TRANSMOLECULAR REVOLUTION: TRANS*VERSALITY AND THE MATTERING OF POLITICAL LIFE

by

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Abraham Weil
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Abstract

My dissertation “Transmolecular Revolution: Trans*versality and the Mattering of Political Life,” develops the concepts of “transmolecular revolution” and “trans*versality,” drawn from the conceptual vocabulary of cultural theorist Félix Guattari as well as recent black and trans* theorizing to intervene in debates about the complexity of embodied subjectivity and scales of political mattering. Guattari crafts transversality as an ethical, political, social, and aesthetic tool, capable of maximizing communication between different topographies in a field and creating micropolitical linkages across scales, while still retaining the specificity of minoritarian life (defined by Guattari as any subjectivity that is not traditionally masculine, white, and straight, but for the purposes of this dissertation, black and trans*). Individual chapters explore Guattari’s ecosophy through his use of transversality and molecular revolution; an examination of student-worker protests of May 1968 and the uptake of Deleuzoguattarian frameworks in genealogies of trans* and black studies; and an analysis of the #blacklivesmatter and #blacktranslivematter movements that draws on critical animal studies to reveal ways that species hierarchies are always present in processes of racialization that allow some lives to matter more, or less, than others. While the dissertation certainly attends to questions of oppression and resistance that motivate deep political change, it also highlights possibilities for creativity and invention necessary for any successful revolutionary project.
Introduction: The Mattering of Political Life

This project began as an attempt to think about revolution. I was interested in how to read texts, art, music, and political philosophies that emerged in the context of revolution to think about how revolutionary politics are deployed, remixed, and remembered. I wanted to understand: what is revolution now? This is not an autoethnography, though it would be disingenuous to say that I do not place myself within the folds of this project. Many of the theoretical choices I make in this project emerge directly from my own experiences as a queer black trans man. There would be no way to generalize the experiences of subjects that embody these identities, but for my purposes, I argue that there is a relationship between my own corporeality and lived experience that generates a particular interest in modes of becoming.

There are many moments that I return to that mark the physical, emotional, and affective violence that has been leveraged against my body, but one in particular haunts the pages of this project. This suspension in time brought me to a standstill with my own materiality and mattering, inspiring a sense of urgency that previously existed through the passive accumulation of living as a monster. In 2012, I was dancing with a group of friends at a bar that I had been many times before. In fact, I had danced there almost every week, with the same group of friends, so much that the bartenders knew what we wanted before we asked, and the DJ knew what songs we liked to hear. It was a Thursday night and we were celebrating my successfully defended master’s thesis when we were violently assaulted by a group of men. They hit us with beer bottles and barstools as they called us faggots and niggers, leaving us bloody on the floor. As I floated in and out of consciousness, seeing frantic friends lean over me, I experienced a paranoid confusion
tapping against the familiarity of what it meant to occupy my body. As the ambulance arrived I slipped in and out of the room, trying to interpret my feelings of wanting to run away from them, but feeling helpless to do so. They explained that they would wrap my head “like Aunt Jemima” and take me to the hospital. I closed my eyes and tried to leave myself.

Waking up in the hospital brought little relief. From the police investigation that never left the station to the consistent misgendering or use of a name that was no longer mine, I found myself floating through these moments as they had appeared to me before; my earliest memories of gendered and racialized violence, my teenage angst as I came to know the bounds of acceptable sexuality, and the more recent violence of transitioning. These moments flashed, painfully, as the staples in my head horrified me and my inability to speak in complete sentences stunned my family and friends. The long weeks of recovery that followed were generative, if not embedded with an agonizing self-hatred, as I attempted to comprehend what had happened. Much of it remains erased from my conscious memories, only appearing as flickers and flashes, and through the accounts of those who managed to avoid the assault. A reconstruction of the event, my body, and my political life was required to continue to move along, but lingering effects and questions have carried on. What emerged in the weeks that followed was a vital need to rethink the markers of radical political movement. I became overwhelmed by thinking about the revolution. I had long considered my place in the world to be a kind of disruption, a micro-revolution being worked out through the contours of affect, science, and politics, but this event forced me to alter what that looked like when formulated as political thought.
I open with this experience as a way of signaling a central concern of this project. I argue that there is a component of bodily knowledge that teaches us something about revolution and the mattering of political life itself. Vital work in feminist theory, critical race theory, philosophy, feminist geography, and ethnic studies have all made clear the impacts of the body, and the body in space. Advancing these theories on and off of the body and detailing the political milieus in which the body is cast or erased have been essential in troubling the lines of power, violence, and biopolitical surveillance that makes up the collective.

Throughout, this dissertation develops the concepts of “transmolecular revolution” and “trans*versality,” drawn from the conceptual vocabulary of cultural theorist Félix Guattari, as well as recent work in trans* theory and black studies, to intervene in debates about the complexity of embodied subjectivity and the politics of life. I am working at the intersection of two confluent, charged, and at times contentious trends: first, critical and popular attention to transness, and second, anti-blackness in the context of hierarchies of life. One can see this in the contemporary moment, dubbed the “transgender tipping point” by TIME magazine in 2014. Laverne Cox, featured on the cover, employs the collective social body to consider black-trans* reality as it is experienced at the level of the body and the psyche. In the interview Cox calls the contemporary “a state of emergency,” an articulation that the refusal of the trans* body leads to any number of violent realities: poverty and homelessness, lack of healthcare or cure, neglect and death. Thus, the so called “tipping point” is a deep paradox where on one side visibility overwhelms, so much as to spill over, and on the other, we see this water has nowhere to fall as we drown in its toxic spillage.
In this sense, black-trans bodies are required to do the labor to uphold the possibility of liberal progress. As Eva Hayward elaborates, “Rather than building a political and intellectual project on the bodies of dead black trans women—the ongoing project of slave making—trans negativity asks how trans identity, representation, and politics have needed the murdered bodies of black trans women and trans women of color to constitute ‘the transgender tipping point’” (Hayward 2017, 191). Working with Hayward, trans negativity reminds us of the imperative for resisting grand narratives of progress through visibility, legal protection, or access. But, we must think of trans negativity as it exists within the assembled terrains of molecular trans generativity, where trans animates and intensifies the multiplicity. Here, trans phenomena operate philosophically and materially as both/and; a marker of unfinished possibility or capacity, even as it is frequently banished from existence.

It is at this intersection that much is at stake in advancing an analytics of power beyond a myopic focus on structural racism and misogyny, and an analytics of personal and societal transformation that takes trans* theorizing beyond an exclusive focus on the embodied experience of transgender people. This project relies on an expansive sense of trans* wherein the asterisk denotes the potential for linking to multiple landing sites, rather than to gender alone. I want to briefly identify my purpose in using trans* rather than trans-, trans, transgender, or transsexual (though these terms will be used as well). In 2008, Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore offered one of the first elaborations of ‘trans-’ in place of trans or transgender. If trans- was to resist a single landing place (gender), it needed to remain open-ended, available to ignite the sites where trans- mattered. Transgender phenomena unsettled fixed categories of gender that were
circulating just two decades before. These phenomena, as Stryker tells us, draws our attention to the falsity of gender as a pre-given category in ways that emerge at the margins of the biopolitically governed body: “…transgender phenomena constantly flicker across the threshold of viability, simultaneously courting danger and attracting death even as they promise life in new forms, along new pathways” (Stryker 2014, 40).

More recently, Eva Hayward and Jami Weinstein have argued that the asterisk, when attached to trans*, signals a series of philosophical points. They suggest that the asterisk provides a radiation of trans; a fold within a fold. In this case the animation of trans* is a composite of percepts and concepts—in other words, trans* is never just one thing. What Stryker, Currah, and Moore offered in 2008 was an elaboration of transdisciplinarity and a convergence of work looking to explode what trans* could signify. These two philosophical moves foregrounded a massive uptick of trans-scholarship as it posed the question of what other trans-ing operations (such as transnational, translation, or tranimalities) might have to do with transgender as a sociopolitical (and biopolitical) category embedded in political life.

In 2015, Stryker and Currah argued that “Trans* represents mattering’s vital capacity to become more and other than it already is through movements, connections, intensifications, and refigurations that traverse existing material arrangements” (Stryker and Currah 2015, 190). Before the asterisk pollinated trans*, it operated within Boolean computer code as a wildcard, or a way of searching related terms (trans* in Boolean would attach to articles that contained “trans,” such as transsexual or transgender). The debate of the usefulness of the asterisk contains within it the question of binary systems, where proponents suggest it complicates the binary system and critics suggest that there
is an incorrect assumption made about “trans” as within the binary from the outset. In fact, one could go back to early writings on trans* that contain the very work that the asterisk seeks to do, and yet it has come to signal important moves, not between binary logics of male and female, but multiplicities of boundaries that exist simultaneously together and apart.

It was 1988, at the “Other Voices, Other Worlds: Questioning Gender and Ethnicity” conference in Santa Cruz, CA, where Sandy Stone first asked us to walk through the hills of Casablanca, into Dr. Georges Burou’s clinic, and then to the Stanford Gender Dysphoria Program in Palo Alto, CA. Gender Identity Disorder had only been recorded by the American Psychiatric Association eight years earlier, but was done so amidst feminist critique of transsexuality as a replication of patriarchy. Stone illustrates this through Janice Raymond’s violent remarks about the divisiveness of transsexual people within the feminist movement calling instead for a multifaceted spectrum of identity. As Stone suggests, divisive politics do not emerge from the body, or the influxes of gender, but from the project of late capitalism that seeks to govern and extract from the self, to produce the other, and to manage both.

Debates about the strategic attribution of trans/trans-/trans* notwithstanding, here, I attempt to elaborate an expansive sense of trans* in which the asterisk denotes the potential for linking the conceptual and political operations of moving to multiple suffixes, rather than to gender alone. I will argue that trans*versality offers an analytical focus and methodological interruption to practices of reading, writing, and performative politics. I ask: how does “trans*” become a method? I argue what emerges from the conceptual operations of trans* can be ignited through transversality, which offers the
possibility for linking across different registers, scales, and territories. I use the asterisk to signal concurrent attachments. Trans* attaches to a multiplicity of sites, at the same time or at different times, to sites known and unknown. The asterisk also presents a question of scale and connectivity. It provides a subtle, but useful gesture, that considers how the trans* multiplicity pollinates the assemblage and provides linkages across fields.\(^1\) In its infancy the asterisk is a delicate character and risks the same swallowing that its predecessors the hyphen, the space, the non-space have before. The discursive unfolding of the asterisk, much like discourses of transness and blackness mustn’t be sedimentary. Like the body, one cannot predict the trajectory of a concept; conceptual exposition requires an openness to unpredictable capacities, a transing of everything.

A central consideration of this project is what happens when we link trans* to versal and molecular. This necessitates further consideration of molar and molecular scales, as well as where scales interrelate. The project of transmolecular revolution is staged by the imputation of trans*versality and takes into account the ever shifting biopolitical apparatus to ask: how can we conceptualize revolution in new and important ways? How can these revolutions be understood at the molecular level? I draw influence from trans* theory, black feminist theory, and continental philosophy, and seek to bring together these (at times) disparate bodies of work to move toward transmolecular models, while still maintaining a commitment to productive difference.

We are living in a moment of ecological crisis and the “human” has become a contested terrain. My work traces the debate between the human and the ecological

\(^1\) I offer a further discussion of assemblage in chapter one, in relation to intersectionality, but a brief definition can be understood as the broad understanding of heterogeneous elements that first appears as a resistance to thinking about the Freudian use of “complex” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983).
through the fields of black feminist studies—which has long taken up the debate of who has access to humanness and who does not—and emergent questions of the non-human being grappled with in trans* theory. Drawing from Guattari’s elaboration, I propose trans*versality as the conceptual framework for this dissertation. Transversality is an ethical, political, and aesthetic tool that maximizes communication and creates linkages between topographies, while still retaining the specificity of minoritarian life. Its potential exists in curves and intensities that pollinate social movements. Implementing the asterisk offers a way to think about molecular possibilities that are not mediated strictly through normative protocols, capitalism, or the body. What can trans* address?

While transness, in the most capacious sense, has not been adequately theorized to its fullest potential, it carries with it the impetus to crisscross, to move, to excite, not as a method to revisit or return, but to creatively mutate.

There is a vital need to rethink the proximity and fungibility of black-trans* -matter as evidenced in the targeting of trans* people, especially trans* women of color, for slow and immediate death. While this could easily be fashioned to transphobic violence akin to other identity phobias, as Talia Mae Bettcher (2014) suggests, we do not yet—and likely never can—completely understand what transphobia is. Within the context of feminist and queer debate, trans* has troubled the foundations of what work on the body has looked to comprehend. Recent anti-trans* backlash takes many forms, from academic publishing of sexual difference and biological determinism, to affective violence sutured into social and institutional frameworks, to physical violence near and to the point of death.
Much anti-trans* violence can be marked in the early backlash of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, through the contemporary queer theory of the 1990s and still, as nuanced debates around trans* embodiment emerge, we become increasingly aware of anti-trans* violence that continues to produce trans* subjects as worthy of recognition only after death. There has been increasing global attention to trans* as a category of life, and with it, a concerning amount of violent discourse concerning anything from theoretical perspectives, to legal protections, and the incitement of violence from both the inside and outside of feminist concern. We understand that transphobia exists and has material impacts for the bodies of trans* people, however, the paradox of our current conceptualization of transphobia leaves one wanting in the face of political life. If the first question is what trans* needs to address, the second is: how will we go about it? In thinking about the prefixal work of trans*, this project considers what happens when we link trans* to suffixes versal and molecular.

Guattari posits that the global scale of political intervention has become inseparable from what he calls the molecular level, arguing:

We don’t need to build ‘ecological niches’ or ‘islands of fresh air’ alongside large social collectivities, but, rather, to aim these molecular revolutions…towards the construction of new social war machines, which will themselves forge their own support creating a new kind of social praxis (Guattari 2009, 29).

For Guattari, earlier forms of revolution were reliant on particular ideological Programs and easily captured forms of protest but are disrupted by the spasmodic mutation of molecular revolution. Ultimately, these transversal mutations will not be about purity, but
instead work against the co-optation of marginalized experiences. By engaging these long-term molecular revolutions, attempts to violate begin to slide past one another without the ability to bind to social reality. The project of transmolecular revolution is staged by the deployment of trans*versality and asks how we can conceptualize revolution in new and important ways. How can these revolutions be understood at the molecular level?

The aim of this dissertation is to advance trans*versality and transmolecular revolution, which draw principally from concepts provided by philosophy, black studies, and trans* studies to advocate for a revolutionary politics already available to undermine the global impacts of war, capitalism, the police, and State violence. Transness and blackness have always been productive exclusions of the nation; by marking the limits of the body politic through blackness and transness they are articulated as always already excessive of white heteronormativity as discourses of race and gender have long outlived their explicit outlaw. As analytics that exceed their embodiment, this positions transness and blackness as uniquely allied in their transversal potential and connection. In particular, “transmolecular revolution” is itself a site of potential to liberate both black and trans* from their defined excessiveness across molar and molecular scales. Transmolecular revolution begins to think through these connections as integral. With a politics directed toward revolution, the present study assumes that there is nothing “natural” about our current condition of violence (it is nothing if not horrifyingly ordinary) and aims to analyze and contest everyday forms of racialized and gendered violence.
Chapter one, “Trans*versality,” examines Guattari’s transversality as a political and philosophical tool capable of creating linkages between previously untapped singularities in a field, and for creating points of contact in the assemblage at different levels of discursivity. The theoretical concepts of assemblage, becoming, plateaus, and flight developed in the collaborative work of Guattari with Gilles Deleuze are also useful for my purposes, but transversality in particular, theorized by Guattari as a hybridized Marxian-psychoanalytic practice prior to his collaboration with Deleuze, best lends itself to the theorization of my central concern of revolution. A substantive portion of this chapter argues that despite his critique, or perhaps radicalization, of psychoanalysis, Guattari recognizes Sigmund Freud as a brilliant thinker. Guattari’s resistance to psychoanalysis rests, at least in part, upon his own analyst, Jacques Lacan, and the production of psychoanalytic frameworks that sought to answer categorical imperatives rather than question phenomena.

I illustrate this through a retelling of Guattari’s arrival in 1955 at Château de la Borde, an experimental psychiatric clinic outside of Paris. The personnel assembled to develop La Borde’s procedures did so with the intention of creating a site of social liberation that was meant to connect to other liberation struggles outside of the clinic’s grounds. The “intra-hospital” system relied on shared responsibility and participation in cleaning, laundering, sports matches, newspaper printing, collective workshops, group therapy, and so on. The primary goal of La Borde was to develop an institutional critique alongside a modified psychoanalytic treatment. In other words, the important interface of his early years at the clinic rested in the understanding that mental illness, which had predominantly been criminalized, could instead be understood as an alternative
relationship to the world. Guattari argues that the clinic began to contextualize their work in larger political frameworks, taking on global health struggles, pedagogical practice, as well as prison conditions, queer sexualities, and spatial thought.

Chapter one also examines transversality as an anti-capitalist politics of desire through Guattari’s ongoing interest in The Mirabelles, an avant-garde drag-troupe in France, whom he understood as enacting a militant kind of desire. The Mirabelles, who performed from 1974-1982, inspired Guattari to ask transversal questions about the function of desire and politics. The troupe’s purpose, as Guattari understood it, was to break away from the social body, to disrupt the function of alienation under capitalism that profits from the polarization of masculinity and femininity vis-à-vis desire. As I explore, Guattari had difficulty examining the possible implications of drag, often philosophically placing it seamlessly in the realm of transsexuality. He suggests the Mirabelles enact a particular kind of becoming-woman, and rather than prescribing their performance to the realm of psychoanalysis, he suggests that a displacement is at work at the site of the repressed social body where a molecular transgression takes place at the level of desire.

In Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari suggest: “We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 89). This is contextualized as a kind of becoming within the realm of desire, itself conceptualized as a flow. They argue that heterosexuality is made up statistically and

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2 Desire for Deleuze and Guattari is not related to representation, reaction, or perhaps most importantly, to repression. Desire is production.
discursively of parts that lack communication among, and between, scales. This produces an “either/or” mode of communication, or what they call a “statistically or molar” heterosexuality, that is fixed through normative protocols or “proper” subjectivity. They argue that personally, we are homosexual, in the elementary sense that desire is more complex than the confines of heterosexuality. Finally, and perhaps most interesting, they suggest that we are transsexual in a molecular sense. This transsexuality might not operate as shorthand for the changing of one’s sex or gender, but rather a coming apart, a deterritorialization, or a kind of molecular multiplicity.

From this positioning of desire, chapter two, “Transmolecular Revolution,” begins with the events known collectively as “May 68” that were precipitated by militant students and striking workers joining forces to bring about an unprecedented challenge to state power, resulting in urban occupations and encampments, blockaded streets, violent confrontations with the police, and an outpouring of revolutionary political thought that inspired new styles of activism and social analysis around the world. For Guattari, along with many French intellectuals, the events of May 1968 were of extreme importance in the formation of political concepts. The debates of tactical political strategy, far from being exclusively conceptual, were explicitly material. His tension with psychoanalysis and Marxism became more salient after 68, and his anti-capitalist critique of psychosociology and psychiatry were fueled by the political fall-out. It is in the residue of May 68 that Guattari considered the possibilities for intervention through the functioning of transversality in new ways, toward the proposition of molecular revolution. He questioned the role of teachers, mental health professionals, and social workers in the landscape of emergent discourses of general theory, but also “minor” theory, which
began to chart affects operating at the level of everyday interactions and the relationships between politics and space.

May 1968 has been called “France’s Last Revolution.” It is remembered with remarkable romanticism given that it only finds its place in history 50 years ago and has been taken up in much philosophy—feminist or otherwise—as a moment to remember; full of politics and a robust sense of vitality. The political haunting of 1968, the lessons learned, and the culmination of a “last” revolution carries a certain intoxication. Looking to May 1968 as a moment of political intervention and an emergence of a trend of philosophy that has been carried and critiqued, it is not radical to suggest that this has much to do with the whiteness that categorizes its political memory. As I discuss in chapter one, by whiteness I do not simply mean the bodies present or bodies erased—though that is also true—but the nostalgic imaginary that allows people to imagine themselves fighting in the streets of Paris.

Pedagogical practice drawn from this moment has been understood as primarily anarchist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist in ways that did not always take seriously concurrent negritude, apartheid, and civil rights protests happening in the same milieu. The scales of May 1968, its afterlives, and the uptake of Deleuzoguattarian frameworks in trans* and black studies are critical for us to consider as we think about how, or if, intersectional models can be made more available through the active scales of assemblage. Indeed, there is a substantive meshwork of both intersectional and assemblage frameworks within the larger literature of black studies and trans studies, as well as other feminist, queer, and critical race frameworks.
May 1968 is also a critical point of departure from which the Deleuzoguattarian concept of molecular revolution finds its bedrock. The molecular is always tied to the molar and takes its articulation as molecular revolution through possibilities of exciting the terrains of scientific, affective, political, and aesthetic components of social revolution. The molar can be understood as something akin to Michel Foucault’s disciplined or docile body, but without an assumption of organic wholeness. Revolutionary potential is not limited to novel alliances and associations of molar entities—for instance, students aligning with workers—rather each of these molar aggregates has a potential to affect, and be affected by, things transpiring on the molecular scale. In this case molecular processes become amplified into the molar scale and are subsequently placed into manageable and categorized systems. For Deleuze and Guattari, and more particularly Guattari on his own, molecular revolutions complement articulations of revolution as we generally understand them. The central argument of this chapter, then, is that political mattering exists at these molecular and molar terrains and open ways of conceptualizing, through a trans* analytical framework, a molecular revolutionary politics that cuts through, across, and around boundaries of embodiment, politics, and desire.

The importance of molecular revolution in this project is to consider how changes might not always take the form of large-scale transformation, but rather from the collective mutations at the molecular scale. Our relationships to identity categories or practices of enunciation are undergoing rapid changes—one could argue that the political culture of the internet has made moments of deterritorializations and capture clearer in their virality. Guattari argues that culture, or the concept of culture, is itself a reactionary
concept that seeks to parse apart semiotic activities, so much as to ascribe people certain kinds of referents and separate them from political reality. These molecular revolutions are already underway, and I suggest can be evaluated on the short-term and immediate topographies that they agitate.

For Guattari, the events of May 68 were a rupture without a conclusion, the signs of a hopeful generation yet to be brought into the psychic folds of capitalism and colonialism. And yet, they also describe its failings to bring substantial change to political life. Still, 50 years later it has come to mark a great shift in the global political landscape. 1968 has been called the year that changed the world, the year that changed the United States, and the year that changed everything. These events also contain unfulfilled promises and the departure point for considering philosophies of power that continue to be relevant to social organizing today.

I take up this debate in chapter three, “Urban Jungles,” which uses the framework of chapters one and two to think through political configurations within black feminism and trans* theory. I rhetorically set this chapter in the ‘urban jungle’ to highlight the racialized politics of urban landscapes but also to attend to the spatial, aesthetic, and ecological components of transversality and molecular revolution. I argue that the urban has come to colloquially reference a geographical site of racial, sexual, and gender diversity, where minoritized subjectivities become attached to “deviant” notions of danger and trouble; where struggles over political life emerge. Rather than centering on a specific city, country, or region, I imagine the ‘urban jungle’ as a composite topography characterized by cosmoxes of difference that constitute space more broadly. This chapter does not aim to fully account for the production of identity categories, rather, my concern
is how we might theorize the revolutionary political happenings working to deterritorialize the boundaries between categories of difference.

Some conceptual polyamory is required to index the genealogical connections between philosophy, black feminism, black studies, and trans* theory. In places, they connect up quite well, elaborating one another and providing a capacious transversal geography. In other places, they violate one another, not in impossible ways, but in ways that create paradoxes within theoretical play. This chapter offers an initial attempt to think through some of these sites set within a larger tapestry of trans* philosophical folds. One example used to illustrate this the centers ongoing feminist debates between intersectionality and assemblage theory, putting Kimberlé Crenshaw and Guattari in conversation through their mutual concern for the emergent gentrification tactics of Donald Trump in New York and Atlantic City during the 1980s. Crenshaw and Guattari both offer critiques of urban representation as it functions through racialized and gendered registers that aim to biopolitically manage minoritized populations.

Guattari, in 1989, likens Trump to “any other form of algae” who makes vulnerable bodies the “equivalent of the dead fish of environmental ecology” through forced displacement and the blocking of resources (Guattari 1989, 29). Crenshaw in 1991, suggests that Trump’s call for the return of the police-state and the death penalty in response to the Central Park Five case was part of a larger campaign against black men, and was quite predictable. Here, between the pre-articulation of anti-blackness and the production of black death, where the black body can be understood as Guattari’s dead fish, Crenshaw argues that:
In the chilling parallels between the media representations of the Central Park rape and the sensationalized coverage of similar allegations that in the past frequently culminated in lynchings, one could hardly be surprised when Donald Trump took out a full page ad in four New York newspapers demanding that New York ‘Bring Back the Death Penalty, Bring Back Our Police’ (Crenshaw 1991, 1267).

How is it that these two thinkers, from their radically different socio-political and embodied locations draw similar conclusions about the trends of global expansion and capitalist enterprise that seek to make-live-let-die?

Guattari, arguably a founding author of assemblage theory as it has been taken up in much feminist analysis draws his scrutiny of Trump from the political memory of May 68 and the lessons he learned there, while Crenshaw offers a predictive skepticism about the role of the criminalization of black and brown men and the impacts that racism has for black and brown women experiencing domestic violence. In both cases, these paradigmatic thinkers—who can be considered as having radically different points of origin—are zeroing in on this figure who is so central to the need to rethink revolution. Crenshaw, though intersectionality, and Guattari, through assemblage theory, both anticipate the inflammation of racial imaginaries that are bursting once more into the surface of consciousness and public life. Continuing to think about the capacities of trans*versality and transmolecular revolution, this chapter’s primary goal is to consider tensions that exist between individual corporeality and political intervention at different discursive, spatial, and political scales.
The final chapter “Trans*versal Animacies,” examines two political movements emerging in the United States that have been yoked under the mattering of political life. Attention to the use of “black lives matter,” “trans lives matter,” and of the two “black trans lives matter,” has, in some places, reignited attachments between blackness, animals, and deviance, demonstrating a biopolitical break in the population, through which state power aims to direct itself, while concurrently drawing stark attention to the complexity of embodied subjectivity and the signifiers that put the collective at risk. This chapter also raises new questions about the reach of intersectional analyses—#blacklivesmatter (BLM) and #blacktranslivesmatter (BTLM) represent an exciting kind of decentralized social body, even while it borrows from previous social movement strategies, including feminist identity politics, gay liberation movements, and even the more contemporary Occupy. Here, we have seen the focus shift from the molar, or large-scale collectives (which remain important), toward molecular potentials. Documenting how the new practices work, and how (or if) they are transversally connected to previous practices calls into sharp relief our schemas for understanding life and political mattering. I argue that much like May 68 and the related ethnic nationalist, black liberation, feminist, and gay movements of the 60s and 70s—BLM and BLTM engage with the biopolitics of identity, in ways that enact and inspire new potentials for revolutionary transformation.

In remembering May 68, and often nostalgically speaking of the possibilities of anti-capitalism and the seemingly “natural” connection between labor, philosophers, and students, the historical possibilities of self-identification with the viral radio transmitter is at play in ways that are not currently driving the connection between racial capitalism and
state violence at work in #blacktranslivesmatter. In holding this popular uprising to a time in history, the connection of France to its own colonial power is mystified and displaced, while in the United States, our racial history is deeply embedded in the land. This more intimate spatial connection, wherein our racial violence is steeped in the soil, the constitution, and the rights of men, propels an inability to consider #blacktranslivesmatter for what it is, a stake in political mattering, and a full politics of connection, vitality, history, and futurity.

This chapter argues that the contemporary conditions of violence I describe are not related to one another through mere coincidence or accident. Indeed, the United States is predicated on violence. As a nation built on the enslavement of black bodies, the fungibility of black labor, where black bodies continue to be lynched every day for America to be, the US requires the afterlife of slavery to sure up its foundations, its logics, its meaning. I stage an intervention in discourses that associate blackness with animality in ways that devalue black lives by forcefully withdrawing their humanness through an attachment to trans*, which in some spaces has taken up animality as a point of disruption in these devaluing and delegitimizing politics.

While I will argue that the relationship between blackness and transness is transversal, I also question if theories of assemblage utilized in trans* studies can indeed be extended to black studies, or if blackness is itself a critique of the framing of multiplicity. Racist ideologies that link animals and blackness do so by asserting that both can occupy a place of inanimacy, through violence, technology, surveillance, and so on. In an almost mirrored move, trans* theory has emerged from another direction, often finding affinity with the animal or posthuman in attempts to undo the common
understanding of a human-centered world. Still, I argue that linking trans* to animality is always already associated with blackness. In other words, black and trans* are not disparate categories when invoking animacy, but rather are inextricably linked.

Rethinking questions of political mattering offers a resistance to the impulse toward inclusion in the body politic. Trans*ing animality displaces the notion that one must “count” to “matter,” highlighting how our matter endlessly animates our political worlds. This disruption deterritorializes, at times imperceptibly so, in ways that open transversal routes for species to lean, shift, and agitate together.

This dissertation enacts transversality as it is enunciated in trans* and black life to thicken their connections in search of the ways that they enliven each other. As blackness and transness dissolve the self and attach to the group, they enact molar and molecular intensities simultaneously. While this dissertation certainly attends to questions of oppression and resistance that motivate deep political change, it also highlights possibilities for creativity and invention necessary for any successful revolutionary project; a trans*versal and transmolecular revolution.
Chapter One: Trans*-versality

Félix Guattari arrived at Château de la Borde in 1955 to collaborate in an experimental clinic with Jean Oury, the clinic’s founder and then director. Given the constraints of the clinic as a hierarchized institution and increasingly private enterprise, Guattari remarks that it was a fascinating time to participate in the formation of a medicalized space that possessed great possibilities for inventive treatment. La Borde had an activist goal, one that relied on community participation at every level. Doctors were charged with laundering and leading outside activities and patients were responsible for leading group therapy and cooking meals. However, over time, as tasks became more diffuse, supervisors were put into place to ensure organization and with increased protocols, hierarchies between doctors, employees, and patients emerged. A shift occurred at La Borde and, by Guattari’s account, it lost its central commitments. Still, La Borde heavily influenced Guattari’s philosophy and he remained there until his death in 1992.

Following the seventeenth century, as Michel Foucault explains, the changing terrain of madness was reflected as an issue of interiority and exteriority. The secularization of madness produced a new social landscape wherein the clinic functioned as an exclusionary apparatus:

The hospitality that had previously been reserved for the mad would henceforth only be found within the walls of a hospital, and it would be no different from the welcome reserved for the poor. And there madness was to remain until the end of the eighteenth century. A new sensibility had come into being, no longer religious
but social. A familiar figure on the human landscape of the medieval world, the madman had come from another world. Now he stood out on the background, a problem of ‘police,’ a matter of social order for individuals of the polity. Once, he was welcomed because he came from without; now he was excluded because he came from within, and the mad were forced to take their place alongside paupers, beggars and vagabonds (Foucault 2006, 61-62).

