



ENTANGLED KNOWLEDGES

Practices of Dreaming, Reflecting, and Being Present

GRSJ 500 2021-2022

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This zine was produced on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territories of the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓w̓7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətəl (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. Particularly given our theme is entangled knowledge, we want to recognize that our existence here has directly arisen from colonialism, dispossession, and the expropriation of Indigenous lands, processes which are ongoing. Our work would not be possible without a longer genealogy of Indigenous and Black feminist scholarship and activism. We continue to be committed to the return of stolen land, abolition, restitution, reparations and justice for past and ongoing colonial subjugation.

Introduction

ON EPISTEMIC OPPRESSION AND ROUTES OF RESISTANCE

By Elaina Nguyen

This zine emerges out of a collection of works produced from our class, GRSJ 500, in response to our department's Noted Scholars Series, *Entangled Knowledges: Practices of Dreaming, Reflecting and Being Present*. Our class gathered bi-weekly throughout the academic year to have conversations around the work of scholars who approached knowledge from different vantage points—all working towards building something different and hopefully better within the academy. While reflecting on the pieces in this zine, I found myself turning back to the work of Kristie Dotson whose writing on epistemic oppression we used to begin the semester. While epistemic exclusion refers to the “unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers”, epistemic oppression speaks to ongoing infringement on people's ability to contribute to knowledge production (Dotson 115). Dotson introduces the idea of irreducible, third-order epistemic oppression where the resilience of epistemological systems—their ability to absorb large disturbances—is key to maintaining oppression. What this means is that one of the most necessary but difficult tasks in trying to shift out of oppressive epistemic systems is becoming and making other others aware of the system's limits (Dotson 131). Yet how do we become aware of the limitations of epistemological systems when their durability means we also rely upon these same systems for our thinking?

Covering a range of speakers and topics, the following pieces take up the challenge of listening to and thinking with a wealth of work that asks us to dream, reflect, and be present in different ways. Not only is it necessary to ask what alternate knowledges exist, but also to create spaces where we can probe the issues within our current epistemic toolset. Reflecting on Michel Foucault and Jasbir Puar, Allison Campbell considers the entanglements of knowledge and power through the biopolitical “right to maim.” Melissa Plisic's poem responds to Tara Mayer by imagining an academic institute that decenters human ways of knowing. Allen Baylous draws on insights from Y-Dang Troeung and Thy Phu to explore context, consent, and redaction, asking how family archives can help locate imaginaries of diasporic interconnection. Z. Brimacombe recounts their experience travelling across the US border and uses Hortense Spillers' work to reflect on what we can learn from the the margins of violence. Working with musical codes, Elys Gardiner builds on Katherine McKittrick's work to explore Black freedom in *Lemonade* and *At Last am I Free*. In closing, Lindsey Nkem uses Jasbir Puar's concept of debility to write about the experiences of Black and Brown athletes. It is in conversation that we hope these pieces will prompt reflection on the many ways that knowledge is intertwined with power, serve as a collective effort to continue to reveal resilient forms of epistemic oppression, and open up strategies for feeling and dreaming otherwise.

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BIPOWER, BIOPOLITICS: DEBILITY, CAPACITY, AND DISABILITY

By Allison Campbell

Many of the concepts discussed this year under our theme of *Entangled Knowledges* revolved around issues of power: power in knowledge(s), the reparative power of remembrance, power in community organizing, in defining whose lives are grievable, in dreaming as a practice for knowing, in the meaning of borders during a pandemic, in water and grassroots organizing to protect it, in militarization and grassroots movements to resist it, and in music and what it can teach us.

In the midst of these discussions we paused to consider theories of power directly, examining Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, coupled with Jasbir Puar's discussion of capacity, debility and disability. This pause offered an important opportunity to reflect on how power manifests and is exercised in society, first through understanding Foucault's discussion of the sovereign "right of death and power over life," and then building on this with Puar's discussion of states' exercising of the "the right to maim," leading to an analysis of debility as a means of social control.

In *A History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes that sovereign power held within it the implicit right to kill – that is, it is the right of the sovereign to decide who lives and dies.¹ Under sovereign rule, power was exercised through the "right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself. It culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (259). Moreover, any perceived threat to the life of the sovereign was a legitimate reason to end a person's life, i.e. to eliminate that threat.

