UNDEAD ENDS

UNDEAD ENDS: CONTESTED RE-BEGINNINGS IN APOCALYPTIC

FILM AND TELEVISION

BY

SARAH TRIMBLE, B.A., M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2012)　　　　　　McMaster University

(English and Cultural Studies)　　　　　　Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Undead Ends: Contested Re-Beginnings in Apocalyptic Film and Television

AUTHOR: Sarah Trimble, B.A. (York University), M.A. (University of Western Ontario)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Sarah Brophy

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 316

ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores the counter-histories of trans-Atlantic modernity that surface in contemporary apocalyptic visuality. Framing twenty-first-century apocalypse films and televisual narratives as "new world" fantasies, I argue that British and American visions of The End re-stage the exploitative "contracts" that underwrite capitalist modernity. While contemporary visions of apocalypse predominantly valorize a survivalist ethos premised on claiming territory, annihilating threatening others, and securing reproductive labour, they can also be read for the ethical, affective, and political alternatives that they inadvertently expose. With this in mind, I bring together the fields of transatlantic studies and biopolitical theory in order to accomplish two complementary objectives. The first aim is to critique the gendered, racial, and generational politics of survivalist fantasies, which I read as conducting a neoliberal pedagogy that reanimates histories of racial terror and sexual exploitation. The second is to develop a biopolitical analysis premised on Hannah Arendt's principle of natality in order to foreground the reproductive and youthful bodies that have been too long marginalized in theories of biopower. Though they are typically relegated to the background of apocalyptic visual culture, women and children figure the unrealized possibilities that haunt survivalist fantasies—possibilities that, I argue, are embedded in the ruined landscapes that they negotiate. Apocalyptic visions of crumbling metropolises, wasted landscapes, and abandoned border sites invite genealogical excavations of the lingering counter-histories embedded in their ruins. Such critical excavations reveal the "now" as a space-time of contestation in which suppressed pasts open onto a multiplicity of possible futures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by thanking the faculty, friends, and administrators who made my time in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University deeply rewarding. Chaired first by Mary O'Connor and then by Peter Walmsley, the department has offered intellectual challenges, generous support, and a home away from home for five excellent years. From impromptu hallway conversations to administrative problem solving, the care that I have received from my colleagues at McMaster has sustained me through some of the biggest "firsts" of my academic career.

My dissertation committee—the Dream Team—deserves greater recognition that I can put into words. Janice Hladki dishes out assists like nobody's business. Her warmth, enthusiasm, and collaborative spirit have multiplied the highs and buoyed me during the lows. Nadine Attewell holds me accountable to the fundamentals of the game. I'm deeply thankful not only for the gnarly conceptual questions, but also for the compassion and humour with which they were asked. Sarah Brophy, my Michael Jordan, quite simply makes me better. Her attention to nuance inspires me to think harder, and the integrity that she brings to this work has set the bar for my career. My sincerest thanks to the Dream Team for their exceptional mentoring, thoughtful friendship, and spectacular footwear.

Many thanks, too, to my external examiner, Katherine McKittrick—both for her own inspiring work and for her generous reading of mine.

I want to express gratitude to my family as well: to my mom, Gail, for instilling in me a love of stories and inspiring some of the questions I raise in this project; to my dad, Warren, with whom I can joke about bunkers, gas masks, and collapsible stairs (or are we only half joking?); to my sister, Megan, with whom I learned as a kid that movies deserve many, many viewings; and to my brother, Justin, who manages to love me and keep me humble at the same time. My in-laws, too, deserve great appreciation: Jo-Anne and Allan have offered countless meals, hand-sewn attire, general patience, and the joy of puns.

Finally, I want to thank my partner, Jen, who's seen me through the best and the worst. I know you think you didn't help, but it wouldn't have been possible without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

You'll see a woman
hanging upside down
her features covered by her fallen gown
and all the lousy little poets
coming round
tryin' to sound like Charlie Manson
and the white man dancin'

       —Leonard Cohen, "The Future"

Hence, it is not in the least superstitious, it is even a counsel of realism, to look for the unforeseeable and unpredictable, to be prepared for and to expect "miracles" in the political realm. And the more heavily the scales are weighted in favor of disaster, the more miraculous will the deed done in freedom appear; for it is disaster, not salvation, which always happens automatically and therefore always must appear to be irresistible.

       —Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (170)

INTRODUCTION ~ UNDEAD ENDS: NATALITY, BIOPOLITICS, AND THE LONG TWENTIETH CENTURY

> *In the last analysis, the human world is always the product of man's* amor mundi*, a human artifice whose potential immortality is always subject to the mortality of those who build it and the natality of those who come to live in it. What Hamlet said is always true: "The time is out of joint; O cursèd spite / That ever I was born to set it right!" In this sense, in its need for beginners that it may be begun anew, the world is always a desert.*
> —Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (203)

> *To fight for an oppressed past is to make this past come alive as the lever for the work of the present: obliterating the sources and conditions that link the violence of what seems finished with the present, ending this history and setting in place a different future.*
> —Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (66)

James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) envisions a contemporary Los Angeles haunted by a machine-dominated future, a post-apocalyptic world in which human survivors of a nuclear holocaust are herded into concentration camps for "orderly disposal." In the midst of narrating the events leading to the "ruins" in which he was born, Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn), a resistance fighter from the year 2029 who has travelled "back" to 1980s LA, rolls up his sleeve to reveal a red barcode burned into his right forearm. Describing how he was put to work "loading bodies" in the camps, Reese offers physical proof of what is simultaneously a future and a history—a time to come that, for him, has already passed. The barcode visually resonates not only with Second World War concentration camp tattoos, but also with branding in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and with the universal product codes (UPCs) that track consumer goods in capitalist economies. The close-up shot of Reese's arm exemplifies the entangled temporalities of apocalyptic visual culture: visions of The End persistently conjure

1

histories of violence in order to render their nightmare futures intelligible. A defining characteristic of apocalypse films and televisual narratives is an emphasis on picturing once-modern urban spaces in various stages of decomposition, a visual strategy that, I argue, makes newly visible the sedimented histories of racial, sexual, and gender violence that compose such spaces. Apocalyptic visions of crumbling metropolises, wasted landscapes, and abandoned border sites invite genealogical excavations of the lingering counter-histories embedded in their ruins. Such critical excavations reveal the "now" as a space-time of contestation in which suppressed pasts open onto a multiplicity of possible futures.

It is a key critical premise of my project that apocalyptic visual culture re-stages the exploitative "contracts" that underwrite capitalist modernity. Specifically, trans-Atlantic slavery exemplifies the racial and sexual logics and the systematic appropriations of embodied labour that these "contracts" entail (cf. Baucom 2005; Federici 2004; Gatens 2006; Hartman 1997; Mills 1997; Pateman 1988). The narratives that I explore typically valorize a survivalist ethos premised on claiming and fortifying territory, fending off or using un-human others, hoarding resources, and securing reproductive labour. But they can also be read for the ethical and affective alternatives that they inadvertently expose; the resistances, escapes, and indeterminacies that they register but do not fully explore. I argue that these unrealized potentialities are indexed to the maternal figures that are often relegated to the background of apocalyptic visuality. Like the unnamed mother whose suicide haunts the father/son journey in John Hillcoat's 2009 adaptation of Cormac

McCarthy's novel *The Road* (Chapter Four), spectral traces of alternative worldviews trouble the patriarchal pedagogies of survival that these texts predominantly emphasize.

Yet, these alternatives remain visually and ethically opaque. They derive from the background of the visual field, or what, in *Frames of War* (2009), Judith Butler describes as the perspective that is "ruled out" in order to bring an image—along with the ideals and affects that it conducts—into focus (74). Since what is ruled out organizes the visual field through its absence, the point, Butler insists, "would not be to locate what is 'in' or 'outside' the frame, but what vacillates between those two positions, and what, foreclosed, becomes encrypted in the frame itself" (75). The verb "encrypt" registers both the unintelligibility and the ontological indeterminacy associated with this "vacillating" movement: to encrypt, as in the cryptographical practice of hiding meaning within apparent nonsense, is to bury that meaning, relegating it to "an underground cell, chamber or vault; *esp.* one used as a burial place" ("crypt, *n.*"). The ethical and affective alternatives that I excavate, then, are ghostly presences that briefly surface in moments of generic and ideological disturbance. Necessarily resistant to idealizing re-framings, they can become apparent to spectators who refuse easy identification with the male protagonist whose gaze organizes the visual field. Their lessons encrypted in filmic and televisual frames, the maternal figures that I consider in this project are "specter[s] that gna[w] at the norms of recognition" (*Frames* 12). Butler's counter-intuitively "gnawing" specters resonate with Avery Gordon's emphasis on a "hungry past" (*Ghostly* 163). Both

thinkers construct suppressed histories as embodied and ravenous—as "undead ends" eating away at the frames that quarantine past from present.[1]

My dissertation pursues two intimately related strands of inquiry. I have already introduced the first, which pertains to the past: What undead histories become discernible in the ruins that organize apocalyptic visuality, and what claims do they make on the present? The second is future-oriented: What possibilities for "starting again" open up in the midst of apocalyptic wastelands, and whose interests do they serve? My dissertation identifies competing models of re-beginning in these texts, one of which I critique as a "patriarchal survivalist fantasy" that sees catastrophe as recreating a *terra nullius* on which to build a new world, an untainted origin that will invariably reproduce paternalistic communal structures. But this fantasy is haunted by the maternal ethics and ghostly histories that it inadvertently re-surfaces. The young people who inherit these elusive legacies are the counterpoints to the survivalist and his "new world" fantasies.

I develop a framework for reading these figures of re-beginning by engaging critically with Hannah Arendt's enigmatic principle of natality. Arendt saw the capacity for spontaneous action as synonymous with the freedom to begin something new in the world, a freedom that is "ontologically rooted" in the fact of birth (*Human* 247). In spite of her lack of attention to fleshy, embodied differences, one of Arendt's lasting contributions to political thought was to conceptualize action and freedom as re-

---

[1] Michel Foucault, too, speaks of the "gnawing" presence of death as that which biopolitical mechanisms aimed at optimizing life seek to keep at bay: at the end of the eighteenth century, he claims, "[d]eath was no longer something that suddenly swooped down on life—as in an epidemic. Death was now something permanent, something that slips into life, perpetually gnaws at it, diminishes it and weakens it" (*Society* 244). The "living dead," a figuration that I emphasize throughout this dissertation, exists in the crevices of modern biopower, where, as I will elaborate below, biopolitics and necropolitics fold into each other (cf. Puar 2007).

beginning: a beginning again "in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance" (*Human* 176-77). Re-beginnings, then, have genealogies. By initiating something new, we reanimate the "numberless beginnings" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81) that precede and compose us, setting them to work differently in the present. In the context of apocalyptic visual culture, Arendt's emphasis on actualizing the potentialities inherent in birth allows me to imagine flexible modes of youthful agency: creative capacities that are rooted in what Sara Ahmed, in *Queer Phenomenology*, calls "histories of arrival," which are also "histories of labor" (38, 49). As a form of embodied arrival, birth gives substance to histories of labouring bodies—to women's reproductive labour, most immediately, and to longer histories of bodies traversing, arriving at, working on, and inhabiting particular geographies. The potential that Arendt locates in the fact of birth consists of spectral histories, and these histories reanimate in unpredictable ways when we act in the world.

In order to interpret the significance of the maternal and youthful figures that are important but occluded in the contemporary visual culture of apocalypse, I am crafting a theoretical conversation between the fields of transatlantic studies and biopolitical theory. What I have already referred to as apocalyptic film and television's re-staging of the exploitative contracts that underwrite capitalist modernity is bound up with envisioning an incipient new world emerging from the ruins of the old—a fantasy that has its roots in trans-Atlantic routes.[2] My focus on specifically British and American apocalypse

---

[2] Throughout this dissertation, I will use the "transatlantic" spelling to refer specifically to fields of study and the hyphenated "trans-Atlantic" when I wish to emphasize the geographies and mobilities that I am invoking. I would also like to acknowledge, here, the influential work of Paul

scenarios thus derives from their respective negotiations of the histories enfolded in the dream of a New World. As I explore in my reading of *Children of Men* (2006) in Chapter Three, this dream both presupposes and disavows the racial-sexual exploitation that affords control over the means of (re)producing new worlds. By emphasizing the politics of reproduction, I bring insights drawn from transatlantic studies concerning the embodied costs of building new worlds together with biopolitical theorizations of emergent life. I attend not only to how life is disciplined, regulated, and channelled into recognizable corporeal, subjective, and collective formations, but also to how it escapes mechanisms of surveillance and capture (cf. Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Puar 2007; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007).

Biopolitics and transatlantic studies are particularly salient for interpreting contemporary visions of apocalypse because they theorize the present, albeit in different ways, as inheriting a "long twentieth century" (cf. Arrighi 1994; Baucom 2005) shaped by overlapping processes of capital accumulation and "the ascendency of whiteness in the modern world" (Chow 3; cf. Puar 2007). This history is one that the current neoliberal moment intensifies, and one that resurfaces, I argue, in apocalyptic visions that register the "new world" dreams of neoliberalism. In my opening chapter on the genealogy of apocalyptic visuality, I develop a reading of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) and its filmic legacies that demonstrates how patriarchal survivalists, like neoliberal ideologues, speculate on ruins. Speculation is a mode of looking that projects future profits onto risky sites of investment, a way of seeing premised on prediction. The

---

Gilroy, Stuart Hall, James Clifford, and Susan Stanford Friedman on the roots/routes homonym (cf. Clifford 1997; S. Friedman 1998; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1989).

speculative gaze is haunted, then, by specters—by histories that might reanimate in the ruins and open onto unexpected futures. Both "speculate" and "specter" are derived from the Latin verb, *specere* (to see, look), a shared root that sheds light on the politics of apocalyptic visuality: as I explore in Chapter One, the speculative gaze generates a visual field that both surfaces and suppresses the specters that exceed its control.

Meanwhile, this theoretical introduction investigates natality in Arendt's thought, using it to foreground generativity and, by extension, the reproductive and youthful bodies that are often marginalized in theories of biopower. I recognize the importance of analyses focused on "bare life" and on the ethical and political problem of disposability. However, I aim to attend to the "bio-necro collaboration" that implicates death and killing in "a political economy of life" organized by surplus, (re)productivity, and maximization (Puar 35, Lemke 80).[3] Following Puar, I seek to develop a biopolitical analysis that is "[a]ccountable to an array of deflected and deferred deaths, to detritus and decay," even as it "foregrounds regeneration in relation to reproduction" (35). To this end, I draw on the work of critical race and transatlantic studies scholars, amplifying Arendt's biopolitical insights by attending to histories of raced and sexed bodies negotiating trans-Atlantic spatial formations.[4] This allows me not only to highlight the political economy of modern biopower, but also to trace a counter-history of the Enlightenment dream of "freedom" that ostensibly culminated in a "fresh start" in a New World. Finally, I explore

---

[3] For theorists who emphasize the productivity of biopower, see Comaroff 2007; Cooper 2008; Deutscher 2008; Esposito 2008; Latimer 2011; Lemke 2007; Papadopoulos et al. 2008; and Vatter 2006, 2009. For examples of biopolitical analyses focused on disposability, see Agamben 1995, 2003; Bauman 2004; Debrix and Barder 2012; Giroux 2006, 2012; and Mbembe 2003.

[4] The thinkers in transatlantic and critical race studies to whom I am most indebted are Ahmed 2006; Baucom 2005; Du Bois 1903; Gilroy 1993; hooks 1992; James 1938; Hartman 1997; McKittrick 2006; and Sharpe 2010.

how the Christian apocalyptic tradition, in which the End Times reveal a new world order, anchors this Enlightenment narrative. Extending the visual analysis that I began above, I consider the alternative meanings of "unveiling"—a translation of the Greek *apokalupsis* from which "apocalypse" derives—encrypted in this Christian frame. First, let me contextualize these Arendtian theoretical reflections by returning briefly to *The Terminator* in order to demonstrate how apocalyptic film and television asks us to invest in some bodies at the expense of others, and, in turn, to exorcise the ghosts that linger in ruined landscapes.

Birth control: *The Terminator*'s maternal ground

Shortly after revealing the barcode that brands him as a survivor of *The Terminator*'s post-apocalyptic camps, Kyle Reese explains to Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) why she has been targeted, from the future, for assassination: her "unborn son" will one day lead the human resistance, teaching others "to storm the wire of the camps." In A. Samuel Kimball's formulation, the film "stag[es] the future as an infanticidal call from a machine world" (266), imagining both contemporary LA and the body of a potentially reproductive woman as sites in which competing horizons of futurity originate. Sarah Connor's son will disrupt the historical process that leads to a machine dystopia—a future that, Constance Penley points out, has its roots in the technological "texture" of the film's noir 80s LA landscape (64-65). In order to prevent the as yet unborn John Connor from breaching the camp space that materializes the end of human history, the T-800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is charged with effecting what a sceptical

criminal psychologist describes, at one point in the film, as a "retroactive abortion." *The Terminator* is thus structured by a "time-loop paradox" according to which Reese, sent back in time by an adult John Connor to protect his mother, impregnates her, thereby fathering the man who will one day command him, indirectly, to do just that (Penley 67; cf. Mann 1989/90; Pask 1995). As Penley argues, the film enacts a Freudian primal scene fantasy: its "attempted end-run around Oedipus" (69) allows Connor to orchestrate his own conception and, in a sense, father himself. In so doing, it anchors the normatively human future that it endorses in Connor's seeming mastery over his own maternal origins.

Nonetheless, technology threatens to undo the temporally fractured "family romance" (Penley 69) that propels *The Terminator*. When, for instance, the sight of bulldozers spurs a nightmare in which Reese recalls the treads of enormous "hunter-killers" crushing human skulls, the film points to the origins of the dystopian future in human technological innovation—or, as the setting of its climactic scene in a factory run by robotics suggests, in technologies specifically created to replace human labour.[5] The primal scene fantasy, then, is haunted by another intergenerational conflict: a war between human beings and their cyborgian descendents. The film thus opens itself up to a counter-reading in which John Connor's impending war against the machines enacts its own infanticidal impulse, attempting to eradicate the unrecognizable, nonhuman future

---

[5] See Pask for an analysis of the climactic scene as encoding trans-Pacific anxieties about neoliberal economic restructuring. The factory run by robotics is, he writes, "the site that can carry the weight of the displacement of once (relatively) privileged American workers by worldwide technological innovation and the shift from mass production to 'flexible accumulation.' […] This globalization and restructuring of capitalism, already as early as 1984 misrecognized by the American media as an epic struggle between American and Japanese, is often accompanied in the media by the representation of Japanese (and Asian workers generally) as lifeless automatons, incapable of any action not directed by the monstrous corporations to which they remain attached for life" (194).

embodied in "humankind's technological offspring" (Kimball 269). Each successive installation of the franchise troubles and imperfectly restabilizes the human/machine binary, exemplifying the reproductive unpredictability that *The Terminator*'s time-loop conflation of birth and fate cannot altogether contain. Manifesting a horizon of futurity that, to borrow from Jacques Derrida, is both monstrous and spectral, the franchise's mutant generations constitute possibilities that "dis-join" the present, inscribing it as a space-time of intergenerational encounter (cf. Derrida 1976, 1994). Moreover, as the most recent film in the franchise, *Terminator: Salvation* (2009), dramatizes in the eventual meeting between an adult Connor (Christian Bale) and a teenaged Kyle Reese (his father-to-be), the future has already taken place: "what seems to be out front, the future, comes back in advance: from the past, from the back" (Derrida, *Specters* 10). The radical exteriority that opens the present to the potential for transformation makes itself felt as, at once, past and future, remembrance and anticipation.[6]

    This rendering of the living present as simultaneously haunted and expectant—as pregnant with arrivals whose "coming," in Walter Benjamin's terms, "was expected on

---

[6] The "hauntological" structure of the Derridean trace marks a key point of overlap between my project and the analytical frameworks associated with posthumanism (cf. Derrida 1994). In *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), Cary Wolfe invokes Derrida's definition of the trace as "the intimate relation of the living present to its outside, the opening to exteriority in general" (Derrida qtd. in Wolfe, 293), in order to unsettle readings of (especially digital) technologies as contaminating notions of the human-as-presence: "the human is itself a prosthetic being, who from day one is constituted *as* human by its coevolution with and coconstitution by external archival technologies of various kinds—including language itself as the first archive and prosthesis" (295, emphasis in original). While I share other thematic concerns with this field, including a commitment to unfixing human/machine and human/animal binaries, my own approach to interrogating the category of "the human" tends to draw on feminist postcolonial and transatlantic insights concerning the historical emergence of "Man" in opposition to gendered and racialized others (cf. Chow 2002; Loomba 1998; McClintock 1995; McKittrick 2006; Razack 2004; Wynter 2003).

earth," and on whom the past has a claim (*Illuminations* 254)—foregrounds the cost, to others, of a mode of survival that does not "learn to live *with* ghosts" (Derrida, *Specters* xviii, emphasis in original). *The Terminator* authorizes John Connor's imminent war against the machines by casting Cameron's sentient machines "as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations" (Butler, *Frames* 31). This drawing of boundaries around what counts as human life is one of the fundamental manoeuvres according to which biopower operates (cf. Foucault 2003). Modern biopower justifies the dealing of mass death by framing "the human" in ways that generate biopolitical fragmentation, producing excesses that Butler describes as "something living that is other than life" (*Frames* 15). Yet, the *Terminator* franchise's increasingly humanoid cyborgs put pressure on the frames that produce Connor as the embodiment of normative human life. For instance, *Salvation*'s Marcus Wright (Sam Worthington), a reanimated death-row inmate whose human heart is enfolded within a titanium endoskeleton, haunts the adult Connor's claim on survival, uncannily doubling the resistance leader and conjuring the specter of a cyborgian future.

This brief reading of the *Terminator* franchise through the lens of biopolitics and generational conflict demonstrates that mainstream visions of apocalypse tend to dramatize not an absolute "End" but, rather, the end of a particular form of life along with the recognizable future that seemingly guarantees its continuation. This anxious envisioning of the "ends" of white masculinity, the nation-state, and neoliberal capitalism is politically ambiguous at best. But by grounding normatively human re-beginning in reproductive labour, apocalypse visions encrypt histories of sexual exploitation and

racialized patriarchal violence in their narrative frames. These histories allow for critical counter-readings that undermine the texts' dominant ideological investments. It is not coincidental that such encrypted, "gnawing" histories visibly materialize in the background of the visual field—in the apocalyptic landscapes against which the male protagonist's story of survival takes shape. Like the maternal bodies relegated to the narrative background, the landscapes composing the visual background are material resources harnessed to naturalize and reproduce dominant arrangements of power (cf. Daniels and Cosgrove 1993; Duncan 1990; Duncan and Duncan 1992; Mitchell 2000; Rose 1993; Smith 1993). Moreover, and as I explore in greater detail in the next chapter, in which I consider the role of the Whore of Babylon in the Book of Revelation, feminine figures metonymize the apocalyptic cityscape, which, in turn, is coded as gendered and sexualized terrain.

Reading landscapes as both spatial and corporeal back/grounds, I align them with an unruly field of potential that Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick call "demonic grounds" (cf. McKittrick 2006; Wynter 1990). The concept originates in Wynter's postcolonial reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which she highlights the absence of "Caliban's potential mate through whom the reproduction of his race might occur" (McKittrick xxv). This "absented presence" (McKittrick xxv) indexes a possible future on which the play forecloses: a reclaiming of Prospero's island by its native population. The notion of demonic grounds thus evokes a centuries-old connection between "geographies of domination," on the one hand, and the struggle to control and exploit the reproductive capacities of women, particularly women of colour, on the other (McKittrick x). It is a

concept that names the labouring "background" that is historically entangled with (re)productions of British and American whiteness in the context of trans-Atlantic modernity (cf. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Carter 2007; Chu 2006; McClintock 1995; Roberts 1997; Stoler 2002; Weinbaum 2004). Moreover, McKittrick points out that Wynter imports the meaning of "demonic" from the disciplines of physics and mathematics, where it connotes "a non-deterministic schema[,] a process that is hinged on uncertainty and nonlinearity because the organizing principle cannot predict the future" (xxiv). Demonic grounds, then, haunt ways of seeing premised on prediction, disturbing a speculative gaze that projects a "landscape of terror and transparency" in an attempt to stabilize a knowable future (McKittrick 43).[7] By exploring black women's historical and ongoing resistant negotiations of the "transparent" landscapes imposed by white patriarchal power, McKittrick emphasizes that reproductive labour exceeds control through spatial contestations, inhabitations, and mobilities. The concept of demonic grounds links contested geographical and corporeal landscapes to indeterminate futures.

Strange arrivals: biopolitics and natality

If, as I have been suggesting, mainstream visual projections of apocalypse tend to justify exploitative power relations, then these visions can be considered the paradigmatic biopolitical "genre" of our times. In both the lectures he delivered at the Collège de

---

[7] What I am calling the speculative gaze is closely connected to what Allen Feldman, in his discussion of post-9/11 visual culture, describes as an "actuarial gaze"—a compulsively risk-assessing outlook that projects threat onto skins and surfaces that are coded as opaque, as resistant to unproblematic "knowing" (cf. Feldman 2005). Both gazes inherit the "landscape of terror and transparency" that organized white patriarchal power in the context of American slavery (McKittrick 43). I return to Feldman in Chapters Two and Five.

France from 1975 to 1976 and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Michel

Foucault's early theorizing of biopower emphasized the functions of "sex" and "race" in

proliferating the points at which power, especially state power, could apply to bodies and,

in turn, regulate populations. Tracing the emergence of biopower to the eighteenth

century, when demographers began tracking birth and mortality rates, Foucault defined it

as "the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of

knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques" (*History* 141-42). He also

considered the horizons of futurity against which this politicization of biological life took

place. Locating the sexualities of women, children, and perverts at "the juncture of the

'body' and the 'population,'" Foucault argued that, "through the themes of health,

progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke *of*

sexuality and *to* sexuality" (*History* 147, emphases in original). Paradoxically, the

technologies of power bent on generating, proliferating, intensifying, and harnessing the

forces associated with "life" and orienting them to "the future of the species"

simultaneously imply an apocalyptic horizon—a warrant to deal mass death epitomized,

at the time of Foucault's writing, by "the atomic situation" (*History* 137). Foucault's

assertion that "massacres have become vital" derives from his recognition that regimes of

biopower imagine "enemies" as compromising not just the political but also the biological

survival of the body politic (*History* 137). As I mentioned in relation to *The Terminator*'s

sentient machines, the production of biopolitical "enemies" entails fragmenting the

biological field, dividing the species population into (racial) subsets in order to establish a

"positive relation" between fostering life and committing mass murder: "the death of the

other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer" (*Society* 255). Harnessing corporeal forces to the future of the population—a future imagined in terms of progress and perfectibility—biopower simultaneously wards off the unrecognizable, deviant futures embodied by its dehumanized others.

Almost two decades before Foucault began theorizing the shaping of bodies towards the cultivation of "healthier and purer" populations (*Society* 255), Hannah Arendt had expressed concern over what she saw as the entry of "life itself" into the political realm (*Human* 2). *The Human Condition* (1958) inherits anxieties explored in Arendt's first book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), about the automatism of process—about the implications of imagining worldly events as inexorably driven by "the law of Nature or the law of History" (*Origins* 462). The mid-century totalitarian enactment of these "immutable laws" had rendered entire populations "superfluous" and therefore vulnerable to extermination (*Origins* 349, 459). In *The Human Condition*, Arendt revisited what she saw as the dangerous eclipse of politics by process—this time in an attempt to account for the "modern world alienation" of ostensibly democratic societies (*Human* 6). Developing conceptual distinctions between labour, work, and action, Arendt argued that the first category overwhelmingly defines human activity in the postwar period. Unlike work, which materializes a distinctly human world composed of objects, and action, which initiates political bodies in the midst of that world, labour is "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body" (*Human* 7). It is, for Arendt, a mode of activity—one that "never 'produces' anything but life" (*Human*

88)—that is proper to the private realm because it is driven by biological necessity.[8]

Arendt thus anticipated Foucault's analysis of the biopolitical harnessing of the body to

the population: "the last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders, demands

of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been

submerged into the over-all life process of the species" (*Human* 322). Even as Arendt

worried over the rise of *Animal Laborans*, though, she developed a theory of action that,

via the principle of natality, enfolds labour within it, destabilizing her own distinctions

and offering a framework through which to think modes of generativity that confound the

operations of biopower.

    My turn to Foucault and Arendt aims, to borrow Foucault's language, to excavate

"a profusion of lost events" in the history of biopolitical theorizing ("Nietzsche" 81). I am

looking for beginnings, threads of analysis, that contribute to a remapping of the field of

biopolitics that de-centres the Europe–Holocaust–camp nexus that Giorgio Agamben

posits as the telos of modern biopower (cf. Agamben 1995, 1998, 2003). Significantly,

Agamben begins *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995) by pointing out the

oddity of Foucault's failure to reference Arendt's work. In the opening pages of a book

---

[8] Arendt's at times rigid distinction between the private and public realms, like her
insistence on using the putatively universal "man" and "mankind," and, indeed, her publicly
expressed hostility towards feminism, have resulted in complex, historically varied feminist
receptions of her work. In her Introduction to *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (1995),
Bonnie Honig offers the example of "Adrienne Rich's oft-quoted words, [which characterize]
Arendt's *The Human Condition* [as] a 'lofty and crippled book' that 'embodies the tragedy of a
female mind nourished on male ideology'" (2). Honig usefully points out that interrogations of
"the Woman Question in Arendt" may not be as generative as "the Arendt Question in
Feminism," which calls for a dynamic encounter with her work that asks "what resources, if any,
Arendt has to offer a feminist theory and politics whose constituency is diverse and often
fractious" (3). In addition to Honig's edited collection, feminist engagements with Arendt along
these lines have proliferated in the last two decades, especially (cf. Allen 1999; Benhabib 1996;
Dietz 2002; Kristeva 2001; Maslin 2012).

that has become foundational to contemporary biopolitical theory, Agamben outlines

what he sees as the two thinkers' "unfinished" projects, beginning with

> the curious fact that Arendt establishes no connection between her research
> in *The Human Condition* and the penetrating analyses she had previously
> devoted to totalitarian power (in which a biopolitical perspective is
> altogether lacking), and that Foucault, in just as striking a fashion, never
> dwelt on the exemplary places of modern biopolitics: the concentration
> camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth
> century. (4)

Agamben narrates his own project as one of "completing" the analyses begun by Arendt

and Foucault, bringing them to their logical conclusions in the space of the camp as the

materialization of a "zone of irreducible indistinction" between exception and rule, or

between the realms of bare life and politics (9). Without denying the importance of

Agamben's analysis of the camp as "the hidden matrix" of modern politics (166), I want

to question his impulse to funnel the "numberless" theoretical beginnings suggested by

Arendt and Foucault into, as Ian Baucom observes, "a quasi-teleological reading of

modernity with the camp as its atrocious terminus" (185). Agamben's attempt to master

his own theoretical origins not only fundamentally misses some of Arendt's key insights,

but also results in an "excessively partial" account of the spaces of modern biopower

(Baucom 191).

Counterbalancing Agamben, I investigate natality by excavating its conceptual

precursor in what Arendt refers to as "the merely given" (*Origins* 301), and, more

specifically, by reconsidering the Arendtian analysis of statelessness on which Agamben

draws. In developing his concept of "bare life"—a living figure who, abandoned by the

juridical order, "*may be killed and yet not sacrificed*" (*Homo Sacer* 8, emphasis in

17

original)—Agamben closely follows Arendt's analysis of the Rights of Man as dependent

on, rather than independent from, the nation-state. Though he observes that the "originary

fiction of modern sovereignty" posits a seamless continuity between "*nativity* and

nationality," Agamben does not linger over the implications of the interval between birth

and nation (131, emphases in original). Both Agamben and Arendt seek to theorize the

figure of the refugee, but where the former emphasizes a post-political biological

remainder, the latter introduces a cluster of terms—"the merely given," "mere existence,"

"mere differentiation" (*Origins* 301, 302)—that gesture to emergent life, or what

Penelope Deutscher refers to as "original ambiguity" (58). For Arendt, the stripping of

citizenship is evocative of an anteriority in which difference is unmediated by political

structure:

> Since the Greeks, we have known that highly developed political life
> breeds a deep-rooted suspicion of [the] private sphere, a deep resentment
> against the disturbing miracle contained in the fact that each of us is made
> as he [*sic*] is—single, unique, unchangeable. This whole sphere of the
> merely given, relegated to private life in civilized society, is a permanent
> threat to the public sphere, because the public sphere is as consistently
> based on the law of equality as the private sphere is based on the law of
> universal difference and differentiation. (*Origins* 301)

To model extra-political life on the "disturbing miracle" of birth is to link its threatening

nature to its animating force. Arendt makes this link plain when she asserts that the total

elimination of the spontaneities associated with the "merely given" results in the

"complete petrifaction" of politically organized humanity (302).

In "Ideology and Terror," a 1953 essay prepared after the publication of *Origins*

and added to later editions of that work, Arendt develops this insight into the animating

force of the merely given by imagining it as interruptive to the "processual temporality"

that totalitarian movements seek to foster (Braun 5). If totalitarian biopower aims to accelerate the law of Nature or of History, allowing it to "race freely through mankind," then it must develop mechanisms to address the fact that "with each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, a new world has potentially come into being" (*Origins* 465). The constraining space of the camp exemplifies how principles of quarantine and containment work to offset what Kathrin Braun formulates, in Benjaminian terms, as the "'weakly' messianic […] interval" (5) that corresponds to the fact of birth: the new beginning that threatens to deflect already unfolding historical processes. (As I explore in my chapter on *Children of Men*, though, even camp space cannot altogether constrain the possibilities that attend new arrivals.) In attempting to suppress the spontaneity of (re)beginning in the service of an inexorable, linear historical process, the camp facilitates an apocalyptic version of history—one invested in a perspective that "implies the end of time, a completed development" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 87).

The totalitarian investment in process is an intensification of what Foucault identifies as the mode in which biopower operates in contexts we conceive of as democratic. Taking as its point of application processes that occur over time in a given population—rates and averages of birth, mortality, fertility, and illness—biopower intervenes "at the level at which these general phenomena are determined, [that is,] at the level of their generality" (*Society* 246). In order to regularize and efficiently harness the "phenomena of population" (*History* 141) to the needs of capital and the state, biopower seeks to smooth out variation,

> to establish an equilibrium, maintain an average, establish a sort of
> homeostasis, and compensate for variations within this general population

and its aleatory field. In a word, security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life. (*Society* 246)

Because it harnesses phenomena "at the level of their generality" (*Society* 246), biopower works through mechanisms that constrain spontaneity, contingency, and the recalcitrance of "mere differentiation" (Arendt, *Origins* 302). In other words, "security mechanisms" produce a general population by suppressing its "aleatory field," the dimension of chance that haunts all attempts to measure, predict, and capitalize on general phenomena. Biopolitical security is thus consonant with apocalyptic visuality in its relegation of disruptive—indeed, demonic—elements to the background of the field that power controls.

For my purposes, it is particularly salient that Arendtian natality indexes Foucault's "random element" in a population to, on the one hand, youth as "newcomers who are born into the world as strangers" (Arendt, *Human* 9) and, on the other, the potentially reproductive women in whom this strangeness originates. These are the figures who haunt and who emerge so ambiguously in twenty-first-century apocalypse narratives. As Roberto Esposito elaborates,

> [r]ather than enclosing the extraneousness within the same biological or political body (and so canceling it), birth now puts […] what is within the maternal womb outside. It doesn't incorporate, but excorporates, exteriorizes, and bends outside […]. At the moment in which the umbilical cord is cut and the newborn cleaned of amniotic fluid, he or she is situated in an irreducible difference with all those who have come before. […] This is precisely the reason why the Nazis wanted to suppress birth, because they felt and feared that, rather than ensuring the continuity of the ethnic filiation, birth dispersed and weakened it. (176)

Echoing Arendt's description of newborns as "strangers," Esposito characterizes the one

who "emerges as necessarily extraneous and also foreign" (176).[9] This extraneousness, I

argue, belongs to the interval of pre-political potential that is structurally implicit in

Arendt's formulation of action as re-birth: "With word and deed we insert ourselves into

the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take

upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance" (*Human* 176-77). In

marking out a space-time of anteriority in relation to the political realm, Arendt

implicates reproductive and youthful bodies in what she characterizes as the constitutive

"frailty" of human community (*Human* 191), or what Esposito describes as the

dispersing, weakening effect that the Nazis sought to suppress.[10] They sought, in other

words, to armour the social body against the "onslaught with which each new generation

must insert itself" into a pre-existing common world (Arendt, *Human* 191).

    I propose that natality is a chronotope designating an "exceptional" space-time in

relation to the political—not, as Agamben formulates it, one that results from the

---

[9] Esposito's analysis posits birth and maternity as resistant to what he formulates as the immunizing logic of modern biopower. In his trilogy, which culminates in *Bios* (2008), Esposito traces a history of political modernity through which, as Miguel Vatter explains in a review of his work, "the modern subject, with all of its civil and political rights, emerges as an attempt to attain immunity from the contagion of what is extra-individual; namely, the possibility of radical community" ("Biopolitics" 7). Leading into a reading of Arendt's principle of natality as contesting the "immunitary line [of political thought] inaugurated by Hobbes" (Esposito 177), Esposito considers how a political philosophy premised on birth offers an alternative model of the relationship between individual and community. While I clearly agree with many of Esposito's insights, he maintains, like Agamben (from whose biopolitical analysis he otherwise departs significantly), a markedly Eurocentric perspective on modern biopower. As I demonstrate in the next section by excavating the racial and imperial roots of Arendt's conception of natality, there are other linkages—other space-times—through which to think the politics of maternity.

[10] For a critical disability studies perspective on this perceived "weakening" effect, see Snyder and Mitchell (2006), and for an analysis of the influence of the Nazi program of racial hygiene on American eugenics movements, see Kuhl (2002).

suspension of law but, rather, one that gestures to anteriority and emergence. From the radical nostalgia that reorients Andy and Tam, the brother-sister duo in *28 Weeks Later* (2007), toward a suppressed maternal inheritance (Chapter Two), to the unnamed Boy in *The Road*, whose desire to connect with strangers induces detours in his father's relentlessly unfolding journey (Chapter Four), the youth in the texts I consider in this project enact hesitations, wayward movements, and escapes that point to "new forms of sociability" (Papadopoulos et al. 143). The principle of natality thus allows me to posit a connection between youthful agency and "queer" temporalities.[11] It is structured by what Kathryn Bond Stockton formulates as the time of "delay" that hovers around the "ghostly gay child" and others "who are broadly strange" (3). Against the common conception of children as "slow[ly] unfolding, which, unhelpfully, has been relentlessly figured as vertical movement upward" (4), Stockton emphasizes the horizontal implications of delay—a "sideways growth" that "locates energy, pleasure, vitality, and (e)motion in the back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive" (13). Stockton's language is evocative not only of Arendt's understanding of action as "always establish[ing] relationships" and "forc[ing] open all limitations" (*Human* 190), but also of what, in *Escape Routes*, Papadopoulos et al. describe as the "haptic trajectories [that

---

[11] Lee Edelman's polemical *No Future* (2004) reminds us that the image of the Child is, in many contexts, harnessed to the conservative imperatives of "reproductive futurism" (2), to an affirmation of the extant order in the form of a "presupposition that the body politic must survive" (3)—and in recognizable form. But Edelman's organizing opposition between the Child as a fetishized figure of hope, on the one hand, and queerness as "the place of the social order's death drive" (3), on the other, leaves no room to consider the non-progressive temporal structures associated with "the queerness of children" (cf. Bruhm and Hurley 2004). By leaving a consideration of the agency of real children out of his analysis, Edelman does not take into account how the symbolic Child operates as what Sara Ahmed might call a "straightening device" (*Queer* 92)—one that conjures the possibility of wayward, deviant, and discontinuous trajectories even as it seeks to foreclose on them.

22

haunt] the representational regime" (146). In this sense, I am aligning natality with what Papadopoulos et al. call "imperceptible politics": ways of sensing, moving, touching, and feeling that materialize in "the flow of continuous experience" as it shuttles back and forth between "representable modes of experience [and the] imperceptible worlds" from which they arise (161, 154). Arendt's rooting of the capacity for action in the fact of birth—in a materialization that, significantly, precedes one's entry into the formalized public space of appearance—grounds agency in "the play of everyday excess" (Papadopoulos et al. 149).

This focus on experience and on the haptic demands an excavation of the embodied specificities of race, gender, and generation that haunt Arendt's work. Though she brackets the materiality of bodies as the very "stuff" of natality, Arendt's description of a generationally striated political realm implicitly configures maternal bodies as a necessary but unstable background for politics—the corporeal source, as Esposito recognizes, of the "onslaught" that un-grounds the political order (*Human* 191). In this respect, reproductive femininity evokes the "disturbing miracle" of givenness, the private realm that both lends depth to and puts pressure on its public counterpart (*Origins* 301). Significantly, in *Origins*, Arendt frames this necessary "background" to public life according to a racial discourse of the dark, the alien, and the Negro. Near the end of her meditations on statelessness, she writes:

> The dark background of mere givenness, the background formed by our unchangeable and unique nature, breaks into the political scene as the alien which in its all too obvious difference reminds us of the limitations of human activity—which are identical with the limitations of human equality. (301)

Elaborating on what she means by "alien," Arendt likens statelessness to the situation of "a Negro in a white community [who] is considered a Negro and nothing else" (301). In this example, it is the context of the "white community" that causes the "Negro" to eclipse the citizen. The political space that is organized according to the imperatives of whiteness pushes the "dark background of mere givenness" into the foreground, but this eruption of blackness is read as a "breaking in," an "alien" invasion with distinctly threatening qualities.[12] The example produces a slippage, in Arendt's thought, between official statelessness and racial difference within the body politic. It registers a spectrum of fraught negotiations of political space, and one that illuminates tensions in Arendt's notion of a "common world [that] absorbs all new origins and is nourished by them" (*Origins* 465). These tensions derive from the "intertwining histories of arrival" through which embodied subjects encounter the world (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* 38).

Accumulations: sedimented histories, New World economies

Arendt's exemplary "Negro" is a metonym for the "dark background of mere givenness," which forms, in turn, part of the background out of which—against which—the principle of natality emerges. Appearing at the end of her analysis of imperialism in *Origins*, the example anchors some of Arendt's most troubling oppositions:

---

[12] This narrative has a history of deadly consequences for African Americans, including, most recently, Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old shot and killed on his way home from a convenience store in a mostly white gated community in Florida. Martin's murder at the hands of Neighborhood Watch volunteer George Zimmerman has reopened debates about Florida's controversial "stand your ground" law, which allows people to use deadly force *beyond* their private property if they have "reasonable fear an assailant could seriously harm them or someone else" (Pearson; cf. Powell). In the next chapter, I return to figurations of blackness as "breaking in" to space via Stuart Hall and his colleagues' influential analysis of "the mugger" in *Policing the Crisis*, a foundational text in the history of British cultural studies (cf. Hall et al. 1978).

politics/nature, civilization/savagery, human/animal, and political/personal. The Negro is a figure located at what critics have identified as an impasse in Arendt's thought—one that is shaped by a Eurocentric view of history and an ideological humanism that limits her biopolitical insights (cf. Rothberg 2009; Vatter 2006). The conceptual impasse represented by the fraught example of a "Negro in a white community" demands interventions by critical race thinkers and frameworks. In particular, the critiques of Enlightenment conceptions of modernity, freedom, and progress offered by transatlantic studies scholars allow me to recalibrate the principle of natality to disturb specifically "new world" fantasies.[13] Conversely, in its inscription of an interval that links a history of arrival to the possibility of transformative action, natality offers a model of freedom-as-re-beginning that remobilizes suppressed pasts without imagining them as determining. Arendt shares with transatlantic studies scholars a mistrust of progressive (that is, processual) visions of history, from the vantage point of which "every new beginning […] breaks into the world as an 'infinite improbability'" (Arendt, *Between* 169). Arendt's very language indicates how the freedom rooted in natality derives, in her thinking, from the "dark background of mere givenness": like the Negro-as-alien, it breaks into the world. Remember that Arendt arrived as a stateless person in New York in 1941, and so, situated at the end of her thoughts on contact between Europe and Africa, the exemplary "Negro in a white community" is inflected by her urban American writing context. This

---

[13] I want to recognize that Indigenous Studies scholars, too, offer important critiques of Enlightenment history and philosophy. In a future version of this project, I will weave this work together with the transatlantic studies scholars on whom I already draw. I particularly look forward to thinking with Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush's co-edited collection, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence* (2011), Christina Snyder's *Slavery in Indian Country* (2010), Jodi Byrd's *The Transit of Empire* (2011), and Coll Thrush's forthcoming edited collection, *The Red Atlantic*—all of which promise to significantly deepen and complicate my analytical framework.

geographical triangulation leads me to root Arendtian biopolitics in a trans-Atlantic history that unveils, in Saidiya Hartman's terms, "the disavowed transactions between slavery and freedom" that built—and continue to shape—the New World (*Scenes* 13).

In their insistence on attending to "the reign of terror that accompanied the advent of freedom" (Hartman, *Scenes* 13), critical race and transatlantic studies scholars provide the basis for a critique of the "new world" fantasies that lend a utopian edge to even the grimmest apocalyptic visions. Throughout this dissertation, I develop a critical race studies critique of apocalypticism not only along temporal lines—drawing attention to the inheritances and genealogies that (un)ground progressive time—but also by attending to how the circulation of affect shapes bodies and worlds (cf. Ahmed 2004, 2006, 2010; Butler 2009; Ngai 2005). Twenty-first-century visual apocalypse narratives variously explore, critique, and are complicit in post-9/11 projections of "terror" as emanating from outside the boundaries of white, Western nation-states, where it "sticks," to borrow Ahmed's verb, to negatively racialized bodies and frames them as "threats to human life as we know it" (Butler, *Frames* 31). Patriarchal survivalist fantasies imagine white masculinity as terrorized, and their visual field is structured accordingly: to support biopolitical fragmentation and dehumanization and to thereby justify the waging of war against largely civilian populations. Yet, in their inadvertent resurfacing of the exploitations and racial violence that haunt trans-Atlantic modernity, many apocalyptic visions also invite counter-readings premised on the possibility of critically perceiving terror as a tool deployed in the interest of white supremacy and the supposed rationality of empire (cf. Gilroy 1993; Hartman 1997; hooks 1992; James 1938). By reading for what

Saidiya Hartman calls "the diffusion of terror and the violence perpetrated under the rubric of pleasure, paternalism, and property" in these texts, I aim to shed light on a contemporary moment when, once again, "savage encroachments of power [are taking place] through notions of reform, consent, and protection" (*Scenes* 4, 5)—a moment when circulations of terror are shaping new capitalist worlds (cf. Clough and Willse 2011; Klein 2007; Puar 2007).

Arendt's political phenomenology positions the private realm as a background—though, importantly, an opaque, heterogeneous, and shifting one—to the public space of appearance. In this context, Ahmed's work on the whiteness of space, on orientations and proximities as inherited forms of power, and on what it means to inhabit "a body that is not extended by the skin of the social" (*Queer* 20), offers an especially powerful framework through which to de-naturalize Arendt's exemplary Negro and the "dark background" for which he stands in. Drawing on Edmund Husserl's definition of the background as "*a dimly apprehended depth or fringe of indeterminate reality*" that supports the appearance of objects and figures (qtd. in Ahmed, *Queer* 37, emphasis in original), Ahmed emphasizes the operations of power that generate such an enabling "ground." What is both behind (in space) and before (in time) is produced, she asserts, "by acts of relegation" (31). Reframing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which foregrounds the body's successful negotiation of space, as a phenomenology of the will— "I can"—that encodes whiteness as a "bodily form of privilege," Ahmed turns to Frantz Fanon's phenomenology of the black body and its attention to "experience[s] of restriction, uncertainty, and blockage" (*Queer* 138-39). Bodies marked with blackness fail

to "flow" in and into a world organized according to the interests of white subjects, and the background that refuses to stay in place reveals this racial economy. It is an economy of movement that supports accumulations of power, capital, and property for some through the captivity and constriction of others; one that organizes and is, in turn, (re)organized by a "racist disposition of the visible" that supports interpretations of unconstrained movement by black bodies as threatening (Butler, "Endangered" 16).

Despite the resonance between the two thinkers' approaches to experience and appearance, Ahmed's attention to the everyday possibilities of resistance, like McKittrick's, challenges Arendt's conclusion that those who are "thrown back […] on their natural givenness" are relegated to impotent acts of destruction (*Origins* 302).[14] Ahmed reworks Fanon's analysis of negatively racialized subjects that, in a world organized around whiteness, are forced to encounter their own bodies as objects—an experience in which the "background" of corporeality comes to the fore and registers as the cause of impeded movement. Ahmed extends this insight by pointing to the possibilities that open up when, stopped and turned back on the body that "trails behind," "we face what is behind us" (*Queer* 142). The background that fails—or refuses—to stay in place disturbs the visual field, bringing images out of focus and threatening to resurface the spectral possibilities encrypted in dominant frames.

---

[14] Following Fanon, Ahmed demonstrates that black bodies are turned back on themselves as objects. The "background" that is corporeality itself—the body that, ideally, "trails behind" one's actions rather than impeding them (Ahmed, *Queer* 130)—becomes foreground and results in what Ahmed calls a "failed orientation": this manifests "when bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, [which] means that something happens other than the reproduction of matter" (*Queer* 147). The Arendt who is concerned with "a Negro in a white community" reduces this "something" that happens to a destructive nothingness originating in a non-place—to the politically disabling deprivation "of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective" (*Origins* 296).

Ahmed's attention to the "temporality of 'the background'" (*Queer* 143)—to the "intertwining histories of arrival" (38) that compose a multilayered corporeal genealogy—helps me flesh out the complex temporal structure of natality. Though Arendt's model of action might be read as maintaining a hierarchical opposition between public and private spheres—where one's public re-birth actualizes the "mere" potential inherent in the fact of birth—Miguel Vatter emphasizes the non-progressiveness of natality, its indexing of action to a memory of origins. He traces the genesis of the concept back to Arendt's 1929 dissertation on Augustinian love, where, he argues, she grounds human existence and consciousness in the memory of an "original" dependence on origin, or divine creation ("Natality" 139-41). Decades later, she reworked the Augustinian influence in *The Human Condition*, where "the relation of human existence to what is outside it and gives it meaning ceases to be called the 'fact' of Creation and becomes the 'fact of natality'" (Vatter, "Natality" 141). Arendt's political vision, which hinges on the existence of a plurality of singular actors, is key to this shift. In order to derive plurality from divine creation, Arendt pointedly selects the version of human beginnings in The Book of Genesis in which "'Male and female created He *them*'" (*Human* 8, emphasis in original). The triad of natality, action, and freedom is thus unequivocally rooted in sexual difference, reproduction, and the fact of birth. Creation functions in this scheme as an endlessly receding origin, the root of a "plural singularity" that the biological force of fertility perpetuates on the earth (Vatter, "Natality" 154).

Natality demands a critical genealogical perspective, an understanding of inheritance "as both bodily and historical," and as "'passed down' not only in blood or in

genes, *but also through the work or labor of generations*" (Ahmed, *Queer* 125, emphasis in original). Bringing together Ahmed's and Arendt's thinking, I conceptualize natality as the opening of a bodily accretion of origins—biological, genetic, familial, and historical—towards an unpredictable future. As I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Three, in this respect natality is conditioned by demonic grounds, a concept that emphasizes the materiality of multiple, disparate, and competing histories that form "a working system that cannot have a determined, or knowable, outcome" (McKittrick xxiv). Working with a phenomenological notion of bodies as composed of "sedimented histories" of orientations, postures, and gestures, Ahmed emphasizes the dual meaning of "inheritance": "to receive and to possess" (*Queer* 56, 126). Noting that "we *convert* what we receive into possessions" (126, my emphasis), Ahmed identifies a gap between inheritance and (social) reproduction, a space-time of conversion and contestation in which what we do with what we receive is an open question. Yet, as transatlantic studies scholars remind us, the project of "fac[ing] what is behind us" (Ahmed, *Queer* 142) can require scaled-up geographical and historical perspectives—views that bring into focus long histories, layers of ruin, and corporeal traces that linger along the routes of capital.

The visual apocalypse narratives that I consider in this project register the fantasy of a new, neoliberal capitalist order in which all resources are available for the taking amid the play of pure competition along with the anxiety that attends that fantasy: that those who become superfluous in this economic game will eventually overrun it. Such an anxiety, as I elaborate in my economic history of zombies in Chapter Two, inherits what Ian Baucom, following Giovanni Arrighi, describes as a "long twentieth century" in

which biopolitical fragmentations of "the human" enabled periods of accelerated

financialization.[15] These are phases in which, as Baucom explains, "capital seems to turn

its back entirely on the thingly world […] and revels in its pure capacity to breed money

from money—as if by a sublime trick of the imagination" (27). Baucom's *Specters of the*

Atlantic (2005) traces, in part, the "trick of the imagination" on which even the earliest

credit-based economies depended: the transmutation of particular bodies into "a type of

interest-bearing money" (61). Through an analysis of the ever-circulating bills of

exchange that facilitated and sped up trans-oceanic flows of profit, Baucom concludes

that the "Liverpool businessmen invested in the trade […] were not just selling slaves on

the far side of the Atlantic, they were lending money across the Atlantic" (61). The

fantasy of capital that reproduces itself thus relies on (trans-)national imaginaries

structured by biopolitical fragmentation: those who embody the difference against which

normative human life takes shape, can, in their failure to appear as human, be harnessed

to a relentlessly unfolding process of capitalist accumulation.

The fantasy of self-reproducing capital that animates speculation economies, then,

is an optical illusion facilitated by "acts of relegation" (Ahmed, *Queer* 31) according to

which particular bodies are made to compose the "dark background of mere givenness"

that supports public life (Arendt, *Origins* 301). Early in her analysis of the late nineteenth

and early-twentieth-century imperial period, Arendt introduces a reproductive metaphor

---

[15] Drawing on Marx's formula for capital, MCM′—where "M stands for money capital, C for commodity capital, and M′ for the more intense, freer form of money capital that follows the transformation of money into commodity and commodity into money once more"—Arrighi organizes capitalist history into cycles of accumulation punctuated by hyper-speculative transitional moments. These moments are indicated by the abridged formula, MM′ (Baucom 25; cf. Arrighi 1994). As I explore in greater detail in Chapter One, the imperial period that Arendt explores in *Origins*, which she dates from 1884 to 1914, is one such MM′ moment.

that resonates with Baucom's. Imperial expansion, she argues, was driven by the "bourgeoisie's empty desire to have money beget money as men beget men" (*Origins* 137). Here, Arendt's consistent use of the putatively universal form of "man" results in a simile that reveals the displacements underwriting the illusory autonomy of capital. The dream of endless economic expansion is grounded in an appropriation of labour as, according to Arendt's framework in *The Human Condition*, a specifically life-re-producing activity. It is an activity that, in capitalist economies propelled by exploitative "contracts," "can be channeled in such a way that the labor of some suffices for the life of all" (*Human* 88). The peculiar phrasing of Arendt's simile underscores the gendering of labour-as-reproductivity: raced and sexed bodies labour in the backgrounds of speculation economies, "fleshing out" their transnational circuits of exchange.

The principle of natality emerges out of Arendt's productively unstable formulation of extra-political life in *Origins*, the "dark background of mere givenness" exemplified by the American "Negro" (301). It thus enfolds within it a history of contact and economic exchange that expands the sites of the production of bare life beyond the camp. My Arendtian-inspired biopolitical analysis, then, prompts me to share Baucom's objection to the Eurocentric parameters that define Agamben's state of exception. Baucom observes that, for Carl Schmitt, who is one of Agamben's key interlocutors, "early occidental modernity's exemplary *space* of exception is the New World" (Baucom 187, emphasis in original). This prompts him to multiply the spaces of exception that have operated in the modern Western state: to the camp he adds "the prison; the torture room; the asylum; the riot zone; the colony, protectorate and reservation; the plantation,

the barracoon, and […] the slave ship" (188). These are the territories in which "the law

legally suspends itself" (188), and, to borrow Arendt's formulation, unleashes terror to

immobilize human beings, "hold[ing] them so tightly together that it is as though their

plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions" (*Origins* 465-66). Yet, as

McKittrick demonstrates, spaces and landscapes—even those that have been "deranged"

by practices of racial-sexual domination and its attendant terrors—are sites of

"unresolved struggle" (xxix). They are, as such, open to "respatializations" (xix). As I

explore in my reading of Kee, the stateless woman of indeterminate African origins who,

in *Children of Men* (2006), breaks into a refugee camp in order to escape the state

(Chapter Three), the "landscape of terror and transparency" is haunted by alternate

geographies (McKittrick 43). The demonic back/grounds lurking beneath speculation

economies, the labouring subjects rendered spectral by capitalist speculation, gnaw,

imperceptibly, at the frames that contain them.

Unveiling: ruins and "seeable body-scale[s]"

It is my contention that even the most ideologically conservative apocalypse

visions imperfectly foreclose the counter-histories and "cartographies of struggle" (cf.

McKittrick 2006) that they register in their anxious imagining of the ends of white

masculinity, the (Western) nation-state, and capitalism. The impossibility of completely

exorcising these "gnawing" presences derives from the counter-historical impulse that is

embedded in apocalyptic visions. Consider the biblical model of apocalypse as recorded

by John on the Greek island of Patmos. As Teresa Heffernan explains, John's vision of

"the arrival of a fully integrated community at the end of history" (101) underpins the

> interconnected Enlightenment narratives that have given rise to certain
> versions of modernity—History, the Nation, and Man—[which] continue
> to be secured by the spirit of the Christian apocalypse, a narrative that
> posits an origin and moves definitively, through a series of coherent and
> concordant events, towards an end that will make sense of all that has
> come before it. (4)

On the one hand, then, Revelation establishes the contours of the "new world" fantasies

that I critique, and, in my first chapter, I read it as an example of the "paranoid Gothic"—

as a text that assuages the anxieties of its male readership through its envisioning of the

spectacular annihilation of a sexualized feminine body, the Whore of Babylon (cf.

Carpenter 1995; Sedgwick 1985). On the other hand, John prophesies the end of Christian

persecution at the hands of Roman authorities, narrating the fall of an empire that his

addressees experienced as oppressive. In its particular historical context, Revelation

encodes within it a grammar of political resistance—one that has since been appropriated

by Indigenous, African American, and Haitian visionaries resisting white supremacy in

the New World (cf. Davis 2002; Lear 2006; James 1938; Murrell 2010).

These counter-historical mobilizations of apocalyptic prophecy recalibrate the

"unveiling" that, according to the Greek *apokalupsis*—"a revelation or unveiling of the

true order" (Heffernan 4)—catastrophe effects. In a short essay on the Paiute prophet,

Wovoka, who introduced the apocalypse-inducing Ghost Dance to Indigenous America at

the end of the nineteenth century, Mike Davis stresses the term's "precise meaning in the

Abrahamic religions," writing,

> an apocalypse is literally the revelation of the Secret History of the world as becomes possible under the terrible clarity of the Last Days. It is the alternate, despised history of the subaltern classes, the defeated peoples, the extinct cultures. I am claiming, in other words, that Wovoka offers us a neo-catastrophist epistemology for reinterpreting Western history from the standpoint of certain terminal features of the […] millennial landscape. He invites us to reopen that history from the vantage-point of an already visible future […]. (*Dead* 31)

In place of a teleological confirmation of Western progress, Wovoka conjures a post-apocalyptic future—one that is "already visible" in the form of unsustainable environmental, economic, and political practices—in which "white people [will have been] only a bad dream" (*Dead* 23). Later in this dissertation, I demonstrate that this imbrication of apocalypticism with the end of whiteness shaped the slave revolt in the French colony of Saint Domingue (Chapter Two) and inflected Frederick Douglass' vision of the end of American slavery (Chapter Three). In all of these instances, what is "unveiled" is the fragility and contingency of Euro-American civilization, which becomes a "great mirage," a "bad dream" that deranges the landscape (Davis, *Dead* 30). These post-white prophecies are intimately connected to spatial contestations: they take shape through "subaltern or alternative geographic patterns that work alongside and beyond traditional geographies and site a terrain of struggle" (McKittrick 7).

Contemporary apocalyptic visual culture registers "terrain[s] of struggle" by mobilizing what John Hillcoat, director of *The Road*, describes as a catastrophe that "we've actually already seen […] in glimpses" (*The Road*, Director's Commentary). From Alfonso Cuarón's re-envisioning of the refugee camp in *Children of Men* (Chapter Three) to Hillcoat's filming on location in decaying Pittsburgh neighbourhoods and in post-Katrina New Orleans (Chapter Four), the apocalyptic visions I consider in this

dissertation make their nightmare futures intelligible by re-staging familiar scenes and landscapes of violence. My readings of *28 Days Later* and its sequel, *28 Weeks Later*, *Children of Men*, *The Road*, and the HBO series, *The Wire*, are all organized around crucial scenes or figures that operate as "images" in the Benjaminian sense: ones that flash up "at a moment of danger" and alert us to—indeed, implicate us in—the accumulating "wreckage" of modernity (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 255, 257). Whether it is the zombie figure that, in the *28* films, reanimates a history of trans-Atlantic racial economies (Chapter Two), or the image of a pregnant, stateless black woman standing among cattle and milking machines (Chapter Three), my aim is to excavate the "sedimented histories" that compose bodies and backgrounds (Ahmed, *Queer* 56). In describing my method as "excavating" the suppressed histories encoded in demonic grounds, I am aligning myself with the critical counter-Enlightenment knowledge projects that these films and televisual narratives variously conjure and exorcise. Rather than reading apocalyptic visions as revelatory of a "truth" that stabilizes historical meaning, I propose that these texts offer spectators an occasion to dwell in the ruins—to dwell, figuratively, in metonyms for the "numberless beginnings" that make of both history and geography contested terrains (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81). As Sarah Brophy notes, the Benjaminian view of "history as a 'ruined' landscape" makes interpretation an uncertain—though nonetheless urgent—process: "the allegories we produce proliferate endlessly, without cancelling one another, leaving us in a world bereft of secure meaning but newly lucid, somehow, if still aggrieved, about the teeming multiplicity of interpretations that this view of the world in ruins makes possible" (23-24).