Foucault’s analysis influenced Guattari’s understanding of the function of the clinic. Guattari suggested that comparable institutions of the time treated psychosis as a zoo-like enterprise, quarantining subjects in confined spaces to defend society against them. For Guattari, the criminalization and privatization of mental illness presented an important political and ethical conundrum—one that offered opportunity to reconceptualize the residual effects treating mental illness as an inverted reality.

During his tenure at La Borde, Guattari developed the conceptual tool of transversality in the context of psychoanalytic theory and treatment. The goal of transversality was to open up communication at different levels, while retaining commitments to radical politics, enabling Guattari to express the possibilities of systems or institutions to be reconfigured so that the symptoms of psychosis could be relieved and removed. Viewing psychoanalysis as reactionary, Guattari conceptualized transversality as a modification to the superego, shifting the focus to the already established, if unarticulated, group desire (Guattari 2007, 146). Far too frequently Sigmund Freud is posited as the enemy of Guattari’s philosophy rather than a frictional thought companion. I would like to argue that Freud’s influence is clear in the early psychoanalytic framing of
the concept of transversality. Freud’s exploration of dreams was of great interest to Guattari’s philosophy and logically extends beyond purely scientific explanations. Dreams, after all, are frequently mobilized in politics as aspirational imaginaries, or visions of what alternate worlds could be. Guattari’s resistance to psychoanalysis rests, somewhat centrally, upon his own analyst and early mentor, Jacques Lacan. Guattari took particular issue with exaggerations of antipsychiatry critique (that he extends to Lacan’s students) and the use of psychoanalytic frameworks that sought to answer categorical imperatives rather than embrace phenomena. Guattari argues, as Foucault did, that far from treating illness, the clinic (and the analyst) produce illness.

Guattari also disagrees with Freud’s transitory state of consciousness. For Freud, the ‘unconscious’ can occupy a space of capability, a latent possibility of becoming conscious; the conscious faces particular barriers that oppose a conscious becoming, and these barriers are psychical in nature (barriers of repression that can be addressed through psychoanalytic technique). Freud details two kinds of unconscious—latent but capable of becoming-conscious (pre-conscious) and repressed unconscious that is not capable of consciousness through traditional routes (Freud 2010, 10-11). In Freud’s first psychical topography—conscious, preconscious, unconscious—he critiques philosophers that theorize that preconscious and unconscious states should be relegated to levels that differ

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3 However, Freud reads these dreams as individuated processes, whereas Guattari understands them as collective pressures that exhibit themselves as neurosis.

4 Freud argues that ‘conscious,’ as a term, is descriptive in nature. It relies on the direct character of perception of a particular awareness.

5 Accounting for the unconscious is undoubtedly one of Freud’s great contributions, even if it does not put into relief all of the philosophical questions that Guattari asks.
in kind in search of equilibrium. Instead, Freud details three distinct states of consciousness that operate dynamically in one way. The ego is a compromise formation that regulates psychical states with the external world and the task of the analyst is to unlock the various repressions of the ego—in behavior or dreams—at the site of resistance; the analyst is tasked to make conscious what was once unconscious.

Sensations and feelings might be conscious from the outset and bringing the unconscious into a state of preconscious relies on connecting it with the verbal images (the residue of memory) to which they correspond (Freud 2010, 19-20). Sensations may arrive from different, sometimes opposing, qualities and Freud argues, pleasurable sensations are of a less coercive quality, whereas ‘painful’ sensations direct one toward change; a negotiation between internal and external self in which pain shores up a knowledge of our organs and a sense of our bodies.

In his second psychical topography—id, ego, superego, an edit to his schema that places the Id as folding over conscious and preconscious actions—Freud explains that the unconscious id (the home of the pleasure-principle) touches the surface of the ego. The ego does not swallow the id, rather they merge allowing for communication to occur. Repression, once again, takes its place as the ego is modified by external perceptions, bringing these perceptions into contact with the id (Freud 2010, 26-27). The super-ego assumes a gradient difference in relation to the ego, one that is further away from consciousness. A distinction between melancholia and mourning helps to distinguish this process—melancholia operates as an unconscious process that reacts to the mourning of a love-object that can be named (Freud 2010, 32). For Freud, this substitution influences
the ego so much that it erects its ‘character,’ a character which can be drawn from the origins of the super-ego, or, the primary identification with the father.\textsuperscript{6}

Guattari inserts transversality at the site of Oedipus and the super-ego. Freud’s Oedipal complex assumes an identification is formed at a point in early childhood leading to affectionate or hostile feelings that ultimately govern the transformation of the ego into the super-ego:

The broad general outcome of the sexual phase governed by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of the two identifications in some way combined together. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it stands in contrast to the other constituents of the ego in the form of an ego-ideal or super-ego (Freud 1962, 40).

In this case, the super-ego is not only the residue of early childhood formation, but also later reactions to the early formation of the id. A double gesture of emulation and rejection is formed, on loan from the father, to be acted out, repressed, and later reproduced. Guattari both praises Freud’s understanding of the unconscious and criticizes his personalization of it. His concern with the Freudian unconscious derives from its inseparable relationship to the past—-with trauma as psychoanalysis’ most central trope—and concern with phallocentric logics, positioning of desire, and variants that rely on

\textsuperscript{6} We can consider this alongside of Judith Butler’s analysis of the mastery of power: “The more practice is mastered, the more subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and paradoxical simultaneity constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Though one might expect submission to consist in yielding to an externally imposed dominant order and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, paradoxically, it is itself marked by mastery” (Butler 1997, 117).
particular subjective positions. Instead, he argued for a more future oriented model, one that takes seriously social and aesthetic paradigms capable of modifying political and ethical ecologies of the strata and substratum (Guattari 1996, 197).

Guattari’s essay *Transversalité* offered an early formulation of the concept that he would develop, opening it up to an immutable approach to the reorganization of institutions on a broader scale. Guattari’s confrontation with Freud’s formulation working of Oedipus and the super-ego shook out in his deployment of schizophrenia to which he hastily suggested Freud did not understand. Instead, Guattari places schizophrenia, and psychosis in general, alongside revolution, wagering that the two have been misplaced as taboo (Guattari 2007, 145). Of the super-ego, Guattari deduces that “…either desire comes to desire repression and actively supports its aims, thus preserving itself as desire, or desire revolts against repression and loses itself as desire” (146). Instead, the coefficient of transversality assumes an erotic focal point—what he terms a *group eros*—that has the capacity to overwhelm toward liberating ends.

I follow Guattari’s understanding that the purpose of transversality is not representational (another departure from psychoanalysis). In what follows, I argue that we cannot adequately make representational or appositional connections between black and trans* by replicating frameworks of representation. Rather, transversality explore

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7 Jean Baudrillard wrote: "…The schizophrenic is not, as generally claimed, characterized by his loss of touch with reality, but by the absolute proximity to and total instantaneousness with things, this overexposure to the transparency of the world" (Baudrillard 1988, 27). As Gary Genosko notes, Guattari was often placed in opposition to Baudrillard by asserting that Guattari misread Baudrillard’s work. However, Guattari did not publish any full analysis of Baudrillard, and thus, any disagreements (for example, regarding postmodernism) should simply be understood as such.
hierarchies and logics of difference that have been, in many ways, foreclosed. Guattari describes transversality as a tool to amplify communication between striated and siloed individual and group experiences. In contrast to psychoanalysis, with its focus on the ways individuals subsume and enact society and culture, transversality treats groups and group desire as its primary focus, lessening the medicalized approach of therapy and cure. The Deleuzoguattarian writing-machine usefully maps the ways that singularities are assembled in a larger field and function through interstitial capacities and becomings. However, transversality, as elaborated by Guattari, offers a way to think about the already existing political potential or linkages among singularities in a field, and then to map that field amongst other fields. Transversality is a concept most useful to political revolution as it takes the collective as the beginning and not the end point.

Guattari’s use of transversality is conceptual, but as is always the case in his work, there are important quotidian functions that take aim at (and within) institutions of power; this is a provocation that we must turn the symptom on itself.\(^8\) In Guattari’s case, the implications for the psychiatric hospital were of chief concern. Beyond the psychiatric clinic, Guattari’s early thoughts on the state of social ecology in relation to environmental disaster, child labor, HIV, the failure of the education system, water contamination, among others bolster his arguments about the codification of identity, the proliferation of capitalisms, and the clogging of radical politics. Guattari (among others) predicted this moment of ecological disequilibrium, in which human life deteriorates

\(^8\) As Gary Genosko suggests, transversality “…may be low or high; it may be opened or restricted; it may be latent or manifest; it is homogenous, even though different intensities exist here and there in the institution; it is a property of groups, and it is always present to some degree” (Genosko 2002, 78).
along with the environment, suggesting that a ‘cloak of silence’ has been, and will continue to be thrown over the struggles for liberation.

Mapping the early articulations of transversality in Guattari’s work allows us to understand that it does not completely abandon its origins in the clinical context (Freud), nor does it completely uncouple from the phenomenological perspective (Heidegger).\(^9\) In Freud’s case, it is essential for the purposes of radical politics to consider the ways in which identity can inform political mobilizations without being reducible to it. In the latter sense, Guattari’s transversality allows us to push against the conceptual binaries that place black and trans* in opposition to one another. Here, even the Deleuzoguattarian and is left wanting in the search of ‘an nth term…the opening onto multiplicity’ (Guattari 1995, 31). As an analytic, transversality offers the radical possibility of mapping and confronting power through channels which it most fears, group inter and intra-action. Defying all attempts to individualize and subjectivize, transversality links and produces shared political affect.

**Capitalism and the Coefficient of Transversality**

Transversality offered Guattari an alternative to the psychoanalytic use of transference between patient and analyst, though it retained some of its principles (much like Deleuze and Guattari’s collective work retains elements of Oedipus while still seeking alternate methods of becoming). Transversality should not be considered merely a critique or reworking of psychoanalysis, but rather as a way to reorient tenets of psychoanalysis toward larger political goals and constituents, to bring the relationship of

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\(^9\) Gary Genosko, Eric Alliez, and Andrew Goffey all provide valuable insights to the trajectories Guattari’s work. While their primary focus is not the troubling of identity, per se, they each offer detailed understandings of Guattari’s thought.
the therapist and patient outward and extend it beyond the walls of the clinic. Just as psychoanalysis can be extended from the ways in which individuals react to and enact the confinements of society to a larger critique about the operations of culture, transversality is a tool to critique the demands of capital and capitalism from those deemed marginal by production. Transversality should not be reduced to untangling psychoanalysis, but to deterritorialize the role of the clinic and treatment institutions that ultimately bare striking resemblance to the writ large functions of capitalism. For Guattari (and Deleuze), the individual is always already the group. Thus, no distinction exists between the individual and society, rather, the distinction can be drawn between groups—the (transversal) subject group or (dependent) subjected group. Brian Masumi writes:

> The twentieth-century’s many Freudianisms problematized one of the terms in the equation: psychoanalysis fractures the self-identity of the individual by making it the product of an underlying unconscious dynamic, outside rational control. The twentieth-century’s many Marxisms problematized the second term in the equation: Marxism undermines the self-consistency of society, making it the product of an underlying material dialectic with its own motor, outside any individual’s control (Massumi 1988, 814).

In both cases, mediating structures of the family and language intersect, separated by the symbolic in Freudian thought, and by ideology in Marxism. Rather, transversality is a tool to interrupt hierarchies, or, in Guattari’s terms, to allow people to relate from an affective point of view. Transversality seeks to interrupt those who claim any totalizing logics (all that is X, is Y) in search of reassurance, a world of repression.
Guattari’s early work with Lacan and at La Borde demonstrate how his object is the *institution*, rather than the practice of psychotherapy in the hospital or clinic. The practical and philosophical functions of transversality rely on transitional phenomena that occur in intermediate experience and spaces of potential (as drawn from Winnicott), holding space for creativity (Genosko 2002, 71). The role of the clinic, hospital, emergency ward, and the act of diagnosis produce categories of illness, wherein illness is never rationalized, but projected in ideological terms after the fact. In Guattari’s larger view, the function of the institution is inextricable from the capitalist project.\(^\text{10}\) Such a project deploys a false sense of tolerance (a fantasy that the group will come to a beneficial consensus) and operates through the quelling of desire and the subjugation of sexuality (Guattari 2009, 207). Guattari’s relentless dissatisfaction with the functions of capitalism as a barricade for communication provides a basis for his political philosophy. In a piece published anonymously in *Recherches* (1973), he offers an unforgiving analysis of the capitalist state\(^\text{11}\).

\(^\text{10}\) As Deleuze remarks in an interview with Guattari: “That people in a society desire repression, both for others and *for themselves*, that there are always people who want to bug others and who have the opportunity to do so, the ‘right’ to do so, it is this that reveals the problem of a deep link between libidinal desire and the social domain” (Guattari 2008, 36).

\(^\text{11}\) This issue of *Recherches* discussed homosexuality in France’s social liberation movements. Because of his political involvement, Guattari was continually harassed by French authorities who repeatedly searched his home and the La Borde clinic, citing violations of militancy and pornography that eventually resulted in charges of, and fines for, “affronting public decency.” The essay “Three Billion Perverts on the Stand” (1977) is composed of notes used in Guattari’s legal case brought about by the publication the *Recherches*. 

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With its throttling, its stasis, its lesions, its neuroses, the capitalist state imposes its norms, establishes its models, imprints its features, assigns its roles, propagates its programs... Using every available access route into our organisms, it insinuates into the depths of our insides its roots of death. It usurps our organs, disrupts our vital functions, mutilates our pleasures, subjugates all lived experience to the control of its condemning judgments. It makes each individual a cripple, cut off from his or her body, a stranger to his or her own desires (Guattari 2009, 207).

In the context of the capitalist state—in all of its functions and at all of its sites—the body becomes a difficult site of analysis for liberation.

Microwars and microprocesses are being staged at every conceivable level. In recent decades, as globalization has shed its outer layer and we see that it is nothing but power restructured, or more clearly, we know that globalization has functioned as a repressive tool, ensuring allegiance to notions of freedom and nation in exchange for small subduing concessions. There are flashes in which power is more obvious—where war is conducted at the corporeal level—but once it arrives at the body, we should know that this violence is already systematically rooted. Justice has never been an emancipatory mode of politics, even if, at times, it calms the storm or provides a path of least resistance. State compromises only quiet emergent discomfort; they make our lives livable, but with great sacrifice. Justice systems operate as hide-and-seek mechanisms, where repression is at work, and herald exceptional or spectacular instances of identity in order to mask the mundane, everydayness, of violence. The symbiosis between privileged categories of life and violence should not come as a surprise, and yet, in any case when
human life is cut short it is justified through the same rhetoric that has always been set into motion. Concessions are made, necessarily so, by the state and its actors to ensure that violence is made available for wielding in any direction, at any time, while simultaneously producing a docile politics that gestures toward the need to mobilize without actually doing so. This is not to suggest that revolutionary efforts are not already underway (they are). Rather, it is to suggest that these efforts are often biopolitically captured, cut up, and managed so much so that they remain containable.

Given that corporeal reality is organized toward production, the body becomes a challenging place from which to rework capitalism. Guattari offers an equestrian example to articulate what he calls “the coefficient of transversality,” or the amount one can see in a field. He asks us to envisage a field of horses wearing blinders. The “function” of the blinders is to keep the horses from being startled or overwhelmed by movements. Perhaps we should view this as an instance of repression and, more to the point, understand that the function is to “make manageable” what might otherwise overwhelm:

Imagine a fenced in field in which there are horses wearing adjustable blinders, and let’s say that the ‘coefficient of transversality’ will be precisely that adjustment of the blinders. If the horses are completely blind, a certain kind of traumatic encounter will be produced. As soon as the blinders are opened, one can imagine that the horses will move about in a more harmonious way (Guattari 2015, 79).

Thus, the blinders themselves are obstacles to the formation of transversality—transversal relations that always already exist prior to the obstacle. Opening the blinders would not guarantee transversality and the imagined possibilities may not be the material
realities (Guattari 2009). However, the purpose would be to maximize communication and it recognizes that the restrictiveness of the blinders might be producing the very horror that they are said to prevent. Making the horse track akin to a social field, Guattari describes the ways that subjects and groups are purposefully unable to grasp the full social realities in which they are embedded. Similarly, liberation struggles that have been mobilized around the visibility of minorities—queers, women, trans*, and black folks, for example—operate in a particular field, and under certain constraints, of the promise of such visibility; a blinkered relationship of self-emancipation, and a hope that there is strength in numbers that might provide a paradigmatic shift even if it does not completely undo the social body. They produce a particular visibility that necessarily forecloses alternate understandings of the environment.  

These blinkered politics, far from being capacious and radical, prevent transversal relationships through the governing of acceptable practices of the body. Genosko, while following the threads of transversality, posits that what is missing in Guattari’s analogy of horses in the field is the person who is responsible for the adjusting of the blinders: “Horses, like persons, can be broken, that is, the transversality of the groups in an institution can be destroyed by the rigid imperatives of management, nurses, doctors, State systems of oppression and massive imaginary structures that make debilitating demands on collectives and individuals, and reduce individuals to particulars in a dyad of Universal-Particular that robs them of all singularity” (Guattari 1989, 79). The ecosophy

12 Even within the confines of a few years, the politics of the (in)visible has become a frequent strategy for negotiating with power. To make such a negotiation “contemporary”: the history of rioting in the United States has been quelled as discourses around terrorism and non-violence have made strange bedfellows.
that Guattari develops brings this question into sharp relief, and it is clear that in its philosophical function, transversality cannot be limited to the Humanist project. Guattari defines ecosophy as a generalized ecology that incorporates environmental, social, aesthetic, and mental domains, and argues that it will be necessary to move away from interdisciplinary frameworks and toward a transversality of productive assemblages, ecological, and social fields (Guattari 2015, 132).

In the residue of May 68 Guattari considered the possibilities for intervention through the functioning of transversality in new ways. He asked new questions about the role of education, the clinic, and social work that produced different forms of theoretical interventions and began to chart routes for “minor” theory, which paid special attention to quotidian interfaces between politics and space. From this vantage, the central focus of transversal functions is rearticulated, and for Guattari, the concern with how to force communication at different levels of discourse and life became critical. Post 68, Guattari’s anti-psychiatry implementation of transversality found a philosophical companion in the work of Deleuze who encouraged a thickening between the concepts of transversality and deterritorialization. The term “deterritorialization” signals the use of a ‘concreate machine,’ or a machine that articulates singularities, not to borrow or absorb, but to acquire power and attach to anterior fields. Through the joining of these heterogeneous components we can understand the charge of transversality. In the following section I turn to The Mirabelles as an example of enacted transversality, which is drawn closer to destratification than in Guattari’s independent work, teasing its conceptual flows through elements, horizontal and vertical orders, heterogeneous forms
and substances, and molar and molecular stratum where the dislodging matter is made available for tapping into intensities and liberating desires.¹³

Les Mirabelles

In his own work, and in his work with Deleuze, Guattari references the drag theatre troupe *Les Mirabelles* (The Mirabelles) as an example of the enacted militancy of transversality. The Mirabelles, who performed from 1974-1982, inspired Guattari to ask transversal questions about the function of desire and politics. He describes their performance: “They resort to drag, song, mime, dance, etc., not as different ways of illustrating a theme, to ‘change the ideas’ of the spectators, but in order to trouble them, to stir up uncertain desire-zones that they always more or less refuse to explore” (Guattari 2007, 225). The purpose, as Guattari understood it, was to break away from the sanctioned social body, to disrupt the function of alienation within capitalism that profits from the polarization of masculinity and femininity vis-à-vis desire. The Mirabelles do not expose homosexuality, drag, or transsexuality as something like that of normative heterosexuality, but invoke a discomfort rooted in the fact that, generally speaking, people just do not really like themselves (227). He says: “What is essential here is not the object in question, but the transformational movement. It's this movement, this passage, that the Mirabelles help us explore: a man who loves his own body, a man who loves a

¹³ Here, the distinction between the molar and molecular are important. As Diane Beddoes argues, the distinction is important because “it prevents the correlation of molar regimes with medium-sized objects and the molecular with microscopic elements, or molarity with form and molecularity with matter. It also wards off confusing a randomly chaotic outside verging on the margins of the State, whether this is geographically or historically characterized, with the exteriority of turbulent molecular flows. And lastly it differentiates the intensive media of the threshold, and the in-between of the conjunctive middle from the qualified redundant resonances of mass media” (from Ansell-Pearson 2002, 26).
woman's body or another man's is himself always secretly characterized by a ‘becoming-woman’” (225). This transformational moment leads Guattari to suggest that performance done in this way offers a different kind of becoming.

Figure One: Loulou Bonheur in Guérilléroses

Figure Two: The Mirabelles in the final scene of Guérilléroses

Of the 1976 show, The Storm Lullabies (Les Berceuses D’orage), a French newspaper reported: “It is rare that transvestites reach this degree of baroque in innocence. Under the longing eye, beyond the lipstick that conquers facial lighting, there
hides a different loneliness, an intensity” (La Monde 1976, my translation). The extravagance of their make-up, affinity for sequins, feminine dramatization, and “degree of baroque” work within molar functions of transversality that seek to deterritorialize molecular strata. As Deleuze remarks, the Baroque does not invent, or reinvent, rather, it produces *folds* (Deleuze 2006). Their performance contains many folds, producing multiplicities within a dichotomous understanding of gender.

Guattari makes analogous the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat within capitalism and men and women within desire. Just as the proletariat is alienated from labor through capital accumulation, men are alienated from desire through masculinity. Thus, becoming-women is a process of knowing and articulating desire. Under late capitalism, men are marked as productive bodies whereas women are reduced to the sphere of consumption, of being consumed and consuming. The operation of gender is critical to the foundation of capitalism. Gender is shuttled through the production of workers and consumers as the elements of capital, and then by producing sexual subjects, property and property holders. In the contemporary context, it is the way in which certain forms of labor are gendered, as masculine and feminine, stifling the desire zones of both.
This positing of class struggle and the struggle of desire is not meant to mark one as more important than the other, rather, “…each juncture between them will bring an unexpected energy to the former. That is the ‘front’ on which, with much modesty and tenacity, the Mirabelles work. But they especially don't want us to take them seriously; they are struggling for something more important than what is ‘serious’” (Guattari 2007, 225).
It is clear in Guattari’s writing that although trans/homo/sexuality are of great interest, he has some difficulty in examining the possible implications of drag, often philosophically placing it in the realm of transsexuality (and vice versa). The topography of desire and (trans)sexuality necessitate a distinguishing between perception and sensation in realm of becoming that Guattari struggled to articulate. He suggests the Mirabelles enact a particular kind of becoming-woman, and rather than prescribing their performance to the realm of psychoanalysis, he suggests that a displacement is at work at the site of the repressed social body where a molecular transgression takes place at the level of the individual and group eros, simultaneously. For Guattari the politics of masculinity can only be liberatory if they are directed toward deterritorialization, toward becoming-woman, particularly when it is cast in the project of modern economic and sexual exploitation.

I return here to a quote from the introduction because it successfully encapsulates the arc of trans* in the context of Guattari and Deleuze’s oeuvre: “We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 89). All becomings are becoming something and a Deleuzoguattarian desire necessitates becoming. Becoming for Deleuze and Guattari is not an act of mimicking or impersonating, but rather an intense connection between two things that are fundamentally different. They say that “…becoming isn't part of history; history amounts only the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to ‘become,’ that is, to create something new” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4). This creation relies between majoritarian and minoritarian networks and subnetworks, respectively:
What we term a molar entity is, for example, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject. Becoming-woman is not imitation this entity or even transforming oneself into it. We are not, however, overlooking the importance of imitation, or moments of imitation, among certain homosexual males, much less the prodigious attempt at a real transformation on the part of certain transvestites. All we are saying is that these indissociable aspects of becoming-woman must be understood as a function of something else: not imitating of assuming female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity, of microfemininity, in other words, that produce in us molecular women, create the molecular woman (Deleuze et al 1987).

In this formulation becoming-woman is conceptualized as a flow that interrupts the ways that desire has been partitioned and forced into a state where transversal communication is halted. They argue that heterosexuality is made up statistically and discursively of parts that lack communication among, and between, themselves. This produces a binary mode of communication, or what they call a “statistically or molar” heterosexuality, that understands that the molar body is fixed through normative protocols or “proper” subjectivity. They argue that personally, we are homosexual\(^\text{14}\), in the elementary sense that desire is more complex than the confines of heterosexuality.

\(^{14}\) Deleuze (and later with Guattari) draws on Proust’s proposition of two regions of homosexuality in which he states: "For some, doubtless those whose childhoods were timid, the material kind of pleasure they take does not matter, so long as they can relate it to a male countenance. While others, whose sensuality is doubtless more violent, give their material pleasure certain imperious localizations. The second group would shock most people by their avowals. They live perhaps less exclusively under Saturn’s satellite, for in their case women are not entirely excluded. . . But those in the second group seek out women who prefer women, women who suggest young men . . . indeed,
They suggest that we are transsexual in a molecular sense. This transsexuality is not shorthand for the changing of one’s sex or gender, but rather a coming apart, a deterritorialization, or a kind of militant multiplicity. The Mirabelles enact identity as performance in ways that resist identity as a static category, opening the political possibility for group desire. If one understands performativity as a relay of reiterated actions, this repetition is precisely what produces different flows and through locating a politics of desire at the molecular level, revolution is found in the movements that pollinate boundaries structured by the assemblage. The molecular transsexuality that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to The Mirabelles functions through desire zones that assemble the body in new ways, with new arrangements, creating the possibility for transformations at different scales. Through molecular desire, by changing the patterns of bodily movement in the world, it becomes possible for those who have been left behind, or violated, in any given biopolitical arrangement to begin to deterritorialize those spaces, and to bring new territories into being, through the very materiality of their bodily transitions.

We should not mistake “molecular transsexuality” as a call for sexual liberation of a certain order. As both Guattari and Deleuze suggest, once desire becomes particularized as a static identity, it enters the realm of power where it can be casted, classed, and capitalized; it becomes a mask that hides another mask. These specified liberation struggles are always already tied to other liberation movements (struggles that aim for

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they can take, with such women, the same pleasure as with a man. . . For in their relations with women, they play—for the woman who prefers women—the role of another woman, and at the same time a woman offers them approximately what they find in a man” (Deleuze 2008, 89).
solidarity or participation). Molecular transsexuality is a suggestion, once again working against psychoanalysis, that we must liberate *desire* itself. For Guattari (and Deleuze), desire exists before representation as a transversal flow (Guattari 2009, 142). There is a rich possibility in such a conceptualizing of the body’s molecular desires; a possibility that would necessarily engage the curved practices of trans* when not directed toward reassurance or assimilation into the proper social body. Still, it is important to note that all of these things (molar heterosexuality, personal homosexuality, molecular transsexuality) are happening at the same time. In their words “lines of escape are still full molar or social investments at grips with the whole social field…” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 382). Thus, we should understand that while transversal curves exist in processes of becoming, becoming itself is not transversality.

Nevertheless, in Guattari’s work, transsexuality seems to offer a kind of provocation. It is a provocation of molecular revolution. Guattari correctly argues that capitalist logics shuttle through race, class, sexuality, and gender, but his imperative to destratify these normative protocols requires more attention than that of performative gestures on the surface of the body. In “I Have Even Met Happy Drag Queens,” he explores the Mirabelles with some skepticism in regard to performative liberation, but also proposes the possibility of a transversal militant politics. He suggests “Listening for the real desires of the people implies that one is capable of listening to one’s own desire and to that of one’s most immediate entourage. That doesn’t at all mean that we should put class struggles way down on the ladder beneath desire struggles. On the contrary, each juncture between them will bring an unexpected energy to the former” (Guattari 2009, 226). Understanding politics on this immediate level, at the molar and molecular
level simultaneously, offers routes to become something other than what repressive power has attempted to foreclose (what power relies on). These tensions should excite a deeper conversation of transversality. The strands that exists in Guattari’s analysis of homosexuality, drag, and transsexuality invites us to think about the relationship between becoming, minoritarian desire, and trans* in a political way that moves past what Guattari’s interests were able to accomplish.

**Majoritarian/Minoritarian**

Extrapolating what these agitations look like for political mattering is to question where our revolutionary energy should be directed. Guattari suggests that our attention should be toward the molecular, or even submolecular, components that exist within our milieus. Things pick up speed in the middle (*intermezzo*), and transversality works against any one localizable place, disrupting binary logics ordered by vertical and horizontal relations or practices of importing significance (syntagmatic) and interpretance (paradigmatic) semiotic processes. Instead, transversality should be understood as a bend, or curve, to traditional programs of oppressive power.

Such a perspective offers a route for conceptualizing the breakdown of human relations and taking it seriously can provide warnings and inspirations for revolution. This means taking into account our milieus in a more expansive way, in a way that maximizes communication between entities, and that recognizes that behavior is not monolithic, predictive, or logical, even if there is a deep imperative to repeat behaviors, politics, and ideologies previously available to the social body. I look to trans*ness and blackness as two modes that have been continually excluded from the body politic, while simultaneously *making* the body politic, in ways that have at once left them vulnerable to
extraordinary violence, but also have positioned them with the radical possibility of transversality.\textsuperscript{15}

I argue that the curves of transversality are not unheard of for black and trans* people, who have always created bent (alternative, anti, undetectable) strategies for negotiating space and power. This is what makes the minoritarian a site of possibility for Deleuze and Guattari; not only its ability to move, but also to occupy the in-between, and to constitute the assemblage itself. The term \textit{minority} is somewhat difficult for Guattari and Deleuze to analyze in the context of deterritorialization, so it should be no surprise that they find political possibility in the categories of minority, minor, and molecular becomings. We do know that minority categories are not quantifiable, and we know this principally from the structures of privilege that govern the adult-white-heterosexual-able bodied-speaking-male who occupies the “majority.” This is because such a figure appears twice, once as himself, and once again as what is extracted from him (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 105).\textsuperscript{16} In doing so, the majoritarian figure assumes the position of power, of domination, of the “standard” measure. Deleuze and Guattari show that this is evident

\textsuperscript{15} It is important to note that while Guattari and Deleuze maintain metaphors throughout their work, it is not without salient political commitments that indeed have practical ethical and political implications. They say: “Of course, we realize the dangers of citing scientific propositions outside their own sphere. It is the danger of arbitrary metaphor or of forced application. But perhaps these dangers are averted if we restrict ourselves to taking from scientific operators a particular conceptualizable character which itself refers to non-scientific areas, and converges with science without applying it or making it a metaphor” (Deleuze 2013, 134).

\textsuperscript{16} Deleuze and Guattari offer an analysis of major and minor language as an example of the ways in which black Americans have utilized their own language tools in the context of slavery and emancipation. It is not an opposition between black and English that affords such a shift, but the transformation of English to black English thus making language open to bilingual or multilingual variations. There is, they say, strength in the minor language—it is a conquering of one’s own language (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 104-105). What is markedly absent from such an analysis is the precarity in which the minor language functions. Attaining a form of communication within the normative protocols of the English language provides, at once, a clear target which power reterritorializes almost immediately.
in electoral operations, for instance a democratic system, in which you are given a choice, assuming the choice made adheres to the standard measure. Thus, the double appearance of the majority figure operates as a cloak for stultifying regimes of power, and also covers the potentials of becoming, of blackness, of transness, and indeed all others that struggle to entertain transversal curves. Meanwhile, power multiplies, gridding the population, the environment, and molecular revolutions in a cancerous and mutating fashion. Within *(because of)* this diffusion of power, violence has moved from a strategy to a problem and odd negotiations of compromise have taken its place.

Still, transversality has always existed for minoritarian subjects (defined by Guattari as any subjectivity that is not traditionally masculine, white, and straight, but for the purposes of this dissertation, black and trans*). For example, there will necessarily be times and spaces that demand normative gender presentation and identification (interactions with law enforcement, hospitals, jobs) even when one may not necessarily identify with the strict gender being presented, while at other times being properly trans* may be preferred for particular calls to diversity. Bodies navigate these fields in ways that are detrimental to self-determining their fashioning and legibility. This bending, or the simultaneous occupation of different modes of life, can also be considered as transversal. Between these curves, and always within them, is the function of the group desire. Desire, for Guattari, is the central force that capitalism wishes to usurp. Minoritarian life, because of its capacity to entertain transversality, has more access to these desire zones which are themselves sites of revolution.
Trees and Transcoding

In *A Thousand Plateaus* the conceptualizing of the book as an assemblage becomes the point of departure in which Deleuze and Guattari discuss their use of the rhizome. They discuss lines of flight, at different speeds, which bolsters their lasting argument of interconnectedness and lays the groundwork from which to understand their conceptualization of majoritarian and minoritarian life. Of the rhizome, they summarize the identifying characteristics: “[U]nlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21). As it is often cited, Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the tree rests in its rootedness, or the understanding of the tree as static or unmoving. Though they tell us in no uncertain terms to abandon the tree, we can also think about the tree beyond its rootedness—its leaves fall, its conversion of carbon dioxide makes possible the consumption of oxygen, its wood makes the book tangible; the tree, like the body, swells beyond its own roots.

This capacious reading of the tree’s capacities is not the target of Deleuze and Guattari’s critique, and to read it as fundamentally anti-assemblage is a false reduction. Instead, we can understand the tree as a molar entity, already assembled with its own molecular capabilities and the molecular stratum that contain its roots and branches. They say: “…multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single *assemblage*, operating in the same *assemblage*: packs in masses and masses in packs. Trees have rhizome lines, and the rhizome points of arborescence” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 34). This brings the
striated political model of the tree into contact with the insect, the dirt, the animal, or the human as a part of the assemblage. The subterranean, vegetal, fungal life of the rhizome, then, is not distinct in their metaphor, but is the molecular companion, always already connected by and to the tree and the affective, biological, atomic, ecosystems, and special products of historical processes.

From this ecosophical perspective, I want to foreground the question of political intersections of blackness, trans*, and animality (explored further in Chapter 4). At the beginning of Soft Subversions, Guattari claims to be an “idea-thief,” lifting ideas, concepts, and terms from other fields of inquiry for his own purposes. Guattari allows his philosophy to be porous, providing a space to trans* his conceptual maneuvers: “The purpose of this strategy is to forge linkages, i.e., between singularities within a particular field and into a range of components and fields in other conceptual territories, transversally. Assemblages are an example of such a singular tool, functioning transversally to link concepts and bring them into productively intense interaction” (Guattari 2009, 10). Guattari, as a falsifier of different concepts and language tools, seeks to find if they are capable of asking new questions, configuring new articulations across fields. These transversal linkages elude dominant modes of identification thus undermining traditional systems of politics, kinship, and spatial relations (trees). Guattari’s writing is always meant to explode dominant structures of power and it is of the utmost importance that when thinking critically about the role of difference, that we understand that categorization itself is power:
The perspective of a real social revolution seems to me as open as the fields of possibility for scientific and aesthetic revolutions. (…) In fact, this is what leads me to introduce the notion of ‘molecular revolutions,’ which I believe complements rather than opposes traditional notions of social revolution in today’s world. Changes do not have to come about from large-scale socioeconomic conditions. All these systems leak from the inside, as systems of defense, but also systems of mutation. Molecular mutations do not always assert themselves on a large scale, and they must be gauged differently in the short term. But this does not mean they do not exist. We do not have the same relations to reading, writing, images, space, sex, the body, the night, the sun, pain, as we only had ten years ago. Profound and irreversible mutations are underway in all these areas. In other words, the molecular substratum on which all large social collectives are inscribed has become a sort of bubbling soup, a ‘mechanic soup,’ the way ‘biological soup’ is not ‘determined’ unilaterally by macrosocial conditions (Guattari 2009, 29).

Such a viewpoint would question the assumptions made by Mel Chen’s (2012) analysis of Deleuze and Guattari’s use of assemblage (that all things are connected by some network). Chen may be right to say that the bifurcation of human-animal has fallen on racial lines, which is encapsulated by a slippage between the material realities of alive and dead, but these racialized lines are much less stable than Chen accounts for. As the violent abuse and premature death of black and trans* subjects have moved from the purview toward the forefront of mainstream political consideration, (re)theorizing the
connection between the human and the animal is no accident in imagining political possibilities even with its legacies of racialized violence. And, so, while Deleuze and Guattari have argued for a desertion of the arborescent model as it has formed insufficient dualistic connections between the predetermined relations between the tree’s roots and branches, it is not a clean break.

The rhizome, insofar as it serves their alternative genealogy, allows us to see the connections facilitated through and. Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome is a fruitful, philosophical, alternative to the arborescent model, but it is not yet transversal if it does not take the tree into account. Rhizomatic models provoke certain anxieties in thinking through the biopolitical violence disproportionately leveraged against black and trans* bodies and necessitate caution in proceeding down such a route. Through Guattari, transversality is not only philosophical, but political, and thus capable of rearranging sociopolitical realms as well as the very foundations of violent institutions. Promoting trans*versatility here is meant to take some initial steps toward questioning the usefulness of subjectivity (the group fantasy which forecloses maximum communication between different levels by forcibly aligning with proximal interests, or in this case identities). When we encounter questions of mattering, subjectivity must now be viewed as a compromise for intensities of matter that have been unbearable or have lacked comprehension.

Trees and transcoding come into contact “when a code is not content to take or receive components that are coded differently, and instead takes or receives fragments of a different code as such (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 314). Deleuze and Guattari read Jakob Von Uexküll’s umwelt as a transcoding, or a chaotic passageway between milieus.
These transcodings are not additives, but constitutions of new territories, new planes, new vibrations (leaves, soil, insects). The transversality of the tree-leaf-water relation illuminates questions of trans* in ways that do not simply split the subject into identities but open them so much that intensities pass through. Uexküll’s contribution to the melodic components of the environment (for instance, the transcoding of nature and music) elaborates Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that transcoding is not a matter of one part added to another, but the constitution of a new plane. Thinking through Uexküll, Deleuze, and Guattari’s wide-spread interest in animals, the relationship between the animation of trans* and blackness should be revisited. Katie King, for instance, has argued that the prefixal knowledge of trans* gestures back to the ways in which bodies are entangled through proximity. Following this, the discursive and political connections between trans* and black are always already emergent, and the question of the animal makes this more salient. King suggests, “Animal becomes ‘animals,’ not just in terms of plurality but in terms of a plurality that is located within spatiotemporal coordinates” (King 2015, 283). These coordinates of becoming, far from abstracting the subject, attend the specifications lost in ontological questions of being.

When Deleuze and Guattari stress ‘becoming’ they enact the foggy intensities of becomings that emit relations of speed and slowness—haecceities and affects which constitute the assemblage. 17 This affective perspective, what Brian Massumi examines as

17 Three central becomings they offer are becoming-woman, becoming-intense (becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible), and becoming BwO (Body without Organs), all which rely on relations. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that, “A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification… [t]o become is not to progress or regress along a series” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 237-238).
“the virtual as point of view,” is a synthetic potential capable of transforming the potential interactions between entities (Massumi 2002). The potentials of these becomings, like that of trans*, are molecular; they discharge through affects, passions, and intensities, disrupting the attachments to binary socio-political embodiment and opening new deterritorializations.18

**Lines of Flight: Interdisciplinarity and Transversality**

Like the distinction between the tree and rhizome, Guattari has also used transversality to critique the basis of interdisciplinarity. And like the tree and rhizome, the distinction is essential and still permeable. Guattari’s central critique of interdisciplinarity is that it has frequently relied on notions of democracy and freedom in relation to the human and the human’s environment. The touching of disciplines in this way, for Guattari, prohibits in depth communication or commitment to panache activity amidst our milieus and thought. In other words, one can only envision quotidian “normalcy” from a normative viewpoint, and in order to maintain such a reference, interdisciplinary research must continually produce an object that requires continuous modification. Such an approach requires constant intervention from the public, vis-à-vis the police, social work, or legal structures, and alongside public opinion (media, thought polls, the education of young people, etc.). Such an object has limited emancipatory scope; it is always chasing an explanation and reaching for the carrot of freedom.

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18 Thus, Deleuze and Guattari ask: “what does becoming-imperceptible signify coming at the end of all the molecular becomings that begin with becoming-woman? Becoming-imperceptible means many things. What is the relation between the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal?” These “three virtues” signal the destratified body, now capable of entering into becomings with other bodies and form assemblages (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 98).
Guattari’s critique of interdisciplinary studies relies, unsurprisingly, on the dominance of Freudianism and Marxism as the two “collective myths” that have been discursively central in understanding the human psyche and labor production. Frank B. Wilderson makes a similar claim of black cultural studies, placing it on the proverbial shoulders of Lacan and Marx. Wilderson makes an important intervention in the conceptualization of the object when he nuances the grammar of suffering—that much cultural theory rests upon—as an insufficient residue of the Humanist project (Wilderson 2010). The political ontology that informs much writing on black and trans* subjectivity relies, at least in part, on a consensus that the body is produced by any number of transgressions, matterings, structures, and histories. Wilderson correctly points out that we have not yet picked apart the lingering dichotomies inherited through Humanism’s contingent logics. Thus, the Humanist project must shuttle alienated and exploited subjects through suffering, ensuring that this suffering will reproduce itself with ease, even at the site of revolt.

The problem may not be between identity categories of black, trans*, and the human, but rather, that our stakes in identity and the human need revisiting. We can take the example of how the explicit targeting of black and trans* bodies—through bullets or

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19 There is a perceived rift between Guattari and the useful components of psychoanalysis that black and trans* theory directly or passively engages with increasing frequency. Despite his critique, or radicalization, of psychoanalysis, Guattari recognizes Freud as a brilliant thinker. However, it is the mentorship of (his analyst) Lacan which seemingly positions him against the mobilization of psychoanalysis. The “cult” of Lacanian psychoanalytic thought leads him to wager a philosophical debate about the role of the environment through the avenues of political ethical, social, and aesthetic domains (Genosko 1996, 69). These reservations become clearer as he elaborates transversality as a broadening approach that must move away from the white masculine figure in attempts to break up the standard gaze. Still, in many points, Guattari’s training emerges as important insights (particularly around Transference and the partial object) to his work with psychoanalysis, even if it is done with a prescription of criticism.
water, through gentrification or market collapse, through medicalization or incarceration—produce a political milieu that constantly orders these subjectivities to detach from the revolutionary project through promises of self-emancipation and mechanisms freedom. Following Frantz Fanon, Wilderson reminds us that white supremacy and Humanism are both gridded and ordered by positions of contingent or gratuitous violence (Wilderson 2010). All of this juxtaposed against progress narratives that rely on the slippery notion that familiarity with difference leads to shifts in psychic understanding, often dubbed ‘tolerance’ or ‘acceptance.’

As Wilderson argues: “[T]he Black has sentient capacity but not relational capacity. As an accumulated and fungible object, rather than an exploited and alienated subject, the Black is openly vulnerable to the whims of the world; and so is his/her cultural ‘production’” (Wilderson 2010, 57). This clarification highlights the discursive limits of mobilizing black and trans* subjectivity through concurrent categories of racism and transphobia. Though we should not read black and trans* as always already allied categories (though at crucial moments they most certainly are) we can understand the functions of a symbolic political deployment that advocates for an understanding in place of fear offer a predictable lack of recourse. Such an understanding provides the raw landscape to embrace molecular possibilities and for transversality to take hold. Where there have been unified territories (phobias, -isms, or extraction from normative categories), there are now multiplicities. We can take a quote from The Invisible Committee as a proposed political commitment:

20 These categorizations operate, as Michel Foucault argues, as modes of regulation. Race, gender, sex, or sexuality become cyclical practices of production and regulation in the classification and control of bodies.
Nothing is simple anymore or is simple in a different way. Every commune creates a political territory that extends out and ramifies as it grows. It is this movement that marks out the paths leading to other communes, that is forms the lines and links making up our party. Our strength won’t come from our naming of the enemy, but from the effort made to enter one another’s geography (The Invisible Committee 2014, 229).

Violence (affective, structural, physical) maintains particular biopolitical inactions of black and trans* identities, ensuring that we always resolve our own identity crises through language, community, compromise, and notions of temporal progress. The extension of community allows the state apparatus to inclusively shift, relying on our own sentiments drawn from the horrific experiences of the Other; the Other’s death weighs heavily on our mind.

Instead, when approaching the interwoven points between blackness and transness, we must look transversally in order to shift the analytical focus away from binary logics, rhetorical justifications of violence, and premature death, and toward new, molecular, revolutionary angles for approaching the work of difference. Black and trans* identities, even within the biopolitical project, remain unknown and undiscovered in their abundance, but in order to aim these politics at power we must remember that we cannot be reducible to interpolating compromises from the State. In this way, Wilderson offers an important companion to Guattari, questioning the arrangement of the subjects’ un-freedom: “[T]he structure of the subject’s condition of un-freedom is imagined along one
or two shared vectors: the dispossession and stagnation within political economy (Marx) and the dispossession and stagnation within libidinal economy (Lacan)—sometimes a combination thereof, but rarely are both weighted equally” (Wilderson 2010, 70).

Freedom is a construction that attempts to rectify the horror of violent dispossession, but the breaking of chains has not made us free. Subjectivity remains a group phenomenon that accumulates the use value of black and trans*, fanaticizing that they are autonomous wholes.

As we consider the continuous fuzzy and dysphoric precarity between “freedom,” “subject,” and “object” we should remember that freedom has been foreclosed. Black and trans* as heuristics, or modes of self-determination and self-emancipation might direct us, but if not transversalized, they will remind of us of our impossibility. The pseudo-tolerance proliferated by State negotiations of representation continually divide up the body, carving State interests into our flesh, inscribing its laws into our psyches (freedom comes at a high cost). Increasingly, the danger of this is playing out in academic and political domains where the reliance on the State has become so enmeshed that it is embodied.  

Normative protocols leveraged by institutions work as corrosive agents

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21 The field of somatechnics has worked against such moves, looking to collapse the discursive chasm between embodiment and technology in ways that offer insight to Guattari’s charge to lead interdisciplinarity into the waters of transversality. Working through poststructuralist, feminist, queer and trans* philosophical frameworks, somatechnics works to highlight the intimate connections of the always already technologized body; “The term somatechnics troubles and blurs the boundary between embodied subject and technologized object, and thus between the human and the non-human, and the living and the inert, and it asks us to pay attention to where, precisely, a prosthesis stops and a body starts” (Stryker and Pugliese 2009, 1). Working from this viewpoint, Jasbir Puar extends these biopolitical mandates of normativity by extending this to the transnormative body, questioning which trans* body or bodies can be understood as objects of futurity: “This suturing of trans to exceptional futurity and the potential that the future offers is the new transnormative body…This is not the transnormative body that passes but the transnormative body that ‘pieces,’ the commodification not of the wholeness of rehabilitation but of plasticity, crafting parts from wholes, bodies without and with new organs” (Puar 2017, 46). Working with Stryker and Nikki Sullivan’s use of bodily integration,
targeting the Other (the object) and teaching it how to suffer with whispers and promises of upward mobility, legal protections, and freedom. We can approach these concerns in a number of different ways, but if we ignore them, push them out of our way, they become hollow political alternatives. Or, instead, we might approach them transversally, embracing the mutation of radical politics and the revolutionary body.

**Proposing Trans*versality**

Guattari’s philosophy tells us that the global scale of political intervention has become inseparable from molecular level. He urges us to eschew ‘ecological niches’ or ‘islands of fresh air’ that declare themselves separate from macro-scales and large social collectives. Instead, he insists that we direct our revolutionary energy toward the coding of new war machines that will bring about social praxis of a different kind (Guattari 2009, 29). Revolutionary movements that abide by ideological Programs, ones that fantasize a particular destiny, are doomed for capture. Molecular revolutions may also be captured, but their coefficient of transversality offers a mutation, a new kind of becoming, capable of working against the co-optation of marginalized experiences and by engaging these long-term molecular revolutions, attempts to co-opt or violate begin to slide past one another without the ability to bind to social reality (57). In his terms: “We should permit nothing to distract us from discovering the ways and means for irreversible social transformation, without which we will enter into an escalation of fear and despair

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Puar suggests that a somatechnical “piecing” together of parts, rather than passing, is more useful to interrupt biopolitical control as it overruns a return to the body’s “wholeness” (49-50). Thinking through somatechnics offers considers the ways that surfaces are transformed through molecular assemblages.
on a whole new scale” (93). Putting transversality to the task of molecular revolution has been a crucial task for Guattari. Following this, the functioning of Guattari’s understanding of transversality invites an investigation to the work of prefix of trans* in relation to the molecular.

The prefix trans-, in the Oxford English Dictionary sense of “across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another” provides some insight Guattari’s fashioning of ‘versality.’ In most narrow sense, trans* (as it has become associated with the body) allows for an understanding that there is more than either/or. A broader understanding of trans* as a pollination, or mummer, provides a useful addition to transversality. Implementing the asterisk, trans*versality, indexes a way of thinking about molecular possibilities not mediated through normative protocols, capitalism, or even the body.

Rejection of revolution often operates through a refusal of its existence, or declarations of its impossibility. Emerging discourses on trans*, as a form of embodiment but more importantly as an analytic, can teach us something about revolution. Susan Stryker discusses the recent cultivation and investment in trans* subjects vis-à-vis the visible murder and withdrawal of life as being organized along the fault lines of race. Rather than including trans* wholesale as a productive category, state power seeks to manipulate the terrain on which democratic rights are extended. One’s worthiness is dependent on the unworthiness of its other. This stunts transrevolutionary politics as it operates to striate trans* life through categories of inclusion. Stryker details transgender phenomena in the following way:
Transgender phenomena—anything that calls our attention to the contingency and unnaturalness of gender normativity—appear at the margins of the biopolitically operated-upon body, at those fleeting and variable points at which particular bodies exceed or elude capture within the gender apparatus when they defy the logic of the biopolitical calculus or present a case that confounds an administrative rule or bureaucratic practice. Consequently, transgender phenomena constantly flicker across the threshold of viability, simultaneously courting danger and attracting death even as they promise life in new forms, along new pathways (Stryker 2015, 40).

Transgender phenomena and transversality elucidate the methodological work of trans*. A transmolecular revolutionary politics would follow Stryker’s call for “noncompliance” and “noncomplicity” when faced with the trappings of identity formation and subject making.

Though the promise or possibility of transsexuality never fully materializes in Guattari’s thought, he presents it as a provocation, and in doing so opens an avenue for this project to attend to the politics of trans* in contemporary struggles of violence against trans* people while always keeping in mind the ways in which blackness might capacitate a referential connection. An analytical connection between trans* and black should not be taken as always already enacted. At times, black and trans* embodiment must be understood as different, sometimes converging, experiences. However, in linking these categories, I am gesturing toward their impossibility within the body politic. The targeting of black and trans* normativity creates a political puzzle, or, put another way, the “correct” performance can itself a target; the message is not subtle: you are not like
us; do not pretend to be us. These unsteady fault lines of race and gender (among others) should be enough to inspire a new form of militancy. This means taking into account the functions of psychoanalytic and capitalist repression, even if it is not to accept these moves outright, and more importantly, it is to take seriously the modes of cyclical violence that enact and enforce that repression.

Transversality, in its most basic sense, is an attempt to explode communication across and at every level, and importantly, is a modification to psychoanalytic and capitalist frameworks that produce conditions of repression. Guattari pays special attention to militant sexual minorities who direct their performance toward liberation.\(^\text{22}\)

He was intimately concerned with the struggles of women, people of color, queer people, and transsexual people, and those whom he deemed to be positioned within politically important minoritarian experiences. At times, Guattari himself (perhaps because of his own subject position) is unable to put into relief how minoritarian experience impacts political mobilization, however, what we can borrow from concept of transversality is a way of rethinking, immediately and long-term, ways of human life, environmental, social, and psychic ecologies, and a collective awareness of what it means to change life, to create new ways of being, which must be transformed at the molecular level.

Trans*versality

If the project of queerness is meant to make usage into a crisis (Ahmed 2017), the crisis has already present been in blackness and transness. Both black and trans*, while often politically held to an empty standard of impossibility in the authorized social

\(^{22}\) For Guattari these examples are often cited as the liberation struggles of women, homosexuals, transvestites, and to some extent, psychiatric patients, sadomasochists, and at times, murderers.
landscape, exist in the curves of transversality. By this I mean two things. The first, is something that C. Riley Snorton picks up when he argues the very connections between blackness and transness are transversal. The aesthetic, ethical, and political operations of black and trans exist “…prior to their articulation, which is to say that the connections within these concepts occur in the formal anterior to their various calcifications of meaning or territorializations or nominalizations” (Snorton 2017, 9). The second, in my extension of Snorton’s argument, is that the transversality of black and trans exists explicitly the ungovernable excess that exists in and between the spillage of identity and radical possibility. As trans* studies emerges as an institutional field of inquiry and as an analytical vantage point to understand the possibilities located within the corporeal body, in the non-human, the animal, and in the collective, we can say with relative certainty that the capaciousness of transness has not been adequately theorized to its fullest potential, primarily when put through an analytic of blackness, which offers possibly the greatest vantage point from which to imagine an anterior futurism that might guide us simultaneously back to our past, situate us in our present, and the create a possibility for a future to come. The urgent task of trans*, even in the institutional or interdisciplinary form of trans* studies ushers in the question of black feminist intersectionality. What does a trans*intersectionality look like? If we—and we must—continue to organize through large scale collectives that retain their specificity in the law, the university, or the authorized political system, it is equally important to turn toward the micro scale, to think about possibilities for creatively furnishing cracks in the structures that keep us submerged. If black and trans* studies, and black-trans* studies, has been its incorporation and pacification in the academic mainstream, and at the macro scale, might
trans*versality aid in thinking through the molecular so that we can retain the thrust of political life?
Chapter Two: Transmolecular Revolution

May ’68 is more of the order of a pure event, free of all normal, or normative causality. Its history is a ‘series of amplified instabilities and fluctuations.’ There were a lot of agitations, gesticulations, slogans, idiocies, illusions in ’68, but this is not what counts. What counts is what amounted to a visionary phenomenon, as if a society suddenly saw what was intolerable in it and also saw the possibility for something else. It is a collective phenomenon in the form of: ‘Give me the possible, or else I’ll suffocate...’ The possible does not pre-exist, it is created by the event. It is a question of life. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work...).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 2007

The events known collectively as “May 68” were precipitated by militant students and striking workers joining forces to bring about an unprecedented challenge to state power, resulting in urban occupations and encampments, blockaded streets, violent confrontations with the police, an outpouring of revolutionary political thought, all of which contributed to the most radical upheaval since the Paris Commune, and inspired new styles of activism and social analysis around the world.23 As barricades were erected in the heart of Paris, riots protesting American imperialist capitalism beginning in early May gained momentum in subsequent outbreaks as activist protests grew in numbers and violence. The events took a sensational turn on the tenth of May, with violent riots raging in the streets until dawn. This chapter starts with the events of May 68 that deeply

23 Student movements: “May 1968 in France was molecular, making what led up to it all the more imperceptible from the viewpoint of macropolitics. It happens that people who are very limited in outlook or are very old grasp the event better than the most advanced politicians, or politicians who consider themselves advanced from the viewpoint of organization... those who evaluated things in macropolitical terms understood nothing of the event because something unaccountable was escaping. The politicians, the parties, the unions, many leftists, were utterly vexed; they kept repeating over and over again that “conditions” were not ripe. It was as though they had been temporarily deprived of the entire dualism machine that made them valid spokespeople” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 217).
influenced Guattari’s thought, his relationship with Gilles Deleuze, and their collective writings.

May 68 is characterized as a political and social revolution, one that brought together workers and students in the name of overthrowing the socio-political order of France. What began as student occupation and protest lead to the largest worker strike in France’s history. The events were met with harsh actions by police and university administrators, causing the President to flee amidst fear of widespread civil revolt, and ultimately severely impacting the French economy. Deleuze was an outspoken advocate of the May 68 actions, then teaching at Vincennes University in Paris, and Guattari, then the director at the La Borde clinic, advocated all patients participate in the action. May 68 spawned their thought partnership and lead to the writing of Anti-Oedipus, described as a “May 68 book.” In their essay “May 68 Did Not Take Place,” Deleuze and Guattari offer their most grounded descriptions of May 68, its shortcomings, and the work to be done in its wake. For what would become the Deleuzoguattarian writing machine, the events were a rupture—a demand for the possible—and one that has yet to be brought to a close. It marked the dawn of a hopeful generation yet to be brought fully into the folds of capitalism and colonialism. And yet, they also describe its shortcomings to bring long-term substantial change to French political life as protest fizzled out, aided by police action and the eventual choice workers faced between returning to work or losing their jobs. The elections that year demonstrated severe backlash to protest, electing conservative office holders of the Gaullist party in higher numbers than ever before. Yet, alongside this fall-out, Deleuze and Guattari mark May 68 as a moment of political
potential in its capacity to breakup life as normal, and to continue its ghostly influence on French politics.

Fifty years later it has come to mark a great shift in the global political landscape. 1968 marked an apogee in the waves of events that characterizes the 1960s; the Vietnam war, black power, the Watts riots, gay liberation, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., early articulations of contemporary understandings of transsexuality, queers bashing back, the Compton cafeteria riots, women’s liberation, the peaking of apartheid, militancy in the streets, the changing terrain of the university, the dawn of the so-called megacity, and the list goes on. The sixties offer a rich moment from which to think, as politically and socially they are marred in the memory of rich social transformation and theorizing. These events also contain unfulfilled promises and the departure point for considering philosophies of power that continue to be relevant to social organizing today.

In the United States the civil rights movement remained in full effect and the legacy of the civil rights movement and black power movement still reverberate through contemporary conditions of anti-black violence. 1968 was also the year that Martin

\[24\] 1968 has been called the year that changed the world, the year that changed the United States, and the year that changed everything (The Guardian 2008; US News 2017; LIFE Magazine 2018). In 2016, following the election of Doug Jones to the Alabama senate seat over Roy Moore who faced a slew of credible allegations of sexual assault, a barrage of headlines emerged effectively thanking black women for their service to country. They read “In Alabama, black women saved America from itself – as they’ve always tried to do” (The Guardian) or “How black women saved Alabama -- and democracy” (CNN), noting that black women had led to the marginal victory through the leverage of their 98% vote in favor of Jones. The affective contours of these statements speak directly to the tension between intersectionality as problem and process. The sentiment, perhaps innocent and banal, is reflective of the long histories of using the labor of black women to figure an equal future while simultaneously lacking any significant investment in the experiences of violence they face. In the case of these headlines, this intersectionality is divorced from institutional or political feminism (though certainly haunted by it) in attempts to bring the political mattering of blackness, and black women in particular, into a moment of legibility, forcibly leveraging black women in ways that actually produced the familiar contours of segregated politics, institutions, and thought.
Luther King Jr. was assassinated while under full FBI investigation. Protests were staged from the streets of Birmingham, Alabama to the Mexico City Olympics against the treatment of black folks amidst the celebration of their victories. Anti-Vietnam protests emerging with increasing intensity all around the world drawing attention to the violence being waged in Vietnam, rampant famine in Africa, and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. 1968 was the first time Earth was seen from outer space. Indeed, the

25 Watts, Los Angeles (August 1965): Shortly after Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights act Marquette Fry was pulled over by Lee Minikus, a Los Angeles police officer. He placed him under arrest for drunk driving. Various accounts of what took place provide eerily familiar reality of clashing between black folks and the police. Los Angeles would not see a similar uprising until the beating of Rodney King in 1992, and arguably not again until contemporary #blacklivesmatter protests.

26 1965 Malcom X is assassinated: “I am not American. I’m one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I’m not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag waver—no, not I. I’m speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don’t see any American dream. I see an American nightmare.”

27 The Tet Offensive was a coordinated attack against South Korea and its ally, the U.S. by the North Vietnamese that began on January 30, 1968. The Tet Offensive is officially categorized as a loss for the North Vietnamese, though it caused deep suspicions of the evaluation of the Vietnam War by the US government and was key in changing the tide of public opinion against the war. US officials had severely underestimated the military power, prowess, and recruitment and replacement strategies of the North Vietnamese, and the Tet Offensive was evidence that the Vietnam War was far from over, and that many more US casualties would be lost in efforts to end the war. The Offensive required in depth military planning and utmost secrecy as it mobilized 80,000 troops in more than 100 towns and cities, causing the US and South Vietnamese to lose control of vast amounts of territory. Nonetheless, the US and South Vietnamese were able to restrategize, redeploy troops to weak points, and regain control, causing a blow to the North Vietnamese. Despite officially “winning,” the Tet Offensive inspired a wave of turmoil within US politics and is credited as the “turning point” in public opinion against the war, aided by media accounts and turmoil in the Johnson administration.

28 The Space Race: When John F. Kennedy pledged to send a man to the moon and return him safely to Earth, he promised to colonize space, the new frontier. In the midst of the Cold War, the moon became a new site of competition against communism and any nation associated with it. In his address to congress he said, “We are not against any man, or any nation, or any system, except as it is hostile to freedom” (Kennedy address to Congress on May 25, 1961). He detailed the revolutions happening around the world, and he said, with great confidence that these were revolutions of freedom. Freedom has operated as one of the greatest ideological constructions that attempts to rectify the horror of violent dispossession, but the breaking of chains has not made us free. The ideological weapons upon
year seemed to be erupting in a molecular sense and interconnected modes of power were being confronted at all angles of the social sphere.