It is particularly important, in this interpretive context, that the maternal ethics and counter-historical knowledges to which I attend in my readings of these texts remain opaque; that they do not come to rest in or as the revelation of new ethical truths. As disturbing presences that resist idealizing framings, they elude what Heffernan describes as a "desire to unveil the truth of the past or coming age" that patriarchal apocalyptic visions manifest, an "unveiling [that] plays itself out most dramatically on the body and at the boundary of women" (131).[16] If the desire to ground stable meaning in the apocalyptic unveiling of a pure, knowable origin shapes patriarchal survivalist fantasies, then this desire is repeatedly thwarted by the spectral histories that gnaw at the visual frame without, themselves, cohering into a recognizable vision of either past or future. Following Ahmed, then, I understand "unveiling" as making visible the "shared deceptions" that support the reproduction of a violently unjust social order (*Promise* 165). In her own analysis of *Children of Men*, Ahmed draws on Georg Lukács' image of a "'veil drawn over the nature of bourgeois society,'" musing that "the key might not be so much the distinction between truth and falsity but the role of falsity in the reproduction of truth. […] The veil is not unveiled to reveal the truth; the veil is revealed, which is a revelation that must be partial and flawed" (*Promise* 166). I am arguing that the "new world" dreams of apocalyptic visual culture are structured by both manifest and latent modalities of "unveiling." Their inadvertent revelation of the veils themselves, the

---

[16] Insofar as Western apocalyptic narratives invest in this desire, they are complicit in a secular, progressive paradigm of modernity underpinned by a colonialist fixation with, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has written, "white men […] saving brown women from brown men" (296). My own consideration of the gendered and racial connotations of the discourse of unveiling complements postcolonial/transnational feminist critiques of Orientalist framings of *hijab* (cf. L. Ahmed 1992; Butler 2009; Heath 2008; Jarmakani 2008; Shohat 1991; Tarlo 2010).

"shared deceptions" that, in the trans-Atlantic context, suppress histories of exploitation and colonial violence, undermines their investment in the visual mastery of feminized bodies and terrains.

Apprehending the ethical and affective alternatives that haunt these visual texts requires "a new perceptual strategy" (Papadopoulos et al. xv) that, in Chapter Five, I posit as looking with "soft eyes." It is a way of seeing that resists white "patriarchal logic[s] of visualization," speculative gazes that map the world by drawing boundaries around embodied others and securing them in place as backgrounds (McKittrick 43). Through a reading of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), a text that I take up again in Chapter Three, McKittrick argues that the "seeable presence" of the slave woman produces her white master's "sense of place"; that "her seeable body-scale" is crucial to stabilizing white patriarchal epistemologies and desires for racial-sexual domination (40). The "landscape of terror and transparency" (43) coheres around the sexualized and feminized black body, the hyper-visible object of a gaze that arrogates the right to look and refuses that right to others.[17] Significantly, even as the raced, sexed, and gendered "bodily codes" (40) of black femininity—the exposed body captured in transparent space—orient the white patriarchal worldview, that worldview, as W.E.B. Du Bois insists, casts a veil over the land that it maps. Du Bois' first figuration of what, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he famously calls "the color line," is a "vast veil" that

---

[17] In *Black Looks*, bell hooks argues that this refusal—the "right to control the black gaze"—was essential to the objectification of slaves, who "learned to appear before whites as though they were zombies, cultivating the habit of casting the gaze downward so as not to appear uppity" (168). I will return to hooks' theorizing of a racist distribution of looking relations in Chapter Two, in which I offer a "zombie history" alongside an analysis of security states and their surveillance technologies.

separates him from white America (6). It is the violence of this veil that generates what

Du Bois describes as the "peculiar sensation" of "double-consciousness": a way of

looking that painfully gifts African Americans with "second-sight" by re-routing their

senses of self "through the revelation of the other world" (7). Moreover, Du Bois derives

the critical perspective that the veil affords—the ironic "gift" of second-sight—from

African American folklore, in which "seventh sons and children born with a veil (also

called a caul, a membrane that sometimes covers the head at birth) are thought to be able

to predict the future, and to have special insight" (Harris 257). The "landscape of terror

and transparency" (McKittrick 43) is, itself, the veil that apocalypse films inadvertently

reveal. Its violence consists in the way that it structures the New World according to

biopolitical fragmentations of life. Yet, as Du Bois' complex metaphor suggests, these

very fragmentations generate new locations—demonic grounds—from which radical

insights, new subjectivities, and unrecognizable futures emerge.

     The principle of natality allows me to explore how new ontologies and alternative

ethical frameworks emerge from demonic grounds. In the chapters that follow, I trace

such emergences through moments of visual, narrative, and ideological disturbance in the

landscapes of terror and transparency that the visual texts on which I focus, to different

degrees, re-surface. Organized by close readings of three different versions of *I Am

Legend*, my first chapter offers a critical survey of postwar British and American visions

of apocalypse, reading them as an archive of the political fantasies and anxieties that

mediated the trans-Atlantic rise of neoliberalism. By attending to the patriarchal

survivalist's perspective on ruined landscapes, I outline the gendered, racial, and

generational politics of neoliberal ideology, which is invested, I argue, in a project of representing urban ruins as open to re-mastering. Chapter Two remaps the long twentieth century and its legacy of dispossession through the figure of the zombie in *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later*, exploring how patriarchal logics of surveillance align both mothers and children with pathologized landscapes, bodies, and histories. The zombie, I suggest, figures the reanimation of suppressed histories and, as such, becomes central to the argument in my dissertation as a whole. In Chapter Three, I focus on the histories of slavery, forced migration, and sexual violence encrypted in the background of particular scenes in *Children of Men*. Reading Kee's negatively racialized maternal body as, itself, a biopolitical back/ground, I consider the material entanglement of reproductive black femininity in "new world" visions. Chapter Four extends this consideration of re-surfacing histories in order to read *The Road* against itself, positing Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as its counterpoint in the generic tradition of the American gothic. *The Road*'s unnamed boy inherits a suppressed maternal history—one organized not only around suicide, but also around an infanticidal impulse. This inheritance can be discerned, I argue, in small gestures that assume rather than deny vulnerability. My dissertation then culminates in an analysis of the HBO series, *The Wire* (2002-2008), in which I trace the makeshift intergenerational alliances that allow for perhaps fleeting, and certainly fragile, acts that tenuously remap the apocalyptic urban landscape. My Epilogue, finally, gathers these moments of resistance together in order to reflect on a mode of relationality premised on responsibility, witnessing, and learning that Roger Simon calls survivorship, and which I argue constitutes an important and viable ethical alternative to survivalism.

CHAPTER ONE ~ WHY APOCALYPSE NOW? SURVIVALISM, NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE CITY

> *Drawing closer to the crypt, he stiffened as he noticed that the iron door was*
> *slightly ajar. Oh,* no*, he thought. He broke into a run across the wet grass. If*
> *they've been at her, I'll burn down the city, he vowed. I swear to God, I'll burn it*
> *to the ground if they've touched her.*
> —Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (36)
>
> *Wisdom [...] involves the endlessness of negotiation with that which cannot be*
> *mastered, namely the city as the locus of contestability.*
> —Andrew Benjamin, "Trauma Within the Walls" (30)

In Richard Matheson's 1954 novel, *I Am Legend*, Robert Neville is the only inhabitant of plague-stricken downtown Los Angeles who moves by day. At dusk, he retreats to his fortified home where he is besieged by vampiric creatures, the bacterially reanimated bodies of neighbours and coworkers who, each night, call for him to come out and join them. Neville experiences this ritual hailing as both gendered and sexualized. Fighting off the "mindless craving of his flesh," he wills himself not to look out at the street: "In the beginning he'd made a peephole in the front window and watched them. But then the women had seen him and had started striking vile postures in order to entice him out of the house" (Matheson 19). The "lewd puppets" (19) that seduce him at night are objects of violence and, later, experimentation during the day. In what begins as a project of extermination but turns, over time, into a layman's scientific investigation into causes, symptoms, and possible cures, Neville moves systematically through the city's residential neighbourhoods in search of inert vampire bodies. In one fit of "experimental fervor," he violently pulls a woman out of bed by the wrists and, when she unconsciously digs her nails into him in protest, "drag[s] her the rest of the way by her hair" (39).

Gazing at her on the sidewalk, interested in the effects of sunlight on the vampire body, he "notice[s] her figure" (40) before carrying on with his plans. In a moment that anticipates his re-figuration as a military scientist in the film adaptations of Matheson's novel, Neville sublimates rage and desire into the ostensibly detached, calculating gaze of the scientific observer.

Female corpses, both the still and the reanimated, organize Neville's relationship to the city. He lives a life of "forced celibacy" (19), withstanding the dangerous nighttime allure of bodily contact even as Matheson's narrative registers slippages between scientific experimentation, territorial mastery, and sexual aggression. Like many of the male protagonists I discuss in this dissertation, Neville is haunted by the memory of his dead wife, whose corpse he keeps securely contained behind the iron doors of a crypt. She is an immobilized counterpoint to the sexualized, undead figures that roam the post-apocalyptic streets of LA: the "lewd puppets" that attempt to lure him out during the night and that often become bodies left sprawled on the sidewalk in front of his house in the morning. Unable to bring himself to dispose of his wife's body in the same burning pit into which he routinely throws these others—an inability that, in the narrative past, resulted in her undead return to their home (76-77)—Neville instead keeps her entombed. At one point, prompted by the thought of his wife's desecrated body, an enraged Neville imagines expanding the burning mass grave until it engulfs the entire city, razing Los Angeles so that the metropolis is re-modeled to match the stillness of his wife's corpse (Matheson 36).

Through readings of *I Am Legend* and its two most recent film adaptations—Boris

Sagal's *The Omega Man* (1971) and Francis Lawrence's *I Am Legend* (2007)—this

chapter develops a critical method for interpreting postwar apocalyptic visual culture as

an archive of the cultural, political, and economic fantasies that have facilitated the

hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.[18] Specifically, I argue that neoliberal ideologies are

invested in scenes of urban ruin—and in a project of representing those ruins as

pathologized, dangerously disorganized, and in desperate need of re-mastering, or what

economists and pundits euphemistically term "restructuring." Apocalyptic visions that

valorize a survivalist ethos encourage audiences to read urban ruins in a way that

corroborates this gendered and racialized neoliberal vision. As Neville's negotiation of

LA suggests, the decaying, unruly city is feminized terrain, a landscape that invites

reshaping—or re-colonizing—according to the spatial imperatives of survivalism:

fortification, quarantine, lockdown.[19] These spatial imperatives fragment both the city and

its population. In the apocalyptic imaginary, they frame particular bodies and spaces—

Robert Neville's "lewd puppets," for example (Matheson 19)—as threatening to undo

white masculinity and prevent the re-emergence of Western civilization. As I explore near

the end of this dissertation in a chapter on the representation of inner-city Baltimore in

---

[18] One of the assumptions informing my method is that, in Edward Said's terms, cultural products cannot and should not be read as "antiseptically quarantined from [their] worldly affiliations" (xiv). Inspired, in part, by Said's attention to the entanglement of the *idea* of empire with its political and economic reality, I am thus situating postwar Anglo-American apocalypse visions in, to borrow his formulation, the "great cultural archive […] where the intellectual and aesthetic investments" in neoliberal restructuring are made (xxi).

[19] I have specifically used the language of colonization here to indicate that my analysis is indebted to and in conversation with postcolonial feminist critics who, like Sherene Razack, interrogate "the idea that certain territories beseech and require domination" (10; cf. Loomba 1998; McClintock 1995).

HBO's *The Wire*, such "threatening" bodies and spaces are perceived as obstacles to the rise of the "robust entrepreneurial city" (Wilson 4) out of the ruins—decaying public housing and pathologized populations—attributed to the welfare state. Yet, as I argued in my Introduction, readings of the apocalyptic city as *terra nullius* are unsettled by the alternative histories, formations, and ontologies that surface in the ruins of once-modern metropolises. In this chapter, I begin to demonstrate how reproductive femininity and youth, precisely because they are the material basis of fantasies of re-beginning, threaten to disturb projects of masculine mastery.

I begin my critical survey of postwar American and British apocalypse visions with Matheson's *I Am Legend* not only because its lines of influence extend from the 1950s to the present, but also because its most recent film adaptations surface and suppress the sexualized aggression that organizes their source material.[20] As I have shown, Matheson's narrative articulates Neville's sexual frustration with scientific experimentation: "Why," he asks himself, after injecting a "soft, fleshy buttock, […] do you always experiment on women?" (Matheson 61). The filmic re-casting of Neville as a military scientist ostensibly provides an alibi for his invasive "treatments" of gendered, monstrous others, but it also inherits the patriarchal, colonial, and imperial legacies of

---

[20] Along with its three film adaptations—*The Last Man on Earth* (1964), *Omega*, and *Legend*—Matheson's novel is the acknowledged inspiration behind horror director George Romero's 1968 zombie classic, *Night of the Living Dead* (McConnell). With its generic blending of science fiction and horror conventions, *I Am Legend* has thus shaped the narrative logic and visual grammar of American apocalypse films, including not only its direct adaptations, but also the current proliferation of zombie films spawned by Romero's *Living Dead* series. I have chosen to bracket *The Last Man on Earth* in this chapter because it is mostly faithful to the book and, a rather clumsy voiceover notwithstanding, does not give us the same access to the protagonist's thoughts—and therefore to a mental battle organized along gendered lines—as Matheson's third-person narrative focalized through Neville.

Western medical science (cf. Cartwright 1995; Castaneda 2002; Jordanova 1989; McClintock 1995; Spillers 1987; Squier 2004). Along with the sexual aggression that structures Matheson's original narrative, these scientific legacies haunt the makeshift families that cohere around Neville in both *Omega* and *Legend*, threatening to reveal the anxieties about (recognizable) futurity, racial purity, and metropolitan space that are encoded in patriarchal survivalist fantasies. My reading of *Legend* and its adaptations illustrates how, from the vantage point of the white male survivalist who embodies neoliberal hegemony, women and children threaten to exceed his control even as they authorize his violence. As embodiments of the unpredictability that derives from demonic grounds, they potentially undermine the projected future that anchors the survivalist's speculations. Confronting the male protagonist with the possibility of a failure of return on his investment—where "investment" can take both economic and affective forms— women and children seemingly call out for paternal protection, or, indeed, correction.

With the introduction of atomic power—and, along with it, a realizable apocalyptic horizon—onto the postwar political scene, fictions that entwined nightmare Ends and "new world" fantasies emerged on both sides of the Atlantic (cf. Dewey 1990; Jameson 2005; Kermode 1966; Ketterer 1974; Moylan 2000; Paik 2010; Sontag 1966). The patriarchal survivalist fantasy that structures contemporary apocalyptic visions can be traced both to the American epidemiological horror sub-genre that Matheson represents and to a British strand of speculative fiction that Brian Aldiss, somewhat dismissively, has called the "cosy catastrophe" (292). Matheson's depiction of Robert Neville as a lone everyman negotiating resurgent frontier conditions draws on an American tradition of

anti-state survivalism that is bound up in histories of gender violence, dispossession, and genocide (cf. Faludi 2007; Slotkin 1973, 1992). Yet, in their emphasis on new familial formations, the later *Legend* film adaptations uneasily draw their isolated protagonists into fantasies of rebuilding civilization around the reconstituted family unit, a "cosy" solution to the problem of beginning again that exorcises alternative modes of affiliation. This blending of American and British postwar sub-genres doubly inflects the politics of social reproduction in late twentieth and early twenty-first-century "new world" fantasies. These fantasies inherit both American anxieties about miscegenation historically rooted in New World slavery and a legacy of British imperial science, which, by infantilizing racial others, "gave to politics and economics a concept of natural time as *familial*" (McClintock 38, emphasis in original; cf. Castaneda 2002; Eng 2010; Loomba 1998; Sharpe 2010; Weinbaum 2004). Both discourses construct white masculinity as the end-point of "normal" development through progressive time, while women, children, and racial others constitute "living archive[s] of the primitive archaic" that must be guided into the civilized present (McClintock 41).[21] *Omega* and *Legend* thus archive a trans-Atlantic trafficking in visions of urban apocalypse, visions that mobilize popular anxieties about racial purity, reproductive control, and generational conflict. As I explore below, neoliberal rhetoric distills racial and reproductive anxieties into a demonization of the

---

[21] Notably, in an essay on the European "image" of America written in 1954, Arendt remarks that this naturalization of historical time supports the "delusion" that the United States is younger than—a political offspring of—Europe: "the origin of this delusion of youth was in eighteenth-century ideas about 'noble savages' and the purifying influence of uncivilized nature, rather than in actual experiences of pioneerdom and colonization. Or, to put it another way, only because the new history-consciousness of the West used the metaphor of individual biological life for the existence of nations could Europeans as well as Americans delude themselves with the fantastic notion of a second youth in a new country" (*Essays* 411-12).

"nanny" state's supposed deformation of citizens, cities, and national economies (cf. Friedman 1964; Hayek 1960; von Mises 1947).

I contend that critical interpretations of the survivalist fantasies that structure contemporary apocalyptic visuality can shed light on how neoliberal projections of a new world order imbricate Butler's "frames of war" with what Marianne Hirsch has called "family frames," both of which conduct norms that serve as "alibi[s] for […] violence" (Hirsch 13; cf. Butler 2009). Neoliberal ideology draws on organizations of the visual field that frame "the human" in ways that make gendered and racialized others seem "not quite alive" and therefore vulnerable to annihilation or, alternatively, available as material resources (Butler, *Frames* 42). These frames are also entangled with a "family values" discourse that affirms patriarchal authority and seeks to secure reproductive labour in the name of generating "human capital" (Foucault, *Birth* 219). By harnessing reconstituted family formations to "new world" dreams, patriarchal survivalist fantasies highlight how both neo-imperial and familial gazes exploit the biopolitical fragmentations of humanness that neoliberalism remobilizes. In my Introduction, I argued that the spectral others produced by these fragmentations materialize in the background of the visual field. My practice of excavating the counter-histories embedded in visual texts is a way of attending to what Hirsch, following Walter Benjamin, calls their "unconscious optics" (Hirsch 10; cf. Benjamin 1969). Visions of apocalypse mobilize a masculinist, neo-imperial gaze that superimposes neoliberal ideology "as an overlay" (Hirsch 11)—a screen or veil—that shapes our perception of ruins. Yet, as Benjamin reminds us, the close-up, the cut, slow motion, and, now, acceleration allow us to apprehend "an immense and unexpected field

47

of action"—one that Benjamin, fittingly, characterizes as the "far-flung ruins and debris" of everyday spaces that have been "burst […] asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second" (236). The very specters that paranoid white masculinity generates in order to guarantee recognizable futures, then, cannot be exorcised from the visual field. Enforcing the becoming-ghostly of "others" in order to affirm his own existence, the survivalist paradoxically undoes the "seeable body-scale[s]" according to which he maps his new world (McKittrick 43).

My purpose in this chapter is to attend to the desires and anxieties that shape the patriarchal survivalist's perception of urban ruins in order to map the gendered, racial, and generational politics of neoliberal speculations. Continuing the conversation between Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault that I began in my Introduction, I demonstrate that neoliberalism invests in sites of ruin; that its rhetoric offers an economic and affective re-beginning where politics, it claims, has spectacularly imploded. I then trace the ideological sleight of hand by which neoliberalism affixes an apocalyptic horizon to the maternally-coded welfare state—projecting a catastrophe that seemingly materializes in visions of urban decay and "menacing" youth—and proposes the paternal security state as an authoritarian corrective. I go on to read this process through three incarnations of *Legend*, analyzing, in turn: the feminizing of the apocalyptic landscape; the neoliberal displacement of state-phobia; the survivalist's corporeal "hardness" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 2); the spatial mastery enacted by urban restructuring; and, finally, the post-9/11 deflection of terror that, once again mobilizing the ruined cityscape, authorizes the resurgence of the state in a security mode. I conclude this chapter by meditating on the

interrelatedness of urban space and democratic politics, thereby framing neoliberalism not only as a project to achieve "the restoration of class power" (Harvey, *Brief History* 31), but also as an effort to claim the metropolis as a financial hub—where speculators capitalize on labouring bodies—rather than as a site of political contestation.

Reading the ruins: state-phobic speculations[22]

Recently published histories of mid-century American and European political economy have discerned, in an early postwar period seemingly dominated by the "embedded liberalism" of the welfare state, the emergence of a "neoliberal project to disembed capital from [the] constraints" of state intervention in industry, the labour market, and social security (Harvey, *Brief History* 11; cf. Duménil and Lévy 2000; Judt 2010). As "in the first instance a theory of political economic practices" that articulates "human well-being" with the liberation of "individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills," neoliberalism frames state-led economic regulation as the essence of un-freedom (Harvey 2).[23] Thus, even before the "crisis of capital accumulation in the 1970s" (14), a postwar period shaped by what Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault both characterize as

---

[22] My section heading is a deliberate evocation of *The Guardian*'s joint project with the London School of Economics, "Reading the Riots," which exemplifies the ongoing entwinement of apocalyptic urban landscapes and unruly youth in neoliberal rhetoric. I briefly return to the looting and burning that took place in England in August 2011 at the beginning of my next chapter on the films *28 Days Later* (2002) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007).

[23] Harvey's pointed qualification—"in the first instance" (2)—gestures to the fact that neoliberalism cannot be adequately understood as solely an economic theory. Harvey makes an early distinction between neoliberalization as a "*utopian* project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism [and] as a *political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" (19, emphases in original). Others have taken this further, analyzing the ways that neoliberalism now shapes culture, ethics, forms of sociality and subjectivity, and everyday practices (cf. Bauman 2008; Braedley and Luxton 2010; Rose 2006; Rose and Miller 2008).

a fundamental mistrust of politics was *affectively* conducive to neoliberal logics intent on curbing state power. For Arendt, the implementation of "murderous" scientific "know-how" (*Human* 3), in the form of both the Nazi concentration camps and the American detonation of atomic weapons, prompted visions of the state as a monstrously armed entity oriented toward an apocalyptic horizon. The resultant fear of politics ignited a question that Arendt characterizes as "radical," "aggressive," and even "desperate": "Does politics still have any meaning at all?" (*Promise* 108).

Foucault, too, implicates atomic weapons in the emergence of an affective phenomenon that he calls "state-phobia," an aversion to state intervention that was constantly coupled "with fear of the atomic bomb. The state and the atomic bomb, or rather the bomb than the state, […] or the state entails the bomb, or the bomb entails and necessarily calls for the state" (Foucault, *Birth* 76). In his 1979 *Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, Foucault outlines a critique of the state structured by two mutually reinforcing assumptions: that it possesses "an intrinsic tendency to expand, an endogenous imperialism constantly pushing it to spread its surface and increase in extent, depth, and subtlety"; and that there is an "evolutionary implication between different forms of the state," a "genetic continuity" between, for example, its welfare and totalitarian incarnations (187). The atomic bomb thus presented a model for the state imagined as a relentlessly expanding, death-dealing force, and the state-as-bomb, for Foucault, became the phobic object around which early American and German neoliberal theory cohered.[24]

---

[24] Though he is careful to distinguish between American and German forms of neoliberalism, Foucault articulates similarities between the two in language that resonates with his emphasis on state-phobia. They share, he suggests, a "main doctrinal adversary, Keynes, the

Foucault's investigation of how a new theory of political economy gained traction through its mobilization of state-phobia allows me to historicize the neoliberal investment in interpreting ruins. Beginning with the divided, occupied Germany of 1948, Foucault offers readings of speeches and policy papers presented by, among others, Austrian economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, and German Economics Minister (and future Chancellor) Ludwig Erhard. In the process, Foucault demonstrates how neoliberalism marshaled state-phobic logics to reanimate political sovereignty on the model of the market. Where classical liberalism sought to carve out a space of economic freedom within a pre-existing state apparatus, neoliberalism embedded itself in the *remnants* of the German nation-state and claimed to initiate "a permanent genesis, a permanent genealogy of the state from the economic institution" (*Birth* 84). The project of reconfiguring the ruins of postwar Germany into "a state-forming commercial opening" also offered, significantly, assurance that the "institutional embryo being formed presented absolutely none of the dangers of the strong or totalitarian state" (*Birth* 86, 83). In other words, conjuring recent histories as cautionary visions, neoliberal rhetoric presented a state founded on the promise of economic freedom as a guarantee against the monstrous, "embryonic" possibilities that it projected onto the ruins of

---

common enemy," and "the same objects of repulsion, namely, the state-controlled economy, planning, and state interventionism" (*Birth* 79). A full elaboration of the complex historical connections between state-phobia and the rise of finance capital in the postwar period is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Another angle of approach to this history is to consider the influence of physics and physicists on Wall Street in the last decades of the twentieth century, which has resulted in the interdisciplinary field of "financial engineering," or "econophysics" (cf. Derman 2004; Kümmel 2011; Mantegna and Stanley 2000; McCauley 2009). The discipline of physics can be understood as a bridge between the technological innovation that produced the bomb (and the state-as-bomb) as the postwar phobic object, and the financial innovation for the sake of which neoliberal orthodoxy preaches market deregulation and non-intervention.

Germany. In a series of events that anticipates the post-9/11 American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq—where, in 2003, American diplomat Paul Bremer famously declared that the rubble generated by the military strategy of "shock and awe" was "'open for business'" (qtd. in Klein 409)—twentieth-century neoliberal ideology consolidated itself as the lens through which to read the ruins of political bodies.

While neoliberalism mobilizes state-phobia to secure an interpretation of ruined political landscapes as "commercial opening[s]" (Foucault, *Birth* 86), its implication in a "long twentieth century" of capitalist accumulation sheds light on its displacement of, rather than opposition to, state power (cf. Arrighi 1993; Baucom 2005). Interestingly, in her work on the 1884-1914 imperial period in *Origins*, Arendt posits an inversion of the relationship between capital and state power that resonates with Foucault's later analysis, in which the state exists merely to guarantee a "non-state space of economic freedom" (*Birth* 87). Describing one of the moments of accelerated financialization that I outlined in my Introduction, Arendt argues that "national instruments of violence" (*Origins* 136) functioned to mitigate the risks inherent in economies premised on speculation:

> For the first time, investment of power did not pave the way for investment of money, but export of power followed meekly in the train of exported money, since uncontrollable investments in distant countries threatened to transform large strata of society into gamblers, to change the whole capitalist economy from a system of production into a system of financial speculation, and to replace the profits of production with profits in commissions. (*Origins* 135)

Anticipating late-twentieth-century analyses of "casino capitalism" (Comaroff and Comaroff, "Millennial" 297-98; cf. Harvey 1989; Strange 1986), Arendt conceives of the imperial period in terms of "gamblers" speculating on "distant," uncertain terrain. And, in

52

a new preface to the "Imperialism" section of *Origins* written in 1967, she wonders if the

Cold War "jockey[ing] for position […] in more or less the same regions in which

European nations had ruled before" amounts to a new imperial moment (xvii-xviii).

Arendt's thoughts on imperialism and its resurgence corroborate Ian Baucom's argument

that the current geopolitical hegemony of neoliberalism is "an uncanny moment"—one

that inherits and intensifies previous hyper-speculative capitalist periods (Baucom 29).

     This neoliberal intensification is one that, from the vantage point of her reflections

on imperialism, Arendt imagines in Benjaminian terms: as a "storm" of progress piling

"wreckage upon wreckage" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257-58). Citing Cecil Rhodes'

desire to "'annex the planets if [he] could,'" Arendt writes, "the human condition and the

limitations of the globe were serious obstacles to a process that was unable to stop and to

stabilize, and could therefore only begin a series of destructive catastrophes once it had

reached these limits" (*Origins* 124, 144). Before attending to the world-threatening

experience of politics via the atomic bomb, then, Arendt notes the catastrophic

implications of the bourgeois importation of "expansionism," a concept that "has its

origin in the realm of business speculation," into the realm of politics (*Origins* 125). What

Arendt did not foresee was that the "destructive catastrophes" she projected would,

themselves, create new forums for capitalist speculation and investment: that private

enterprises would proliferate in the ruins of Iraq (cf. Klein 2007); that environmental

devastation would create "natural" sets for apocalypse films and survivalist reality shows

(cf. Havrilesky 2010); or, as I explore in Chapter Five, that crumbling American

cityscapes would become prime sites of investment for global real estate capital (cf.

Wilson 2007).

Neoliberalism thus appropriates ruins and proliferates economic re-beginnings,

mobilizing a "new dimension of temporality" (Foucault, *Birth* 86) premised on what

Francis Fukuyama famously proclaimed as "the end of history" (cf. Fukuyama 1992). As

Foucault elaborates,

> History had said no to the German state, but now the economy will allow it
> to assert itself. Continuous economic growth will take over from a
> malfunctioning history. It will thus be possible to live and accept the
> breach of history as a breach in memory, inasmuch as a new dimension of
> temporality will be established in Germany that will no longer be a
> temporality of history, but one of economic growth. (*Birth* 86)

Neoliberal capitalism invests in the ruined landscapes of history, holding out the promise

of economic growth alongside "permission to forget" the violence that led to—and that

re-surfaces in—the rubble (Foucault, *Birth* 86).

From this critical perspective, apocalyptic visual culture registers the

contradictory impulses of neoliberalism with respect to the Western nation-state: its

ideological dependence on state-phobia, on the one hand, and its practical need to install

"security mechanisms" around the "random element inherent in a population of living

beings," on the other (Foucault, *Society* 246). This contradiction manifests in a postwar

apocalyptic imaginary preoccupied by both "strong state" and "weak state" fantasies.

Visions of atomic and viral modes of destruction—disasters that increase exponentially as

they unfold—allegorize state-phobic constructions of the state-as-bomb. They picture a

relentlessly expanding force perceived as invading the private and economic realms in

which, according to neoliberal ideology, true "freedom" exists (cf. Friedman 1964;

Harvey 2005). In the immediate postwar period in the United States, fear of the state-as-bomb found expression in alien invasion films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *War of the Worlds* (1953), and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), which articulated the horror associated with the atomic bomb with the threat of communist infiltration.[25] These "strong state" imaginings also obliquely index anxieties that originate closer to home. As I explore in the next section, early postwar films were as much concerned with "private contamination" as with "public invasion" (Thomson 11); the cinematic emergence of the "gothic child" was the counterpart to the hostile alien (cf. Hanson 2004).

For now, though, let me emphasize that, coincident with the capitalist crises and "urban struggles" of the 1970s (Harvey, *Brief History* 44), apocalyptic visual culture began shifting away from picturing unfolding disasters to imagining aftermaths. In the context of widespread decolonization movements, global recession, the atrocities of Vietnam, and anxieties about urban decay, films of the later postwar period articulated "weak state" anxieties with the imagined undoing of white masculinity. From the destabilized military men in *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *First Blood* (1982), to the wounded heroes besieged by cyborgian others in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Terminator* (1984), American science fiction and action films registered fears of

---

[25] Arendt's theorization of public "horror" in the wake of the atomic bomb—an affective response that was suppressed by official American rhetoric, such as Harry Truman's evaluation of the Hiroshima mission as "the greatest thing in history" (qtd. in Cooper 100)—illuminates why alien invasion films were uniquely suited to negotiating this horror. The feeling, she writes, is "a horror of an energy than came from the universe and is supernatural in the truest sense of the word" (*Promise* 158). The destructive potential of the atomic bomb is literally otherworldly; it derives from processes and energies that are not proper to the earth and its nature, but to the universe (*Promise* 157-58).

emasculation. Then, epitomized by subsequent instalments in the *Rambo* and *Terminator*
franchises, the filmic re-valorization of hard-bodied automatons later in the 1980s and
into the 90s allegorized the resurgence of the state in a "security" mode in response to the
disastrous "softness" of the welfare state.[26]

In Britain, "weak state" anxieties found visual expression in the "folk horror" sub-
genre that emphasized rural landscapes and the resurfacing of buried pagan histories
("Home Counties Horror"; cf. Young 2010). Films such as *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971)
and *The Wicker Man* (1973), along with the BBC television series, *The Changes* (1975),
manifested fears of degeneration linked to imperial decline. At the same time, they
uneasily enacted what Jed Esty has theorized as an "anthropological turn" (2) meant to
reintegrate English culture in the wake of empire. This retroactive cultural fortification
ultimately crystallized in the British "heritage films" of the 1980s and 90s, in which
nostalgic visions of pastoral English landscapes evoked imperial greatness, evading the
devolutionary anxieties that the post-apocalyptic landscapes of folk horror both re-
surfaced and suppressed (cf. Higson 2003; Voigts-Virchow 2004; Young 2010).

---

[26] *Terminator 2* exemplifies this reclaiming of the hard, cyborgian body in its
reprogramming of the T800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger), the assassin of the first film, as a paternal
protector for the teenaged John Connor. *T2* thus displaces the technophobia of the original film
onto the T1000, an "extratechnological and *fluid* enemy" (Larson 59, emphasis in original) that
embodies popular fears about radical democracy. As Doran Larson elaborates: "In the LMM
[liquid metal man] we see a body whose parts have lost rational priority, precisely as is bewailed
of the political disorganization of the state. The complaint […] is monotonous: social engineering
in accord with New Deal/Great Society/Politically Correct agendas is overturning meritocracy,
mutilating the body politic, and replacing the hegemony of strong (i.e., white male) hearts with
bottomless (i.e., minority female) stomachs" (63). Larson's reading of "Arnold versus the T1000"
as an allegory of two different conceptions of democracy—the neoliberal utopia versus the
"potential for permanent class upheaval" (63)—illustrates my argument that, under Reagan and
Thatcher, neoliberal state-phobia was deflected onto the feminized welfare state.

From alien invaders to cyborgian infiltrators to demonic children, from cities

reduced to smoking rubble to atavistic tendencies rooted in disturbed rural landscapes,

postwar apocalypse visions are shaped by an ambivalent attitude to disaster. This

ambivalence is especially evident in the wide-angle shots of still, empty streetscapes that

proliferate in apocalyptic film and television. These shots amount to a lingering in the

aftermath of what Martha Bartter, in an exploration of Cold War-era speculative fictions,

characterizes as a horrific cleansing in which "secret salvation" mingles with "obvious

disaster" (148). Noting the biblical association of cities with sin, Bartter observes that

apocalyptic texts link the possibility of "a new, infinitely better world" to "a select group"

of survivors that has been "purified through the sacrifice of a large percentage of its

members (and perhaps by a return to primitive conditions)" (148). This recalibration of

mass destruction as a purifying force—one that initiates the becoming-ghostly of the

urban crowd and enables a return to seemingly untainted origins—shapes the patriarchal

survivalist fantasy. As Arendt reminds us, human plurality is the condition for politics (cf.

Arendt 1958). From the survivalist's state-phobic vantage point, disaster culls the human

population such that politics becomes obsolete. Mass destruction, then, ostensibly clears

the ground for unconditioned re-beginnings; or, in neoliberal terms, for "radical social

and economic engineering" (Klein 9). Neoliberal and survivalist logics thus converge in a

shared vision of the post-traumatic city as potentially masterable space, a feminized,

racialized ground secured against contingencies—secured, in short, against politics.[27]

---

[27] I will return to this argument in the concluding section of this chapter. It is inspired by Arendt's reading of Plato's political philosophy. Writing, she notes, "under the full impact of a politically decaying society," Plato sought to supplant the inherent messiness and contingency of

Menacing youth and faithless femininities: urban space as demonic ground

Neoliberalism mobilizes familial rhetoric in order to mediate the incoherence of its own theoretical framework. The need for mediation is particularly evident in the uneasy fit between neoliberalism's state-phobic ideology and its "need for a strong and if necessary coercive state that will defend the rights of private property, individual liberties, and entrepreneurial freedoms" (Harvey, *Brief History* 21). Visions of urban apocalypse and uncontrollable young people—especially young, negatively racialized men whose "family structures [are seen as] lacking firm paternal authority" (Butler, *Frames* 116; cf. Spillers 1987)—have been historically integral to managing the contradictions between neoliberal theory and practice. Beginning with the Notting Hill riots in 1958 and the riots in Harlem and Watts in the 1960s, scenes of insurgent black youth and burning cities have facilitated the neoliberal deflection of state-phobia onto welfare benefits "conceived as a maternal deformation of the state," on the one hand, and calls for the state to "act as a compensatory paternal authority in such a situation," on the other (Butler, *Frames* 115-16). Interpreted not as anti-racist demonstrations and contestations of class power, but as irrational, nihilistic violence, youth-led urban riots conjure visions of degenerate national futures springing from the "nanny" state as demonic ground. Within the logic of this interpretive framework, the need for paternal authority to re-secure private property and economic freedom against a potentially

---

the realm of human affairs with a "tyranny of truth" presided over by philosopher-kings (*Promise* 6, 12). Arendt argues that Plato turned his back on the polis out of despair over the trail and condemnation of his friend, Socrates, an event that solidified Plato's mistrust of both opinion (*doxa*) and persuasion (*peithein*), "the specifically political form of speech" (7). He thus sought to replace the flux of opinions about the "good" with the compelling force of eternal truths.

deforming generational "onslaught" (Arendt, *Human* 191) authorizes the reconsolidation of "strong" state power.

As an analysis of early neoliberal readings of youth and urban unrest in Britain, Stuart Hall and his colleagues' *Policing the Crisis* (1978) highlights the trans-Atlantic shape of this familial rhetoric—its inflection by a British-American relationship that is, itself, anxiously imagined in intergenerational terms. Focusing on the panic about mugging in England from 1972 to 1973, Hall et al. hinge their argument on a "'structure of attention' in the British media" that framed events in the United Kingdom as "*incipiently* American" (21, 26, emphasis in original). A figure of young masculinity encoded with American "connections between black unrest, inter-racial tensions, the spreading ghettoes and crime" (21), the mugger operated in British law-and-order discourse as a figure for a perceived crisis in American cities. New York City, in particular—a laboratory for neoliberal economic policy in the 1970s (Harvey, *Brief History* 44-48)—served as a screen on which to project a dystopian future vision of political crisis and urban degeneracy:

> NEW YORK CITY [:] the science fiction metropolis of the future[,] the cancer capital, a laboratory where all splendours and miseries of the new age are being tried out in experimental form […]. Professor Nathan Glazer, the sociologist, remarks: 'We're threatened with the destruction of the entire social fabric.'
>
> America is where our weather comes from—the prevailing cultural winds are carrying the same challenges and threats across the Atlantic to Europe. […] The forecast does not seem very favourable. (Brandon qtd. in Hall et al. 18)

A forerunner to the "black youth gangbangers" and "Welfare Queens" that served as Reagan's racialized civic enemies in the 1980s (Wilson 31, 32), the mugger was imagined

as a cause rather than an effect of the urban fragmentation initiated by economic restructuring. Both in the United States and across the Atlantic, this threatening figure also helped to mobilize an "authoritarian consensus" (Hall et al. viii) that promised to re-secure the nation against the disruptions posed by enemies within: the criminalized, pathologized, and racialized younger generation that was the result of a supposedly "permissive"—that is, "soft" or maternal—society (cf. Hall 1980; Mort 2010). Neoliberal ideology frames youth as "human capital" in formation (Foucault, *Birth* 219) and simultaneously mobilizes them as projection points for the threat of instability, masking the violence of economic deregulation by aligning young people with unruly spaces and generalized volatility.

The trans-Atlantic preoccupation with menacing youth found cinematic expression in the figure of the "gothic child," "uncanny progenitor of trauma, horror, pathology, and sexual secrets" (Hanson 110-11). From the American film, *The Bad Seed* (1956), to *The Innocents* (1961), the British adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), demonic children figured anxieties about reproductive controllability, feminine monstrosity, and contested national futures. Consider *Village of the Damned* (1960), which began as an American project but was relocated to England after the Catholic Legion of Decency objected to its dark portrayal of Immaculate Conception, and which combines the logic of space invasion films with what might be called "familial" horror (cf. Burman 2003). *Village* is based on John Wyndham's novel, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), which depicts a small English town in which all fertile women are

simultaneously inseminated by aliens.[28] They subsequently give birth to a telepathic collective of blond-haired, blue-eyed, and affectless children who grow at an exponential rate and can bend adults to their will. When the inhabitants of Midwich learn that the same phenomenon occurred in other parts of the world, including at least two behind the Iron Curtain, the evidence of a coordinated invasion prompts one of the protagonists to sacrifice his life in order to destroy the children. Professor Gordon Zellaby's suicide bombing both echoes and repudiates the Soviet strategy of using an atomic bomb to destroy their own affected village in its entirety. *Village*'s ultimate refusal of an atomic solution, which is faithful to Wyndham's book, encodes postwar British mistrust of ostensibly American technologies. Yet, its main premise indexes the entrenched Western association between promiscuous femininity and monstrous offspring on which, I argue, both British and American neoliberalisms drew to secure their readings of riotous youth and maternally deformed states (cf. Boucé 1988; Huet 1993).

Wyndham's novel includes an offhand reference to a scene of massacre that exemplifies the chiasmatic relationship between the apocalyptic city and desecrated female reproductive bodies. With respect to one of the Soviet counterparts to Midwich, Wyndham's narrator reports: "it was assumed that the women had been lying with devils, and they perished, as well as the Children" (189). The phrase, "lying with devils," conjures a female figure that is central to the Christian apocalyptic imaginary: the Whore of Babylon, "mother of harlots" and "habitation of devils" (*King James Bible*, Rev. 17.5, 18.2). In her analysis of The End as prophesied in the Book of Revelation, Mary Wilson

---

[28] Notably, it was to categorize Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) that Brian Aldiss coined the term "cosy catastrophe."

Carpenter considers the implications of what biblical scholars agree is an allegorical substitution: the violent destruction of the Whore of Babylon—"these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rev. 17.16)—stands in for the ruin of Rome. "Babylon" indexes both the woman "arrayed in purple and scarlet […], having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Rev. 17.4), and "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17.18). The sexualized violence that underwrites John of Patmos' vision of urban destruction haunts the ruined landscapes of apocalyptic visual culture. And though *Midwich*, along with the British tradition of folk horror, locates sexually suspect femininity and demonic offspring in rural settings, their American counterparts—films that are also preoccupied with gothic children, including *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973)—shift the emphasis on place from country to city, imagining eruptions of primordial evil in the midst of urban late modernity.

Let me develop this notion of a gendered apocalyptic landscape by returning to Matheson's *I am Legend* and its filmic adaptations. In a move that raises ethical questions about the cost of survival and projects an unfamiliar horizon of futurity, the final pages of *Legend* twist the meaning of its title. Single-mindedly caught up in his project of extermination, Neville fails to distinguish meaningfully between the reanimated dead who hail him each night and the infected but still-living beings in whom, he belatedly realizes, the bacterial plague has mutated. He thus initially fails to consider the possibility that he is already anachronistic and fights the emergence of an unrecognizable future. Ultimately, Neville capitulates to "the new people of the earth" (170), with the realization that, to

them, he is "a scourge," "an invisible specter who had left for evidence of his existence

the bloodless bodies of their loved ones" (169). The dying realization that he is

"legend"—and that "normalcy [is] a majority concept" (169)—underscores the violence

that supports the reproduction of a recognizable social order and partially destabilizes the

survivalist ethos that pervades the novel. This is, in part, Slavoj Žižek's point when he

considers each subsequent film adaptation of Matheson's novel as symptoms of "gradual

ideological regression" (*End Times* 63): as I will now discuss in more detail, both *The*

Omega Man and *I Am Legend* recalibrate the meaning of Matheson's title so that the

protagonists' "legendary" statuses appear to stem from their respective discoveries of a

cure for vampirism, along with the sacrificial gestures that put that cure into the hands of

human survivors. According to Žižek, "what gets obliterated in this change is the

authentically 'multicultural' experience rendered by the title's original meaning, the

realization that one's own tradition is no better than what appear to us as the 'eccentric'

traditions of others" (63). I agree that the film adaptations foreclose on the ironies and

insights that Matheson offers at the end of his novel. However, Žižek's critical narrative,

which posits that *Legend*'s various instantiations degenerate from a "powerful

'multicultural' insight into the contingency of our background" to embrace "religious

fundamentalism" (64), obscures the feminized terrain on which all versions of this

story—and apocalyptic storytelling in general—build their narrative logic.

　　Whether Neville is construed as the terror-inspiring last man or as the self-

sacrificing father of a renewed humanity, his legendary status mobilizes the logic of

social reproduction by pointing to witnesses who will transmit his story across

generations. In Matheson's novel, the harbinger of the "new society" (168) is Ruth, an infected survivor who later confesses that she was sent to investigate Neville. Before testing her blood, Neville, caught between paranoia and hope, reflects that "if she had come two years before, maybe even later, he might have violated her" (136). He then turns his thoughts in another direction: "if she stayed, if they had to establish a relationship, perhaps become husband and wife, have children…" (139, ellipsis in original). In this moment, the sexual violence that haunts the novel is explicitly and fleetingly sublimated in the image of a procreative couple bound by the imperatives of "reproductive futurism" (Edelman 2). Though Matheson abandons the suggested reconstitution of a human family around Neville, this construction of Ruth as potentially reproductive lingers in the text's projection of a new society that will persist long enough to have its own legends. Yet, as Neville's slippage between thoughts of sexual violence and procreation suggests, Matheson's narrative logic produces female corpses—the "lewd puppets" (19) with which I began this chapter—as Ruth's un-reproductive doubles. The women who taunt Neville with their sexualized, undead bodies represent the disorder that threatens both his survival and that of the new society: "'That's why we're killing,' [Ruth explains.] 'To survive. We can't allow the dead to exist beside the living'" (166). The "new people of the earth" (170) are engaged in a struggle that can be understood as both biopolitical and historical: they are killing in the name of their own health and survival, and this violence is, to paraphrase Marx, the midwife that will facilitate the birth of a new society (cf. Marx 1867). I am arguing, in other words, that "the new people of the earth" (170) are no less concerned with cleansing the city than Neville. The new society will

build its foundation on violently emptied out space and, presumably, transmit itself into the future through the bodies of women such as Ruth.

I contend that the "revolutionary group" (Matheson 166) that materializes at the end of *I Am Legend* treats the apocalyptic landscape as a threshold between the old society and the new. This notion of space as the conduit for an emergent reality derives from the Socratic dialogue, *Timaeus* (360 BC), in which, like Marx after him, Plato mobilizes the rhetoric of reproductivity. Faced with the need for a concept to mediate between the eternal realm of the Forms and the sensible, material world composed of their likenesses, he introduces an explicitly feminized third term: *chora*, "that in which the generation takes place" (Plato 39). In her feminist contribution to postmodern architectural theory, Elizabeth Grosz argues that *chora*, which signifies both spatial terms (location, site) and "gender-aligned terms" (mother, nurse, receptacle), constructs "a disembodied femininity as the ground for the production of a (conceptual and social) universe" (48). Having neither qualities nor substance of its own, *chora* simply receives impressions from the Forms such that "her" formlessness is the condition of possibility for the generation of a material world. In an extended metaphor of birth, Plato imagines the Forms as father, *chora* as mother, and the objective world as their offspring:

> And [we] may remark further, that if the model is to take every variety of form, then the matter in which the model is fashioned will not be duly prepared, unless it is formless, and free from the impress of any of these shapes which it is hereafter to receive from without. For if the matter were like any of the supervening forms, then whenever any opposite or entirely different nature was stamped upon its surface, it would take the impression badly, because it would intrude its own shape. […] Wherefore, the mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any way sensible things […] is an invisible and formless being which receives all things […] and is most incomprehensible. (Plato 39)

Curiously, as the abstract, dimensionless space that is anterior to the world of things to which it gives rise, *chora* must be "duly prepared" to unobtrusively receive all impressions. It must be devoid of its own potentially distorting features, "a kind of pure permeability" (Grosz 49; cf. Irigaray 1974; Kristeva 1974, 1982). As the third term in Plato's creation story, the notion of a feminized space of pure potential—a site endlessly open to the imposition of masculine forms—anticipates the function of apocalyptic space in the Christian tradition. Embodied by the desecrated Whore of Babylon, it is imagined as an intermediary landscape between creation and re-creation, violently prepared for "the arrival of a fully integrated community at the end of history" (Heffernan 101).

The salient point from this philosophical discussion for my treatment of apocalyptic visuality is that, as one of the founding conceptualizations of space in the Western philosophical tradition, Plato's gendered metaphor constructs the maternal *chora* as a source of patriarchal anxiety. That which must be "duly prepared" in order to prevent deformity is also "most incomprehensible." As Grosz elaborates, *chora* is an early model of a disembodied femininity that serves a particular function in Western philosophical frameworks: it is "made to carry the burden of what it is that men cannot explain, cannot articulate or know, that unnameable recalcitrance that men continue to represent as an abyss, as unfathomable, lacking, enigmatic, *veiled*, seductive, voracious, dangerous and disruptive but without name or place" (57, my emphasis). As a modality of space implicit in the ruins of a built environment that has been catastrophically undone and, as such, is open to reshaping, *chora* sheds light on the violent imagery surrounding the Whore of Babylon. Linking this violence to the opening chapters of Revelation—letters of

evaluation and warning written to the seven churches of Asia by the Apostle John—

Carpenter argues that, "the text may be read as an early Christian version of what

Sedgwick calls 'the Gothic paranoid'" (110). Revelation, in other words, addresses its

implicitly male readers as, in Carpenter's terms, "anticipating persecution" at the hands of

other men: "Repent," John writes, "or else I will come unto thee quickly" (Rev. 2.16).

Carpenter concludes "that the 'pleasure' invested by the interpellation of a paranoid

(male) subjectivity is the transfer of that anxiety to the body of the Other—the female

body—and the climactic gratification of spectacularizing the destruction of that body"

(112-13). If Plato's *chora* establishes a Western notion of space as feminine and maternal,

then John's representation of Babylon as sexually promiscuous and as the "habitation of

devils" draws attention to the dimension of unmasterability that haunts Plato's spatial

scheme. The visually spectacular destruction of the Whore not only assuages the anxieties

of paranoid masculine subjects. It also models the violence that seeks to exorcise what is

vilified as the *demonic* element—the (dis)organizing principle that "cannot predict the

future" (McKittrick xxiv)—from maternal ground, clearing it of the traces of past

impressions that might cause it to "intrude its own shape" (Plato 39) in the patriarchal

vision of re-beginning.

My cold, dead hands: hardness and friction in *The Omega Man*

As the material basis of regeneration, the apocalyptic landscape-as-*chora*—the

ruined terrain onto which survivalists project their Edenic dreams—encodes patriarchal

anxieties about bodily recalcitrance and historical remnants that might de-form idealized

new worlds. Remobilizing Western philosophy's gendered conception of space along with the colonial logics that attend it, neoliberal rhetoric has, since the mid-twentieth-century, cast the welfare state as a maternal impediment to the emergence of a capitalist utopia. In a rehearsal of what Anne McClintock describes, in the context of the European voyages of "discovery," as fantasies in which "the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power" (23), neoliberal culture claims and then restructures spaces that have been "duly prepared" (Plato 39)—rendered apparently formless by war, environmental devastation, or economic disinvestment and infrastructural collapse. The casting of welfare benefits as a "maternal deformation of the state" (Butler, *Frames* 115) sheds light on the perceived obstacles to a free market utopia: bodies and communities that persist, however tenuously, in the ruins and threaten to "intrude [their] own shape" (Plato 39) on an emergent world. With its mandates to fortify borders, contain and surveil pathologized populations, and manage movement, the neoliberal security state enacts a paternal "hardening" of space as a corrective to the welfare state's deforming "softness."

As a cinematic exemplar of the security state, the patriarchal survivalist sheds light on the paranoid rage—the investment in whiteness, class power, and reproductive control—that shapes neoliberal biopower. With respect to the 1970s mugging panic in London, Hall and his colleagues highlight the racist organization of the neoliberal economy of fear by pointing to "the growth of a 'defensive mentality' amongst whites […] and the image of the 'mugger' erupting out of the urban dark" (Hall et al. 21). Like Arendt's exemplary "Negro in a white community" (*Origins* 301), which I considered in

my Introduction, the mugger's "erupt[ion] out of the urban dark" is read as a "breaking

in" against which society must defend itself. In the rest of this section, I draw together

Sara Ahmed's work on affective economies with Klaus Theweleit's analysis of fascist

masculinity in order to show how white defensiveness is articulated to the paranoid rage

of a masculine subject who perceives himself as inundated by otherness. Tracing fantasies

of "hardness" across both bodies and bodies politic, I show how neoliberal logics

converge with survivalist ones in visions of the post-apocalyptic city as masterable space,

a feminized, racialized ground that can be purged of its demonic—that is, unpredictable—

dimension.

What Harvey describes as the "*utopian* project" of neoliberalization (19, emphasis

in original)—the central claim that free market capitalism facilitates human freedom—

entails, even induces, corporeal and spatial formations that approximate the "'utopia' of

the fascist warrior" (Benjamin and Rabinbach xix). As a corollary, an analysis of the

violence that organizes the latter utopia can shed light on that suppressed by the former.

Theweleit's outline of the corporeal and affective orientation of the "soldier male" (3) in

Male Fantasies (1987) illuminates the gendered logic underwriting the neoliberal turn to

the security state. Specifically, the fascist warrior's compulsive project of containment

has profound implications for the exterior of his body.[29] In order to deaden his desire, he

---

[29] In a study of more than 250 novels and memoirs written by members of the German *Freikorps* in the 1920s, Theweleit concludes that fascist perception and bodily experience are organized by a series of overlapping oppositions anchored by a masculine/feminine binary: hard/soft, formed/fluid, phallic/engulfing, machinic/liquid, high/low, and exterior/interior are hierarchical pairs in which the devalued second term must be held at bay or contained so that the properly masculine subject can materialize. In Theweleit's analysis, corporeal softness and fluidity are inextricably linked to the unconscious itself, to "the whole desiring production of the unconscious" that the soldier male has repressed (6). He writes, "inside this man is a

"is forced to turn the periphery of his body into a cage for the beast within. In so doing, he deprives it of its function as a surface for social contact. His contact surface becomes an insulated shield, and he loses the capacity to perceive the social corpus within which his insulated body moves" (22). In the soldier male, desire for belonging and touch—for merging with other bodies—is psychically transposed into the perception of oneself as "inundated" (3), as ceaselessly impinged upon from without.

The soldier male's performance of armoured corporeality is an imperative of white masculinity that also organizes the spaces and borders of Western security states. Projecting threat, or, to evoke the current geopolitical discourse, terror, onto racial others, both the survivalist and the security state harden themselves against the "swarms" bent on exploiting the "vulnerability" of the white (national) body (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 1-2). In her analysis of the rhetoric of the British National Front, Sara Ahmed emphasizes that hardness is no less emotional than the "Soft Touch Britain" that the BNF repudiates—or the state imagined, as in more mainstream neoliberal discourse, as overly emotional and maternal. "*Hardness*," Ahmed writes, "*is not the absence of emotion, but a different emotional orientation towards others*. The hard white body is shaped by its reactions: the rage against others surfaces as a body that stands apart or keeps its distance from others" (4, emphasis in original). Intriguingly, while Ahmed configures white rage as an orientation premised on apartness and distance, Theweleit's analysis highlights violent touch as the one form of legitimate contact available to the soldier male. A man whose bodily surface is simply "a cage for the beast within" necessarily "craves war, because

concentration camp," a closed off interiority in which "life-producing desire" is sealed and left to rot (6, 17).

only war allows him to achieve identity with his alien, 'primitive,' 'bestial' interior, while

at the same time avoiding being devoured by it. Or to put it another way, only war

promises to animate the dead within him" (23). Read together, Ahmed and Theweleit

suggest that rage shapes the hard white body according to alternating orientations with

respect to its others: it oscillates between a hyper-fortified "away from" and a death-

dealing "toward."

It is not coincidental, then, that the patriarchal survivalist is one who dreams of

empty—or emptied—landscapes, of screens onto which he can project his re-beginning.

The formlessness of *chora*, the ruins of Rome-as-Babylon, and the colonial "myth of the

virgin [and empty] land" (McClintock 30) are integral to the survivalist's paranoid

negotiation of urban ruins. Attending to the *Freikorps* soldiers' methods of dispersing

unruly civilian crowds, Theweleit conceptualizes gunfire as a "force of terror" that "aims

to create […] an empty square, *an empty space*" (34, emphasis in original). Assuagement

of the soldier male's anxiety is directly linked to the empty landscape generated by his

violence. The emptied square means that "the world is clean again. […] The swarthy

rabble gives way to a white totality. The man is *whole* again" (35, emphasis in original).

In contrast to the sexualized, demonic, and plague-ridden Babylon depicted in Revelation,

there is a cleansed landscape "duly prepared" (Plato 39) to receive the impress of a

utopian ideal. If this ideal is meant to bear a likeness to the patriarch who projects it, then

the becoming-ghostly of the crowd is imperative: the sight of corpses and fleeing bodies

"becomes a direct affirmation of his own reality: it is not I who am the ghost, but others—

see how they disappear… (when shots are fired)" (Theweleit 42, ellipsis in original). Yet,

71

the anxiety-assuaging emptiness that affirms the life of the white male survivor is, as

Legend's Robert Neville discovers, haunted by these spectral others.

Similarly, Boris Sagal's *The Omega Man* (1971) opens by establishing Neville's

(Charlton Heston) monopoly on movement—a monopoly on which he violently insists—

in an otherwise static urban landscape. Cruising the empty streets of downtown Los

Angeles in a red Ford convertible, Neville abandons his careless, languid movements

when he catches sight of a shadowy figure passing behind the windows of a derelict

building. As he abruptly stands up in the driver's seat and sprays the building with bullets

from a submachine gun, Neville enforces the stillness depicted in the wide-angle shots

and aerial views that visually render Matheson's post-apocalyptic world. A military

scientist saved from the ravages of germ warfare by an experimental vaccine of his own

creation, Colonel Robert Neville shares LA with "the Family," a group of black-robed,

albino mutants led by a former television news anchor, Matthias, who see themselves as

"chosen" to complete the global cleansing begun by the plague. Evoking Cold War

propaganda about Communist homogeneity and brainwashing, the Family's uniform

robes and shared albinism—a visual sameness aurally enhanced by their recitations, "The

Family is one" and "Outside the Family, there is nothing at all"—construct them as the

dystopian collective out to destroy Neville, the embodiment of rugged individualism. This

opposition corresponds to the traces of a public/private distinction embedded in the

apocalyptic cityscape. What Neville derisively describes as the Family's "nest" is in the

once-public Civic Center while, in contrast, Neville fiercely defends his hyper-fortified

home: "That's where I live. It's where I used to live. It's where I'm gonna live and not

Matthias and his family nor any other son of a bitch is gonna make me leave." Defending

his private property and seeking to master the space beyond, Neville turns the city into a

grid according to which, by day, he conducts an organized hunt for the Family's nest.

Neville secures his self through a project of extermination that aims to consolidate his

monopoly on movement, a project that deepens the already eerie urban stillness.

Like the soldier male whose "contact surface becomes an insulated shield"

(Theweleit 22), Neville's quest for bodily security entails mastering his desire for

connection and interaction—a desire that, in its opening scenes, *The Omega Man*

constructs as dangerously anachronistic. Upon leaving a movie theatre in which he has

just, yet again, watched *Woodstock* (1970)—the images of crowds and his ability to speak

lines along with the onscreen figures emphasizing his isolation—Neville experiences an

auditory hallucination of multiple phones ringing. The abrasive sound disorients him, an

effect that is exacerbated by a single overhead shot interposed between point-of-view

(POV) shots as Neville staggers first towards one payphone and then another, battling the

impulse to "answer" one of the non-existent calls. Rapidly zooming out until it seems to

originate in the upper-storey window of an off-screen building, this one obvious

disruption of the camera's identification with Neville suggests that the city itself is

observing his movements—that the suddenly animate urban landscape, standing in for

Matheson's "lewd puppets," is calling on him to stay out in the streets at dusk.[30] Like the

cinematically projected crowds of the *Woodstock* scene, the ringing phones construct the

---

[30] In my analysis of John Hillcoat's *The Road* (2009) in Chapter Four, I note a similar
shot structure that captures the Man and the Boy as they flee a scene of cannibalism. Here, the
perspective seems to originate in the attic window of an old plantation house, reinforcing the
impression that the landscape—especially the built environment—is haunted.

city as haunted, capable of possessing Neville through his anachronistic desire for contact. Nonetheless, relentless efforts to master himself and dominate his environment are precisely what keep him isolated. After being rescued from the Family by Lisa (Rosalind Cash) and Dutch—the adult leaders of a group of children who are naturally resistant, though not immune, to the plague—Neville expresses shock that he has been unaware of their existence. Lisa's explanation doubles as a reprimand that aligns Neville with his enemies: "Between the Family at night and you in the daytime shooting anything that moved, man we had to stay low." Neville's unapologetic response, "I had to stay alive," imbricates his projects of survival and extermination. He is akin to Theweleit's soldier male: "corpses piled upon corpses reveal him as victor, a man […] who remains standing when all else is crumbling" (Theweleit 19). Reducing the possibilities of contact to a systematic piling of corpses upon corpses, Neville attempts to repudiate with violence his own becoming-ghostly.

With the introduction of Lisa, the youthful Dutch (a former medical student), and the children—a group of survivors who are, significantly, bound together by dynamics of caregiving—Neville's resistance to extinction takes a decidedly biopolitical turn. He shifts from an exterminator exercising the sovereign power to *make die* to the medical/scientific project of *making live* (cf. Foucault 1976). It is a transformation that entails corporeal investments that allow Neville to "father" the post-apocalyptic generation. The family (an alternative to the Family) that coheres around Neville, Lisa, and her younger brother, Ritchie, emerges from a mixing of bodily fluids that intersects in complex ways with the film's racialized visual economy. By rendering the most obvious

symptoms of Matheson's bacterial plague in terms of albinism, *Omega Man* materializes infection as a process of whitening, and one that is particularly legible on the African American bodies of Lisa, Ritchie, and Matthias' right-hand man, Brother Zachary. Ritchie's advancing infection appears in the form of ashy skin and streaks of white hair, symptoms that are reversed when Neville injects him with a serum created from Neville's own vaccinated blood. Paradoxically, this corporeal transference registers visually as a restoration of racial difference that unsettles Brother Zachary's early description of Neville's home as a "honky paradise." Matthias' admonishment of Zachary—"Forget the old ways, brother, all your hatreds, all your pains. Forget. And remember: the Family is one"—indicates that whiteness-as-sameness is a marker of the dystopian collective that the film demonizes. Later, Neville's sexual encounter with Lisa combines with his curing of Ritchie to establish him in opposition to this enforced homogeneity. While raiding a drugstore in search of supplies shortly after the sex scene—itself a spectral presence in the film in that it dis/appears in the form of a suggestive fadeout—Lisa draws Neville's attention to and laughingly tosses aside a package of birth control pills. Not only does Neville's blood now run through Ritchie's veins, but, by highlighting the reproductive implications of the previous night, the film also suggests that Lisa may be pregnant with his child. Lisa's body is the vessel that orients Neville towards the founding of a new, mixed-race family.