**Multiplicities in the City**

In Henri Lefebvre’s *The Urban Revolution*, Neil Smith’s forward places readers in the context of the events of May 68. Rich descriptions, analysis, memories, and accounts of the event, and the half of century of distance has produced a myriad of theories, metaphors, manifestos, questions and politics. Activist concerns around the cost of education, immigrant rights, the condition of workers, and access to affordable social services gave way to more central concerns about what the city should do and be. Of Lefebvre’s “right to the city” David Harvey (2008) says:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

which this dream hinged: justice, liberty, prosperity for all—“freedoms” absolutely foreclose molecular potentials.
Fervent opinions formed in the heat of the moment as activists risked their safety under the banner of revolution. 29

It is in the context of urban anxiety that Guattari and Deleuze develop their concept of molecular revolution to explain what they saw transpiring in the streets of Paris during May 68. Though they both offer initial insights, it is Guattari who later aims to place molecular revolution into a political practice “on the ground”. This chapter explores how Deleuze and Guattari’s sense of transformative social and political potential was sharpened by the events of May 68, and how those events compelled them to think of radical change at different scales and intensities, which they labelled the “molar” and the “molecular.” After briefly discussing the meanings and usages of these terms in their work, I turn toward my own sense of what trans* methodologies can add to their analytical framework.

To do so, one must first understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean by the molar and molecular. Like many of their terms, they derive the philosophical functions of molar and molecular from scientific literature. While the metaphor might hold in some places, the particles of molar and molecular scales are not meant to signpost a quantitative macro/micro distinction as they might at first suggest. The purpose is not to set up a dualism between molar and molecular as one would set up the poles between the Deleuzoguattarian use of One and the multiple. Rather, these are differences in kind. Molar strata attend to homogenous referentials of the whole—referentials which can be

29 “Woodstock…was only a moment of glorious innocence, and such moments happen only by accident and then not that often” said the conservative publication National Review in 1969. And correct they are. The question is not what glory was but what can be done so that the deterritorialization continues the axiom of flight.
identified through patterns or behaviors demonstrable elsewhere in the milieu. This can be seen in State systems, normative identity, systems of powers, and so on, that require a certain kind of quantitative ordering.

Throughout, they engage Foucault’s understanding of discipline as a type of molarizing and moralizing effect (Foucault 1977; 2012). Identity documentation for transgender people might offer a brief example here. Health records such as medical or birth certificates, or documents of permission such as a driver’s license or a passport, when aligned with the molar aggregate don’t tend to cause problems within systems outright (though this is not always true). It is when these documents are mismatched, offering a chronology of different names and genders, or if the care needed in misaligned with the documentation that the trans* body deviates from a norm and thus becomes a point of crisis for the management of population and bodies. And perhaps this becomes increasingly true if visual signifiers do not match the normative assumptions about what a body can and should look like. Being aware of these standards and being coerced by them, it becomes more likely under these molar disciplinary regimes that we adhere to the conditions of management in whatever way and for whatever reason. The molar can be understood as something akin to Foucault’s disciplined or docile body, but without an assumption of organic wholeness—its parts, with relations of exteriority, in a particular assemblage. Their sense of revolutionary potential is not limited to novel alliances and associations of molar entities—for instance, students aligning with workers—rather each of these molar aggregates has a potential affect and be affected by things transpiring on another scale, the molecular, which can be transformative in turn of molar politics.
In this case (and many others) molecular processes become amplified into the molar scale and are subsequently reterritorialized into manageable and categorized systems. Always tethered to the molar, the molecular space is freeform creativity. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between different kinds of molecularity, from spasmodic to mutational, absolute and harnessed, to point toward revolution. They say that we should always look for the molecular, or the submolecular of the molecular, as the place of political alliance. The break, crack, or rupture occurs in the rigidity of the molar and it is the molecular that breaks it up. Like what I am trying to elaborate through trans*, the molecular is the line of flight that ruptures the corporeal, the abstract, the dead and alive matter (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 200; 221). Deleuze and Guattari hold that binaries also interface molecular assemblages, but of a different order:

If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature, and that there is a double reciprocal dependency between them. For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes. Mass movements accelerate and feed into one another (or dim for a long while, enter long stupors), but jump from one class to another, undergo mutation, emanate or emit new quanta that then modify class relations, and run new lines of flight in new directions. Beneath the self reproduction of classes, there is always a variable map of masses. Politics operates by macrodecisions and binary choices, binarized interests; but the realm of the decidable remains very slim. Political decision making necessarily
descends into a world of microdeterminations, attractions, and desires, which it must sound out or evaluate in a different fashion. Beneath linear conceptions and segmentary decisions, an evaluation of flows and their quanta (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 221).

The borderline is where the molar and molecular join. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the borderline from the ridge or hard border that constitutes the boundary between beings and matter. They argue that the “phenomenon of bordering” binds molar aggregates—something that is of great importance since globally, societies are preoccupied with borders and boundaries (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 245). Unlike the ridge or boundary, the borderline represents the ambiguous edges wherein “…a multiplicity is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension, but by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in ‘intension.’ If you change dimensions, if you add or subtract one, you change multiplicity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 245). Similar to their rearranging of the body or machine, the borderline functions in opposition to the boundary. They take up crescendos to illustrate the blurriness of the borderline (flocks and packs, swarms and revolt, villages and networks, secret societies and sorcerers). The boundary is what marks the exterior and the interior allowing the State apparatus to leverage control, whereas the borderline, in this sense, provides a certain zone of play for the outsider—a space where multiplicities border other multiplicities creating the dwellings of those banished from normative political mattering.

The border, rather than the boundary, is the site of trans* becoming. Again, when Deleuze and Guattari say “We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally
homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 70) they gesture toward the instantiation of signification, but also the feverish intensity that has difficulty comprehending the indeterminacy of the borderline. These intensities, situated in the molecular unconscious are not those of the castration of psychoanalysis. Rather, like trans* they look to the partial objects that form multiplicities, cutting the cut, producing the flow. What they term “microscopic transsexuality” signals “…the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering—men with women, women with men—into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 295-296). Indeed, beyond a strict sense of the body as matter, Deleuze and Guattari consider the body as a system, or machine, in relation to other systems (this is why the individual does not exist). At one strata, the body operates as an assemblage, but at another, the body is the organ(ism) in the terrain of the social body. The body can be plugged into flows or territories, at times speeding up the effects of the assemblage and at other times slowing it down.

**Coding and Decoding May 1968**

Thinking about the stakes of May 68 in relation to molecular revolution, we can follow Foucault’s preface in *Anti-Oedipus*. First, he says, the revolutionary must embrace psychosis in order to “shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power” so that one can initiate the radical possibilities found in desire (not a wanting, but a true desire). Once these mystifications are dissolved, the task is to ignite flows at every scale. This means to engage in flows that disrupt and escape processes of *coding*; to take off from the middle in all directions (Foucault 1983, xxi). If *content* is the first articulation of
stratification, then bodies are most frequently, if not always, recruited to move from the molecular to the molar through processes of coding and (overcoding). For Deleuze and Guattari, both expression and content are both are molecular and molar in their form and substance (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 59). The distinction between molar and molecular scales are not of a single subject, rather they enter into different relations of scale toward ontologically flat multiplicities.

Intermediate states exist between the molar and molecular and are arranged from exterior centers (the focal point of power). Molar forms are expressed through “molds” or “modulations” that limit the amount of contact points. Even as molar molds are coded, stratified, or territorialized, the molecular assumes a heterogeneous complexity that appears outside of the formatted module (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 58). 30 What is important here is not simple wordplay that takes any binary form between molar and molecular strata and substrata, respectively, but that even when these scales are crystalized or diffused, they enact different possibilities for intervention at each stage.

Molar forms can only entertain a minimal amount of intervention (transversality), while molecular content offers more opportunity for creativity. Codes operate as a version of double-articulation that offer Deleuze and Guattari an explanation of difference in strata. 31 Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of genetics and ‘genetic drift’ to model

30 “Every code is affected by a margin of decoding due to these supplements and surplus values—supplements in the order of a multiplicity, surplus values in the order of a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 53).

31 Stratification creates strata through double articulation. “The first articulation concerns content, the second substance” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 44). The first is that of “sedimentation” or territorialization and the second of folding which is a form of expression creating new linkages between strata.
the ways organic processes produce effects through coding and decoding in the strata and parastrata. Genetic drift is a dissolving of the code that opens the terrain of mutation. When DNA mutates, within and across species, a transversal communication occurs and within this matrix of power these transversal flows are eluding power (it is this impotence that renders power perilous). Power aims to cease lines of flight in attempts to stabilize molecular revolutionary possibilities. While power often succeeds in this, it is only by creating a void wherein the assemblage now has access to the power machine: “The modern theory of mutations has clearly demonstrated that a code, which necessarily relates to a population, has an essential margin of decoding: not only does every code have supplements capable of free variation, but a single segment may be copied twice, the second copy left free for variation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 53). Elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari offer an account of how social codes provide semiotic referents that underpin territories and their denizens. Social codes offer a more formal occurrence of measurement where things can be measured through an assumed progress. In other words, as populations are formed and assume a certain coded form that can be measured and evaluated accordingly:

What can be done so that the decoding and the deterritorialization constitutive of the system do not make it flee through one end or another that would escape the axiomatic and throw the machine into a panic (a Chinese on the horizon, a Cuban missile-launcher, an Arab highjacker, a consul kidnapper, a Black Panther, a May 68, or even stoned hippies, angry gays, etc.)? There is an oscillation between the reactionary paranoiac overcharges and the subterranean, schizophrenic, and revolutionary charges (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 260).
Decoding, or loss of a specific form, is where the assemblage speeds up, or where progress is measured by complication of strata rather than the acquisition of form or code.

The molar operates as a semi-stable norm, allowing molecular flows from the molar order, and vice versa. Here, flows relate between the molecular and the molar, and transversality allows chaotic openings in these passages. The State apparatus, where molar overcodings function most saliently, is the primary site where the molecular is situated within the assemblage. Flows or mutations exist in the abstract machine where it flee molar territories (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 40; 227). One must be careful, however, not to romanticize flows. As Bonta and Protevi note, “Deleuze and Guattari are not simple enthusiasts of flow, despite the widespread but mistaken postmodernist reading of them in that regard. For Deleuze and Guattari, the pragmatic evaluation and cautious experimentation with the flows that traverse bodies. The stratification, the binding of flows into stable substances, is ‘a very important, inevitable phenomenon that is beneficial in many respects and unfortunate in many others’” (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 87). And so, it is the task of molecular revolution not to overthrow the world, but to recreate it, to embrace its mutations, perversions, and hallucinations, brining them into contact through the breakdown of the hegemonic order.
Mommy/Daddy/Me

How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant? How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior?

Michel Foucault, 1983

Deleuze and Guattari attempt to intervene in the inevitable ways that fascism is coded through the intentions and actions of resistance at the level of the body. As I argue in chapter one, it would be a mistake to read Anti-Oedipus as a direct attack on the broad field of psychoanalysis. While key disagreements can and should be taken up, it is not without acknowledgements of the important interventions made by psychoanalysis; what they take from psychoanalysis is often lost. They say, “Psychoanalysis is like the Russian Revolution; we don't know when it started going bad. We have to keep going back further. To the Americans? To the First International? To the secret Committee?” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 55). While their tone might be read as mockery, it gets to the core of the disagreement. It is not simply that psychoanalysis has no merit for Deleuze and Guattari, it is that in the multiplicity of forms that it has taken, there has become a less central way to conceptualize psychoanalysis as a project that has not been overcoded.

As is the case with transversality, there is an essential distinction to understand between the molecular and molar as they relate to the psychoanalytic unconscious. The unconscious belongs to the micropsychic realm of physics and the micrological body (283). In most cases, they use the molecular strata of desiring production to explain this distinction. That is to say that molecular desiring-production would come to overtake molar aggregates of sovereign power that subsume desire in psychoanalysis’ unconscious
They argue that desire is repressed only because it has the capacity to overtake any established order. Desire is an accelerant, an explosion, and an opportunity to abolish a given social terrain. This is not simply to say that desire functions a priori to revolutionary strategy, to the contrary, desire is revolutionary and can only be tolerated should the State apparatus be shattered (120).

Their alternative to psychoanalysis is *schizoanalysis*. A full examination of these two propositions side-by-side would be too extensive here. However, briefly, they are both interpretations of the unconscious (which Deleuze and Guattari say Freud was brilliant to propose) that are contrasted through the process of personalization and differentiated through molar and molecular strata. Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari’s most salient argument against psychoanalysis’ treatment of the unconscious is that it is primarily Oedipal, rendering it structural and ideological (coded).32 Beyond Freud and Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari place ideology in the molar realm. They also treat the psychoanalytic unconscious as expressive and not repressive, but only in the sense of the imaginary or symbolic. Psychoanalysis is the statistical counter to schizoanalysis. It draws its prefixal relation from schizophrenia, which they repeatedly return to as a critique of psychoanalysis and all of the social codes that is bound to the personalization of the unconscious.

32 Ideology is a main target of Deleuze and Guattari. It is also a prominent disagreement that they leverage against Marx, though contributions regarding ideology might be best attributed to Engles, rather than Marx, they take particular issue with false consciousness; things are true, but only through false consciousness. If ideology functions at the superstructure of a given civilization, Deleuze and Guattari assert that this primarily fails to account for fascism and thus the problem of desire.
It is, for them, the abstract but still material, productive, and concrete interpretation; the nonfigurative machine that allows for engagement with flows, intensities, and desiring-machines (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 381). They distinguish between these two interpretations as two poles of delirium: the molecular schizoanalysis and the molar psychoanalytic investment which is the primary difference between what turns revolutionary and what turns fascist, respectively.

It would be a misunderstanding to think that schizoanalysis is a mere substitute for processes of identification drawn from the analyst. In a provocative passage, they suggest that the schizophrenic enacts a trans* becoming:

He does not substitute syntheses of contradictory elements for disjunctive syntheses; rather, for the exclusive and restrictive use of the disjunctive synthesis, he substitutes an affirmative use… He is not simply bisexual, or between the two, or intersexual. He is transsexual. He is trans-alivedead, trans-parentchild. He does not reduce two contraries to an identity of the same; he affirms their distance as
that which relates the two as different. He does not confine himself inside contradictions; on the contrary, he opens out and, like a spore case inflated with spores, releases them as so many singularities that he had improperly shut off, some of which he intended to exclude, while retaining others, but which now become points-signs (*points-signes*), all affirmed by their new distance” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 77).

Transing the functions of alive and dead, is an affirmation that *trans* is irreducible to a singularity, is the primary purpose in following the transversal routes of molecular revolution. The difference in kind or regime is no longer satisfied by dualisms of one or the other. Rather, this extends to differences between the molar and the molecular—these formations offer nothing if set up in a binary fashion. Desiring-machines, social-machines, axiomatic coding and decoding, are all, in short, partial objects that function molecularly within the unconscious (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 324). Thus, we see the distinction they draw as one that does not foreclose itself, but is placed wherever a singularity exists, at the same time.

**Molecular Revolution: A Case Study**

What is politics? Deleuze and Guattari’s extensive workings of the political and micropolitical requires inquiry into what is to be achieved by an extended investigation of what the molecular and molar are or can be. Despite any sweeping generalizations that have occurred in this work thus far, I do not believe that politics is dead in any nihilistic sense. Changes in the flows of information, the speed of sharing information, the intensity it is accessed, all mark a certain kind of political mobilization that effectively makes obsolete previous forms of uprising that have since been territorialized, even if we
continue to draw inspiration and strategy from them. Simultaneously, the state apparatus has formed new kinds of control, both social and political, that force this alive-dead politics to necessarily shift. But there is another kind of politics, a molecular politics, that has managed to follow the transversal curves of these shifts. This molecular politics, micropolitics, or molecular revolution, is a politics obsessed with the immediate, every day, every minute, need for revolt; it is the formation of desire in the social field that demands the possible. These revolutions, while not always tangible, are political.

Experimentation with these conceptual tools finds an exciting exploration in Guattari’s *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, a collection of texts, interviews, case studies, and transcripts assembled with Suely Rolnik, a Brazilian psychoanalyst, cultural theorist, and a rare sustained collaborative partner of Guattari. Rolnik contextualizes these texts as taking place during an extended visit in August and September of 1982, following Brazil’s first direct election after almost 20 years of dictatorship. There, Guattari engaged in a number of formats across five states. There is a primary goal in reading *Molecular Revolution* of understanding what the namesake is meant to signal. The text itself provides less elaboration of molecular revolution as a concept but offers important insights to what molecular revolution might mean in an embodied field. In other words, the collection functions as a test site in which readers can see the concept elaborated “on the ground.”

As he exposes in *Molecular Revolution*, at some point in his youth, Guattari took half of a course to become a pharmacist. It was there that he picked up the terms molecular and molar that would be threaded through his work. He would later draw and analogy between the operations of the molecular and molar with that of quantum physics
wherein matter came to be understood as corpuscular and undulatory at the same time. The same would hold, he says, for the molar and molecular; “social struggles are molar and molecular at the same time” (Guattari and Rolnik 2008, 179). As I elaborate shortly, a small, but key distinction here is that the molar and molecular are not synonyms of the micro and macro, rather, they cross each other (the molar can emerge from the micro and the molecular can emerge from the macro). One cannot separate the molar and molecular into distinct fields where they hold some stable sense of distance. Rather than singularity, Guattari speaks of processes of singularization. He offers the example of a “militant homosexual group” to explain: “…we see that this…can’t be mechanically classified into these two categories (molar and molecular). There will always necessarily be a certain functionality that is molar—for example, the fact that some time or other one may fall into the trap of some kind of representativity, or the fact that feminist militants let themselves be carried away by the star system” (Guattari and Rolnik 2008, 182-83). So, one might be simultaneously militant, waging revolution at the molecular level, but always subject the macrosocial and molar codes they wish to disrupt.

Following this, we can take trans* as an example. At the molar level, we can understand transgender activism to be working at the organization level in attempts to guard against violence, advocate for care and rights, attend to disproportionate statistics of homelessness, poverty, employment discrimination, and so forth. Simultaneously, at the molecular level, the issues raised by attention to the category of transgender (and transgender people) is also about the ways that binaries function at the fault lines of all people’s experience. It not only concerns the lives of transgender people, but all people including those who do not fall in the descriptive purview of trans* since all are engaged
in processes of becoming, albeit at different coefficients of transversality. Thus, while it might operate there, trans* cannot be only be reduced to the molar strata because it would lose its processual singularization. It would be a mistake to read Guattari’s analysis of the molecular as any pure strata. Indeed, it is subject to the same problems of groups that exist elsewhere, namely, fascism or microfascism can also exist at the molecular level. Rather, what is at stake, is that investments exist on the molar level (rights, care, protection) require a singularization at the molecular level (desire) that it not seduced by the processes of reterritorialization (sexism, racism, homophobia, for example).

The question, now, might be slightly reformulated: what is molecular politics? Certainly, molecular revolution does not only concern those who are minoritized through vectors of gender, race, class, sexuality, and so forth; it includes the individuals and groups that challenge majoritarian systems.\footnote{A troubling moment in A Thousand Plateaus: “Answering for race...the criteria for making the distinction(s) are simple, whatever the de facto mixes that obscure them at a given level, at a given moment. The race-tribe exists only at the level of an oppressed race, and in the name of the oppression it suffers: there is no race but inferior, minoritarian; there is no dominant race; a race is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination. Bastard and mixed-blood are the true names of race.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 379). Likely, what they are drawing on is that one does not become-majoritarian. From this vantage, what does it mean to declare whiteness? Sara Ahmed approaches different modes of declaring whiteness in different spaces: academic, social, governmental, and so forth to shore up a basis of these declarations. For example, when one proclaims themselves as racist based on social positioning, it becomes a justification that in fact they are not racist, for true racists are not self-aware enough to admit to such ideologies. These speech acts, which she calls “unhappy performatives”, are unable to “do what they say” given the social landscapes in which they are deployed. She explains the difficulty in writing of whiteness in the first place since it remains true that making whiteness legible is only a project that must be explained to those who do not inhabit it. In other words, Ahmed argues that far from being baseline, the presence of whiteness is loaded and felt to non-white subjects. In this way, one may question her purpose in tracing these declarations. Ahmed argues that the project of whiteness studies is deeply invested in anti-racist intellectual production, and while she is not necessarily critiquing these modes of production, she aims to pull attention to the anxieties that exist within these projects. She is cautious of centering whiteness in projects, even those that aim to deconstruct its meaning, suggesting that they risk promoting a narcissistic recasting of what people of color have always known (Ahmed 2004).}
correct to guard against a leader or ideological program. However, as Guattari clarifies: “On the molecular level it is much more difficult to identify the enemy, because, unlike the situation on the molar level, it is not a class enemy embodied in some leader or other. The enemy in this case is something that is embodied in our friends, in ourselves, in our own ranks, whenever the problem leads to an assemblage of enunciation of a different kind” (Guattari and Rolnik 2008, 188). If politics is a stage choreographed through representations, affects, or dominant investments, a molecular politics would find its place everywhere, with no abiding locale or temporality. In practice, the placement of molecular politics is a process of decoding (loss of a specific form) and requires attention to the “factors of culpabilization” that threaten to overrun transversal and transformative processes (Guattari and Rolnik 2008, 190).

Much like Guattari’s writings against psychanalysis, wherein his critiques are misattributed to a fundamental rejection of Freud (even Lacan), the percolations of Marxism are also important to understand to fill-in the workings of molecular revolution. Guattari says:

If we accept the hypothesis that Integrated World Capitalism is also sustained by the control of the production of subjectivity, we are obliged to recognize that social antagonisms, which were previously confined to the fields of economics and politics, have now shifted. *It is no longer a question merely of*

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34 Guattari calls this the “first (and only) rule of micropolitics, a kind of parameter for analysis of the formations of the unconscious in the social field…be alert to all the factors of culpabilization; be alert to everything that blocks the processes of transformation in the subjective field. These processes of transformation, which occur in various fields of social experimentation, may sometimes be very small and yet constitute the beginning of a much greater mutation. Or not” (Guattari and Rolnik 2008 190).
reappropriating the means of production or the means of political expression, but also of leaving the field of political economy and entering the field of subjective economy (Guattari 2008, 196-7, emphasis in original).

Guattari borrows a great deal from Marx, specifically in the context of molecular revolution, primarily through an understanding of global capitalism, economics, and new forms of subjectivity that emerge through them.\(^{35}\) Like psychoanalysis, Guattari suggests what has been produced in the wake of Marxism (by Marxists rather than Marx himself) is a delirious microfascism that takes aim at the molecular mutations of the world, seeking to reterritorialize them in order to draw strong conclusions about the ways that social fields are ordered.

An essential piece that Guattari draws from Marx is the differentiation between individuality or individualization, in favor of *processes* of singularization. Individuation, for Guattari, is the effect of alienation from singularization. This is an essential clarification and precisely why it is important to think about the ways Guattari insists that molecular revolutions are not abstract things of philosophy, but active practices. As he says “…if we refer only to the phenomena of molecular revolution, we can undoubtedly exert ourselves to transform our personal life (for example, the relation with the body, time, music, cosmos, sex, the environment), and even organize ourselves in groups of

\(^{35}\) The Resistance War Against America (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia): Following World War II, Vietnam remained a war site that triggered molecular politics around the globe. Vietnam is one of the few instances in which the molar organization of the US army lost, even by their own metrics, to the molecular style of the Viet-Cong, both in leadership and tactics. Collusion notwithstanding, it marked a moment of viral coverage of the abject demoralization of capitalist equipment. The justifications of US involvement in Vietnam (anti-communist rhetoric) set off a number of micro-fascist crystallizations that simultaneously ignited micro-revolutionary movements around the globe: a blow to the powers that be, and disgusting; amazing and amazingly terrible.
coexistence to get away from the dominant models” (Guattari 2008, 200). We see this in social movements, and indeed, these practices can create change and perhaps more importantly, can create the terrain in which lives can be bearable, if not livable. But this is only one component, and by no means guarantees substantive shifts across scales or geopolitical topographies.

I disagree with Guattari that these are not, at times, the things of micropolitics. In particular, the counter-networks created by marginalized communities often exist in imperceptible ways, from the interior and exterior. Thus, if we are to consider a group desire, there must be resistance to the idea that desire, true desire, is in anyway analogous to progress or it risks the argument of false consciousness and repression. Still, Guattari provides a great caution here: to engage in long term molecular revolutions is not simply to eschew dominant models, divest from certain kinds of practices in order to cure socials ills, or to simply affirm them philosophically. The adage “history repeats itself” is a molar view of the social body; it is to say that nothing that is has not been before. A molecular revolutionary approach would embrace the acceleration of history, not as a fantasy or parody of itself, but rather a shake-up of desire.

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36 The byproduct, however, can be seen in the current instantiations of trans* life, where biopolitical efforts split trans* people into good and bad populations based on adherence to normative and non-normative protocols.
Working for the Unpredictable

We have to try and think a little about the meaning of revolution. This term is now so broken and worn out, and has been dragged through so many places, that it’s necessary to go back to a basic, albeit elementary, definition. A revolution is something of the nature of a process, a change that makes it impossible to go back to the same point. This, incidentally, goes against the meaning of the term “revolution” when used to refer to the movement of one star around another. Revolution is, rather, a repetition that changes something, a repetition that brings about the irreversible.

Félix Guattari, 2008

We now have the chance to enter into a transmolecular revolution.

When revolution is understood as processual, it lends itself quite well to the operative functions of trans*. Paul B. Preciado’s work in Testo Junkie attends to these swerving molecular mutations that constitute the processual nature of revolutionary possibility beyond a situation or project: “Some will read this text as a manual for a kind of gender bioterrorism on a molecular scale. Others will see in it a single point in a cartography of extinction. In this text, the reader won’t come to any definitive conclusion about the about the truth of my sex, or predictions about the world to come” (Preciado 2008, 12). Preciado suggests that changes to the political and economic activities of capitalism have altered our understanding of gender, sex, sexuality, sexual identity, and pleasure, and extends this to suggest “that this management itself is carried out through the new dynamics of advanced technocapitalism, global media, and biotechnologies” (Preciado 2008, 25). Sexopolitics, Preciado argues, emerge within dominant forms of disciplinary capitalism as fictitious and often nefarious categories of sex, sexuality, and race continue

37 “Revolutions, like history, always bring surprises. By nature, they are always unpredictable. That doesn’t prevent one from working for the revolution, as long as one understands “working for the revolution” as working for the unpredictable” (Guattari 2008, 259).
to dilute western thought. Hormones, or more the use of hormones, become central in discussing what it means to embody and disrupt categories of gender and sexuality in the midst of medico-legal surveillance. Preciado directly engages Guattari and Deleuze’s notion of *becoming* and Preciado thus reads his own body as a molecular revolution, noting that while the concept at inception was perhaps not discussing a trans-becoming per say, it does attend to the ways in which molecular formations collide into new arrangements, producing different things.

Preciado thus preforms a queer trans-racial mutation: the body is no longer relegated to a corpus capable of transmitting and collecting information, but a form which, in engaging with all other intensities, is the “material effect of these semiotechnical exchanges” (Preciado 2008, 161). He establishes a framework in which a micropolitics emerges to disrupt rigid categorization and to cross authorized boundaries. Micropolitics, while more flexible, is no less unsettling than the fantasy of a grand overthrow. In fact, it may be more disruptive as it brings everything into account on a different molecular scale. Mutation, similarly, may not always be imperceptible (though it will be at times). One can work to transform and reroute power through every day micropolitical actions that engage this existential singularity so much so as to move toward the molecular materiality of the body as being constituted by reiterative performativity embracing molecular intensities which carries us in new directions, rhizomatically and virally.

What does revolutionary mean? Is it possible to view it as a mutation that exists at various scales, strata, and substratum, from the molecular to the molar, opening up ways of conceptualizing, through trans*versality, a molecular revolutionary politics that cuts
through, across, and around boundaries of embodiment, politics, and desire? This is a difficult question that necessitates another series of difficult questions. I argue, that within the multiplicity of trans* many folds become available. What remains unclear, but further explored in chapter four, is if these same multiplicities exist across minoritarian experience.

Deleuze and Guattari say “…transsexuality does not let any qualitative opposition between a local and nonspecific heterosexuality and a local and nonspecific homosexuality arise. Everywhere, in this reversion, the innocence of flowers instead of the guilt of conversion” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 74). Here again, trans* troubles the boundaries of both the local and the nonspecific. The purpose is not to locate and expand the various calcifications of trans* political mattering, nor is it to dismiss the work done under that banner. The question is not whether that project is revolutionary or not—it is vital to pursue these trajectories. The purpose is to move from the site of representation to collective processes of singularities in the field and further, to link these transversally, even while structural levels attempt to uproot, coopt, or neutralize.

Territories of Desire

I’ll return here, to Deleuze and Guattari’s rereading Freud’s case of Little Hans in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

Look at what happened to Little Hans already, an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept on BREAKING HIS RHIZOME and BLOTCHING HIS MAP, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him, PHOBIA (they barred him from the rhizome of the building, then
from the rhizome of the street, they rooted him in his parents' bed, they radicled him to his own body, they fixated him on Professor Freud (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 14).

Little Hans, who wished to cross the street to see his friend, Marrielda, was continually turned away by her family who maintained that they were different, in background and in kind. This continued, blocking off territories, foreclosing lines of flight in the assemblage, producing a kind of guilt and shame. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that what Hans needed was not to be relieved of this shame, but rather to be able to articulate himself within the coefficient of transversality that would allow him to create a new place within the assemblage.

We see this happening now, within the context of what it means to be “transgender.” With increasing visibility has come an increased need to articulate (normalized) existence within the assemblage. This, at one level, is about the biopolitical categories of good and bad, moral and deviant, but also that it is precisely the seduction of power that leads one toward the adhere to the capitalist assemblage. The personal difficulty—up to and at the point of death—experienced by many trans* people has naturally led to debates regarding rights, visibility, representation, even the need to use the restroom without threat of harassment. These are the processes elaborated by Foucault (1992). The biolologization of cultural or subjective difference is limited to our current concept of race that make sexual and gender minorities appear as targets of a racializing logic. The regime of sovereignty that Foucault describes is characterized as a “letting live” (or undisciplined life) except when the body is commanded in certain limited ways, up to and including the point of death. As sovereignty became overlain
with the biopolitical, discipline that individualized techniques of population management began to form subjects through diffusions of discipline and self-discipline. The distinction for this argument is not between “discipline” and “sovereignty,” but rather between the level at which discipline operates on individualized corporeality and the level at which biopolitics operates on the population. So, when molar seductions of proper trans-individuality emerge, it is already striated, territorialized, and captured. When taken from the molecular level, this is done precisely by means of trans*formability and the capacity to introduce new repeatable forms, and can, through a viral politics reconfigure assemblages, ultimately producing change at another structural level.

One avenue for this might be taken through Foucault’s conduct and counter conduct which can be understood as follows: first, conduct is a regulated process for biopolitical purposes. Conduct (as a noun) is how people act or behave, or (in the other sense of conduct as a verb) it is the instructed means through which conducts (or practices) become a means of being led from one place to another. “Governmentality” then, is the way in which the State conducts people’s conduct. Transmolecular revolutions would look toward Foucault’s “counter conduct” which serves as a kind of disruption of the basic elements of conduct while still being inside of it. How can counter conduct hold meaningful political effects? What does a revolutionary transmolecular assemblage of transversal counter conducts look like?

Che Gossett points to an aggravation between molar conduct and molecular counter-conduct when they examine a 2009 campaign in New York City that established it as the go-to LGBT tourist destination (2006). This campaign, backed by 1.9 million dollars marked the
historic Stonewall Inn as a tourist stop. Gossett suggests that this declaration affectively marked a closing chapter in which Stonewall, once an explosive site of state violence against queer and trans* people, became a place in which tourists could come and remember the violence as only a distant memory and a reminder of how “far” we have come. In this way, a type of archive is created: “In order for the archive to be constructed information must be economized. Some information must be preserved while other documents are discarded. This privileging of certain forms of evidence, or documentation, is a form of violence” (Gossett 2006, 581). This form of epistemic violence that dwells in the archive, but also in political movements, allows social memory to reinscribe hegemonic and privileged versions of history that continue to inform molar political and social practices. Gossett argues that in spite of these processes that silence the memory of poor queer and trans* people of color, many of which rely on the molecular to agitate the assemblage.

But ultimately, all of this is difficult work, done under abhorrent conditions. It is true, and especially true for minoritized bodies, that the mattering of political life is under siege. To acknowledge the material ramifications of power is not to dismiss the possibilities of molecular revolution any more or less than it would be to say that molar revolutions did not require the molecular level. Transmolecular revolution is already here, where we can see and especially where we cannot:

The difference between these kinds of molecular revolutions and earlier forms of revolution is that before everything was centered on ideology or The Program, whereas mutational models—even if they involve things which appear to be secondary, like fashion—are immediately transmitted to the entire planet. (…) A mutation like that introduced by
microprocessors changes the actual substratum of human existence and, in reality, opens up fabulous possibilities for liberation (Guattari 2009, 29-30).

Essential to Guattari’s philosophy is the understanding that group desire requires “collective equipment” in order to take flight. The first component of this is the capacity of expression, or sign machines, that serve as the affective, ethical, and political aesthetic for the groups internal and external relations. The implication here is not pre-determined, rather, this means harnessing the indeterminate mechanic and semiotic energy of molecular strata (Guattari 2011, 11). Collective equipment operates as conceptual exposition—careful, detailed, loving experiments that can be executed in the social field—that are enunciated through creativity. Like creativity in general, it is extremely rare. Deleuze has famously described theory as a “toolbox,” suggesting that there are questions, concepts, and ways of thinking rather than regimented methods to be implemented. Imagining the physical box (molar) that holds the capacity to transition (molecular), the assemblage extends. Deleuze says: “Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, a practice is necessary for piercing this wall” (Foucault and Deleuze 1972). To pierce, forces intimate contact where the two become one, and the one become many.

Capitalist equipment lays at the intersection of macropolitical and micropolitical struggle. A further distinction between the two: macropolitical struggle is easily visible (for example, protests, unions, voting, challenges to the State). Micropolitical struggles are situated at the same level, but also exceed the territory of State control piercing
through legal and institutional registers. As I explore in chapter four, it is precisely because micropolitics is situated at the same level that seemingly ordinary incidents can intensify the assemblage. A revolution can erupt at any time. If trans*, taken as an opening, can find any number of landing points, we can imagine that a transmolecular revolution can also erupt at any time, for any reason, and land or attach to other singularities in unpredictable ways that produce irreversible processes that then go on to ignite other processes.

**Transmolecular Revolution**

Remembering the events of May 68 in Paris, we can say now that many of the ideas Guattari (and Deleuze) formulate in its wake have much to do with molecular revolution. For the sober reality of May 68, in spite of the things it set off, it was also consumed in ways that make clear that it was neither independent nor excused from the mechanisms of production that govern molar insurrection. Deleuze and Guattari have argued that *everything is production* since all that is broadcasted is quickly consumed and reproduced. Within the assemblage, events are connected to other events, machines to other machines, and it is the desiring of production (desiring-production) that yields production itself (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 6).\(^{38}\) Desiring-machines are what produce the body. They also produce the social constructions (gender, race, sexuality) and the semiotics of the (human) organism. These organizations shrink the coefficients of transversality, cut of access to parts of the assemblage, and eventually we see that the body suffers from the very organization that it has produced. This body, now available to

\(^{38}\) This is where the body without organs (BwO) emerges.
produce and reproduce capitalist equipment, will find a certain comfort with the world it has created at the molar level. Instead, I argue that we should look toward a body that remains unproductive, inconsumable, and ungovernable. This body is intensity, harnessing the molecular, transversally attaching to singularities in the field; it is antiproduction opting instead to engage collective equipment:

Direct discourse is a detached fragment of a mass and is born of the dismemberment of the collective assemblage; but the collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice. I always depend on a molecular assemblage of enunciation that is not given in my conscious mind, any more than it depends solely on my apparent social determinations, which combine many heterogeneous regimes of signs. Speaking in tongues. To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my Self (Moi) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 84).

This is not a promise that transmolecular revolution is without the possibility of capture. Trans* bodies are already well under control, becoming visible or remaining invisible but subject to the same biopolitical management strategies that surveil and target all of the population. The benefits that exist even amidst increased surveillance of trans* people are important, and we will continue to organize at this level. Molar power relations serve the important function of gearing politics toward emancipation, even while they continue to hierarchize the social body. They “what” and “why” of my argument for transmolecular revolution is in many ways banal. This is, again, because it is already here. It is the twist
and the swell that contours the molar expressions of sociology, economics, even social movements and provides a vantage point from which to imagine an increased distance from traditional structures of the family, the school, the city, and the self (Guattari 2011, 52).

The seduction of these individualist imaginaries is organized at the molar level; sometimes around crisis (crisis of capitalism, crisis of conscious, crisis of faith) or sometimes around war (war on poverty, war on drugs, war on terror). Rather than fixing it on collective equipment, power wages wars on ideology—it creates fear, disrupts lines of flight, blocks the assemblage, prevents the trans*ing of space or time or body. Instead of fleeing these molar wars, a transmolecular revolution would continue to call them into question, challenging their need to dissolve desire, disorienting logics of cause and effect or structures of interior and exterior. Transmolecular revolutions create the anti-territory at the borderline of striated space. The collective equipment of transmolecular pulsations cannot have a single access point that serves as a temporary goal (for instance, to end sexism or homophobia but still uphold the family or government). The prefixial trans* reminds us that there is always movement taking place, but it should also insist that the multiplicities of crossings are already contaminating one another. These crossings will operate at intersections, at times, but more often they cross chaotically and unpredictably, disrupting the part of the assemblage that they previous belonged to. I don’t argue that trans* prefixes molecular revolutions in order to make them more radical, per se. There is no anteriority provided to the transmolecular revolution aside from its transversality. I argue, however, that trans* opens up more connective points through its nomadic drifts
so much so that the possibility for transversality and transmolecular revolution becomes available.

In Guattari’s words: “The molecular revolution is not hostile to political movements, whether classically contestatory or protest. It simply makes them take flight from inside, and opens them up onto other outsides” (Guattari 2011, 55). He continues that they are not hostile to any localized institutional critiques of sites such as the school, prison, military, and so on, since these all contain objects within them that do not in any way correspond to the institutions where they are set and captured. But these institutions, that include the family, school, prison, or factory, should be extended to the processes of self-management (Foucault) and containment (Heidegger), and even further to the topographies of sociality, desire, and the virtual.

Guattari uses the function of collective equipment to question what the effects of modes of power (hierarchies, bureaucracies, phallocracies) would be if they were required to ‘let go of the control levers’ (Guattari 2011, 59). For the purpose of considering the transmolecular revolution, it is important to remember the between the relationship between collective equipment and the collective assemblage. The collective assemblage (the mechanic assemblage and the enunciation of the assemblage) resists any totalizing logics of capitalist enterprise, law, or institution primarily through the political and the social, though this is most certainly a reduction. In the collective assemblage, politics exists through molar power and molecular desire. It is then crossed by the microsocial and the macrosocial.

At the molar level of power, a micro-equipment of power and macro-equipment of power are produced. The micro-equipment of power refers to a molar politics that
takes aim at the body or psyche (the parent who teaches the child) while the macro-equipment of power directs a molar politics toward the group (army, police). If we take trans* corporeality as an example of this, we can say that molar politics exists in the realm of quantification where one must count to matter. We see this shuttled through claims to legal documents or healthcare, but also in the development of prisons for trans* people or the emergence of the trans* panic defense. If the former example (legal documentation or healthcare) could be considered “good” it is also imbued with the latter macro-equipment wherein the state seeks to shuttle power through the group. But, of course, macro-equipment cannot capture the group entirely and thus deploys the micro-equipment at the molar level through various narratives of psychiatric conditions or brokenness. In these two cases, though there are many more, it is not to say that healthcare is bad or violence against trans* people in cis prisons is good. It is to say that arguing for trans* inclusion in healthcare within certain paradigms reinscribes the systems that barriers to healthcare hold tightly to. Advocating for a trans* prison cedes that prisons are an inevitable structure, and rather than questioning the legitimacy of them in the first place, the trans* prison rearticulates law and order as the site of justice. In short at the molar level of politics we concede infinitely, in more and more diffuse configurations, and in ways that simultaneously achieve and spoil.

39 Similar to what Deleuze and Guattari term double articulation, Jacques Derrida (2012) reminds us that time is out of joint. This disjunction works as a recoil or double gesture that looks for the singularity of the radical other always to come.
At the molecular level, the collective assemblage produces both a micro-assemblage of enunciation and a macro-assemblage of enunciation. The micro-assemblage of enunciation operates as a molecular politics of desire that aims to “change-life” while the macro-assemblage of enunciation takes the same molecular politics of desire and aims it at the group. Here, the compositions work in two ways. In one direction, the micro-assemblage of desire sparks sociopolitical upheaval. In the other, macro-assemblages of enunciation ignite molecular revolutions. Taking trans* corporeality again, we can think of the former process as the site of riot (Compton Cafeteria Riots or Stonewall, for example) which produce a number of trans* phenomena in the vibrations that follow. Or taken another way, the micro-enunciation of the molecular might look closer to a politics of abolition, a call to fundamentally change life. In the latter case we can consider something like the alteration of queer kinship networks, trans* art (in all fashions), and the changing of relationships to the body, sex, work, or perception. This is the rhizomatic cartography of the collective assemblage where any number of compositions can emerge (Guattari 2011, 77).

Despite the way that I have lined this up, it remains much more complicated as these not only cross between one another, but in every direction: the molecular with the macro, the micro with the molar, and so on. What makes passage between these levels possible is collective equipment. This could also be called social transversality and does not depend on a program or plan, does not abide by any ideology or category, and has to be remade every time. This social transversality can emerge within concreate machines, but ultimately possess what Guattari terms an “abstract deterritorialization machine” in order to guarantee transversality. Moving through the interstices of assemblages and
equipment means to engage these abstract machines, passing from one to another, to be transmolecular (50). And yet, we know from Guattari and from living our lives that none of this guarantees the conditions nor the emergence of revolution. The pacification of the masses, the privatization of radicalism, or the usurpation of bodies (human or otherwise) over centuries means the most petrifying state of things is yet to come.

Deleuze argues that we do not repeat because we repress, rather that we repress because we repeat. The amnesia that results from this cycle is in part because some things are more bearable than others, allowing us to mediate our embodied experiences within material worlds that are otherwise intolerable. In other words, we may deceive ourselves to make embodied experiences more livable, but these repetitions are doomed for capture:

It is only on a much bigger scale that this heap of empty consciousnesses might succeed in launching super-deterritorialized modes of semiotisation, such as speech, writing, religious or scientific symbolism, that can create the conditions for a reversal of the situation. But in the last resort it is only on the scale of revolutionary—or perhaps one ought instead to say ‘trans-revolutionary’—collective assemblages that this excess of consciential deterritorialization, this detachment of everything, this de-short-circuiting of the real and of desire, can produce a new reality and a new desire (Guattari 2011, 200, emphasis added).

The concepts that Guattari continues to put to the center of his philosophy are often prefixed by ‘trans.’ In this case, the trans-revolutionary collective assemblage provides the reality of a new desire, not of repression (psychoanalysis) or economics (Marxism). History does not repeat itself, rather it is remade through difference and repetition. As
transmolecular revolutions unfold, seeking transversal enunciations within collective political life, we will come to know the ways that trans* works to cut together and apart. Transmolecular revolution, here and now, means to chart these new arrangements that make politics matter.
Chapter Three: Urban Jungles

On the night of April 19, 1989, Trisha Meili was brutally assaulted, raped, and nearly killed in New York’s Central Park. According to a brief police investigation, the suspects were five black and brown teenagers, part of a larger confluence of gang activity that involved carrying out random assaults as a part of initiation and belonging. As I note in the introduction, this practice became known as “wilding”. Mainstream media outlets and police reports mobilized wilding to reference animalistic behavior in ways that are rhetorically similar to contemporary mobilizations of terms such as rioters and looters. Specifically, wilding was meant to signal particular forms of violent attacks associated with gang initiations. It has a questionable etymology. The police suggested that it was a term used by the central park five suspects to describe violence associated with gang initiation, while the suspects argued in court that the term was attributed to them in attempts to connote racialized animality. What would be known as the “Central Park Five case” was contextualized by a number of political events that relied heavily on the political memory of the 60s and 70s and became a frequent touchstone for violence indexed by gang activity, poverty, and people of color.

During this time, New York City was situated in rising statistics of violence and was a politically charged terrain. By the 1980s, the city had experienced an unprecedented spike in violent crime on the heels of serial killer David Berkowitz, or “son of Sam.” Police logs in the early 80s logged approximately 250 felonies per week on the subway, dawning the formation of the Guardian Angels, a volunteer organization that patrolled the subway under the banner “keeping it safe.” Simultaneously, the police state
emerged in new ways alongside racially motivated vigilantes who were excused from their crimes, inputting a collective lack of empathy for their victims.

This imaginary of the racialized urban jungle is set amidst the uptake of neoliberal policies shifting the welfare state to a carceral state, resulting in dramatic increases in drug and crime convictions and the expansion of prisons, which emerged directly from the political memory of the new social movements of the 1960s. These flows contribute to the terrain in which political mobilization today has been forced to comprehend and contend with and that trans*, as it attaches to gender and race, is currently administered through. It was on the back of the 1970s in which Donald Trump erected the Trump tower in 1983. A building that was meant to do two major things: jumpstart Trump’s career and Manhattan investment portfolio, and more importantly, to signal a kind of opulence that offered stark contrast to the sociopolitical reality just below its gold faucets and onyx floors. Indeed, the stated purpose was housing “the best people in the world” and was meant to create the playground in which the wealthy might defend society against the poor, violent, disposable subjects waging war in the city streets. To drive the poor away, to hide them in the alley, to hide them in prison.

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s foundational text on intersectionality, *Mapping the Margins* and Félix Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies*, both written nearly 30 years ago draw our attention to the violence of Donald Trump’s early campaigns against poor people of color, shuttled through claims of prosperous redevelopment and the resurgence of the “good cop.” As previously mentioned, Guattari makes Trump equivalent to algae, binding to ecosystems, entwining and proliferating through excessive development and the usurpation of resources. In this oxygen-deprived social field, Guattari says that, “men
like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely…taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he ‘redevelops’ by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness.” (Guattari 1989, 29). At the same time, Crenshaw takes up Trump’s violent collusion with the police state following the Central Park Five case, offering further opportunities for discussing the relationship between theories of assemblage and intersectionality in black feminist thought. Crenshaw draws parallels between the historical lynchings of men of color when faced with allegations of violence against white women and suggests that the $85,000 ad campaign organized by Trump exposed the ongoing media project to link racism to rape in the United States (Crenshaw 1991, 1267). Descriptors of black men as savages, wolfpacks, and beasts facilitated Trump’s ad that used the public’s fear of violence to support pervasive racialized imaginaries of blackness as dangerous. For Trump, the project of gentrification worked hand-in-hand with the demonization of certain embodiments; it became much easier to redevelop New York and Atlantic City if the previous occupants could be criminalized and caged.

Crenshaw’s analysis of Trump is a good starting place to begin to think about the ways that gender-based violence, race, and imperialist capitalism can function on uncertain grounds. All five suspects were exonerated of the charges in 2002 following an external confession and given the near absence of all physical evidence and coerced confessions, a 41-million-dollar settlement was issued to the five men. Regardless, it is less shocking with this brief sketch to imagine why in 1989, discussing the Central Park Five case, Trump tells Larry King “Let’s all have hate for them…maybe more hate is what we need.” Indeed, while it is shuttled through different imaginaries of race or
gender depending on the motivation, the rhetoric that Trump deployed in his 2015 presidential campaign and subsequent presidency is certainly no different that the rhetoric he deployed in the 80s and the colonial rhetoric deployed centuries before him. This is because it works—it is the language of war, of profit, of masculinity, and is used to withdraw humanness from the other; to make the other killable if not already dead. On the surface level, it mobilizes a myriad of -ism and -phobias. But just below the surface, where we are struggling to breathe, it exposes the gap that exists between the intended function of identity and how identity is mobilized as a political strategy.

Habits, large or small, are formed through articulations of memory that conceive of the very *materiality* that identity wishes to rest upon and operates in the move between already dead and not yet viable. The proposition that minoritized identities are marginalized purely through history neglects the very ways that social landscapes operate, and more importantly how those identities become captured within biopolitical logics that force the habitual reproduction of the other. In other words, these state-sanctioned habits often choke the revolution at the stage of revolt, from our classrooms to the ballot box, on the football field and in the street. How do we think of these terrains as critical to feminist debate right here, right now? We need to revisit intersectionality as it emerges in the contemporary short hand of on-brand feminism and be cautious of its manipulations. Indeed, it is an intersectional analysis that asks us to think, concurrently, about the lives of the five black and brown men convicted of the Central Park Five assault as well as the grounds that make Meili’s violent assault possible.

As a major turn in the feminist analysis of violence against women of color, intersectionality has analyzed the ways in which different, sometimes contradictory
identities interact, creating new spaces to deepen understandings of embodiment. Intersectionality’s brilliance is that as a framework, it allows us to identify, in a very material way, where power clusters and how it is exercised; where it seeps into our bones and quite literally, kills us. Simultaneously, it has re-invested in the humanist subject; the human and the human’s experience once again becomes the point of political departure leaving it open to a myriad of subjective interpretations that have, in some takes, divorced it from its origins in the experience of women of color and domestic violence, in ways that can only create possibility if we proceed with caution. There is a growing trend in feminist thought to rethink intersectionality alongside emergent theorizations of assemblage theory, a concept that is beholden to the work continental philosophy. Jasbir Puar, brokering one of the first elaborations of this tension, points to a perceived disagreement between intersectionality—drawn from Crenshaw’s use of intersectionality—and assemblage theory—indexed by Deleuze and Guattari’s wordplay. For Deleuze and Guattari (and for the purpose of this project I am especially interested in Guattari’s handling) the assemblage provides a broader notion than those of structure, system, form, process, or montage. It is comprised of heterogeneous parts, from the biological, to the social, to the imaginary, and as I discuss in chapter one, is first proposed as a refusal of Freud’s use of repression and complex (Guattari and Rolnik 2008). Intersectionality and assemblage theories both bring about spatial questions that, at times, collide. While this debate can on the surface be articulated through these two schools of thought, it has long been present in the literature of feminist and queer theory and has especially saturated feminisms of color that have looked to the in-between as a site of productive intensity. The emergence of trans* studies as an institutional field is
particularly situated in this debate, not to resolve or reproduce, but to move across. By no means do I suggest we should dispense with an intersectional analysis nor embrace assemblage theory whole cloth. Rather, I debate what scales and dimensions can be thought with and through intersectionality, contextualized by the assemblage, beyond the contours of identity politics. Here, I examine the ways that identity, experience, and representation construct and are constructed by structural, institutional, and affective inequalities and also interrogate how we can mobilize politics at molar and molecular scales, both of which offer opportunity for social change.

Further, a crucial component of this debate is the sustained question of what we want the conceptual framework of trans* to do. How can we conceptualize trans* as an animating addition across scales? If trans* is always both/and, it cannot locate a landing place—even if that place is unknown—without crossing a boundary, or without the cut that cuts both together and apart. So, trans is both lively and death-dealing, negative and positive, void and present—and the task of feminist debate is to say how, when, where, why, and on what terms. From this vantage, trans* has both reinforced prevailing ways of knowing and interrupted them, at times making visible cultural contradictions, providing openings to insurgent forms of struggle, or reformulating dominant cultural narratives of difference and identity. In the tradition of feminists of color who have advocated for a liberatory forms of consciousness raising, this debate centralizes at least two points: First, whether or not mapping or documenting the current accelerants of trans, so often conditioned by the legitimation of racialized exploitation, can reframe ways of seeing into new kinds of consciousness emerge. And, second, if this multiplicity of the object
and percept of trans can share its theoretical subtext with blackness or if blackness itself it a critique of the framework of multiplicity.

**Darwin’s Trees**

*Archaeology* was the term Foucault first used to explain his relationship to historical excavation. It predominantly relied on how one could examine the discursive events of the past in order to understand the history of the present; what can the past teach us about today? He later infused his term archeology with a consideration of *genealogy*, which shared much conceptual vocabulary and yet offered an explicitly political turn wherein he began conceptual tracing, looking for what emerges in his investigations of transcendental systems of power and knowledge.40 Foucault’s genealogy offers a way to apprehend the terrain in which biopolitical fractures provide the basis to understand the ways that power distinguishes what is considered true from what is consider false.

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40 Ann Stoler’s work offers a nuance to the relationship between race and sexuality which is useful in the broader brushstroke of this framework. Stoler argues a lacuna is Foucault’s assessment of sexuality is that it lacks a sufficient analysis of race and racism. Though it may be argued that Foucault attends to these topics elsewhere, Stoler focuses on, arguably, Foucault’s most cited text, *The History of Sexuality* in which Foucault explores Sigmund Freud’s repressive hypothesis, Stoler critiques Foucault’s archeology of the emergence of sexuality within a Eurocentric geographical context. Her argument is that by excluding her addition, Foucault missed the importance of race and colonization. In fact, she argues that the very processes that Foucault outlines are often based processes of colonization. She argues that this is intimately tied to Foucault’s own geographic and identity contexts, and in this way, opens up a space to find Foucault useful, if still insufficient for her own purpose; Foucault links techniques of race and biopower, but stumbles when he does not link sexuality and race. Stoler does not disagree with Foucault’s assessment that biopower is central when considering the production and maintenance of racism through disciplinary power aimed at the body and devotes time to Foucault’s lectures in *Society Must Be Defended*, to utilize these arguments in support of her own critique (See *Race and the Education of Desire* 1995).
There are too many precedents in the genealogy of black studies, women of color feminisms, trans* studies, philosophy, geography, and posthumanism to be fully satisfied here. Instead, I draw some conceptual points that might be read as substratum to the larger questions I posed in my exploration of trans*versality (chapter one) and transmolecular revolution (chapter two). What is most vital to my concern is the question of how we can make changes to our global socioeconomic, corporeal, and political modes. Drawing from articulations of black and trans* with and against groundings in women of color feminism, I rhetorically set this chapter in the “urban jungle” to shore up the complications between spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces (Lefebvre) and think through the scales where hierarchies of life are implemented, exercised, and maintained. Thus, rather that centering on a specific space—city, country, region—I imagine the ‘urban jungle’ as a composite topography characterized by spaces of difference that characterize space more broadly. This chapter does not aim to fully account for the production of identity categories, rather, my concern is how we might theorize the revolutionary political happenings at work in the attempts to deterritorialize the boundaries between categories of difference.

To begin, for Charles Darwin the tree—endowed with generalities above and particularities below—is the primary way life has been molded. The familiar image of the tree—the roots, truck, branches, and leaves—is traceable well before Darwin’s interest in questions of selected modification (in particular “the tree of life” or “the tree of knowledge”). Following his observations in the Galapagos Islands, Darwin illustrated a small sketch of the phylogenetic, or family, tree that would ultimately support Darwin’s understanding of the evolutionary relationship between species. The humble sketch,
marked at the top by the proposition “I think,” brought new life into the mythical and religious notions of the tree, offering a social-scientific understanding of relations.

Figure Six: Charles Darwin’s Tree of Life

In contrast, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s positing of the book as an assemblage theorizes a curious distancing from the tree, which offers the book its very materiality. Their refusal of the tree relies, in part, on twentieth-century scientific advances that unsettle Darwin’s tree, namely the possibility of cross-pollinating genes that do not anchor themselves to the roots of the tree, but rather to the molecular abundance of species. Deleuze and Guattari note Darwin’s contribution in coupling species and their milieus, thus, when they advocate that we abandon the tree in favor of

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41 Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between the root-book and the book as rhizome. The root-book, which might be best understood in the context of Darwin’s genealogy operates through what they call the “word of God,” signaling a kind of unwavering truth whereas the book as rhizome operates through multiplicity; it can be read from anywhere.
the rhizomatic knowledge model, they retain the importance of the tree’s sun-loving compression and excretion. The divergence lies in the molecular principles that are unaccounted for in Darwin’s tree. They argue that form does not predate a given population, as Darwin suggested, but that the population chops the milieu through multiplicities that differ in kind (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 48).

As I have argued, the tree is also ripe with metaphor—in the jungle and elsewhere—one that lends itself quite seamlessly to the practice of genealogy. For Darwin, the abundance of life, variations of patterns within species, and evolutionary shifts might account for diversity beyond the reasoning of then popular religious narratives. Darwin argues that species come to populate the tree in different locations, and their proximity in the arborescent diagrammatic model indicates relationality between species. The principle characteristic of the tree, rather than hierarchical, represents a collective organization and mutating connection between species. Central to Darwin’s model is whether animals are defined by their form or by their function. Darwin’s encounter with finches, wherein he attempted account for the dramatic change in their beaks suggested that the selected modifications in their beaks linked to questions of song production and the protection of territory. Despite dramatic differences in beak size and shape, however, Darwin would classify them all as finches. As such, following Darwin’s tree, one wants to say human culture is only possible through animal nature—in other words, evolution has produced sexually differentiated animals. The social production of difference in animals (where one sex has come to represent the other sex) has subsequently facilitated the cultural privileging of masculinity that allows us to imagine inherited biological privileges. Similarly, the value of whiteness can be
understood as inherited, but only insofar as the cultural values of whiteness are inherited. However, to trouble Darwin is to recognize that at times when he speaks of humans (and animals), he mistakes cultural differences for biological differences leaving social inequality unresolved.

Natural selection is, in its reduced short-hand, categorized by “survival of the fittest.” Processes of copulative reproduction (regardless if they lead to proliferation of the species) are categorized by natural selection. Darwin’s theory states that physical differences exist not through climate or geography de facto, but through the process of selection—in which races exist because individual differences are selected through what is appealing or attractive, offering a provocative notion of sexual selection as an engine of variation. If race is a given difference that is magnified through sexual selection, pleasure and pain subsequently renders sexuality dangerous. Indeed, sexuality can be perilous, and reason, mobile activities, and safety come to impact the social realm so much that agitations of sexuality can be quite agonizing. Modern philosophy has followed this trajectory (even if we do not wish to do so) because we have yet to resolve some of the major oppositions between mind and matter, reason and mechanics, and nature and mind (as conceptualized in the work of Descartes). In Darwin’s terms, multiple variances among humans (and animals) should not present inherent class

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42 Natural selection is connected to Darwin’s idea of the “principle of preservation.” This is described as “…the preservation of the fittest, of the most appropriate existences in given and changing circumstances, not the most victorious species—the ‘winners’ of evolutionary struggle at any particular moment—but those most open and amenable to change” (Grosz 2004, 20). Whereas natural selection discusses advantages a species has in order to adapt to their environment, sexual selection “…depends on the advantage which certain individuals have over others of the same sex and species solely in respect of reproduction” (Darwin 2007, 280).

43 Further, feminist theory, anti-racist theory, anti-colonial theory, etc., have inherited these oppositions, at times uncritically.
difference, but should be understood, in part, as the limits of environment as well as what is appealing. Of these false propositions, he says:

We will first consider the arguments which may be advanced in favour of classing the races of man as distinct species, and then the arguments on the other side. If a naturalist, who had never before seen a Negro, Hottentot, Australian, or Mongolian, were to compare them, he would at once perceive that they differed in a multitude of characters, some of slight and some of considerable importance. On inquiry he would find that they were adapted to live under widely different climates, and that they differed somewhat in bodily constitution and mental disposition (Darwin 1871, 234).

It is the use of terms such as differentiated “bodily constitution and mental disposition” that have uncritically produced anti-black scientific literature in the wake of Darwin’s thought, incorrectly deducing that Africans were evolutionary less than the colonizer, occupying some space between apes and humans. While this might have been preemptively refuted in Darwin’s work, arboreal hierarchies placed through categorizations of gender, race, and class have emerged through such observations, hastily anchoring themselves to a hypothesis of hierarchical dominance or perceived differences in intellect and physical characteristics (Darwin 1871, 241).

A critique of Darwin’s tree leveraged by Deleuze and Guattari might help explain the ways that social Darwinism, intentionally or not, has proliferated teleological narratives of anti-black racism. In the branches of social Darwinism, Deleuze and Guattari question the effects of coding on molecular populations when they are evaluated by molar populations. They suggest that these kinds of genealogical renderings when
evaluated through molar entities can only be understood as a relationship between two, rather than the molecular process of many. Processes of mutation are not sufficiently accounted for in Darwin’s evolutionary motif resemblance through shared kinship (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 234). Whereas Darwin did not set out to suggest that species achieve perfection through selection process, the uptake of social Darwinism has mobilized intellectual properties, in particular, to the relationship between animals, blackness, and whiteness. Darwin’s own brilliance takes a somewhat ‘modern’ example in the post-publication reception of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. The text, which encompassed decades of scientific research was met with fierce criticism from religious leaders and followers. To articulate that humans may not be a product of divine creation, but rather an evolved species was radical in its time. However, as modern society has advanced to largely accepting the theory of evolution, the devaluation of blackness has shifted its rhetoric to focus on blackness as less evolved.

A 2011 New York Post cartoon depicted two police officers standing, befuddled over a dead chimpanzee. The caption, “They’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill” invokes the author of the bill, then United States President Barack Obama. The cartoon’s invocation of the animal highlights the discursive residue of antiblackness in social Darwinism. Set against the 1874 Faustin Betbeder cartoon of Darwin pictured below, we see the cultural value of the human and the cultural value of whiteness collide, and more precisely the interweaving of animal characteristics, blasphemy, and blackness. In making these analogous, sociopolitical flows (anxieties)

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44 For a collection of critiques see David L. Hull’s text *Darwin and his Critics: The Reception of Darwin’s Theory by the Scientific Community*. 
have served to lock into place racist ideologies that continue to maintain and justify the ill treatment of black people.