However, Neville's "genuine, 160-proof old Anglo-Saxon" blood—source of the serum that he will distribute to all of the children in Lisa's care—materializes his paternal and scientific authority over this new family, doubling his claim on Lisa's body. After

Neville and Lisa have sex, she awakens and sits on the bed, naked, while Neville emerges

from Ritchie's room in a white lab coat. In my reading of *Children of Men* (Chapter

Three), I will return to a scene of encounter between vulnerable black femininity and

scientific authority, considering how what M. NourbeSe Philip formulates as

"thespacebetween / the legs" (94) of black women has been appropriated in the building

of new worlds. For now, I am specifically interested in how blood mediates the contact

between Neville and Lisa, intersecting with her potential pregnancy and conjuring

histories of trans-Atlantic anxieties about racial identity and miscegenation (cf. Ahmed

2006; Carter 2007; Eng 2010; Loomba 1998; Weinbaum 2004).

When, near the end of the film, Lisa succumbs to infection, the fact that she will

need Neville's cure positions her uneasily between "figuration[s] of the maternal body as

either a repository of racial identity or a racializing force" (Weinbaum 17). Like *Children

of Men*, *Omega* ends with a deferred transaction: Neville dies, handing the still infected—

thus visibly whitened—Lisa over to Dutch along with the serum. Projected beyond the

narrative frame, the injection that will cure Lisa and restore her pigmentation also,

perhaps paradoxically, "prepares" her as the receptacle that will regenerate Neville's

form, gifting a new generation with his Anglo-Saxon vitality. If, following the Civil War,

"the [American] legal apparatus attended to the complicated task of investing white blood

with value—rendering whiteness a rare inalienable commodity—and then arresting its

circulation in the body politic" (Weinbaum 20), *Omega* ends with a benevolent scientist

whose last gift to humanity is the circulation of what is imagined as his superior white

blood. Neville's Christ-like sacrifice—which is underscored by his posture in the final

shot of the film, as he lies slumped in a public fountain, arms outstretched—obscures his appropriation of Lisa's and the children's "cured" bodies as the basis of his legacy.

The spatial arrangement of Neville's fantasized new Eden—a projected site outside the city "where everything we do will be the first time it ever happened"—encodes the violence that attends his "gift" and portends new biopolitical fragmentations. The bloodlines of his family will not extend to the Family, whose members he describes as "vermin" and "half-dead already." His bio-scientific capacity "to make live and to let die" (Foucault, *Society* 241) underwrites Neville's vision of re-beginning, a gesture of exclusion that prompts the recently healed Ritchie to retort, "You know what, Mister? You're hostile. You just don't belong. […] There are times you scare me more than Matthias does." Though his critique is ultimately undermined when the Family murders him, Ritchie's rebuke sheds light on the continuities between Neville's original survivalist/exterminator stance and his "cosy" fantasy of reviving civilization in an untouched, ahistorical space: "Someplace nobody ever bothered with. A river nobody ever dammed, a mountain nobody ever built any bloody freeways to." Neville's withholding of health from the city's "vermin" means that the new Eden will resemble a gated community—a utopia secured against the instabilities of a deteriorating urban core.

Neville's projected re-beginning is consistent with the neoliberal restructuring of urban America that began in the 1970s and intensified in the next decades, a process that eventually prompted Mike Davis to coin the term, "Fortress LA" (*City* 221). Responding in part to the "youth insurrections" of the 1960s—the teen riots of 1960 and 61, the Watts rebellion of 1965, and "the so-called 'Hippie riots' on Sunset Strip between 1966 and

1970" (Davis, *Dead* 220)—the militarization of LA throughout the 70s and 80s can be understood as the materialization of neoliberal ideology and economic policy in the built environment. In language that resonates with Theweleit's and Ahmed's, Davis describes this process as "the programmed hardening of the urban surface in the wake of the social polarizations of the Reagan era"—a fragmentation of city space that also aims, significantly, to "'kill the crowd'" (*City* 223, 231). Urban restructuring enacts on an institutional scale what Theweleit's soldier male seeks to accomplish when he fires into a crowded square: a dispersal of the masses that amounts to a refusal of political contestation. The fragmentation of living spaces insulates the "good" neoliberal subject from "threatening" contact with others, including "'mugger[s]' erupting out of the urban dark" (Hall et al. 21). As Neville's shift from exterminator to doctor illustrates, the security offered by fortified spaces mitigates the need for direct aggression and relies, instead, on the violence of disinvestment—a withdrawal, a decision to simply "let die" (Foucault, *Society* 241).[31] In my reading of *The Road* (Chapter Four), I will be arguing that one of the manifestations of this violence is the survivalist practice of hoarding, which has its roots in the fortified bunker spaces that attended postwar visions of nuclear apocalypse. Neoliberal restructuring remodels the city according to the spatial

---

[31] See Mike Davis' *City of Quartz* (1990) and *Dead Cities* (2002) for elaborations on the neoliberal restructuring of Los Angeles, which he describes as entailing social and economic disinvestment with particular implications for negatively racialized youth: "As the political muscle of affluent homeowners continues to ensure residential segregation and the redistribution of tax resources upwards, inner-city youth have been the victims of a conscious policy of social disinvestment. The tacit expendability of black and brown youth in the 'city of the angels' can be directly measured by the steady drainage of resources—with minimum outcry from elected officials—from the programs that serve the most urgent needs" (*City* 306). David Harvey describes a similar scene in New York City during the 1970s, where the rhetoric of "fiscal discipline" and the need to create a "'good business climate'" decimated "working-class and ethnic-immigrant New York" (*Brief History* 46-47).

imperatives that the underground bunker exemplifies: isolation and lockdown come to

shape not only emergency planning but also the terrain of everyday life.

When neoliberal economic policy began to remake American cities at the

beginning of the 1970s, apocalyptic visions of urban unrest channeled generalized

anxieties about economic insecurity into an emerging social logic of competition.

Precariousness is unevenly distributed across an "enterprise society" that frames

individual subjects as types of "human capital," or sites un/worthy of investment

(Foucault, *Birth* 147, 219). Emphasizing the displacement of state intervention on which

neoliberal ideology is premised, Foucault argues that neoliberalism creates "a society

subject to the dynamic of competition," one that makes the economic "game" possible by

generating a proliferation of individual "players" on the model of the enterprise (*Birth*

147, 173). Foucault then offers an account of the particular *texture* of the enterprise

society that is induced by and conducive to neoliberalism:

> [it] is a society in which the regulatory principle should not be so much the
> exchange of commodities as the mechanisms of competition. It is these
> mechanisms that should have the greatest possible surface and depth and
> should also occupy the greatest possible volume in society. […] In other
> words, what is involved is the generalization of forms of "enterprise" by
> diffusing and multiplying them as much as possible. (147-48)

The social fabric in which Foucault's neoliberal subject is embedded is permeated by

competition, the "basic unit" of which is the enterprise; and "the more you multiply

enterprises, […] then of course the more you multiply the surfaces of friction between

each of these enterprises" (149). What Foucault describes as the dominant

phenomenological experience of neoliberal society—inundation, diffusion, friction,

fragmentation—can be correlated with the conditions to which hardness, as an embodied

orientation and spatial arrangement, responds. Neoliberalism intensifies the sense of inundation, along with the gradual erosion implied by proliferating "surfaces of friction," that prompts the survivalist desire to "'kill the crowd'" (Davis, *City* 231), to affirm one's own life by rendering others ghostly. But, as I will show, though hardness is a dominant response in apocalyptic visual culture, it is neither self-evident nor inevitable.

"Diseased little island[s]": infection and quarantine since 9/11[32]

Robert Neville is hunting a herd of deer through the streets of Manhattan in a red Ford Mustang. Establishing shots of an unused harbour and a desolate Times Square give way to an extended aerial view of Manhattan's rooftops, the faint roar of an engine barely discernible amid birdcalls and insect sounds. 2007's Robert Neville (Will Smith) is on the lookout for fresh meat, maneuvering the Mustang through grassy streets with one hand and steadying an M4 rifle with the other. "This," he asserts to his wife in a later flashback sequence, "is ground zero. This is my site." Francis Lawrence's post-9/11 adaptation of *I Am Legend* relocates the American apocalypse to the eastern seaboard, shifting the ground of Matheson's story to a site evocative of the War on Terror and its reanimated biopolitical fragmentations of humanness: the Islamophobic equation, in both popular rhetoric and official policy, between immigrants and potential terrorists; the indefinite detention of "suspicious" bodies afforded by the Patriot Act; the surveillance of activist organizations and dissenting voices in the name of "Homeland Security"; and the cultural

---

[32] I have borrowed the section heading from a line of dialogue in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002). Trying to convince the protagonist, Jim, that the Rage virus has not resulted in a global apocalypse, Sergeant Farrell reasons that England's geographical situation would have limited the outbreak: "What would you do with a diseased little island? They quarantined us."

demonization of feminists and queers, whose "softening" of the nation reputedly made it

vulnerable to the events of September 11, 2001 (cf. Butler 2004; 2009; Faludi 2007; Puar

2007). The collapse of the Twin Towers fostered a renewal of the neoliberal critique of

the "nanny state" as having exposed a significant financial centre to ruin through its

depletion of national masculinity—a depletion symbolized by the fallen towers

themselves. As Susan Faludi reports, crystallizing the gendered rhetoric of the American

press, bloggers, and politicians, including Vice President Dick Cheney, into a particularly

bald statement, "'the phallic symbol of America had been cut off […] and at its base was

a large smoldering vagina'" (mensaction.net qtd. in Faludi 11-12; cf. Butler 2004).

Here, the neoliberal family frame once again evokes ruined cityscapes to authorize

the reanimation of paternal/sovereign power. But post-9/11 visual rhetoric reveals that the

"riotous" youth to whom this power responds are produced by complex imbrications of

generational, racial, and, in Butler's terms, "civilizational" frames (*Frames* 74).[33] Shifting

away from *The Omega Man*'s negotiation of racialized urban unrest in postwar LA, the

latest version of *Legend* allegorizes the Western security state's hardening in response to

an alleged "clash of civilizations" emblematized by the altered New York City skyline

(cf. Huntington 1996). Drawing on colonial logics of development, according to which

"'entire peoples and races [are] seen as part of the childhood of the human race'"

---

[33] I borrow this notion of sovereign power as "reanimated" by neoliberal governmentality from Judith Butler. If neoliberal biopower requires the "*de*vitalization of sovereignty in its traditional sense," then this "does not foreclose the possibility that it might emerge as a reanimated anachronism within the political field unmoored from its traditional anchors" (*Precarious* 53, emphasis in original). Given my discussion, beginning in the next chapter, of youthful forms of agency that are shaped by radical nostalgia—or a tending-toward the unrealized possibilities grounded in (maternal) counter-histories—it is significant that Butler characterizes contemporary sovereignty as "animated by an aggressive nostalgia that seeks to do away with the separation of powers" (61).

(Steedman qtd. in Castaneda 20), Rosi Braidotti argues that the West's "opponent" in this perceived clash is "a more virile, youthful and masculine non-Western world, of which Islamic culture is the standard-bearer" (Braidotti 46; cf. Butler 2009; McClintock 2005; Razack 2004). Enraged, self-destructive, and seemingly incommunicative, director Lawrence's CGI-rendered monsters remobilize ideological associations between an obscure fundamentalist threat and the apocalyptically reconfigured terrain of New York City. Like the viral cure for cancer that, according to the film's brief prologue, mutated and gave rise to them, *Legend*'s monsters allegorize a fantasy gone awry: a hostile takeover of the "gateway to the new world" ("Ellis Island – History"). In a dramatic reversal of New York's status as a point of arrival for the nation's newcomers, the city-as-island exemplifies the biopolitics of outbreak: it is a space that can be militarily sealed off, enacting a hardening of the American body politic against an internal site of perceived vulnerability. Imagined in biological terms as a rapidly mutating virus—one that becomes catastrophically airborne, and is therefore transmissible via proximity—the incursion of otherness both demands and undoes rigidly fortified national borders.

Anglo-American apocalypse films of the last decade are dominated by the generic conventions of epidemiological horror and, in particular, by what Priscilla Wald categorizes as an "outbreak narrative" that "dramatizes […] the necessity and danger of human contact" (2). Putting pressure on both corporeal and national fantasies of security, epidemiological horror films exemplify how viral logic dovetails with Foucault's notion of a neoliberal society characterized by proliferating "surfaces of friction" (*Birth* 149): proximity and contact are threatening, and disease becomes, perversely, "a commodity in

the dangerously promiscuous spaces of a global economy conceived as an ecology"
(Wald 7). As I will explore in greater detail in my next chapter, the discourse of disease
emergence is structured by a temporal organization of global space according to neo-
colonial rhetorics of development. Reinforcing figurations of negatively racialized others
as youthful in relation to the "adult" or "developed" West, outbreak narratives highlight
the seeming "danger of putting the past in (geographical) proximity to the present" (Wald
7). *Legend*'s departure from the atomically mutating bacteria and germ warfare storylines
of its predecessors—a departure that invokes an undefined but presumably transnational
scientific effort and, indirectly, the corporate power of large pharmaceutical companies—
is thus consistent with contemporary anxieties about the ability of the Western nation-
state to reliably withstand global circulations of bodies, capital, and diseases.

As the inspiration for George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968),
Matheson's *Legend* anticipates intimate connections between outbreak narratives and the
post-9/11 proliferation of zombie apocalypse, or, "infectious zombie" films (Wald 257).[34]
Crystallized by Danny Boyle's reimagining of the genre in *28 Days Later* (2002)—the
focus of my next chapter—the resurgence of zombies speaks to the pervasive sense of
threat described by Foucault, and to what Jean and John Comaroff, from a later historical
vantage point, describe as "the implosion of neoliberal capitalism at the end of the
twentieth century" ("Alien-Nation" 779). Playing on the simultaneous "obsolescence and

---

[34] Likely inspired by the success of Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), a remake of
his 1978 classic, Romero recently directed *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Diary of the Dead* (2008),
and *Survival of the Dead* (2010), all of which are set in the United States. The *Resident Evil*
franchise also takes place in the United States and is based on a popular series of video games by
Capcom. Thus far, its installments are *Resident Evil* (2002), *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004),
Resident Evil: Extinction (2007), and *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (2010), with a reboot of the series,
Resident Evil: Retribution, slated for theatrical release in September 2012.

tenacity of borders" in global modernity (Wald 33), zombie apocalypse films—like epidemiological horror films more generally—link local forms of decay to the global "flows" and instabilities associated with neoliberal capitalism. Visually, they mobilize both continuities and discontinuities between their signature post-apocalyptic landscapes and the biopolitical mechanisms of the security state: fortified walls and borders, bunker-style complexes, bombed bridges, and military checkpoints. In a dystopian rendering of the structure of Foucault's neoliberal state, in which security mechanisms provide the frame within which an economic "game" plays out, apocalyptic visions of disease outbreak imagine spaces of exception contained by a framework of quarantining and surveillance mechanisms: Manhattan in *I Am Legend* (2007), England in *28 Days Later* (2002), a walled-off Scotland in *Doomsday* (2008). Such landscapes figure the biopolitical paradox of democratic sovereignty: as Susan Buck-Morss puts it in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe* (2000), the exercise of state violence occurs *in the name of* the people and is directed *at* the people (3).

The Western security state's production of what Buck-Morss, following Walter Benjamin, formulates as a "wild zone" in which "power is above the law, and thus, at least potentially, a terrain of terror" (2-3), requires an ideological deflection of "terror" so that it seems to emanate from outside the state.[35] Exceptional spaces ranging from the detainment centre at Guantanamo Bay to the Sangatte Refugee Camp, which I discuss in

---

[35] Significantly, Benjamin developed this argument in his "Critique of Violence," originally published in 1921, and the examples he offered derived from the workers' strikes in Germany in 1918-19. The political experience that informed his argument, then, was the mobilization of the *Freikorps* to suppress German class upheaval—the same situation that Theweleit addresses in his analysis of fascist masculinity. This shared context suggests conceptual links between the wild zone/terrain of terror and Theweleit's "empty square" (34), which is also a "white totality" (35).

Chapter Three, reveal that there is "something rotten […] in the law" (Benjamin qtd. in

Buck-Morss 7), and unveil the organized violence of the security state. The 2007

adaptation of *I Am Legend* visually renders this apocalyptic zone and the violence that

generates it: the military destruction of the Brooklyn Bridge, and retina scans that

instantaneously distinguish between healthy citizens and disposables. It thereby risks

undermining its own ideological sleight of hand, which projects terror onto unhuman

others. The instability of Lawrence's allegorizing of 9/11 can be linked to Neville's

shifting affective orientation. In contrast with the paranoid rage of the character as

delineated by Matheson, to which Charlton Heston adds an arrogant swagger, Will

Smith's Neville is, pointedly, terrorized. As dusk falls in the film for the first time, he

closes up his Washington Square townhouse with thick, steel window shutters and

huddles in an upstairs bathtub. An overhead shot captures him curled around his dog and

cradling his gun, inundated by the nighttime sounds of the post-apocalyptic city—a

screeching, roaring din that increases in intensity as the camera zooms in and settles on a

close-up shot of Neville's fluttering eyelid.

Smith's Neville is an uneasy assemblage of hard surfaces—his steel-enclosed

home extending his bodily hardness into space—and tearful emotionality. He cries in

terror and in sadness, and, in an important scene in which he is confronted with evidence

that others are moving and acting in the city, he becomes hysterical. When a mannequin

that he has playfully named "Fred" suddenly appears out of its usual place, Neville rages

and shouts, demanding an explanation before shooting Fred multiple times in the

stomach. Then, recalling scenes from *The Omega Man*, he ducks and swivels, the camera

assuming his perspective as he fires his gun erratically at the buildings that loom over him. In combination with Fred's uncanny appearance, Neville's dawning awareness that the infected are capable of thought and planning spurs an affective shift from fearful grief to outrage. His sudden apprehension of spectral doubles "gnawing" at his imagined monopoly on what counts as "life" generates an epistemological rupture that estranges him from the city he assumed he had mastered (Butler, *Frames* 12). Recalling the soldier male, for whom war "animate[s] the dead within him" (Theweleit 23), Neville re-stakes his claim to life with bullets in place of tears.

This shift from being terrorized to embodying terror—a transformation connected to the suddenly strange, disorienting cityscape—underscores the instability of *Legend*'s organizing metaphor: racism is a virus. Where Matheson's Neville used classical music to drown out the calls of the infected, Smith's Neville is fixated on Bob Marley's 1984 album, *Legend*. Late in the film, he is dismayed to discover that Anna, an adult survivor with a young boy in her care, has no knowledge of Marley or his music. Neville explains: "He had this idea. It was kind of a virologist's idea. He believed that you could cure racism and hate, literally, cure it, by injecting music and love into people's lives. […] 'Light up the darkness.'" In the context of the film's depiction of an unhuman assault on "ground zero," Neville's attempt to cure racism-as-hate-as-virus evokes the question that dominated American media in the immediate aftermath of 9/11: "Why do they hate us?" *Legend* can be read, then, as complicit in a reconfigured Orientalism that aligns Islam with irrational, virulent anti-Americanism and positions Americans, in turn, as innocent victims of international hate crimes. Neville's effort to "light up the darkness" amounts to

a project of diffusing pre-modern fundamentalism with the light of scientific reason. Realizing, in the film's final scenes, that his latest vaccine works, Neville's pleas of "I can save you!" fall on the deaf ears of monsters that continue to throw themselves at the plexiglass wall of his basement laboratory. His decision to hide Anna and Ethan safely away with the cure and to sacrifice himself—a decision that he accounts for as a revival of his Christian faith, his "listening" to God—secures Neville's "legend" of saving humanity and curing a hateful racism that emanates from outside the United States.

Yet, this uneasy appropriation of Bob Marley's anti-racist activism—seemingly authorized by Will Smith's portrayal of an African American Robert Neville—threatens to collapse into ideological indeterminacy at best. If the incorporation of "Fred" into a mantrap reveals that the infected are capable of rational thought, then Neville's use of a grenade to become, essentially, a suicide bomber blurs the opposition of reason versus mindless violence that supports the film's dominant, Islamophobic meaning. This destabilized opposition is a vestige of the ending that had originally been planned for *Legend*. Gesturing to the insights at the end of Matheson's novel, Lawrence's first ending depicts Neville's realization that the creatures who are throwing themselves at his glass barrier are demanding the return of his latest test subject, a heavily sedated female whom he has "cured." Reversing the cure and opening the plexiglass door—moving among unhuman others with neither weapons nor bodily protection—Neville's bowed head signifies a combination of fear and shame. His incredulous, whispered apology elicits an anguished roar from the being described in the film's credits as the "alpha male," and the next shot is composed so that Neville's blurred head remains in the foreground while, in

87

the background, a wall covered with photographs of his other test subjects—all of whom, we know from a previous scene, died due to his experimentation—comes into view.[36] Allegedly changed as a result of unfavourable responses from test audiences (cf. K 2008), the original ending recalibrates the meaning of both Neville's "listening" and the ostensibly self-destructive actions of his unhuman others. Their seemingly mindless rage—an affective orientation to which I will return in my next chapter—becomes a demand for the recognition of their losses, an acknowledgement, in Butler's terms, of their lives as grievable (*Frames* 14-15). Neville's return of the "alpha female" enacts a listening to the Other's demand for recognition rather than a listening to God. Especially when it is read against this earlier version of the ending, the revival of Christian faith that concludes the film's final cut comes into view as a *deus ex machina* that attempts to stabilize a hierarchy of the living and to justify the survival of "humanity" at the expense of its genetically modified offspring.

However, the transaction that organizes the original ending—Neville's return of the "alpha female" whose body has been the site of his scientific experimentation—highlights the gendered narrative logic that underwrites *both* versions of the film's climax. The seemingly progressive alternate ending evokes what Carole Pateman has called the "sexual contract," which (re)produces patriarchal social orders via "the exchange of obedience for protection" (31). The possibility of a post-apocalyptic world in

---

[36] In the context of *Legend*'s allegorization of Ground Zero, it is worth noting the visual resonance between this photographic display of Neville's test subjects and the walls plastered with photographs of missing New Yorkers in the weeks following September 11, 2001. This visual echo bolsters my claim that Lawrence's alternate ending invites us to grieve for the monstrous others whose lives Neville has sacrificed to science.

which human and unhuman beings coexist is reduced to the exchange of a feminine body that reconstitutes, on the one hand, the monstrous horde as a hetero-familial formation, and, on the other, the potential couple of Neville and Anna as the dyad around which human sociality might reemerge.

Moreover, the final cut, which prompted Žižek to charge the film with "religious fundamentalism" (*End Times* 64), reminds us that yet another female figure lurks in the film's narrative background, anchoring the masculinist marriage of science and Christianity that constitutes Neville's legend. Dr. Alice Krippin (Emma Thompson) developed the cure for cancer, a genetically engineered version of the measles virus, which induced the apocalypse when it began to mutate beyond the control of medical science. She is the demonic ground that gives rise to an unfaithful reproduction of human society—the woman who gives birth to a monster—that must be undone by proliferating layers of paternity. If Krippin's scientific error is the disastrous result of transnational pharmaceutical companies exceeding the control of a "weak state," then it calls for a "strong state" correction. Standing in for the biopolitical security state, the military scientist generates a cure and finds his God, sacrificing his life in order to send Anna, Ethan, and his scientific discovery to a rumoured survivors' colony in Vermont. Backed by a Godly guarantee that his cure will not have the same catastrophic effect as the pointedly named "KV," or Krippin Virus, Neville becomes a new founding father. The re-beginning of humanity in a walled community on the east coast of the United States is also a re-founding of America—one that anticipates a future rehearsal of westward expansion across the continent, with all of its attendant violence.

The politics of post-traumatic cityscapes

The Whore of Babylon who figures the city as sexualized, feminized terrain that must be mastered through apocalyptic violence has a counterpoint in Greek mythology: Athena, goddess of wisdom and protector of the polis. As a figure bound up with the founding of democracy in the ancient Greek city-state, Athena sheds light on the unpredictable political potentialities—including, for instance, *The Omega Man*'s Lisa as evocative of the 1970s Black Power movement—that visions of urban apocalypse suppress and often demonize. In a reading of Aeschylus' trilogy of Greek tragedies, the *Oresteia*, Andrew Benjamin describes the "catastrophe" that Athena induces in the relationship between the city and the gods: "the goddess Athena has, through an act which empowers the polis of Athens to become the locus of decision making, simultaneously undone both her own power and the rule of the gods" (27). This founding gesture produces democracy in opposition to transcendent loci of power and inextricably links it to the prospect of its own undoing. Athena's abdication—her "affirmation of forms of powerlessness"—means that the polis is endlessly haunted by the potential for "civil strife" or, in Benjamin's terms, that "the unaccustomed inhabits the city" (28). A translation of the Greek *to deinon*, "the unaccustomed" not only connotes fear, but also locates an unmasterable, estranged element at the heart of the polis. In this schema, the city is "the locus of contestability" (30), a common reality generated by exchanges of opinion and judgment that derive from a plurality of perspectives—and one that can never be ultimately stabilized by the compelling force of eternal or divine Truth (cf. Arendt 2005). Firmly intertwined with the space of the city, "democracy" entails ongoing

90

negotiations with, rather than a foreclosure of, the unaccustomed as "that which falls beyond the hold of prediction and calculation" (A. Benjamin 30). In sharp contrast to the Platonic vision of a city ruled by philosopher-kings who impose transcendent ideals on the population—a model grounded by the feminized, world-generating passivity of the *chora*—the polis founded by Athena calls for worldly wisdom derived from the endless negotiation of democracy's demonic grounds (cf. McKittrick 2006).

Whether it is Plato's *chora*, John of Patmos' Whore, or the soldier male's empty white square, feminized constructions of urban space register anxieties about the unpredictability of political action and the fragility of democratic political bodies. As a conceptual reclamation of the articulations among gender, race, youth, and space that have historically undergirded "geographies of domination" (McKittrick x), the notion of demonic grounds gestures to the material basis of the anxieties that such geographies suppress. As "that which falls beyond the hold of prediction and calculation" (A. Benjamin 30), the unaccustomed names a dislocating strangeness that is embodied and perpetuated in the "constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers" (Arendt, *Human* 9). This influx maintains a horizon, within the democratic city, that opens onto the possibility of justice—a horizon of difference on which apocalyptic violence seeks to foreclose, imposing an End to all spontaneous re-beginnings in order to clear the ground for the faithful reproduction of an ideal form. Andrew Benjamin's reading of the complex spatio-temporal structure of Freudian trauma, in which "future occurrences" reactivate repressed memories and trouble distinctions

between past and present, here and there, sheds light on the politics of projecting

apocalyptic violence as emanating from outside the city or nation-state:

> What matters is the possibility of understanding the city and thus the urban field as having been, in part, constituted by repression and thus by a form of systematic forgetting. Within such a set-up, future occurrences—occurrences that may be the fact of invasion or acts of terror—rework what had hitherto been repressed and therefore allow for the presence of the traumatic. And yet, what was either forgotten or repressed can never simply just return. […T]he city will always have contained that which falls beyond the work of memory. (27)

In the case of *I Am Legend* and its restaging of Manhattan's Ground Zero, "acts of terror"

spur the reworking of a "founding repression" (A. Benjamin 27)—in this case, the

constitutive vulnerability of city life—by projecting threatening difference onto "foreign"

bodies. Such repeated projections, along with the violence they authorize, seek to resolve

unmasterability through and across bodies that can apparently be known and dominated:

"seeable body-scale[s]" (McKittrick 40). Trauma is (re)produced in this interstice

between a founding repression and its reworking in "the movement to familiarity" (A.

Benjamin 31), a trajectory that Neville's cure exemplifies. The cost of restoring the alpha-

female's recognizable humanity is kidnapping, drugging, restraining, injecting, and

scrutinizing her body—forms of violence that inadvertently surface the suppression of

demonic grounds.[37]

Taking my analysis of these contradictions a step further, let me suggest that

contemporary visual renderings of the apocalyptic city can be understood, to invoke a

---

[37] In my analysis of *28 Weeks Later* (2007) in the next chapter, I elaborate on this argument in relation to the violent fate of the mother figure—a metonym for unruly urban space, especially in the context of epidemiological discourse—at the hands of both the security state and her enraged husband.

Derridean concept, as "hauntological" (*Specters* 10). Derrida's theorization of the entangled temporalities of the ghost as *revenant*, or that which arrives by returning (10), complements Andrew Benjamin's analysis of "future occurrences" that re-surface suppressed traumas (27). Reading Benjamin together with Derrida, what is forgotten never simply returns: the arrival of the specter is always "[r]epetition *and* first time"—at once a memory and a singularity that installs difference in the present and invites an altered relationship to the past (Derrida, *Specters* 10, emphasis in original). As I consider in more detail in the Epilogue to this dissertation, the hauntological structure of apocalyptic visuality opens up the possibility of critical spectatorship. Rather than assuming that the becoming-ghostly of gendered, racialized, and generational others securely encrypts them in the filmic frame, I seek, in this project, "to follow ghosts, neither to memorialize nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 57). Each of the next chapters enacts a following of ghosts—ghosts of mad, abandoned, infanticidal women, of slavery, of migrant sex workers and pathologized inner-city youth—not simply to excavate sedimented histories of trauma, but also "to allow the ghost to help [us] imagine what was lost that never even existed" (57). It is a project of attending to the unrealized ethical, affective, and political potentialities that are fleetingly unveiled in visions of the world in ruins.

CHAPTER TWO ~ (WHITE) RAGE: ZOMBIE HISTORIES IN *28 DAYS LATER* AND *28 WEEKS LATER*

> *The abuse of evil—the reification of evil—[…] blocks inquiry into a phenomenon that is taking on global significance—the rage expressed by those who believe that they are constantly and systematically being* humiliated.
> —Richard Bernstein, *The Abuse of Evil* (59, emphasis in original)

> *Finally the doctor forcibly uncovered her and held her so that I could [photograph] her face. And the sight was dreadful. That blank face with the dead eyes. The eyelids were white all around the eyes as if they had been burned with acid. It was pronounced enough to come out in the picture. There was nothing that you could say to her or get from her except by looking at her, and the sight of this wreckage was too much to endure for long.*
> —Zora Neale Hurston describes Felicia Felix-Mentor in *Tell My Horse* (206)

Midway through Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), a small group of infected Britons race through a maze of cars abandoned in a tunnel, rapidly nearing four healthy survivors who scramble to change a flat tire. Anchored close to the panicked protagonists and trained on the dimly lit far wall of the tunnel behind them, the camera captures flashes of shadow resolving into running figures. The grainy, depthless look of digital video combines with backlighting to render Boyle's creatures uniformly black and featureless—humanoid cutouts lurking in dark places.[38] Moments earlier, Jim's wry description of the tunnel as the "world's worst place to get a flat" evokes a common trope in the urban thriller genre: car trouble in a dangerous neighbourhood, the "wrong turn"

---

[38] The entirety of *28 Days* was shot on relatively low-resolution MiniDV cameras, a decision that Boyle and cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle reached for both logistical and thematic reasons. The small cameras of the MiniDV format allowed for quick setup, which was essential to capturing shots of a deserted London in the brief moments of morning stillness secured by traffic control at such sites as Picadilly Circus, Westminster Bridge, and the Docklands (Bankston). At the same time, the format's "harsh imaging characteristics" were appropriate to a script that Dod Mantle describes as "very disturbing, gritty and anarchic" (qtd. in Bankston).

94

that results in unnerving encounters across lines of racial and economic difference.[39] Along with this nod to scenes of organized mugging, the rapid movements of the infected are suggestive of rioting—a characterization introduced early in the film, when Selena informs Jim that the outbreak of infection first became visible as riots that swiftly moved from television screens to "the street outside," until "it was coming through your window." As this chapter will explore, *28 Days* and its sequel, *28 Weeks Later* (2007), draw on the optics of mugging and rioting to rework traditional representations of zombie embodiment, a shift that situates their neo-zombie horror in a lineage of dystopian visions of urban England in the postwar period. From the Notting Hill riots of 1958 to the five nights of looting and burning in August 2011, apocalyptic British cityscapes have served as, to borrow *Guardian* columnist Aditya Chakrabortty's formulation, "a kind of grand Rorschach test" for commentators from across the political spectrum (cf. Chakrabortty 2011). My argument here is that by articulating the visual grammar of rioting with zombified bodies—with what Zora Neale Hurston once described as "broken remnant[s]" (189)—the *28* films resurface histories of racial violence and economic injustice that neoliberal interpretations of "apocalyptic" cities typically suppress. Millennial zombie films thus offer an occasion to unsettle the neoliberal project of reading urban ruins as beseeching what British Prime Minister David Cameron might describe as a "muscular"

---

[39] See Steve Macek's chapter on "The Cinema of Suburban Paranoia" in *Urban Nightmares* for an elaboration of American films in the 1980s and 90s that envisioned the city "as Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah, or even Hell itself" (204). Macek focuses on *Judgment Night* (Dir. Hopkins 1993), *Falling Down* (Dir. Schumacher 1993), and *Grand Canyon* (Dir. Kasdan 1991) as films that feature "middle-class white men who find themselves lost in the wilderness/jungle of the postindustrial metropolis and are forced to fight their way out" (204).

response on the part of the state—one that is shaped by, even as it disavows, the paranoid

rage of white masculinity.[40]

Let me suggest that what I have described as the "depthless" look of digital

video—the grainy imaging with which Boyle visually renders the infected in *28 Days*—

allegorizes the impact of the Western security state's proliferating surveillance

mechanisms on negatively racialized, youthful, feminized, and otherwise "suspect"

bodies (cf. Amoore 2006; Butler 2009; Feldman 2005; Giroux 2009; Magnet 2011;

Muller 2010; Puar 2007; Pugliese 2010). Obscuring backgrounds, contextual details, and

even individual features, Boyle's low-resolution footage evokes the mode of visual

capture enacted by the CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras that play a central role in

28 Weeks. The latter manifest a risk-assessing gaze that criminalizes bodies read as "out

of place" or otherwise unpredictably mobile (cf. Coleman 2004; Feldman 2005; Lyon

2003). Like the neoliberal restructuring that I explored in Chapter One, which fragments

urban space by quarantining superfluous bodies and fortifying prosperous areas,

surveillance cameras aim to "'kill the crowd'" (Davis, *City* 231). Yet, as Boyle

demonstrates by filming his protagonist, Jim, in low resolution at a key point in *28 Days*

so that he blends in with the infected, the very technology meant to facilitate capture

creates a flattened visual field that enables imperceptible movements (cf. Papadopoulos et

al. 2008). Consider that, especially in the wake of the August 2011 riots, the figure that

consistently emerges from the inkblot of Britain's ruined streetscapes is the hoodie, a

young person whose hooded sweatshirt can be understood as both "the tribal mask of an

---

[40] In a speech on February 5, 2011, Cameron introduced the term "muscular liberalism" to describe his government's reframing of a "failed" multiculturalism ("PM's speech").

underclass" and "criminal camouflage against the ever-increasing intrusiveness of closed circuit television cameras" (Cowell). Surveillance mechanisms that visually conjure hordes of indistinct bodies also elicit strategies that imitate their own visual logic, thereby reanimating the very "menacing" figures they seek to capture; they zombify, rather than kill, the crowd.

The zombie figures the reanimated histories that disturb the visual field of apocalypse films—the undead ends that gnaw at "the landscape of terror and transparency" regenerated by contemporary surveillance technologies (McKittrick 43). Arrogating the right to look and refuse that right to others, these technologies manifest a white "patriarchal logic of visualization" (McKittrick 43): an omniscient gaze emanating from a sovereign subject who is, in turn, unexposed to counter-scrutiny.[41] As bell hooks has theorized in *Black Looks* (1992), this is a zombifying gaze. The illusion of white invisibility is premised on controlling the black gaze, so that, "reduced to the machinery of bodily physical labor, black people learned to appear before whites as though they were zombies, cultivating the habit of casting the gaze downward so as not to appear uppity" (168). The zombie, as Zora Neale Hurston observes in the epigraph to this chapter, has "dead eyes." Yet, framed by Hurston's photograph, reputed Haitian zombie Felicia Felix-Mentor is nonetheless resistant to the gaze that seeks to "get [something]

---

[41] Significantly, in his reading of the ghostly father in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Derrida attaches the power enacted through asymmetrical looking relations to the armoured body: "Even when it is raised, the visor remains, an available resource and structure, solid and stable as armor, the armor that covers the body from head to foot, the armor of which it is a part and to which it is attached. This is what distinguishes a visor from the mask with which, nevertheless, it shares this incomparable power, perhaps the supreme insignia of power: the power to see without being seen" (*Specters* 8).

from her": "the sight of this wreckage was too much to endure for long" (206).[42]

Generated and captured by the gaze that seeks to master, the zombie-as-"wreckage"—a

ruined corporeal landscape that echoes Walter Benjamin's notion of history—ultimately

evades secure interpretation, indexing, instead, the disturbing proliferation of meanings

"that this view of the world in ruins makes possible" (Brophy 24). In *28 Days*, Boyle

intensifies this disturbance by physically manifesting his affect-infection, Rage, in a

hemorrhaging of the ocular vessels that draws attention to the zombie's eyes; reanimated

and enraged, the "wreckage" looks back.

The instability of looking relations, especially in the context of visually

disseminated scenes of violence, generates intense anxiety throughout *28 Days Later*,

and, for this reason, the affective productivity of such circulation constitutes this chapter's

main theoretical and analytical point of entry. If, in the context of urban riots, figures like

the hoodie and the mugger seemingly contain proliferating violence by fixing it to "sick"

bodies,[43] then *28 Days* envisions the nightmare scenario that this ideological containment

suppresses: the apocalyptic spread of rage-as-sickness, the "new trajectory of affect"

made possible by visual circulation, or what Judith Butler formulates as "the iterable

---

[42] One of the most well-known cases of alleged zombification in Haiti, Felicia Felix-Mentor was discovered, disoriented and naked, in the Artibonite Valley in 1936. In *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985), his controversial account of the search for a poison that might explain the zombie phenomenon, ethnobotanist Wade Davis reports that Felix-Mentor had "suddenly taken ill, died, and been buried" twenty-nine years before her reappearance (213). Identified by her brother in 1936, she was taken to a hospital in Gonaives, which is where Hurston encountered her. Hurston thus opens her chapter on zombies in *Tell My Horse* (1938) with the following lines: "What is the whole truth and nothing else but the truth about zombies? I do not know, but I know that I saw the broken remnant, relic, or refuse of Felicia Felix-Mentor in a hospital yard" (189).

[43] Proclaiming his willingness to use a water cannon to restore order to England's streets in August 2011, David Cameron described "pockets of […] society that are not only broken, but frankly sick" (qtd. in Porter 2011).

structure of the frame" (*Frames* 11, 12). Boyle's articulation of Rage with a visual culture obsessed with aggression hinges on an allusion that connects his infectious zombies to Britain's pathologized, or riotous, youth. *28 Days* opens with an experimental apparatus that cites and reworks the fictional Ludovico technique featured in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Psychologists confine the straitjacketed fifteen-year-old psychopath, Alex DeLarge (Malcolm McDowell), to a chair and force his eyelids open with specula, confronting him with violent images while administering a nausea-inducing drug. What in *Clockwork* is an aversion therapy that renders Alex temporarily impotent becomes, in Boyle's hands, the origin of Rage. A chimpanzee is strapped to a gurney in the Cambridge Primate Research Centre and surrounded by a bank of television monitors displaying scenes of rioting, burning, and lynching. Imagined as a prelude to aversion therapy—"In order to cure," a scientist pleads in the film's opening minutes, "you must first understand"—the Cambridge experiment infects the chimp with representations of rage drawn from a global array of histories, an infection that becomes legible in the form of frenetic movements and bloodshot eyes. Like the Ludovico technique, the Cambridge laboratory setup is an onscreen double of the relationship between film and viewer. Even as the unstable results of both apparatuses indict biosocial engineering as a form of violence, they implicate the films themselves in a visual culture that traffics in the spectacular destruction of bodies.

In the *28* films, self-reflexivity about the viewer's susceptibility to "infection" invites an exploration of the dominant affective economy of a neoliberal culture that multiplies "surfaces of friction" (Foucault, *Birth* 149). Both films portray the imperatives

of hardness—invulnerability, militarization, and lockdown—as simultaneously responding to and participating in public circulations of terror, insecurity, humiliation, and rage. *28 Days* imagines the rapid spread of Rage, unleashed from the Cambridge lab by well-meaning animal rights activists, across the British mainland. Organized around the perspective of Jim, a bicycle courier who lies comatose in the hospital during the outbreak and wakes to an inexplicably still and silent London, the film focuses on a handful of survivors as they follow a radio signal to a military blockade at the edge of Manchester. In the process, they attempt to avoid hordes of infected fellow citizens. *28 Weeks Later*, helmed by Spanish director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo,[44] envisions a post-quarantine, American-led effort to repopulate a Security Zone on the Isle of Dogs as a first step in reclaiming the mainland. Establishing overlaps between survivalist fantasies and the security state, the *28* films significantly shift the locus of horror from the infected to the violence of patriarchal, militarized re-beginnings. Epitomized in the first film by the looming threat of sexual violence and, in its sequel, by the compulsive destruction of a maternal body, this violence is, I argue, insistently gendered. At the same time, by situating Boyle's enraged infected in a history of cinematic representations of the zombie—a figure embodying lost agency with roots in West African and Haitian folklore—I demonstrate how Rage inherits a "long twentieth century" of capitalist exploitation and racial violence (cf. Arrighi 1994; Baucom 2005).

In the next section, then, I outline a zombie history of capitalist modernity and argue that Boyle's neo-zombies figure the "waste products," the swelling global

---

[44] Unavailable to direct *28 Weeks* due to his commitment to another film project, Boyle served as Executive Producer instead.

underclass generated by neoliberal capitalism (Bauman, *Liquid* 29). I then read the *28* films through the family formations that they mobilize and unravel: the twisted version of the "cosy" answer to catastrophe as envisioned by Boyle, in which a rogue British army Major actively seeks to secure women's bodies in order to regenerate civilization; and the nuclear family that, in *28 Weeks*, is haunted by an act of paternal abandonment. I argue that Boyle's militarized father figure, Major Henry West, exemplifies the neoliberal subject who projects rage and terror onto monstrous others while disavowing his own. Diffusing Major West's paternal hardness across the apparatus of a security state, Fresnadillo's sequel then articulates conflicting "readings" of the apocalyptic landscape with familial looking relations: the father who seeks to blind his family to his humiliation; the mother whose incredulous stare haunts her husband; and the children who inherit their mother's look. Aligned with demonic grounds that take shape as both a monstrous mother and unmastered city space, Fresnadillo's hybrid and unruly youth reanimate the counter-histories that both father figures and security states seek to suppress.

The quick and the dead: zombies and the long twentieth century

In the same year that the theatrical release of *28 Days Later* revitalized the Western zombie film, South African anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff began an essay on labour and postcoloniality with the following question: "What might zombies have to do with the implosion of neoliberal capitalism at the end of the twentieth century?" ("Alien-Nation" 779). Connecting a preoccupation with the figure of the zombie to the rise of "occult economies" (786) in rural, post-apartheid South Africa, the

Comaroffs read both phenomena as efforts to resolve the "*experiential* contradiction" arising from rapid economic restructuring: the generation of incredible wealth that is, apparently, autonomous from labour and production (782, emphasis in original). As financial innovation and transnational coordination increasingly "disembed capital from [local, material] constraints" (Harvey, *Brief History* 11), proliferating pyramid schemes and "prosperity gospels" attempt to harness some of this perceived "money magic" (Comaroff and Comaroff 785). In this context, "reserve armies of spectral workers" (784) are imagined as supporting the accumulation of supernatural amounts of wealth even as jobs and livelihoods continue to mysteriously disappear. Zombie tales reveal anxieties about the (im)possibilities of agency in the context of economies driven by "unseen forces" (781). The Comaroffs trace these narratives across historically earlier conjunctions of local worlds and globalizing forces, from myths of zombies toiling in the mines of South Africa in the late nineteenth century to a labour force of undead children in West Cameroon during the Great War (794-95). The zombie's re-emergence in the popular culture of postcolonial South Africa, then, attests to ongoing histories of imperialism, economic violence, and alienated labour.[45]

Ian Baucom's question about the origins of trans-Atlantic modernity allows me to resituate the Comaroffs' inquiry into the zombie as figuring the exploitative power relations still unfolding from European contact: "How did the trans-Atlantic slave trade

---

[45] Zombie narratives thus register "the invisible predations that seem to congeal beneath the banal surfaces of new forms of wealth" in the context of both contemporary globalization and its colonial and imperial antecedents (Comaroffs 795). In a brief discussion of slave narratives in my next chapter, I point to Olaudah Equiano's impression of cannibalistic "white men with horrible looks" (70), the crew of the first slave ship he encounters, as another instance of lending substance to what the Comaroffs' formulate as "invisible predations" (795).

license the global spread of finance capital?" (59). Rooted in the belief systems of West

African Vodou[46] and conjured to account for the fractures induced in relationships among

kinship networks, work, and place by global/colonial pressures, the zombie migrated to

the New World via the slave trade. In other words, it is not only a recurring symptom of

the "experiential contradictions" wrought by a long history of global capital on the

African continent. But, with respect to its emergence in American film, the zombie is also

an effect of forced trans-Atlantic migrations and the associated violence of the Caribbean

plantation system. Preserved and recombined in the Maroon communities that controlled

the mountains of Saint Domingue—communities of runaway slaves that modeled

themselves on West African secret societies—Vodou provided both the practical

knowledge and the spiritual grammar of black resistance in the French colony. From the

mass poisonings of cattle, dogs, and white plantation owners in the mid-eighteenth

century to the ceremony at Bois Caïman that spurred the revolution on August 14, 1791,

Vodou was integral to the birth of Haiti (cf. W. Davis 1985; Dayan 1995; Fick 1990;

James 1938; Murrell 2010). The zombie, a soulless body under the command of a *Bokor*

(a sorcerer or priest), thus derives from a religion historically entangled in master/slave

relations, on the one hand, and one that quickened the uprising that constitutes what

Patricia Chu calls "the back story of modern Western subjectivity" on the other (9). If the

obverse of the modern Western subject—the politically and economically emancipated

European citizen—was the enslaved New World labourer, then this subject "was born

---

[46] As Nathaniel Samuel Murrell notes in his *Afro-Caribbean Religions* (2010), "until recently, *voodoo* was an accepted spelling of the word, but Haitians and modern scholars acknowledge *Vodou* as the historically correct term for the religion; it is preferable because it is seen as phonetically more correct than many of the other terms" (58-59, emphases in original).

economically, politically, culturally and metaphysically twice in the Caribbean": first as a white entrepreneur and then as "a black, anti-colonial nationalist" (Chu 9-10). This re-birth points to a counter-history of Enlightenment modernity—one in which the Haitian Revolution "inaugurat[es] postcoloniality" (Chu 11; cf. Buck-Morss 2000; James 1938). And as the Haitian zombie—"dragged from the vault […] and set to toiling ceaselessly in the banana fields, working like a beast" (Hurston 190)—migrated from Vodou ceremonies to American cinemas, the undead encrypted histories of colonial violence in twentieth and twenty-first-century popular culture.

The first American zombie film capitalized on the sensational news reports and travel narratives that proliferated in the United States during its occupation of Haiti. This sensationalism is exemplified by William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1928), the Foreword to which imagines Haiti's layered historical landscape dissolving into darkness permeated by "the steady boom of Voodoo drums" (4). Seabrook introduced Haitian sorcery to mainstream America in a chapter entitled "…Dead men working in the cane fields," in which he describes the clumsy, dead-eyed figures that went on to make their first filmic appearance in Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932). Featuring Bela Lugosi as the non-Haitian zombie master, Murder Legendre, the film unfolds its melodrama against the backdrop of non-white Haitian zombies working Legendre's sugar plantation. As Chu points out, though, "the notable zombies of the film are white" (4): Madeline, zombified by Legendre at the behest of Beaumont, a wealthy planter seeking to steal her from her fiancé, and then Beaumont himself when he turns against the zombie master. Chu reads the film in light of modernist concerns with the tensions inherent in the

twentieth century's liberal-democratic regimes; their reduction of individual political agency to the capacity to consent to preexisting structures of power. "Halperin's film," she writes, "visually renders these structural politics as the fear of becoming nothing but a body endlessly consenting to its own lack of autonomy" (29). *White Zombie* registers anxieties about mass democracy's undoing of white masculine subjectivity—a danger exemplified by the white planter Beaumont's own zombification. The film tentatively resolves these anxieties, Chu argues, by reframing the question of consent in terms of heterosexual union. Freed from her zombie state by the eventual death of Legendre, Madeline marries her fiancé, Neil, in the film's denouement. Drawing on nineteenth-century American women's rights discourses that discerned, in the issue of marital consent, contradictions in the social contract more broadly, Chu posits that, "Madeline as zombie raises the specter of unfree consent to forms; Madeline as bride recuperates modern consent and citizenship" (34). *White Zombie*, the inaugural American zombie film, models its compromised forms of agency on a figure derived from the "globalized master-slave economy" that underwrote Enlightenment notions of political tyranny, freedom, and citizenship (10).

George Romero's redefinition of the zombie horror genre in the late 1960s and 70s simultaneously departs from and remobilizes the zombie's Haitian history. Confirming Chu's insight regarding the first generation of American zombie films, namely that the zombie is "not simply a slave […] forced to act against his will," but one whose "will has been changed" (27), Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) refigures the zombie as instinct-driven, or, more specifically, as hungry for human flesh, brains,

and entrails. This shift from exploited labourer to pathologized consumer eliminates the

zombie master, the early American film version of the Haitian *Bokor*.[47] No longer

anchored to a centralized figure of power, Romero's zombies are an apocalyptic force that

is seemingly independent of the master/slave dynamic central to Haitian folklore. Yet, by

reorienting the zombie towards an explicitly apocalyptic horizon, Romero's films recall

the revolutionary, counter-historical spirit of Vodou. Like the Paiute prophet, Wovoka,

whose apocalyptic visions conjured a future for the Americas in which "White people

[will have been] only a bad dream" (M. Davis, *Dead* 23), François Macandal, the Maroon

spiritual leader who spearheaded the mass poisonings on Saint Domingue, projected a

post-white future for the island (cf. W. Davis 1985; Fick 1990).[48] Significantly, in the

final scene of *Night of the Living Dead* a posse of armed men intent on restoring order

mistake the African American protagonist, Ben, for a zombie and shoot him in the head.

In a series of stills that then serve as the background for the film's credits, Ben is dumped

onto a pile of bodies and set ablaze. It is a scene that conjures the violent atmosphere of

early-Reconstruction America—which, in my fourth chapter, I follow Toni Morrison in

describing as pervaded by the stench of "fire-cooked blood" (*Beloved* 172)—in which

---

[47] The critique of postwar American consumer culture implicit in Romero's ravenous zombies comes to the fore in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Night*'s long-awaited sequel, in which zombies mindlessly congregate around a suburban shopping mall. They are, in Kim Paffenroth's description, devouring "an America of enormous shopping malls, a fuel shortage, [and] grinding urban poverty" (46).

[48] Though Romero initially distanced his "ghouls" from Halperin's zombie labourers and their Caribbean setting, he nonetheless saw *Night of the Living Dead*, like its inspiration, *I Am Legend*, as a film "about revolution" (McConnell). But where *Legend* begins when recognizable humanity has all but vanished, Romero's *Dead* series "start[s] at the beginning" of the revolution (McConnell), vividly rendering the undoing of the modern Western subject in trademark shots of spilling entrails and cannibalistic consumption, including infamous shots of a young girl eating her father's flesh.

armed white men retake the countryside, destroying blackness and monstrosity together in a single bonfire. Romero's film thus envisions what, in my previous chapter, I argued is typical of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century apocalypse films more generally: white masculinity purports to return the dead to their proper ghostliness—"see how they disappear … (when shots are fired)" (Theweleit 42, ellipsis in original). However, like other bodily destructions that I analyze, Ben's assassination unveils the histories of racial violence embedded in the literal uprising that the film stages.[49]

What most distinguishes early twenty-first-century zombies—the focus of my discussion in this chapter—from their classic counterparts is the range of movement afforded to the millennials. This mobility forms a sharp contrast with, while at the same time intensifying, the automatism of their forbears. For Chu, the staring, "stiff-legged" mill workers of *White Zombie* reference both "the mechanization of the body under regimes of modern labor" and "the earlier regime of slavery" (21, 25). Boyle's zombies reverse this affective and corporeal dullness, but, in so doing, they exemplify what Sianne Ngai calls "animatedness," an affective orientation in which "the seemingly neutral state of 'being moved' becomes twisted into the image of the overemotional racialized subject, abetting his or her construction as unusually receptive to external control" (91). Two aspects of Ngai's analysis are pertinent to my exploration of millennial zombies. First, animatedness "oddly synthesizes two kinds of automatism whose meanings run in

---

[49] Morrison's *Beloved* also invokes the figure of the zombie to metaphorize an uprising against racial violence and economic exploitation. When Paul D and his fellow prisoners collectively escape from a "grave calling itself quarters" in the midst of a southern storm, rising up from the mud of their flooded cells, Morrison likens them to "the unshriven dead, zombies on the loose" (99, 103).

opposite directions": both the mechanistic, restrictive corporeal routines of the modern worker and the spontaneity associated with Surrealist uses of the term (100). In other words, the affect simultaneously encodes a racializing subjection to power and a bodily "elasticity" that exceeds external manipulations (100). Second, through close readings of scenes from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Ngai aligns the spontaneous excesses of corporeal animation with contagion: premised in the first place on "hyperreceptiveness" to external stimuli, animation is "easily transferred through the animated body to its spectators" (96, 98). As imagined by Boyle, Rage is a modality of animatedness in that it is both legible as corporeal plasticity—a wrenching, awkward, and intense form of pliancy—and highly transmissible.[50]

The *28* films' enraged zombies lend a temporal dimension to animatedness—a re-animatedness, perhaps—in that what becomes legible in, and transmissible through, their frenetic movements are the histories of racial violence, bodily appropriation, and biopolitical fragmentation on which neoliberalism capitalizes. Boyle's zombies belong to a mode of abjection on the near side of the life/death divide; that is, they are not walking corpses per se, but bodies that compulsively expel in order to live (cf. Kristeva 1982). Spreading infection through the expulsion of such fluids as blood, vomit, and saliva, they are animated by/as a failure to consume. Where their filmic predecessors—the exploited

---

[50] Reading the infected in the context of the tension between embodied constraint and spontaneous excess that structures animatedness, it is notable that, as Boyle explains in a special feature on the DVD of *28 Weeks*, his neo-zombies are all performed by movement artists. In order to achieve the desired frenetic look, their collective movements in both films were, in fact, highly choreographed.

labourer and the pathologized consumer—figure compromised agency as repetitive, streamlined movements, millennial zombies reenact their violent expulsion from a late capitalist system that is generating "human waste" on a massive, even "toxic," scale (cf. Bauman 2004, 2007).

"The end is extremely fucking nigh"[51]**: theorizing rage**

An important critical premise of this analysis is that the patriarchal survivalist fantasy is generated by and, in turn, intensifies the dominant affective economy of neoliberalism. Terror, insecurity, and rage can be understood as affective orientations towards unsettling disjunctions between the local and the global—or between national subjects and transnational corporations, terrorist organizations, and global movements of capital (Bauman 2004, 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 2002; Massumi 1993; Mbembe 2003). Locally experienced as labour redundancies and derelict factories, neoliberal economic restructuring distributes disposability across a global landscape organized into "developed" and "developing" worlds. In other words, the texture of Foucault's "enterprise society" intersects with and recombines a long history of biopolitical fragmentations of the human. The result is that proliferating insecurity takes shape according to a racial logic in which, as Zygmunt Bauman claims, refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants "are uniquely suitable for the role of the effigy to be burnt as the spectre of 'global forces'" (*Wasted* 66). Bauman then elaborates, "seeking in vain for other, more adequate outlets, fears and anxieties *rub off* on targets close to hand and re-

---

[51] Graffiti located on the interior wall of a London church in *28 Days Later*.

emerge as popular resentment and fear of the 'aliens nearby'" (66, my emphasis). His language resonating with Sara Ahmed's work on emotions that "stick" to negatively racialized bodies (*Cultural Politics* 11), Bauman's analysis suggests that the dis-ease generated by neoliberalism dovetails, in the West, with the ideological reproduction of the white nation. Although, on one level, apocalyptic visuality seems to collude with neoliberalism in projecting the causes of decay as emanating from outside the Western nation-state, epidemiological horror stories are structured by a failure to fix disease to any particular body or set of bodies. Trafficking between affect and infection, Boyle's apocalyptic vision simultaneously mobilizes the "stickiness" of racializing discourses and the slipperiness of what Priscilla Wald calls the "outbreak narrative" (cf. Ahmed 2004; Wald 2008). Even as the *28* films deploy a visual grammar that aligns infection with racialized otherness and savagery, they displace horror onto the paranoid rage that, as I argue throughout this dissertation, organizes militarized white masculinity. Lurking behind a potentially conservative articulation of rage with contagion, then, is an interrogation of white rage—of the "body that stands apart" and wards off the impinging world (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 4).

As "epidemiological horror" films (Wald 160), *28 Days Later* and its sequel are especially suited to theorizing the material continuities that disturb Western fantasies of containment, fortification, and "ontological hygiene" (Graham 11).[52] In *Contagious*

---

[52] Elaine Graham uses the concept of "ontological hygiene" to describe the cultural and socio-political mechanisms that maintain the apparently discrete categories—separating, for example, human, nature, and machine (11)—underpinning "Western modernity's classifications of power and difference" (203). Eve Sedgwick, too, refers to "Western culture's 'hygienic imperative'" in her discussion of the operation of the category of "deviance" in AIDS discourse

(2008), an analysis of how microbes and viruses materialize human circulation in a "shrinking world" (2), Wald argues that epidemics have been historically integral to the formation of such biopolitical concepts as "public health" and "population" and have played a crucial role in consolidating the modern state (17-18). Let me suggest, in turn, that transformations of the state under neoliberalism reshape the national response to disease (cf. Papadopoulos et al. 2008). Reading the *28* films as allegorizing the collapse of the social state and its uncanny return in the form of the security state, I argue that the films highlight strategies of bio-segregation and quarantine as central to the security state's approach to unruly publics. Both films mobilize the outbreak narrative— organized, in Wald's terms, around "primordial" origins, the healthy carrier, and the "superspreader"—to suggest that fear of the infected and contagious outsider coagulates around sites of perceived internal vulnerability, including urban spaces defined by the intermingling of citizens and strangers.[53] As highlighted in the opening scenes of *28 Days Later*, cities are places where citizens might become insurgent: repeated shots of police in riot gear—emblems of what, in Chapter One, I described as a "wild zone" of power (Buck-Morss 2)—punctuate the sequence of violent images that the chimpanzee in the Cambridge laboratory consumes. As a long shot establishing the experimental apparatus tracks left, another screen slides into the foreground of the visual field, this one displaying

(qtd. in Brophy 5). The "hygienic imperative" also dovetails with what Nikolas Rose has described as "biological citizenship," a set of "citizenship projects" premised on the "biological responsibilities […] embodied in contemporary norms of health and practices of health education" (*The Politics of Life Itself* 132, 133).

[53] It is important to acknowledge Wald's indebtedness to earlier feminist contributions to the social study of medicine and health, especially Paula Treichler's *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic* (1999) and Cindy Patton's *Inventing AIDS* (1990) and *Globalizing AIDS* (2002), all of which consider how AIDS discourses pathologize particular bodies and terrains, which, in turn, support fantasies of "normal" bodies—and the West more generally—as immune to disease.

a grainy black-and-white image from the primate lab's security camera as it captures the

arrival of masked animal rights activists. Boyle's screen-within-screen technique

articulates global rioting with local protest, implicating both in the outbreak of infection.

Yet, the techno-scientific source of Rage is an apparatus, along with its inferred

institutional and corporate backers, that distills violent imagery into a highly transmissible

affect. This element of the origin story undermines the film's apparent pathologizing of

civil unrest and disturbs the racialized space-time of the outbreak narrative. The news

footage that opens *28 Days* suggests that the Cambridge experiment is bound up in

ideologies of progress that de-contextualize aggression and construct it as atavistic.

Associations between Rage, an infection of the blood, and HIV/AIDS, "the signal

pandemic of the global here and now," underscore this point (Comaroff 197). The

outbreak in *28 Days Later* resonates with what Jean Comaroff conceptualizes as the

spatio-temporal disruption wrought by HIV/AIDS—its anachronistic force in relation to

Western narratives of reason and control over, among other things, death:

> In retrospect, the timing of its onset was uncanny: the disease appeared
> like a memento mori in a world high on the hype of Reaganomics,
> deregulation, and the end of the Cold War. […] AIDS also casts a
> premodern pall over the emancipated pleasures, the amoral, free-wheeling
> desires that animated advanced consumer societies. And, as is often the
> case when Western self-images of reasoned control face homegrown
> disruption, the disease was deflected onto Africa as primal other, Africa as
> an icon of dangerous desire, Africa as the projection of a self never fully
> tamable. (Comaroff 197)

28 Days configures riotous violence as an eruption of savagery that disturbs the fantasies

of linear temporality on which the "developed" world is based. A visual scheme that

draws on representations of HIV that are, themselves, anachronistic intensifies this

destabilization of progress narratives. The chimpanzee evokes a now decades-old

preoccupation with the question of viral mutation and species jumping, alluding, as it

does, to theoretical connections between SIV (simian immunodeficiency viruses) and

HIV. In remobilizing anxieties that circulated in the early days of the epidemic—

including a hysterical visual emphasis on contaminated blood—*28 Days* plays on

Western fears of degeneration that crystallize in what Wald calls "thirdworldification."

Referring to formulations of disease outbreaks as emerging in the Third World and

"leaking, through the microbes, into the metropolises of the 'First World'" (Wald 45),

thirdworldification highlights the evolutionary and racial logics that underpin the Western

security state's emphasis on fortified boundaries.

It is significant that *28 Days* draws on the conventions of both epidemiological

horror and apocalypticism because emergent disease discourses, in particular, conjure a

pathologized Third World landscape to represent a nightmare First World future. With

respect to early AIDS discourses that posited "African origins" of the pandemic, Wald

writes, "as accounts of African AIDS conformed to familiar narratives, the metaphor of

the Third World slid into a threat, and geographical boundaries were recast in temporal

terms" (237). However, *28 Days* destabilizes conventional outbreak narratives that deflect

disease onto a primal other (Comaroff 2007; Wald 2008). The chimp is not a stable

metonym for a diseased continent. Rather than anchoring "colonial images of nature red

in tooth and claw" (Comaroff 201), it is the body across which two processes converge:

first, a global distribution of highly political encounters between, for example, police and

civilians; and second, the mobilization of technologies that capture, juxtapose, and

disseminate images of these encounters. Rage emerges as the technological amplification of an affect generated by cycles of insidious Western intervention and intensifying global unrest. Moreover, Boyle organizes his first shot of Jim in a way that resonates with the framing of the chimp image in the film's opening scene. The overhead shot allows viewers to see Jim's entire body: completely naked and laid out on a hospital bed, he is attached, via intravenous tube, to the medical apparatuses that encircle him. Jim's nakedness visually reinforces his animality and constructs him, from the beginning, as exposed and vulnerable. Boyle's imaging of the continuities between chimps and humans constructs Rage as an affect-infection that transcends species distinctions, implicating it in a devolutionary logic that projects the undoing of Western civilization. Ahmed elaborates on imagined connections between embodied vulnerability and degeneration:

> The risk of being a "soft touch" for the nation, and for the national subject, is not only the risk of becoming feminine, but also of becoming "less white," by allowing those who are recognised as racially other to penetrate the surface of the body. Within such a narrative, becoming less white would involve moving backwards in time, such that one would come to resemble a more primitive form of social life, or a "lower and animal like condition." (*Cultural Politics* 3)

What *28 Days* perhaps inadvertently draws attention to is the way that evolutionary logics linking corporeal vulnerability to racial degeneration support the disavowal of white rage. Denying the affective dimensions of hardness, they allow for the projection of rage, hate, and terror onto "other" bodies and spaces.

The *28* films partially destabilize the privileging of hardness in patriarchal survivalist fantasies by figuring fathers and children according to competing affective economies. Ahmed's analysis of the articulations among rage, whiteness, and (national)

bodies that perceive themselves as under siege allows me to read the Cambridge experiment—an attempt to cure an inconvenient affect—as manifesting a defensive posture meant to secure the bodily integrity of the white nation. The experiment materializes a disavowed white rage that pathologizes others in "anticipation of a future injury" and, in so doing, reveals that the lockdown impulse underwriting the "hard white body" proliferates rather than contains threat (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 47, 4). Both films link father figures to the terror, humiliation, and rage that circulate through survivalist fantasies. But *28 Weeks*, in particular, figures youth in ways that gesture to ambivalent corporeal, familial, and affective possibilities that resist the imperatives of hardness. As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, which focuses on the film *Children of Men*, patriarchal fantasies of re-beginning hinge on affective and ideological reorientations towards an imaginary past—that is, on nostalgia for racially pure origins that might be reanimated in the wake of catastrophe. In this fantasy, the problem of (social) reproduction—the process that threatens to reintroduce difference into an ideal community/familial formation—is seemingly solved by closed spatial formations that, literally and figuratively, safeguard the integrity of the collective body. In the present chapter, I argue that such a tending-toward sterility requires the suppression of maternal and youthful agency, and that, in *28 Weeks Later*, the mother and children evoke anxieties about uncontrolled space, mutation, and hybridity. Mapping the distribution of R/rage in the *28* films across both fortified and unruly spatial formations, I demonstrate how corporeal unruliness gestures to an alternative affective economy organized around radical nostalgia, tenderness, and hope.

Father figures: survivalist fantasies and their failures

In the climactic scenes of *28 Days Later,* neoliberal allegory and patriarchal survivalist fantasy converge in the figure of Major Henry West, the aptly-named military man for whom Rage has opened up the possibility to "start again"—to re-boot civilization in his own image. As survivors Jim, Selena, and the teenaged Hannah reach the military blockade that has been broadcasting a radio signal promising "salvation" and "the answer to infection," they discover nine soldiers defending an estate just outside of a burning Manchester. Here, Major West is hunkering down with his men and waiting to find out "how long the infected take to starve to death." Their encampment is a military twist on the survivalist impulse to fortify a plot of land and rebuild after the apocalypse—a project that resonates with my discussion, in Chapter One, of "fortress LA" (cf. Davis 1990). By the time the survivors reach Manchester, Jim's early incredulity about the absence of organized power—"Of course there's a government. There's always a government!"—has been replaced by the conviction, which the film invites its audience to share, that Rage has indeed sparked a global apocalypse. Thus, when West informs him that, "secondary to protection, our real job is to rebuild, start again," Jim is obviously relieved. Operating under the delusion that Rage has wiped out all of civilization, Major West simultaneously embodies a survivalist patriarch and a nascent security state emerging in the midst of social collapse.

West's makeshift family unit is uncanny, full of strange and unsettling twists on idyllic domesticity that ultimately shift the locus of monstrosity in the film from outside to within the walls of his fortified English manor. The fate of the infected Private Mailer

is the first sign that something is amiss. Again mobilizing associations among race, savagery, and animality, Boyle positions Mailer—a black British soldier who has been infected and subsequently captured—as the abused family dog. Chained up outside the manor, he is West's test subject. In an echo of the troubling attitude of Western scientists towards chimpanzees in the film's opening, Major West explains to Jim that he is observing how long this "futureless" former soldier will take "to starve to death." (Of course, the catastrophic failure of the film's first science experiment anticipates that Mailer will eventually be unleashed.) This disturbing scene, in which West's hardness materializes in the collar around Mailer's neck, conjures the histories of chained and terrorized black bodies with which zombies are historically entangled. The act of observing a chained, starving, enraged black body suddenly makes the terror encoded in West's white masculinity visible; his whiteness becomes a presence that makes itself felt "as terrorizing imposition, a power that wounds, hurts, tortures" (Dyer qtd. in hooks, *Black* 169). The unmasking of white masculinity as a force of terror then effectively unsettles the next scene: a bizarre welcome dinner put together by the military survivors for their civilian counterparts. West seats himself at the head of the table in an enormous dining room, surveying his men and their "guests," and his fantasy of becoming the paternal head of a new family/society begins to take shape. Yet, as the young, apron-wearing Private Jones serves omelettes made with rotten eggs—symbols of reproductive power that are, significantly, "off"—the feminized cook underscores the fact that, prior to the arrival of Selena and Hannah, women have been markedly absent from West's domestic scene.

117

His imagination dominated by the seeming arrival of the Last Days, Major West is

a mad configuration of Western survivalists who see a new Eden bound up in

Armageddon[54]—a future in which civilization returns to the land and people, as he puts it,

"bake bread, plant crops, raise livestock." However, West's vision of resurrecting

England as Eden depends on securing the physical means of reproduction that will ensure

a future for his new society. He sees Jim's fellow survivors, Selena and the young

Hannah, as the fulfillment of a promise he has recently made to his men:

> I promised them women. Eight days ago I found Jones with his gun in his mouth. He said he was going to kill himself because there was no future. What could I say to him? We fight off the infected or we wait until they starve to death, and then what? What do nine men do except wait to die themselves? I moved us from the blockade, I set the radio broadcasting, and I promised them women. 'Cause women mean a future.

West's attitude to Selena and Hannah culminates in the frightening scenes that follow,

where the anticipation of rape displaces monstrosity from the infected swarming across

the countryside to the militarized family entrenched in its manor house. This

displacement prompts a recalibration of Rage as a form of resistance, albeit compromised,

to the survivalist ethos epitomized by West. In an effort to free Selena and Hannah, Jim

first unleashes Private Mailer to infect and otherwise distract the remaining soldiers, an

act that leads, in a reversal of the looking relations theorized by hooks, to a shot of Mailer

---

[54] In his essay on American "Peak Oil" communities, Bryant Urstadt notes the title of one of the closing speeches at an American conference: "Armageddon or Eden." He writes, "After all, though many of our conveniences will vanish [in the post-carbon world], so too will McMansions, traffic jams, Circle Ks, golf courses in Nevada, wars on the other side of the world […]. In their place will be a closer relationship to the natural world, and perhaps […] a return to a more spiritual life" (40). Notably, there is a filmic precedent for Major Henry West in Marlon Brando's representation of Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Traced back, of course, to Joseph Conrad's undone imperialist in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Kurtz and West highlight the colonial antecedents of Western survivalism.

that features his bloodshot eyes as he peers at his former "family" through a window of the manor house. Boyle then reinforces the significance of this shifting visual logic when, realigning audience sympathies with the infected, he films Jim in a lower resolution—the same used to emphasize the wildness and speed of the infected—throughout these climactic scenes. Major West's family is thus infiltrated by the Rage it was designed to keep at bay and, it was hoped, eventually transcend—a fate that anticipates the failure of larger-scale fortification and quarantine efforts in *28 Weeks Later*. West's embodiment of paternal and military authority highlights the shared biopolitical imperatives of survivalism and the security state: both anchor their visions of futurity in appropriations of space and reproductive bodies.

In contrast, Don, the father in *28 Weeks Later*, is the "everyman" who repeatedly fails to secure his family within a contained space, a pattern of humiliation and guilt that eventually animates his Rage. Set in a remote cottage in the British countryside, Fresnadillo's opening sequence establishes this connection between Rage and humiliation as central to the film and to Don's characterization. Hiding in the cottage with his wife, Alice, and a small handful of other survivors, Don abandons Alice when the building is overrun with infected. Notably, husband and wife are separated in the first place because Alice has stopped to help a child who is with them. Having urged her to leave the boy behind, Don leaves them both and becomes the only survivor of their original seven. A counterpoint to West, whose quarantine experience revolves around the fantasy of a fresh start, Don's experience of survival is organized around shame; forced into making a series of life or death decisions in the absence of all formal support networks, his makeshift

family of survivors quickly disintegrates. Thus, when Don is finally reunited with his

kids, Andy and Tam (away on a school trip in Spain when the infection breaks out), he is

haunted by his acts of abandonment and disgraced by the need to lie to them about

Alice's fate. And, unlike the clearly authoritative Major West, Don is ambiguously

positioned within the fully functioning security zone—District One—on the Isle of Dogs.

As head caretaker, he lacks the clout of the military personnel, but his job gives him "all

area access" to District One. In the end, the unrestrained mobility enabled by his ID card

initiates yet another failure of containment, this one leading to a second outbreak.

If the quarantined British mainland perversely allegorizes a neoliberal utopia in

which survival becomes a matter of individual responsibility, then, in light of

philosophical, literary, and anthropological analyses of debt-as-guilt, Don's figuration as

guilt-stricken suggests that he can be read as a neoliberal subject (re)animated by debt (cf.

Atwood 2008; Deleuze 1983; Kuper 2011; Nietzsche 1887).[55] His guilt is an

internalization of the imperatives of the enterprise society. Drawing the Nietzschean

account of subject formation in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)—in which the human

animal turns its aggressive instincts inwards—together with Foucault's description of a

---

[55] For a fascinating, complex elaboration of the centrality of debt to speculation economies, and particularly its role in actualizing the fantasy of self-reproducing capital that I discussed in my Introduction, see Melinda Cooper's *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (2008). Drawing on Marx's argument that "the creation of money from debt represents the most insane form of the capitalist delirium" and noting that "the debt form is no longer indexed to any known terrestrial reserves," Cooper writes: "Fueling [U.S. debt imperialism] is the delirium of the debt form, which in effect enables capital to reproduce itself in a realm of pure promise, in excess of the earth's actual limits, at least for a while. […] In the sense that the debt can never be redeemed once and for all and must be perpetually renewed, it reduces the inhabitable present to a bare minimum, a point of bifurcation, strung out between a future that is about to be and a past that will have been. It thus confronts the present as the ultimate limit, to be deflected at all costs" (30, 31).

social fabric pervaded by friction, I am positing that guilt serves as the mechanism by which competition and indebtedness shape the "inner world" of the neoliberal subject (Nietzsche 84). It is through the transformation of "responsibility-debt" into "responsibility-guilt" that debt is internalized as something "inexhaustible, *unpayable*" (Deleuze, *Nietzsche* 141-42, emphasis in original). The competitive landscape of neoliberalism, which Foucault describes in terms of multiplying surfaces and expanding depths (*Birth* 147-48), imbricates with the psychic landscape that, according to Nietzsche, "acquire[s] depth, breadth, and height in the same measure as outward discharge [of aggression is] inhibited" (84). In other words, guilt is an affective indicator of the neoliberal subject's enmeshment in the enterprise society—the psychic manifestation of his repeated failure to make his enterprise viable, and of his indebtedness to the neoliberal state for his personal security. However, returning to my earlier discussion of Ngai's notion of animatedness and its inherent tensions, it becomes possible to rethink this dynamic, for the guilt that makes Don susceptible to external manipulation also threatens to exceed such controls. Once infected, his guilt twists into Rage. The subject that, in Nietzschean terms, has turned inward, thus turns outwards again, and his guilt/indebtedness manifests in bursts of violence that unravel not only the social fabric, but also his own paternal identity.[56]

After he is infected, Don's Rage takes shape as an attempt to eradicate his family—the witnesses to his humiliations. When Andy and Tam sneak back to their

---

[56] In light of the nearly "apocalyptic" collapse of major American financial institutions in 2008, many of which maintained their AAA credit rating mere days before their bailouts by the Federal Reserve, a darkly humorous reading of Don might emphasize the disastrous consequences of his "all area access," or triple-A rating.

family home and discover that Alice has survived alone on the diseased mainland, she

enters District One as a carrier of the infection. Seeking absolution, a guilt-stricken Don

uses his clearance to visit his traumatized wife while she is still in quarantine and

becomes infected when he kisses her. As the brutally violent scene unfolds, Don beats

Alice—who is strapped to a gurney inside a secure observation room—and, horrifically,

blinds her with his thumbs in a protracted act of murder.[57] Jump cuts between the

narrative present and his moment of abandonment at the cottage, with a focus on Alice's

incredulous and terrified stare, clearly establish that Don's Rage is oriented by a memory

of humiliation that is inextricably linked to her gaze. Throughout the rest of the film, Don

stalks his children, the only other witnesses to his lie about their mother's fate in the

cottage. Significantly, he eventually attacks and infects his son, twelve year-old Andy,

whose eyes—like Alice's—are two different colours. As a father, Don is shaped by his

failure to negotiate the affective economy of neoliberal survivalism; initially unable to

transform his terror in the face of bodily vulnerability into hatred and rage—in other

words, failing to embody hardness—he is instead conditioned by humiliation, grief, and

guilt. Then, when he is infected with Rage, his guilt is projected onto familial others,

initiating a sequence of events that once again splinters his family. Figured in terms of

breached boundaries, contagion, and proliferation, Don embodies not just the failure of

the patriarchal survivalist fantasy, but its limit case: the man whose rage exceeds the

defensive imperative and twists into an all-encompassing, murderous aggression.

---

[57] In her analysis of the aggressive, gendered American response to the events of 9/11, Susan Faludi quotes developmental psychologist Erik Erikson: "'He who is ashamed would like to force the world not to look at him, not to notice his exposure,' Erikson wrote in *Childhood and Society*. 'He would like to destroy the eyes of the world'" (qtd. in Faludi, *Terror* 13).

Mothers: urban space and the carrier-stranger

Following the prologue in the cottage, Alice haunts the first half of *28 Weeks Later*, her face flashing onto the screen in jump cuts that alternate between memories and prophetic dreams. She is an insistent presence that disturbs the linear narrative, intruding in the form of both recollection and anticipation.[58] During his first night in District One, Andy has a bad dream that Fresnadillo represents as a jarring but brief sequence of overexposed images set against a black background. Don turns out the light in his kids' bedroom, initiating a slightly prolonged cut between scenes that suddenly gives way to Alice's bruised and beaten face, appearing as if under the glare of an interrogation lamp. Raising her head to stare steadily at the camera, she then brings her hands up to her forehead and peels away her face to reveal Andy's, streaked with blood, beneath her own. Their differently coloured eyes underscore the connection between mother and son and anticipate the significance of the next image: an extreme close-up of an eye, its blood vessels hemorrhaging. As the red spreads across the white of the eye, signifying infection, Fresnadillo cuts to and rapidly zooms out from Andy's startled face as he wakes up in bed. Even as Andy's terrified stare integrates the sequence back into the narrative, retroactively, as a nightmare, Fresnadillo quickly flashes back to the hemorrhaging eye *after* Andy awakes. No longer anchored to the dream sequence, the infected eye operates as a metonym for the inevitable failure of quarantine—one that can be traced back across

---

[58] For the first half of the film, then, Alice occupies a structurally homologous position to that of the unnamed wife and mother in *The Road* (2009), the focus of my fourth chapter. Both haunt their respective narratives via flashbacks, gesturing to alternative courses of action and ethical frameworks that resist the imperatives of survivalism. The Woman in *The Road* chooses suicide over persistence, and Alice, as the opening sequence of *28 Weeks* illustrates, opts for protecting someone else's child over self-preservation.

the slippages in Andy's dream to his mother, Alice. As the lighting in the "dream" indicates, Alice is a suspect figure that lurches out of the narrative past, troubling the military-medical timeline indicated in the film's title. The compulsive acts of violence to which she is subjected through the middle of *28 Weeks* index the force of her disturbance: beyond Don's act of abandonment and the ensuing six months of isolation—the traces of which are inscribed on her body in the form of bruises, bite marks, and a nearly feral appearance—Alice undergoes a brutally violent decontamination shower at the hands of the military, her trauma expressed in screams of fear and outrage. And, even after the enraged Don blinds and beats her to death while she is immobilized, Fresnadillo returns once more to Alice's body, showing it being consumed by flames as the US military, having lost control of the outbreak that Don unleashes, drops firebombs on District One.

As I established in Chapter One, the infliction of unrelenting violence on a woman's—often a mother's—body relates directly to her alignment with urban space and the promiscuous forms of contact that it enables. Figured as a healthy carrier, Alice confounds the categorizations and imperatives that organize the nascent security state on the Isle of Dogs. She emerges from a still unsanitized and unsecured London, her recent history unaccounted for, and brings Rage into District One in the form of her own hybrid embodiment. Alice is infected but symptom-free, the result of a seemingly "natural immunity" that, the Chief Medical Officer speculates, can be linked to a "genetic abnormality" signaled by her differently coloured eyes. Alice's obvious emotional instability—the result of her prolonged isolation in the quarantine zone—reinforces this

undecidable embodiment.[59] Fresnadillo's representation of Alice thus draws on a history of gendered representations of affective and corporeal unruliness. Andy's discovery of his supposedly dead mother in the attic of their former home clearly positions her within a lineage of literary and filmic madwomen representing threat and disorder (cf. Gilbert and Gubar 1979; Walkowitz 1992). Moreover, Alice's status as a carrier evokes a second strand of pathologized representations that begins with science's identification of the first healthy carrier—"Typhoid Mary"—in 1907 (Wald 68). According to Wald's extensive analysis, in early twentieth-century public health discourse, "woman's primary role as bearer (or carrier) of the human race" was imagined as potentially perverted by "what she might carry instead" (88-89). Anxieties related to this dual sense of carrier dovetailed with those regarding promiscuous or generally "unattached" women—women not sufficiently regulated by familial structures and contained within domestic space. With respect to Alice, what is pertinent about the unattached woman is her capacity to disappear and reappear, inscribing a temporal gap marked by a lack of surveillance: "Implicit in her ability to disappear is the threat of her circulation and of what she might bring back. When she returns from wherever she has been, the community that had lost sight of her will not know what she might be *carrying*" (Wald 90-91, emphasis in original). In light of the emphasis on surveillance within the militarized compound that is District One, Alice's six-month absence and hybrid embodiment configure her as dangerously estranged from the protocols of the emergent security state.

---

[59] Just as Major West's surname resonates with his status as a neo-imperial alpha male, so too does Alice's name suggest an apt connection to Lewis Carroll's famously morphing girl child.

In *28 Weeks Later*, historical and gendered anxieties about the healthy carrier's contamination of the body politic imbricate with contemporary fears of terrorism. In both cases, the unruly circulations and proximities enabled by urban space are framed by racist discourses that cast immigrants as threatening strangers. In the early twentieth century, such discourses doubly linked contagion to circulations of waste within the industrial city:

> Tenements of immigrants and migrants offered the most visible representation of the excesses of industrialization and the limits of assimilation. Nationally, industrial prosperity produced insufficiently absorbed waste as it produced insufficiently absorbed foreigners. […] The polluted fluids of the immigrant, nonwhite, or generally impoverished body became the polluted fluids of the body politic. The threat of national disaster, articulated in the language of nativism, was a consistent refrain in the typhoid literature of the period […]. (Wald 82-83)

Within the "promiscuous" space of the city (Wald 14), discourses of hyper-visible racial difference compensated for the invisibility of the healthy carrier. In the context of the post-9/11 release of the *28* films, the negatively racialized carrier-stranger who may usher in an explosion of disease is articulated with the insurgent or terrorist, the figure linked to "a permanent foreboding about urban space as potential Ground Zero" (M. Davis, *Dead* 6). In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Western politicians and mainstream media conjured the "mysterious package" that might contain Anthrax as easily as an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). In so doing, they evoked the intimate stranger who deposits his duffel bag in the midst of a public space before blending back into the community. As figures defined by imperceptibility, carriers, insurgents, and terrorists portend the inevitable failure of technologies of surveillance and control (cf. Magnet 2011).

The apocalyptic cityscape of *28 Days* and *Weeks* suggests that, from the vantage point of an increasingly fortified body politic, urban space is the privileged site of the

incursion of savagery in the midst of Western civilization. Such a perspective frames

cities as rife with pockets of insufficiently assimilated strangers and, therefore, as sites of

national vulnerability. The early-twentieth-century tenements described by Wald have

twenty-first-century counterparts in what Bauman refers to as "ghost wards," post-

industrial ghettos imagined as running wild with "dangerous classes" that might suddenly

erupt into uncontainable—that is, contagious—violence (*Liquid* 74, 69). *28 Weeks Later*

builds on the neoliberal suspicion that all civilians are potential insurgents by allegorizing

the rise of the security state in response to anxieties about urban space as a locus of

insurrection. The opening sequence is followed by a documentary-style timeline:

> 15 days later: mainland Britain is quarantined.
> 28 days later: mainland Britain has been destroyed by the rage virus.
> 5 weeks later: the infected have died of starvation.
> 11 weeks later: an American-led NATO force enters London.
> 18 weeks later: mainland Britain is declared free of infection.
> 24 weeks later: reconstruction begins.
> 28 weeks later.

Interspersed with aerial shots of a ruined, empty London, this information frames

"reconstruction" as a militarized restructuring of the Isle of Dogs—its fortification against

what one security official describes as the "forbidden" area across the Thames. In

counterpoint to the first film's eerily empty cityscape as seen from the ground, the

viewer's introduction to London in *28 Weeks* establishes surveillance as a function of

height: the first shots originate from a military helicopter, and those that follow emerge

through the rifle scopes of rooftop snipers. Finally, ubiquitous security cameras recall the

camera in the first film that catches the catastrophic arrival of animal rights activists at the

Cambridge lab. Given that this single camera in *28 Days* captures rebellious citizens in a

disastrous act of trespassing, the fact that military personnel—and, by extension, the film's viewers—observe all of the new arrivals in *28 Weeks* on security monitors configures them, from the beginning, as suspects. The civilians about to be repatriated are all potentially disruptive to the military imperatives of fortification and containment.

Alice's arrival from the forbidden area beyond District One confronts the security state with what Wald refers to as "the fundamental paradox in the principle of community" (56): the danger and necessity of strangers. Considered in relation to the two forms of authority on the Isle of Dogs, Alice, as a healthy carrier, embodies this paradox. From the military perspective, she is threatening, but from the medical perspective, she is the potential source of a cure for infection. As this debate over whether to destroy or use Alice's body is being waged, Don's guilt drives him to her bedside, initiating an outbreak through which Fresnadillo interrogates military strategies of isolation and extermination. "Code Red" begins with the movement of civilians to containment areas and a military attempt to distinguish between the infected-as-targets and civilians-as-"friendlies." However, as the situation deteriorates, soldiers receive the command to "target everyone at ground level. No exceptions." The spatial distinction structuring this command evokes Bauman's new urban topography, with elite forces substituted for the urban elite—whose access to the global space-of-flows allows them to transcend local concerns and constraints—and the infected replacing the "dangerous classes" (cf. Bauman 2007). The infection spreads such that, from the vantage points afforded by the rooftops, everyone at ground level is dangerous, a scenario in which the expedient military response is simply to "abandon selective targeting. Shoot everything." Importantly, *28 Weeks Later*

generates a critique of this logic by realigning the audience's sympathies with those on the ground. While, at first, spectators view the confusion on the streets along with the rooftop snipers through their scopes, the rest of the film is focalized through a ground-level assemblage of civilians—including Andy and Tam, the only two children on the Isle of Dogs—and two military personnel who abandon their posts. When the sniper, Doyle, refuses the "No exceptions" command and leaves the roof to protect the children, he shifts the topographical arrangement of the filmic landscape; the pathologized urban streets become a site of resistance to organized military extermination, which takes the form of sniper shots and firebombs that rain down from the film's upper regions. As the security zone implodes, Andy and Tam negotiate the cold rage of a military machine bent on annihilation, and the Rage of a father who—through their eyes—sees himself as a failure.

Youth: competing inheritances, mutant hope

As indicated by Andy's dream—which recalls the opening shot of *28 Weeks*, in which the flare of a match illuminates a close-up of Alice's differently coloured eyes—the eyes of Alice and her children serve as points of organization for discerning corporeal and affective possibilities that resist the imperatives of survivalism. As I have emphasized, fortification and containment are intimately connected to technologies of surveillance. Fresnadillo repeatedly employs security cameras and riflescopes, both of which allow military personnel to scrutinize civilians from a distance, exemplifying, as Ahmed suggests, connections between affective hardness and distance, or orientations

129

away from. A particularly complex sequence of images begins with Doyle peering through his scope at the new arrivals, using his rooftop position to survey the windows of a residence tower as individuals and families prepare for bed on their first night in District One. He prefaces this act of military surveillance with the question, "What's on TV tonight?," likening his peeping into windows to idle channel-flipping and underscoring a lack of attachment to what he sees. Nevertheless, the scene ends with Doyle pausing on a window in which Don is happily saying goodnight to his children. The pause is ambiguous, suggesting both an involuntary connection to Andy and Tam and a sense that they are somehow threatening exceptions to the adult population of District One. This combination of interest and fear is inherent in the means of surveillance itself, for in order to watch the kids for a prolonged moment, Doyle keeps his rifle trained on them. The next scene is Andy's dream, in which the slippage from mother to son to infected implicates the children in the undecidability with which the military apparatus will be confronted when Alice returns. Notably, this is not the only scene in which adults (and viewers) see Andy and Tam through the scope of a gun. Forced into the pitch-black London tube towards the end of the film, Scarlet, the Chief Medical Officer, uses the night vision in Doyle's riflescope to direct the children around bodies and down long flights of stairs. Filmed through the crosshairs and lit in night-vision green, Andy and Tam look uncertainly back at their guide, their luminous eyes simultaneously evoking animality and demonic possession. The visual emphasis in this scene on Tam's glowing eyes over Andy's aligns her with the suspect mother/son duo and their shared genetic mutation.

Andy's desire to see his mother's face again initiates a sequence of events that connects affective orientations premised on proximity—radical nostalgia and tenderness—to uncontrolled and insecure spaces.[60] *28 Weeks* establishes a topography in which the military controls the heights while civilians (and, eventually, the infected) negotiate the streets. Significantly, if civilian space is street level, District One, then Andy and Tam's space is street level, London. Prompted by Andy's wish to return to their old house and collect a picture of his supposedly dead mother, he and Tam sneak past the military outposts on the Millennium Bridge and run, whooping and shouting, through the city streets. Here, the audience sees London from the ground—a contrast to the early aerial shots—as Andy and Tam run past yellow biohazard bags and abandoned cars, reclaiming quarantined space and portending the return of the riotous infected. This forbidden excursion to their former home results in Andy's discovery of Alice in the attic, a reunion in which joy competes with fear and the sudden recognition of a paternal betrayal. These conflicting affective orientations crystallize in the ambiguous hug between mother and son. It is possible to read Alice's hug, which mutates into a desperate, clutching squeeze, as foreshadowing the threat she poses to the secure space of District One. However, I want to suggest an alternative reading: that Alice's action resists the escalating experiences of abandonment that constitute her largely untold story. Don's

---

[60] As distinct from the nostalgia for racially pure, masterable origins that structures patriarchal survivalist fantasies, "radical nostalgia" is oriented towards counter-memories and unrealized possibilities. As Alastair Bonnett argues in *Left in the Past* (2010), the fact that radicalism "emerged in and against modernity" opens up the possibility of a "'radically critical'" nostalgia aligned with Indigenous, postcolonial, and transatlantic studies critiques of Enlightenment history: "Any attempt to take nostalgia seriously, to see it as unavoidable, perhaps even an occasionally creative force, is likely to make us appear discontent with modernity. It rips us from some basic assumptions, not just about progress and change, but what it is to be a happy, optimistic, and 'well-balanced' citizen" (1, 2; cf. Boym 2001; Hirsch 1997).

fear, which prompts him to radically and swiftly distance himself from his wife at the beginning of the film, is doubled by the collective fear that legitimates military quarantine and results in Alice being left for dead on the "diseased little island" (*28 Days Later*). As such, her hug may be read as an attempt to re-establish proximity, an insistence on maternal connection that becomes unstable and compromised only as the distant sound of a helicopter becomes louder, settling over the house. Alice's hug verges on violent, then, only in response to the proximity of military machines and personnel—a proximity that, paradoxically, serves to re-establish the imperative of isolation when Alice finds herself quarantined yet again. Like Andy and Tam's street-level alignment with the infected, Alice's hug "zombifies" when the security state reasserts its mechanisms of surveillance and control. With the return of the militarized gaze, the unruly youth and their hybrid mother are zombified figures; they resurrect suppressed histories of abandonment and organized quarantine, which, in turn, threaten to reanimate Rage. Andy and Tam's yearning for their mother's image, along with the tenderness between the siblings themselves, are articulated with a breach in controlled military space.

Andy and Tam's spontaneous reclaiming of the London streets—their obvious sense of belonging among the traces of an urban riot of apocalyptic proportions—indexes the connections among zombie (re)animatedness and pathologized youth that I began to explore in the introduction to this chapter. Associations between young people and urban instability spawn paranoid formulations of youth as weakening a body politic perceived as fragile or, in Ahmed's terms, wounded. Conservative calls for fortified, hyper-secure collectivities derive from mistrust of new arrivals and their contestations, a mistrust that,

as Wald explores, shapes both generational and racial tensions. Reading Geddes Smith's

Plague On Us (1941) as a precursor to the outbreak narrative, Wald notes that Smith

"defines children as 'immigrants into the human herd—immigrants whose susceptibility

dilutes herd resistance and so helps to keep certain diseases in circulation'" (22). Smith's

formulation simultaneously racializes youth and casts them as intimate strangers who

threaten the social order with mutation. Wald's reading of epidemiological discourses

thus gestures to the material and corporeal basis of Hannah Arendt's characterization of

young people as newcomers (*Human* 178). Specifically, Wald elaborates on Smith's

equation between children and immigrants in terms of the healthy carrier as "the uncanny

figure of the familiar estranged" (22):

> [Smith's] observation captures the chaotic and recombinatory nature of
> communicable disease, as the ultimate familiars become the ultimate
> strangers. Ironically, they are threatening because of their own
> susceptibility—because, that is, they are threatened—and the future agents
> of the community's reproduction carry the threat of its annihilation. By
> casting children as immigrants, Smith identifies the fundamental instability
> of community. Communicable disease marks both the potential destruction
> of the community and the consequences of its survival. It is the figure of a
> necessary and even generative disequilibrium. (22-23)

Wald's insights highlight the biopolitical implications of Arendt's vision of a "fragile"

human community that is threatened by the (re)generational "onslaught" that animates it

(*Human* 191). Variously framed as newcomers, strangers, and immigrants, youth are

targeted by rites of incorporation and tactics of governance because they *arrive*. They

bring with them biological, genetic, experiential, and familial histories that might

reanimate within the body politic, rising up and recombining extant formations in

unforeseen ways—undead histories emerging from demonic grounds.

Interpreted in this context, Andy and Tam's corporeal and affective connection to the hybrid Alice combines with their movements through (racialized) urban space in order to amplify the uncertainty surrounding their belonging in District One. Further, their oscillation between hope and threat stems directly from their negotiation of competing parental inheritances. Scarlet, who disobeys military protocol in order to protect the children, is motivated by her recognition that Andy and Tam may share their mother's partial immunity. As she explains to Doyle, the cure for Rage might be in their blood, making their lives extremely valuable. While they are the potential source of a cure, Andy and Tam's embodiment of hope is already compromised by their role in bringing their hybrid mother to the sanitary, controlled environment of District One. Andy in particular, as an inheritor of his mother's simultaneously fortuitous and suspect genetics, runs the risk of becoming a healthy carrier if exposed to infection—an embodied echo of Alice's threatening hybridity. As is the case with her genetic mutation, this hybridity materializes in Alice's eyes; her configuration as a carrier is signaled to the audience by a hemorrhage in one eye, while the other remains clear. When, in the film's final scenes, Don attacks and bites his son as he and Tam make their way to a pre-established extraction point, Andy anxiously asks his sister, "Tammy, am I one of them?" In response, Tam lies to him as she watches the hemorrhage spread across his left eye. By the end of the film, then, Andy's hybridity can be formulated as his embodiment of competing maternal and paternal inheritances; he shares Alice's genetic abnormality, which grants him partial immunity to Don's Rage. Tam, too, negotiates these conflicting parental legacies in an effort to preserve, in the figure of her brother and in their attachment, a compromised and

unstable hope at the end of the film. Actualizing the very survivalist mentality that renders Don a failure, she murders her father while he is attacking Andy. Then, like Don, she lies. However, Tam's actions serve to orient her emphatically toward her brother, echoing the struggle for proximity enacted by Alice both in the cottage at the beginning of the film and later in the family home. This is underscored when, spurred by tenderness for her brother and hope for a future together, Tam shields Andy with her body as they come into view of the helicopter pilot who will take them across the Channel. Tam's insistence on staying close to Andy—on maintaining a connection in spite of his now dangerously hybrid composition—reanimates Alice's resistance to the affective economy of total fear and isolation.

Regenerative vulnerabilities

My reading of *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later* underscores a conceptual connection between social unrest and disease—one that is prominent in recent apocalyptic storytelling, and that, I argue, provides a point of departure for cultural analyses concerned with the political, ethical, and affective implications of embodied vulnerability (cf. Ahmed 2004, 2006; Butler 2004, 2009; Esposito 2008; Haraway 1989). The patriarchal survivalist fantasy invokes imagined social and corporeal vulnerabilities, and the implications are ambiguous. Imperatives of containment and fortification refuse the material realities of proximity and mutual dependence, yet, as defensive dynamics, they presuppose a subject and/or nation imagined as "in crisis" and "failing" (Ahmed 2004, 43). Apocalyptic visions of invading hordes, disease outbreaks, and political or

financial collapse animate survivalist fantasies in which the creation of a new world order is, paradoxically, premised on the unmaking of the world. The apparent resolution of this paradox rests on an uneven distribution of vulnerability—or, in Judith Butler's terms, on the relocation of injurability in the "other" that produces the sovereign subject (*Frames* 178). Within the affective economy of the patriarchal survivalist fantasy, bodily and social integrity are maintained through a compulsive conjuring and violent undoing of the other—an undoing, in other words, which reanimates its object in order to undo it again. In the person of Major Henry West and in the form of the security state, the *28* films interrogate the ethical, affective, and political implications of regenerative visions premised on the hyper-vulnerability of zombified others. At the same time, in its figurations of youth, *28 Weeks Later* suggests that embodied vulnerability is not simply readable as portending an apocalypse, but that it also constitutes a point of departure for forms of affective and social regeneration that contest the reactionary dynamics of the patriarchal survivalist fantasy.

Affective (re)orientations have temporal as well as spatial dimensions. Andy and Tam's mobilization of radical nostalgia, tenderness, and hope opens up regenerative possibilities that cannot be reduced to the patriarchal fantasy of returning to original purity. Ahmed posits that affects circulate among and "stick" to figures and figures of speech through the evocation of undeclared histories, or "histories that have stayed open" and are, significantly, available for reanimation (*Cultural Politics* 59). Against the conservative historical narratives conjured by rage and hate, radical nostalgia is oriented toward suppressed histories—zombie legacies gnawing at the frames in which they are

encrypted. My reading of Andy and Tam as tending towards a maternal past elided by Don's lie exemplifies the contestations embedded in such an orientation. After flames consume Alice's body during the military attempt at containment, she reappears in the film one last time, spliced into the midst of the climactic scene in which her husband attacks their son. As an armed Tam approaches Don, who has pinned Andy to the floor and is biting his neck, Fresnadillo cuts to Alice's horrified face at her moment of abandonment in the cottage. Onscreen for less than a second, she screams his name in protest, the outrage in her voice resonating with Tam's yell in the narrative present. Synchronizing Alice's "Don!" and Tam's "Dad!," Fresnadillo cuts directly from mother back to daughter, zooming in on Tam's eyes as she hesitates with the gun. Given that the shot of Alice's face in this scene indexes a past to which Tam has no access, it is Don's memory that triangulates the mother/daughter parallel for the viewer. His gaze inscribes a perspective from which Tam's horror and grief reiterates her mother's affective orientation and compounds Don's failures, or, in differently economic and ethical terms, his indebtedness. The shot/reverse shot structuring the subsequent encounter between father and daughter—alternating close-ups of Tam's eyes (now aligned with Alice's) and Don's (red with Rage)—then splits the viewer's gaze, ultimately both resisting identification with infection and refusing triumphalism over Don's death. While Andy rematerializes Alice's hybridity at the end of the film, Tam inherits her embodied commitment to proximity—an insistence on relationality that, significantly, necessitates a reluctant act of patricide.

By figuring Andy and Tam as evoking and orienting themselves towards a suppressed maternal history, Fresnadillo gestures to the revelatory aspect of the apocalyptic imaginary. The undoing of the Western nation-state and/or the white patriarch reanimates the scenes of genocide, enslavement, and sexual violence that underwrite these formations, and the zombie figures the reanimation of such lingering counter-histories. Excavated from burial grounds or erupting from within the body in the form of infection, the zombie is, in psychoanalytic terms, not only abject but also uncanny: the return of the repressed of the Western narrative of historical progress. In twenty-first-century films, the zombie that evokes slave ships, plantations, and black rebellion imbricates with the infectious zombie, the unhuman waste that stands in for disenfranchised, impoverished, and potentially insurgent populations. Contemporary visions of the zombie apocalypse thus frame a long twentieth century of capitalist speculation and biopolitical fragmentation, dis-joining the present by multiplying its histories. "That there is no one time," Butler writes, "that the question of what time this is, already divides us, has to do with which histories have turned out to be formative, how they intersect—or fail to intersect—with other histories, and so with a question of how temporality is organized along spatial lines" (*Frames* 101). Contestations over the space-time of modernity unsettle the chronopolitics of neoliberalism—the discourses of progress and development that shape the language of freedom and naturalize the "differential allocation of precarity" (*Frames* 3) across "modern" and "pre-modern" global landscapes. Yet, as I argued in my Introduction, Hannah Arendt insists that the very notion of a historical process means that progress and doom are "two sides of the

same coin," for "a process with a definable direction and a predictable end […] obviously can land us only in paradise or in hell" (*Between* 101). The event of The End only makes sense from the perspective of a concept of history-as-process—a concept that subsumes the singularity and haphazardness of human actions within a linear narrative that suppresses re-beginnings. Such a concept of history disavows the constitutive vulnerability of the human world, which derives from natality: "with each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, a new world has potentially come into being" (Arendt, *Origins* 465). In my reading of *Children of Men* (2006) in the next chapter—in which a stateless, negatively racialized infant tenuously reopens a horizon of futurity in the midst of global entropy—I elaborate on the implications of Andy and Tam's maternal inheritance: that re-beginnings are not simply future-oriented but, rather, that they reanimate a "profusion of lost events" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81).

CHAPTER THREE ~ MATERNAL BACK/GROUNDS: HISTORIES OF ARRIVAL IN *CHILDREN OF MEN*

> *I sink down into my body as into a swamp, fenland, where only I know the footing. Treacherous ground, my own territory. I become the earth I set my ear against, for rumours of the future.*
> —Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (84)

> "Dis Place*"—the space between. The legs. For the Black woman "dis placed" to and in the New World, the inner space between the legs would also mutate into* "dis place*"—the fulcrum of the New World.*
> —M. NourbeSe Philip, "Dis Place—The Space Between" (77)

The ominous final shots of *28 Weeks Later* show a group of the infected racing through a tunnel and emerging into the streets of Paris. Positioned in the midst of the pack, the jolting, jerking camera offers glimpses of an underground passage that evokes the Channel Tunnel—the route that, presumably, facilitates the spread of infection to the continent.[61] Fresnadillo's vision of a growling horde spilling out of the mouth of a tunnel and descending on an iconic European cityscape registers anxiety about the routes, thresholds, borders, and "contact zones" (cf. Pratt 1991) that shape a "trans-national political economy of movement" (Shamir 200). Drawing on the spatial permeability that the practices and rhetoric of "Homeland Security" seek to minimize, this fictional scene of "invasion" recalls the real, historical controversy surrounding the Sangatte refugee camp near Calais, France. Opened by the French Red Cross in 1999 and located less than a mile from the entrance to the Channel Tunnel, Sangatte attracted a mix of asylum-

---

[61] An alternative possibility is that Andy, as a healthy carrier, spreads the infection by unwittingly infecting either Tam or the helicopter pilot, causing the helicopter to crash somewhere in France and unleashing Rage in Europe. Even so, given the film's emphasis on the failures of quarantine and containment, it is likely that viewers are meant to assume that at least some of the infected reached the Chunnel, especially given the scene that I have just described.

seekers and people-traffickers, and, for three years, served as the launching point for

refugees attempting to smuggle themselves into Britain ("Sangatte"). Eurotunnel's

extreme security measures—including "20 miles of outer fencing, six miles of razor wire

and 300 video cameras" along with "360 security guards [who] patrol[led] the site during

any 24-hour period"—failed to deter a group of more than five hundred refugees who

"stormed the tunnel" on Christmas Day, 2001 ("Sangatte"). Captured by surveillance

cameras, the ultimately unsuccessful attempt highlighted what British authorities and

Eurotunnel representatives had been proclaiming since the camp's opening: the perceived

illogic of warehousing a "suspect" population in close proximity to a conduit between

two nation-states. I begin this chapter with overlapping but opposite vectors of

transnational movement—the infected escaping their "diseased little island" (*28 Days*)

and refugees desperately seeking entry—in order to foreground the biopolitics of what

Ronen Shamir describes as an emergent "global mobility regime" (199). The story of the

Chunnel, a site of both outbreak and "break-out" ("Chunnel Storming"), reminds us that

conceptualizations of "globalization-qua-openness" can obscure proliferating mechanisms

"oriented to closure and to the blocking of access" (Shamir 199). This chapter critically

explores precisely such visions of containment and entropy—and draws attention to the

bodies that bear the burden of generating a New World from the midst of stagnation.

Culminating in a fictional refugee camp at Bexhill-on-Sea—an imaginary cross-

Channel counterpart to Sangatte—Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006) articulates

the "paradigm of suspicion" driving the global mobility regime (Shamir 200) with

questions of reproductivity and futurity. *Children* envisions a near-future world in which,

due to an unexplained crisis in female fertility, the youngest person on the planet is eighteen years old. Employing images of violence similar to those that open *28 Days Later*, Cuarón orients viewers to his childless dystopia via state propaganda: an increasingly frenetic montage of cities in chaos and place names—Paris, Moscow, Washington, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Brussels, and so on—gives way to claims that "The world has collapsed" and "Only Britain soldiers on." The camera pulls back from a shot of Big Ben dissolving into the Union Jack, revealing that the screen that viewers have been watching is one among many in the passenger car of a moving train, and we hear only the audio track of the next state-sponsored message: "*They* are illegal immigrants. To hire, feed, or shelter illegal immigrants is a crime." Having established that Britain is hardening itself against the threatening disarray of the outside world, the camera locates its protagonist, the listless Theo Faron (Clive Owen), in time to glimpse a large sign on the side of a boxcar as the train pulls into the station: "Avoiding fertility tests is a crime." These parallel pronouncements establish the power of the state to manage its population: rounding up and deporting "fugees" on the one hand, and routinely inspecting potentially reproductive bodies on the other. As Theo leaves the train and walks past armed, uniformed men standing in front of deportation cages, the camera strays from his path, turning to and lingering on a non-English-speaking elderly woman pleading her case inside one of the cages. Such moments, in which the camera deviates from an obviously subjective point of view, have prompted critics to attend to the film's background. As Slavoj Žižek observes, *Children* is a film in which "the background persists" ("Clash"); and Zahid Chaudhary argues that the film's "structure of visibility [is one] in which the

background of the frame, rather than the putative object of cinematic focus, carries the

weight of signification" (80). Emphasized by Cuarón's use of the long take,[62] the film's

background of state proclamations, cages, and military checkpoints gathers into a violent,

uncannily familiar biopolitical order.

My aim here is to extend critical discussion of *Children*'s cinematic background

by focusing on the figure of Kee (Clare Hope-Ashitey), the miraculously pregnant illegal

immigrant whose gendered and racialized body constitutes the hyper-visible

"background" against which Theo's narrative of conversion takes shape.[63] Bracketing the

white male anti-hero whose journey from apathy to reawakening serves, according to

Žižek, as "a kind of prism through which you see the background even more sharply"

("Hope"), I consider Kee both in relation to and *as* the biopolitical landscape of the film.

Hers is the body across which the biopolitics of statelessness and reproduction meet,

prompting a clandestine journey to the southern coast of England in search of a boat

called *Tomorrow*. The emissary of a rumoured collective known as the Human Project—a

transnational group of scientists dedicated to curing female infertility—the *Tomorrow*

ostensibly represents a cosmopolitan alternative to English insularity, that is, to a

government that "will take [Kee's] baby and parade a posh black English lady as the

---

[62] As critic James Udden observes, "the longest take in the film is over seven minutes in duration" (31) and occurs in the climactic scenes at the Bexhill refugee camp. Beyond a handful of extraordinarily long takes such as this, though, it is worth noting that *Children of Men* has "an average shot length of just over sixteen seconds per, an astonishing figure for a present-day Hollywood feature which sometimes can average less than two seconds per shot" (29).

[63] Kee is unsure about the identity of the father of her baby. After jokingly claiming that she is a virgin, she asserts, "I don't know half the wankers' names." While this may be read as evidence of Kee's sexual agency—a reading supported by her flippant tone and self-conscious play on the idea of Immaculate Conception—it also evokes the possibility of sexual violence in a world that has "collapsed" (*Children*). I will return to questions of rape, race, and paternal identity in the conclusion of this chapter.

mother" (*Children*). Yet, straightforwardly hopeful constructions of the Human Project derive from readings of the film that privilege Theo's psychic and political trajectory: the arrival of the boat in the final shots of the film materializes the new, better world that he purchases at the cost of his life. As I will demonstrate, when read in the light of Kee's embodied struggles, the end of the film is ambiguous at best. Rather than closing the deal on Theo's sacrifice, the arrival of the *Tomorrow* gestures to a deferred transaction, begging questions about what Kee will exchange for safe passage, and resurfacing slave economies and histories of sexual servitude.

By pursuing a material engagement with the film, this chapter troubles a tendency, noticeable in the majority of reviews and analyses of *Children of Men*, to read the infertility on which the narrative is premised as a metaphor for the spiritual, political, and/or cultural decline of the West (cf. Brennan 2007; Dargis 2006; Schwartzman 2009; Žižek 2007, 2008). Exemplified by Žižek's commentaries, such interpretations write the story of Theo's spiritual resurrection across the body of a pregnant black woman. If, for Žižek, "the true infertility" in the film is constituted by the "lack of meaningful historical experience" and the "ideological despair of late capitalism" ("Hope"), then the apathetic and exhausted male protagonist embodies this barrenness. A descendent of the Nietzschean "Last Man"—a being without passion, valuing survival over the riskiness of action and worldly engagement (Žižek, "Clash")—Theo's awakening from passive nihilism to hope in response to the miracle of new life provides him with a second, indirect chance at reproductive success. As he dies from a gunshot wound in a small, fragile rowboat at the end of the film, Kee informs him that she will name her baby girl

144

"Dylan" after his dead son. When it is read as a conversion narrative centered on Theo, *Children of Men* appears to symbolically displace fecundity onto the martyred protector and, as the title indicates, aligns regeneration and inheritance with paternity. Such readings reproduce the patriarchal conservatism of the film's source material—PD James' novel, *The Children of Men* (1992), which I discuss in the next section—by failing to adequately account for Cuarón's and his fellow screenwriters' *invention* of Kee, a woman whose embodied, maternal labour is doubled by "the cultural labor her image performs" (Chaudhary 96).[64]

Oscillating, as Chaudhary notes, between fetish and allegorical sign, the figure of Kee is both opaque and overdetermined. I engage the corporeal dimensions of in/fertility in *Children of Men* in order to contribute to an emerging body of critical work on race, gender, and the politics of representation in the film (cf. Bateman and Dickman 2009; Chaudhary 2009; Korte 2008; Latimer 2011). I thus take what Alys Weinbaum calls the "race/reproduction bind"—an "ideological constellation" that supports visions of the nation as a reproducible "racial formation" (5, 19)—as central to biopolitical analysis. Inspired by the interplay of foreground and background in two crucial scenes—Kee's revelation of her pregnancy to Theo in a barn, and the final shot of the film, in which she sits adrift in a rowboat awaiting the arrival of the *Tomorrow*—I interpret Kee in relation to two intersecting strands of literature and theory. The first is a lineage of dystopian

---

[64] My characterization of Kee as "invented" is a nod to Hortense J. Spillers' essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," the opening lines of which serve as the epigraph to Chaudhary's essay. Spillers writes, "I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented" (65). I return to Spillers' work in Chapter Five, when I consider *The Wire*'s representation of black motherhood.

speculative fiction premised on fantasies of in/fertility and reproductive control. The most

pertinent of these is Margaret Atwood's contentious feminist classic, *The Handmaid's*

Tale (1985), which can be read as an antecedent to James' novel. The second strand is

transatlantic studies combined with literatures of empire and slavery: these materially

haunted and haunting perspectives allow me to read Kee's encounter with the boat called

Tomorrow in terms of a long history of trans-Atlantic trafficking in "capital, bodies, [and]

babies" (Weinbaum 2). I create a dialogue between Atwood's formulation of the female

body as "treacherous ground" to which one listens "for rumours of the future" (84) and

the focus in transatlantic studies on a submerged oceanic landscape, an "alluvial bed"

composed of the sedimentary traces of drowned slaves (Baucom 318). My aim in doing

this is to generate a more elastic, and, indeed, a more diasporic, conception of

"back/ground" than the one thus far invoked in considerations of Cuarón's formal

techniques. I read Kee both as a feminized, racialized bodily landscape and in relation to

"the Atlantic's submarine, exceptional […] grounds" (Baucom 315), and, in so doing, I

critically excavate the overlapping histories shaping the arrival of the first child born in

nearly two decades.

Milking machines: dystopian fiction and the end of whiteness

"You know what they do to these cows? They cut off their tits." Kee's

disembodied voice addresses Theo as the camera tracks his progress into a cattle barn,

revealing stacks of hay, milking apparatuses, and dairy cows before settling on Kee

herself. Standing inside a pen along with the lactating animals, she is visible from the

waist up, captured from a distance and framed by milking machines as she reflects on the violence of industrial agriculture: "Four tits fits the machine. It's wacko. Why not make machines that suck eight titties, eh?"[65] When Kee disrobes to reveal her swollen breasts and belly to a startled Theo—the camera tilting up from a bovine snout and a tagged ear, and Kee's protruding belly initially out of focus in the background of the shot—the image of a miraculously pregnant female body inside of a barn exemplifies how *Children* both inherits and mutates the Messianic symbolism of its literary predecessor. While it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive account of the film as an adaptation, it is important to consider the layers of history and narrative that are embedded in and reworked by its shift away from the novelistic "triad of white man—white woman—white [male] child" (Chaudhary 74). Even as *Children* allegorizes a post-9/11 moment dominated by discourses of terrorism, security, and fundamentalism, it is also shaped by the historical context in which James' dystopia was written: Thatcherism and its aftermath, which, as I discussed in Chapter One, contributed to the consolidation of neoliberal hegemony. With this in mind, and as I indicated in my Introduction, I read the images that organize this chapter in Benjaminian terms: as images that flash up "at a moment of danger," imploring us to sift through the accumulating "wreckage" of modernity that constitutes our inheritance (Benjamin, "Theses" 255, 257). The spectacle of a black female refugee surrounded by milking machines and petitioning a white man for help evokes a complex history of violent dispossession. It also raises important questions about the gendered and racial politics of James' and Cuarón's respective fantasies of infertility. What kinds of

---

[65] See Chaudhary for a detailed reading of Kee's visual alignments with animality.

bodies—and whose losses—do these narratives lament? How does a racist inscription of "animal-like hyperfertility" (Chaudhary 97) haunt Kee, and how is this linked to national fantasies in which "foreigners" are imagined as besieging a vulnerable, white social body? To what extent do apocalyptic visions of falling birth rates coincide with anxieties about the reproducibility of whiteness?

If, in its novelistic form, *The Children of Men* assuages these anxieties by reconstructing the white, heterosexual family unit in its final pages, then Cuarón's adaptation pointedly—and, in fact, violently—disturbs the articulations among whiteness, paternal power, and national futures that James attempts to stabilize. This disturbance takes shape, in part, as the haunting presence of destroyed, speechless figures of white femininity. After Theo's train journey initiates viewers into the ideological and juridical world of Britain in 2027, Cuarón provides glimpses of a counter-narrative of state violence and activist contestation. Having arrived at the secluded home of his friends, Jasper (Michael Caine) and Janice Palmer (Philippa Urquhart), Theo surveys a window taped with old newspaper clippings and anti-war fliers. A handheld camera moves across Jasper's and Janice's awards for, respectively, political cartoonist and photojournalist of the year; newspaper headlines with Janice's byline, including "90% Infertility," "No Baby Hope, Admit Scientists," "Channel Tunnel Closed," and "All Foreigners Now Illegal"; and comes briefly to rest on an image of Janice beneath the headline, "MI5 Deny Involvement in Torture of Photojournalist." After a shot of Theo greeting an unresponsiveness Janice, the camera cuts back to the window, slowly zooming in on a family photograph of Theo with his estranged wife, Julian (Julianne Moore), and their

son, Dylan, who died of influenza at a young age. Not only does the photograph, as Chaudhary claims, "accentuat[e] the vulnerability of the white, heterosexual nuclear family cast adrift in a sea of global atrocities and futile public displays of protest" (74), but it also re-frames James' novelistic family unit as "a thing of the past" (Chaudhary 74). Cuarón violently forecloses on the possibility of reconstituting this image of the family when, early in the film, Julian is shot and dies. The Palmers' window archive both crafts a narrative of twenty-first-century Britain dominated by state violence and, by linking Janice to Julian—the former tortured into muteness and the latter shot in the throat—conjures the gendered violence that James works hard to exorcise from the conclusion of her novel. *Children* refuses to locate the possibility of national repair in the white, heterosexual nuclear family, responding instead to James' evasion of gendered state violence by presenting a series of white, female British activists—from Janice's violated body to Julian's bloody death to the midwife Miriam's (Pam Ferris) execution at Bexhill—destroyed by their opposition to the authoritarian state. In this connection, it becomes important for my materialist reading to consider Cuarón's mobilization of racialized femininities in the context of the racial and gender politics of its novelistic predecessor, along with the genre that frames it.

James' *The Children of Men* (1992) belongs to a constellation of Western dystopian narratives shaped by neoliberal economic restructuring and the conservative backlash of the 1980s and 90s.[66] Its vision of a total state that manages increasingly

---

[66] For a thorough account of the literary history and political economy of dystopian narrative strategies, see Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000).

superfluous segments of the population—organized mass suicides of the elderly known as

the "Quietus," permanent quarantining of dissidents and criminals on the Isle of Man, the

deportation of aging "Sojourners," or migrant workers—speaks to the political and

economic disposability that accompanies state-supported capitalist restructuring. But the

utopian alternative lurking at the fringes of this declining system is itself a product of

1980s and 90s cultural conservatism: the pastoral and decidedly Christian birth scene at

the end of the novel equates hope with repairing the white, heterosexual nuclear family.

James' novel maps the distinction between the "strong," dystopian state and the utopian

resurrection of family values onto a contrast between two scenes of birth. Envisioning

"the high sterile bed, the banks of machines […], the distinguished obstetricians

summoned from retirement, […] the television cameras with their crews" (268)—all

presided over by his cousin, Xan Lyppiatt, "the dictator and Warden of England" (4)—

Theo decides, instead, to bring the pregnant Julian to a woodshed in Wychwood Forest.

Repelled by the possibility of a spectacular public birth—"there would be no simple

shepherds at this cradle" (James 235)—Theo and Julian retreat to a forest refuge that

aligns a Christian worldview with a privatized, familial utopian horizon. As Lee Edelman

notes in his critique of the novel, James thus positions the reproductive family unit as a

force of redemption in decadent Western societies suffering from a "putative crisis in

sexual values" (Edelman 11-12).

    Yet, there is a detail in the final pages of *The Children of Men* that threatens to

collapse James' distinction between utopian/private and dystopian/public and suggests

that Julian's body is, indeed, national property. When Theo shoots Xan and dons his

cousin's ring of state, eliciting "a shadow in [Julian's] eyes" just prior to the baby's

christening (James 288), the reconstituted family and the revitalization of white

Englishness merge into a single project defined by paternal lines of inheritance. The baby

boy, whose "sex […] was like a proclamation" (272), is named after both Luke, his

biological father, and Theo, who will raise him along with Julian. Since *male* sterility is

explicitly identified as the primary cause of childlessness in James' narrative, Theo's

claim on Xan's vacated position is tied to his paternal appropriation of Julian's baby who,

we assume, has inherited Luke's capacity to reproduce. And while Julian's physical

deformity—the misshapen hand that kept her off "the list of women from whom the new

race would be bred if ever a fertile male was discovered" (46)—renders her suspect, the

baby boy who "needed no encouragement to suck" (275) establishes her body, at least

temporarily, as valuable state property. At the same time, Theo's sterility means that he

avoids becoming "a breeding, experimental animal" even as he ascends to the position of

"father of the new race" (198)—a rise to power founded on his claim to Julian's body and

offspring.

The collapse of family and state as symbolized by the ring in *The Children of Men*

recalls Margaret Atwood's conception of a patriarchal line of power extending from the

households of the elite to the theocratic Republic of Gilead. Written shortly before James'

novel, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is a feminist reworking of the classical

dystopian separation of sex and reproduction. Bracketing the techno-scientific mediations

of reproduction in both Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-

Four* (1949), Atwood explores the gendering of biopower by imagining the embodied

experience of a woman who is, by virtue of her proven fertility, "a national resource" (Atwood 73). Framed as a first-person account of sexual slavery following a Christian fundamentalist coup of the American government, the "Handmaid" Offred's tale of enforced surrogacy takes place against the backdrop of sterility caused by ecological disaster. Atwood thus shares James' interest in the connection between authoritarian government and reproductive failure, and she, too, writes in the context of the rise of neoliberalism, the backlash against feminism, and the racial anxieties circulating in discourses about drugs, cities, and youth.[67] In its foregrounding of women's bodies as foundational to state power, *The Handmaid's Tale* "fleshes out" the gender violence that is implicit in James' dystopian birth scene and accounts, in part, for the bodily invasions that haunt Kee as she reflects on the cows whose "tits" are cut off to fit the milking machines. Along with its complicated racial politics, this "fleshing out" makes Atwood's novel an illuminating third text with which to triangulate the two versions of *Children of Men*.

Atwood's articulation of the gendered and racialized background of biopower with a paradoxical logic of in/visibility sheds light on Kee's position in relation to the visual field of *Children of Men*. Gilead's Handmaids are objects of intense surveillance even as they are meant to blend into the background of both domestic and public life. Dressed entirely in red with the exception of "white wings" around the face—"to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen" (Atwood 9)—the Handmaids are marked with

---

[67] See Faludi (1991), and see Latimer (2009) and Lauret (1994) for accounts of the anti-feminist backlash as context for Atwood's novel; and on the racialized dimensions of moral panics surrounding cities, drugs, and youth, see for example Hall et al. (1978), Macek (2006), and Tyler (2010).

tattoos that, as Offred reflects, anchor them into place as the Republic's maternal back/ground: "I cannot avoid seeing, now, the small tattoo on my ankle. Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. It's supposed to guarantee that I will never be able to fade, finally, into another landscape. I am too important, too scarce, for that. I am a national resource" (73). Aligned with Gilead's lawns and sidewalks as carefully tended state property, the Handmaids' place in the landscape of the new republic is haunted by the possibility of being declared barren. Since "there is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially" (68), the Handmaids have three chances—in three households—to conceive before they are labeled "Unwomen" and sent to the colonies. Barrenness, then, has its topographical double in the toxic wastelands beyond Gilead's borders, sites saturated with the chemicals and radiation of industrial modernity. Peopled by sterile "discards" (288), the toxicity of the colonial peripheries threatens to contaminate the Republic through the very bodies that are meant to guarantee its futurity. One in four births results in an "Unbaby," a mutant that marks its maternal ground as "polluted, dirty as an oily beach" (128-29). As Offred reflects, though, the spatial distinction between the (barely) fruitful centre of Gilead and its barren edges is unstable at best. She describes her own body—rendered docile by drugs, brainwashing, routine physical examinations, and monthly "ceremonial" rape—as "dry and white, […] something dead […], something deserted. I am like a room where things once happened and now nothing does, except the pollen of the weeds that grow up outside the window, blowing in as dust across the floor" (118). Offred's figuring of herself as a site of ruin gestures to racial anxieties wherein, materialized in the bodies of the Handmaids, whiteness becomes a dwindling "national

resource." Her white body is post-apocalyptic terrain, a deserted space on the verge of being overtaken by opportunistic outsiders "blowing in as dust."