The cartoons above elucidate a paradox in which the pictorial representation of political narratives often distinguishes sharply the alive/dead border, but often fails to make this distinction salient, and arbitrarily puts it into place. The negative gesture between blackness and the animal, or what Mel Y. Chen invokes in the term *animacy*, shuttles through humans, animals, matter and interstitial spaces as they engage with power and identity (Chen 2012, 24). Darwin says: “The great sin of Slavery has been almost universal, and slaves have often been treated in an infamous manner. As barbarians do not regard the opinion of their women, wives are commonly treated like slaves. Most savages are utterly indifferent to the suffering of strangers, or even delight in witnessing them” (Darwin 1988, 94). Certainly, the ‘delight’ of witnessing speaks to the sadistic impulses of the human, but also to what the human is capable of repressing, and through intent or ambivalence, repeating.
There is also a component of duration in the ontology of race. It is a question of how biopolitically, race and racism have pivoted under the rubric of ‘progress,’ masking deeply held beliefs that whiteness is inherently superior—this is precisely the trouble with the phylogenetic tree. The more muddled and camouflaged these views of superiority become, the more we must wonder if race is a valuable route for social organization, and thus social change. The cultural phenomenon of slavery, often justified through animality discourses, is of central concern to any politics concerned with its effects and certainly to the ways that political frameworks have shifted in the wake of the abolition of slavery. We can take any number of examples, but we must crassly wonder what the limits of cruelty are when we turn the human into the same bodies that are consumed for nourishment. Such a project necessitates attention to these complicated processes of capitalism, or it risks picking-and-choosing within a socially constructed frame. What are the possibilities afforded to biopolitical control when the murder of a black child is justified through the very lexicon employed to produce a cost-effective steak dinner? When the auction block can feature the slave or the cow? The discursive repetition that memes blackness and the animal is at the very core of the anti-black project.

The repetitive insistence that differences necessitate some form of categorization cannot be denied; in the deployment of Social Darwinism, hierarchies can become raced, gendered, and classed. The effects of this repetition can be seen in the work of Patricia Hill Collins, who has argued that the linking of Black women and animals is especially evident in much nineteenth-century scientific literature, and the anthropological comparison of one to the other has unsurprisingly led to racist discursive links between
Africa, blackness, animals, and deviant behavior in the late-twentieth century (Collins 1999, 140). 45 Collins argues that the associations between blackness and animals provides the basis of justifiable violence toward black bodies. These justifications often play out on various political stages as the genealogy of “scientific” literature proliferates anti-black sentiments through depictions of blackness as unworthy of investment or protection even within a larger matrix of biopolitically managed diversity (Collins 1990, 167). Here, Collins provides a healthy anxiety for thinking through the diagram of the tree, which, when taken literally ignores the production that facilitates its life. Collins shows us how the linkages between questions of labor and proliferation are politically codified on the black body through processes of sexual objectification and economic abuse; practices that are key when we consider the ways in which under violent capitalism, certain bodies are made available for work, trade, consumption, and murder, for the profit of others (she says, like animals, slaves are bred against their will). She argues that the sexual and economic objectification of blackness can be so extensive that the Other disappears, such is the case with the likening of blackness to breeding or pain tolerance vis-à-vis slavery; the slave child represents a commodity and the slave girl as the producer of more slaves (Collins 1990, 69-76).

Collins’ analysis provides, on the one hand, the explanation for how racism is ordered in social fields. One the other, it also draws closer the idyllic solution offered by a propinquity of difference. Progress narratives often rely on the slippery notion that familiarity with difference leads to shifts in psychic understanding, often dubbed

45 See also Watney 1990 and Adams and Donovan 1995.
‘tolerance’ or ‘acceptance.’ Sharon Patricia Holland questions if proximity can facilitate the conditions to dismantle racism, or if in fact, familiarity with difference reproduces the very underpinnings that articulate and proliferate racism and its byproduct, race (Holland 2012, 19). The problem, as Holland puts it, is: “When race becomes the basis for social organization—determining and fixing not only what we are to others, but also to defining who we are—it gains an immutability that neither pro nor con can shake—it gains ontological might and becomes ‘too high to get over, too low to get under’” (Holland 2012, 7). As such, subjectivity has come into crisis with itself wherein ontology requires an overly capacious understanding of difference. Holland’s analysis challenges the ways that race exists as the nonnegotiable byproduct of Foucauldian racism and asks how black/white binaries reproduce themselves through our failed attempts to disrupt human relations.

Elizabeth Grosz (2011) argues that Darwin’s theory links (biological) sexual and racial differences through an abstraction of the human. For Grosz, ‘Human’ is the name given to ignore the (biological) differences between them. She argues that there are males and females, and perhaps subject positions in between, however the human itself remains an abstraction. Grosz’s advancement of sexual selection relies on the notion that Darwin, in many ways, was unfinished and she offers an enhanced theory of sexual selection (one might call it a feminist reading) to consider the ways in which sexual selection, in its explanation of diversity in nature, accounts for a multitude of diversity. In Darwin’s accounting of racial difference, she says: “Racial differences are…entirely transformable, entirely open to historical and social transformations, though they must always be mediated by sexual relations…Racial differences themselves are the long-term result of
sexual rather than natural selection” (Grosz 2004, 85). Thus, she argues that racial
categorizations that have attached to notions of superiority and inferiority destabilize the
imposition of progress if we accept the Darwinian model of diversity.

However, for Darwin (as is the case with Grosz), sexual selection and natural
selection are inherently linked, even if their functions deviate. In thinking through
diversity as it is frequently mobilized, this poses a problem for other kinds of nuanced
diversity. In particular, we might consider the ways in which Darwin cannot reconcile
same-sex sexuality as it does not properly explain a proliferation of the homosexuality
cross culturally, beyond the notion that the social group must render a social value.

Indeed, Darwin’s observations concerning sexuality are rooted in a heterosexual model—
procreation is explained by what the male and female do to attract one another—where
the secondary sexual characteristics that are responsible for male beauty and performance
are marked by female selection that then, in turn, serves as the method of females to
adapt simultaneously. This is perhaps why Grosz—even in her ontological reordering of
a Darwinian (sexual) difference and the evolution of biological difference—is necessarily
confronted with, and unable to rectify the presence of queer and trans* in nature. She
writes “However queer, transgendered, and ethnically identified one might be, one comes
from a man and a woman, one remains a man or a woman, even in the case of gender-
reassignment or the chemical and surgical transformation of one sex into the appearance
of another” (Grosz 2011, 109). Grosz argues, not that one cannot be queer, trans*, or
ethnically identified, but that the binary of male and female as categorized by natural
selection, is, at its core, necessary for sexual selection to hold up.\textsuperscript{46} In doing so, Grosz illuminates the trouble with the ways that materiality is capacitiated with meaning through techniques of race and gender. The question of being, or \textit{beingness}, abjures these questions of queer, trans*, or racial materialities, narrating them in particular corporeal ways that can be increasingly traced from roots to branches, without consideration of alternate, mutating, molecular possibilities. At the same time, the grounds of the transmutations are troubled by the ways that blackness has been situated within the history of the United States. The constitution of black and trans* as identity categories, the interstitial transversality of black and trans* theorizing, as well as the specific historical and political convergences on the bridges of black feminist theory and contemporary trans* theory, provide a landscape to think through the ways that blackness always already has transness in it (and vice versa), but how we think about this relationship has been obscured.

Part of this question summons Roderick A. Ferguson’s intervening gesture toward a \textit{queer of color critique}, wherein he suggests that knowledge production always stems from a heterogeneous creativity that is not locatable to one place or another and that within this heterogeneity there is an inherent creativity in theory and practice (Ferguson 2004, ix). Following José Esteban Muñoz’s \textit{disidentification} and Louis Althusser’s (re)formulation of historical materialism, Ferguson puts forth an argument bolstered by an intervention in Marxism, revolutionary nationalism, and liberal pluralism that queer of

\textsuperscript{46} Grosz, trailing the existential genealogy of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, is concerned centrally with the category of woman. Emergent work in trans* studies has been increasingly critical of this position, charting an alternative genealogy in the feminist project that passively or actively rejects trans* as anything other than imitation.
color analysis must “disidentify” with historical materialism as to not continue to render race, gender, and sexuality ambivalent.\(^{47}\) That is not to say that queer of color critique cannot build from historical materialism’s workings of social formation, only that it must not allow the silences within those formulations to remain (Ferguson 2004, 10-11). Following Marx, Foucault, and academic traditions of history, sociology, and political economy, he pulls attention to the contradictions that bring about various racial formations and disrupt ideas of uniform racialized, gendered and sexualized identities. His purpose is to put epistemology in conversation with realms of economics and politics to shore up what he is calling “queer of color critique.” This critique stems from anxiety birthed by a shift in governing “cultural norms” to one of “individual desire” produced through racial mixing and practices of sexual identity moving from the purview to the forefront.

As new forms of social management emerge, using ideals of whiteness, masculinity, nuclear family structure and heteronormativity, normalcy becomes a key measurement. He argues that fear of perversion becomes located on black bodies, and by

\(^{47}\) José Esteban Muñoz begins the leverage his critique with an analysis of identity that marks the differences between bodies of power and abjectness, or majority and minority. He says: “The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects. Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self” (Muñoz 1999, 5). It is not his argument that majoritarian subjects do not interface with their own identities, only that the choice is not made difficult to them. Muñoz draws on writers of color that have rubbed up against the pain of identity to begin his project. “Disidentification is meant to offer a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic, one that is calibrated to discern a multiplicity of interlocking identity components and the ways in which they affect the social” (8). Muñoz works to complicate the ways in which political identities often situate themselves against identification with hegemonic identities. Instead, he proposes an alternate to counter-positions: disidentification.
extension those who dared to cross “naturalized” lines of separation (39-41). He looks at the figure of the “transgendered mulatta” and the danger that she and her comrades embody through the performance of fluid gender identity. Moving from this anxiety of fluidity Ferguson turns his attention to the emergence of lesbian feminist critique and begins to deal more seriously with gender and race together, and for him, women of color feminism bolsters his genealogy of queer of color critique. He argues that black lesbian theory and practice became a crucial epistemology in a new era of global capitalism, marking these politics as an intentional distancing from heteropatriarchy, nationalism and liberalism while still maintaining a politics that functioned within the larger constraints of globalization. This is an important moment for Ferguson as women of color critique and queer of color critique converge with mutual enemies of capitalist displacement and disenfranchisement (117). To imagine a queer world is not as simple as flattening identity to serve as a catch-all for difference; without needing to explain what it identity is, we are able to see what it does.

**Genealogies and Geographies of Blackness**

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991, 66) defines the city as the center of social and political life; the center in which wealth and knowledge are accumulated.48 Rather than decaying over a given span of time, he suggests that through various processes, cities accumulate material and virtual capital which confound with

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48 Lefebvre says the city itself is *Oeuvres*. *Oeuvres* translates from French as “work” or, more precisely “works of art and/or monuments.” Lefebvre’s asserts that prior to industrialization, the city exists outright. His three archetypes (that predate industrialization) are the oriental city, the antique city, and the medieval city.
their prior wealth to create centers of commerce, art, and community. Lefebvre shows the ways in which shifting ideologies of alienation and belonging produce urban space and “the right to the city.” He also cautions that when formulating a political praxis, the use of passionate battle-cries demanding a change to society are ultimately romantic if one does not complete the task of producing the appropriate space (59). This is the moment in which Lefebvre slips into the assumption that space is a fully relational human process. Lefebvre instills much responsibility, and places a great deal of confidence, in the hands of the working class. He argues that city dwellers must demand from theory,

49 The city, rural space, as well as the institutions that govern their relations compose society. Lefebvre draws on Gramsci’s hegemony to account for the ways in which the ruling class interfaces with capitalism. The hegemony of the ruling class extends capitalism beyond a one-dimensional economic system. Instead, more than a structure, influence, or technique of violence, capitalism infects through culture, knowledge, and ideology, producing a seemingly self-evident “system.” Lefebvre outlines the ways in which industrialization often positions itself outside the city, where labor, cost of manufacturing and production are more economically sound for large conglomerates. This leaves space in the city open for start-up entrepreneurs to produce on a smaller scale. When profit margins are large enough for large companies, they can “attack” the city, often squeezing out small-scale labor and modest dwellings. Modern gentrification practices follow Lefebvre’s notions of urban ghettos and unattainable spaces of affluence, what he metaphorically describes as the “urban fabric.” While these tracings are useful in understanding the processes of urbanization, it does not fully explain why cities remain fully populated even in worrying conditions. He answers this in part when he argues that the urban fabric penetrates rural space, bringing with it a lure to visit, consume, or occupy the urban core.

50 Harvey says of this demand: “The demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical, open to becoming, to encounters (both fearful and pleasurable), and to the perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty” (Harvey 2012, x).

51 As an extension of this conversation, and in relation to Lefebvre’s own involvement with the events of May 1968, in a recent dialogue concerning debates in radical geography, Simon Springer (2014) suggests that radical geography has too long succumb to Marxism as its back bone. Instead he gestures to traditions of anarchy that predate geography’s Marxist’s leanings. Nathan Clough has argued that we must extend Simon Springer’s call for a return to anarchy within the project of radical geography. Clough argues that while Springer’s argument calls attention to the underappreciated rapport between anarchism and radical geography, Springer omits an essential component of a praxis-oriented anarchogeography. Clough suggests that we all engage, in part, in an anarchist praxis through our sharing of ideas, social interactions, and by taking aims at unbalanced power relations (Clough 2014, 294). While not refuting Springer’s gesture toward (or back to) anarchy as a central tenet of radical geography, Clough offers two direct critiques to Springer’s argument. First, he cautions against the use of a singular political trajectory that isolates particular practices as “anarchist”, thus inherently
activism, and from the “everydayness” of life, a holistic transformation or space through the right to the city. In seeking a politics of the everyday, Lefebvre says:

So long as everyday life remains in thrall to abstract space, with its very concrete constraints; so long as the only improvements to occur are technical improvements of detail...so long, in short, as the only connection between work spaces, leisure spaces and living spaces is supplied by the agencies of political power and by their mechanisms of control—so long must the project of ‘changing life’ remain no more than a political rallying-cry to be taken up or abandoned according to the mood of the moment (Lefebvre 1991, 59-60).

Thus, for Lefebvre, the connections between spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces (what he terms the trialectic) demonstrate the co-constructive aspects of space. He offers a way of understanding the processes in which space becomes experienced and represented, as well as a possible political praxis for disrupting or reconfiguring it. Thus, the urban becomes a kind of jungle in which hierarchies exist and are maintained through biopolitical regimes, anti-black racism, medicalization, and capitalism (while at the same time, it is imagined as a space of knowledge, liberation, and creativity). Thinking through the underpinnings of our social terrains and political landscapes, I look to the cultural turn in human geography alongside black liberation movements in the United States in the 1960s and 70s, to analyze the emergence of racially politicized embodied knowledges as they began to work alongside

pushing other tactics to the side. Second, if as Springer argues anarchism is “un-utopian” at conception, Clough questions what the discipline of geography is to gain by homogenizing a project that must remain inherently anti-hegemonic (295).
and through discourses of class, gender, and sexuality. Taking influence from a large number of philosophical accounts, these theoretical models continue to develop new ways of tracing the impact of social and spatial production. Increased attention to the cultural meaning of social practices, consumptive habits, and political engagements has produced valuable insight, however, attempts to provide answers to the ways in which our notions of space is produced have often relied, unreflexively, on human participation or an inflexible archetype of mattering and are in need of serious consideration of points of connection between embodied identity, radical political movements, space, and social theory that enable important opportunities for trans*versal movement. Conceptualizing this genealogy specifically as a conversation emerging within the cultural turn in human geography alongside black liberation movements in the US looks to analyze the emergence of racially politicized embodied knowledges as they began to work alongside and through discourses of class, gender, and sexuality.

Katherine McKittrick has said “Black matters are spatial matters” (2006). In *Demonic Grounds*, McKittrick examines the ways in which spatial meaning is geographically produced in relation to black women’s geographies. Situated in the tides of the transatlantic slave trade and black diaspora. McKittrick is chiefly attuned to the human experience of the black subject in conjunction with the systematic subordination demonstrated through techniques of violence and control, or, what Sylvia Wynter calls “systematic devalorization of racial blackness” (Wynter 2006, 113). Many of the techniques central to her remapping can be drawn from post-Darwinian thought that was increasingly disrupted by the mobility and forced mobility of bodies. McKittrick assumes—rather than seeks—a historical record of black women’s geographies and in
exploring them she attempts to open “a conceptual arena through which more *humanly workable geographies* can be and are imagined” (McKittrick 2006, xii, emphasis added).

To envisage humanly workable geographies necessitates a disruption of the naturalization of bodies, places, and spaces; these naturalizations are not complete or unmovable, rather, they are spatial practices that compel willful altering.

In scouring the demonic grounds of geographic domination, McKittrick is not working to uncover untold stories or draw a new map, rather, she questions how the discipline might develop humanly workable geographies as a mode of social organization (15). For McKittrick, the disproportionate overrepresentation of *Man* makes evident the relational process of socially constructed space—and one presumes that this figure of Man is that which Darwin envisions through his allocation of selection. Thus, alternate encounters with geography have remained shallow and relegated to a (dis)placed *Otherness*; she argues this Otherness is shadowed by the naturalization and normalcy of Man and maintains “Those who occupy the spaces of Otherness are always already encountering space and therefore articulate how genres or modes of humanness are intimately connected to where we/they are ontologically as well as geographically” (133).

The geographies McKittrick works toward are not always freely accessible. She argues that “dominant geographic patterns can often undermine complex interhuman geographies by normalizing spatial hierarchies and enacting strict spatial rules and regulations. More than this, ‘normal’ places and spaces—of comfort, wealth, peace, safety—are hopefully seductive: they allude to the idea that finding and living the ‘normal’ within existing spatial hierarchies is geographic achievement” (145). Through these seductions of self-fulfillment, geography can pass as fixed, or “normal”, thus
excluding “difference” from its standard equation. The fantasy of a given, and unchanging geographic arrangement is the core anxiety that McKittrick works against. In the concluding chapter, “Stay Human,” McKittrick suggests that humanness (like geography) has the capacity to be altered; “we can drift in and out of our humanness” (146).

McKittrick is aided in this project by tracing Dionne Brand’s contributions in drawing a new kind of map that does not abide by existing cartographic rules, for those rules have eliminated possibilities for certain bodies. Brand works delicately to develop a language that paves the road for a different geography that both considers and does away with our commonplace notions of geographic space. In A Map to the Door of No Return, she develops a number of metaphors to locate and displace the drifts of diasporic subjects. When Brand evokes “The Door of No Return” she simultaneously ushers in belonging and unbelonging; not a place but a collection of places; a paradoxical emptied beginning (Brand 2012, 6). Thus, “Getting to the Door of No Return…needs no physical apparatus except the mind; the body is the prison” (45). It is a nomadic plane.

52 Marlene Goldman’s article “Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand” (2004) inspires a connection between Brand’s floating and Deleuze and Guattari’s nomad. The nomad seeks to disrupt, resist, and destroy control. “The nomad has territory”, however the nomad’s existence is intermezzo, or always between. Paradoxically, nomad life is constantly in threat of capture, constantly being reterritorialized by the state. Goldman does not connect Brand and Deleuze, rather Goldman puts an emphasis on drifting as a point of interruption for traditional understandings of diasporic subjects. Goldman argues that Brand’s heavy use of ocean metaphors ushers in a subject of diaspora that drifts from place to place, “landing” temporarily at various points. Deleuze and Guattari argue that State constantly attempts to striate space, aiming to capture the war machine for its own purposes. Even if the war machine is appropriated by the State (such is the case with the military) the war machine continues to cause the State problems (for instance, the threat of overthrow).

53 See Mark Bonta and John Protevi for an extensive glossary of terms that bring together geography and philosophy, and in particular geography and Deleuze. Bonta and Protevi work to thicken the
Brand’s symbolic use of the ocean describes her movements toward and away from her “home.” The use of “the door” offers a seasick metaphor for her relationship to space, nation, and self. In reminiscing of a river she “returns” to, she says: “What I am doing out here I do not know…in the sense that I did not know I would end up here. End up is not the right phrase…Land may be a better word. Landing is what people in the Diaspora do. Landing at ports, dockings, bridges, stocks, borders, outposts…But I had no destination; that is one of the inherited traits of the Diaspora” (150). Brand’s landing is not a predetermined, nor is it happenstance. Rather, it is a nomadic drift within which she can assert: “Belonging does not interest me. I had once thought it did. Until I examined the underpinnings. One is misled when one looks at the sails and majesty of tall ships instead of their cargo” (McKittrick 2006, 85).54 The bedrocks of Brand’s (un)belonging address a missing component of Deleuze and Guattari’s nomad; the diasporic subject complicates their notions of exteriority. Conversely, Brand’s account turns toward ambivalence, rather than the political possibilities of refusal that Deleuze and Guattari advocate.

relationship between geography and philosophy by working through Deleuze and Guattari’s account of complexity theory. Within this, they argue that “spaces are NOT constructed by discourse alone, and thus are not configured solely to be read. ‘Haecceities’ (places as events, for example) offer endless opportunities for the emergence of new materials that irrupt from multitudinous points and ripple outward across landscapes. These irrupting, smoothing forced need to be mapped and described, and even exploited…for the State is never and should never be the last or only word in any landscape” (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 40). Thus, they seek instead to unravel a geography produced within the context of complex spaces.

54 Katherine McKittrick offers an examination of the containment of the slave ship. She argues that the materiality of the ship “just is” because the subjects bound inside cannot be seen. This is what Brand attempts to caution—by accepting pregiven notions of materiality, we erase the experiences below deck.
Brand locates captivity in the body. However, she argues that the black body is paradoxically domesticated and wild; it is ascribed characteristics that make it legible and simultaneously a site of resistance and *transgression* (Brand 2012, 36). This paradox offers an opportunity to assess the ways in which diasporic subjects interrupt notions of space as a fully-relational human process. Brand asks, does the diasporic subject leave? By force? Are they taken? (21-24). One could argue that Brand’s figurative *floating* and Deleuze and Guattari’s *nomadology* offer something hopeful in their possibility of destratification. They are both fundamentally against stable fantasies of the state, de facto equilibrium, striated territory, and both occupy an unarrestable, affective account of space. It would be dangerous to put the onus to destratify, as Deleuze and Guattari term it, on the diasporic subject. A better approach might be a reconceptualization of space in rolling out radical critiques of the State. The floater, or nomad, offers an alternative formulation—even in the context of the un-reflexive human subject—to belonging, and to not belonging.

**The Human and the Posthuman**

When Friedrich Nietzsche speaks of the man of *ressentiment*, he imagines one who does not react, but rather affirms. He argues there is a tendency to be reactive, and further argues that when reactive projects overtake active forces, they do not *become* active, rather, they decompose the active forces—they separate the active forces from

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55 Destratification defined here as “decentralizing an organism or other hierarchical structure by pushing it past a ‘crisis’ threshold of its intensive properties to allow the components to find their own arrangements rather than submit to the overcoding of the stratifying agent” (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 78). The nomad constantly destratifies.

56 Feminist cautions of rights-based narratives (Berlant 2011; Brown 2010; Spade 2011) have shown the limits, and dangers, in seeking state sanctioned liberties.
what they can do—making them reactive (Deleuze 1962). It remains unclear in
Nietzsche’s formulation how the “man” denuded of rensentiment would appear, but what
becomes more salient is that this man is never fully human, at least in our current
capacities to formulate the term.

Humanism’s task of accounting for the human and the human’s interactions has
often materialized as a shuttling of “empathy” and “ethics” to explain our social
landscapes. For example, Emanuel Levinas has sought to deepen a pre-reflective ethics
that exists in the “other”, thus explaining how one’s relationship to the other is
established. Therefore, as Richard A. Cohen argues, Levinas does not understand
embodiment as an individual constitution aimed toward-death (as Martin Heidegger
wrote) but rather, here embodiment is situated within a profound vulnerability that takes
into account the vulnerability of the other, and one’s responsibility to the other’s
vulnerability (Levinas 2003). The human is not a self-contained actor, rather, it is in the
face of the other that Levinas locates the essence of the human. For Levinas’ humanism
the suffering of one is always already the suffering of the other. To face the other, to
recognize the other’s vulnerability, and to engage one’s pre-original responsibility to the
other is to exit oneself.57 It is, as Levinas terms it, a concern for the other despite
oneself.58 I take up Levinas here to identify the ways in which humanism has redirected
the central concern of the self toward collective concern for the other. This formulation
exposes the limits of an ethics that relies on recognizing another’s humanness. What

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57 As Levinas’ humanism engages the other as the human other, we might begin to question what
position the “other” and the “self” occupy under posthumanism.

58 This concern for the other has begun to poke its head in posthumanist accounts albeit with the
understanding that the other not necessarily be human.
subjects can be encapsulated by the human, while certain others are relegated to the non-human for their lack of sympathy, compassion, or most poignantly their *essence*?

Humanist values have crept into contemporary projects that seek to attribute human characteristics to non-human actants in the name of benevolent responsibility (saving animals, saving land, saving the atmosphere; these things *are us*).

The decline of humanism and the rise of antihumanist thought—what Rosi Braidotti situates as one aspect of the posthuman turn—is one starting place to imagine, among others, the inhuman, the animal, or the monster. The post- cannot (as Nietzsche informs) be reactive, but it should seek in some way to move; to *trans* *. In this sense, it is not a question of who, or more aptly what, the posthuman is, or even does, but rather the possibilities opened and foreclosed by examining its trajectories. The post- in posthumanism might properly be considered as a comment on “humanism” itself. There is, of course, no linear narrative of humanism, but we can identify its key obsession as the enlightened hu(man) subject whose subjectivity takes evidence in a rational consciousness. In tracing the genealogy of her own posthuman project, Braidotti details that humanism has been endowed with a series of paradoxes (and so too, will the posthuman era).  

For Braidotti, these humanisms which have so often excluded certain

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59 Braidotti quotes Tony Davies’ to position this genealogy: “The romantic and positivistic Humanisms through which the European bourgeoisies established their hegemonies over (modernity), the revolutionary Humanism that shook the world and the liberal Humanism that sought to tame it, the Humanism of the Nazis and the Humanisms of their victims and opponents, the antihumanist Humanism of Heidegger and the humanist antihumanism of Foucault and Althusser, the secularist Humanism of Huxley and Dawkins or the post-humanism of Gibson and Haraway” (Davies 1997, 141).
bodies, signal a historical, ethical, and political imperative to overcome their unfulfilled promises of self-possession and legible subjectivity (Braidotti 2013, 51).

These things converge, at different points, and in different configurations, molecularly and virally, in ways that disrupt any static behindness of post-. Therefore, one question remains: if posthuman figure remains always already accessible to processes of becoming. Braidotti’s posthuman arises at the convergence of antihumanism (the critique of the humanist man) and anti-anthropocentrism (the critique of a species hierarchy). Braidotti takes distance from the human without letting go of it. Zakiyyah Jackson argues posthumanist theory has “demonstrated the constructed and often spurious conceptual foundation of Enlightenment humanism. However, its critics maintained that the acuity of posthumanism’s intervention was undercut when its scholars effectively sidestepped the analytical challenges posed by the categories of race, colonialism, and slavery (Jackson 2013, 671). Jackson, in part, critiques Braidotti’s inability to let go of the human because even in disrupting the “human” it maintains a particular order and epistemological locus within Western tradition. Jackson notes that feminist and queer critique has begun to take animal studies and emergent new materialisms seriously in search of different routes for challenging biopolitical practices and the divide between the human and the animal (674).

Similarly, Mel Y. Chen has argued that we are situated within animacy hierarchies that inform our political actions. Chen notes that this idea of animacy, while fundamental, is constantly pushed forward for its relevance across languages and modes of signifying. Its relevance to the posthuman project, and perhaps in general, is that it encapsulates a slippage between the material realities of alive and dead. Chen is
concerned with the ways that this conceptual geography (between things alive and dead) is persistently being worked out and forms the basis of many of today’s pressing political questions and the troubling of the flexing category of “human.”\textsuperscript{60} Chen explores these suspensions between human-animals and nonhuman-animals, highlighting movement in the animacy hierarchy made explicit through the commodification of animals. For instance, practices of pet ownership, in which pets are treated with a certain standard of care, and fetishistic consumption around the pet-animal signal a rise in the animacy hierarchy (Chen 2012, 131). Likewise, some humans are relegated to lower positions in the hierarchy that are often modulated along discourses of race and sexuality. So much so, Chen argues, that the calculus of who lives and who dies unfolds around bodies that are racialized and sexualized, thereby enacting a kind of biopolitics that emerges through the animacy hierarchy (133).

Through the lens of the human and non-human animal, Chen also questions animacy’s “ontology of affect” in the elemental form of lead and mercury, arguing that these particles “threaten to overrun what an animacy hierarchy would wish to lock in place” (159), to explore ways in which these entities become racialized. Chen’s engagement with toxins may seem slightly disconnected here. However, I argue that it draws attention to the ways in which matter plays a central role in the complication of the posthuman, especially in Braidotti’s account, and while Chen’s formulation is in many

\textsuperscript{60} A major point of departure for animacy is marked by Silverstein’s “animacy hierarchy” which explains that the split between accusative and ergative case-markings are not done at random, but rather that “less animate objects were more likely to receive special ergative marking, in a kind of communicative reassurance that such types of subjects could indeed possess the agentive or controlling capacities required to do the action provided by the verb” (25, emphasis in original). Chen’s linguistic explanation highlights the importance of discursive practices in the attending to tensions between alive and dead, human and animal.
ways only a part of the larger assembly of being, it leads us to begin to question molecular disruptions. Here we can begin to loosen Levinas’ “other.”

As such, the animacy hierarchy performs a necessary political trick for capitalism in which it deflects criticism by directing mass public attention and feeling towards racialized “Others” (164-166). Chen calls this a xenophobic ontology of affect that is centered on a semiotics rendering some lower on the hierarchy, while completely eliding the powerful force of industrial toxins on bodies everywhere. The human-centered ontology of affect in hegemonic animacy simultaneously diverts and engages with the ontological force of toxins by subsuming them into normative semiotic structures of power. For Chen, queer affect challenges the animacy hierarchy, such that inanimate things are no longer dead. If animacy is characterized as proximal relations among entities, then biopolitics lies in the operations that seek to capture and control them resulting in a categorical differentiation. Foucault’s biopower describes the ways in which practices, techniques, and technologies of the state manipulate the flows of power to account for operations of human discipline and state sovereignty simultaneously. The term biopolitics first appears in the early 20th century, but Foucault’s treatment provides a contemporary definition marking the move from sovereign state power to biopolitical management of subjects is the new politics of modernity (Lemke 2011; Deleuze 1988; Foucault 1998; Stryker 2014). Giorgio Agamben places biopower in relation to the state of exception—a concept Agamben continues from Carl Schmitt’s formulation of Hobbes in the opening of Political Theology: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”—in which the state exists in the domain of sovereignty (with the ability to kill with impunity) and bodies are in constant threat of extraordinary violence (Agamben 1995; Pugliese
In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben departs from Foucault’s understanding of biopolitics, suggesting the collision of the sovereign state and biopower does not mark modernity, but rather the two inform each other continuously, building political power. Agamben suggests it is unhelpful, even dangerous, to create a politics regarding those who are saved and those who are left-behind. Rather, we must look for the *unseen*, for that is the likely hiding place of the state of exception. To deny animacy to an entity, then, is driven by an anxiety about the centrality of the human subject, while also building an ontological basis from which to relegate various “Others” in times of political danger.