If the dry, white body of the Handmaid locates a desert in the midst of Gilead and its households, then the colonies, as the histories evoked by the term suggest, are negatively racialized spaces. They are not only populated with old women, failed Handmaids, and "incorrigibles" (Atwood 288), but are also sites of resettlement for "the Children of Ham" (94). Incorporated into the narrative in the form of a headline on the evening news, this passing reference to the racism of the new regime is powerfully rendered in the film version of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990), wherein the process of deporting people of colour anticipates the visual grammar of cages and cattle corrals in Cuarón's film. Yet, in combination with what Maria Lauret has described as Atwood's "usurpation of African-American literary motifs for the writing of white femininity" (177), the author's formal relegation of race to the narrative "background" suggests that *The Handmaid's Tale* is both critical of and complicit in the racism of contemporary infertility fantasies.[68] Positioning Atwood's novel in the context of the rise of the New Right in the United States, Lauret makes a claim that also applies to James' British context: "the dystopia as a didactic form, as a political warning, is premised upon a problem which is only acute in the eyes of a white, conservative and traditionalist middle class worried about its own survival in the face of massive social, racial and ethnic rifts in

---

[68] For a more sympathetic reading of Atwood's engagement with slave narrative conventions, see Dodson, whose framing of *The Handmaid's Tale* not in terms of prediction, but as "a recollection of specific atrocities of the American experience" (68), resonates with my own approach to speculative/apocalyptic narratives. Nonetheless, I remain troubled by Atwood's construction of white handmaids through the conventions of such slave narratives as Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), and am unconvinced by Dodson's attribution of a great deal of self-reflexivity to *The Handmaid's Tale* on this point.

American society" (182). Just as James gestures to a history of "race riots" (James 47)

leading up to her narrative present, Atwood's falling birth rate—graphed as "a slippery

slope, down past the zero line of replacement, and down and down" (Atwood 130)—

associates futurelessness with the end of whiteness. Moreover, James Bowman's

problematic review of the film version of *Children of Men* indicates that this racist

narrative logic is grounded in reproductive white femininity. Celebrating James' novel for

its "accurate" (and bravely un-feminist) depiction of "the gradual depopulation of the

developed world through below-replacement fertility rates" (107), Bowman critiques

Cuarón's adaptation for its ostensibly inexplicable invention of Kee: "The movie makes

Julian into Theo's ex-wife and gives her child-bearing duties to a new character, Kee,

whose antecedents are as unexplained as her reasons for trying to escape the authorities"

(109). Kee's failure to "make sense" in this context speaks to the film's destabilization—

and, in fact, subtle surfacing—of a narrative logic that constructs infertility as a threat to

the reproduction of the white nation.

The figure of Kee lays bare a violent fantasy about the reproducibility of the

nation as a homogeneous "racial formation" (Weinbaum 4)—a fantasy that, as Bowman's

anxious complaint reveals, is underwritten by a myth of pure, transparent origins. In her

analysis of the "race/reproduction bind" that undergirds the nationalist and imperialist

ideologies of trans-Atlantic modernity, Alys Weinbaum explores figurations of "the

maternal body as either a repository of racial identity or a racializing force" (17). As a

racializing force—the bodily ground from which the next generation will emerge as

marked—Kee also embodies the opacity that, following Weinbaum's invocation of

Nietzschean genealogy, un-grounds the "truth" of racial/national identity. Kee's statelessness, her unknown ancestry, and her lack of knowledge about the identity of her baby's father all gesture to "a profusion of lost events" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81) that threatens to undo the rhetoric of a united Britain "soldiering on" in the midst of global chaos (*Children*). Moreover, Weinbaum asserts that racist and sexist forms of national memory pivot on the race/reproduction bind, lending a temporal dimension to Chaudhary's positioning of Kee as both fetish and allegorical sign. Standing in the cattle barn, the camera lingering on her "naked visibility" (Chaudhary 99), Kee obscures the investments that produce her body as overdetermined and spectacular; yet, as an allegory of alterity, she stands in for difference at the origin—a figuration of the genealogical task of excavating "the forgotten history, the repressed ground upon which we build our identities" (Weinbaum 46). Kee materializes the continuities between this historical ground—a shifting site composed of "the endlessly repeated play of dominations"—and the bodies that it marks with power and engraves with memories (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 85). Associated with cattle and framed by milking apparatuses, she implicates modern (British) biopower in a history of slavery, unveiling the violence implicit in James' imagined renewal of humanity in the figure of a white baby boy "who needed no encouragement to suck" (275).

Read in relation to James' suckling white baby, Cuarón's shot of Kee standing among dairy cattle underscores the violent entanglement of white masculinity and reproductive black femininity in the making of a New World. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), a text that I will discuss more fully in my next chapter, distills these embodied

156

power relations into a scene of violation that its protagonist, Sethe, cannot exorcise from her overburdened memory: "two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up" (65-66). An extension of schoolteacher's[69] lesson about categorizing the Sweet Home slaves' various characteristics as either "human" or "animal" (Morrison 183), the encounter articulates scientific racism with the infanticidal organization of slave economies—with breast milk stolen from black mothers to nourish "little whitebabies […] first" (190).[70] Sethe's trauma resonates in Kee's scene in the cattle barn, highlighting the violent extraction of maternal labour from black women's bodies that both enabled and destabilized the (re)production of white America in the context of slavery and after. Morrison's novel foregrounds the operations of sexual violence and racial terror in the project of carving a New World out of the ruins of communities, epistemologies, and lifeworlds ruptured by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. If *Children of Men* envisions a "world [that] has collapsed" (*Children*) into smoke and chaos, then the material burden of renewal falls on Kee and her baby girl, Dylan—precarious lives whose gendered and racialized embodiments compel us to attend to the "histories of arrival" (Ahmed, *Queer* 38) that shape their encounter with *Tomorrow*.

---

[69] In both this chapter and the next, I will follow Morrison's lead in not capitalizing "schoolteacher" (except where the appellation begins a sentence), since I see it as a move that subtly undermines Sethe's overseer at Sweet Home even as it grants him a title.

[70] I will elaborate on the racism that structures the infanticidal economy of survival(ism) in the next chapter.

Fragments and lullabies: the sound of *Children*

The cinematic background through which I am excavating the histories and

"contact zones" (cf. Pratt 1991) that un/ground Western modernity is composed of both

visual and aural registers. Inspired by William Whittington's observations about the

incorporation of Eastern spiritual traditions into *Children*'s sound design—from Miriam's

rhythmic chanting over Julian's body to composer John Tavener's use of Tibetan prayer

bowls in the orchestral film score (9-10)—I want to consider the significance of a Hindu

prayer included among Cuarón's proliferating historical and cultural allusions. Miriam's

and Jasper's repetitions of "Shantih shantih shantih" not only evoke "Britain's history of

colonialism in relation to India" (Whittington 9), but also refer to the final line of T.S.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).[71] Eliot's fragments culminate in meditations framed by

one of the philosophical texts at the root of Hinduism, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,

including the formal conclusion, "Shantih shantih shantih" (l. 434), which he loosely

translates in a note as "the Peace which passeth understanding" (54, n. 434). If *The Waste

Land* feminizes infertility in order to materialize its vision of a Western tradition in

ruins—rewriting the metropolitan seat of the British Empire as an apocalyptic No Man's

Land—then its concluding section draws on Eastern otherness to offer the merest hint of

the possibility of rejuvenation. Among the fragments "shored against [the] ruins" (l. 431)

---

[71] Like *Children*, Eliot's poem imbricates a decaying metropolitan landscape—an
"Unreal" London teeming with ghosts in the wake of the First World War (ll. 60-63)—with
visions of childlessness and failed heterosexual union. From Lil's abortion (ll. 158-61) to the
mechanical, barely consensual sex between the typist and the clerk (ll. 239-42), *The Waste Land*
writes anxieties about a culturally, morally, and politically barren modernity onto figures of non-
reproductive femininity. For analyses of *The Waste Land* in relation to Britain's imperial history,
see Esty (2004) and Sherry (2007), and for an exploration of the politics of reproduction in Eliot,
see Hauck (2003).

of the Western subject and his lands are the parable of the thunder and the prayer for peace found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, a trans-cultural "borrowing" entangled with the British colonization of India and with Orientalist constructions of an exotic, sensuous East. As an early-twentieth-century vision of British barrenness and one of Cuarón's intertextual references, *The Waste Land* sheds light on the ideological burdening of racialized femininities in *Children*: the ruined bodies of white women stand in for the apocalyptic "old world," while black femininity promises to (re)produce the new.

The two articulations of "Shantih shantih shantih" in *Children of Men* complicate, even as they highlight, this division of representational labour. At the scene of Julian's makeshift funeral, the camera travels the length of her corpse in close-up, beginning at the boots and following Miriam's hands as they hover over her pelvic area, her chest, and finally her face. As Miriam places a small ornament on Julian's brow, she intones, "Shantih shantih shantih," before wrapping the body in a blanket. The scene not only lingers over the spectacularly destroyed female body that is essential to apocalyptic visions—Julian's white shirt is drenched in blood, and a bullet hole is visible on the right side of her neck—but it also anchors the introduction of the orchestral film score, which has been absent from the film up to this point, in a destroyed corporeal terrain. When Theo walks away from the improvised service, eventually dropping to his knees and sobbing, Julian's body remains in the distant background of the shot as Tavener's "Fragments of a Prayer" overpowers the midwife's chanting. Here, the aptly named original composition begins to shore up, to borrow Eliot's phrasing, a "pattern of sonic

dissolution" that dominates the first part of the film (Whittington 5).[72] Whittington's

argument that "['Fragments'] rises from the bed of the soundtrack to take Julian's place"

is instructive (9-10). It leads him to link the possibility of repair and transcendence with

Julian's spectral—that is, sonic—presence throughout the remainder of the film. Thus,

when "Fragments" swells again in the film's final moments, as Theo is dying and Kee

announces that she will name her baby Dylan after his and Julian's son, Whittington reads

this ending as the reunification of "the family of Julian, Theo and child […] in death"

(12). This rewriting of Dylan as Theo and Julian's progeny appropriates Kee's maternal

labour in order to symbolically reconstitute the nuclear family. According to this logic,

the sounds of children laughing, shouting, and giggling that accompany the closing title

card index a revitalized future that issues from Theo and Julian. This "sonic flash-

forward" (Whittington 12) inscribes a horizon that, as Chaudhary notes, "avoids […] the

visual economies of difference on which [the film] has relied thus far" (75)—a

mobilization of sound and spirit that transcodes the white nuclear family into a post-racial

utopia.

The flash-forward to a utopian "prattle of child sounds" that precedes language,

subjectivity, and difference elides Kee's and Dylan's insistent materiality, rendering them

the "repressed ground" of a projected New World (Chadhaury 75, Weinbaum 46). Yet,

the hopefulness expressed in the film's second invocation of "Shantih shantih shantih"—

---

[72] This pattern begins with the opening title card, which flashes onto the screen a few minutes into the film. After an explosion in the coffee shop that he has just left shakes Theo, "Children of Men" appears in fully capitalized white lettering against a black background. The title is accompanied by a high-pitched ringing sound that continues into the next scene, a "point of audition" (Whittington 5) that emanates from Theo's body and represents, as Julian later explains, the "swan song" of dying ear cells that portends permanent frequency loss.

Jasper's joyful follow-up to his assertion that "Kee, your baby is the miracle the whole world's been waiting for"—is undermined by the histories of gendered and racial violence that remain visible in the frame even as Jasper makes his exit. On learning that Julian's death was a leadership coup planned by members of the Fishes (the militant, pro-refugee activist group that she led), a desperate Theo takes Miriam and Kee to the Palmers' house. There, Jasper serves a meal as they all discuss how to make contact with the *Tomorrow*. As Jasper hits on a plan that will involve smuggling the trio *into* the Bexhill Refugee Camp, the camera takes up Kee's position at the table, capturing Jasper as he leaves Janice's side and moves towards the door at the back of his living/dining room. The bibbed and silent Janice stays in the right foreground of the shot, intermittently chewing the mouthful of stir-fry that Jasper has just fed her, as her husband shuffles around in the background—directly in front of the window archive that, as I outlined in the last section, records decades of state violence and xenophobia. Though the details of the newspaper clippings are indiscernible from this distance, the presence of the tortured photojournalist reminds us of the intersections of gender, racial, and generational politics that structure the operations of biopower. Janice stands in for the history that she once documented, a narrative in which the panic over infertility leads directly into racist forms of national retrenchment. Silently attesting to state terrorism even as her husband, now off-screen, playfully shouts yet another "Shantih shantih shantih," Janice indexes the power of the state to reach into bodies—even, and especially, into a bodily vessel containing "the miracle the whole world's been waiting for."

Jasper's vision of a suspended world alludes to the pressures coalescing around Dylan's impending arrival. As Sara Ahmed has demonstrated, the promise of a happy future is premised on both the active forgetting of unhappy histories and mobilizations of "straightening device[s]" that forcibly discourage social and subjective waywardness (*Promise* 145). Shaped by the criminalization of dissent, the warehousing and extermination of refugees, and the medical surveillance of women's bodies, the Britain and, indeed, the world "waiting" for Dylan reactivates long histories of biopolitical intervention in order to hold open the possibility of a recognizable national future. While Ahmed reads *Children* primarily in terms of Theo's conversion, her emphasis on the film's "rather awkward temporalities" dovetails with her broader interest in "the gap between inheritance and reproduction": a space-time of suspension wherein both pasts and futures become sites of contestation (*Promise* 164, 196). Let me suggest, building on Ahmed, that "slow" apocalyptic visions dilate the gap between inheritance and the horizons of futurity that it opens up. This is the moment of suspension into which Dylan arrives, re-beginning the passing of generational time. "The arrival," Ahmed writes, "is also what takes time. If time is what passes, then the time it takes for something to happen is the time of perversion. We might say that time is what makes the future perverse" (*Promise* 180). Moreover, the arrival has its own histories, its own "numberless beginnings" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81), any combination of which might surface to shape unrecognizable futures. To return to the ideas I explored in my Introduction, Ahmed's emphasis on "histories of arrival" (*Queer* 38) highlights the socio-political, economic, material and embodied histories that shape Dylan's encounter with the world, and the

Arendtian principle of natality—according to which Dylan is a "newcomer," or an "arrival" (Arendt, *Between* 185)—registers the unpredictable recombinations of these histories that Dylan may effect. Moreover, as I have argued, natality implicitly roots both conditioning histories and spontaneous potentialities in a maternal back/ground that is neither fixed nor transparent.

Not coincidentally, Kee's name is a homophone for *chi*, an Igbo term for the soul or spirit double (Achebe 67) that encodes her embodiment of histories that both constrain and enable her child. As Nigerian novelist and literary critic Chinua Achebe explains, chi is more than the spiritual complement to one's earthly being; it is also one's "unique creator," and the divinity that shapes one's destiny (69-70). Yet, Achebe emphasizes that the relationship between chi and its earthly creation is not strictly deterministic. Rather, in a cosmology in which individuals negotiate and receive their "portion in life generally" before they arrive into the world, chi "presides over the bargaining" that establishes the talents and character traits that impact one's worldly fortunes more broadly (69). In Paul Edwards and Rosalind Shaw's formulation, it is a "spiritual entity which personifies the words spoken to the creator deity by the individual before birth when choosing his or her life-course" (149). Without positing a neat allegorical equivalence between Kee and (Dylan's) chi, it is worth reflecting on the temporal structuring of agency embedded in this West African spiritual concept: chi gestures to a history of arrival—a pre-birth set of negotiations—that shapes one's possible futures. Like Arendt's formulations of natality, the Igbo creator-chi brackets (even as it appropriates the functions of) the maternal body that materializes arrival. This elision resonates with the filmic and ideological structures

163

of in/visibility that render Kee a hyper-visible back/ground to *Children*'s unfolding

action—an unstable figuration that echoes in the aural overlapping of "Kee" and "chi."

The interplay of predestination and agency that chi represents in Igbo cosmology

registers, if obliquely, in slave narrative autobiographies, and resonates particularly

powerfully in relation to the turns of fortune attached to ships in that genre. In their

investigation of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789),

Edwards and Shaw argue that the "central position given to God's providence [in

Equiano's narrative] had its root in the Igbo conception of *chi*" (146), a spiritual concept

drawn from what they, following Achebe, characterize as a "'half-remembered

childhood'" in Igboland (Achebe qtd. in Edwards and Shaw 147). Rooted in a memory

fragmented by the routes of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, chi is reanimated as the

Christian notion of divine providence that mediates between agency, constraint, and

chance in early African American life writing. These texts ambivalently construct ships—

to which they often link God's interventions in the worldly fortunes of enslaved Africans

and African Americans—as sites of both mobility and horror.[73] While Equiano repeatedly

attributes his surviving and distinguishing himself at sea to "the particular interposition of

Heaven" (102), his earliest memories of enslaved life associate European ships with a

profound fear of whiteness. Equiano's first sight of a slave ship provokes "terror" as the

---

[73] Frederick Douglass writes that "divine Providence" first manifests in his life in the form of the ship that carries him to Baltimore from a Maryland plantation (43); and Harriet Jacobs, after seven years in hiding in a tiny garret above her grandmother's shed, rejoices in the "air and sunlight" while "sailing on Chesapeake Bay" during her escape to Philadelphia from North Carolina (316). Jacobs' experience here recalls Douglass' apostrophizing of the "beautiful vessels, robed in purest white" on Chesapeake Bay, which he sees as the embodiment of freedom for free men (71-72). Douglass' enslavement lends ambivalence to this vision, though: the sails that metonymize freedom for free men are, to him, "so many shrouded ghosts [come] to terrify and torment [Douglass] with thoughts of [his] wretched condition" (72).

sight of "white men with horrible looks" presiding over "a large furnace of copper

boiling, and a multitude of black people […] chained together," convinces him that the

European crew intends to eat him (70). Equiano recalibrates the ship as a site of racial

terror and European predation, "a world of bad spirits" (70) through which enslaved black

subjects pass on their way to the New World.

In the final moments of *Children of Men*, as John Tavener's score swells and the

Tomorrow emerges from the fog along the southern English coast, Kee sings a lullaby

that evokes the affective and corporeal intensities of watery crossings for black subjects.

As the camera provides a brief, angled close-up of the *Tomorrow*—tilting up the fishing

boat's hull and lingering on the chains that run the length of its deck[74]—Kee sings a

Ghanaian cradle song, "Kaafo" or "Don't Cry," to comfort her child. Her voice quietly

mixes with and outlasts the final strains of Tavener's "Fragments," combining soothing

sounds with lyrics that seek to ward off dispossession: "Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry for

someone to look in your mouth / A gold nugget is in your mouth / Don't cry for someone

to look in your mouth" (English translation in Agawu 99). Even as Kee assures Dylan that

they are "safe now," the lullaby locates a precious metal within the infant and evokes a

history of imperial violence on the Gold Coast, thereby highlighting that Dylan's body is

contested terrain—a site across which the schemas of modern biopower translate

humanness into capital, labour, and/or reproductive value. "Kaafo" conjures violent

---

[74] Given Cuarón's interventions in the Christian symbolism of his source material, the
fact that the *Tomorrow* is specifically a fishing boat—thus evocative of Jesus' injunction to his
disciples to be "fishers of men" (*King James*, Matt. 4.19)—generates a complex association with
the dysfunctional revolutionary group, the Fishes, from whom Kee flees. In light of their attempts
to appropriate Dylan for their own purposes, the Fishes bolster my claim, which I pursue in detail
in the next section, that we should be skeptical about the Human Project and its salvationist boat.

histories of contact and exchange that haunt the *Tomorrow*, demanding a critical interpretation of the deferred encounter that ends the film. As I will explore in the next section, straightforwardly optimistic readings of the arrival of the *Tomorrow* elide the stolen bodies and unfree labour that have, historically, built New Worlds. Ahmed links such optimism to the European imaginary that prompted Foucault to conceptualize the boat as "'heterotopia *par excellence*'": "'a floating piece of space, a place without a place,'" and one that, significantly, "'goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens'" (Foucault qtd. in Ahmed, *Promise* 275, n. 25). This vision of the boat, Ahmed writes, teaches us "how much the technologies of utopia are also technologies of capital and empire" (275, n. 25)—ones that allowed Europeans to forcibly extract "precious treasures" from colonial gardens, or gold nuggets from infant bodies.

Tomorrow: modernity's exceptional grounds

In the final shot of *Children of Men*, Kee sits adrift in a rowboat off the Bexhill coast with Theo's fresh corpse slumped in front of her and her day-old infant cradled to her chest. As the *Tomorrow* approaches, the grey of sea and sky fuses with the smoke drifting from Dylan's ruined birthplace: the Bexhill Refugee Camp, site of a recently quelled 'fugee uprising. Only the red light on a nearby buoy, flaring a brief warning, punctuates the monochromatic composition of the scene. The watery gap that Cuarón sustains in this final image troubles easily optimistic readings of the anticipated meeting between Kee and the Human Project. I suggest that the latter is fraught with peril for a

black stateless woman whose value is imagined as inhering in her reproductive body—a

body that also encodes risks tied up with the threat of difference. What will Kee exchange

for safe passage on the *Tomorrow*? How does the specter of a deferred transaction haunt

the ending of *Children of Men*, implicating its vision of renewed futurity in a history of

trans-Atlantic trafficking in bodies? The gap between Kee's and Dylan's gendered and

racialized bodies, on the one hand, and the boat that promises salvation, on the other,

persists in the final shot of the film. Transatlantic studies scholars such as Ian Baucom

conceive of this counter-history as "floatingly rooted in the Atlantic's submarine,

exceptional, and alluvial grounds" (Baucom 315), a space-time shaped by the economic

and political violence inherent in the "states of exception" in which modern sovereignty

(un-)grounds itself.[75] Influenced by this work, I argue that Cuarón's suspended ending

evokes a counter-history of modernity that emphatically resituates Foucault's floating

heterotopia amid circuits of exchange, expropriation, and terror.

Even as "Theo's death anticipates a postwhite future" (Chaudhary 78), the sea

itself, site of the beginning of a modernity that capitalizes on bodies and ruins—and

bodies in ruins—haunts the re-beginning that Kee and Dylan represent. *Tomorrow*'s

---

[75] Baucom's work has been inspiring for my own, as he, too, marks some of the critically productive points of overlap between transatlantic studies and biopolitical theory. Specifically, Baucom points out that Martinican novelist and philosopher Édouard Glissant's language of exceptionality—animated by a vision of drowning slaves, "a vision of exceptional suffering and of those violently excepted from history" (Baucom 310)—resonates with the "state of exception" theorized by Giorgio Agamben, Carl Schmitt, and Walter Benjamin. Yet, Glissant's focus on *relation*, like Benjamin's interest in redemption, opens up possibilities for theorizing geographies of modern biopower beyond Agamben's exemplary camp space: as Baucom explains, Glissant understands "the abysmal spaces of the slave ship, slave plantation, and underwater slave burial ground as not only evidencing the exceptional sovereign power of trans-Atlantic capital and trans-Atlantic race terror but also as seeding the alluvial ground of a transverse, relational mode of being in the world whose elaboration is the task of his *Poetics* […]" (317).

claim on a woman of indeterminate African origins evokes the "drowning grounds" of the

Atlantic (Baucom 329), the submerged oceanic landscape that shapes the conceptual

vocabulary of transatlantic cultural studies. From this standpoint, Žižek's argument that

the boat is an effective political "solution" to Kee's plight because it is "rootless"

("Hope") evades the Atlantic ground—the "exceptional historical catastrophe"—from

which the time of modernity "piles up" (Baucom 320). In combination with the

supposedly transnational composition of The Human Project, this evasion renders the

Tomorrow an exemplar of liberal cosmopolitanism and its fantasy of disinterestedness.

For Žižek, the boat is a "wonderful metaphor" pointing to the cutting of one's roots as the

condition for political and spiritual renewal ("Hope"). Even for Chaudhary, who

otherwise carefully attends to the complexities of Kee's presence in the film, the final

scene offers a problematic "theological solution" (87), wherein the arrival of the

Tomorrow sutures the critically productive disjunction between cinematic foreground and

background. But let me build on Chaudhary's insight that, at the level of both sound and

symbolism, this final scene recalls the image of Kee in the cattle barn, in order to suggest

that it opens up an alternative reading of Cuarón's ending:

> If the final sequence promises an oceanic plenitude, and a theological
> solution to a fallen world, it also recalls an earlier image of plenitude,
> complete with the identical segment of Tavener's "Fragments of a Prayer"
> playing in the background. This is the sequence in which Kee reveals her
> pregnancy to Theo and the camera makes, quite literally, a spectacle of her
> body for Theo and for us. (93)

The first image reinforces Kee's vulnerability to a violent biopolitical order, conjuring a

history of chattel slavery authorized by ideological associations of blackness with

animality. The final image, then, is structured by a deferred encounter between two

"vessels," an encounter that re-surfaces the exceptional spaces of biopolitical modernity, beginning with the corporeal traces on the ocean floor. In this way, it becomes possible for me to reframe Chaudhary's "oceanic plenitude" as an open "wound" in the Atlantic— a traumatic past that "cannot cease to alter all the future-presents that flow out of it" (Baucom 330).

By recalling the histories of imperial violence and racial terror that are encoded in Equiano's vision of a predatory European ship, Kee's singing of "Kaafo" in the final shot of *Children of Men* lends an ominous inflection to the *Tomorrow*. Shot from the front, its black bow and two front lights evocative of a large mouth and gleaming eyes, the boat registers as a monstrous, potentially devouring apparition emerging from the gloom—an impression that is intensified by the red light on the buoy, flashing its warning and creating visual continuity with the boat's lights. Given the nearly uninterrupted greyness of this final sequence, the lights on the boat and the buoy operate as visual echoes of a slightly earlier source of reddish-orange glow: the barely glimpsed explosions, mere flashes on the horizon, that mark the destruction of Bexhill as it is bombed from the air by the British military just after Kee's and Theo's departure. Foucault's description of the genealogical field as "gray"—and of the genealogist as necessarily attuned to the "hints of color" that index "numberless beginnings" —inspires me to historicize these colourful flashes ("Nietzsche" 76, 81). The reddish-orange punctuations in Cuarón's grey cinematographic palate illuminate a genealogy of exceptional spaces that reveals intimate connections between the "drowning grounds" of the Atlantic (Baucom 329) and the ruined camp at Bexhill. Following a series of transatlantic theorists who connect the

slums, prisons, detainment centres, and ghettos of global modernity to the "middle-passage" from which that modernity emerges (Baucom 313; cf. Gilroy 1993; Glissant 1997; McKittrick 2006; Wacquant 2001), I locate Bexhill—the space in which Dylan enters the world—in a history of *grounds* that, ostensibly, reify and stabilize difference, rendering some lives more valuable and "livable" than others (cf. Butler 2009).

Furthermore, Katherine McKittrick's feminist contributions to transatlantic studies allow me to complicate Baucom's focus on submarine burial grounds and spectral slaves by attending to black women's embodied negotiations of "locations of captivity" (McKittrick xvi). Isolated by the sea on one side and by vast stretches of empty fields on the others, Bexhill is no longer "proper" to the English state that operates it as a dumping ground for illegal immigrants. It is, rather, coded as uninhabitable or impossible ground at the fringes of national territory. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter's analyses of the European voyages of discovery, McKittrick traces "geographies of domination" (x) rooted in the epistemological ruptures initiated by contact. Her attention to the challenges that the New World posed to accepted fifteenth-century geographies extends Baucom's oceanic grounds both spatially and historically: the "landmasses [of the Western hemisphere] should have been […] submerged: these areas were comprehensively non-navigable, uninhabitable, unlivable, and oceanic" (McKittrick 128). Recasting this impossibly oceanic New World as simultaneously "virgin" and "empty" land, European explorers linked the invention of race to ritually feminized space, producing what Wynter calls "Man's geographies" (McKittrick xxii; cf. Loomba 1998; McClintock 1995; Wynter 1990). The European coding of unknown spaces as uninhabitable locates and naturalizes

difference in order to produce Western Man as the epitome of humanness. The film's

evocation of this spatial legacy in the forms of both Bexhill and the *Tomorrow* lends a

potentially ironic twist to its title. Read from the perspective offered by feminist

transatlantic studies, the jump-cut to "Children of Men" on a black background following

the final shot of the film juxtaposes dissonant logics of gender, race, and space. The

patriarchal, imperial order announced by the title cannot altogether subsume a maternal

lineage grounded in "spaces of Otherness […] 'palpitating with life'" (McKittrick 133).

As a stateless black woman, Kee's negotiation of Man's geographies underscores

the "social processes that *make* geography a racial-sexual terrain" (McKittrick xiv,

emphasis in original), and imbricates impossible grounds with a gendered and racialized

body-as-landscape:

> transatlantic slavery incited meaningful geographic processes that were
> interconnected with the category of "black woman": this category not only
> visually and socially represented a particular kind of gendered servitude, it
> was embedded in the landscape. Geographically, the category of "black
> woman" evidenced human/inhuman and masculine/feminine racial
> organization. The classification of black femininity was therefore also a
> process of *placing* her within the broader system of servitude—as an
> inhuman racial-sexual worker, as an objectified body, as a site through
> which sex, violence, and reproduction can be imagined and enacted, and as
> a captive human. Her classificatory racial-sexual body, then, determined
> her whereabouts in relation to her humanity. (McKittrick xvii, emphasis in
> original)

As a racial-sexual body embedded in the landscape, (reproductive) black femininity both

grounds and resists hierarchies of difference and the geographies that support them. In

their modes of inhabiting and moving through spaces of captivity and containment, black

women recast "uninhabitable" spaces as terrains of struggle and challenge their own

relegation to the realm of the "ungeographic" (x). As such, it becomes possible to read

Kee as engaging in what McKittrick calls "respatializations" (xix) of Bexhill's impossible grounds. In assenting to being smuggled into the camp, she initiates a series of spatial shifts that recalibrate it, however tenuously and temporarily, as a fraught threshold rather than a closed site. When the Fishes, seeking to appropriate her baby as a symbol that would unite the dispossessed, follow her into Bexhill by blowing a hole in the fence surrounding the camp, the result is that while Kee escapes in, others escape out. Moreover, Kee's destabilizing presence inside the camp shifts not only its landscape but also its soundscape when, portending the arrival of the first child born in almost two decades, Dylan's cry momentarily arrests the barking dogs, the explosions, the shouts of men, and the now ceaseless gunfire of the Bexhill uprising.

This coincidence of spatial and sonic disturbance links Kee's embeddedness in the landscape to her reproductive, labouring body—a link that is expressed in the concept of demonic grounds. As I outlined in my Introduction, McKittrick foregrounds the racialized, feminine bodies that simultaneously ground and destabilize the material reproduction of "impossible" spaces. Kee's escape from Bexhill emphasizes this corporeal/spatial overlap by recalling, visually and symbolically, the birth scene that takes place inside the camp. When Kee, Theo, and Dylan depart in their rowboat through a sewer tunnel beneath Bexhill, the tunnel's visual association with the birth canal is underscored by an umbilical cord-rope that Theo uses to pull them out into open water through a small hole cut into the outer grate. A wide shot captures their emergence into the sea from the side, the jagged bars of the grate through which they have just passed doubled by the razor wire lining the sea wall above them. Dylan's precarious position at

172

the end of the film is thus shaped by layered passages through (corporeal) space. Her "origin," readable in genealogical terms as both bodily descent and historical emergence, is tenuously rooted in demonic grounds that cannot stabilize a recognizable horizon of futurity. Far from a miraculous, eleventh-hour renewal of Mankind, Dylan's "emergence designates a place of confrontation" in the midst of a history composed of "the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 83-84)—a radically uneven field of forces in which a racialized, feminized infant and her mother are about to encounter a boat with a seemingly alternative but ultimately ambiguous biopolitical mission.

By emphasizing the watery gap that persists in the final shot of *Children of Men*, I seek to focus critical attention on arrivals and encounters that are irreducible to "happy endings." Like Ahmed, I am wary of "optimistic" readings that "prematurely [fill] the boat with a meaning," affectively orienting viewers to the *Tomorrow* as a site of unambiguous hope (*Promise* 197). Such optimism assumes that we can know in advance the shape(s) that Kee's and Dylan's respective experiences of the Human Project will take. To invoke Ahmed's play on "hap," this kind of reading forecloses on the encounter-as-happening—an occurrence that, in the time it takes to unfold, might open up a multiplicity of possible and "perverse" futures (Ahmed, *Promise* 180)—in favour of the happy ending. Ahmed's insistence that encounters "recreate the ground on which things do happen," a recreation that allows for deviation "from a past that has not been given up" (198), resonates with Foucault's formulation of the genealogical project: it is one that "seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" ("Nietzsche" 83). By tracing Kee's

figuration as a maternal back/ground, I have attempted to excavate the "numberless beginnings" that Dylan inherits, the sedimented histories that constitute "an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 81, 82). As Ahmed tells us, these histories materialize in orientations, postures, and gestures—relationships to spaces and to others—that are unpredictable precisely because the histories that give rise to them are disparate and conflicting. What relationships and forms of contact will Dylan initiate? How might the child with the "gold nugget [in her] mouth" articulate the counter-histories she inherits with the horizon of futurity she opens up? How is the deferred encounter at the end of *Children of Men* caught between the promise of renewal and the re-surfacing of slave economies? What would it mean to read the sewer grate through which Kee and Dylan pass on their way to meet a boat as a door of no return (cf. Brand 2001; Hartman 2007), a threshold beyond which they might be defined by their racialized, sexualized, labouring bodies?

"Dis place": threshold of the New World

Before it is razed by the British military at the end of the film, the tightly controlled and quarantined Bexhill Refugee Camp, like its nonfictional counterpart at Sangatte, begins to hemorrhage: refugees escape through a hole blown into the fence by the Fishes, while Kee, Theo, and Dylan pass through the jagged remnants of a sewer grate and into open water. *Children*'s articulation of infertility with a xenophobic state highlights the entangled racial, sexual, and generational politics of (re)producing a New

174

World. The multidirectional escape from Bexhill gestures to a cause-and-effect

relationship that structures the apocalyptic imaginary of white nations: failure to control

reproduction results in lands overrun—ruined—by otherness. The bombing that reduces

Bexhill to rubble aims at foreclosing on the re-beginnings that threaten to emerge from an

exceptional site located, literally, at the edge of Englishness. It also foregrounds the

overlapping of ruined lands and ruined (feminized, racialized) bodies that generates *terra*

nullius on and as apocalyptic terrain. Such overlaps become newly visible when we

position Kee and Dylan as inheritors of a genealogy of exceptional spaces and transitional

sites that condition their emergence into a New World. Spatio-temporal thresholds such

as the door of no return, which symbolizes the passage from freedom to bondage on the

West African coast, the Middle Passage, and the very concept of a "New World," are

points of intensity in the trans-Atlantic spatial imaginary. These space-times of

transformation were defined by the terrors, captivities, and bodily appropriations of

biopolitical modernity even as they gave rise to unforeseen resistances. A dialectic of

constraint and contestation shaped not only the physical passages that generated a New

World at the edge of the Old, but also the corporeal passages that were harnessed to that

project. Just as Kee and Dylan's escape through the sewer tunnel doubles the earlier scene

of birth at Bexhill—where Dylan's tiny, steaming body emerges into the space of the

camp—so, too, does the door of no return have a counterpart in what Frederick Douglass

has described as "the blood-stained gate" to slavery (21).

In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845),

Douglass introduces the metaphor of the "blood-stained gate" as a way of framing his re-

birth into slavery—a second birth that, like the first, is entangled with the sexual violation

of a slave woman's body. The first chapter, which begins with the autobiographical "I

was born," ends with an eyewitness account of the brutal beating and implicit rape of

Douglass' Aunt Hester, a "terrible spectacle" that Douglass imagines as "the blood-

stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass" (17,

21). Christina Sharpe reads this as both a "quintessentially New World scene" and "a

primal scene" (6)—an exemplary account of the "monstrous intimacies" that made,

unmade, and remade slaves and masters in America, and an approximate repetition of

Douglass' own conception. I want to build on Sharpe's analysis by linking the "bloody

transaction" (Douglass 22) between Captain Anthony and Hester to the musings on race

and population that precede it. Before narrating the "terrible spectacle" through which his

future in slavery unfolds before him, Douglass, reflecting on the unconfirmed rumour that

his father was also his master, conjures the specters of miscegenation and rape that

attended uncertainty about paternal origins in the slaveholding world—specters that are

reanimated, in *Children*, by Kee's lack of knowledge concerning the identity of Dylan's

father. Douglass' musings lead to a prophetic vision of post-slavery America structured

by the "race/reproduction bind" (Weinbaum 5):

> Every year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves [fathered by
> their white masters]. It was doubtless in consequence of a knowledge of
> this fact, that one great statesman of the south predicted the downfall of
> slavery by the inevitable laws of population. Whether this prophecy is ever
> fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of
> people are springing up at the south, and are now held in slavery, from
> those originally brought to this country from Africa […]. If the lineal
> descendents of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that
> slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are

> ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters. (20)

Between the uncertainties that circulate around "I was born" and the "blood-stained gate" through which Douglass is "born into the significance of being born a slave" (Sharpe 7), there is a prophecy of a slave system collapsing under the weight of its own issue. Like Wovoka's and Macandal's visions of the end of white supremacy in the New World (see Introduction and Chapter Two), Douglass' elaboration on the unnamed statesman's prediction is simultaneously apocalyptic and revolutionary. And though Douglass attributes this vision of a racially mixed population "springing up at the south" to the lust of white masters, his reflections lead him to the "heart-rending shrieks" of Aunt Hester (22)—to a blood-stained gate that is synonymous with the bodily torment of black femininity.

The concept of demonic grounds, then, derives from the transformation of female slaves into "profitable sexual and reproductive technologies" (McKittrick 46), and, simultaneously, from the spatial contestations that represent resistance to "an institution where 'every kitchen is a brothel'" (Douglass qtd. in Sharpe 9). The intimate household spaces in which white families and slaves negotiate power and proximity are precisely what drive Linda Brent—Harriet Jacobs' autobiographical avatar in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)—into hiding in a tiny garret above her grandmother's shed in Edenton, North Carolina.[76] "[P]ositioned across (rather than inside or outside, or

---

[76] Driven by the implications of "foul words" whispered in her ear by her master, Dr. Flint, Brent eventually retreats into a 9' x 7' x 3' "hole" (Jacobs 158, 262). Here, she stays in hiding and watches over her children for seven years before an opportunity arises to flee to the

inevitably bound to) slavery while in the garret" (McKittrick 42), Brent critically

observes a system that she describes, significantly, as a "cage of obscene birds" (189). In

combination with her description of sexually aggressive white masters as "fiends who

bear the shape of men" (159), and of her master in particular as "a restless spirit from the

pit" (218), this reference to a "cage of obscene birds" constructs Edenton as the doomed

biblical city of Babylon: "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a

cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (*King James*, Rev. 18.2). This rhetorical strategy

evokes the feminized, sexualized and desecrated landscape at the centre of John's

apocalyptic vision (see Chapter One) and, simultaneously, recalibrates the Whore of

Babylon—"mother of harlots" (Rev. 17.5)—as besieged black femininity. Where, in

John's vision, the Whore has "a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness

of her fornication" (Rev. 17.4), for Brent, it is the slave girl who grows up to drink "the

cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink"

(161). Here we have the ground not of John's apocalypse but of Douglass': forced into

sexual servitude, black women become the demonic ground from which "a very different-

looking class of people are springing up at the south" (Douglass 20).

 The narrating of a history that Brent/Jacobs would rather "have been silent about"

becomes, as her editor asserts in the Introduction to *Incidents*, a withdrawing of the "veil"

that hides the "tangled skeins [of] the genealogies of slavery" and the worlds they build

(Jacobs 126, 128, 220). These "tangled skeins" are materially rooted in what M.

NourbeSe Philip formulates as "thespacebetween / the legs" of black women (94).

---

north. The space that Brent repeatedly characterizes as a "cell" is both a physically disabling site of captivity and a "loophole of retreat" in the midst of a slaveholding community (262).

Reading Philip together with Jacobs, McKittrick elaborates that this silent space is "deeply connected to the physical landscape and the actual movement of bodies: real bodies are mutilated, bought, sold, trafficked; they also metropolize, industrialize, and create wealth. The enforced movement and placement of the space between the legs contributes to the built environment and colonization" (48). The space between the legs produces both the wealth and the labouring bodies that build the New World. The bodies of enslaved black women in the Americas are part of the "histories of arrival" that condition both the physical world and our perceptions of it (Ahmed, *Queer* 38). The insights of feminist transatlantic studies scholars thus resonate with, and differently inflect, Ahmed's pseudo-Marxist reading of the objective world, which asks us "to consider the history of 'what appears' and how it is shaped by histories of work" (*Queer* 43).[77] If phenomenology emphasizes a world of objects that orients bodies and organizes experience—one that, in Hannah Arendt's terms, "lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together" (*Human* 182)—then feminist transatlantic studies asks us to attend to "dis place," the space between (the legs), as the ground of this worldly in-between.

Apocalyptic visions that index the embodied space-between as a source of renewal—visions that wait for water to break, and for the space between (the legs) to

---

[77] Consider, for instance, Jacobs' remarks about a silver candelabra purchased by her grandmother's mistress with three hundred dollars borrowed from, and never repaid to, the enslaved grandmother (who made money from her "midnight bakings" [132]): "When [grandmother's] mistress died, her son-in-law, Dr. Flint, was appointed executor. When grandmother applied to him for payment [of the loan], he said the estate was insolvent, and the law prohibited payment. It did not, however, prohibit him from retaining the silver candelabra, which had been purchased with that money. I presume they will be handed down in the family, from generation to generation" (138).

revitalize the crumbling built environment—can thus be critically reinterpreted by

attending to the "histories of labor" encrypted in the backgrounds of their visual fields

(Ahmed, *Queer* 49). In the final scene of *Children of Men*, Kee and Dylan are adrift

between two "impossible" spaces: the destruction of Bexhill and its inhabitants by a

violent state apparatus, and the "rootless" isolation of the Human Project (Žižek,

"Hope"). In this context, the insights of feminist transatlantic studies demand that we

attend to the bodily appropriations of black femininity that, historically, enabled a New

World to surface from "impossible," submerged landmasses (McKittrick 128). Yet, as the

unpredictability encoded in the concept of demonic grounds attests, these histories of

violent crossings, sexual servitude, and bodily torment are never fully determining; they

haunt the worlds they build, and threaten to rebuild them differently. A text that is key to

my next chapter, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, foregrounds continuities between the Middle

Passage and "thespacebetween / the legs" (Philip 94), imagining both as giving birth to

ghosts. When her murdered child first appears at 124 Bluestone Road, walking up out of

the river as a fully dressed woman, Sethe's suddenly urgent need to relieve herself is like

"water breaking from a breaking womb," and reminds her of a flooding boat (48).[78] Kee's

Dylan and Sethe's Beloved both figure the unresolved "spatial and bodily remnants of

transatlantic slavery" (McKittrick 52)—a back/ground that refuses to remain in place, a

history that re-surfaces in the midst of a modern Atlantic world in ruins.

---

[78] Importantly, Beloved's name, just like the "crawling-already?" (Morrison 87) baby she once was, issues directly and materially from the space between Sethe's legs. In exchange for the seven letters chiseled onto her dead child's headstone, Sethe gives the engraver ten minutes with her body "pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave" (5).

Chapter Four ~ "Endings that are not over": Thinking *The Road*'s Maternal Blackness

> *It was the heyday of the nouveau riche, and a life of careless extravagance among the masters. Four and six bobtailed thoroughbreds rolled their coaches to town; open hospitality and gay entertainment were the rule. Parks and groves were laid out, rich with flower and vine, and in the midst stood the low wide-halled "big house," with its porch and columns and great fireplaces.*
> *And yet with all this there was something sordid, something forced,—a certain feverish unrest and recklessness; for was not all this show and tinsel built upon a groan?*
> —W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (121-22)

> *We do not rush toward death, we flee the catastrophe of birth, survivors struggling to forget it.*
> —E.M. Cioran, *The Trouble With Being Born* (4)

Film critic David L. Pike notes that what he designates as the "signature moment" in John Hillcoat's adaptation of *The Road* (2009)—a flashback birth scene followed, in the narrative present, by a shot of the interstate disappearing into a darkened tunnel—is absent from the Cormac McCarthy novel on which the film is based. Interested in the addition of this underground space to McCarthy's post-apocalyptic father/son journey, Pike posits that its evocation of fear is "compounded by a visual association with the birth canal from which the boy has, in our minds, just emerged out of a mother whom we have seen fight expelling him into the world with every ounce of her will." Though his review ultimately leaves her behind, Pike's introductory comments provide me with a point of departure for rethinking the figure of the mother in relation to the histories of terror that haunt *The Road*. The juxtaposition of birth canal and tunnel—a visual strategy that echoes Cuarón's use of the sewer tunnel in *Children of Men*—complicates the notion that the unnamed woman's infanticidal desire and suicide are the results, simply, of numb despair.

181

Her (also unnamed) son's birth amid a kind of nuclear winter links his embodied subjectivity to the other (re)emergent formations in the post-apocalyptic American landscape: bloodcults, cannibals, thieves, and slaveholders. The auditory register of the scenes underscores this, as the screams marking the painful birth of the Boy (Kodi Smit-McPhee) continue beyond the flashback to which the Woman (Charlize Theron) is consigned, echoing in the narrative present, and blending in with the ominous rumble of a diesel engine announcing the presence of a road gang in the tunnel. The Woman's screams create an aural overlap between these two scenes of emergence and lend a gothic inflection to the Boy's birth, a "dark beyond darkness" (McCarthy 3) that both the film and the novel incompletely suppress. Encrypted in the narrative past and affectively configured in terms of horror and despair, the Woman is the maternal back/ground of McCarthy's tale of a slowly dying father and his son. In Avery Gordon's terms, her absence gestures to the haunting "story of how the real story has emerged" (*Ghostly* 26).

In a 2007 interview with Oprah Winfrey, McCarthy described his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel as "a love story to [his] son"—a tale of survival and paternal care that began to take root at a hotel in El Paso, where the author looked out over the city at three o'clock in the morning and "had this image of these fires up on the hill and everything being laid waste and […] thought a lot about [his] little boy." Approaching the film adaptation, director John Hillcoat and principal actor Viggo Mortensen (The Man) took McCarthy's cue, drawing on their own respective relationships with their sons for creative and affective insight ("The Making of *The Road*"). Thus, *The Road* is insistently framed as the intimate story of a father and son journeying towards the southeast coast

years after an unspecified event—simply, a "long shear of light and then a series of low

concussions" (McCarthy 45)—has turned America into an "ashen scabland" (13).[79] In

both the novel and the film, the Boy's mother appears only in the Man's dreams and

memories, flashbacks that establish the terrors of the post-apocalyptic world they inhabit

and, ultimately, account for her suicide. "Sooner or later," she says, "they will catch us

and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and

kill us and eat us and you wont face it" (48). Rejecting the Man's key premise—his

insistence that they are "survivors"—the Woman re-casts her family as "the walking dead

in a horror film" (47). Her introduction of the zombie figure exemplifies the generic

disturbance with which she is associated: complicating readings of *The Road* as,

primarily, a "love story" between father and son, the Woman's story infuses the narrative

with a gothic impulse that reanimates a counter-history of trans-Atlantic modernity

organized around enslavement, genocide, and racial terror (cf. Fiedler 1966; Goddu 1997;

Gordon 1997; Martin and Savoy 1998; Redding 2011). Despite the Man's claim, included

both in the novel and in the film's voiceover, that "she died alone somewhere in the dark

[…] and there is no other tale to tell" (McCarthy 27), the Woman conjures histories that

gnaw at *The Road*'s reinvigoration of the "cherished geocentric American myth of the

frontier, of a new physical, imaginative and spatial beginning" (Walsh 54).

---

[79] McCarthy's pared-down writing style involves not only the omission of apostrophes
and avoidance of commas, but also the nearly complete absence of proper nouns. The Man, the
Woman, and the Boy all remain unnamed throughout the text, and, despite their consistent use of
an old roadmap, the route traveled by father and son is unspecified. Nevertheless, attending to
McCarthy's "roots in Knoxville and the southeast" (Morgan 46) and his detailed descriptions of
dams, mountain gaps, and gorges, Wesley G. Morgan tentatively maps the pair's journey from
Kentucky through Tennessee and, most likely, to the South Carolina Coast. "The mention of the
Piedmont [in the novel]," he argues, "reinforces that speculation" (45). Hillcoat confirms *The
Road*'s location on the eastern seaboard when he visually renders the Man consulting his map.

I argue that *The Road*'s journey south through "what used to be called the states" (McCarthy 36) stages a repeatedly deferred confrontation with what Leslie Fiedler describes as the "maternal blackness" organizing the gothic imagination—a blackness that registers the histories of unfree labour haunting the New World (132; cf. Goddu 1997). A concept drawn from psychoanalytic readings of Old World gothic romances, maternal blackness demands recalibration in the context of New World landscapes, where fear of the unrestrained Id is differently spatialized.[80] As Toni Morrison argues in *Playing in the Dark* (1992), the dream of "history-lessness, a blank page waiting to be inscribed," is haunted by a "fear of boundarylessness [which is] the terror of human freedom" (35, 37). Enslaved Africans, then, embodied both terror for New World settlers in the form of potential insurrection, and the "'blank darkness' [of] conveniently bound and violently silenced black bodies" against which to stabilize the meaning of freedom (38). For Morrison, America's "frightened and haunted" (35) founding literature expresses—and attempts to imaginatively manage—the historical contradictions that troubled the emergent nation's dreams of freedom, innocence, and novelty.

Let me suggest that these contradictions are structured by the "race/reproduction bind" (Weinbaum 5) that I introduced in Chapter Three—by a logic that imagines white

---

[80] In *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1966), Fiedler proposes that the ruined castles of European gothic novels metonymized "the crumbling shell of paternal authority," beneath which lay "the maternal blackness" of the dungeon keep—or, in Freudian terms, the twin terrors of a betrayed Superego and an unrestrained Id (132). Yet, in the hands of nineteenth-century American writers, the forests and caves of a "heathen, unredeemed wilderness" replaced haunted castles and abbeys (160), and *blackness* as the source of terror took concrete shape in the racialized bodies of Indigenous Americans and African (American) slaves. If the European gothic negotiated the anxiety associated with revolutionary turmoil, then early American gothic novels registered the "special guilts"—the "slaughter of the Indians […] and the abominations of the slave trade"—that turned the American dream into a "Faustian nightmare" (143).

reproductive bodies as guaranteeing the original purity of the new nation even as it harnesses black maternal bodies to its real, material founding and reproduction. In spite of Fiedler's assertion that "the proper subject for American gothic is the black *man*" (397, my emphasis)—a claim that seems to flag a shift in the gendering of gothic darkness between Old and New Worlds—his reading of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (ca. 1838) hinges on racialized maternal symbolism. For Fiedler, as for Morrison after him, Poe's novel dramatizes a quest for newness and innocence that is haunted, at every turn, by "terror—and terror's most significant, overweening ingredient: darkness" (Morrison, *Playing* 37). Reading *Pym* against the backdrop of Poe's childhood journey with his mother from New England to the American South, Fiedler interprets the landscapes that organize the climax of this exemplary gothic tale as, first, a "black womb sealed off by black warriors" (400), and then a chasm that he characterizes as a "white womb" (394). Yet, though the chasm "thr[ows] itself open to receive" Pym's boat, the tale ends with "impenetrable whiteness" (Morrison, *Playing* 32): "But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of snow" (Poe 371). If, for Morrison, images of impenetrable whiteness constitute anxious, compulsive responses to the shadows that threaten to engulf the New World subject, then Fiedler's gendered reading of Poe allows me to articulate this threat with the embodied space-between that I discussed at the end of Chapter Three. The shadow that haunts the American gothic tradition is a "black womb" (Fiedler 400), an embodied site of unfree labour that (un)grounds both America's racial identity and its capitalist beginnings.

Doubly displaced, first by an inviting "white womb" and then by an impenetrable, towering figure of "perfect whiteness," Poe's maternal blackness evokes enslaved reproductive bodies, or what Saidiya Hartman aptly describes in *Lose Your Mother* as "the ghosts in the machine of kinship" (194).

As this double displacement suggests, the ghost that haunts *The Road*—the grieving mother encrypted in the narrative frame—is, herself, haunted. Inspired by resonances between the Woman's desire to kill her son and the infanticide at the centre of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), I argue that the horrors she anticipates and seeks to ward off belong, in fact, to "a hungry past" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 163). Morrison's critical reworking of the American gothic tradition allows me to consider the New World histories, the real as well as the fantastic, of slavery and cannibalism that *The Road* reanimates. As both haunted and haunting, the Woman gestures to "the constellation of connections that charges any 'time of the now' […] with the debts of the past and the expense of the present" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 142).[81] A novel concerned with the cost, or the sacrificial structure, of white supremacy, *Beloved* suggests a reframing of the Woman's infanticidal desire as an interrogation of the economic/economizing imperatives of survival. I contend that there is an important question about expenses and limits—"What is too much?" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 140-41)—embedded in the infanticidal wish on which *The Road* forecloses. It is a question that not only registers the violent roots of racial capitalism and American property relations, a violence that McCarthy simultaneously

---

[81] Here, Gordon is drawing on Walter Benjamin's "These on the Philosophy of History"—the text on which Ian Baucom also draws in order to formulate a conception of the present as haunted by trans-Atlantic slavery (see Introduction).

evokes and disavows in refusing to name his protagonists. But it also points to affective

and ethical alternatives to the Man's paranoid survivalism. Neither an act driven, simply,

by "clear-headed despair" (Pike) nor one prompted by a lost "sense of responsibility to

the Other" (Snyder 76), the Woman's self-destruction combines with her infanticidal wish

and haunts the Boy's existence. It is a troubling maternal inheritance that shapes his

"emerging status as the moral centre of the novel [and film]" (Gallivan 103)—one that

charges him with discerning "the something to be done that the wavering present is

demanding" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 183).

In this chapter, I excavate the elusive maternal legacy that, I argue, manifests in

the Boy's repeated efforts to prompt detours in his father's relentless trajectory. I begin

by tracing the generational, gendered, and racial politics of the economy of survival(ism),

the violent implications of which surface through analyses of scenes that Hillcoat leaves

out of his adaptation of McCarthy's novel. I then offer a reading of Morrison's *Beloved*

that "fleshes out" *The Road*'s ghostly maternal figure, situating her opaque lessons in the

context of the sacrificial economy of whiteness and its attendant distributions of terror.

This reading contributes to a critical discourse about the "market dread" encoded in

American gothic literature (Redding 2), or its oblique registering of anxieties related to

consumption, commodification, and the circulation of value (cf. Goddu 1997; Gordon

1997; Sonser 2001)—concerns that I extend, in the section that follows, into a critical

analysis of *The Road*'s demonization of cannibalistic others. I contend that this

demonization authorizes the neo-imperial violence of survivalism by deflecting the cost

of white masculine paranoia onto ostensibly monstrous others. Finally, I consider the

Boy's negotiation of his mother's legacy, which I describe as a maternal ethics of self-harm. Reading his resistance to the Man's pedagogy of survival in two scenes of encounter with strangers, I ultimately argue that the Boy effects minor redistributions of affect that, as Sara Ahmed insists, are "world making" (*Cultural Politics* 12)—and in a way that assumes, rather than deflects, the cost of making new worlds.

The "other others": the infanticidal economy of survival

There is a brief, particularly unsettling scene in McCarthy's novel that Hillcoat, after insisting on keeping it in the script, ultimately decided to leave out of the final cut of the film (*The Road*, Director's Commentary). From a distance, the Man and the Boy see three men and a visibly pregnant woman traveling behind them. Remaining hidden and allowing the group to pass, father and son approach their campsite the next day, causing the others to flee and leave behind only "whatever black thing was skewered over the coals," which the Boy sees first: "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (McCarthy 167). The scene presents a disturbing continuity between emergence and consumption against the backdrop of McCarthy's barren world. I want to suggest that the Woman, who asserts that her "heart was ripped out of [her] the night [the Boy] was born" (McCarthy 48), is painfully aware of the indeterminacies of reproduction in a context in which new lives become, literally, a form of nourishment. In the midst of material constraints that compel such a violent uncoupling of reproduction and futurity, the Man's injunction that his son must "carry the fire" (McCarthy 234) into the post-apocalyptic future begs questions about the cost—to others—of this project.

188

Emphasizing his enactment of a seemingly limitless responsibility to the Boy as his primary Other, sympathetic readings of the Man as a besieged hero in a dying world tend to elide his insistent avoidance of all other face-to-face encounters (cf. Gallivan 2008; Graulund 2010; Snyder 2008).[82] What kind of violence inheres in the Man's elevation of his son to the status of a god, and how does the Woman's infanticidal wish interrogate an "ethic of survival" (Snyder 77) organized by isolation and hyper-vigilance? What happens to the *other* others in a world visibly shaped by a horizon of extinction?

Like Cuarón, Hillcoat visually renders the claustrophobic deterioration of *The Road*—the "cauterized terrain," "grainy air," and "looted, ransacked, ravaged" country, "[r]ifled of every crumb" (McCarthy 12, 17, 109)—using an overwhelmingly grey cinematic palate. Dirt and dust and once valuable items blend into one another, and the sudden toppling of dead trees, crashing into the drifts of snow and ash covering the ground, epitomizes what McCarthy describes as the "ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be" (231). This is a post-apocalyptic environment defined, from the level of the organism to that of the ecosystem, by drastically increased—and steadily increasing—entropy, a measure of the irreversible loss of usable energy and corresponding levels of disorganization or chaos within a given system (cf. Ben-Naim 2008). The world of *The Road* is manifestly oriented toward what A. Samuel Kimball describes as the "thermodynamic horizon that condemns all living things to extinction" (42). Kimball's reading of evolutionary theory alongside Derridean deconstruction allows

---

[82] Though his essay includes a list—and accompanying analyses—of all of the "encounters" between the father/son duo and other people in the novel, the Boy's desires and actions consistently mediate Snyder's reading of the Man's behaviour, suggesting that the former is a more appropriate "host" figure than his father.

me to consider the Man's survivalism in relation to the finitude of terrestrial resources, a

material limit that *The Road*'s indeterminate catastrophe unveils. This limit underscores

how life is conditioned by an entropic economy in which "the self-organizing complexity

of living things able to extract energy from their environments and convert it to their uses

is always purchased at the cost of an increase in entropy somewhere else" (Kimball 42).

At the biological level, survival amounts to deflecting the costs of existence onto others,

increasing one's own access to usable energy and redirecting the resultant unusable

excess onto other organisms and environmental niches. Kimball frames this sacrificial

logic—the presumption that to survive "is always to be engaged in the direct or indirect

sacrifice of other life"—as specifically infanticidal because, within evolutionary

paradigms, survival amounts to "outreproduc[ing] one's competitors" (38). To diminish

their reproductive success is to erase countless "possible futures" (28).

　　The Man's paternal authority rests, in part, on the disavowal of a biological reality

that *The Road* nonetheless foregrounds: "like all other forms of life, humankind remains

inextricably entangled in flows of matter and energy that result from eating and being

eaten" (McNeil qtd. in Kimball 39). Insofar as the project of survival entails a process of

negotiating this "bio-economic burden" (Kimball 21), it is shaped by imperatives that

implicitly or explicitly cast some lives as more valuable than others.[83] The survivalist

patriarch stakes his claim to power on the Western tradition of deifying the paternal

---

[83] Kimball's attention to the politics of survival-as-evolutionary success resonates with Judith Butler's work, in *Frames of War* (2009), on "the differential allocation of precarity" (3): "precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (25).

function (Kimball 21), which anchors differential distributions of value across the field of "life."[84] Intriguingly, the aporetic logic of patriarchal authority hinges on a contradiction organized around infanticide as both a practical and logical limit, and points to the ultimate impossibility of transcending mortal limits. As Kimball explains, a "person is a father only if he has a child. If he kills his child, he ceases to be a father. The category of father thus depends on the category of child. The logic of paternal transcendence, however, requires that the father be categorically independent of all other categories" (22). *The Road* stages this contradiction. As the life to be protected at all costs, the Boy authorizes the Man's sacrificial attitude towards the lives of others, an idea that McCarthy introduces early in the novel—"He knew only that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (4)—and one that writer Joe Penhall reiterates, in voiceover, in his screenplay. Yet, each time that the Man fears capture and threatens to preemptively kill his son, he verges on destroying the very life that legitimates the violence undergirding his own survival; with his father's gun to his head, the boy is "imperiled by the very paternal authority that depends on the child for its future" (Kimball 24).

In endlessly deferring the act of infanticide, the Man paradoxically remains within the parameters of what Kimball formulates as "the (infanticide-provoking) dream of an escape from finitude" (24), a fantasy of transcendence that supports violently uneven distributions of material resources and disavows the possible futures that are foreclosed in

---

[84] In its various philosophical and religious manifestations, this tradition posits a supernatural realm that transcends the material basis and biological realities of terrestrial life, simultaneously figuring "the father as worldly origin" and ostensibly evading the implications of the "sacrificiality of mortal existence" (Kimball 22).

the process. In this light, the Woman's infanticidal desire can be reframed not as a

straightforward symptom of her despair but, rather, as an attempt to refuse the sacrificial

imperatives of survivalism. The film underscores this connection in an important

flashback scene. In response to her husband's insistence that "we will survive this. We are

not gonna quit," she retorts, "I don't want to just survive. Don't you get it? I don't want

to. Why won't you let me take him with me?" Here, the Woman connects her infanticidal

desire to a refusal of the economy of survival. In so doing, she directly confronts the

infanticidal dilemma that shapes one's ethical responsibility towards others:

> To respond to the singularity of one's own child, then, precipitates the
> individual into the abyss of an infinite responsibility the structure of which
> is irreducibly sacrificial: "what binds me thus in my singularity to the
> absolute singularity of the other," Derrida explains, "immediately propels
> me into the space or risk of absolute sacrifice." Why? Once again because
> "there are also others, an infinite number of them, the innumerable
> generality of others to whom I should be bound by the same responsibility
> […]. I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the
> love of another without sacrificing the other, the other others." (Derrida
> qtd. in Kimball 152-53)

Kimball's Derridean analysis allows me to recalibrate the Woman's infanticidal gesture

as a way of facing the "other others" from whom her husband turns away. By situating

Derrida's meditation on ethics and responsibility firmly within a material context defined

by finitude, Kimball's analysis points to the infanticidal implications of the Man's

construction of his son as "the word of God," and even a "god" himself (McCarthy 4,

145). Unable to ignore the cost of survival, the Woman bodily assumes the "risk of

absolute sacrifice" that attends "the abyss of an infinite responsibility."

Inspired by Kathleen Marks' work on Morrison's *Beloved*, I argue that the

Woman's unfulfilled infanticidal impulse can be productively read as an apotropaic

gesture; that is, one that is "aimed at warding off, or resisting, a danger, a threat, or an imperative" (Marks 2). In *The Road*, the Woman's desire to kill her son is a compromised form of resistance to the imperatives of economization. As an attempt to negotiate a decidedly unforgiving situation, her infanticidal wish exemplifies what Marks characterizes as the "double-edged" structure of the apotropaic: it is "both a flawed way of seeing reality and one that is protective of value, preserving goods from being used up even if at the expense of parts of the self" (3). Drawing on its origins in early Greek religious rites intended to keep the Chthonic gods at a distance, Marks re-reads apotropaism, via *Beloved*, "as a fundamental trope of history, as a manner of taking up a past of suffering" (2). A way of both confronting and resisting the past, apotropaism is related to the "complex function of memory: memory as the faculty that distinguishes between what ought truly to be resisted and what needs to be remembered" (Marks 24). Yet, even as they grapple with the past, apotropaic gestures are structured by anticipation, a paradox that Marks, following Derrida, formulates as "the continual self-castration that repels the threat of castration." She continues, "Derrida articulates a kind of self-agency, whereby one gains self-mastery through the anticipation of threat and an attendant self-projection that represses aggression" (10). The apotropaic imagination amounts to a "flawed" perspective on the world because it constructs a seamless continuity between memory and anticipation, projecting past horrors into the near or immediate future and warding them off as having both already and not yet occurred. In *The Road*, the anticipated threats—rape, slavery, and cannibalism—that the Woman seeks to keep at bay in fact conjure suppressed histories that are simultaneously national and trans-Atlantic.

The post-apocalyptic "horror film" into which she projects herself is shaped by centuries-old shadows and terrors, by a darkness that haunts the American landscape and reveals that the economy of survivalism is not only gendered, but also profoundly racialized.

The Woman's elusive pedagogical legacy is interwoven, then, with the histories of contact and contestation that resurface in the apocalyptic landscape: arrowheads made of white quartz and grey flint; an old Spanish coin covered in a "[d]eep crust of verdigris" (McCarthy 171-72). This resurfacing also takes the shape of spectacles that reanimate histories of racial terror, one of which, like the spitted infant with which I began, Hillcoat chose not to include in his adaptation of McCarthy's novel. Shortly after the Man recalls the conversation in which his wife insists, "I'd take [the boy] with me if it werent for you. You know I would. It's the right thing to do" (47-48), he and the Boy hide by the side of the road as an "army in tennis shoes" tramps past (77). There are phalanxes of pipe- and spear-carrying men, and then, "[b]ehind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each" (78). Here, the Woman's fears are condensed into one "ragged horde" (78), an organized and mobile assemblage that exemplifies how histories of unfree labour resonate in the asymmetrical power relations defining *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic America. McCarthy's vision of "slaves in harness" on a forced march recalls the New World scenes of migration and white settlement that produced a livable, profitable place in the midst of supposedly uninhabitable space. The coffle that Hillcoat left out of his film conjures visions of labour and misery such as the

one that haunted W.E.B. Du Bois as he traveled through Georgia at the turn of the

twentieth century: "Day after day the clank of chained feet marching from Virginia and

Carolina to Georgia was heard in these rich swamp lands […] until by 1860 there had

risen in West Dougherty perhaps the richest slave kingdom the modern world ever knew"

(121). Moreover, the Woman's insistence that, "[t]hey will rape me. They'll rape [our

son]" (48), identifies the gendered and generational differences that bolster newly

powerful patriarchs who see themselves as hounded by shadows. The Woman anticipates

a future of sexual servitude and forced reproduction that recalls the fate of enslaved black

women on New World plantations. And, in combination with the later "baby on the spit"

scene, McCarthy's pointed use of the term "catamite"—a boy groomed for sex with older

men—delineates how the products of maternal labour will be used in this new New

World landscape.[85]

---

[85] As expressed in his director's commentary, Hillcoat's rationale for the absent "army in
tennis shoes" registers anxieties about its visual effect and points to a replacement scene that
suppresses, but cannot altogether exorcise, the (sexualized) master/slave dynamic that horrifies
the Woman. Echoing a concern that he initially expresses in relation to the early "road gang"
scene—when the diesel truck, teeming with pipe-carrying and gun-toting men and women,
emerges from the tunnel—Hillcoat explains that, when translated into the visual grammar of post-
apocalyptic film, "big cannibal armies" and their captives evoke George Miller's *Mad Max* films.
Hoping to avoid associations with Miller's low-budget vision of a post-apocalyptic Australia,
Hillcoat—who is also Australian—turns for visual inspiration to two firmly American survivalist
classics: John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972), in which four businessmen from Atlanta negotiate
the Georgian back-country and its locals; and George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968),
which takes place in rural Pennsylvania, where much of *The Road* was shot (Director's
Commentary). What Hillcoat wanted to retain from McCarthy's marching army was the "idea of
the more organized, greater feeling of spreading […] cannibalism and ritual violence" (Director's
Commentary)—a phenomenon that he transposes onto an added scene where a woman and child
are hunted and captured by a bloodcult. As the gang emerges from the woods and crests the filmic
horizon, it resembles Danny Boyle's frenetic, enraged infected—the inheritors of Romero's vision
of an implacable zombie onslaught. This anxious negotiation of filmic histories gestures to what I
established in my Introduction as the layered organization of apocalyptic visual culture, the
spectacles that threaten to re-surface amid ruined landscapes and scenes of violence.

"Some passable ghost": lessons of a shadow narrative

McCarthy's novel is haunted by a narrative possibility that it refuses to bear out—

by a ghost that it conjures but almost immediately exorcises. Shortly after the Woman

expresses her infanticidal wish, she offers her husband curiously hypothetical advice:

> The one thing I can tell you is that you wont survive for yourself. I know
> because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would
> be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. Breathe it into
> being and coax it along with words of love. Offer it each phantom crumb
> and shield it from harm with your body. (49)

Here, the Woman accurately predicts the Man's devoted coaxing, (barely) nourishing, and

protection of their son, but imagines orienting these behaviours toward a ghost conjured

for the sake of survival by someone who is utterly alone. Appearing early in the narrative,

and before father and son have encountered other people, this flashback raises questions

about the Boy's ontology; it invokes the possibility that he is the spectral projection of a

man driven to stay alive, to "tak[e] a stand" at all costs (McCarthy 48). In the next

significant narrative event, as if to dispel such doubts, the Man and the Boy meet the road

gang coming out of the tunnel, and the Boy's objective existence seems to be confirmed

when he is grabbed and held at knifepoint by a thug (53-57). Still, the Woman's

infanticidal logic and hypothetical advice point to a shadow narrative on which McCarthy

firmly forecloses. It is a narrative organized around a maternal economy of "too thick"

love (Morrison, *Beloved* 156), and one that threatens to confront the white patriarch with

his own sacrificial logic. In order to trace the outline of this alternative tale, then, I turn to

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Through the character of Sethe—a former slave who,

eighteen years before the narrative present, "recognized a hat, and split to the woodshed

196

to kill her children" (Morrison, *Beloved* 150)—Morrison imagines infanticide as an attempt to keep a "hungry past" at bay (Gordon, *Ghostly* 163).

Morrison's tangible, fleshy pasts—not only fully materialized ghosts, but also pictures of places "floating around" in the world, "rememories" waiting to be "bump[ed] into" (*Beloved* 34)—concretize gothic darkness and register the nearness of histories of violence. For Du Bois, the sight of a ruined plantation prompted visions of marching slaves, clanking chains, and "muttered curses" (77). Similarly, Morrison's rewriting of the history of Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave who cut her baby's throat rather than see her reclaimed by her former master, simultaneously resurrects both the child's ghost and that of "an unnamed African girl lost at sea, not yet become an African-American" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 140). A representative of the "Sixty Million and more" Africans who did not survive the Middle Passage, and to whom Morrison dedicates her novel, Beloved doubly figures the exchange of captured bodies that underwrites capitalist modernity. If gothic tropes of darkness evoke "that construction of blackness *and* enslavement" that props up American ideas of freedom (Morrison, *Playing* 38, emphasis in original), then Morrison's attention to the material entanglement of darkness and (economic) freedom re-politicizes the gothic impulse. *Beloved* entwines the passages and captivities of trans-Atlantic slavery with "the origin of modern American freedom, [with] the paradigmatic and value-laden operations of the capitalist market" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 169).[86] Exploiting the gothic trafficking in what she calls "American Africanism—a fabricated brew of

---

[86] "This is a market," Gordon continues, "whose exchange relations continue to transform the living into the dead" (169)—a modern alchemy that I will explore in greater detail in my next and final chapter.

darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire" (Morrison, *Playing* 38)—Morrison redistributes

savagery and terror in Reconstruction-era America. For, as A. Timothy Spaulding points

out, just as Beloved "renders the abstract gothic concrete, the presence of schoolteacher,

the representation of Enlightenment thinking and traditional history in the text, renders

the 'rational' gothic" (74).

Morrison's displacement of horror from darkness onto whiteness—embodied in

the scientific racism and sadism of schoolteacher—highlights the (an)atomization of

black bodies, their violent reduction to fragments strewn across the American landscape.

Shortly after Sethe recalls accidentally overhearing schoolteacher telling one of his pupils

to list her "human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right" (183), Stamp

Paid reflects on the origins of the savagery that white people project onto black bodies:

> Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin
> was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons,
> sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he
> thought, they were right. The more coloredpeople spent their strength
> trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how
> human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something
> Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the
> jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to
> this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks
> planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through, and after life, it
> spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. […] Made them
> bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of
> the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own
> white skin; the red gums were their own. (188-89)

Working with the nature and landscape imagery that is essential to gothic narrative,

Morrison reconfigures "rawness and savagery"—the necessary "staging ground and arena

for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity" (Morrison, *Playing* 44)—not

as inadvertent imports from Africa but, rather, as New World phenomena forged amid a

violent, exploitative economic system and proliferating in its aftermath. Stamp Paid's

rumination on the tangled jungle of savagery redeploys an Africanist trope to posit that

the American landscape is contaminated by the systematic degradations that underwrite

the nation-building project itself, turning the land into a matrix of hatred, fear, aggression,

and wild rage. According to Stamp, even as they project this affective constellation into

black bodies—"under every dark skin"—whites are invaded by it, turned into bared "red

gums ready for […] blood" (188).[87] It is this bloodlust that, memorably, Stamp Paid

condenses into a ribbon that he discovers stuck to the bottom of his boat, "a red ribbon

knotted around a curl of wet woolly hair, clinging still to its bit of scalp" (172). This is the

fragment around which all of the other horrors of early Reconstruction, the ones that had

not yet "worn out his marrow," coagulate: the lynched and raped bodies, the burnt

schools, and, above all, the stench of "skin and hot blood" (171)—"fire-cooked blood"

(172)—pervading the land.

    Imagining whiteness in terms of untamed, encroaching ferocity, Morrison

considers how black bodies bear the "bio-economic burden" (Kimball 21) of white

supremacy, or how the "survival" of white America is premised on ongoing biopolitical

fragmentations. Beloved's fearful recognition that "she could wake up any day and find

herself in pieces" (Morrison, *Beloved* 126) is the obverse of schoolteacher's cold financial

---

    [87] In his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), Douglass describes the transformation of his once kind mistress in language that anticipates Morrison's: "The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon" (45). In attributing to whiteness the bloodthirstiness and paranoid rage that white subjects disavow, Morrison's "red gums" and Douglass' "eye […] red with rage" reinforce my argument, in Chapter Two, about the racialized affective economy at work in the *28* films, which also imagine "eye[s] red with rage."

calculations: the "nine hundred dollars" he thinks Paul D is worth; the $123.70 that Halle still owes him for Baby Suggs' freedom; and Sethe's price, which, Paul D imagines, "was greater than his; property that reproduced itself without cost" (216, 186, 218). For Paul D, the "tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (68) exemplifies how terror overwhelms the affective lives of dispossessed subjects, inducing a philosophy of "[l]oving small and in secret" (211). Paul D's "small" love is embedded in the landscape of Alfred, Georgia, where he labours as a prisoner and sleeps at night in a "grave calling itself quarters" (99). The tobacco tin is a way of managing his trembling—a "flutter" that began "in the chest" and intensified "the further south they led him" (99)—an internalized shudder signaling that the horrors of whiteness are approaching a limit beyond which is the realm of *too much*. This, according to Baby Suggs, holy, is the essentially ethical issue: "'Everything depends on knowing how much,' she said, and 'Good is knowing when to stop'" (81).[88] And, when Baby Suggs' "heart collapse[s]" (174) and she retires to her bed to contemplate colours, she gets up one last time to announce "to Sethe and Denver the lesson she had learned from her sixty years a slave and ten years free: that there was no bad luck in the world but whitepeople. 'They don't know when to stop'" (97). Years later, finally understanding Baby Suggs' exhaustion through his own encounter with the red ribbon, Stamp Paid grasps the importance of the statement that she once repeated to him three times, simultaneously accounting for her broken heart and

---

[88] Hi Man, the "lead chain" on Paul D's coffle in Alfred who yells the signals that start and end each day of labour, is also characterized in terms of ethical limits: "[Paul D] believed to this day that the 'Hiiii!' at dawn and the 'Hoooo!' when evening came where the responsibility Hi Man assumed because he alone knew what was enough, what was too much, when things were over, when the time had come" (Morrison, *Beloved* 101).

formulating the excesses of whiteness in terms of spatial transgression: "'I'm saying they came in my yard'" (170).

The event that is central to *Beloved*—Sethe's act of infanticide and her attempted murder of her other three children—is shaped by this configuration of whiteness as compulsively trespassing limits, extending, via property rights, into other bodies and spaces (cf. Ahmed 2006; Carter 2007; Hartman 1997). Exemplifying Baby Suggs' charge that, "[t]hey don't know when to stop," schoolteacher and his nephew cross the Ohio River and track the fugitive Sethe down at 124 Bluestone Road, where they enter Baby Suggs' yard to reclaim "the breeding one" and her "foal" (216). Reflecting on her actions, Sethe articulates the problem of keeping black bodies intact as one of withstanding "the extensive capacities of property—that is, the augmentation of the master subject through his embodiment in external objects and persons" (Hartman, *Scenes* 21). Upon recognizing schoolteacher's hat coming down the road, she responds with an act meant to keep her children out of his reach:

> And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. […] By the time she faced him, looked him dead in the eye, she had something in her arms that stopped him in his tracks. He took a backward step with each jump of the baby heart until finally there were none. (Morrison, *Beloved* 155)

If whiteness coheres around an insatiable appetite for power and profit—a set of desires that are "both founded upon and enabled by the material relations of chattel slavery" (Hartman, *Scenes* 21)—then it is structured by a set of economic imperatives that deflect the costs of such accumulation onto the bodies of others. Sethe's apotropaic gesture is

spurred by a projection of her prior knowledge of the violence of this economy into her children's future. She attempts to refuse these imperatives by holding "the parts of her" together and, simultaneously, arresting schoolteacher's relentless advance into her new home. But this refusal is caught up within the same sacrificial economy that Sethe seeks to evade, a connection that Morrison underscores through the parallel rhythms of schoolteacher's backward steps and the increasingly infrequent "jump[s] of the baby heart." Sethe's act of infanticide is not a straightforward act of resistance but, rather, a "warding off" (Marks 2) that obeys a twisted, aporetic logic expressed by Sethe herself: "if I hadn't killed her she would have died" (190).

In confronting whiteness with its own sacrificial economy—draining a body of life precisely so that it cannot be consumed by white power and its imperatives—Sethe shuffles the categories of darkness and whiteness, destabilizing their respective connotations in a way that reverberates across the narrative. This ambivalence is embodied in the weariness of Baby Suggs, whose heart also eventually stops in the wake of what Stamp Paid refers to as "the Misery" (163). Finally understanding her heartbreak well after her death, Stamp thinks, "[t]hey came in her yard anyway and she could not approve or condemn Sethe's rough choice. One or the other might have saved her, but beaten up by the claims of both, she went to bed. The whitefolks had tired her out at last" (171). *Beloved* is rife with such "exhausting" moments when, under the pressure of asymmetrical power relations, refusals slide into indeterminacy. Morrison's construction of "the Misery" as an apocalyptic event articulates the black community with excess while the gothic trope of darkness-as-terror becomes loosely affixed to the white bodies

of "the four horsemen": schoolteacher, his nephew, a slave catcher, and the sheriff (140).

The Misery occurs after what is meant to be a small celebration on Bluestone Road turns

into "a feast for ninety people" (129), a display of "bounty" and "reckless generosity" that

angers those who took part so that, the next morning, "[t]he scent of their disapproval lay

heavy in the air" (130). Working in her garden and sensing her neighbours' anger and

offense, Baby Suggs suddenly smells something different, a "dark and coming thing" that

materializes in the form of the four horsemen (131). Morrison's apocalypse is configured

as the disastrous arrival of whiteness-as-darkness—armed by the state in the form of the

1850 Fugitive Slave Act—in the midst of a black community temporarily undone by

excessive celebration. Sethe's own excessive act, a (self-)mutilation spurred by "too

thick" love (156), then intensifies this fragmentation of community. Morrison's

representation of darkness and whiteness as interpenetrating smells on the air—"free-

floating repulsion" partially obscuring the terrifying scent of the "dark and coming thing"

(131)—distributes the affective economy of white supremacy across the land itself. Not

deterministically tied to particular bodies or sites, but permeating everything, terror and

love, anger and shame circulate in a national atmosphere that reeks of "fire-cooked

blood" (172)—an atmosphere that *The Road* revivifies through the "ungodly stench" of

cooked human flesh (McCarthy 93).

Instructive appetites: cannibalism and consumption

By reading The Woman in *The Road* as haunted by "Sethe's rough choice"

(Morrison, *Beloved* 171), I aim to highlight a constellation of phenomena that make

maternity unthinkable: rape, forced reproduction, stolen milk, and "a red ribbon knotted around a curl of wet woolly hair, clinging still to its bit of scalp" (172). Together, the army of slaveholders with its pregnant women and the infant "blackening on the spit" (McCarthy 167) suggest that the Woman will struggle to hold "the parts of her" together (Morrison 155) in this new New World landscape. Yet, *The Road*'s conservatism—its tale of a besieged white patriarch journeying into what was once the American South and confronting the possibility of his own enslavement—troubles any easy alignment between the Woman and Sethe. Both the novel and the film indirectly exploit the "American Africanism" that Morrison destabilizes, projecting terror onto the resurgent wilderness and the cannibals that populate it—a strategy that Fiedler traces back to early American gothic novels that encoded wild natural landscapes with "the threat of the black rebellion" (400). Here, too, Morrison's re-politicization of gothic tropes points the way to a critique of the Man's implicitly racialized worldview, in which cannibals are "bad guys" and he and his son are "good guys" who are "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 109). In *Beloved*, schoolteacher frames Sethe's infanticide as the result "of a little so-called freedom imposed on people who needed every care and guidance in the world to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred" (143). But Morrison lends irony to this characterization of Sethe's actions as cannibalistic when, shortly after, Sethe angrily reflects that the pathological violence of white people had "buttered Halle's face; gave Paul D iron to eat; [and] crisped Sixo" (179). Invoking alignments of whiteness with cannibalism found in slave narratives, Indigenous accounts of Euro-American contact, and contemporary cultural critique (cf. Arens 1979; Bartolovich 1998; hooks 1992; Hulme 1998; Kilgour

204

1990; King 2000; McClintock 1995), Morrison recalibrates schoolteacher's accusation as a deflection. What kinds of anxieties, then, are embedded in the Man's horrified distancing of himself from his cannibalistic others? What would it mean to position the Man as an inheritor of schoolteacher's violent rationality and obsessive counting?

As a "love story" between father and son that imagines hope and goodness as a paternal inheritance, a light to be carried into the future, *The Road* valorizes imperious white masculinity and demonizes its "savage" others. The Man's project of passing on "[o]ld stories of courage and justice as he remembered them" (McCarthy 35) is inseparable from the outmoded orientation devices to which he clings: binoculars through which he sees only the endless grey of a ruined landscape (7); a "tattered oilcompany roadmap" that marks obsolete state roads (36); and "a brass sextant, possibly a hundred years old," discovered on the beached wreck of a sailboat—"the first thing he'd seen in a long time that stirred him" (192). Engraved with two of the few proper nouns that appear in McCarthy's novel, "Hezzaninth, London" (192), the sextant evokes the trans-Atlantic journeys that generated the world for which the Man is nostalgic. His alignment with the artifacts of Enlightenment histories and geographies inflects his self-fashioning as a "good guy" who is "carrying the fire" (108-09), a construction that recalls imperialist discourses in which civilized "torch-bearers" brave a dark unknown populated by cannibalistic savages (Hulme 7-8). The civilized/savage opposition underwriting the Man's good guy/bad guy worldview becomes almost explicit in a conversation between father and son that is nearly identical in both the novel and the film:

> Boy: We wouldnt ever eat anybody, would we?
> Man: No. Of course not.

> [...]
> Boy: No matter what.
> Man: No. No matter what.
> Boy: Because we're the good guys.
> Man: Yes.
> Boy: And we're carrying the fire.
> Man: And we're carrying the fire. Yes. (McCarthy 108-09)

As the Boy tries on his father's logic, he generates a slippage from a refusal of

cannibalism to being one of the "good guys" to "carrying the fire." The dialogue that ends

in affirmation begins with the denial on which the good/bad binary pivots. It is one that

underscores the irreducible alterity of *The Road*'s cannibals, one of whom the Man

identifies as, "[m]y brother at last. The reptilian calculations in those cold and shifting

eyes. The gray and rotting teeth. Claggy with human flesh" (64). Operating ironically, the

term "brother" demonstrates that "otherness is dependent on a prior sense of kinship

denied, rather than on mere difference" (Hulme 6). The Man's demonization of his

cannibalistic "brother" reopens the biopolitical fault lines—civilized/savage,

human/monster, Christian/pagan—that remade "the human" on the threshold of the New

World.

A negatively racialized figuration of appetite without limits, the New World

cannibal operated as the Indigenous screen onto which were projected European anxieties

concerning the human, progress, and capitalist modernity (cf. Arens 1979; Bartolovich

1998; Hulme 1998; King 2000; McClintock 1995). In her psychoanalytic history of the

imperial voyages of discovery, Anne McClintock argues that such a projection worked in

tandem with the compulsive feminization of the land in European travelogues, maps, and

paintings. These strategies of projecting shadows onto and obsessively mapping the

"impossible" spaces of the New World betray "acute paranoia and a profound, if not pathological, sense of male anxiety and boundary loss"—a "fear of engulfment" by the unknown that finds expression in the trope of cannibalism (McClintock 24, 27).[89] Through an analysis of a drawing by Belgian artist Jan van der Straet, in which Amerigo Vespucci encounters a naked and female "America" while cannibals roast a human leg in the background (ca. 1575), McClintock posits a "doubling within the conqueror":

> Suspended between a fantasy of conquest and a dread of engulfment, between rape and emasculation, the scene, so neatly gendered, represents a splitting and displacement of a crisis that is, properly speaking, male. The gendering of America as simultaneously naked and passive *and* riotously violent and cannibalistic represents a doubling within the conqueror, disavowed and displaced onto a feminized scene. [And] the fear of being engulfed by the unknown is projected onto colonized people as *their* determination to devour the intruder whole. (27, emphases in original)

McClintock's psychoanalytic history of contact, imperial masculinity in crisis, and "the implacable rage of paranoia" (28) outlines an affective and ideological inheritance that, later, found expression in early American gothic literature and the "special guilts" that it registers (Fiedler 143). Along with representing the conqueror's fear of engulfment, fantasies of New World cannibalism managed the incommensurability between European dreams of *terra nullius* and the reality of Indigenous populations that "would not yield their lands to the carriers of utopia" (Fiedler 143). Here, Fiedler's ironic description of European settlers as "carriers of utopia" into the midst of a recalcitrant (cannibal) population resonates with the Man's project of "carrying the fire." In *The Road*, The End of capitalist America looks something like its beginnings: white masculinity projects its

---

[89] McClintock's analysis clearly resonates with Klaus Theweleit's work, which I explored in Chapter One, on fascist masculinity and its fantasies of "empty space, untrodden territory, a virginal body" (35).

violent appetites onto "savage" others, and paranoid rage goes hand in hand with the guilt of indebtedness.

Like van der Straet's drawing, *The Road* enacts what McClintock describes as a "splitting and displacement" that suppresses the possibility of critique embedded in its vision of American capitalism in ruins. On the one hand, the "reptilian calculations in [the] cold and shifting eyes" (64) of the cannibal suggest that violent consumption is aberrant—a post-capitalist mutation rather than a phenomenon that is integral to an economic system premised on appropriations of territory and labour. And, on the other hand, a single can of "Coca Cola" that the Man offers up as a "treat" for his son (McCarthy 19) represents his nostalgia for a lost world of consumer comfort. Crystal Bartolovich formulates this unstable interplay between excess and limitation as a "disgust/desire nexus" that registers how popular fascination with the figure of the cannibal is symptomatic of "specifically capitalist crises in appetite" (223, 211). New World fantasies of cannibalism, she argues, indexed the ideological and subjective tensions of an emergent capitalist modernity:

> [The figure of the cannibal] embodied an appetite both instructive to emergent capital—and interdicted by it. If the cannibal represents consumption without reserve, then capital must meet in cannibalism not only its own limit—that which it must renounce—but also the figure of its own desire. […] In the case of the early modern European encounter with cannibals, the disgust/desire nexus indicated a conflictual space in capitalism as well as in the capitalist subject, whose appetite must be continuously fueled—and controlled. (223)

If popular fascination with Hannibal Lecter, the cannibalistic serial killer in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), epitomized Bartolovich's "disgust/desire nexus" in the 1990s, then a proliferation of post-apocalyptic cannibals in early twenty-

first-century American films points, once again, to capitalist crisis. Films like *The Road* and *The Book of Eli* (2010)—a post-apocalyptic vision in which cannibals are "outlaw" figures, though only a few enclaves of non-cannibalistic humans remain—are closely linked to the zombie apocalypse films that I outlined in Chapter Two. Imagining the end of (American capitalist) civilization in terms of widespread "reversion" to cannibalism, they register the contemporary instabilities of finance capital that I discuss in greater detail in my next chapter: driven by desire for limitless capital accumulation, the neoliberal revolution has its "disgusting" counterpart in the underground economies proliferating in its dead zones.

Reading *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic cannibals through George Romero's iconic images of undead humans feasting on human viscera—an association that Hillcoat himself acknowledges in naming *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) as an influence on his film (*The Road*, Director's Commentary)—prompts me to return to the Woman's assertion that she and her family are "the walking dead in a horror film" (McCarthy 47). The shift from Hannibal Lecter as a solitary, exceptional, even bourgeois cannibal in the 1990s to post-apocalyptic masses of (zombie-)cannibals in the last decade gestures to the abject, failed consumers that I invoked in relation to the *28* films. The Woman's invocation of the zombie, a figure of compromised agency, all but collapses the distinction between "good guy" survivors and "bad guy" cannibals that organizes the Man's worldview. Moving through the vacuum created by the end of consumer culture, the Man and his family, *like* the cannibals around them, embody the limits of consumerism. Whether scavenging among or cannibalizing the remnants of a "vanished

world" (McCarthy 117), their respective negotiations of finite resources reveal the

sacrificial economy that lurks beneath consumer culture and its myth of endlessly

available goods. The Man and the Boy push a battered shopping cart that aligns them with

"the homeless in every city" (Director's Commentary), an association that Hillcoat

visually reinforces with a nighttime shot of the cart sitting just outside of their tarp

shelter, which is lit from within by a fire.[90] In contrast, the cannibal "bad guys" have

abandoned the project of scavenging among the wreckage of a world of supermarkets,

consuming the bodies of others without the mediation of consumer goods. In so doing,

they directly confront the fact that "humankind remains inextricably entangled in flows of

matter and energy that result from eating and being eaten" (McNeil qtd. in Kimball 39).

In its exploration of two versions of the "outside" of consumerism, *The Road* renders the

Man, who clings to the vestiges of a capitalist economy, vaguely heroic by demonizing

the cannibalistic others who fail to displace the "bio-economic burden" of survival

(Kimball 21).

These oppositely valued depictions of failed consumerism are complexly linked

across two subterranean spaces that evoke particular moments in American political

economy.[91] The demonization of cannibalism reaches its peak when the Man and the Boy

---

[90] I will return to and rethink the relationship between the shopping cart and cannibalism
in my next chapter, wherein *The Wire*'s Reginald "Bubbles" Cousins exemplifies the
indeterminacies of capitalist consumption. Working the streets of inner-city Baltimore, he uses his
shopping cart both as a mobile, unofficial store—selling t-shirts and other necessities to
impoverished locals—and as a means of transporting the metal that he harvests from back alleys,
construction sites, and abandoned buildings to the neighbourhood scrap-yard (an act that could be
read as a "cannibalizing" of the city itself).

[91] I owe the inspiration for this analysis of subterranean spaces to David Pike's review of
the film, in which he asserts the "interdependence" of the "twinned undergrounds, the only ones
in the book." However, Pike rather simplistically concludes that McCarthy's version of the

discover partially eaten captives in the basement of a plantation house, where the sight of a naked man "with his legs gone to the hip, their stumps blackened and burned, cauterized" (Penhall 35), re-materializes a history of slavery in which power took the form of the ability to consume the bodies of others. Later in the film, the basement has a counterpart in the form of another underground space, also secured by a padlocked hatch: a well-stocked bunker, "simultaneously the apogee of the consumer culture of the 1950s and its dark alter ego" (Pike), that ambiguously rewards the Man-as-scavenger for his refusal of cannibalism. In her analysis of apotropaism in *Beloved*, Marks draws on its connection to the gods of the Greek underworld to argue that the threatening past materializes as subterranean space, enacting "the haunting power of some Hades-like place of repression and aggression" (9). As such, it is possible to read the cellar of the plantation house and the bunker as conjuring up complex realignments of history, space, and race that destabilize the Man's good scavenger/bad cannibal opposition.

When father and son find a padlocked hatch in the kitchen floor of an old plantation house, the former rushes out to the yard in search of tools with which to break the lock, missing, in his haste, details that the Boy notices: "a forty gallon cauldron on the blackened remnants of a fire" and "a wooden smoke house with thin wisps of smoke coming off it" (Penhall 34). The scene exemplifies what Peter Hulme calls the "primal scene of cannibalism," an encounter with savagery in the form of its "aftermath" that features "the large cooking pot, essential utensil for cannibal illustrations" (2). Yet, the

---

cellar/bunker relationship is more ethically ambiguous and complex than Hillcoat's—a conclusion that stems, in part, from what I think is a gross misreading of the cellar scene in the film (he reads the sound effects and shrieks coming from the house as an indication that the captives are taking revenge on the cannibals, rather than the aural evidence of their being consumed).

plantation house itself troubles Africanist constructions of cannibalism-as-darkness. The enormous cauldron and the smoke house conjure the plantation as an industrial site, and the presence of bodies waiting to be consumed in the cellar aligns the main part of the house with the terror of whiteness—an association that is underscored by Hillcoat's visual nod to Nazism, even if this cue displaces the violence of whiteness onto a different space and time.[92] When the Man and the Boy discover the "blackened and burnt" body in the cellar causing an "ungodly stench" (McCarthy 93), the Man refuses the captives' pleas for help, racing back up the stairs and slamming the hatch down on them. There are two things to note about Hillcoat's version of this scene. The first is that the Man's infanticidal gesture—fearing capture, he holds the gun to his son's forehead—takes place inside the house in an upstairs bathroom rather than, as in McCarthy's version, at the edge of the woods nearby. The second is that infanticide is deferred and the Man and the Boy able to escape only because the captives manage to force open the hatch, distracting the "suspiciously well fed" people who have returned to the house (Penhall 36). These two changes highlight the sacrificial economy of survival, directly connecting the Boy's spared life to the slammed cellar door and the "hideous shriek […] coming from the house" later that night (Penhall 41). Curiously, the shot of father and son fleeing the house originates from a top-floor window, as if the house itself is watching them run, a

---

[92] When father and son enter the house through a window, the boy catches sight of a pile of shoes and boots in the living room that invokes the Nazi death camps. This connection is enforced when, as the Man and the Boy flee the cellar, one captive grabs at them, pleading for help and saying, "[t]hey're taking us to the smoke house." I will briefly return to the idea of the Holocaust as a "screen memory" in my Epilogue (cf. Hirsch 1997; Huyssen 2003; Rothberg 2009).

witness to their abandonment of the emaciated people inside—and so, too, to their uneasy complicity with the "suspiciously well fed."[93]

After the plantation house, their discovery of a bunker loaded with food and supplies crystallizes the Man's and the Boy's investment in the sacrificial logic of survival. Though, in *The Road*, this logic is projected onto—and into—the bodies of cannibal others, the bunker's connection to 1950s consumer culture, as well as its manifestation of an utterly privatized solution to the specter of a post-apocalyptic world, reinforce the incommensurability between survivalism and community that the Man takes for granted. As Elaine Tyler May argues in her analysis of the family in Cold War America, the "home bomb shelter" (91) replaced "broad-based government programs for evacuation of the population and for public shelters[, which were] quickly abandoned as impractical" (90). Modeled on the reliable readiness of "Grandma's Pantry" (91), well-supplied bomb shelters underscored the centrality of the aptly named nuclear family in plans for civil defense. Premised on acts of hoarding and meant to facilitate the survival of families—thus implicitly warding off those with whom, to paraphrase Peter Hulme, kinship is denied—the bunker spatially manifests both the hardness and the sacrificial logic of survivalism. McCarthy highlights the ambivalence of the space when, as the Man and the Boy load their cart and prepare to leave it, he offers a chilling image of the open hatch: "The faintly lit hatchway lay in the dark of the yard like a grave yawning at judgment day in some old apocalyptic painting" (131). In consuming the supplies they

---

[93] In his analysis of the concept of "rememory" in *Beloved*, A. Timothy Spaulding argues that it "asserts the ability of the past to maintain its surface traces in the physical world of the present. […] As Sethe defines it, rememories can lie in the places where history has occurred, in the houses and trees that have witnessed slavery" (66).

find in the bunker, father and son benefit from the labour of the dead, an unavoidable reality that troubles the Boy, but which the Man justifies by claiming, "[t]hey would want us to. Just like we would want them to"—because "[t]hey were the good guys" (118). The "good guy" survivalists are hoarders, their enactment of a sacrificial logic deflected onto "bad guy" cannibals. Yet, the topographical alignment between the bunker and the cellar means that the narrative cannot sustain this distinction. *The Road*'s vision of the collapse of consumer culture reveals that the "good" capitalist subject does not refuse the violence of cannibalistic consumption but, rather, mediates that violence through a world of consumer goods. This is a world that is now evident only in "surface traces" (Spaulding 66)—a single can of Coca Cola, a cap embroidered with "the logo of some vanished enterprise" (McCarthy 19, 54)—but to which the Man remains affectively connected.

"Other families do it": maternal ground and the ethics of self-harm

The Man's nostalgia is complicated by a narrative structure that firmly articulates the past with his dead wife, a haunting absence that becomes particularly apparent as father and son enjoy the brief respite from hunger and hardship offered by the bunker. In a scene that exemplifies the Man's longing for a lost world of sensuous pleasures, Hillcoat films him dressed in a dinner jacket as, secure within the bunker, he enjoys an after-supper cigar and a shot of Jack Daniels. Looking across the table at his son, recognizing that he is re-experiencing a world of plenty that the Boy, until now, may not have believed ever existed, he remarks, "[y]ou think I come from another world, don't you?" His father's tendency to become possessed by the past makes the Boy uneasy. In a

scene that appears very early in the book, but that Hillcoat repositions so that it occurs

shortly before they find the bunker, the Man takes the Boy to visit his childhood home.

As the Man wanders around the wreckage of the living room, pointing out where the

Christmas tree used to stand and where stockings were hung, the Boy watches him—

watches, McCarthy writes, "shapes claiming him he could not see" (22)—and nervously

states, "I don't think we should do this," before heading outside to wait on the porch.

Viewers are left to watch the Man examining the faded pattern on a sofa cushion,

caressing it affectionately with his thumb before placing it gently back on the sagging

couch frame—an act highlighting the entanglement of his attachment to material goods

and their arrangement in, or as, familial space. Meant to preserve such space—along with

the family unit that animates it—in the face of apocalyptic annihilation, the bomb shelter

represents "safety […] in the form of the family" (May 93). What is conspicuously

missing from the bunker in *The Road*, then, is the feminine complement to the Man in his

dinner jacket, the wife and mother whose domestic labour was the inspiration for the

bomb shelter-as-"Grandma's Pantry" in postwar America (May 91).

Just as bomb shelters functioned symbolically to secure and contain the nuclear

family during the Cold War, the family itself served to domesticate women's unruly

sexuality, the hypothesized "source" of male weakness in an America striving to harden

itself against communist invasion. May writes, "[a]s temptresses who seduced men into

evil or as overprotective mothers guilty of 'Momism,' women were blamed for men's

sexual transgressions that could lead them down the path to communism. Behind every

subversive, it seemed, lurked a woman's misplaced sexuality" (84). The overwhelming

postwar pattern of "early marriage, traditional gender roles, domesticated sexuality and a home life centered on security" (94)—a pattern epitomized by the contained and fortified space of the bunker—was meant to shape women into appropriate maternal ground from which children, sons especially, could "develop normally" (84). If apocalyptic landscapes are feminized, sexualized, and racialized terrains that confront the white patriarchal subject with unpredictable futures, then the bunker symbolizes the drive to suppress and re-master these demonic grounds (cf. McKittrick 2006). In *The Road*, the absence of the mother within the very space meant to symbolize security-as-family reinforces the disjunction between the Boy and the lost world that his father sees taking shape in the objects and brand names that suddenly surround them. Without his wife, the Man's nostalgic vision of sitting down to a family dinner remains half-formed, an incompleteness that allegorizes the missing "ground" of (un)free labour that made such privileged patterns of consumption possible—and made them appear infinitely sustainable. In Hillcoat's film, the shot of father and son sitting across a table from each other creates a visual echo of an earlier moment, a flashback of husband and wife seated at their kitchen table as she informs him of her decision to kill herself. Here, she briefly proposes a suicide pact that simultaneously foregrounds and undoes the family unit. Over a close-up shot of their two hands barely touching, hers resting lightly on the gun and both of their wedding rings clearly visible, she says, simply, "[o]ther families do it." As a mother who attempts to sever the ideological connection between the family and futurity and who, failing that, forsakes her husband and child, the Woman-as-maternal ground is characterized by absence and negation.

In the context of the articulations between sexualized femininity and ruined

landscapes established in the Book of Revelation (see Chapter One), it is significant that,

in McCarthy's novel, the Woman frames her desire for suicide as a form of promiscuity.

Offering her husband the "gift" of coldness in their final conversation (McCarthy 49), she

tells him, "[y]ou can think of me as a faithless slut if you like. I've taken a new lover. He

can give me what you cannot" (48). Casting death as a lover and telling her husband that

she is "done with [her] own whorish heart," the woman becomes the heartless whore

whose destruction clears narrative space for a "love story" from a father to his son. The

novel's deification of the paternal takes place across the body of a faithless woman.

Where McCarthy employs a striking simile that removes this haunting maternal figure to

a remote location—"[b]y day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother

with a lamp" (28)—I argue that the Woman is the destroyed body, the "supportive

ground" (Cartwright, *Moral* 19), on which the Man and the Boy travel south. Hillcoat's

version of the last conversation between husband and wife includes an important, though

subtle, change that softens McCarthy's cold parting scene: the Woman gives the Man

direction before "vanishing into the darkness" (Penhall 31). "You go south," she says.

"You keep him warm and you go south. You won't survive another winter here." The

absent mother's final injunction shapes the father/son journey to the southeastern coast of

the former United States, and Hillcoat's visual rendering of her departure gestures to the

corporeal dissolution—the material incorporation into the ruined landscape—that her

death entails. Quite literally "vanishing into the darkness," the Woman blends into the

night as she walks away from her husband, her white nightgown visibly disintegrating

into post-apocalyptic blackness. Visually, *The Road* registers what its dominant narrative suppresses: the darkness that symbolizes the undoing of the white family unit is where the "maternal blackness" of the gothic imagination (Fiedler 132) meets demonic grounds. Coupled with her order to "go south" and read as a kind of unveiling, the Woman's suicide conjures the racial and economic violence that sustains white America—to the remnants of which her husband clings.[94]

Rather than acceding to the Man's suggestion that his son is "a god" (McCarthy 145), I want to explore the Boy's indeterminate and unruly figuration in greater detail by routing his ethical and affective orientation through the (maternal) ground he negotiates. Here, the specifically psychoanalytic derivation of the concept of "maternal ground" is a useful point of departure for reading the Boy's maternal inheritance. In her development of object relations theory for feminist film theory, Lisa Cartwright articulates conceptualizations of the maternal body as a "supportive ground" shaping the child's emergent subjectivity with psychoanalyst André Green's model of affect as a "pivot," or "the place of an encounter" (Cartwright, *Moral* 19, 41). Deploying a relational model of

---

[94] In some ways, my reading of (maternal) ground defined as absence responds to Rune Graulund's analysis of McCarthy's use of the desert motif. Graulund writes: "Physically, emotionally as morally, every choice the protagonists of *The Road* face as they trek across the bleak and abstract wasteland of a future America can in some way or other lead back to the ultimate question of deserta, of absence. The problem of the desert, in other words, is the barren ground upon which the central questions of the novel rest" (58). In spite of his feminizing description of the land as "barren" and the obvious play on absence as desertion—"[d]eriving from Latin *desertus* meaning 'abandoned, deserted, left'" (70)—Graulund fails to make even a passing reference to the figure of the Woman in *The Road*. This is a remarkable omission in an essay that ultimately links the uncharacteristic hopefulness of McCarthy's ending to the Boy, who may represent, Graulund suggests in rather telling language, "a spark of life that will enable creation to begin anew" (76). Eliding the question of maternity altogether, Graulund ultimately triangulates McCarthy's father/son duo with a "conspicuously absent" third character: God (75).

subjectivity, Green posits that the "*psyche is the relation between two bodies one of which is absent*" (qtd. in Cartwright, *Moral* 35, emphasis in Green). Within this model, according to Green,

> one may imagine the affective process as *the anticipation of a meeting between the subject's body and another body* (imaginary or present), a contact that would result either in the analogue of a sexual and amorous interpenetration or, on the contrary but in a comparable mode, the analogue of mutilating aggression, both threatening—for better or for worse—the subject's integrity. The affect would seem to resemble both a preparation for such an eventuality and the effect of foreseeing it in an accelerated way. (Green 312, emphasis in original)

Green's model of affect as the anticipation of an encounter, imagined as either pleasurable or threatening, with the body of another, allows me to consider continuities between the Man's survivalist paranoia and the Woman's "clear-sighted despair" (Pike), both of which constitute "preparation" for "mutilating aggression." Simultaneously, the temporal organization of this model as the anticipation of contact recalls the structure of the apotropaic gesture, which is intended to ward off just "such an eventuality" through self-inflicted mutilation. It is on this point that the husband and wife diverge, generating competing paternal and maternal inheritances for their son.

In a post-apocalyptic context in which the psychic cost of encountering another—the subject's compromised integrity—is entangled with the cost of existence, the sacrificial economy of survivalism will not admit self-inflicted harm. In a brief exchange of dialogue, included in both novel and film as a prelude to the flashback in which the Woman declares her suicidal intentions, the Boy states, "I wish I was with my mom" (McCarthy 46). The Man translates this:

> You mean you wish that you were dead.

> Yes.
> You mustnt say that.
> But I do.
> Dont say it. It's a bad thing to say. (47)

Rather than expressing a straightforward wish to die, the Boy articulates *a desire to be with* which, in this case, entails that he sacrifice his life. Against the Man's reduction of this complex statement—"I wish I was with my mom"—to a "bad thing," I argue that this, precisely, is an awareness that the Boy inherits *and adapts* from his mother's apotropaic gesture: that there is a connection between corporeal vulnerability and being with others. The Woman's negation of the sacrificial economy of survival is an act of self-harm in which she bodily assumes the entirety of the cost of her existence, but, paradoxically, such total destruction leaves no "self" with whom the Man and the Boy can share the psychic costs of her act. As I explored through *Beloved*, this is the paradox of the apotropaic gesture: in mimicking that which it seeks to ward off, it generates effects comparable to the ones that were feared. I posit that the Boy's resistance to his father's survivalist imperatives can be understood as a measured adaptation of his mother's self-mutilating stance. If "[g]ood is knowing when to stop" (Morrison, *Beloved* 81), then both assuming the cost of one's own existence and deflecting it onto others must be limited processes. As such, though the Boy does not seek his own death, he does accept the corporeal vulnerability inherent in meeting other bodies, enacting a tending-toward others that not only takes on the risk of encountering "bad guys," but also demonstrates a willingness to share the resources to which his father clings.

Fittingly, then, the Boy's emerging resistance to his father's paranoid worldview becomes evident when they leave the bunker and, for the first time, have resources that

could be shared with others. When they come across a solitary traveler on the road, an old

man who resembles "a pile of rags fallen off a cart" (McCarthy 137), the Boy wishes to

connect with the stranger while the Man suspects that "Ely" (Robert Duvall) is a "decoy,"

prelude to an ambush (136). Having just left the bunker, father and son are loaded with all

the food and supplies they can carry. Nevertheless, the Boy has to plead with the Man

before being allowed to give Ely a "tin of fruit cocktail" (Penhall 73). The Boy's

contestation of his father's hardness takes shape through minor gestures and attempted

proximities: when the Man draws the line at offering Ely a spoon along with the food, the

Boy heaves a sigh of frustration and crouches down near the old traveler, speaking

encouragingly; when his father pulls him back up into a standing position by the shoulder,

the Boy roughly shrugs him off; and, reasoning that Ely cannot see well, the Boy briefly

takes his hand until the Man orders him, without explanation, to let go. When they

separate from Ely the next morning, the Boy giving him one more can of peaches to tuck

into his pack, the Man underscores the anticipated cost of their sharing. Implying that the

Boy has been reckless, he snaps, "[m]aybe when we're out of food you'll have more time

to think about it." The Man's comment not only expresses his survivalist mentality, but

also reminds the audience that there *is* an element of self-harm inherent in the Boy's

generosity. Each can of fruit that he gives to the old man is a source of nourishment that

he and his father will no longer have at their disposal.

The struggle between father and son culminates in an encounter with a thief, a

meeting animated by an unstable and racialized affective economy. By casting African

American actor Michael K. Williams—best known for his role as the queer stick-up man,

Omar Little, in HBO's *The Wire*—as the stranger who steals the protagonists' cart and supplies, Hillcoat and his team not only gesture to the contemporary criminalization of race in the context of a "dehumanizing battle over dwindling resources" (Pike). The scene also contributes to the film's visual evocation of histories of racial terror. When the Man goes into a paranoid rage and aims his gun at the thief—his demand to know "how long have you been following us?" precluding the possibility that this was a crime of convenience—the stranger's pleading gesture of raising his hands reveals his missing thumbs. In the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*, this suggests that he is an outcast from one of the cannibalistic "bloodcults" (an interpretation supported by the fact that he takes the cart but leaves the Boy, who was alone while his father scavenged on the beach). Yet, both the visual and aural registers of the ensuing confrontation are haunted by a master/slave dynamic that links the thief's mutilated hands to a history of branding, punishing, and tormenting black bodies on American soil. In a shot/reverse-shot sequence, the Man orders the thief at gunpoint: "Take your clothes off. Take them off, every goddamn stitch." As the Boy pleads for his life and the thief reluctantly tosses everything he has onto the cart—uttering a "please, mister" that threatens to slip into an appeal to a "master"—Hillcoat switches to a wide shot that frames the encounter against the backdrop of the Atlantic ocean. Between the naked, shivering black man and the hardened white man holding a gun, a smudge of grey on the filmic horizon stands in for the edge of what was once the New World.

The Man's attempt to repress his own fear by terrorizing an/other takes the form of an aggressive appropriation of basic necessities, an extension of himself via the

222

claiming of another's property that the Boy clearly sees as too much—as not knowing

when to stop. Reducing both the thief and the Boy to tears, the Man inadvertently

demonstrates the truth behind the thief's justifying claim:

> Thief: You ain't gotta do this to me, man. You ain't gotta do me like this.
> Man: You didn't mind doing it to us.
> Thief: I'm begging you. I'm begging, please.
> Boy: Papa.
> Thief: Listen to the kid, man. I'm starving. You'd have done the same
>   thing. I'll die out here. I'm gonna die out here.
> Man: I'm going to leave you just the way you left us.

Becoming the "robber" that he had assured Ely he was not, the Man takes his revenge,

hauling the reclaimed cart and roughly prodding his son away from the scene. As they

leave the thief "shivering and whimpering" (Penhall 94), he snaps at the Boy, "[y]ou've

got to learn!" Aware that his lungs are deteriorating and that his death is not far off, and

dismayed by his son's lack of hardness, the Man frames his actions as a pedagogy of

survival that the Boy ultimately refuses when he retorts, "I don't want to learn!" This

refusal takes concrete shape as a desire to stop rather than relentlessly pursue their course:

physical hesitations that prompt his father to yell at him, and a backwards glance through

which the audience, too, sees the vulnerable black body—"the nude and slatlike creature"

(McCarthy 217)—they are leaving behind. Tellingly, when father and son stop to regroup

after this encounter, the Man orders the Boy to "stop sulking" because the thief is "gone."

The Boy's incredulous look, coupled with his assertion that "[h]e's not *gone*," constructs

him as haunted by an absent presence. The thief, like the Woman, has become a ghostly

figure that "is invisible but not necessarily not there"—a figure "pregnant with unfulfilled

possibility, with the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 179, 183).

Having refused to consign the victimized thief to an unalterable past, the Boy also forces his father to see the future differently—not as the space-time in which he will faithfully reproduce the Man's pedagogy of survival, but one of indeterminacy, contingency, and contact. When the Man implicitly dismisses his son's empathy as the luxury of irresponsibility—"[y]ou're not the one," he says, "who has to worry about everything"—the Boy, in a pivotal moment, asserts himself by yelling, "[y]es I am. I am the one!" His simultaneously defiant and pleading expression leads the pair to return to the place where they left the thief, who is now gone, and leave his clothes and shoes piled in the road. When the thief fails to materialize in response to the Boy's calls, the Boy kneels beside the pile and, recalling his offering to Ely, places a tin of food on top of the rags. In extending to another the food and clothing that his father provides only for him, the Boy indirectly responds to his mother's advice about nourishing and shielding "some passable ghost" (McCarthy 49). The single tin of food stands as a gesture of atonement, the enacting of a new ritual grounded not in sacrifice, but in a material negotiation of asymmetry. Instead of tirelessly guarding against the anticipated "mutilating aggression" of others (Green 312), the Boy allows himself to be undone by empathy, ceding a small piece of the resources that shore up his existence.

By grappling with the material asymmetries of his world, the Boy also effects local redistributions of affect, which, as Sara Ahmed reminds us, are "world making" (*Cultural Politics* 12). Whereas the Man seeks to keep his fear at bay by hoarding

resources, hardening himself against, and instilling terror in others, the Boy sees fear as a

mutually shared condition—an expression, to invoke Judith Butler's terminology, of a

precariousness that is universal. His apprehension of both Ely's and the thief's fear

prompts him to mitigate rather than intensify it, risking himself just long enough for a

glimpse of the possibility of community to appear in the midst of apocalypse. This is the

future possibility that the Man cannot grasp, and from which his death will exclude him.

Bent double and coughing up blood on the road, he sees the Boy "looking back at him

from some unimaginable future, glowing in that waste like a tabernacle" (McCarthy 230).

Following McCarthy's lead, Hillcoat reduces "community" to a reestablished patriarchal

family unit at the end of the film, leading the Boy, after the death of his father, safely into

the hands of a man who has a wife, two children, and a dog. But, recalling the thief, this

new father figure is also missing his thumbs, a detail that allows me to argue that an

alternative intergenerational and interracial assemblage haunts this "*deus ex machina*

worthy of Euripedes*" (Graulund 72). It is a possibility on which the film forecloses, but

one that resonates with the Man's various descriptions of the Boy as a "changeling child,"

an "alien," and a tabernacle "glowing in [the] waste" (McCarthy 66, 109, 230)—all

figurations that trouble attempts to contain him within a nuclear family structure.

Glimpses of the apocalypse: filming *The Road*

Enjoining her husband and son to "go south" even as her suicide seeks to ward off

the resurgent pasts that they will encounter along the way, the Woman "vanish[es] into

the darkness" that haunts *The Road* (Penhall 31). She becomes allegorically entwined

with the histories of violence—the "rememories" that linger "[r]ight in the place where [they] happened" (Morrison, *Beloved* 34)—that the narrative both evokes and evades. Further, her affective alignment with horror recalibrates the post-apocalyptic wilderness into which she visually dissolves, highlighting its materialization of what Morrison describes as "the terror of human freedom" (*Playing* 37). It is a terror associated with unrestrained re-beginning: the ambiguous freedom of "boundarylessness, of Nature unbridled and crouched for attack; […] of aggression both external and internal" (Morrison, *Playing* 37). If the Woman embodies the "maternal blackness" (Fiedler 132) that registers the physical and psychic threats of unbridled freedom, then she disturbs her husband's nostalgic project of remapping the land and passing on "[o]ld stories of courage and justice" (McCarthy 35). Such stories are intimately tied to the mythology of the American frontier, to what Chris Walsh, in an essay on the novelistic version of *The Road*, problematically celebrates as a "longing for fresh territory, for a sense of boundless, uncontaminated space [that] gets to the very heart of the geocentric urge of Southern and American literature" (52). Arguing that the "melancholy" of McCarthy's writing stems from his recording of "the transformation of the American landscape from boundless space to confining place" (52), Walsh concludes that, in spite of its dystopian inflections, *The Road* reverses this spatial trajectory and revives the utopian openness of the frontier. Such an argument reproduces the violent erasure of peoples and histories that generated the New World as an imagined *terra nullius* in the first place. An emphasis on the maternal ghost that haunts the narrative demands a critical reinterpretation of what constitutes *The Road*'s suppressed utopian edge: not a reinvigorated frontier myth but,

226

rather, a reckoning with "what systematically continues to work on the here and now" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 179).

Within the visual economy of *The Road*, the Woman threatens to undo the very distinction between past and present that she seems to stabilize. If her onscreen presence orients viewers within Hillcoat's flashback sequences, then her dissolution into spectrality—where the latter, as Gordon insists, is "*what makes the present waver*"— alerts us to the layers that visually compose Hillcoat's post-apocalyptic landscape (Jameson qtd. in Gordon, *Ghostly* 168, emphasis in Gordon). *The Road*'s near-future vision is composed of contemporary American scenes, each of which encodes its own histories of natural and economic devastation. From the barren slopes of Mount Saint Helens, to the streets of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to "desolate Pittsburgh," Hillcoat drew on unnervingly familiar vistas to create "an apocalypse that we've actually already seen […] in glimpses" (*The Road*, Director's Commentary).[95] Such a visual strategy begs a number of questions. What does it mean to film the apocalypse in places that have been "conveniently" depopulated by natural or political and economic disaster, or some combination of both? How can—and *can*—mainstream visual culture offer critical purchase on the rust-belt towns and boarded-up inner-city neighbourhoods that it uses to materialize its visions of post-apocalyptic decay? Where are the visual and narrative seams indexing the histories of violence that these landscapes register? From the paternal guilt of *28 Weeks Later* to state violence in *Children of Men* to

---

[95] This stitching of familiar sites—and sights—into the fabric of McCarthy's post-apocalyptic vision extends even to plumes of smoke, in the background of one shot, that are scaled and shaped to recall the New York City skyline on September 11, 2001 (Director's Commentary).

the sacrificial economy of survivalism in *The Road*, destroyed feminine bodies are the repositories of counter-histories in apocalypse films—markers of "endings that are not over" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 139), even amid visions of The End.

Discerning such unfinished endings is part of the work of prising open the present and imagining the conditions for a different future, a project that becomes all the more urgent when sites of ruin—the wasted landscapes of rust-belt America, for instance— become the new *terra nullius* for the speculations and predations of the very economic system that undid them. John Hillcoat's work on the Levi's *Go Forth* campaign exemplifies how mainstream visual culture is implicated in the "glimpses" of apocalypse that it (re)mobilizes. After filming parts of *The Road* in "desolate Pittsburgh" and its environs, Hillcoat returned to Braddock, Pennsylvania to direct a commercial for a Levi's campaign meant to reinvigorate "the brand's wholesome work-horse roots" on the occasion of its 150th anniversary ("Levi's / Ready to Work"). Attaching itself to a grassroots movement driven by an ambitious mayor, Levi's has donated funds to Braddock's urban farming program and uses the town's residents in its visual advertising (Elliott). Hillcoat's commercial features shots of overgrown roads and abandoned buildings accompanied by the following voiceover:

> We were taught how the pioneers went into the West. They opened their eyes and made up what things could be. A long time ago, things got broken here. People got sad and left. Maybe the world breaks on purpose, so we can have work to do. People think there aren't frontiers anymore. They can't see how frontiers are all around us. ("Levi's Go Forth to Work—Braddock, PA")

Voiced by a child, the advertisement articulates the campaign's "We Are All Workers" message with a revitalized, sanitized myth of the American frontier. The strategic use of

228

passive voice—"things got broken here"—elides the fact that capitalist restructuring *broke* Braddock, a once prosperous steel town (Streitfeld). The elision clears the way for the neoliberal fantasy through which Levi's expresses its own brand renewal: capitalist crisis means that there is more, not less, "work to do." Propelled by a small African American boy racing along a deserted corridor, the camera races out a doorway and into an empty street before tilting up to a sky emblazoned with the "Go Forth" slogan. An apocalyptic vision of the world "break[ing]" gives way to the openness of a reinvigorated frontier, and the blackness of the youthful body oriented towards that horizon deflects troublesome associations of the American frontier with racial violence.[96]

This is precisely the visual economy that HBO's *The Wire*, the focus of my next chapter, disrupts. Refusing discourses of urban renewal that would frame the apocalyptic streets of West Baltimore as a new frontier, *The Wire* insists, instead, on the ongoing violence of "endings that are not over"—on "the lingering inheritance of racial slavery, [and] the unfinished project of Reconstruction" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 139) that unevenly manifest in America's post-industrial cities. The eighth-grade boys at the centre of the show's fourth season illustrate the hollowness of the Levi's claim that "Everybody's work is equally important" (*Levi Strauss & Co.*). Except in the context of underground economies, work does not proliferate in their broken world. Yet, in negotiating the alleys, boarded-up rowhouses, and drug corners of West Baltimore—in highlighting the exclusions that haunt the neoliberal fantasy that turns ruins into "work to do"—they gesture to an indeterminate, unpredictable *something to be done*.

---

[96] For a critique of urban gentrification as re-enacting the violence of settler-colonialism, see Amber Dean's, "Space, Temporality, History" (2010).

CHAPTER FIVE ~ HOPPERS, HUSTLERS, AND SCAMMERS: THE YOUTH OF *THE WIRE*

> *But is not every square inch of our cities the scene of a crime? Every passer-by a culprit? Is it not the task of the photographer—descendant of the augurs and haruspices—to reveal guilt and to point out the guilty in his pictures?*
> —Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (256)

> *The Dew Drop Inn, the Fayette Street corners, the entire neighborhood—all of it has become an emotional minefield for her. Step off the marked path for a moment and you get blown apart by a memory. [...] For Fran, all of Fayette Street is filled with ghosts; some truly dead, others giving it their best. It's getting so she can't think a serious thought anymore without provoking her own anger or collapsing into depression, but still she can't stop herself from thinking. Not even today, when Diamond in the Raw is a bomb.*
> —David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner* (172)

Partway through the fourth season of David Simon's HBO series, *The Wire* (2002-2008), the disembodied voice of Namond Brice, a Baltimore eighth-grader, articulates the difference between everyday murder and the making of zombies as the camera tilts down the length of a decaying West Side factory. It settles on six boys lounging at the base of the building, four of whom are busily working to convince the gullible Randy Wagstaff that Chris Partlow, lieutenant to drug lord Marlo Stanfield, is a zombie master. Namond's nighttime tale is a mischievous, disquieting explanation for the absence of bodies that organizes the season. Chris and his protégé, Felicia "Snoop" Pearson, are disposing of their victims in the West Side's ubiquitous abandoned row houses where, covered in quicklime and wrapped in plastic sheeting, they remain undiscovered by authorities until the season's penultimate episode. Building on the zombie hypothesis, another one of the boys, Kenard, asserts that Chris is "working that juju shit," a claim that prompts Michael to elaborate: "I don't know about that voodoo shit, man, but Chris is definitely doin' somethin.' Get a nigger to walk up in the alley knowin' he about to get capped" (Season

230

Four, "Alliances"). As Michael's voice shifts from playfulness to troubled incredulity, it becomes apparent that, although they are toying with Randy, the boys' tale of a zombie master and his undead spies expresses real anxieties about power, surveillance, and dispossession in their West Side neighbourhood. These anxieties cohere around the spatiotemporal differences between "dead" and "special dead," categories that distinguish between sudden deaths—a "pistol to [the] head" and "'pow,' and you tagged"—and those that are more controlled: "Why you think [Chris] take 'em in the vacants? He need time to change 'em." One manner of death results in a body and an identifying toe tag, while the other generates a haunting absence imagined as a lingering presence—one that can be seen, after death, "creepin' in the alley […] near the playground" ("Alliances").

This two-minute episode opening generates complex associations between derelict spaces, on the one hand, and bodies that are animated by powerful external forces, on the other. Shortly after Namond invokes the zombie master—"Chris got the power. He tell 'em to come and they gotta come, like the devil do with the damned" ("Alliances")—the arrival of a dope fiend scares the boys off and ends the scene.[97] The camera cuts back and forth between their fleeing silhouettes and the newcomer's shuffling progress down the darkened alley, his hitching movements and uneven breathing inflected with sinister

---

[97] Throughout this chapter, I will be using terms drawn from either *The Wire* itself or from its source material—David Simon and Edward Burns' *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood* (1997)—to identify the roles and rules that make up "the game" of Baltimore's drug economy. Simon and Burns offer the following guidelines: "In the thought and speech of the corner, misdemeanors become not crimes, but capers. Those selling drugs are no longer peddling dope, but serving people; those buying the drugs are not addicts or junkies— pejorative terms of an earlier era—but dope fiends, a term that captures the hunger and devotion of the corner chase, rather than simple dependency. A player who undertakes an armed robbery, a street shooting, or a carjacking is no longer committing a felony, but simply doing a deed. A burn bag sold to a friend, a stash stolen from a first cousin's bedroom, is no longer a betrayal, but merely getting over" (71).

intent in the context established by their horror story. The establishing shot of the factory, the narrative about bodies in vacant row houses, and the fiend in the alley all gesture to the continuities between rotting space and rotting flesh that shape the boys' imaginations—continuities that can also be traced, I want to suggest, as a series of material conversions. In the entrepreneurial character of Reginald "Bubbles" Cousins, *The Wire* demonstrates that many dope fiends are also metal-harvesters, collecting up all of the copper, aluminum, and steel they can find (including what they find on construction sites and in still-functioning buildings) and selling it as scrap (cf. Simon and Burns 1997).[98] In a kind of addicts' alchemy, the infrastructure of the ghetto fleetingly becomes quick cash before it becomes a speedball or a pipeful of crack; the body consumes and is, in turn, consumed by the spaces it inhabits. The zombie figures evoked in the opening moments of "Alliances"—the undead labourers and mindless consumers that organize Baltimore's underground economy—have their counterpart in a phenomenon that I am describing as the zombification of urban space itself: a becoming-(un)dead that reanimates long, entangled histories of race-making and economic violence.