The human subject has now become precarious and unfastened. The unfixed human, what leads Jean-François Lyotard to question the inhumanity of our technologized world, presents a major problem for humanism. Lyotard asks on one hand “what if human beings, in humanism’s sense, were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman?” And on the other “what if what is ‘proper’ to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?” (Lyotard 1991, 2). Lyotard works to unfold the body by critiquing dehumanizing effects of the techno-era while simultaneously arguing that these technologies might create a rupture, and thus a more capacious possibility, in our understanding of the human subject.\(^6\) The possibilities and limits offered by Lyotard’s

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\(^6\) Lyotard asks whether this “human” could outlive the inevitable explosion of the sun, and if thought can live on without the body. Lyotard argues that what has been termed “post-modern” signals a break between the *project* and the *programme*. He argues: “The latter seems today much better able that the former to meet the challenge thrown down to humanity by the process of complexification. But among the events which the programme attempts to neutralize as much as it can one must, alas, also count the unforeseeable effects engendered by the contingency and freedom proper to the human project” (Lyotard 1991, 69). Lyotard thus accounts for *multiplicity*, to borrow from Deleuze, which allows for further disruption of the category of “human.”
construction of dehumanization leaves a chasm, and an essential if risky task, for thinking about the operations of race or trans*. The historical record of racial discrimination among human communities necessitates attention when troubling the (post)human.

Achille Mbembe’s *Necropolitics* assumes that the penultimate expression of sovereignty rests firmly in the capacity to dictate the terms of life, or who may live and who must die. The first element of this definition relies of Foucault’s treatment of biopower: “that domain of life over which power has taken control,” but Mbembe asks under which conditions these practices come to be exercised (Mbembe 2003, 12). Mbembe brings Foucault’s biopower into conversation with Agamben’s sovereign and state of exception and suggests that modernity is the point of origin for of biopolitics vis-à-vis forms of sovereignty arguing against the centralizing of reason as the project of modernity. By doing this, he suggests, that subjects are presumed to be full and equal, capable of autonomous understandings of the self. Black and trans* subjects then provide a crisis for the twofold process of self-institution and self-limitation in regard to the sovereign whose purpose is particularly aimed at generalizing and exploiting life for the purposes of making particular bodies disposable.

Mbembe discusses how one becomes a subject through a Hegelian reading of the spirit and outlines the how a human becomes distinct from the animal through a process of negation: the human negates nature, the human creates a world through work and struggle, the human becomes a subject through upholding death as an inevitable result (Mbembe 2003, 14). Mbembe points to slavery as a clear instance of “biopolitical experimentation,” describing enslaved subjects as experiencing a triple loss creating a shadow subject: “loss of a ‘home,’ loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political
status” resulting in social death (19). Paradoxically, the slave was needed for the purposes of labor, relegating them to a state of injury. By relegating slaves to a subhuman, animal, or savage state, techniques of violence and biopolitical management create a “criminal” or “savage” enemy which war can be waged against up to, and to the point of, death. As such, “the sovereign right to kill is not subject to any rule in the colonies. In the colonies, the sovereign might kill at any time or in any manner. Colonial warfare is not subject to legal and institutional rules. It is not a legally codified activity” (25). Similarly, space exists as an unregulated material of sovereignty though occupation. This has been true in South Africa, occupations in Palestine, contemporary wars, and the logic of martyrdom and the logic of survival (as demonstrated by the suicide bomber, as acute examples of sovereignty, terror, and necropower insofar as they demonstrate processes of control and disposability all of which can be understood as producing and produced by what I am calling the “urban jungle” where struggles over political life emerge. Much has been said about the role of nature and that of culture (and with it, the animal’s and human’s purpose in both), but the attachments to such modes of thinking continue to create insufficient, reductive models—indeed, the environment is crumbling around us. Hence, I argue while emerging academic fields and political frameworks such as trans* studies have looked toward the animal for the purposes of theorizing, the relationship between black and trans* reminds us that there is more to unpack when encountering the human and animal and their political connections.
Franz Fanon, for example, calls for the interruption of cycles of dehumanization which reproduce white superiority and, as a result, the blackness that strives to match it.  

Fanon’s charge against the reproduction of incomprehensible structures of race (in particular black and white) hopes we might “shake off” the human/non-human divide that has prevailed in its project of shackling the other to the self (Fanon 2008, xvi). He argues that blackness operates as the non-human, and becomes legible through whiteness. To speak, is to possess the qualities of language, and to use language signifies assimilation. Fanon exposes the ways in which black man’s intellect will never be adequate to shift him into the category of man for he will always be black first and rendered an outlier. How does this disrupt the posthuman? I believe it might be in the most profound way. However attached, however shackled we may be to the human — when we look in the mirror, when we feel the “other” against our body, when we

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62 Deleuze and Guattari say “Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face, which endeavors to integrate nonconforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves, sometimes tolerating them at given places under given conditions, in a given ghetto, sometimes erasing them from the wall, which never abides alterity (it’s a Jew, it’s an Arab, it’s a Negro, it’s a lunatic…). From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be” (1987, 178).

63 Fanon has broadened the discussion of “man” and “human” by placing them in a larger discourse of race, gender, sexuality, and the colonialism that has long managed these categories. Similarly, I draw on Sara Ahmed who says of postcolonialism: “For me, post-colonialism is about rethinking how colonialism operated in different times in ways that permeate all aspects of social life, in the colonised and colonialising nations. It is hence about the complexity of the relationship between past and present, between the histories of European colonisation and contemporary forms of globalisation. That complexity cannot be reduced by either a notion that the present has broken from the past (a narrative that assumes that decolonisation meant the end of colonialism) or that the present is simply continuous with the past (a narrative that assumes colonialism is a trans-historical phenomenon that is not affected by local contexts or other forms of social change). To this extent, post-coloniality allows us to investigate how colonial encounters are both determining, and yet not fully determining of social and material existence. (Ahmed 2000, 11; emphasis in original).
celebrate our minute political victories of legible certainty—it is quite possible that it will never free “us.”64

Returning to Braidotti, who says at the opening of *The Posthuman*, “Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moment of Western social, political and scientific history. Not if by ‘human’ we mean that creature familiar to us from Enlightenment and its legacy” (Braidotti 2003, 1). With regards to the human, the prefix “post-” poses a predicament when working through Braidotti’s words. Can we post- that which perhaps never was? While understanding this frequently argued dilemma, Braidotti wagers that attempts to re-inscribe the human bump up against growing discourses of the inhuman, the posthuman, the animal, and their relationships to global technologies within varied socio-political landscapes. Braidotti, who claims a deep investment in a vital, material posthuman subjectivity, a posthuman ethics (in our multiple capacities), and an alternate, affirmative politics that transcends a unitary or linear versions of the self might flatten if we cannot unhinge from the sticky human in the posthuman. Braidotti is in good company as she tries to push and pull at the body—asking what it does, what it sees, what it cannot see, when it can be seen—troubling the (post)human. But if the post- in posthumanism seeks to somehow reformulate the human and open it up to alternate configurations, then it must be through the very continuity of the skin and the affective, viral, technologized, and ghostly

64 As Audre Lorde has told us: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”; Let us make new tools (1984).
dimensions that work molecularly though and around bodies. Perhaps here, new assemblages can begin to emerge.

Alphonso Lingis’ “Beastiality” offers erotic animal becomings and powerful philosophical provocations in continuing to trouble post-humanism:

Let us liberate ourselves from the notion that our body is constituted by the form that makes it an objective for the observation and manipulation of an outside observer. Let us dissolve the conceptual crust that takes hold of it as a subsistent substance. Let us turn away from the anatomical and physiological mirrors that project it before us as a set of organs and a set of biological or pragmatic functions (Lingis 2005, 58).

To turn away from the narrow-minded notion that our form (however cybernetic) is what makes us individual, that our identity is the principle form of this individuation, and that our individuality taken as a substance is an inherent exclusion of substances, gestures us toward a much more open formulation of expressive possibilities amidst our milieus (58). Lingis contends that any species is always already in symbiosis with others; they are symphony composed by and through “wheat, and corn fields, with berry thickets and vegetable patches, and also with the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil that their rootlets enter into symbiosis with in order to grow and feed the stalk, leaves, and seeds or fruit…in symbiosis with other mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish” (57-58). These entities cannot be flippantly relegated to a subaltern or trivial status, rather, Lingis argues that it is their vital intensity that bring about their material force. Their intensities cannot be hastily fastened to tactical capitalist suppositions, nor is there a traceable point of origin in which their movement is cast. For Lingis, movements are stimulated by pulses,
rhythms, intensities, passions, and “The differentials of speed and slowness liberated from our bodies do not block or hold those movements…our movements compose their differentials, directions, and speeds with those movements in the environment” (59). These deterritorializations do not only extend out, they swell virally with forceful intensity.

Lingis mocks the social importance ascribed to goal-oriented movement, which he argues conventional perception has myopically valued. In fact, Lingis says, movements have no prior programmed goal to abide by, and no fantasy of achieving a finalized state (60). Lingis posits the sorcery of animals as a haunting, rather than model, which is precisely what is to be gained by his poetics. The ebbs, flows, and lascivious prying of movement, finds characterization in the sex, sexuality, and lust of bestial relations; “Humans have from earliest times made themselves erotically alluring…by grafting upon themselves the erotic splendors of animals, the glittering plumes of quetzal-birds and the filmy plumes of ostriches, the secret inner splendors of mother-of-pearl oysters, the springtime gleam of fox fur” (66). As such, humans have developed a precarious relation to the animal, enacting a pseudo-fusion through aesthetics, design, or the coding of kinship through commodification or observation of animal behavior. In Lingis’ account, the bumping between humans and other species is not a sufficient and does not account for the abundant cacophony of creative molecular relations. So much are these relations, that “When we, in our so pregnant expression, make love with someone of our own species, we also make love with the horse and the calf, the kitten and cockatoo, the powdery moths and the lustful crickets” (63). Lingis draws connections intra-actively, showing, in Karen Barad’s terms “the mutual constitution of objects and
agencies of observation within phenomena” (Barad 2007, 197). Technologized bodily movements and intensities compose with those of the toxic and non-human animal worlds as the shift, settle, and lean (Lingis 2005, 60-61).

The impact of Donna Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* has been foundational and far-reaching as an examination of a different kind of symbiosis. Throughout, Haraway remains, as Joanna Zylinska says, “consistently playful yet rigorous” in her efforts “to undermine human exceptionalism through a series of philosophical exegeses, scientific reports, auto-ethnographic accounts, and personal anecdotes (Colebrook 2012, 206). In 1985, Haraway wrote: “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 1991, 149). This “ironic” metaphor imagines a hybridism of machine and organism that seeks to bridge the spatial, affective, technological and cartographic gaps enforced by conventionally accepted boundaries. Science-fiction, medicine, and warfare, says Haraway, are ripe with cyborgs; dystopic robotics, prosthetics placed in and on the body, machines and bodies fighting against and with one another (149). In Haraway’s reworking of nature and culture—toward a perverse cyborg that has no genesis or gender—she posits a resistance to the coopting or folding of one into the other. When Haraway examines the cyborg as the monster (one that turns away from Western notions of community or belonging), she describes a moment of possibility and perhaps signals some initial limitations.

As Haraway writes provocatively of this post-gender world (in which the creature of the cyborg dwells), she calls the construction of ‘women’s experience’ “a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind” (149). This post-gender world has crept into the
imagination of much feminist scholarship, literature, and performance, often answered by the fact that we do live in a world in which gender has been constructed, enacting itself upon our bodies and spaces. However, Haraway’s fictional mapping of bodily realities is such that it might emerge as a creative resource. Haraway assures us that totality is not necessary and, in fact, is a dangerous hallucination to pursue: “The feminist dream of a common language, like all dreams for a perfectly true language, or perfectly faithful naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one. In that sense, dialectics too is a dream language, longing to resolve contradiction. Perhaps, ironically, we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos” (173). For Haraway, these co-evolutions make salient the permeable boundaries between the personal body and the body politic. Thus, she suggests that practices of “networking” present themselves as potentials for strategic weavings of oppositional strategies or alternate configurations of socio-political coalitions. Thus, we come to understand Haraway’s mythic cyborg as one full of passion and possibility; to transgress, fuse, to remain partial and, of course, to be disruptive.

**Black and Trans* Materialities**

Haraway has famously said: “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess” (181). This is the very provocation that provides the title of Puar’s article discussed at the beginning of this chapter, where she seeks to *become-intersectional in assemblage theory* (2012). Following her thesis, we might use this frictional reading practice to address the specifications and multiplicities demanded by intersectionality and assemblage theory to

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65 For example, burgeoning work being done in the field of Somatechnics has offered promising alternatives in its understanding of our bodies as always already technologized.
task when thinking about the transversal relationships between blackness and transness. As she argues, we must not dismiss the assemblage in favor of an intersectional framework, and it is equally important to recognize that intersectionality invites us to understand the techniques of violence that control bodies but possess limits when we imagine capacities for societal transmutations.

The Anthropocene presents a new kind of crisis for the human, especially amidst the terrain of posthumanism which might expose a humanist impulse. From ecological disasters and plastic oceans, to environmental racism, the quarantining of resources, or state sanctioned murder, a modern instantiation of what Georgio Agamben calls bare life, makes the “human” a contested terrain. Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2016) strains the limits of the metaphorical deployment of plasticity, calling this utilization a “dynamic, motile mode of anti-black arrangement” secured through violence, with little attention to the relationality between blackness and the material. Though developed apart from Catherine Malabou’s (2008) frequently cited theorization of plasticity, Jackson, who “neither posits that human form can become ‘any kind of form’ nor celebrates such a potential,” challenges plasticization as open, mutable, and transformable. Such a maneuver concerns itself, first, with the ways that potential is manipulated by power, and second, how the ontological plasticity of blackness is frequently inverted through anthropocentric claims (Jackson 2016, 119). Tracing the debate between the human and the ecological through the fields of black feminist studies—which has long considered who has access to humanness and who does not—and emergent questions of the non-human being grappled with in trans* theory requires a deeper archive of these fields and would necessarily summon an extensive reading of the presence of blackness and transness as they are
referential through the indexing of race and gender, and to attend to the ways that ask the political questions about the vitality of matter itself, and what it means to matter at all.

Here we have a question of materiality that seemingly troubles the bounds of intersectionality when divorced from the legal structures where it founds its political grounding. Judith Butler has queried how a recourse to materiality might function given the historical centering of matter in negotiations of sexual difference. The referent of black and trans* materialities is a clear point of departure in the political case of #blacktranslivesmatter, but we do not need to deconstruct these identities into oblivion, rather we can attend to them and also follow Butler’s provocation that “…we may seek recourse to matter in order to ground or to verify a set of inquiries or violations only to find that matter itself is founded through a set of violations, ones which are unwittingly repeated in the contemporary invocation” (Butler 1993, 28-29). In both cases, and in their coalition, attention to the premature death of black and trans* bodies have been faced with rhetorical justifications of animal-like behavior which has proven to be a difficult experience for many of us to overcome through pedagogical practice.

In the next chapter, I consider these debates through the efforts of political mattering happening in the #blacklivesmatter and #blacktranslivesmatter movements. Much is at stake for thinking about these sites as scalar, rather than exclusively temporal. When we think more precisely of dissent of black-trans* articulations, we are thinking of nowhere and nothingness. The displacement of these bodies in the material sense and the imagination through which they are conceived is always already empty. We are speaking, or struggling to speak, of submersion—an empty seat at the table; a specter that is always already impossible. Thinking about the scales of political dissent of black trans* lives offers, frankly, a way to avoid depression. I mean this in the literal sense of the ways that
the state mobilizes depression to paralyze, to split the population through phantasmagorias of race and gender difference that are difficult to avoid under the wounded experience of being in this world. But scale can also rethink the allegory of depression in the geographic sense. A depression occurs in areas where low atmospheric pressure causes cloudy, windy, rainy weather to take hold—depressions actually produce geography itself. Depression, then, is always already a queer pre-articulation of the self while it simultaneously figures the conditions of emergence (from, toward).

It also raises new questions about the reach of intersectional analyses—#blacklivesmatter and #blacktranslivesmatter represent a new kind of decentralized social body, even while it borrows from previous social movement strategies, including feminist identity politics, gay liberation movements, and even the more contemporary Occupy. Here, we have seen the focus shift from the molar, or large-scale collectives (which remain important), toward molecular potentials where attempts to co-opt or violate begin to slide past one another without the ability to bind to social reality. Documenting how the new practices work, and how (or if) they are transversally connected to previous practices calls into sharp relief our schemas for understanding life or matter itself.

I have argued that much like May 68 and the related ethnic nationalist, black liberation, and feminist gay movements of the 60s and 70s—BLM and BLTM engage with the biopolitics of identity, in ways that both enact and inspire new potentials for revolutionary transformation. However, the events of May 68 are offered to the public imaginary as full—full of possibility, vitality, and content even by those outside of the movement. In contrast, the state of, and politics offered through, contemporary movements for black lives are conceived of as empty in much of the public imaginary—
devoid of possibility, of substance, and perhaps most poignantly of history. In remembering May 68, and often nostalgically speaking of the possibilities of anti-capitalism and the seemingly “natural” connection between labor, philosophers, and students, the historical possibilities of self-identification with the viral radio transmitter is at play in ways that are not driving the connection between racial capitalism and state violence at work in #blacklivesmatter and #blacktranslivesmatter. In holding this popular uprising to a time in history, the connection of France to its own colonial power is mystified and displaced, while in the United States, our racial history is deeply connected to the land and to communities. This more intimate spatial connection, wherein our racial violence is steeped in the soil, the constitution, and the rights of men, propels forward an inability to consider #blacklivesmatter for what it is, a stake in the human, and a full politics of connection, vitality, history, and futurity.

If mattering functions—as submersion and as emergence—through a multiplicity of violations, then individuation, the subject, even the human, exist in what Saidiya Hartman (1997) calls the scenes of subjection. As the politically sympathetic heterosexual becomes ‘queer,’ as whiteness reaches through the cultural to claim the ‘transracial,’ and as the queer ideologically becomes ‘trans*,’ we must wonder how these slippery identities matter or what they can offer through an assembled trans-intersectional approach. Just as philosophy has not resolved the dualisms of mind and body, the impulses of identity have not allowed us to move beyond our own experiences. Violence (affective, structural, physical) maintains particular biopolitical inactions of these identities, ensuring that we always resolve our own identity crises through language, community, compromise, and notions of temporal progress. Particularly within feminist
political debate, the extension of community and of freedom has historically allowed the state apparatus to inclusively shift, relying on our own sentiments drawn from the horrific experiences of the other, as the other’s death weighs heavily on our mind. What possibilities exist for women of color that are not entangled with the violence against them? What will blackness look like beyond social death? What will transness look like beyond the body? What liberation, and at what scales, can be felt through dissent in ways that do not require breathing under water?
Chapter Four: Trans*versal Animacies

How can we fathom a social life that tends toward death, that enacts a kind of being-toward-death, and which, because of such tendency and enactment, maintains a terrible beautiful vitality?

Fred Moten, 2008

A new revolution is possible only as a result of a new crisis; but it will come, just as surely as the crisis itself.

Karl Marx, 1850

Speaking of the legacies of the Black Radical Tradition and Black Marxism in the history of the United States, Angela Davis says the following of the #blacklivesmatter movement:

As we consider the relation between the Black Panther Party and the contemporary Black Lives Matter Movement, it feels like the decades and generations that separate one from the other create a certain incommensurability that is a consequence of all the economic, political, cultural, and technological changes that make this contemporary moment so different in many important respects from the 1960s. But perhaps we should seek connections between the two movements that are revealed not so much in the similarities, but rather in their radical differences (Davis 2017, 242).

Davis details the emergence of the Black Panther Party (BPP) during police occupations is Oakland, California and in black communities around the country. While in many ways the BPP successfully communicated their political message (that the police needed to be policed) she draws on the words of Audre Lorde to say that a fundamental flaw of the
BPP was that it relied on the “master’s tools” in attempts to upend the violence black communities faced. Begun in 1966, the organization first dawned the name the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, employing police-tactics to protect black communities while simultaneously operating a number of social services, perhaps most notably the free breakfast for children program. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, argues Davis, has taken up a more explicit task of demilitarization, focusing efforts on the changing of policing strategies as we currently know them. BLM has negotiated strong alliances with transnational efforts and articulated the importance of focusing on women, queer, and trans* people. There is a challenge of speaking of liberation struggles in the present, of writing into existence what is happening now. The indeterminacy of what will emerge from BLM or BTLM (Black Trans* Lives Matter) means to follow the lines of flight that emerge from the political possibilities in our milieu. Foucault says:

In a culture such as ours, in a society, what do we mean by the existence of words, of writing, of discourse? It seemed to me that we had never attached much importance to the fact that, after all, speech exists. Speech isn’t only transparent film through which we see things, not simply the mirror of what is and what we think. Speech has its own consistency, its own thickness and density, its way of functioning. The laws of speech exist the way economic laws exist. Speech exists that ways a monument does, the way a technique does, the way a system of social relationships does, and so on (Foucault 2013, 36-37).

And what does it mean to speak after death? One should remember that on the night of February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, seventeen at the time, was fatally shot in Sanford, Florida. In the course of the investigation it was quickly discovered that Martin was
unarmed when he was killed by George Zimmerman, a police-sanctioned neighborhood watch volunteer. Zimmerman’s trial would eventually call into question the complexities of Florida’s stand-your-ground laws as well as the broader racial climate of the United States. Outrage sparked by Martin’s premature death conjured the intimacies of racism—the moment in which we learn we are black, the moment we understand that being black is wicked, and the constant reminders of precarious life. Unsurprisingly, the discursive thrust attending to racialized violence was met with oppositional support for Zimmerman who received an outpouring of compassion. The role of social and mainstream media after Martin’s death exposed (for those not already aware) the underbelly of race relations in the United States in arguably, unprecedented ways.

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Until fairly recently, the octothorpe (#) designated a commonplace abbreviation for “pound” or “number”, familiar to its users on telephones, computer keys, or by shorthand. Said to have first appeared in 1968, social media platforms have capitalized on the octothorpe’s metadata coding properties to provide quick connections between language, casual interest, and in this particular example, social movements. Its gridded visual speaks to its functions. Like a grid, it scours the internet in search of identical matches, but in doing so, it discovers any number of landing points. For instance, November of 2012, social media was flooded with images of Halloween costumes depicting Martin on the night of his death. People dawned blackface and blood stains, wore hooded sweatshirt, held skittles and iced tea.
The horrific images were spread through #trayvonmartin, immediately intertwining them with memorial images of the dead teenager. While many news outlets related Trayvon Martin’s murder to previous cases, in particular the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmet Till, Martin’s death was animated in unprecedented ways by public use of social media. Zimmerman’s own racism, well documented through various public outlets and his public indictment of Martin in his own death, played a key component in drudging up sympathy as well as inciting rage.

It allowed, on one hand, a viral community to erupt, arguing that the injustice of Martin’s death was not new (rather, this kind of violence with impunity is quite familiar to black communities), and on the other hand, it relegated Martin to a criminal and an animal in attempts to devalue his life and make claims that he was responsible for his death. Supporters of Zimmerman argued that the shooting was not motivated by race, as Zimmerman himself is not white. The assumption within these sentiments illuminated the particulars of anti-black racism that is often ignored under the larger rubric of race and
racism and are underscored by the mobilization of the animal that freshen the wounds of slavery, segregation, and animacy hierarchies. Nicole Fleetwood had argued that images of Martin circulated as material objects, shoring up the traumatic attachments to legacies of violence situated in the past that make clear present conditions of racial subjugation:

[O]ne could argue that these images symbolically demonstrate an identification with racial isolation, profiling, and forms of abject suffering associated with certain groups of blacks and other vulnerable populations in this country and elsewhere. In this light, many non-blacks are able to recognize a young black male as a sympathetic character – as one with whom they form a deeply emotional and performative attachment, a type of claiming – and to see the machinations of structural and quotidian racism to portray him as other (Fleetwood 2017, 21-30).

In July 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted of the second-degree murder charge. The initial protests that emerged after the failure to arrest Zimmerman in 2012 were reignited. The following week, hundreds of protests across the US were held demanding “Justice for Trayvon Martin.” Protestors wore hooded sweatshirts and held Skittles and iced tea (in honor of Martin), perhaps in part suggesting, that in some way, we are all made vulnerable by these forms of injustice, emphasized in the circulation of images and mimetic identification under #IAmTrayvon.

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66 In 2017 a judged ruled Florida’s stand your ground laws unconstitutional. John K. Roman’s 2013 study, “Race, Justifiable Homicide, and Stand Your Ground Laws: Analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Report Data” shows the stark racial disparities on convictions that utilized the law.
The Black Lives Matter movement emerged from all corners of the United States as well as transnationally, refreshing discourses of violent capitalism, anti-black racism, transnational militarism, targeted incarceration, and legacies of colonialism and settler-colonialism.\(^6^7\) This eruption was particularly felt within the United States, however, viral contact picked up across the globe through internet and protest support capturing media

\(^6^7\) The founding of #blacklivesmatter as an organization is attributed to Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, however the influence can be traced in a number of directions and is disputed in its origins. Most poignantly, because of the diffusion of BLM, it is in many ways impossible to say it began in any one place or was “founded” by any group of people. In July 2013, Alicia Garza posted a public Facebook in which she stated “black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter”, which began, in part, the questions of mattering. In 2014, BLM, (which had already been organizing) gained wider public attention after the fatal shooting of Mike Brown by Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson. The organization’s website can be found here: http://blacklivesmatter.com/.
attention across the political spectrum, albeit with different positioning of the cause. Following Zimmerman’s controversial acquittal, a number of high-profile cases were ushered into media attention. Martin’s murder became a touchstone in strategic forms of political mobilization, but the high-profile and premature deaths of Walter Scott, Renisha McBride, Michael Brown, John Crawford, Vonderitt D. Myers Jr., Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Antonio Martin, Freddie Gray, Eric Harris, Anthony Hill, Tony Terrell Robinson, Ezell Ford, and the murders at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, to name a few, were protested by the Black Lives Matter movement. The virility of BLM, both through internet and street protests began to focus on broader discourses of racial inequality and violence in the United States.

On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile was fatally shot by a Minnesota police officer. Castile, who was pulled over near St. Paul with his girlfriend and her daughter, four at the time, in the car. Diamond Reynolds, who had just watched her boyfriend endure seven bullets began streaming the execution on Facebook Live. The scene, excruciating to watch, brought about a new wave of protests for black lives. Pained communities flooded the streets. Six days later, 49 people were killed and 58 injured at a queer Orlando nightclub (Pulse). More people hit the streets. Simultaneously, ongoing protests against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (#NODAPL), heightened violence against

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Palestine and in Syria, the height of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign and the
racism, sexist, and xenophobic affective, verbal, and physical violence that accompanied
it. The founders of BLM reasserted that “#BlackLivesMatter is working for a world
where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise” but
now did so with increased intentions of solidarity.  

BLM aimed to challenge not only anti-black racism within the context of the US,
but also targeted “progressive” movements which considered themselves aligned with
anti-racist politics through soft multicultural inclusion. In the wake of the increased
visibility of violence against minoritized people (for instance, the aftermath of the Pulse
nightclub shooting, the rights of Indigenous people’s land, the promise of a wall along the
entire of the US/Mexico border) BLM was confronted with the need to retain the
specificity of anti-blackness alongside tepid liberal politics that engaged in
homonationalist, anti-immigrant, and US centric logics. Simultaneously, it was faced
with the task of accounting for the legacies of the Civil Rights Movement and the critique
that black death is not unique to black, heterosexual, men and boys, but that blackness
itself has always been the target.

The historical backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Radical
Tradition, and black liberation are important in this moment, for, unlike these previous
movements, information has been sped up is shared at a viral rate. BLM has also required
use to refocus on the violence faced by black women (which specifically included queer
and trans* women). #sayhername was mobilized as a reminder that black women are at
risk for extraordinary violence. Andrea J. Ritchie’s recent work (2017) draws attention to

69 Written by Alicia Garza on their website: http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/.
the ways that women have largely been absent from narratives of police brutality historically and today. She details the gendered dimensions of police violence—from brutal beatings, to sexual assault, to murder—clarifying that the structures of police violence require that the experiences of women become less observed in the public imaginary. In 2015, she coauthored an African American Policy Forum report that shows the crucial need to attend to the deaths of women of color, historically, and in the contemporary moment of political outrage. #sayhername worked to hold BLM accountable to their mission of all black lives.

Ritchie’s exhaustive account brings us names of women killed by police that have not gained so much attention in the public sphere. Women like Sandra Antor who in 1996 was brutalized on film just five years after Rodney King, or Rosann Miller choked by police in 2014, or Myra Hall, a black trans woman shot and killed by police weeks before Freddie Gray was murdered (Ritchie 2017). These cases, all of which need to be attended to with the same intensity, she argues, slip passed high-profile attention in the cultural imaginary not because they are any less violent, but because the context of violence experienced by black women at the hands of the police is so engrained that they seldom come as a surprise. Of course, one assumes that the black women that began #blacklivesmatter are more than attentive to the historical abuse of women, but the point Ritchie seeks to make is the same that many feminists of color have before her: that anti-black violence is not quarantined or disproportionately leveraged against cis black men, rather these violences permeate so much that they erase political mattering of the other’s other.

Alivedead
Throughout, I have selected the events of May 1968 and #blacktranslivesmatter to consider the ways that claims to political mattering have been shuttled through assemblage theory and intersectionality, respectively. I want to return to these two movements to think about the ways that they share strategies, in classrooms and in the streets, and also to draw attention to the capacity that separates them, somewhat dramatically. I want to argue that the events of 1968 are offered to the public imaginary as full—full of possibility, vitality, and content even by those outside of the movement. We see this both in the ways that it was reported, but also in the ways that it is remembered.

Figure Twelve: Protests in Paris during May 1968

In contrast, the state of, and politics offered through, contemporary movements for black lives are conceived of as empty in much of the public imaginary—devoid of possibility, of substance, and perhaps most poignantly of history. *Remembering* the social
movements of May 68, often nostalgically speaking of the anti-capitalism politics that exploded across labor, philosophy, and aesthetics, self-identification with the viral radio transmitter is at play in ways that are not driving the connection between racial capitalism and state violence at work in #blacktranslivesmatter. In holding this popular uprising to a time in history, the connection of France to its own colonial power is mystified and displaced, while in the United States, our racial history is deeply connected to the land and to communities. This more intimate spatial connection, wherein our racial violence is steeped in the soil, the constitution, and the rights of men, propels forward an inability to consider #blacklivesmatter for what it is, a stake in the human, and a full politics of connection, vitality, history, and futurity.

The murder of Trayvon Martin came to entangle the materiality of the body and the political economy of the internet, immediately, and in untraceable ways that provide the landscape in which to conceive of a corporeal and psychic emptiness of blackness. This powerful internet intersection, during the infancy of the BLM and BTLM movements, became immediately saturated by a plethora of descriptions of murder victims in attempts to withdraw humanness. Inherent in the call to memorialize and act upon the deaths of black people is the provocation that their life mattered enough to provoke social change and demand that institutions perform differently. It imbues their death with the power denied to their life, and it is this threat of power, even from the grave, that requires the immediate withdrawal of humanity, and the invocation of animal analogies, racial slurs, and the invitation to reinstate slavery.