After all, in the context of twenty-first-century zombie narratives, Namond's conjuring of the zombie *master* is anachronistic but strangely salient (see Chapter Two).

---

[98] As a December 2011 article in the UK edition of Reuters demonstrates, metal harvesting is often framed in mainstream media as an unsentimental cannibalizing of national culture and memory. Beginning with the disappearance of a bronze statue of Alfred Salter, the Reuters article goes on to state that "churches have reported the theft of metal war memorials and on Thursday Britain's Jewish Chronicle newspaper reported the theft of a bronze memorial commemorating Holocaust victims" (Abbas). The article's headline—"Monuments vanish, power cut as metal thieves stalk UK"—overshadows the brief acknowledgement that metal theft may be "an opportunistic 'austerity crime' at a time of economic difficulty" (Abbas). Near the end of this chapter, in a discussion of Baltimore's long history of street vendors, or arbbers, I return to questions of metal harvesting and history.

Transposing the master/slave dynamic inherited from Haitian and West African folklore onto a post-industrial city, the boys' invocation of the zombie master reminds us that there are agents driving the process of zombification. The "economic engine" of the drug corners—a "wealth-generating structure so elemental and enduring that it can legitimately be called a social compact" (Simon and Burns 58)—is the uncanny obverse of what David Wilson calls "city growth machines": assemblages of "builders, developers, Realtors, the local state, and the media" intent on securing "profitable 'global-competitive' economic spaces for real-estate capital" (Wilson x, 3-4). The surveilling, speculating mechanisms of the neoliberal gaze impel the zombification of inner-city space, first ruining and then reanimating it, as I argued in Chapter One, in order to project a nightmare future that authorizes further "fiscal discipline" (Harvey, *Brief History* 46).

Forgoing the catastrophic event that temporally structures apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, *The Wire* "claims time differently" (Hitchcock 2): it materializes slow institutional violence, everyday persistence, and layers of sedimented histories. Here, I am drawing on what Peter Hitchcock calls "the long space" created by the trilogies and tetralogies that proliferate in postcolonial literature, a conceptual borrowing inspired, in part, by repeated descriptions of *The Wire*'s five seasons as novelistic in structure (cf. Anderson 2009; Kraniauskas 2009; D. Simon 2009). Without losing the specificity of Hitchcock's long space as a chronotope bound up in articulating "the conceived and lived spaces […] of postcoloniality" (10), I want to consider how *The Wire*'s serial nature supports representations of persistence in spaces that are out of sync with both national and global time. In shuffling back and forth between everyday scenes

and macroeconomic processes, the narrative structure of *The Wire* "claims time differently to narrate the fraught space between more obvious [historical] signposts" (Hitchcock 2). This expression of "duration in dynamic place" (2) sheds light on the temporal and experiential frictions between local forms of endurance and global flows of time and capital.

The show's second season focuses on the decline of a commercial port that dates back to the seventeenth century (Alvarez 122), opening with POV shots of inanimate shipyard cranes and the all but defunct Bethlehem Steel complex at Sparrows Point. Later in the episode, a Washington party yacht, the pointedly christened *Capital Gains*, blocks the shipping channel on the Patapsco River (Season Two, "Ebb Tide"). When a container ship arrives and unloads the smuggled bodies of dead female migrants, we are reminded that the "space-of-flows" associated with contemporary finance capital inherits a history of trafficking in captured bodies (cf. Bauman 2007; Castells 1998; Ruggie 1993). This is the Baltimore where, in the nineteenth century, an enslaved Frederick Douglass learned to write by attending to the marks that ship carpenters inscribed on freshly hewn timber, and where he later worked as a caulker at Gardner's shipyard at Fells Point (*Narrative* 53, 94-98).[99] It is, moreover, a Baltimore shaped by waves of African American migration out of the rural South, beginning with the "Great Black Migration" of the 1920s and 30s (Wilson 19; cf. Simon and Burns 1997; Wacquant 2001). In *The Corner: A Year in the Life of An Inner-City Neighbourhood* (1997), *Wire* creator David Simon and his writing

---

[99] The show invokes this history when Dukie, one of the eighth-graders on whom I focus at the end of this chapter, shows up for his first day at Frederick Douglass High School towards the end of Season Four. Sadly, the day marks the end of Dukie's formal education when, intimidated by the larger, harder boys he sees around him, he retreats to the corners.

partner, Edward Burns, offer a history of black expendability, migration, and ghettoization in the aftermath of American slavery, or what Saidiya Hartman calls "the story of an elusive emancipation and a travestied freedom" (*Scenes* 10). "America's most northern southern city" (Simon and Burns 89) exemplifies the intersections of capitalist restructuring and racialized biopolitical fragmentation that (un)ground trans-Atlantic modernity's "long twentieth century" (Baucom 30; cf. Arrighi 1994).

By situating inner-city Baltimore in relation to histories of black labour and migration, Simon and Burns frame the zombification of the postindustrial inner city— both its material decay and its inscription as monstrous—as reanimating a genealogy of "peculiar" American race-making institutions (cf. Wacquant 2001; Wilson 2007). If, in the wake of slavery, the mechanization of southern agrarian economies destabilized the sharecropping system and threatened "the world of Jim Crow" with "a reckoning," then the lure of work in the industrial belt ensured that "much of that reckoning would come in the North" (Simon and Burns 89). Beginning with the First World War, the Great Migration swelled the populations of northern cities and provoked institutional responses that balanced the need for unskilled workers with the imperative to protect property value. Laying the groundwork for the neoliberal restructuring that would begin in earnest decades later, a combination of zoning and realtor steering "chopped up urban form into sets of specialized and functionally serving fragments" (Wilson 21). One of the results was the ghetto, a "'black city within the white,'" that, like slavery and Jim Crow, allowed industrial cities "to harness the labor of African Americans while cloistering their tainted bodies" (Wacquant 102, 103). But, as work in factories, mills, and shipyards dried up in

the postwar period and black labour became, once again, superfluous, the jobs that had established conduits between the ghettos and the surrounding urban landscape disappeared. The resulting "sea change in the function, structure, and texture of the dark ghetto in the postindustrial metropolis" made it structurally and functionally continuous with the prison system (Wacquant 107). No longer a reserve of cheap labour as of the late 1960s, "the hyperghetto now serves the *negative economic function of storage of a surplus population* devoid of market utility" (105, emphasis in original). For the majority of the players participating in Baltimore's drug economy, and for the eighth-grade boys who see it as their future, the ghetto is thus the self-contained space—the dead end—in which "the game" plays out.

Simon's registering of the long history of black Baltimore supports the show's deflection of the "actuarial gaze," which produces not only kingpins and slingers, but also the younger hoppers, hustlers and scammers, as biopolitical risk-objects (cf. Anderson 2009; Feldman 2005). For a series based, as its title indicates, on acts of surveillance, *The Wire* paradoxically refuses the looking relations that underwrite what Allen Feldman, following Jacques Rancière, calls a "police concept of history" (209). By conceptualizing the historical process according to interlocking binary oppositions wherein invisible, duplicitous, and unruly space threatens visible, safe, and orderly space, a police concept of history promotes "aesthetics of transparency" and encodes corporeal and subjective opacity as risky (cf. R. Hall 2007). A police concept of history is intimately tied, then, to a "patriarchal logic of visualization" that generates a "landscape of terror and transparency" (43)—one that requires (raced and sexed) "seeable body-scale[s]" to shore

up the spatial and epistemic dominance of white masculinity (McKittrick 43, 40; cf.

Theweleit 1978). If "bio-politics, as visual culture, spatializes the historical" and frames

opaque bodies as threatening to the integrity of the social body, then *The Wire*'s project of

re-framing its "racialized risk-objects" entails re-historicizing both bodies and spaces

(Feldman 211; Anderson 2). Simon and Burns' scaled-up account of the histories and

institutional pressures that bear down on Baltimore's black underclass (re)configure *The*

Wire's characters not "as purely spatial threats" but, rather, "as indicative of historical

contradiction, politically constructed cultural difference, and unreconciled counter-

memories of social suffering" (Feldman 211). In this respect, the show's narrative and

visual expansion across five seasons—its movement from West Baltimore low-rises to

the harbour to City Hall to the school system and, finally, to the city newspaper—might

be read as a cumulative effort to account for the corpse with which it begins: that of the

unfortunately nicknamed Snotboogie, who was allowed to shoot dice though he stole the

stash every time because, as one of his fellow players explains, "this America, man"

(Season One, "The Target").

In contesting the pathologizing impetus of the actuarial gaze, *The Wire* counsels

its viewers to see with "soft eyes," an alternative mode of spectatorship that corresponds

to what I explored in my Introduction as the "imperceptible politics" of natality

(Papadopoulos et al. 143).[100] As Papadopoulos et al. elaborate in *Escape Routes*,

---

[100] This "counseling" to see with soft eyes comes in the form of advice given to a novice
teacher and a novice homicide detective in the show's fourth season. I return to this advice later in
the chapter. My claims about *The Wire*'s deflection of the actuarial gaze resonate with Patrick
Jagoda's argument that "soft eyes" allow for a "more capacious mapping" of the show's "vastly
different, though overlapping, Baltimores" (190). Analyzing a particular sequence of scenes from

imperceptible politics "is first and foremost a question of deploying a new perceptual

strategy; the senses are honed less to reflection and more to diffraction—perception now

involves tracing disturbance and intrusion instead of mirroring existing conditions" (xv).

The perceptual strategy that Papadopoulos et al. advocate, then, is one meant to unveil the

"elasticity and magic of the present" (xiii). What Papadopoulos et al. see as the germs of

social transformation in everyday practices are, in Arendtian terms, the socio-political re-

beginnings made possible by the fact of birth—by the strange arrivals that materialize

incipient "new forms of sociability" (Papadopoulos et al. 143). An emphasis on the

elasticity of the present resonates with the alternative historical models that I have been

drawing on throughout this project: the potentially redemptive Benjaminian "now"; Ian

Baucom's conceptualization, via Édouard Glissant, of time as accumulating rather than

passing; and Jacques Derrida's and Avery Gordon's respective analyses of haunting have

all allowed me to argue that the present is un-grounded by its own "conditions of

emergence" (Ahmed, *Queer* 38). The present is haunted by "numberless beginnings" that,

in turn, "threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath" (Foucault,

"Nietzsche" 81, 82). Yet, the "fragility" of inheritors—including the eighth-grade boys

depicted in Season Four, and on whom this chapter ultimately focuses—is precisely what

opens up the possibility that everyday practices will re-surface lingering historical

alternatives. *The Wire* dramatizes not only how "histories of arrival" materialize in

orientations, proximities, and fields of possible actions and reachable objects (Ahmed,

---

Season Four, Jagoda writes, "this segment, like the show in its entirety, offers neither immersive
spectacle nor episodic disjointedness. It does not unfold for the piercing cinematic gaze of the
Hollywood spectator, and it proves equally incomprehensible to the distracted domestic glance of
the traditional television viewer" (190).

Queer 41), but also how intergenerational alliances reconfigure these histories in unpredictable ways. On behalf of a city and its inhabitants cast, as the next section explores, both as recalcitrant anachronisms and as harbingers of a dystopian national future, the show elicits "soft eyes" from its viewers in an effort to repoliticize the present.

Bodymore, Murdaland: gendering the neoliberal city

The Wire's third season opens with the spectacular destruction of the Franklin Terrace Towers, housing projects controlled by the Barksdale Organization. Standing in front of a banner that reads, "Building for the Future," Mayor Clarence Royce presents the demolition of the towers as a symbolic erasure of the "city's most entrenched problems" and a condition of possibility for urban renewal (Season Three, "Time After Time"). Intercut with the Mayor's speech, a conversation between young Barksdale drug slingers on their way to the demo site reinscribes 221 Franklin Terrace not only as a workplace—Preston "Bodie" Broadus insightfully notes that "these downtown suit-wearin'-ass bitches done snatched up the best territory in the city"—but also as a space of memory and corporeal history. Malik "Poot" Carr associates one of the towers with the loss of his virginity to "the girl, Chantay." In response, Bodie launches into a comedic riff that constructs Chantay as the origin of sexually-transmitted infection and culminates in the episode's tagline, a rebuke ostensibly aimed at Poot: "Don't matter how many times you get burnt, you just keep doin' the same." Even as this riff on STIs seems to construct both Chantay and the towers as sites of disease, the shot sequence and resulting narrative entanglement position Royce—and, by extension, City Hall—as the source of repeated,

painful burning. Bodie not only undermines Royce's claim to progressive time, in which the demolition of the towers divides the city's history into a dystopian past and a promising future, but he also writes a sexualized female body onto a space that is about to be spectacularly annihilated. Though she never appears onscreen, Chantay nonetheless does a great deal of representational work in this opening sequence. Conjured by the dialogue as ill, infectious, and implicitly easy, she both "fleshes out" the towers as a site of (corporeal) corruption and supports the show's critique of a local state apparatus beholden to real estate capital.

As one of the sexualized femininities doing work at the periphery of *The Wire*, "the girl, Chantay" has predecessors in the fourteen Eastern European Jane Does unloaded from a container ship at the beginning of Season Two—a season that David Simon has described as a "12-episode wake for the 'death of work'" (qtd. in Alvarez 123). After visually establishing a declining harbour waterscape, the season's first episode offers a sequence of juxtaposed shots that writes the "death of work" on the waterfront for working-class men across the bodies of undocumented female workers. A night of drinking for the dwindling International Brotherhood of Stevedores—complete with a live, raucous cover of the mining song, "Sixteen Tons"—issues into wide shots of sunrise on the pier, empty except for a single, stumbling male figure. This scene cuts directly to former Homicide Detective Jimmy McNulty, now relegated to the marine unit, fishing the body of a female floater out of the Patapsco River. Then, building on the earlier presence of the luxurious *Capital Gains*, Nicky Sobotka, a young longshoreman, walks to work past a sign advertising "Ship's Landing, Luxury Homes and Apartments

From the Low $300's." The episode then cuts back to the pier and offers a brief close-up of the dead woman's face ("Ebb Tide"). *The Wire* operates through the creation of these kinds of visual proximities: the disposability of working-class men and the erosion of heavy industry on the waterfront are underscored by a dead woman whose body, we soon discover, nobody wants to claim; and the floater, which exemplifies what Feldman calls "transgressive circulation" in seemingly orderly transnational economic space (210), suggests by association that Nicky Sobotka's walk to work similarly amounts to an invasion of space slated for rezoning and gentrification. Within a scopic regime structured by the actuarial gaze, risk materializes in such "improper circulation[s]" of bodies (Feldman 210). Drug dealers (such as Nicky Sobotka will become) and undocumented migrants (such as the Jane Does are) "partake in the illicit substance of the terrorist," their clandestine movements enmeshing global criminal economies with everyday life, turning the cityscape into a dystopian "breeding ground of duplicitous surfaces and structural subversion" (Feldman 210, 207).

The Jane Does—the thirteen women, in addition to the floater, who asphyxiate in a hidden compartment behind boxes of computer parts—materialize a volatile supplement to working-class male labour and, at the same time, embody its eclipse by a restructured, feminized economy dominated by service work. Intended as sex workers and collectively valued by their importer at $4 million (Season Two, "Collateral Damage"), their corpses are an unforeseen result of union boss Frank Sobotka's naïve participation in an international smuggling operation run by "The Greek." In exchange for making containers of smuggled goods disappear from dock records, Sobotka receives payments

that he uses to shore up his eroding union, funneling money to lobbyists and local

politicians in an attempt to gather support for projects that would revitalize work on the

waterfront. As metonyms for a transnational underground economy in human trafficking,

the "beautiful dead bodies" (cf. Andrijasevic 2007) of the Jane Does flesh out the

connections between restructuring formal economies and their criminal counterparts. It is

a connection that Manuel Castells describes in implicitly gendered terms: "complex

financial schemes and international trade networks link up the criminal economy to the

formal economy, thus deeply penetrating financial markets, and constituting a critical,

volatile element in a fragile global economy" (167). Penetration, in the form of

investments of laundered money, creates continuities between transnational crime

networks and "legitimate" business. These continuities intensify the fragility of a global

economy increasingly ungrounded by financial innovation, the vulnerability of which is

epitomized by fearful descriptions of "bubbles" on the verge of bursting. However, I

argue that *The Wire* repeats these tropes in a critical fashion: from Frank Sobotka's ill-

fated participation in The Greek's smuggling network to Russell "Stringer" Bell's forays

into the world of real estate development, the show contests the legitimate/illegitimate

opposition through which global capital disavows its "mutant" offspring (Comaroff and

Comaroff 309).

As female bodies in ruins at the threshold of the city—heaped in a shipping

container, their ghostly faces mottled with purple bruising—the Jane Does construct

Baltimore as porous urban space even as they highlight its growing disconnection from

the space-of-flows within which neoliberal capitalism operates. In this sense, they

exemplify the postindustrial city, as framed by neoliberal rhetoric, as an unreliable site of investment. David Wilson explains that rust belt cities, "once enclosed and confident containers of the economic, in the rhetoric, have recently become porous and leaky landscapes rife with a potential for dramatic economic hemorrhaging" (5). By displacing anxieties about a fragile global economy onto profoundly feminized visions of the city as vulnerable but potentially masterable space (see Chapter One), neoliberal ideology demands urban restructuring in the name of cultivating a "robust entrepreneurial city" (Wilson 4). A "'police concept of history'" animates this logic, projecting "impinging spaces of disorder" (Feldman 209) and drawing on implicitly feminized conceptions of space as promiscuous and permeable in order to justify the arrest of improperly circulating bodies. Mobilizing this gendered rhetoric alongside the threat of hyper-competitive new global times, "city growth machines" justify fragmenting urban space into "investment-attractive micro-terrains" that are fortified against unsalvageable inner cities (Wilson x, 10). Operating in a feedback loop, the rhetoric of globalization materializes a restructured metropolis that can be smoothly integrated into a global neoliberal order. This restructuring takes shape as the compartmentalization of the leaky, feminized urban landscape into gentrified historic districts, glittering waterfronts, and "warehouses" for economically redundant visual contaminants—or what David Simon ironically calls "excess Americans" (9). This amounts to a collective "hardening" of the civic body against its underclass, a reshaping of the urban landscape in the name of economic survivability—and one imagined as mastering the unpredictability and openness of the feminized city.

The Jane Does reveal that the space-of-flows in which finance capital operates

requires spaces of capture and containment that support its liquidity.[101] As I have

explored in previous chapters, the flowing of finance capital is historically tied to coerced

migrations and immobilized bodies. Allegorizing the "ever-shrinking universe of Frank

Sobotka and his men" (Alvarez 131), the Jane Does' asphyxiation in one of the "dead

ends" generated by neoliberal restructuring also anticipates the bodies of African

American men rotting in abandoned row houses in Season Four. A brief conversation

between McNulty, on a mission to identify his floater, and the Medical Examiner

underscores this complex alignment of migrant white femininity and local black

masculinity. Partway into their discussion in the M.E.'s office, the camera significantly

cuts away from the men to capture an attendant wheeling in a white body bag, which

remains in the foreground of the shot as a visual interruption. As the M.E. outlines what

little he has been able to glean from the Jane Does' bodies—the Eastern European origins

of their breast enhancements, their recent sexual histories—he unzips the bag and

examines the neck and head of a young black man. It is the visual unveiling of murdered

black masculinity, unzipped to reveal a blood-soaked T-shirt and a head wound, that

accompanies verbal revelations about the dead women's bodies. If, as Baltimore crime

writer Laura Lippman proposes, the show's "attitude toward women can be evaluated via

---

[101] I am indebted, here, to Sara Ahmed's critique of the overuse of "liquid" metaphors in theorizations of globalization and postmodernity. In a public talk at McMaster University on March 3, 2011, Ahmed pointed out that, for those who are not going "the way things are flowing," liquidity is actually experienced as solidity. This is a point that she derives from her work on Fanon in *Queer Phenomenology* (see my Introduction) and one that she returns to in her portrait of the revolutionary as an "affect alien" in *The Promise of Happiness*: "Everything presses against you; you feel against the world and the world feels against you. You are no longer well adjusted: you cannot adjust to the world. […] You do not flow; you are stressed; you experience the world as a form of resistance in coming to resist a world" (168-69).

its treatment of female corpses" (59), then this brief but complicated scene is instructive. On the one hand, it suggests the political limitations of putting women's bodies to (representational) work in a narrative that is overwhelmingly structured by masculine violence and victimhood. In a show premised on what Detective Lester Freamon repeatedly describes as "follow[ing] the money," the transnational human trafficking storyline highlights the sustained explorations of feminine subjectivities and embodiments that are missing from *The Wire*—a subject to which I will return at the end of this chapter. On the other hand, in refusing to "expos[e …] the violated body" of the Jane Doe (Hartman, *Scenes* 3)—foregrounding, instead, visual interruption and an incongruity between the body being verbally anatomized and the one lying on the table— the scene contributes to the show's self-reflexive interrogation of its own visual politics.[102]

 The Wire's refusal of straightforwardly voyeuristic modes of spectatorship dovetails with its interrogation of the dead ends that neoliberalism both produces and visually manages. The simultaneously material and rhetorical manipulations of the urban landscape that Wilson identifies work toward "entrepreneurializing the visual and banishing 'visual trash'" (Wilson 9). City growth machines strategically frame crumbling urban spaces and the negatively racialized poor as evidence of "a surprisingly elusive abstraction[:] new global times" (8). As I demonstrated in Chapter One, neoliberal

---

[102] Consider, too, that port authority officer Beadie Russell's disturbing discovery of the Jane Does—an arm flopping out of the compartment as she opens the door, a POV shot of the interior—is intercut with a brief scene in which Sobotka, goofing around with his men in an office on the other side of the docks, tells a joke about a union guy "getting laid" and then wiping the pepper spray from his eyes (Season Two, "Ebb Tide"). Between the flopping arm and the container full of dead women, there is a rape joke, a clearly self-reflexive moment that begs questions about the relationship between gendered, sexualized violence and entertainment.

ideologies represent the rotting spaces and unruly populations of American inner cities as

"disciplining signifiers of what the future can bring" (Wilson 5). They encourage a

dominant reading of the urban landscape as pocked with contaminants—shadow

economies, criminals, addicts, and feral children—that threaten to erupt into the

mainstream, an apocalyptic outbreak that only quarantine can prevent.[103] Yet, as Mayor

Royce's celebratory demolition of the Franklin Terrace towers suggests, the poor black

bodies and decaying ghetto spaces with which growth machines materialize a dystopian

urban future are also cast as obsolete—a recalcitrant and ugly past that, where possible,

must be spectacularly erased. Simon's conjuring of the Twin Towers in the midst of black

West Baltimore directly undermines the actuarial gaze that, as Feldman argues, takes 9/11

and the ruins at Ground Zero as "an 'arché' or origin point" that anchors "a new historical

direction, a newly discovered political telos" premised on global risk reduction (212,

220). The image that represents the "transnationalisation of risk" (Papadopoulos et al.

118) in the American imaginary—the falling buildings and eerily familiar shots of smoke

rolling through the streets—now materializes the predations of real-estate capital, or what

Bodie describes as a "snatch[ing] up" of territory in the name of eradicating urban blight

(Season Three, "Time After Time").

---

[103] While the characterization of poor, racialized youth as "feral" re-emerged most recently in the wake of the August 2011 riots in and around London (cf. Hastings 2011; Phillips 2011), it also has an American history. Consider, for instance, the notorious case of the so-called "Central Park Five" convicted of raping a white female jogger in April 1989. As Sarah Burns describes in a recent book about the case—including the 2002 overturning of all the convictions— in the media coverage, "[a]nimal references abounded. When referring to the suspects, the words *wolfpack* and *wilding* were used hundreds of times and came to be emblems of the case, a shorthand that nearly everyone used […]" (69, emphases in original).

"If animal trapped call 410-844-6286"
        —Baltimore, traditional[104]

Like the falling towers at the beginning of Season Three, the first episode of

Season Four exemplifies *The Wire*'s interrogation of the dominant narratives, looking

relations, and spatializations of risk that organize neoliberal biopower. A sequence of

intercut scenes begins with bored police officers being informed of the city's "soft-target

locations": areas where civilians gather in large numbers and that are vulnerable to

terrorist attack. The episode then cuts to equally bored middle-school teachers enduring a

presentation that identifies classroom "hot spots," such as the pencil sharpener, "where

children tend to congregate." A veteran teacher disrupts the lecture to report that, since

the day a student ripped it off the wall and threw it at him, he no longer has a pencil

sharpener in his classroom. Back in the police station, upon being referred to "appendix

B" for information on biochemical agents, a veteran police officer interjects, "No

disrespect to your appendix, but if them terrorists do fuck up the Western, could anybody

even tell?" (Season Four, "Boys of Summer"). On one level, the parallel between police

officers and teachers evokes continuities between ghettoes and the prison system (cf.

Wacquant 2001). Certainly, there are visual resonances between Edward J. Tilghman

Middle School, the fictional West Baltimore public school at the centre of Season Four,

and the bare, institutional hallways, windowless corridors, and raucous cafeteria that, later

in the season, make up Baltimore City Central Booking ("Unto Others"). Yet, I want to

suggest that these intermingled scenes register more than a protracted warehousing of

black bodies that begins in an underfunded school system and ends in a swelling prison

---

[104] Season Four, "Final Grades," episode tagline.

system. The semantic slippages between "soft-target locations" and classroom "hot spots," between terrorists and children, culminates in the joking suggestion that a terrorist attack on West Baltimore would be indiscernible—that the external violation would be subsumed into an already unfolding urban apocalypse. *The Wire* thus dramatizes a regime of neoliberal biopolitical control that is irreducible to the "transnationalisation of risk," foregrounding, instead, the immanent violence of what Papadopoulos et al. call "*postliberal aggregates*" (118, xiv, emphasis in original).

Characterized by vertical alignments of power that correspond to an expanded, recalibrated notion of risk, "postliberal sovereignty" designates "a *new* mode of life control—a regime which exceeds both national and transnational modes of sovereignty" (Papadopoulos et al. 116, emphasis in original). Alliances among global real estate capital, urban developers, politicians at all levels, and media apparatuses—all at work, for instance, in the demolition of the Franklin Terrace Towers—exemplify the "powerful, vertical composites" vying for control in "global transnational space" (Papadopoulos et al. xiv). Like Wilson, who contests the claim that ghettos "are now forgotten and left to rot" in new global times (4), Papadopoulos et al. depart from dominant representations of globalization that emphasize flow and flatness, an emergent horizontal plane of transnational governance epitomized by the image of the network (116). In their verticality, postliberal aggregates register the vital potentialities inherent in "catastrophic risk": not simply the traumatic invasion, but "the possibility of life being *made anew*, recombining and reassorting itself as it is destroyed" (126, emphasis in original). The verticalization of power corresponds to "the threat of remaking from *within*" (126,

emphasis in original), or, in the terms that I have been invoking throughout this project, from the ground up. The epidemiological insight that haunts even the most conservative apocalyptic vision, from the patriarchal survivalist fantasy (see Chapter One) to the neoliberal "shock doctrine" (cf. Klein 2007), is that *terra nullius* is, rather, demonic ground—that catastrophe clears the way for unpredictable emergences.

The Wire is firmly embedded in the ruined streetscapes of West Baltimore, from which it traces lines of influence up, dramatizing the fragmentation and recombination of the city in the name of economic survivability in "new global times" (Wilson 8). The show's ground-level perspective reveals the gendered impulses that organize postliberal sovereignty. Uncertainty about "the specific mode of life's transformation" in the wake of catastrophe gives rise to a "rationality of preparedness [that] deals with unpredictable, future events, *imagined* vulnerabilities" (Papadopoulos et al. 126, 129, emphasis in original). Recalling Katherine McKittrick's formulation of the demonic as "connot[ing] a working system that cannot have a determined, or knowable, outcome" (xxiv), the rationality of preparedness thus inherits the gendered paranoia of an earlier moment in the regime of life control: the fascist incarnation of a "life/culture system" that sought to materialize a "new man" from women as "the mere breeding biomachines of the nation" (Papadopoulos et al. 104). Deploying what Papadopoulos et al. call the "formation of emergent life," which harnesses "life's inherent plasticity and creativity," and, in turn, "*make[s]* life as the regime develops new apparatuses to control life" (128, emphasis in original), postliberal aggregates extract vital resources against the backdrop of an urban landscape hardened against "imagined vulnerabilities." Yet, in spite of the anticipatory

nature of the rationality of preparedness, its operative temporal mode is one of unavoidable belatedness—timing that, as Sianne Ngai argues, is consistent with paranoia (299). As Papadopoulos et al. remind us, escape precedes control: "it is only *after* the imposition of control that some of these [creative, connective] actions come to be seen as responses to regulation" (xv, emphasis in original).

The abandoned row houses of Season Four exemplify the ground-level, everyday oscillation between control and escape that the contemporary biopolitical formation generates. Boarded up and spray-painted with the instruction, "If animal trapped call 410-844-6286," the vacants are, on the one hand, tombs in which Chris and Snoop stash the bodies that secure their dominance of the local drug economy. *The Wire*'s critique of city growth machines extends this entanglement of rotting space and rotting flesh to "legitimate" business and politics: Detective William "Bunk" Moreland's expression of puzzlement—"How do you hold that much real-estate without makin' bodies?"—applies to property developers and their political allies as much as to the insurgent Stanfield crew (Season Four, "Boys of Summer"). In this context, the "If animal trapped…" instruction is a dehumanizing epitaph that marks the city's proliferating dead ends. On the other hand, the vacants are more than tombs. In the middle of the show's first season, an opening shot traces an extension cord running from a hydro pole into the broken window of a nearby row house. Inside, fourteen-year-old Wallace, an unhardened Barksdale slinger, cares for half a dozen children with the help of his friend, Poot. After waking them up for school and distributing juice boxes and bags of chips, Wallace and Poot lead their makeshift family out the front door, which is sprayed with the "If animal trapped…"

instruction (Season One, "The Wire"). Even as it highlights the young boys' constrained existence, the ironic alignment of parentless youth with animality indexes unruly forms of persistence and adaptation in an inhospitable environment: claiming abandoned space, siphoning hydro, existing on packaged, processed foods and bottled water. The brief scene anticipates the show's fourth season, in which Michael, Dukie, Namond, and Randy negotiate the remnants of a public education system, using it in different ways to prepare themselves for a world that, increasingly, refuses to house them.[105]

In their varied forms of persistence, the youth of *The Wire* embody the "threat of remaking from *within*" (Papadopoulos et al. 126, emphasis in original)—the mutations that might undo the very logics and institutions that give rise to them. In their classic essay on neoliberal capitalism, Jean and John Comaroff sketch the outline of a monstrous adolescent, a "nightmare of the genteel mainstream" that they describe as "a larger-than-life figure wearing absurdly expensive sports shoes, headphones blaring gangsta rap, beeper tied to a global underground economy—in short, a sinister caricature of the corporate mogul" ("Millennial" 309). This "mutant citizen" (309) of a new world order negotiates an urban terrain that is increasingly meant to contain him, to keep him circulating within a "*carceral continuum*" between ghetto and prison (Wacquant 97, emphasis in original). In order to consider how "escape" might work in the context of such constraints, I turn to Avery Gordon's recent elaboration of her work on haunting, in

---

[105] Here, I am invoking Sara Ahmed's claim that "the world 'houses' some bodies more than others" (*Promise* 12), a claim that informs my analysis of the labour of remaking family and refashioning intergenerational ties in the remaining sections of this chapter.

which she meditates on "the specter" of a near-future world created in the image of America's growing prison industrial complex ("Some Thoughts" 9).

As I explored in Chapter Four, haunting makes counter-histories available as alternatives within the present, conjuring a something-to-be-done that makes the present "waver" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 183). Considering the "problem of making or finding a future" for American prisoners, and drawing on the layers of meaning embedded in the phrase, "doing time," Gordon discerns a mode of "waiting [that is] peculiar to urgency" ("Some Thoughts" 7). It is an endurance that registers both the emergency of the something-to-be-done and its critical distance from immediate crises (7). In language that resonates with Papadopoulos et al., who emphasize the "elasticity and magic of the present" (xiii) in order to locate social transformation in everyday practices, Gordon writes:

> Abolition recognizes that transformative time doesn't always stop the world, as if in an absolute break between now and then, but is a daily part of it, a way of being in the ongoing work of emancipation, a work which inevitably must take place while you're still enslaved, imprisoned, indebted, occupied, walled in, commodified, etc. ("Some Thoughts" 8)

The "ongoing work of emancipation" entails carving out a space-time of freedom—where freedom, as Hannah Arendt reminds us, is synonymous with the capacity to begin something new (see Introduction)—in the midst of material and ideological conditions that Gordon, following Orlando Patterson, characterizes as "social death" (cf. Patterson 1982). The ontological uncertainty encoded in "social death" allows me to return to what I have been exploring throughout this dissertation as the entanglement of zombification with histories of slavery. In a neoliberal context in which both inner-city spaces and the embodied subjects who negotiate it are zombified—pathologized, in ruins, surveilled—

how can the youth of *The Wire* persist amid conditions of social negation-as-living death?

How do they, to borrow Toni Cade Bambara's formulation, "becom[e] unavailable for

servitude" from within the carceral continuum (qtd. in Gordon 8)?

Misgivings: Michael and the zombie master

Moments of escape from "externally imposed form[s] of social negation"

(Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13)—banishment, as "visual trash," to an urban dead end the

confines of which delimit one's everyday practices and routine paths—are tantamount to

re-birth in the Arendtian sense. Without equating slavery and the ghetto, let me pause for

a moment over the language with which Gordon re-narrates Patterson's account of the

social death of the slave:

> A 'non-person,' he is thoroughly dishonoured and *natally alienated*,
> separated from 'all "rights" or claims of birth,' treated as a '*genealogical
> isolate*' with neither present nor future claims or obligations to living and
> dead 'blood relations' (1982, pp. 5-7). 'Ceas[ing] to belong in his own
> right,' the enslaved lose, in effect, birthright, *a socially recognized place in
> the stream of time itself* (1982, p. 5). This is fatal. It is as if he or she were
> never alive to begin with. (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 11-12, my
> emphases)

Losing his or her claim to kinship and historical time, the slave is "natally alienated,"

suspended as what Claude Meillassoux calls an "unborn being (non-né)" (qtd. in Gordon

12). Gordon's emphasis on the alienation of un-birth sheds light on one of the ways in

which Arendtian re-birth—the actualizing of potentialities that inhere in the fact of being

born—might take shape: in the labour of re-creating family. My critique in previous

chapters of the white, patriarchal, Oedipal family structure is not intended to suggest that

family as such is conservative or oppressive. Cautioning against universalizing the

253

"freedom-from-family" trajectory of white feminist narratives, Sara Ahmed reminds us

that "black feminist consciousness novels may involve freedom-to-family, as family is

what is lost through unfolding histories of displacement and dispossession" (*Promise* 86).

And, as bell hooks argues, "historically, African-American people believed that the

construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden

shack), had a radical political dimension" (*Yearning* 42). In the rest of this chapter, I

consider *The Wire*'s depiction of intergenerational alliances—the trajectories they shape,

the spaces they map, and the "fugitive occurrences" that they allow (Papadopolous et al.

xii)—in order to discern the re-surfacing of an "elastic" urban present where the

neoliberal gaze projects, simply, a nightmare future.

Eighth-grader Michael Lee lives with his little brother, Bug, and his single

mother, who occasionally sells the food in the house to buy heroin ("Corner Boys")—a

situation that materializes in a defensive demeanour that suggests he has the makings of a

soldier. Michael's refusal to meet the gazes of adults demonstrates a resistance to their

authority—and to the betrayals from which he seeks to shelter Bug—even as furtive

glances from his downcast eyes reveal that he is alert, listening at all times. When former

Detective Roland "Prez" Pryzbylewski gives up police work and begins Season Four as

an eighth-grade math teacher at Tilghman, he learns to see Michael with, as a veteran

teacher suggests, "soft eyes" ("Soft Eyes"). As I indicated in my introduction, these are

eyes that take in histories of arrival alongside hardness and mistrust, eyes that apprehend

an eighth-grader taking responsibility for his mother's Social Services ATM card in order

to feed himself and his little brother. Significantly, a few episodes after Prez receives this

enigmatic advice about soft eyes, Bunk uses the same term when instructing Homicide

rookie Shakima "Kima" Greggs about how to visually approach a crime scene: "You got

soft eyes, you can see the whole thing. You got hard eyes, you starin' at the same tree,

missin' the forest. […] Soft eyes, grasshopper" ("Refugees"). These parallel moments of

advice suggest that the Tilghman students themselves are, in some ways, scenes of

crimes—embodied subjects who have not only had food stolen "out of [their] mouths"

("Corner Boys"), but who also inherit crimes of property and racial capital, or "unfolding

histories of displacement and dispossession" (Ahmed, *Promise* 86).

Structured by an ongoing parallel between Marlo Stanfield's bid to control West

Baltimore's drug corners and Tommy Carcetti's run for mayor, "the season 'about the

kids'" (Alvarez 287) locates its young male protagonists at the intersection of a thriving

underground economy and a crumbling public infrastructure. Where Carcetti exchanges

promises of influence for campaign donations, Marlo has his crew distribute "walk-

around money" (Alvarez 304) to the neighbourhood children—a scene that takes place

against a backdrop of election posters nailed to boarded-up row house windows. Michael

distinguishes himself by refusing the two hundred dollars he is offered ("Soft Eyes"). A

brief hesitation and pursing of his lips indicate how tempting the offer is, but as he later

explains to Randy and Namond, "that owin' niggers for shit, that ain't me."[106] Michael's

refusal to become indebted to Marlo, a (fleeting) "becoming unavailable for servitude"

---

[106] Namond's response—"I'll take any motherfucker's money if he *givin'* it away"—anticipates Senator Clay Davis' self-justifying rant to the current mayor, whose ticket he largely finances. Deflecting accusations of money laundering, Davis utters exactly the same line as Namond, creating an aural echo that recalls the political history of walk-around money. Somewhere between a legitimate reimbursement for volunteers who distribute campaign fliers and a straightforwardly corrupt purchasing of votes, walk-around money exemplifies the everyday entanglement of capital with the democratic process (cf. Beam 2008; O'Harrow 2008).

(Bambara qtd. in Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 8), is, ironically, an act that catches Marlo's and Chris' attention. In the episode that begins with the zombie hypothesis with which I opened this chapter, Chris approaches Michael again, appearing in the same alley in which the boys had told their tale of horror and prompting Randy to quietly utter, "zombie master" ("Alliances"). Dismissively categorizing Namond, Randy, and Dukie as "younguns" and ordering them to leave, Chris makes Michael an offer:

> Hearin' good things about you. Say you straight up, take care of your people, not beggin' on handouts. […] Look we always in the market for a good soldier. We see one we like, we take care of the situation. Take him in, school him, make him family. And if you with us you with us, just like we'd be with you, all the way, if you have a mind, you hear? ("Alliances")

The camera stays trained on Michael's face, first catching his profile as Chris begins speaking, then switching to a head-and-shoulders shot from the front. The cut lends emphasis to "we take care of the situation," removing Chris from the frame completely and prompting viewers to scrutinize the responses that are registering on the face of an eighth-grader overburdened with responsibility. Chris' parting gesture—firmly placing the cash that Michael had rejected into the boy's hand and closing his fingers over it—recalibrates the money as an offer of work, belonging, and magnified power in an entropic lifeworld.

Chris' complex, and, indeed, predatory reconfigurations of economics, education, and family implicate the world beyond the corners—the one metonymized in campaign posters for the mayoral election—in Michael's gradual entanglement in Baltimore's shadow economy. Chris' assertion that the Stanfield crew is "always in the market for a good soldier" affirms Simon and Burns' description of the drug economy as an

"economic engine [with] no slacking profit margins, no recessions, no bad quarterly reports, no layoffs, no naturalized unemployment rate" (58). The zombie master's power derives from impoverished alternatives, namely "the unresolved disaster of the American rust-belt" (59) that Season Four invokes in the form of the closed up factory behind which Michael and his friends hang out. Similarly, the promise to "school" Michael is the promise of an education that prepares him for his world and one that is, in that sense, meaningful. This is the insight of former police Major Howard "Bunny" Colvin, who, in Season Four, is helping to run a pilot program for (the most) at-risk Tilghman students: "They're not learning for our world, they're learning for theirs. And they know exactly what it is they're trainin' for, and exactly what everyone expects 'em to be" ("Misgivings"). As the season develops into a critique of "teach the test" strategies, which American public schools have increasingly adopted in order to maintain their funding under the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act (2001), it demonstrates the psychic, embodied, and social costs of decontextualized teaching. Against this backdrop, a scene late in the season—"call it paint-ball for apprentice assassins" (Alvarez 368)—in which Michael races through a vacant warehouse with a gun as part of a "training program" implemented by Chris and Snoop, illustrates the life-or-death stakes of a corner education ("That's Got His Own"). Funneled into the dead ends of West Baltimore by the disinvestments, fragmentations, and restructurings enacted by postliberal aggregates, *The Wire*'s eighth-graders find themselves increasingly at the mercy of the zombie master: "Chris got the power. He tell 'em to come and they gotta come—like the devil do with the damned" ("Alliances").

In the end, it is Chris' offer of "family" that resonates with Michael, standing out as the one viable alternative when his own family life suddenly becomes untenable due to the return from prison of Bug's father, who is also Michael's abuser. The show represents Michael's options in the triangulated figures of Dennis "Cutty" Wise, a reformed Barksdale soldier now running a boxing gym who wants to train Michael; his teacher, the well-intentioned but institutionally constrained Prez; and Chris, who has offered to "take care" of situations. Yet, a conversation between Michael, Dukie, and Randy reveals how Michael's personal history imbricates with institutional brokenness to render two of these three possible alliances inoperative. When Michael brings up the possibility of calling Social Services to rid himself of Bug's father, Randy, who clings tenuously to his life with "Miss Anna" in order to stay out of the group homes he has already experienced, warns him against this course of action. After suggesting that Michael talk to Prez—who represents the impossible "Social Services" option—Dukie invokes Cutty as an alternative source of support. Screwing up his face, Michael tries, hesitatingly, to account for what "creep [him] out" about Cutty: a too-friendliness qualified by a simile—"like he some type of faggot or somethin'"—that extends, as his voice takes on an edge of hysteria, to "everybody just too motherfuckin' friendly" ("Know Your Place"). Haunted by both a history of sexual violence and a future in which he and his brother are wards of the state, Michael turns to Marlo with "a problem [he] can't bring to no one else" ("Know Your Place").

The brutal death of Bug's father at the hands of Chris—a scene intercut with shots of Michael in his family home—sets up the simultaneously spatial and affective shifts

that will shape Michael's trajectory as a soldier. A shot of Michael and Bug flipping through a basketball magazine in their kitchen cuts to the corner store where Bug's father encounters Chris and Snoop. Then, back at Michael's house, the camera, as if coming around a corner, gradually brings Michael's head and shoulders into view as the boy sits in the kitchen alone. The shot lingers on his impassive, contemplative face, slowly closing in until the scene cuts back to Chris and Snoop walking Bug's father up an alley. The juxtaposed moments implicate Michael in the violence about to unfold—he becomes a witness in his imagination—and visually entwine the space of his home with the alley in which a body is about to be dumped. In one of the most disturbing scenes in a show that does not shy away from violence, Chris, who has grasped Michael's motivations for wanting the man gone, beats Bug's father to death before they get him into the vacant. In combination with this unleashed rage—an onslaught of fists that gradually renders a face featureless—Chris' comprehension of Michael's situation suggests that he is haunted by a comparable past. When the scene cuts back to Michael moving through his home with confidence again, the psychic cost of securing this space registers in his posture and on his face: standing in the doorway to the living room, he gives his mother, who has been out looking for her partner, an unpleasant smile. He holds himself casually but expansively—one hand tucked into his pocket, the other reaching up and gripping the doorjamb near its top corner—relishing the power he has just indirectly exercised (Season Four, "Misgivings"). Firmly oriented, now, towards a future that Chris embodies, Michael will make himself hard and unforgiving, embroiling himself deeper into alleys, corners, and vacants in exchange for the power to provide his brother with a home.

259

Stoop kids, corner kids: Randy and Namond

The scene that ostensibly plots Michael's future as a soldier simultaneously excavates a dimension of Chris' past so that, unexpectedly, the horrifying brutality of the latter—the extremity of which registers in the surprise on Snoop's face—mitigates rather than reinforces his pathologization as "zombie master." Chris' enactment of rage on Michael's behalf indexes a history of sexual violation, and, presumably, institutional impotence that are aspects of his own conditions of arrival. For the viewer with soft eyes, a moment of intense violence makes the present waver, revealing Chris as not *only* hardened beyond redemption, but also damaged. This construction of the zombie master as haunted—of his rage as a twisted expression of protection, if not affection— illuminates the stakes of Michael's project of sheltering Bug from the predations of his father. Even as the "hit" that he puts on his abuser seems to determine Michael's future, it highlights the elasticity of *Bug*'s present, an openness to possibility that eventually materializes, complexly, in a permanent homeplace outside of inner-city Baltimore.[107] The relationships and transactions between Chris, Michael, and Bug exemplify the "work" that intergenerational alliances do in *The Wire*. Older characters plot a spectrum of possible futures for the show's younger generations, which, in turn, make newly visible the layers of sedimented histories and institutional pressures that make up Baltimore's kingpins, soldiers, and dope fiends.

Season Four's movement backwards in generational time from seasoned "players" in "the game" to its prospective young recruits also manifests in Bunny Colvin's

---

[107] I will return to Bug's "escape" to Columbia in the conclusion of this chapter.

intervention in the University of Maryland pilot project for at-risk youth. Awarded a grant "not only to rethink the way we utilize institutions, but to help us start getting past having to rely on jail and […] drug rehab as our only responses," David Parenti, a professor in the School of Social Work, wants to identify a "target group to inoculate, epidemiologically speaking" ("Home Rooms"). The academic's self-reflexive invocation of a disease discourse evokes predominantly white, middle-class fears of "outbreaks" of inner-city rage and rioting (see Chapter Two). The desire for inoculation reminds us that social death, as Gordon insists,

> is emphatically not a singular but a relational idiom that speaks most intently, most essentially, to […] that large segment of the population—not rulers and not yet captured, and not yet able to imagine themselves as falling into such a state—whose solidarity is required for the whole regime to operate in a state of normalcy, its attendant pathologies and nervous disorders taken as the wonders of progress. (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13)

Professor Parenti's metaphor implicates him—along with the many academics, myself included, who make up one of *The Wire*'s notable niche audiences (cf. Bennett 2010; Sharma 2011)—in a "relational idiom of power" (Gordon 13) according to which he accrues cultural capital by translating the lives of inner-city youth into statistics, charts, and graphs.[108] At the same time, the language of inoculation encodes anxiety about social

---

[108] Consider that the montage that ends Season Four includes a shot of Parenti presenting on the findings of the now cancelled pilot project in a large lecture hall; behind him, projected large, is a complex graph with the heading "ERGM Coefficient Distributions." The shot then switches to the audience, framing a perturbed-looking Colvin seated amid earnest, head-nodding note-takers. Shaking his head in disgust, Colvin leaves as, behind him, Parenti switches to another slide featuring a complicated three-dimensional imaging of his data ("Final Grades"). The sequence of shots raises difficult questions about the ethics of operating as what may be called a (privileged) "ally"—or, as the abolitionist Levi Coffin once described himself, "frien[d] of the oppressed" (qtd. in Gordon, *Ghostly* 186). As Avery Gordon asserts in her analysis of *Beloved*, the question, "How can we be accountable to people who seemingly have not counted in the

death as a form of contagion: "the living dead haunt […] because in their liminality and in their ability to cross between the worlds of the living and the dead, they carry a sharp double-edged message: it could be you. I could be you" (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13). Significantly, then, even as Parenti's epidemiological language conjures the apocalyptic "outbreak narrative" (cf. Wald 2008) that authorizes the neoliberal hardening of urban space, it suggests that the distinction between those who are imagined as "at-risk" and those who are imagined as "immune" is radically unstable.

In working Parenti's project backwards through generational time with respect to its "target group," Major Colvin historicizes the "living dead" (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13), revealing the layers of experience, betrayal, and social suffering that compose the most hardened "corner boys." In this respect, he anticipates the eighth-graders' anachronistic invocation of the zombie master as a figure that interrupts biologically-driven outbreak narratives, (re)inscribing apocalyptic visions with histories of asymmetrical power relations. After demonstrating to Parenti that his initial plan of beginning with eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds is misguided—a scene that involves an eighteen-year-old in lockup menacing the academic across the table in an interrogation room—Colvin convinces him to go "even younger" than high school age ("Home Rooms"). Standing, finally, in the halls at Tilghman on the first day of school, ducking harmless paper projectiles and watching students jostle each other, Colvin demonstrates that generational time in inner-city Baltimore is radically compressed. The five to six years separating the Tilghman students from the youth in lockup are written on the body

---

historical and public record?" has a corollary: "How are we accountable for those who do the counting?" (*Ghostly* 187, 189).

of the latter: an angry, furrowed brow; aggressive and unpredictable ways of taking up space; a hard edge to both his movements and his speech ("Home Rooms"). Michael's trajectory across the season exemplifies this shift from half-hearted aggression to a deliberate performance of hardness. An early scene in which he and Namond trade insults results in a playful physical confrontation, a few light jabs culminating in an entanglement that resembles an embrace more than a boxing hold ("Soft Eyes"). In contrast, after Michael has joined the Stanfield crew, new dealer Namond solicits his help in dealing with a young slinger who has stolen his package. When Namond confronts his employee with empty threats, Michael steps in and beats the boy senseless, driving his fist into Kenard's face in a manner reminiscent of Chris' attack on his stepfather a few episodes earlier ("That's Got His Own"). From the young Kenard to the emergent Michael to Bodie, who will die a veteran of the corners at the end of the season, *The Wire* marks out generational time in short increments—increments that correspond to the expectation of a truncated lifespan, and to the experience of oneself, as Bodie puts it, as "old" at the age of twenty-one ("Final Grades").

The compressed nature of generational time in West Baltimore's dead ends structures the lives of what Colvin describes as the "corner kids," who, in contrast with the "stoop kids [who] stay on the front steps when their parents tell 'em" ("Alliances"), are relentlessly drawn to the resources, belonging, and meaning offered by "the game." In the characters of Randy Wagstaff, Namond Brice, and, as I will explore in the next section, Dukie Weems, *The Wire* dramatizes the stakes of securing a homeplace—in hooks' terms, a place to renew and recover oneself, and from which to withstand the

temporal compression through which childhood play leads directly to playing "the game" (cf. hooks 1990). Anchored by his foster parent, Miss Anna, Randy nonetheless has to negotiate a landscape of drug corners, alleys, and vacants that hide decomposing corpses—one that, eventually, permanently undoes his efforts to live as a "stoop kid." In comparison, Namond's parents actively push him towards the corners where his father, Wee-Bey, once made his name with the Barksdale organization. Yet, as the scene with his stash-stealing lieutenant, Kenard, demonstrates, Namond cannot embody the hardness that Michael successfully adopts; trapped, in generational terms, between corner boy and soldier, he finds himself desperately searching for a stoop to which he can retreat. For both boys "doing time" in the ghetto, the breaking and making of intergenerational alliances shifts their spatial coordinates, forcing Randy into a space of limbo from which he will emerge hardened and inexpressive, and offering Namond a permanent exit from the world of kingpins and soldiers.

Randy's character arc can be mapped according to the interplay of three houses: the one in which he initially lives with Miss Anna and where he has a strict 9 pm curfew, the vacant in which a particular body is stashed, and the institutional group home in which he finishes the season. The first episode of Season Four establishes the intertwined fates of Randy's home with Miss Anna and the empty row houses in which Chris and Snoop are hiding bodies. When, after passing on a seemingly harmless message from one of Marlo's crew, Randy discovers that he has become an inadvertent accomplice to a murder, he sits on Miss Anna's front steps and contemplates his situation. The sound of sirens in the background of the previous scene—a wide shot of Carcetti, the soon to be

mayor, staring drunkenly at the downtown skyline from across the river—continues into a medium shot of Randy, hands folded in his lap, looking troubled. The camera slowly zooms in as the sirens get louder, settling on a tight shot of the boy's face as his eyes shift in response to the flashing lights of a passing police car. The cut from Carcetti watching the skyline to the guilt-stricken Randy, from wide shot to close-up, exemplifies *The Wire*'s structure as a "Greek tragedy," where the "postmodern institutions are the Olympian forces […] throwing the lightning bolts" (Simon qtd. in Hornby 384). Creating continuity across the scenes, the sound of sirens suggests that Randy is grappling not only with guilt, but also with a sense of foreboding, of being drawn by chance into the unfolding of a drama over which he has no control. Reflecting off both his face and the red brick row house behind him, the emergency lights on the police car visually anticipate Randy's fate in the season's penultimate episode. Branded a snitch for eventually blurting out what he knows about the death of a boy named Lex, the murder that leads to discovery of the bodies entombed in the vacants, Randy hunkers down with his foster parent in a house that is now under police protection. When a false report of a nearby police beating draws that protection away, lights once again flashing across the brick of the row house, two young men toss gasoline bottle bombs through the front windows, setting it ablaze ("That's Got His Own"). In the very episode that sees Bunk and Freamon opening up the vacants and exhuming bodies, Miss Anna's house—the stoop to which Randy clung at the end of the first episode and throughout the season—falls into ruin.

The bodies that emerge from Anna Jeffreys' house are profoundly damaged. Miss Anna is hospitalized with second- and third-degree burns, and Randy, grief-stricken and

terrorized, shows the first signs of a defensive rage that will eventually (re)define him.

When Sergeant Ellis Carver, who tries and fails to protect Randy, arrives at the hospital,

he finds the boy with soot stains on his clothes and face, his hands once again clasped in

his lap, his eyes trained on the floor. As Carver leaves, Randy's voice follows him down

the hospital corridor, calling out bitterly, "You gonna look out for *me*, Sergeant Carver?

[…] You promise? You got my back, huh?" ("That's Got His Own").[109] Later, unable to

make alternate arrangements, Carver drives Randy to a group home where, in the season-

ending montage, he walks into his room to find the words "snitch bitch" scrawled on the

side of his bunk and his new roommates waiting for him ("Final Grades"). Undone by the

system's inflexibility, Randy disappears under a flurry of fists and reappears only once

more in *The Wire*, when, in Season Five, Bunk visits him at the group home with more

questions about Lex's murder. A noticeably taller, harder Randy is unresponsive until

Bunk indirectly threatens him with jail time for his failure to aid the investigation.

Randy's response recalls the bitter rhetorical questions with which he taunted Carver in

the hospital: "Time, huh? You gonna give me time?" ("The Dickensian Aspect"). The

edge in his voice, the implication that Randy is already "doing time" in the system—that

his is a warehoused body—momentarily shames Bunk into silence. Yet, Randy's final

questions encode yearning in their cynicism: "Why don't you promise to get me outta

---

[109] The episode title, "That's Got His Own," is drawn from the lyrics of Billie Holiday's classic, "God Bless the Child," an allusion that registers Randy's losses through an ironic valorization of self-sufficiency: "Them that's got shall get / Them that's not shall lose / So the Bible said and it still is news / Mama may have, Papa may have / But God bless the child that's got his own." Interestingly, *The Wire* is notable for its lack of soundtrack music. Except where sources of sound can be discerned on-screen—characters wearing headphones, for example— there is no music in *The Wire* beyond the theme song that plays over the opening credits and the songs chosen to accompany the montages at the end of each season.

here? That's what y'all do, ain't it? Lie to dumb-ass niggers?" The parting words inflect

Randy's performance of hardness with a sense of waiting, a "'carrying on regardless'"

that registers, however tenuously, the presence of a "something-to-be-done" in the midst

of an urgent situation (Williams qtd. in Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 7).

Where *The Wire* leaves Randy suspended, an "unborn being (non-né)" haunted by

the burnt-out shell of a home (Meillassoux qtd. in Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 12), it also

depicts Namond's rebirth as a stoop kid through his successful alliance with Colvin.

Marked with drug money from the beginning of the season—proudly displaying replica

sports jerseys that stand out among his friends' uniform white T-shirts—Namond is

ostensibly destined for the corners that his father once worked for the Barksdales. Yet,

though a (drying up) stream of drug money supports his self-fashioning, visible difference

also becomes the mode through which he registers his resistance to becoming a full-time

slinger. When Namond visits his father, Wee-Bey, at Jessup Prison, a conversation about

the boy's spotty work for Bodie as a runner leads to comments about hair, which Namond

wears long and in a ponytail. Concerned that "even the white police looking from three

blocks away gonna be able to spot you from every other nigger out there," Wee-Bey

concludes: "Either you real out there or you ain't, Nay" ("Soft Eyes"). The conversation,

the first of a series that takes place across the dividing glass in Jessup's visiting area,

establishes Namond's noncommittal attitude to the corners—an ambivalence expressed in

hair that makes him dangerously recognizable to police, and therefore marks him as

inauthentic in the streets. Wee-Bey's suggestion that Namond may not be "real out there"

reverberates across the season as his son repeatedly encounters the limits of his

performance as a toughened corner kid. Born into a family that derives its wealth from organized crime, Namond's identity is entangled with binge purchases of new clothes that, in his mother's words, ensure he will "go up that school lookin' like himself" on the first day ("Soft Eyes"). Still, his insistence on keeping his hair long interferes with the continuation of the familial economic success that he wears on his body, an interference that he refuses to relinquish.

Namond's hair materializes a hesitation in his ostensibly predetermined trajectory from corner boy to kingpin—one that Colvin reinforces by holding open alternative spaces in which Namond can, however uneasily, linger. The "special class" that Colvin and Parenti establish for ten of Tilghman's corner kids, including Namond Brice, operates as a space in which the school's rules are, to an extent, suspended. The result is that the young people who use the school as, in Colvin's terms, "trainin' for the street" ("Corner Boys"), can no longer predict how the "system" will respond to their testing of its limits. When Namond acts up in class, anticipating the standard three-day suspension that will allow him time to cultivate his new corner, Miss Duquette's refusal to kick him out of school prompts him to up the ante on his performance. Standing by his desk, Namond visibly calculates his next move before weakly tossing a chair and calling the teacher a "bitch" ("Unto Others"). His insistence that "You gotta suspend me. Schools gotta have rules!" lays bare the self-consciously performative nature of behaviour meant to enable his temporary escape from the system. The flexibility that Namond suddenly experiences in the classroom stunts his development as a corner boy, creating a pause that Colvin dilates when, eventually, Namond is arrested for slinging. Showing true fear at the

prospect of being sent to "baby booking"—where, Namond tells Carver, the East Side is "beefin'" with the West Side and "dudes gettin' raped and shit" ("Misgivings")—Namond suggests Colvin as an adult who can take custody of him until his mother returns from out of town. A brief scene around the Colvins' dinner table, in which Namond adopts what his teacher describes as his "Eddie Haskell act," not only highlights the boy's avoidance of what his mother sees as a rite of passage. As one of the few domestic scenes in *The Wire*, it also represents what Michael is struggling towards, albeit in a contradictory way, and what Randy unsuccessfully clings to for most of the season: a homeplace that offers repair and respite from the accelerated world of the corners.

The temporal compression that structures the lives of corner kids raises the stakes of "standing tall" in the face of challenge, a posturing that also sets young people up for what Colvin describes as a "plummet from master of the universe to abject fear to humiliated fury" ("Know Your Place"). Namond's hesitation over how to handle Kenard's stealing of his stash exemplifies his inability to translate tough talk into action, a failure that pushes him into the affective "plummet" that Colvin describes. Confronted by his mother, De'Londa, who characterizes her son as "wearin' [Wee-Bey's] name, actin' a bitch," a tearful Namond walks out of his house seemingly determined to live up to his father's legacy. The scene between Namond, Michael, and Kenard results in Namond staring on in horror as Michael pounds the young boy in the face until his eyes roll back in his head. The following sequence of shots—Namond looking down; the bloodied Kenard lying on the ground; an irate Michael ordering his friend to "get your pack off this bitch"—illustrates the life of receiving and inflicting pain that Namond has been

269

sidestepping throughout the season. His unequivocal refusal materializes in both speech and body language, quiet repetitions of "I ain't want it" accompanied by a few slow steps backwards, then a turning and running away from the scene ("That's Got His Own"). Later, articulating an inability to approximate his father with a newly apparent distance between himself and his friend—"Mike ain't Mike no more"—Namond characterizes his situation in terms of homelessness. Repeatedly, tearfully asserting to Cutty and Carver that he "can't go home," he ends up, once again, sitting in limbo on a bench at the Western District.

   The Wire juxtaposes the fates of Namond and Randy, setting up the latter as a figure that haunts the former—the "I could be you" lurking in the background of Namond's rebirth (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13). Coming into the Western District to collect Namond, Colvin sadly reaches out a hand that barely rests on the boy's shoulder, registering a tenuous connection that will, in the last episode of the season, develop into a permanent home in a new neighbourhood. In the next scene, Randy's house goes up in flames. As Carver works desperately to secure a new foster home for Randy—and Randy, sitting on the same Western District bench that Namond claimed the night before, readies himself for a group home by hiding his money in the spines of his school books—Colvin attempts to convince Wee-Bey to allow him to adopt his son. Characterizing Namond as "smart, funny, and open-hearted," Colvin tells Wee-Bey that "he could go a lot of places, do a lot of things in his life—be out there in the world in a way that didn't happen for you and me." The dividing glass separating prisoners from visitors remains in the bottom third of the screen, but Colvin, rather than insisting on "moral distance, […] an impassable,

uncrossable breach" between those sentenced to social death and those that escape that fate (Gordon, "Some Thoughts" 13), uses the language of "we" and "us" to emphasize his shared history with Namond's father. Agreeing that he is asking "too much," Colvin frames his request as offering the boy a horizon of possible futures, a "be[ing] out there in the world" that begins, in the last scene of the season, with the experience of a quiet front porch ("Final Grades").

"How do you get from here to the rest of the world?"
—Dukie

Where Michael firmly orients himself towards a life on the streets and Namond, eventually, reorients himself towards broader horizons, Duquan "Dukie" Weems is painfully, relentlessly disoriented. Ostracized because of his body odour—his clothes are always dirty, "his people" steal his clean ones, and there is no running water in his house—the thoughtful, receptive eighth-grader will, throughout Seasons Four and Five, repeatedly lose the homes he manages to tenuously secure. A brief conversation between Dukie and Cutty midway through *The Wire*'s final season summarizes the boy's plight. Bruised and beaten by corner boys who are hardening at an accelerated pace that he can match neither physically nor emotionally, Dukie approaches Cutty for training as a boxer. Clearly lacking in both passion and aptitude for the sport, he is desperately searching for skills that will help him better negotiate a place where everything "comes down to how you carry it in the street." When Cutty, seeing the hopelessness of the project, informs the teenager that "the world is bigger than that—least that's what they tell me," Dukie's response encapsulates the dead end that is, for him, West Baltimore: "How do you get

from here to the rest of the world?" (Season Five, "React Quotes"). Unable to toughen up

and work the corners, Dukie will ultimately patronize them, adopting a habit that

manifests his ambivalence about the only bit of the world to which he feels he has access:

chasing "the blast" holds out the promise of fleeting escape even as it secures him a

place—a role as consumer—in the underground economy (Simon and Burns 70). When

social promotion dislodges Dukie from Tilghman, where Prez had offered clean clothes

and nourishment (Season Four, "Margin of Error"), an eviction notice bars him from his

house (Season Four, "That's Got His Own"), and, finally, the home he creates with

Michael and Bug disintegrates, Dukie adopts the one role he can play in "the game." Yet,

the story of how he gets to that final scene, in which the viewer sees him shooting up in

an alley at the end of Season Five, resonates suggestively with the character arc of

Bubbles—an enterprising addict with whom Dukie never interacts, but who may,

nonetheless, hold open the possibility of a livable future.

Similar to the way that Michael's storyline fills in elements of Chris Partlow's

history, Dukie's failed efforts to adapt his skills to the work of slinging point to the severe

constraints out of which Bubbles' entrepreneurial spirit likely arose, along with the

particular history of labour that he reanimates. The fifth season of *The Wire* portrays a

Dukie in search of work. Uneasy with his emerging role as Bug's live-in babysitter,

Dukie wanders down a commercial strip, kicking a can and inquiring about employment

in shops and restaurants. The aluminum can anticipates his encounter with an arabber, a

"junk man" who needs help getting a derelict refrigerator onto his cart, and who hires

Dukie on the spot (Season Five, "Clarifications"). Likely derived from "street arab," the

nineteenth-century British slang term that negatively racialized homeless youth, arabbers are roving vendors who sell their goods—usually fresh produce—from horse-drawn carts (Finn). Once a relatively common occupation in northeastern American cities, where, in the wake of the Civil War, many African American men turned to arabbing to support themselves, it is now a tradition peculiar to West Baltimore, providing fresh food and other items to parts of the inner city that are underserved by supermarkets (Hansen).[110] Moreover, the distinctive "hollers" of the arabbers—rhythmic, sometimes playful singing that advertises the goods they have on hand—evoke a history of African American work songs dating back to slavery (Finn). From Dukie's arabber, whose shouts announce the arrival of the "junk man" and his "junk" ("cardboard, newspaper, sheet metal"), to Bubbles, who cries out the contents of his shopping-cart depot ("got them tees; got them whites"), *The Wire* visually and aurally conjures the histories of work that composed the City of Baltimore. In taking up with the arabbers, who, like Bubbles, are simultaneously merchants, addicts, and metal-harvesters eroding the infrastructure of the inner city (Simon and Burns 189-92), Dukie exists at the intersection of histories of labour and dispossession, African American folk traditions, and the remaking of the urban landscape.

An incident early in Season Four not only exemplifies Dukie's capacity to discern value in garbage—a skill that makes him suited to the metal-harvesting, scrap-peddling work of the arabbers—but also demonstrates how this capacity is entangled with an

---

[110] Arabbing no longer exists in New York City and Philadelphia, where a combination of "government officials and animal rights activists who don't want to see horses on the city streets" have put an end to it (Hansen). In Baltimore, the Arabber Preservation Society began in 1994 when one of the few remaining city stables was condemned. The APS "recognize[s] arabbing as an African-American folk tradition; an economically viable system and a method of apprenticeship completely unique to Baltimore" ("Mission," APS website).

ethical and affective orientation indicative of "soft eyes." On the first day of school, an altercation between Laetitia and Chiquan, two of the eighth-grade girls in Prez's math class, results in the former attacking the latter with a blade, opening up a wound in Chiquan's cheek that will require two hundred stitches to close ("Home Rooms"). As the class clusters around the profusely bleeding girl lying on the floor, Dukie approaches Laetitia with an electric mini-fan that he had picked out of a gutter earlier in the episode and repaired, using paperclips as tools, during class. While a teacher murmurs words of comfort to Chiquan, Dukie uses his fan to blow cool air on Laetitia's face and then, switching it off, places it on the floor beside the girl's bloody hand. The camera angle locates viewers directly in front of where Laetitia is sitting, cutting her out of the shot and emphasizing Dukie's extended arm before tilting up to his face. Settling down a few feet from the angry, shocked girl, Dukie's furrowed brow registers puzzlement and concern. Having spent his time repairing what someone else threw away, Dukie turns his attention to a classmate in a similar predicament, attempting to soothe the rage of a girl who no one looks after—one who lives, as Randy reveals in the next episode, "up in one of them group homes off Edmonson," a place that can "make you crazy" ("Refugees"). Dukie's capacity to repair discarded items issues directly into a reparative gesture—the comfort of physical proximity for someone who is dangerously isolated, the offering of a gift—that, at the same time, reveals its own inadequacy. The soft eyes with which Dukie sees Laetitia apprehend conditions of arrival that can "make you crazy"—or, as the Tilghman vice-principal puts it, "Monday to Friday angry" ("Refugees").

Bubbles' character arc attests to what Dukie himself will discover: that the process of repairing human beings who have been "discarded" is a lengthy, tortuous one. The possibility of repair and rebeginning is contingent on histories becoming visible and, as Bubbles and Dukie demonstrate, on the retention of memories that become swiftly, increasingly distant due to the compressed nature of time on the corners. Sitting with his apprentice, Sherrod, in the abandoned garage that they call home, Bubbles muses:

> I remember when I was a kid. If you had a map of the world, the playground over at Bayview and Morland be at the centre of it. And as I got older, playground just kept on gettin' bigger, went beyond the neighborhood. Everythin' changes you know? One minute the ice cream truck be the only thing you wanna hear. [*Bubbles hums the sound of the ice cream truck and laughs*] Next thing them touts callin' out the heroin be the only thing you can hear. (Season Four, "Refugees")

The recollection exemplifies the compressed temporality of the inner city—"one minute," the ice cream truck; "next thing," the call of the touts—while simultaneously contesting it, inserting a playful musical interlude that amounts to a lingering with the ice cream truck memory. It is an interruption that prevents one moment from seamlessly sliding into the next, allowing for pleasure and laughter through which the "playground" reasserts itself as a trace in the urban landscape. Bubbles' determination to remember both pleasure and pain culminates in a speech that he gives at a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in Season Five. Juxtaposing the pleasurable recollection of being a "young man" enjoying a summer evening in a city park on the one hand, with the memory of Sherrod, whose death by overdose he accidentally facilitated, on the other, Bubbles concludes that there "ain't no shame in holdin' on to grief as long as you make room for other things, too" ("Late Editions"). Here, Bubbles invokes memory as "the faculty that distinguishes between

what ought truly to be resisted and what needs to be remembered" (Marks 24), a holding on that both wards off a relapse and "make[s] room" for a reconnection with his sister. In the same series-ending montage that confirms Dukie's new drug habit, Bubbles takes a seat at his sister's dining room table, finally admitted (back) into a homeplace of "renewal and self-recovery" (hooks, *Yearning* 49).

In spite of the painful breakup of Dukie's makeshift family with Michael and Bug, the reparative domestic scene between Bubbles and his sister holds open the possibility that Dukie, too, may one day experience "that feeling of arrival, of homecoming" (hooks, *Yearning* 41). A series of events throughout Season Five culminates in Michael killing Snoop, violently outlawing himself from the "family" that Chris Partlow had offered and, in the process, undoing his home with Bug and Dukie. It was a home already riven by dissonant temporalities: Michael's accelerated initiation into the Stanfield crew secured the very space that shielded his little brother and deferred Dukie's inevitable confrontation with the corner. In the same episode in which Bubbles reflects on the functions of memory and grief, Michael and Dukie drive Bug out to an Aunt's house on a quiet residential street in Columbia, dropping him off against a sonic backdrop of crickets and wind chimes that is evocative of Namond's quiet moment on the Colvins' front porch in Season Four ("Late Editions"). Having ensured his brother's escape, Michael returns to Baltimore and drives Dukie to the arabber stables. Dukie's memory of a happy moment depicted in the first episode of Season Four structures the scene of their parting, underscoring both the cost of Michael's hardness and Dukie's likeness to Bubbles. Contemplating his lack of options, Dukie slowly breaks into a smile and laughs:

> You remember that one day summer past, when we threw them piss balloons at them Terrace boys? You remember, just before school started up again. You know, I took a beat-down from them boys; I don't even throw a shadow on it. [*laughs*] That was a day. Y'all bought me ice cream off the truck. Remember Mike? ("Late Editions")

Dukie re-experiences the pleasure of that day, emphasizing that what he remembers—the ice cream truck, which resonates with Bubbles' recollection of his childhood from the previous season—is not the pain of his "beat-down." As he speaks, the camera switches angles, offering a close-up of Michael's face as he clearly struggles, and fails, to remember. Confronted with homelessness yet again, Dukie begins to conjure his and Michael's collective history of arrival, sifting through the memory of a far from idyllic day in an effort to give their parting a bittersweet inflection—an affective layering that might reanimate alternative trajectories in the midst of a severely constrained present. It is an effort in which Michael is unable, or unwilling, to participate, but one that fleetingly remaps inner city Baltimore as a site of alliances rather than fragmentations and partings.

On homeplace and maternal labour

Dispersing Oedipal structures and rejecting a singular narrative of patriarchal survival, *The Wire* allows me to consider the labour of re-creating family in the context of inherited histories of African American dispossession—histories in which property relations permeated, undid, and remade the meaning of "kinship" in the New World. Drawing, like Avery Gordon, on Claude Meillassoux's analysis of the slave as unborn (*non-né*), Hortense Spillers discerns a "property/kinless constellation" (74) that shaped the beginnings of trans-Atlantic modernity. The offspring of the female slave neither

277

"belonged" to his or her captive mother (herself a form of property) nor was "related" to

his or her owner—even and especially when that owner, as Frederick Douglass reflected,

was often the father (see Chapter Three). In such conditions, it becomes evident

> that "Family," as we practice and understand it "in the West"—the *vertical* transfer of a bloodline, of a patronymic, of titles and entitlements, of real estate and the prerogatives of "cold cash," from *fathers* to *sons* and in the supposedly free exchange of affectional ties between a male and a female of *his* choice—becomes the mythically revered privilege of a free and freed community. (74, emphases in original)

This privileged Family is the one that lends its patriarchal Name as master signifier to the

dominant symbolic order, to what Spillers calls an "American grammar" that begins with

the epistemic ruptures instantiated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[111] This is a grammar,

then, that "remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation"

(68)—in broken and branded flesh, and in the non-sense of kinship among bodies

categorized as property. As Spillers argues in relation to the controversial 1965 Moynihan

Report, which framed "The Negro Family" as caught in a "tangle of pathology" (United

States Department of Labor), the legacy of effaced African names lingers in language and

permeates contemporary social relations. The black American family fails to make

---

[111] Spillers productively engages with Lacanian psychoanalysis, drawing on its account of the formation of the (split) subject via the entry into language while, at the same time, insisting on the worldly contexts that shape the symbolic order and that it, in turn, mediates. Resisting what Anne McClintock refers to as the "disciplinary quarantine of psychoanalysis from history" (8), Spillers re-conceptualizes the "Real," or the materiality that exceeds signification in the Lacanian framework. Where feminist psychoanalysts such as Julia Kristeva have associated the Real with the maternal body, Spillers points to "the 'flesh' as a primary narrative, [by which] we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped' overboard" (67). Spillers' attention to the trafficking in flesh across the Middle Passage, paradoxically, "un-genders" the Lacanian Real by locating it beyond the confines of the domestic realm: "The human cargo of a slave vessel—in the fundamental effacement and remission of African family and proper names—offers a *counter*-narrative to notions of the domestic. […] Under these conditions, one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into 'account' as *quantities*" (72, emphases in original).

sense—fails to cohere—within a symbolic order "that borrows its narrative energies from the grid of associations, from the semantic and iconic folds buried deep in the collective past, that come to surround and signify the captive person" (Spillers 69).

Locating the boys of *The Wire* amid these ongoing imbrications of patriarchal power, racial property, and familial (de)formations begs questions about the show's marginalization of the stories of black mothers. It is, after all, the bodies of black women that disturb the symbolic order that Spillers outlines: between "the African father's *banished* name and body and the captor father's mocking presence […] only the female stands *in the flesh*, both mother and mother-dispossessed" (Spillers 80, emphases in original). Moreover, as bell hooks insists, black women's labour has, historically, generated and sustained homeplace. Consider that Bubbles' sister, who is also a mother to his niece, has done the work of holding open the space of "renewal and self-recovery" to which she hesitantly readmits him at the end of the series (hooks, *Yearning* 49). As a representative of the "citizens"—neither slingers nor fiends nor police—who attempt to inhabit the city without becoming casualties of "the game," she is utterly peripheral to the world of *The Wire* even as she makes possible one of its few reparative scenes. What would it mean to represent the work of "construct[ing] domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance" alongside, and as a form of resistance to, institutional brokenness and masculine constraint (hooks, *Yearning* 42)? How does such work interrupt what Spillers formulates as the trans-generational inheritance of "marking and branding[, which find] various *symbolic substitutions* in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moments" (67, emphasis in original)? How, in other words, might homeplace as

the spatial instantiation of African American community disturb a symbolic order according to which "Family" is the prerogative of whiteness?

By attending to black women's centrality to a history of African American survivorship, it becomes possible to read *The Wire*'s seeming alignment of "freedom" with private, middle-class homes against the grain of the neoliberal valuing of individualism, autonomy, and private property. In the context of histories of black women's maternal labour, it would be reductive to suggest that the dining room table at Bubbles' sister's house, the Colvins' quiet front porch, and Michael's Aunt's house in Columbia simply reinforce middle-class norms. More complexly, they gesture to the possibility of "homeplace as a site of resistance," to the subversive potential of a "private space where [African Americans] do not directly encounter white racist aggression" (hooks, *Yearning* 47). It is a space that shelters black subjects from what I argued in Chapter Two is the zombifying effect of the white gaze (cf. hooks 1992)—a gaze that reads blackness according to a grammar derived from captive bodies.

Apprehending the struggle to make homeplace is also a way of turning "soft eyes" on *The Wire*'s black women, and a way of critically attending to the show's largely unsympathetic portrayal of black mothers, specifically. In Season Four, Michael and Bug's addict mother allows an abuser back into the house when he is released from prison, and De'Londa Brice mercilessly pushes Namond, her eighth-grade son, to keep the family drug money flowing. I would like to suggest that both are contradictory—and ultimately destructive—attempts on the part of women in severely limiting situations, to secure homes against financial ruin and keep their children close. Consider that

De'Londa's counterpart from earlier in the series is Brianna Barksdale, who, at the end of

Season One, convinces her son to "stand tall" for his family in prison rather than take a

plea and start a new life. When McNulty later suggests that this implicates Brianna in her

son's death—that the order to murder the unraveling D'Angelo while in prison came from

within the Barksdale organization itself—the conflicting claims on her loyalty render her

speechless (Season Three, "Moral Midgetry"). Reading a lingering close-up shot of

Brianna's face, critic Kevin McNeilly posits that the close perspective "open[s] up

language and sight to the unsaid and unsayable" (214). Confronted with the knowledge

that her son's death is directly related to her efforts to hold the family together, Brianna

has no language with which to express her loss. Her failure to give an account of herself,

to provide a narrative of care that might recuperate her as a maternal figure, suggests that

the "law" that McNulty represents in this scene is as much symbolic as it is institutional.

The family code to which Brianna stakes her claim—attempting to preserve the Barksdale

name, to maintain its currency in Baltimore's drug economy—cannot make sense within

the "ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation" (Spillers 68).

Let me conclude, then, by offering a possible counterpoint to Brianna Barksdale's

speechlessness. In a scene from *The Wire*'s fifth season from which I have drawn the title

of this chapter, Shakima "Kima" Greggs, a queer police, attempts to connect with her son,

Elijah, who lives with Kima's ex-partner. Having spent the day cobbling together Ikea

furniture to make her apartment habitable for the toddler, Kima sits on a windowsill with

Elijah on her lap, looking out over the city at night. From this threshold, she offers a West

Baltimore version of Margaret Wise Brown's 1947 children's classic, *Goodnight Moon*:

"Goodnight moon. […] Goodnight stars. Goodnight po-pos. Goodnight fiends. Goodnight hoppers. Goodnight hustlers. Goodnight scammers. Goodnight to everybody. Goodnight to one and all" (Season Five, "Took"). Prompted by the sirens of a passing police car, Kima incorporates broken Baltimore into the bedtime story that her son is repeating, line for line, after her. What begins as a medium shot of mother and son originating from within the apartment switches, on "goodnight fiends," to a shot originating from outside the building, its gentle outward zoom matching Kima's increasingly capacious verbal embrace of the city. Where the original *Goodnight Moon* limits the child's expressions of farewell to the bedroom, Kima's remix orients Elijah to the city as she knows it, her substitutions affectionately acknowledging the Michaels and Dukies that Baltimore fails—or refuses—to house. In this brief scene, Kima's somewhat clumsy early efforts to craft a homeplace for her son become messily, productively entwined with the "the *intervening, intruding* tale" that registers the presence of blackness in America (Spillers 79, emphases in original). The city as demonic ground surfaces "'between the lines'" of a classic American storybook (Spillers 79).

EPILOGUE ~ STOPPING AND TURNING: SURVIVORSHIP AND THE CLAIMS OF THE DEAD

> *At stake is whether one is able to realize the responsibilities of an ethical relation to past lives, traced through a testament of disaster that does not efface its own historical disfiguration. At issue in such responsibility is an anticipation of a future that might become conceivable and concrete yet remains indeterminate, dependent on the substance of time through which testament may be transformed into inheritance.*
> —Roger Simon, *The Touch of the Past* (5)

> *I can only live on in the wake of this unwilled region of history, or, indeed,* as *its wake.*
> —Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (170, emphasis in original)

In a November 2010 address to the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations

of North America, *Wire* creator David Simon characterized poor, urban African

Americans as undergoing "'a Holocaust in slow motion'" (qtd. in Beiser).[112] The

provocation not only reanimates trans-Atlantic histories of solidarity between African

American and Jewish activists and intellectuals (cf. Beiser 2011; Gilroy 1993; Rothberg

2009). Simon's remark also refuses the "logic of scarcity" that structures what Michael

Rothberg calls "competitive memory," a conceptualization of collective memory

according to which the remembrance of one history relegates others to the margins of the

public sphere (2). Such a framework draws, in part, on the visual economy suggested by

the Freudian notion of a "screen memory," which posits that one memory serves as a

barrier to another, suppressing its emergence into consciousness. Yet, in a re-reading of

---

[112] Meant to congratulate the federations on their fundraising efforts for post-Katrina New Orleans, Simon instead took them to task for the "'alienation [of mainstream, institutional Jewry] from tragedy that isn't tribal'" (qtd. in Beiser). Simon was appalled that most of the $28 million raised for New Orleans "was spent on restoring and rebuilding the city's Jewish community"—a community in which the average family income was $180 000 per year, as compared to an average citywide income of $30 000 per year (Beiser).

Freud premised on the screen's dual operation as both a barrier and a site of projection, Rothberg posits that a screen memory "both hides and reveals that which has been suppressed" (14). Rather than simply canceling out the past, it produces "a remapping of memory in which links between memories are formed and then redistributed between the conscious and unconscious" (14). David Simon's rhetorical layering of difficult histories illustrates how, at the collective level, this remapping takes place through processes of "ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (3) that reveal the interconnectedness of disparate histories of struggle. Screen memories partially re-surface the histories that they are meant to obscure and, in doing so, allow us to make unusual, even unseemly, comparisons that generate "new objects and new lines of sight" (19). Rothberg's emphasis on the generativity of memory—on "its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones" (5)—offers a point of departure for reconsidering the practices of remembrance encoded in apocalyptic visuality.

I have been arguing that mainstream apocalypse films conduct a neoliberal pedagogy. Offering the gaze of the survivalist as a paradigm for speculating on ruins, they teach a way of seeing devastated landscapes as risky but potentially profitable sites of affective and economic investment. Within this framework, post-apocalyptic terrain becomes the basis of "new world" fantasies premised on a forgetting of the very violence that, in the first place, swept the landscape clean. Given the emphatically nostalgic orientation of the male protagonists that I have considered—a nostalgia that, in *The Road*, crystallizes in the Man's reverence for a can of Coca Cola—it may seem paradoxical to characterize them as forgetful or as encouraging forgetfulness. I want to suggest, though,

that this forgetting manifests performatively rather than psychologically. Epitomized in Robert Neville's relentless project of extermination in *The Omega Man*, the survivalist enacts a compulsive repetition of the violence that cleared the ground for his fantasy of a new, somehow purer world. These repetitions manifest a refusal to grapple with histories and memories in excess of the familial—or familiar—and, in turn, a refusal to confront what Roger I. Simon formulates as "the terms of one's own survival," a forgetting that one's very identity as "survivor" entails "an indissoluble relationship to the dead" (81, 82). This forgetting is not so much a failure of memory, then, as it is a disavowal of "one's responsibility to the gap between the other's death and one's own life" (R. Simon 81). The forgetfulness of the survivalist lies in his failure to apprehend the ghosts with which he lives. It is a failure that, in the case of Major Henry West and his men in *28 Days Later*, results in their enthusiastic annihilation of the infected fellow citizens who approach their fortified manor house—a scene in which violence unfolds as a kind of sport (see Chapter Two).

To respond ethically to the claims of the dead—claims that, as Walter Benjamin reminds us, "cannot be settled cheaply" (*Illuminations* 254)—requires one both to assume responsibility for a violent past and to consider how this ruined terrain might become the condition of possibility of non-violent practices. I want to propose that survivorship, which Roger Simon defines as "a structure of recognition, responsibility, and learning" (82), constitutes an ethical alternative to survivalism, and that apocalyptic visual culture is premised on tensions between these two tendencies. Survivorship entails awakening not simply to the fact that one has survived, but to the fact that one has survived the dead. It

involves experiencing oneself as haunted, such that beginning again does not proceed from acts of exorcism, but from "*history as a force of inhabitation*" (R. Simon 3, emphasis in original). At the level of the subject, the difference between survivalism and survivorship corresponds to the difference between perceiving oneself as persecuted—so that violence is foreign to the self—and "accept[ing] that violence is one's own possibility" (Butler, *Frames* 171). The fact that one is haunted by violence is precisely what occasions an "ethical quandary […] about how to live the violence of one's formative history, how to effect shifts and reversals in its iteration" (Butler, *Frames* 170). Butler's description of the subject as "mired" in violence (171) resonates suggestively with, and indexes a critical alternative to, the soldier male's experience of himself as "inundated" (Theweleit 3). To understand oneself as inundated is to define oneself as suffering injury, an assessment that leads to the disavowal of one's capacity to do harm. In contrast, Butler posits that the fact of being mired in violence—the fact that the subject takes shape through and against unwilled social conditions that are, among other things, injurious, coercive, and rage-provoking—forms "the condition of possibility for the struggle for non-violence" (171). Reading Butler together with Simon, survivorship requires that we grapple with unresolved histories of violence and struggle, learning from these histories how to "live as though the lives of others mattered" (Simon 9).

To recast Simon's point, transatlantic studies scholars teach us that responsible engagements with haunting histories involve attending to the matter—including the flesh in its "seared, divided, ripped-apartness" (Spillers 67)—of the lives of others. As Katherine McKittrick reminds us, "the spatial and bodily remnants of transatlantic slavery

are unresolved" (52). If what Simon formulates as a project of "remembering otherwise" entails tracing "the social grammars that structure confrontations with difference" (R. Simon 9), then, as I explored at the end of the previous chapter, Hortense Spillers insists that these grammars derive from mutilated and enslaved flesh (cf. Spillers 1987). To remember otherwise, then, might involve attending to the matter of bodies suspended in the Middle Passage—to an economy of racial terror that begins in this oceanic space and continues to haunt the New World. Following bell hooks, I suggest that bringing such counter-memories to the surface radically disturbs claims that we live in post-racial times:

> To name that whiteness in the black imagination is often a representation of terror: one must face a palimpsest of written histories that erase and deny, that reinvent the past to make the present vision of racial harmony and pluralism more plausible. To bear the burden of memory one must willingly journey to places long uninhabited, searching the debris of history for traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed. (*Black Looks* 172)

To "bear the burden of memory" is to dwell in the ruins, to sift through sedimented layers of denial in search of what is unknown but cannot be forgotten—to attend, as I argued in the context of *Children of Men*, to the materiality of blood-stained gates and corporeal traces on the ocean floor (see Chapter Three). hooks' account of journeying into the debris of history, then, suggests that remembering otherwise requires us to linger in the space between the old world and the new.

I want to suggest, in turn, that assuming responsibility for the lives of others—living, to paraphrase Simon, as though the lives of others *matter*—involves practices of delay. Butler insists that non-violence is not a principle, but an experimental practice, "fully fallible, of trying to attend to the precariousness of life, checking the transmutation

of life into non-life" (*Frames* 177). Recalling Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, ethically

responding to the claim of non-violence can take shape as knowing when to stop—

knowing, like the Boy in *The Road*, when to turn around and "face what is behind us"

(Ahmed, *Queer* 142). In this stopping and turning, we attend to histories of arrival even as

they confront us with the inadequacy of our actions. The Boy's turn back towards the

thief results only in the offering of a tin of food, and, in *The Wire*, Dukie's turn towards

the enraged Laetitia reaches its limit in the gift of a handheld electric fan (see Chapters

Four and Five). Yet, faced with the impossibility of redressing histories of mutilation,

starvation, abandonment, and contempt, the Boy and Dukie act anyway, briefly

interrupting these still unfolding processes of violence. These interruptions illuminate

alternative ways of relating to others, "avow[ing] a social bond, even when it is violently

assaulted from elsewhere" (Butler, *Frames* 178). Like Kima's conjuring of the socially

dead between the lines of a classic American children's story (see Chapter Five),

practices of delay register incipient forms of sociability seething beneath the surface of

dominant formations.

    The capacity to interrupt violent processes that I am emphasizing here is, in

Arendtian terms, the agency that inheres in the fact of birth: the capacity, to repeat

Rothberg's formulation with a difference, to build new worlds out of the ruins of older

ones (5). Practices of delay create rifts in the illusion of what appears to be a relentlessly

unfolding historical process that, as Hannah Arendt reminds us, "can land us only in

paradise or in hell" (*Between* 101). Such practices open up a temporal gap that might

instantiate new relations among "the fragmented moments of the present, past, and

future" (Simon 7). Arendt proposes that the gap between past and future is the time of thinking itself: the "small track of non-time that the activity of thought beats within the time-space of mortal men and into which the trains of thought, of remembrance and anticipation, save whatever they touch from the ruin of historical and biographical time" (*Between* 13). The generativity of memory is thus a function of its interruptive quality, of its knotting together of temporal locations and affective landscapes in a way that might set criticalities into motion. The hauntological structure of apocalyptic visual texts, the histories of violence that resurface in their ruined landscapes, potentially set thought to work imagining unexpected futures—even if, admittedly, occasions for remembering otherwise remain ghostly in these politically ambiguous products of neoliberal culture. Nonetheless, the freedom inherent in the unpredictability of re-beginning emerges from "the dimension of depth in human existence[, a] depth [that] cannot be reached […] except through remembrance" (Arendt, *Between* 94). My methodological commitment to attending to sedimented layers of history and experience aims to unveil the "dimension of depth" from which both the elasticity of the present and the indeterminacy of the future emerge.

Works Cited

28 Days Later. Dir. Danny Boyle. 2002. Twentieth Century Fox, 2007. DVD.

28 Weeks Later. Dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. Twentieth Century Fox, 2007. DVD.

A Clockwork Orange. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1971. Warner, 2001. DVD.

Abbas, Mohammed. "Monuments vanish, power cut as metal thieves stalk UK." *Reuters*. UK Edition. Thomson Reuters, 30 Dec. 2011. Web. 1 Jan. 2012.

Achebe, Chinua. "'Chi' in Igbo Cosmology." *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998. 67-72. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. 1995. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

———. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. 1998. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 2002. Print.

———. *State of Exception*. 2003. Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

Agawu, Kofi. *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

———. "Diversity in Educational Institutions." McMaster University. Hamilton, Ontario. 3 Mar. 2011. Public Lecture.

———. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

———. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

Aldiss, Brian. *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973. Print.

Allen, Amy. "Solidarity After Identity Politics: Hannah Arendt and the Power of Feminist Theory." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25.1 (1999): 97-118. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 24 Apr. 2012.

Alvarez, Rafael. *The Wire: Truth Be Told*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009. Print.

Amoore, Louise. "Biometric Borders: Governing Mobilities in the War on Terror." *Political Geography* 25.3 (March 2006): 336-51. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.

Anderson, Angela. "No Such Thing as Good and Evil: *The Wire* and the humanization of the object of risk in the age of biopolitics." *darkmatter: in the ruins of imperial culture*. 29 May 2009: n. pag. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.

Andrijasevic, Rutvica. "Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, Migration, and Representation in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns." *Feminist Review* 86 (2007): 24-44. *Palgrave*. Web. 31 Mar. 2011.

Anthias, Floya, and Nira Yuval-Davis. *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Apocalypse Now. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. 1979. Paramount, 1999. DVD.

Arendt, Hannah. *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. 1961. New York: Penguin, 1993. Print.

———. *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken, 1994. Print.

———. *The Human Condition*. 1958. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998. Print.

———. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 1951. 3rd ed. 1968. New York: Harcourt, 1994. Print.

———. *The Promise of Politics*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken, 2005. Print.

Arens, William. *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979. Print.

Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. London: Verso, 1994. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. 1985. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999. Print.

———. *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008. Print.

The Bad Seed. Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. 1956. Warner, 2004. DVD.

Bankston, Douglas. "All the Rage: Anthony Dod Mantle, DFF injects the apocalyptic *28 Days Later* with a strain of digital video." *American Cinematographer* (July 2003): n. pag. Web. 28 Sept. 2011.

Bartolovich, Crystal. "Consumerism, or the cultural logic of late cannibalism." *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998. 204-37. Print.

Bartter, Martha A. "Nuclear Holocaust as Urban Renewal." *Science Fiction Studies* 13 (1986): 148-58. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Apr. 2010.

Bateman, Terryl, and Govinda Dickman. "Who's the Daddy? The Aesthetics and Politics of Representation in Alfonso Cuarón's adaptation of *Children of Men*." *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*. Ed. Rachel Carroll. London: Continuum, 2009. 147-59. Print.

Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. Print.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008. Print.

———. *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. Print.

———. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. Print.

Beam, Christopher. "What's 'Street Money'?" *Slate*. The Slate Group, 23 Oct. 2008. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.

Beiser, Vince. "The Heretic." *Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life*. Nextbook Inc., 22 Apr. 2011. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.

Benhabib, Seyla. *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. 1996. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. Print.

Benjamin, Andrew. "Trauma Within the Walls: Notes Towards a Philosophy of the City." *Post-Traumatic Urbanism*. Spec. issue of *Architectural Design* 80.5 (September-October 2010): 24-31. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 20 Jan. 2011.

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken, 1986. 277-30. Print.

———. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. Print.

———. *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. London: New Left Books, 1979. Print.

Ben-Naim, Arieh. *Entropy Demystified: The Second Law Reduced to Plain Common Sense*. Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2008. Print.

Bennett, Drake. "This Will Be on the Midterm. You Feel Me?" *Slate*. The Slate Group, 24 Mar. 2010. Web. 27 Apr. 2012.

Bernstein, Richard. *The Abuse of Evil: The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005. Print.

Blade Runner. Dir. Ridley Scott. 1982. Warner Home Video, 2007. DVD.

Blood on Satan's Claw. Dir. Piers Haggard. 1971. Anchor Bay, 2004. DVD.

Bonnett, Alastair. *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.

The Book of Eli. Dir. Albert Hughes and Allen Hughes. Warner Brothers, 2010. DVD.

Boucé, Paul-Gabriel. "Imagination, Pregnant Women, and Monsters in Eighteenth-Century England and France." *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*. Ed. G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 86-100. Print.

Bowman, James. "Our Childless Dystopia." *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society*. Winter 2007: 107-110. Web. 17 Jan. 2011.

Boyd, Colleen, and Coll Thrush, eds. *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011. Print.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Print.

Braedley, Susan, and Meg Luxton, eds. *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2010. Print.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006. Print.

Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001. Print.

Braun, Kathrin. "Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault." *Time & Society*
     16.1 (2007): 5-23. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 5 Jul. 2011.

Brennan, Matt. "What a Waste: The Apocalyptic Prophecies of T.S. Eliot and Alfonso
     Cuaron." *Bright Lights Film Journal* 57 (August 2007): n. pag. Web. 17 Jan.
     2011.

Brophy, Sarah. *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning*.
     Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.

Bruhm, Steven, and Natasha Hurley, eds. *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*.
     Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004. Print.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East
     and West*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000. Print.

———. "Hegel and Haiti." *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (Summer 2000): 821-65. *JSTOR*. Web.
     10 Oct. 2011.

Burman, Mark. "Return of the Cuckoos." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media
     Limited, 5 Dec. 2003. Web. 20 May 2010.

Burns, Sarah. *The Central Park Five: A Chronicle of a City Wilding*. New York: Knopf,
     2011. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia."
     Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising. Ed. Robert Gooding-Williams.
     New York: Routledge, 1993. 15-22. Print.

———. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009. Print.

———. *Precarious Life: Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004.
     Print.

Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis:
     U of Minnesota P, 2011. Print.

Carpenter, Mary Wilson. "Representing Apocalypse: Sexual Politics and the Violence of
     Revelation." *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*.
     Ed. Richard Dellamora. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. 107-35. Print.

Carter, Julian. *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880-
     1940*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

Cartwright, Lisa. *Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.

———. *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.

Castaneda, Claudia. *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.

Castells, Manuel. *End of Millennium*. Vol. 3. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998. Print.

Chakrabortty, Aditya. "UK riots: political classes see what they want to see." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 10 Aug. 2011. Web. 14 Aug. 2011.

The Changes. Dir. John Prowse. BBC. London. 6 Jan.–10 Mar 1975. Television.

Chaudhary, Zahid. "Humanity Adrift: Race, Materiality, and Allegory in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*." *Camera Obscura* 72, 24.3 (2009): 73-109. Web. 17 Jan. 2011.

Children of Men. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Universal, 2006. DVD.

Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Chu, Patricia. *Race, Nationalism and the State in British and American Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

"Chunnel Storming: Camp Chief Knew." *Sky News*. BskyB, 28 Dec. 2001. Web. 8 Dec. 2011.

Cioran, E.M. *The Trouble with Being Born*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Viking Press, 1976. Print.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997. Print.

Clough, Patricia Ticineto, and Craig Willse, eds. *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Coleman, Roy. "Watching the Degenerate: Street Camera Surveillance and Urban Regeneration." *Local Economy* 19.3 (August 2004): 199-211. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.

Comaroff, Jean. "Beyond Bare Life: AIDS, (Bio)Politics, and the Neoliberal Order." *Public Culture* 19.1 (2007): 197-219. Print.

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101.4 (Fall 2002): 779-805. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 28 Jul. 2009.

———. "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming." *Public Culture* 12.2 (2000): 291-343. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 22 Jul. 2008.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. New York: Norton, 2006. Print.

Cooper, Ken. "The Whiteness of the Bomb." *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*. Ed. Richard Dellamora. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. 79-106. Print.

Cooper, Melinda. *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 2008. Print.

Cowell, Alan. "Letter from Britain: Hoodies and the loss of a culture of respect." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 20 May 2005. Web. 26 Sept. 2011.

"Crypt, *n*." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford UP: n. pag. Web. 19 Mar. 2012.

Daniels, Stephen, and Denis Cosgrove. "Spectacle and Text: Landscape metaphors in cultural geography." *Place/Culture/Representation*. Ed. James Duncan and David Ley. New York: Routledge, 1993. 57-77. Print.

Dargis, Manohla. "Apocalypse Now, but in the Wasteland a Child is Given." *New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 25 Dec. 2006. Web. 20 Jan. 2011.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. 1990. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

———. *Dead Cities and Other Tales*. New York: The New Press, 2002. Print.

Davis, Wade. *The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist's Astonishing Journey into the Secret Societies of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985. Print.

Dawn of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. 1978. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Dawn of the Dead. Dir. Zack Snyder. 2004. Universal, 2007. DVD.

The Day the Earth Stood Still. Dir. Robert Wise. 1951. Twentieth Century Fox, 2002. DVD.

Dayan, Joan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995. Print.

Dean, Amber. "Space, Temporality, History: Encountering Hauntings in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside." *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*. Ed. Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter, and Peter Fortna. Edmonton: AU Press, 2010. 113-32. Print.

Debrix, François, and Alexander D. Barder. *Beyond Biopolitics: Theory, Violence, and Horror in World Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia UP, 1983. Print.

Deliverance. Dir. John Boorman. 1972. Warner Brothers, 2007. DVD.

Derman, Emmanuel. *My Life as a Quant: Reflections on Physics and Finance*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2004. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. 1976. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. Print.

———. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Deutscher, Penelope. "The Inversion of Exceptionality: Foucault, Agamben, and 'Reproductive Rights.'" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107.1 (Winter 2008): 55–70. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.

Dewey, Joseph. *In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1990. Print.

Diary of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. 2007. Dimension, 2008. DVD.

Dietz, Mary G. *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Dodson, Danita. "'We lived in the blank white spaces': Rewriting the Paradigm of Denial in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Utopian Studies* 8.2 (1997): 66-86. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 Feb. 2011.

Doomsday. Dir. Neil Marshall. Universal, 2008. DVD.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. 1845. New York: The Modern Library, 2004. Print.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. Print.

Duménil, Gérard, and Dominique Lévy. *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revoluation*. 2000. Trans. Derek Jeffers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004. Print.

Duncan, James S. *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.

Duncan, James S., and Nancy G. Duncan. "Ideology and Bliss: Roland Barthes and the secret histories of landscape." *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*. Ed. Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan. New York: Routledge, 1992. 18-37. Print.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

Edwards, Paul, and Rosalind Shaw. "The Invisible Chi in Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 19.2 (June 1989): 146-56. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 Nov. 2011.

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962. Print.

Elliott, Stuart. "Levi's Features a Town Trying to Recover." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 23 Jun. 2010. Web. 10 Feb. 2012.

"Ellis Island – History." *Ellis Island.org*. The Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. n.d. Web. 11 Jun. 2012.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. 1952. New York: Vintage, 1995. Print.

Eng, David. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written by Himself*. 1789. Ed. Angelo Costanzo. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2001. Print.

Esposito, Roberto. *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Trans. Timothy Campbell. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.

Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004. Print.

The Exorcist. Dir. William Friedkin. 1973. Warner Home Video, 2000. DVD.

Falling Down. Dir. Joel Schumacher. 1993. Warner, 2000. DVD.

Faludi, Susan. *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Crown, 1991. Print.

———. *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America*. New York: Picador, 2007. Print.

Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004. Print.

Feldman, Allen. "On the Actuarial Gaze: From 9/11 to Abu Ghraib." *Cultural Studies* 19.2 (March 2005): 203-26. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 May 2011.

Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990. Print.

Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Stein and Day, 1966. Print.

Finn, Catherine. "The Wanderers' Songs: The Last of Baltimore's Arabbers—Horse-and-Cart Vendors—Are Fading Away." *Preservation: the Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2 Nov. 1997. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.

First Blood. Dir. Ted Kotcheff. 1982. Artisan Entertainment, 1998. DVD.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. Ed. Michael Senellart. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

———. *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. 1976. Trans. Robert
    Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.

———. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New
    York: Pantheon, 1984. 76-100. Print.

———. *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. Ed.
    Mauro Bertani and Allesandro Fontana. Trans. David Macey. New York: Picador,
    2003. Print.

Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and Freedom*. 1964. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. Print.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of
    Encounter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1998. Print.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
    Print.

Gallivan, Euan. "Compassionate McCarthy? *The Road* and Schopenhauerian Ethics." *The
    Cormac McCarthy Journal* 6 (Autumn 2008): 98-106. The Cormac McCarthy
    Society. Web. 28 Jun. 2010. PDF file.

Gatens, Moira. "Politicizing the Body: Property, Contract, and Rights." *The Oxford
    Handbook of Political Theory*. Ed. J. Dryzek, B. Honig, and A. Phillips. Oxford:
    Oxford UP, 2006. 677-93. Print.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer
    and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
    Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA:
    Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

———. *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*.
    Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010. Print.

Giroux, Henry. *Disposable Youth: Racialized Memories and the Culture of Cruelty*. New
    York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

———. *Stormy Weather: Katrina and the Politics of Disposability*. Boulder, CO:
    Paradigm, 2006. Print.

———. *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* New York: Palgrave
    Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print.

Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.

Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 1997. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008. Print.

———. "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity." *Borderlands* 10.2 (2011): 1-21. Web. 14 Dec. 2011.

Graham, Elaine L. *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.

Graham, Jane. "Hoodies strike fear in British cinema." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 5 Nov. 2009. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.

Grand Canyon. Dir. Lawrence Kasdan. 1991. Twentieth Century Fox, 2001. DVD.

Green, André. *The Fabric of Affect in the Psychoanalytic Discourse*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Grosz, Elizabeth. "Women, *Chora*, Dwelling." *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Ed. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 47-58. Print.

Hall, Rachel. "Of Ziploc Bags and Black Holes: The Aesthetics of Transparency in the War on Terror." *The Communication Review* 10 (2007): 319-46. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 13 May 2011.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." 1989. *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. 392-403. Print.

———. "Reformism and the Legalization of Consent." *Permissiveness and Control: The Fate of Sixties Legislation*. Ed. National Deviancy Conference. London: Macmillan, 1980. 1-43. Print.

Hall, Stuart et al. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: MacMillan, 1978. Print.

The Handmaid's Tale. Dir. Volker Schlöndorff. MGM, 1990. DVD.

Hansen, Christine. "Arabbers: An Endangered Species." *Baltimore Stories.com*. Towson University, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.

Hanson, Ellis. "Knowing Children: Desire and Interpretation in *The Exorcist*." *Curiouser: on the Queerness of Children*. Ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004. 107-36. Print.

Haraway, Donna. "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Determinations of Self in Immune System Discourse." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1.1 (1989): 3-43. Print.

Harris, Norman. Notes. *The Souls of Black Folk*. By W.E.B. Du Bois. 1903. New York: Pocket Books, 2005. 257-65. Print.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007. Print.

———. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

———. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. Print.

Hastings, Max. "Years of Liberal Dogma Have Spawned a Generation of Amoral, Uneducated, Welfare Dependent, Brutalized Youngsters." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers Ltd., 12 Aug. 2011. Web. 14 Aug. 2011.

Hauck, Christina. "Abortion and the Individual Talent." *English Literary History* 70.1 (Spring 2003): 223-66. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Jan. 2012.

Havrilesky, Heather. "'The Colony': 'Survivor' meets the apocalypse." *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group, Inc., 7 Aug. 2010. Web. 8 Aug. 2010.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*. 1960. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011. Print.

Heath, Jennifer, ed. *The Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2008. Print.

Heffernan, Teresa. *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008. Print.

Higson, Andrew. *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997. Print.

Hitchcock, Peter. *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010. Print.

"Home Counties Horror." Dir. Rachel Jardine. *A History of Horror with Mark Gatiss*. BBC Four. 18 Oct. 2010. Television.

Honig, Bonnie, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1995. Print.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992. Print.

———. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990. Print.

Hornby, Nick. "An Interview with David Simon." *The Wire: Truth Be Told*. By Rafael Alvarez. Edinburgh, UK: Canongate, 2009. 382-97. Print.

Huet, Marie-Hélène. *Monstrous Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Hulme, Peter. "Introduction: the cannibal scene." *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998. 1-38. Print.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Print.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*. 1938. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. 1932. Hammersmith, UK: Flamingo, 1994. Print.

Huyssen, Andreas. "Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality." *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*. Ed. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 16-29. Print.

I Am Legend. Dir. Francis Lawrence. 2007. Warner Home Video, 2008. DVD.

The Innocents. Dir. Jack Clayton. 1961. Twentieth Century Fox, 2005. DVD.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers. Dir. Don Siegel. 1956. Universal, 2002. DVD.

Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1974. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985. Print.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself.* 1861. New York: The Modern Library, 2004. Print.

Jagoda, Patrick. "*Critical Response I:* Wired." *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Autumn 2011): 189-99. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Apr. 2012.

James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. 1938. London: Penguin, 2001. Print.

James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. 1898. Ed. Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren. New York: Norton, 1999. Print.

James, P.D. *The Children of Men*. 1992. Toronto: Vintage, 2005. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005. Print.

Jarmakani, Amira. *Imagining Arab Womanhood: The Cultural Mythology of Veils, Harems, and Belly Dancers in the U.S.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

Jordanova, Ludmilla. *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989. Print.

Judgment Night. Dir. Stephen Hopkins. 1993. GoodTimes Home Video, 1998. DVD.

Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. New York: Penguin, 2010. Print.

K, Rick. "5 Awesome Movies Ruined By Last-Minute Changes." *Cracked.com*. Demand Media, Inc., 23 May 2008. Web. 30 Aug. 2011.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. 1966. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Ketterer, David. *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature*. Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1974. Print.

Kilgour, Maggie. *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.

Kimball, A. Samuel. *The Infanticidal Logic of Evolution and Culture*. Newark, NJ: U of Delaware P, 2007. Print.

King, C. Richard. "The (Mis)uses of Cannibalism in Contemporary Cultural Critique." *Diacritics* 30.1 (Spring 2000): 106-23. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 16 Jan. 2012.

King James Bible. The Pure Cambridge Edition. 1900. Bibleprotector.com. Web. 17 Apr. 2012.

Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Toronto: Knopf, 2007. Print.

Korte, Barbara. "Envisioning a Black Tomorrow? Black Mother Figures and the Issue of Representation in *28 Days Later* and *Children of Men*." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film, and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein et al. Amsterdam, NL: Rodopi, 2008. 315-25. Print.

Kraniauskus, John. "Elasticity of Demand: Reflections on *The Wire*." *Radical Philosophy* 154 (March/April 2009): 25-34. Web. 16 Aug. 2010.

Kristeva, Julia. *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative*. Trans. Frank Collins. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001. Print.

———. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.

———. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. 1974. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. Print.

Kuhl, Stefan. *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

Kümmel, Reiner. *The Second Law of Economics: Energy, Entropy, and the Origins of Wealth*. New York: Springer, 2011. Print.

Kuper, Simon. "Debt: another word for guilt." *FT Magazine*. The Financial Times Limited, 14 Jan. 2011. Web. 26 Oct. 2011.

Land of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. Universal, 2005. DVD.

Larson, Doran. "Machine as Messiah: Cyborgs, Morphs, and the American Body Politic." *Cinema Journal* 36.4 (Summer 1997): 57-75. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 May 2008.

The Last Man on Earth. Dir. Ubaldo Ragona and Sidney Salkow. 1964. MGM, 2005. DVD.

Latimer, Heather. "Bio-Reproductive Futurism: Bare Life and the Pregnant Refugee in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*." *Social Text 108* 29.3 (Fall 2011): 51-72. *Duke University Press*. Web. 8 Jun. 2012.

———. "Popular Culture and Reproductive Politics: *Juno*, *Knocked Up*, and the Enduring Legacy of *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Feminist Theory* 10.2 (2009): 211-26. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 24 Jan. 2011.

Lauret, Maria. *Liberating Literature: Feminist Fiction in America*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Lear, Jonathan. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006. Print.

Lemke, Thomas. *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. 2007. New York: NYU Press, 2011. Print.

"Levi's Go Forth to Work—Braddock, PA." YouTube. 6 Jul. 2010. Web. 25 Sept. 2010.

"Levi's Proclaims 'We are all Workers' with Launch of Latest Go Forth Marketing Campaign." *Levi Strauss & Co. Press Releases*. 24 Jun. 2010. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

"Levi's / Ready to Work." *Contagious*. Contagious, 7 Jul. 2010. Web. 10 Feb. 2012.

Lippman, Laura. "The Women of *The Wire* (No, Seriously)." *The Wire: Truth Be Told*. By Rafael Alvarez. Edinburgh, UK: Canongate, 2009. 54-60. Print.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 1998. Print.

Lyon, David, ed. *Surveillance as Social Sorting: Privacy, Risk, and Digital Discrimination*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Macek, Steve. *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right, and the Moral Panic over the City*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.

Mad Max. Dir. George Miller. 1979. MGM, 2002. DVD.

Magnet, Shoshana Amielle. *When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race, and the Technology of Identity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Mann, Karen B. "Narrative Entanglements: 'The Terminator.'" *Film Quarterly* 43.2 (Winter 1989/90): 17-27. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Jun. 2011.

Mantegna, Rosario N., and H. Eugene Stanley. *An Introduction to Econophysics: Correlations and Complexity in Finance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Marks, Kathleen. *Toni Morrison's <u>Beloved</u> and the Apotropaic Imagination*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2002. Print.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. 1867. Ed. Frederick Engels. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Vol. 1. Marxists.org. Web. 17 Apr. 2012.

Martin, Robert K., and Eric Savoy, eds. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1998. Print.

Maslin, Kimberly. "The Gender-Neutral Feminism of Hannah Arendt." *Hypatia*. 23 Mar. 2012. Web. 24 Apr. 2012.

Massumi, Brian. "Everywhere You Want to Be: An Introduction to Fear." *The Politics of Everyday Fear*. Ed. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. 3-38. Print.

Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. 1954. New York: Orb, 1995.

May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. 1988. New York: Basic Books, 1999. Print.

Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40. Print.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York: Knopf, 2006. Print.

———. Interview with Oprah Winfrey. *Oprah.com*. Harpo Productions, Inc., 1 Jun. 2007. Web. 6 Jul. 2010.

McCauley, Joseph. *Dynamics of Markets: The New Financial Economics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

McConnell, Mariana. "Interview: George A. Romero on *Diary of the Dead*." *Cinema Blend.com*. 14 Feb. 2008. Web. 3 Aug. 2011.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.

McNeilly, Kevin. "Dislocating America: Agnieszka Holland Directs 'Moral Midgetry.'" *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television*. Ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 2009. 203-16. Print.

Mills, Charles. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997. Print.

"Mission, History, Projection of Activities." *Arabber Preservation Society (A.P.S.)*. Thom LaCosta, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.

Mitchell, Don. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. Print.

Morgan, Wesley G. "The Route and Roots of *The Road*." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal* 6 (Autumn 2008): 39-47. The Cormac McCarthy Society. Web. 28 Jun. 2010. PDF file.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987. New York: Penguin, 2000. Print.

———. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992. Print.

Mort, Frank. *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010. Print.

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000. Print.

Muller, Benjamin. *Security, Risk, and the Biometric State: Governing Borders and Bodies*. New York: Routledge 2010. Print.

Murrell, Nathanial Samuel. *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2010. Print.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. 1887. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1969. Print.

Night of the Living Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. 1968. Alpha Video Distributors, 2002. DVD.

O'Harrow Jr., Robert. "Government Inc.: Walk Around Money." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post Company, 11 Aug. 2008. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.

The Omega Man. Dir. Boris Sagal. 1971. Warner Brothers Entertainment, 2007. DVD.

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. 1949. London: Penguin, 1989. Print.

Paffenroth, Kim. *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth*. Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2006. Print.

Paik, Peter Y. *From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. Print.

Papadopoulos, Dimitris, Niamh Stephenson, and Vassilis Tsianos. *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Pluto Press, 2008. Print.

Pask, Kevin. "Cyborg Economies: Desire and Labor in the *Terminator* Films." *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*. Ed. Richard Dellamora. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. 182-98. Print.

Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988. Print.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982. Print.

Patton, Cindy. *Globalizing AIDS*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002. Print.

———. *Inventing AIDS*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Pearson, Michael. "Florida shooting renews debate over 'stand your ground' laws." *CNN U.S.* Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., 21 Mar. 2012. Web. 27 Mar. 2012.

Penhall, Joe, adapt. *The Road*. By Cormac McCarthy. Dir. John Hillcoat. 2009. Dimension Films, 2010. Web. 25 Jul. 2010.

Penley, Constance. "Time Travel, Primal Scene, and the Critical Dystopia." *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*. Ed. Constance Penley et al. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991. 63-80. Print.

Philip, M. NourbeSe. "Dis Place—The Space Between." *A Genealogy of Resistance: And Other Essays*. Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997. 74-112. Print.

Phillips, Melanie. "Britain's Liberal Intelligentsia Has Smashed Virtually Every Social Value." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers Ltd., 11 Aug. 2011. Web. 14 Aug. 2011.

Pike, David L. "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad." *Bright Lights Film Journal* 67 (February 2010). Web. Jun. 29, 2010.

Plato. *Timaeus*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2008. Print.

"PM's speech at Munich Security Conference." *10: The official site of the British Prime Minister's Office*. HM Government, 5 Feb. 2011. Web. 29 Oct. 2011.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "Narrative of A. Gordon Pym." 1838. *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales*. New York: New American Library, 1960. 200-373. Print.

Porter, Andrew. "London riots: water cannons to be used on 'sick society.'" *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group Limited, 10 Aug. 2011. Web. 29 Oct. 2011.

Powell, Kevin. "Trayvon Martin and the fatal history of American racism." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 20 Mar. 2012. Web. 26 Mar. 2012.

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession 91*. New York: MLA, 1991. 33-40. Print.

Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

Pugliese, Joseph. *Biometrics: Bodies, Technologies, Biopolitics*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Rabinbach, Anson, and Jessica Benjamin. Foreword. *Male Fantasies*, *Volume 2: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*. By Klaus Theweleit. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. ix-xxv. Print.

Rajaram, Prem Kumar, and Carl Grundy-Warr, eds. *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. Print.

Razack, Sherene H. *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.

Redding, Arthur. *Haints: American Ghosts, Millennial Passions, and Contemporary Gothic Fictions*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2011. Print.

Resident Evil. Dir. Paul W.S. Anderson. 2002. Columbia TriStar, 2003. DVD.

Resident Evil: Afterlife. Dir. Paul W.S. Anderson. Sony, 2010. DVD.

Resident Evil: Apocalypse. Dir. Alexander Witt. Columbia TriStar, 2004. DVD.

Resident Evil: Extinction. Dir. Russell Mulcahy. 2007. Sony, 2008. DVD.

Resident Evil: Retribution. Dir. Paul W.S. Anderson. Alliance, 2012. Film.

The Road. Dir. John Hillcoat. Dimension Films, 2009. DVD.

Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Pantheon, 1997. Print.

Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.

Rose, Nikolas, and Peter Miller. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social, and Personal Life*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008. Print.

Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006. Print.

Rosemary's Baby. Dir. Roman Polanski. 1968. Paramount Home Video, 2006. DVD.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Ruggie, John. "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations." *International Organization* 47.1 (1993): 261-85. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Print.

"Sangatte refugee camp." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 23 May, 2002. Web. Dec. 1, 2011.

Schwartzman, Sarah. "*Children of Men* and a Plural Messianism." *Journal of Religion and Film* 13.1 (April 2009). Web. 17 Jan. 2011.

Seabrook, William. *The Magic Island*. 1929. New York: Paragon House, 1989. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985. Print.

Shamir, Ronen. "Without Borders? Notes on Globalization as a Mobility Regime." *Sociological Theory* 23.2 (June 2005): 197-217. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 23 Nov. 2011.

Sharma, Ash. "Editorial: 'All the pieces matter' – Introductory notes on *The Wire*." *darkmatter: in the ruins of imperial culture*. darkmatter Journal, 29 Apr. 2011. Web. 27 Apr. 2012.

Sharpe, Christina. *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Sherry, Vincent. "T.S. Eliot, Late Empire, and Decadence." *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939*. Ed. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. 111-35. Print.

The Silence of the Lambs. Dir. Jonathan Demme. 1991. MGM, 2009. DVD.

Simon, David. Introduction. *The Wire: Truth Be Told*. By Rafael Alvarez. Edinburgh, UK: Canongate, 2009. 1-31. Print.

Simon, David, and Edward Burns. *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997. Print.

Simon, Roger I. *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. 1992. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. Print.

———. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. 1973. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000. Print.

Smith, Jonathan. "The Lie That Blinds: Destabilizing the text of landscape." *Place/Culture/Representation*. Ed. James Duncan and David Ley. New York: Routledge, 1993. 78-92. Print.

Snyder, Christina. *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010. Print.

Snyder, Phillip A. "Hospitality in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal* 6 (Autumn 2008): 69-86. The Cormac McCarthy Society. Web. 28 Jun. 2010. PDF file.

Snyder, Sharon, and David T. Mitchell. *Cultural Locations of Disability*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006. Print.

Sonser, Anna. *A Passion for Consumption: The Gothic Novel in America*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Print.

Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966. Print.

Spaulding, A. Timothy. *Re-forming the Past: History, the Fantastic, and the Postmodern Slave Narrative*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2005. Print.

Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2 (Summer 1987): 65-81. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan. 2011.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Laurence Grossberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313.

Squier, Susan Merrill. *Liminal Lives: Imagining the Human at the Frontiers of Biomedicine*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002. Print.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly*. 1852. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Norton, 2010. Print.

Strange, Susan. *Casino Capitalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. Print.

Streitfeld, David. "Braddock Journal: Rock Bottom for Decades, But Showing Signs of Life." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 31 Jan. 2009. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.

Survival of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. E1 Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Tarlo, Emma. *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith*. Oxford: Berg, 2010. Print.

The Terminator. Dir. James Cameron. 1984. MGM, 2007. DVD.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day. Dir. James Cameron. 1991. Artisan Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Terminator: Salvation. Dir. McG. Warner, 2009. DVD.

Theweleit, Klaus. *Male Fantasies, Volume 2: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*. Trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. Print.

Thompson, Kirsten Moana. *Apocalyptic Dread: American Film at the Turn of the Millennium*. Albany: SUNY, 2007. Print.

Treichler, Paula. *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. Print.

Tyler, Imogen. "Designed to Fail: A Biopolitics of British Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 14.1 (2010): 61-74. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 24 Jan. 2011.

Udden, James. "Child of the Long Take: Alfonso Cuaron's Film Aesthetics in the Shadow of Globalization." *Style* 43.1 (Spring 2009): 26-44. Web. 17 Jan. 2011.

United States Department of Labor. "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." March 1965. *BlackPast.org*. Blackpast.org. n.d. Web. 3 Jun. 2012.

Urstadt, Bryant. "Imagine There's No Oil: Scenes from a Liberal Apocalypse." *Harper's Magazine* 313.1875 (August 2006): 31-40. Print.

Vatter, Miguel. "Biopolitics: From Surplus Value to Surplus Life." *Theory & Event* 12.2 (2009): 1-12. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 20 Jun. 2011.

———. "Natality and Biopolitics in Hannah Arendt." *Revista de Ciencia Politica* 26.2 (2006): 137-59. *DOAJ*. Web. 15 Apr. 2009.

Village of the Damned. Dir. Wolf Rilla. 1960. Warner, 2004. DVD.

Voigts-Virchow, Eckart, ed. *Janespotting and Beyond: British Heritage Retrovisions Since the Mid-1990s*. Tübingen, DE: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004. Print.

von Mises, Ludwig. *Planned Chaos*. 1947. Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1981. Print.

Wacquant, Loïc. "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh." *Punishment & Society* 3.1 (2001): 95-134. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 8 Mar. 2010.

Wald, Priscilla. *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative*. Durham:
Duke UP, 2008. Print.

Walkowitz, Judith. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-
Victorian London*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992. Print.

Walsh, Chris. "The Post-Southern Sense of Place in *The Road*." *The Cormac McCarthy
Journal* 6 (Autumn 2008): 48-54. The Cormac McCarthy Society. Web. 28 Jun.
2010. PDF file.

The War of the Worlds. Dir. Byron Haskin. 1953. Paramount, 2005. DVD.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. *Wayward Reproductions: Genealogies of Race and Nation in
Transatlantic Modern Thought*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

White Zombie. Dir. Victor Halperin. 1932. Vintage, 2005. DVD.

Whittington, William. "Sound design for a *found* future: Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of
Men*." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 9.1 (March 2011): 3-14. Web.
23 Nov. 2011.

The Wicker Man. Dir. Robin Hardy. 1973. Anchor Bay, 2008. DVD.

Wilson, David. *Cities and Race: America's New Black Ghetto*. New York: Routledge,
2007. Print.

The Wire: The Complete Series. 2002-2008. Created by David Simon. HBO. Warner,
2008. DVD.

Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. Print.

Woodstock. Dir. Michael Wadleigh. 1970. Warner Home Video, 2009. DVD.

Wyndham, John. *The Day of the Triffids*. 1951. London: Penguin, 2001. Print.

———. *The Midwich Cuckoos*. 1957. New York: Penguin, 2008.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of
Caliban's 'Woman.'" *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Ed.
Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990.
355-372. Print.

———. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (Fall 2003): 257-337. Print.

Young, Rob. "The Pattern Under the Plough." *The Films of Old, Weird Britain*. Spec. issue of *Sight & Sound: The International Film Magazine* 20.8 (August 2010): 16-22. Print.

Young-Bruehl, Elizabeth. *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*. 1982. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2004. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj. "The Clash of Civilizations at the End of History." *Slavoj Zizek— Philosopher and Cultural Critic—Reacts to <u>Children of Men</u>*. Web. 20. Feb. 2008.

———. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso, 2010.

———. "The Possibility of Hope." DVD Bonus Feature. *Children of Men*. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Universal, 2007. DVD.