This becomes a terrain on which mainstream media continues to act, intentionally and perhaps at times unintentionally criminalizing blackness through animality as though
the demand for life is criminal in and of itself. This practice is explored in Frantz Fanon’s use of *language*; to speak is to possess the qualities of language, and to use language signifies a kind of assimilation. Fanon demonstrates this by examining tensions between French as an official language and Creole, the articulation of the lower class. The construction between these linguistics, he argues parcels apart the white colonizer from the inhuman black. The languages bump up against each other not only in form, but in the continued microaggressions that accompany blacks speaking “perfect French” or whites attempting to speak the “informal” Creole as an act of familiarity. He argues that “It should be understood that historically the black man wants to speak French, since it is the key to open doors which only fifty years ago remained closed to him” (Fanon 1967, 21), however, this only enforces the relationship between black and white, as it will always be a surprise to stumble upon an intelligent black exception.

He goes on to critique the concept of ‘authentic love’ between women of color and the European male (25). He suggests that “The black woman has only one way to open her and one preoccupation—to whiten the race. The mulatta woman wants not only to become white but also to avoid slipping back” (37). His examples detail the internal struggle for women to “become white” in order to access a more acceptable social position through the rejection of black men. Fanon argues that this struggle is an internal psychological battle of self-hatred and one that fuels the rage between black and white. The inverse relation comes in chapter three, where Fanon explores the romantic dynamics between men of color and white women. Fanon begins in first person, provocatively stating: “I want to be recognized not as *Black*, but as *White*... who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white
love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man” (45). Fanon makes the important
claim that societies are simply either racist, or not racist, extending his analysis to avoid
the pitfalls of “more racist than” or “less racist than” (67). Engaging the
incomprehensible psychology and recognition of black bodies vis-à-vis the lived
experience he looks to the racist affect that shuttles through such phrases as “Dirty
nigger!” or simply “Look! A Negro!” (89) that expose the ways in which his intellect
(nor anything else) would never be adequate to shift him into the category of man, for as
he has stated throughout the text, he will always be black first and rendered an outlier.

Achille Mbembe extends Georges Bataille to extend the definition of the
sovereign as the subject which has the ability to refuse the fear of death that other
subjects are required to respect. These foundations allow Mbembe to approach the figure
of the sovereign as the possessor of the right to kill. Working again with Foucault,
Mbembe argues that race (and racism) are rightly situated within the formulation of
biopower. He says: “After all, more so than class-thinking (the ideology that defines
history as an economic struggle of classes), race has been the ever-present shadow in
Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the
inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples” (Mbembe 2003,17). This rule, in the
biopolitical state, is what allows subjects to be put to death. An exploration of terror
becomes central as it relates to modernity. Biopolitical experimentation comes to
encompass the slave, stripping them of home, body, and political status resulting in social
death in ways that mirror, quite astonishingly contemporary policing practices (Mbembe
2003, 19). Paradoxically, the slave was needed for the purposes of labor, relegating them
to a state of injury where the capacity to extract becomes essential to the larger project of
capital accumulation. These categories sit in the realm of animacy hierarchies as they justify and eschew simultaneously. In the case of blackness, he argues that “the African human experience constantly appears in the discourse of our times as an experience that can only be understood through a *negative interpretation*. Africa is never seen as possessing things and attributes properly of ‘human nature.’ Or, when it is, it’s things and attributes are generally of lesser value, little importance, and poor quality” (Mbembe 2001, 1). Through these negative gestures, Mbembe argues that the discourse on Africa is deployed in two particular ways: the African as a monstrous animal or beast figure. Or, alternatively, in an intimate, impenetrable sphere. In any case, Mbembe argues, the African exists as an “object of experimentation” (Mbembe 2001, 2). Mbembe lays the foundation for his analysis of the discourse by reminding readers of various explicit and micro narratives that portray Africa and Africans as strange, mysterious, and thus the Other able to be thrown away.

Mbembe advances his thesis by examining the ways in which the political economy of postcolonial sub-Saharan African was rationalized through particular techniques. He also questions the ways in which governing has changed, producing uncertain and precarious materialities. Mbembe says “*Commandment*, in a colony, rested on a very specific imaginary of state sovereignty” (25). He describes the two main features of state sovereignty as hinging upon false notions of “right” as well as layered techniques of violence. These features are situated within his outlining of the political economy of the colonies. In other words, Mbembe argues that in the case of colonial sovereignty, “right” is a one-sided affair, thus anything that responded against it was made to be “wrong” and made subject to violence.
Mbembe’s uses *entanglement* to examine governmental shifts in Africa:

These processes do not move in closed orbit; they are neither smooth nor unilinear, but point in several directions at once. Further, they are occurring at different speeds and on different time-scales and take the form of fluctuations and destabilizations (sometimes very sharp ones), periods of inertia and spurts that appear quite random but actually combine several regimes of change: stationary, dynamic, chaotic, even catastrophic (67).

This multidimensional concept is useful for considering the larger frameworks that Mbembe offers. He is attending not only to the coercion of certain bodies and the suffering in which they experience as a result, but also the ways in which society is reordered through these practices, and the processes of privatization and public violence operate in tandem. Mbembe asks ‘Who are you in the world?’ to tap on the heart of the matter—cultural legacies of violence categorize certain bodies of the postcolony. In this way, he has questioned what the differences, if any, exist in the colony and postcolony.

**Intersectional Assemblages: All Colors are Found in Black**

From here, I wish to question if indeed intersectionality can be brought into new dimensions while retaining the specificity that remains so crucial for analyzing the ways that women of color negotiate power in violence. The use of *matter* summons the immediacy and materiality of death, but also animates the long histories of blackness in the United States, and indeed globally. For many activists, there has been an excitement in BTLM—principally, it did not rely on a singular influence as was the case in previous movements. The historic leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, often attributed to influential men such as Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois, and the guidance of
Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr., suddenly became more capacious and accessible. BTLM has followed the notion that the people, in all their power, will be more influential in a mass movement than in one that looks to a leader. Thus, without casting assumptions regarding the advantages or challenges of the BTLM’s “leaderful” movement, we can say: while racialized violence is not new, nor is resistance to it, BTLM demonstrates a different form of insurgence. Thus, it is not my intention to diminish the effectiveness or successes of the BTLM movement. Rather, my concern lies in the ways in which these politics share a weedy history with prior movements and the ways in which they often leak from the inside.

Jordy Rosenberg (2014) has argued that attention to the molecular is evidence of theoretical primitivism in the Humanities’ ontological turn. Rosenberg offers a convincing case, albeit incorrect, bolstered by careful readings of continental philosophy and contemporary critical theory. Specifically, he argues that molecular ontologies have been shuttled through neoliberal colonialism and processes of capital accumulation, that when taken politically, name the stakes of historicist critique of embracing the molecular in the context of queer theorization. Rosenberg sets out to illuminate what queer studies has to offer critical theory’s ontological turn in order to unsettle what he calls the “conceptual abstraction” of the molecular. He calls the political interest in the molecular ‘fanatical’ (drawn from Joel Olson) and that of an ‘absent cause’ (from Spinoza), attempting to argue that the molecular functions as an externalized ‘excess of politics’. He says: “the ontological turn is a kind of theoretical primitivism that presents itself as a methodological avant-garde” (2). To make this argument he asserts that the particle metaphor of the molecular is constituted by philosophies that attempt to apprehend the
question of Being or Being-ness especially as it has to do with the relationality between species and temporalization. The burden of proof rests on three main sections: to assert that the ontological turn in critical theory is a primitivist fantasy escalated by colonialism and settler-colonialism, to further argue that the intersections of ‘ontological primitivism’ intersect with sexuality so as to critique the ‘objectlessness’ of queer theory, and finally, to show how the two former dynamics take form in a current political moment.

By primitivism one can assume that Rosenberg is mobilizing a critique that molecularization lacks an object or reason when expressed politically. In his words: “I want to suggest that the subjectless turn has a kind of partial legacy in current ontological work, and specifically in the turn toward the molecular as the pre-eminent ‘subjectless subject’ of ontologically oriented theory. The un-subject if you will” (5). Thus, Rosenberg suggests the molecularization of sexuality (and sociality) reference at least three things: the particle, the biomedical management of sexuality, and the desiring-machine metaphysics proposed in the Deleuzoguattarian frame. Holding these as frictional instantiations rather than supplemental, he suggests that in each case “the molecular operates as an abstraction, and comes to function fungibly across different methodological approaches” (8).

But the molecular enunciation within the assemblage of content does not simply emerge out of nowhere. What Rosenberg is dealing with is a kind of crystallization that exists in the context of sexuality, not a pure abstraction in the molecular sense. What he draws correctly is the embodied relation to desire, but this formulation should be relegated to the notion of becoming, and to a kind of becoming that links to an existential praxis of queer sexuality. He notes that his claim that the molecular is an abstraction is
not meant to signify a vague quality, rather it is meant to index a knotted relationality wherein historicity is divorced from temporality. But it seems what Rosenberg calls the molecularization of sexuality is both too abstract and not abstract enough. As Deleuze and Guattari say “One can abstract forms of content, but one must simultaneously abstract forms of expression; for what is retained of each are only unformed traits. That is why an abstract machine that would operate purely on the level of language is an absurdity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 146). Put another way, the molecular is a potentiality, a theory of subjectivity under capitalism as well as a provocation of how to resist it. Abstraction for Deleuze and Guattari functions as the vital force that draws smooth space (the line of the nomad) and combines the relations between speed, or distance, or time (499). They say: “Abstraction simulates a passageway between the sign machine and the referent have been cut off, emptied out, such that relations of denotation appear arbitrary and relations of signification unmotivated. But it is a matter of a forced arbitrariness and a forced motivation, an active politics of the break and of the autonomisation of the plane of the signifier” (Guattari 2011, 124).

And so, it should be stated that, molecularity does not in any way assert a positive charge—that is the molecular level does not guarantee a molecular revolution, rather it exists across spectrums of what might be considered “good” or “bad.” One not need file a charge against molarity in itself. Returning to Guattari, many positive shifts come from the molar level and many fascist politics emerge from the molecular. Second, objects are only projections. There is no molecular object any more or less than there is a molar. In fact, both exist as intensities that are enunciated at different scales and what exists between them is not despecification (as Rosenberg might argue) but transversality. And
finally, these are not differences, but rather what Manuel DeLanda calls accidental combinations wherein things are given a name (DeLanda 2006, 27). The contingent nature of boundaries means that within any assemblage and at whatever scale, processes are always taking place at both the molecular and molar level. These scales remain in process, always precariously territorialized, deterritorialized and reterritorialized. DeLanda says: “In short, analysis in assemblage theory is not conceptual but casual, concerned with the discovery of the actual mechanisms operating at a given spatial scale. On the other hand, the topological structure defining the diagram of an assemblage is not actual but virtual and mechanism-independent, capable of being realized in a variety of actual mechanisms, so it demands a different analysis” (31). This virtual point of view has major stakes within social theory because it directly aligns with the problem of putting the molecular and molar into relief. This is not the same problem posed by Rosenberg, but it does work to illuminate his misaligning of the molecular as the casual residue of an ontological turn within the context of queer and trans* theorizing.

Year Zero: Molecularization

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari remind us that masks do not make the head a face, rather they ensure that the head belongs to the body (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 176). Thinking politically and considering sentiments that the revolution always seems to be dissolved at the stage of the riot, and that the forest is deteriorating such that soon, there will be no Deleuzoguattarian trees to worry about, we must consider our closed understanding of possession. If the desire for social transformation takes difference seriously, it cannot be reducible to, nor possess it. While the viewpoint of social revolution opens possibilities for other strategic politics to emerge, it must do so in an
overwhelming, molecular fashion, or it risks repetition and capture. As I explored in chapters one and two, Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “molecular” appears repeatedly in their collaborations, often in tension with (and tethered to) the molar: “Every society, and every individual, are...plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms or the same relations...If they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other.”70 If, as Deleuze and Guattari assert, everything is political, then the presupposition that molar and molecular segmentarities are enacted simultaneously leads us to a mutually informed and dependently unfolding macropolitics (molar) and micropolitics (molecular). They give the imperative: “Conjugate deterritorialized flows. Follow the plants” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 11). Thus, to move toward the molecular possibilities of the rhizome, and the plant, is a clear route. The tendency to read Deleuze and Guattari’s dismissal of the tree as a negation is a dangerous oversight, and in fact would contradict the importance of their philosophy. To read the tree and plant together in a biunivocal relationship, where they occupy molar and molecular respectively, would contradict their intended critique of Darwin. The ‘domination of trees’, which they famously trouble, are always already at play as we search for roots. In other words, the molar organization of the tree and the molecular potentials of the plant cannot be

70 Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 213. In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize the rhizome, eventually utilizing the molecular as a politic of the rhizome, assemblage, and deterritorialization. They discuss lines of flight, at different speeds, which is helpful to their explanation of this interconnectedness. Of the rhizome, they summarize the identifying characteristics as one that takes a rhizomatic characteristic rather than the arborescent model of the rooted tree. They go on to describe a messy, malleable overspill of acting forces constantly open to be entered, passed through, and exited, never locatable in any of those points. The rhizome portrays endless interconnectedness that results in the strength of multiplicity. This relies on and connection to difference (or even sameness) in all directions.
understood without the other’s reference; “one cannot make the slightest demand whatsoever on any point of application without being confronted by the diffuse whole, such as you do, you are necessarily led to a desire to explode it” (Deleuze 2002, 213).

Molar and molecular politics operate simultaneously, often imperceptibly, as a kind of photosynthetic feedback loop. How then, might they answer to disparities between race, class, gender, sexuality and the power that shuttles between majoritarian and minoritarian embodiment? If we consider these categories are already emergent in molecular assemblages it is not the binary totality (man/woman; black/white; gay/straight) that binds them, rather, infinite multiplicities. For instance, BLM almost immediately brought into question the mattering of other lives (the molar questioning of brown-lives, women’s-lives, queer-lives, trans-lives, and the more controversial all-lives, white-lives, blue-lives) displaying the modes of capture that power wishes to flow through. Again, BLM resisted these anti-black sentiments: “When we say Black Lives Matter, we are talking about the ways in which Black people are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity…And the fact is that the lives of Black people—not ALL people—exist within these conditions is consequence of state violence.” Indeed, the proposed connections between ‘all-lives’ and ‘matter’—an argument that can be traced through the entirety of political debate—ignores the historical misuse of the demand’s intention. The proposition of all-lives, at its most surface level, mobilizes anti-blackness, but also troubles the notion of collective signs, or the expression of identity through an individual or group. The correspondence of black-lives retains a specificity, or newly constituted regime, with which whiteness frequently coopts and captures.
The challenges to *mattering* have not gained as much traction, with the exception of black trans* lives which have negotiated a clear alliance, particularly in attending to the murders of black trans* women. The disproportionate murders of black trans* women demanded a specification of “which black lives matter?” BLM has addressed this by stating that “there is a fundamental belief that when we say Black Lives Matter, we mean all black lives matter.” Here we have a question of materiality. Judith Butler has inquired how a recourse to materiality might function given the historical centering of matter in negotiations of sexual difference. The referent of black and trans* materialities is a clear point of departure in the political case of #blacktranslivesmatter, but similar to the strata of the tree and plant, we do not need to deconstruct these identities into oblivion, rather we can attend to them and also follow Butler’s provocation: “we may seek recourse to matter in order to ground or to verify a set of inquiries or violations only to find that *matter itself is founded through a set of violations*, ones which are unwittingly repeated in the contemporary invocation” (Butler 1993, 29, emphasis in original). In both cases, and in their coalition, attention to the premature death of black and trans* bodies have been faced with rhetorical justifications of animal-like behavior. The powerful role of the internet in connecting the BLM movement is also saturated with a plethora of descriptions of murder victims as “niggers,” “slaves,” “apes,” and “porch monkeys” in attempts to withdraw humanness, while mainstream media depicts protestors of the murders as “thugs,” “animals,” and “criminals” in attempts to criminalize blackness. Thus, protests held under banners of black and trans* embodiment, were promptly met with rhetorical deployment of animality in hopes of relegating these subjects to
subhuman behavior, or perhaps to return to Darwin’s God-fearing critics: some humans are endowed with a divine right to humanness, while some have never been human.

This familiar slight-of-hand, or what Nicole Shukin calls the “double entendre of rendering,” calls attention to the significant biopolitical practices of capitalism in relation to the animal, conjuring both a sense of mimicry and boiling down, both which play key roles in modes of capitalist (re)production and the distilling of life categories (Shukin 2009). Claire Jean Kim argues that:

Impassioned disputes over the animal practices of racialized others open a window onto the synergistic workings of the taxonomies of race and species in the contemporary United States. Historically conjoined, the two logics continue to sustain and energize one another in the joint project of producing the human and the subhuman, not-human, less than human—with all of the entailments of moral considerability, physical vulnerability, and grievability that follow (Kim 2015, 283).

Kim offers an important reminder, arguing that the false choice implemented by capitalism and biopower is often presented as an obligatory allegiance between the interests of humans and animals. Specifically, I am concerned with the ways in which inanimacy in invoked—on the proverbial back of the animal—in order to justify violence. I am not suggesting that by taking the animal more “seriously” we will see why certain bodies are mistreated. Rather, as Kim does, I am suggesting that we must understand where political projects place themselves in relation to other political projects. In doing so, we can excite transversal connections between them and imagine a politics
that works across scales, across intensities, and indeed, across species rather than hierarchical relations. Dinesh Wadiwel has argued that the biopolitical violence between humans and between humans and non-human animals share intertwined histories, but despite the ways in which they converge, they also display independent regimes of violence in their organization. Principally, the enactment of particular modes of governmentality and control place the human and animal in complex fields of control in which the war against animals is distinctly biopolitical and shuttles the thin line between life and death (Wadiwel 2015, 100). Wadiwel approaches the relationship between humans and animals from through the vantage point of war, pointing to the ways in which we continuously and systematically enforce the suffering of the animal, categorized as bare life, to the benefit of the human consumption. Through these biopolitical techniques and technologies, the animal becomes inanimate anti-matter. The same process can be seen between humans, lending themselves to the ways that politics is constructed along lines of hierarchy and instituted through capitalism, industry, law, and social behavior. Thus, it is not the rhetorical use of the animal, per se, that justifies analogous placement of the black or trans* human and animal on the auction block, but rather (in both cases) it is their forced inanimacy that renders them available for sale and slaughter. We might, with caution, even go as far as to say that black and trans* have much more in common with the animal than the human.

Following this, we must also question the role of black and trans* (and indeed all others) as political points of departure. Connections between blackness and animality are curiously ushered in through recent theories utilized through trans* analytics. Negative gestures between blackness and animals have been reordered through (though still
indexed by) the emerging interest in discursively linking nonhuman species, trans*embodiment, and trans*theory. Racist ideologies that have linked animals and blackness did so under the understanding that both can occupy a place of inanimacy (through violence, technology, biopolitical surveillance, etc.). Thus, in an almost mirrored move, trans* theory has emerged from another direction, finding affinity with the animal in attempts to undo the common understanding of a human-centered world.

Tracing black, trans*, and the animal in the current political landscape is a clear, yet complex, route. To approach these questions transversally encourages a disruption of boundaries and an unauthorized puncture of corporeal and ideological false positives. If it is to hold any weight through the prefixal relationship to animality, it must be attendant to the historical abuse of the term. Thus, tempering trans*animality does not work in a linear fashion, rather it opens new ways of thinking the animal transversally, showing as Alphonso Lingis did, that species shift, and are stirred by agitations in composition with an infinite number of possibilities. We can see the ways in which trans* theorizing may find inspiration in the animal, and that a responsible theorizing will necessarily discuss the impacts of theorizations of race.

Through this, it is easy to see that it is not, nor has it ever been, sufficient to simply say racism and transphobia are wrong. To do so facilitates a political imaginary, undergirded by progress narratives in which certain lives are brought into the grid of intelligibility under the rubric of the human, with its attendant democratic inclusion, rights, and visibility, and others are rendered disposable, often discursively relegated to the indeterminate category “it”. (Butler 1993)\(^71\). These categorizations operate, as

\(^71\) “Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves
Foucault argues, as modes of regulation. Race, gender, sex, or sexuality become cyclical practices of production and regulation in the classification and control of bodies. Such an imaginary of inclusion necessarily eclipses micropolitical, revolutionary happenings, or identity as it is molecular rather than molar and further suppresses possibilities found in a more capacious understanding of the vitality of matter. And so, I propose that when approaching the interwoven relations between blackness, transness, and animality, we must look transversally in order to shift the analytical focus from the bifurcated species, rhetorical justifications of violence, and forced inanimacy in order to seek new, perhaps liberating angles for approaching revolution. A transmolecular revolution will necessarily be processual, but harnessing molecular qualities, following the curves of transversality, using trans* to cut together and apart, does not promise a revolution, rather transmolecular revolution already is.

72 Important to these frameworks are scholars who have explored race and its geographical, political, and philosophical impact (cf. Spillers 1987; Ferguson 2003, Davidson et al. 2012; Gilmore 2002; Alarcón 1994; Omi and Winant 2004, 2014; Socio-political geography of: Del Casino 2011; McKittrick 2006; Nast and Pile 2005; Hartman 2007, Wynter 2006; Delany 2001; Mohanty 1991). Further, the affective impacts (in relation to space) of identity have been charted though recent work in urban geography (City special issues volumes 15.2-6; Robbins 2007; Amin and Thrift 2002; Latham and McCormack 2004; Swyngedouw 2006; Farías and Bender 2012).
Conclusion: Trans-Becoming/Becoming-Trans, or, Trees and Rhizomes

Nothing is older than the end of the world...And at the beginning, insurrection is the doing of those who are nothing, of those who hang out in the cafes, in the streets, in life, at the university, and on the Internet. It coalesces the whose floating element, plebeian and petty bourgeois, that is secreted in excess by the continuous disintegration of the social.

-The Invisible Committee, 2014

I preface this conclusion by saying that it does not operate as one; it disobeys its label in the spirit of the politics I’ve avowed up to this point. Rather than conclude, I hope to offer a number of timely conversations I imagine this dissertation to live within or at their margins. In doing so, I echo the stakes embedded within the dissertation, and offer future lines of inquiry for transmolecular revolution.

Jacques Rancière has troubled the grounds of political philosophy, arguing that disagreement is vital to politics as it is precisely the moment of dissensus—the gap between equality and lived experiences. Politics makes possible particular moments of dissatisfaction and class alignments that it can then never possibly contain. For him, politics rests on an equality that is never really enacted, and the moment in which it attempts to be enacted is politics. The notion of “wrong” is at the heart of politics and processes of subjectification. Though, it is not enough (and does not constitute community) to merely address the wrong, but rather to think about the aesthetics of politics, and to redress those who count as its actors. In many ways, political change has required—if only at a molar level—a certain set of procedures that has influenced organizations of power and achieved some sense of collective consent. It is for this

73 The gap that Rancière identifies, and the shuttling between the Deleuzoguattarian smooth and striated space might be contextualized in the aforementioned forces of Nietzsche, or to a lesser extent, a Derridean differance.
reason that when we think of the origins of intersectionality in the context of black feminist studies (through Crenshaw but also in ways that intersectionality predates the term) it is important to remember that the analysis one can draw from it is about the impossibility of the law, the impossibility to protection for black and brown women, and thus cannot be an analytic that is locked into place or possessed. This political disagreement, what Jennifer Nash has termed “intersectionality wars” has served to paradoxically place the political terrain of black feminist thought into contention, where one emerges as either a defensive and protective, or, critical and dismissive:

Nearly everything about intersectionality is disputed: its histories and origins, its methodologies, its efficacy, its politics, its relationship to identity and identity politics, its central metaphor, its juridical orientations, its relationship to “black woman” and to black feminism. At the heart of these debates is an anxiety over feminist theory’s key symbol: black woman. Feminist theory has long imagined black woman as the quintessential location of complexity and marginality, a figure that disciplines the interdisciplinary project of feminist theory by demanding an account of gendered racism and racialized sexism, and by advocating a feminism that transcends a preoccupation exclusively with gender. (Nash 2017, 117-118).

As Nash continues, in the political history of intersectionality, it is often argued for and conflated with black feminism more broadly, and by extension black women in general. The “imagined complexity” of black women plays a necessarily political trick for feminist political and intellectual production where black women are both ushered in for use value and eschewed for political investment. Echoing chapter two, in the era of
unprecedented trans* visibility, the trans* black woman has now taken up this role as both object of theoretical departure and murder. Visibility and legal protections do not suffice to affect social schemas of power.

It is likely for this reason that assemblage theory has found an affinity, but it should not be taken as a supplement on the road toward the gentrification of intersectionality. When assemblage theory is critiqued as heady, ambivalent theory—one that can only be thought alongside intersectionality—it reproduces the conditions under which black women’s bodies become the fungible site of accumulation. This has become intensified by the calls to intersectionality as it incorporates the mattering of black trans* women. Similar to the argument that I make in chapter four (Trans*versal Animacies) between the different considerations of animality for black and trans subjects, the black trans subject has been cast as one suspended in between the analytics of intersectionality and assemblage theory. Contemporary debates between intersectionality and assemblage theory are undergoing rapid changes in their application. As intersectionality has been made increasingly available as theoretical shorthand, it has incited feverous debate between those who might seek to hold on to the particulars of intersectionality and those who might leverage criticism that it has been used to mark a sensitive politically-correct, perhaps unreflexive, liberal subject. In short, intersectionality has been brought into a false equivalence with an ethical stance that demands we attend to the intersecting identities that make up out social worlds and then because of such a capacious rendering, has been critiqued for aspiring to include those not considered in its first articulated formulation. Within this debate, intersectionality is tasked with being the locator of the
problem (anti-black racism) of political debate as well as the measurer of progress (an inclusive feminism) within the question of political mattering.

This is precisely the moment we are in, where the social body is moved to do, not to listen to the calls of a leader, but to rise up in leaderless fashion with no real organization or program. While typically movements are spurred through negation (to collapse the system), claims to mattering conjure a certain vitality. One should be cautious not to romanticize this vitality, but to recognize that the mattering of black life is always already alivedead; the people do not create BLM, but rather BLM creates the people. In this disarticulated swarm of that which is knowable through trans* multiplicity, perhaps we can say that blackness disturbs the multiplicity and that looking for blackness means to make it visible, however temporary. And so, the micropolitics of blackness exists as a crisis of waiting, or a crisis of time. Declarations of political mattering, at their most fundamental, are claims to time and temporality.

The ontological ordering of blackness works outside of syncopated time, simultaneously disorganized as the non-thing (doing time) and the thingness of time-accumulated (time’s up). When Eva S. Hayward speaks of the imperative “don’t exist”, she draws attention to the different operative function of “nothingness”, or the restriction of political mattering, and “don’t exist” as the function that produces an antisocial contract wherein subjects are made available for death. She says: “‘Don’t exist’ articulates an attack on ontology, on beingness, because beingness cannot be secured” (Hayward 2017, 191). Hayward calls for a turn toward trans negativity as a project that would necessarily shift the focus away from the fungibility of black trans* women as the crisis point from which to acclaim a “tipping point”, the limit of physics, where time
stops. The interpolative function of “don’t exist” can be aligned with the negation of political mattering.

Again, this calls into question the ontological limits of multiplicity when confronting the anti-black tapestry of Eurocentric modernity. Calvin Warren proposes that “black trans, as a discursive formation, is charged with an exceptionally difficult task: creating the intellectual occasion for recognizing, interpreting, and introducing black trans experience into a larger field of inquiry” (Warren 2017, 267). This is especially true given the convergence of tremendous violence and subjugation that black trans people face. If, as C. Riley Snorton has argued, the connections between black and trans are transversal, one would be inclined to unearth the kinds of temporality that exist in the curves between black and trans, and between black-trans and other. Returning to the friction that exists between intersectionality and assemblage theory I wish to argue that, here, the materialities that exist between black and trans* are not simply an intersectional subset of a subset, but rather a newly constituted point of intensity within the assemblage.

The reordering of blackness, trans*ness, and the animal will be faced with capture and we must decide if this is the point in which it fizzles out. Trans*ness and blackness can render humanness perilous, directed toward inanimate death, or place the body in precarious relation to the nonhuman, subhuman, or inhuman. It may also offer new routes might be taken through the linking of trans*, black, and animacy, that if fully explored beyond the body, might serve to rearrange the stable human. The role of speciation provokes a theorization of the processes by which animal hierarchies become enmeshed with particular bodies in more salient ways than others, and in turn allows for a kind of
transversal relation, or alternate politics, to work in the refrain of silence previously thought to be a space of death. Tranimacies offer a transversal link between the affective dimensions of the animal and the provocation of the pollenating of trans*. If we accept this understanding of the human and the animal, where is the end? Revolutionarily speaking, there must not be one.

The use of “black trans lives matter” is not a conscious attempt to quell the revolution, and we must resist the impulse to label the movement as only molar or momentary, but the capturable nature of identity stresses the importance of continually reinventing practices that otherwise risk infinite and dismal repetition and dangerous sedimentation. Reconditioning identities, without performative reinvention, subdues creativity and anchors subjectivity to the static past, rather than the possibility of new futures. Jasbir Puar argues: “Becoming trans…as opposed to trans becoming, must highlight this impossibility of linearity, permanency, and end points. In Deleuzian terms, becoming is the ‘I’ cascading into the impersonal, the stripping of all registers of signification that make each body succumb to subjectification over ‘significance’” (Puar 2017, 56). These new possibilities will necessarily come to understand the animal and human in new ways. The conceptual work of trans* can bring about new articulations of animacy but doing so requires a great responsibility to the legacies of inanimacy that forcibly strip mattering. Mainstream anxiety provoked by the insistence black and trans* lives matter is often articulated through attributions of animalistic, not-quite human, behavior. Rethinking the question of matter itself offers a rethinking of the political impulse of inclusion. Trans*ing animality displaces the notion that one must “count” to “matter,” instead it highlights how our matter endlessly animates our worlds. This
disruption deterritorializes, at times imperceptibly so, in ways that open transversal routes for species to lean, shift, and agitate together.

Deleuze and Guattari say “Becomings, becomings-animal, becomings-molecular, have replaced history, individual or general. In fact, the tonal is not as disparate as it seems: it includes all of the strata and everything that can be ascribed to the strata, the organization of the organism, the interpretations and explanations of the signifiable, the movements of subjectification.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 162). The intensely rich facets of work that has come to encompass trans* studies and political mobilization point to a certain aspect of becoming as an influx and in motion process. Recalling Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion that we are already transsexual, we should add in here that the biopolitics of blackness to show that #blacktranslivesmatter raises different questions, not only about what lives matter, but also ones that stage the problem of relationality between identity and becoming, between additive identities within neoliberal diversity models, and the problem of changing the critique implied by a focus on blackness. Perhaps it is appropriate now to implement that asterisk once again (#blacktrans*livesmatter) to denote the nonlibertarian potentials for new ways of moving. How does #blacktrans*livesmatter enact new modes of becoming-trans? Might it be transmolecular revolution in practice? Onward.
References


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