Foucault describes that the way social control

was exercised shifted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the rise of individualism, industrialization, and the emergence of the nation-state. The right to kill, which had characterized sovereign power, was gradually supplanted by disciplinary power, which regulated human life in society by exerting control over the human body in two ways. First, emerging alongside industrialization, disciplinary power mechanized the human body, operating to "increase the docility and utility of the people, at the lowest cost and maximum efficiency" (261). Second, and later, it operated on the "species body," exercising biopower through the regulation and management of biological processes, including the birth, death and conditions that contribute to the relative health of the population. As Foucault summarizes, "the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death." (261)

Where Foucault described disciplinary power as a mechanism of social control, Jasbir Puar, in *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*² illustrates how disciplinary power is differentially applied and what that differential application accomplishes. Puar argues that the neoliberal state apparatus has an interest, not only in controlling a population through "the regulation of human bodies and the calculated management of life" (Foucault, 261), but in actively ensuring the *debility* of a population. Debility, she argues, is an intended result of biopolitics, one which is exercised through the state's self-claimed "right to maim."³

1 Foucault, Michel, edited by Paul Rabinow (1984). *The Foucault Reader* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books. Read: Part II. Practices and Knowledge (pp. 170-187; 206-213 and 258 to 272)

2 Puar, Jasbir. K. (2017). *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham: Duke University Press.

3 Puar describes debility as a 'disruption' of the ability/disability binary, noting that while some bodies may not be (recognized) as disabled, they may be debilitated. Meanwhile some bodies may be disabled but also capacitated (xv). However, rather than a continuum of various levels of ability, ability, debility and disability become an overlapping set of concepts that feed, reflect on and reinforce each other; concepts that might be represented as a Venn diagram, rather than as a linear movement from one to the next. Debility thus functions as "both a disruption of the ... binary – as an in-between space – and as a supplement to disability..." (xvii).

SOVEREIGN POWER

RIGHT TO TAKE LIFE OR
LET LIVE

BIOPOWER

RIGHT TO FOSTER OR
DISALLOW LIFE TO THE
POINT OF DEATH

BIOPOLITICS OF DEBILITY

RIGHT TO MAIM

Thus, the right to maim emerged as a necessary modification of the sovereign right to kill; a deliberate biopolitical move designed to ensure the debility of a population. While the right to kill is the explicit exertion of total control over who is allowed to live or die, “maiming” is an active and intentional expression of biopolitics which becomes a specific source of value extraction from populations that would otherwise be disposable. As Elaina Nguyen summarized, it ensures “the preservation of ‘life’ (and therefore the maintenance of bodies that capitalism can profit off of) but the complete deprivation of the actual conditions of life.”⁴ Ensuring the debility of a portion of a population exemplifies the most intense form of the biopolitics, and, Puar argues, is a “sanctioned tactic of settler colonial rule” (Puar, xxvi).

Maiming is used to achieve the tactical aims of settler colonialism... on two levels. The first is the maiming of humans within a context that is utterly and systematically resource-deprived, an infrastructural field that is unable to transform the cripple into the disabled. ... that is, normalization of practices that produce docile bodies. The second is the maiming of infrastructure in order to stunt or decay the able-bodied into debilitation through the control of calories, water, electricity, health care supplies, and fuel (Puar 144)

The Israeli violence against Palestinians, often resulting in significant injury as an intentional choice rather than death, illustrates the state’s enforcement of the “right to maim.” Puar argues that states variously exercise the right to kill or maim as a deliberate choice. She meanwhile notes that in Palestine, occupied territories where hospitals and most other infrastructure are have been eradicated and damaged, rendering the Palestinian population as “permanently debilitated, and yet alive.” Debilitation is a deliberate means of social control. Puar states, “both are part of the “deliberate debilitation of a population... and are key elements in the racializing biopolitical logic of security. Both are mobilized to make power visible on the body.” (x)

Finally, Puar discusses two slogans that became popularized by the Black Lives Matter protests, positioning them as disability justice rally cries. She refers to both “Hands up, don’t shoot!” and “I can’t breathe!” as demanding an end to both the systemic conditions of (deliberate, state-sanctioned and -enforced precaritization), and to the speaker’s (deliberate, state-sanctioned and -enforced) debilitation. By contesting the right to maim, the Black Lives Matter movement is thus a “revolutionary call for redressing the debilitating logics of racial capitalism” (xviii).



Figure 1. Protesters in Ferguson, Missouri following the police shooting of Michael Brown / Joe Raedle, Getty Images 2014

State-sanctioned violence against targeted individuals occurs within the context of disciplinary control at the systemic level, which ensure the debility of racialized communities on a broader scale, across society. In Canada this is most clearly illustrated in the debilitation of Indigenous communities, which Puar would argue is a deliberate mechanism of social control. Through the reservation and residential school system, the Canadian state instilled the systemic precarity of Indigenous communities, while at the same time demonstrated its ‘right to maim or to kill’, determining who could live, who would die. The “sixties scoop,” the foster care system are then, examples of how power relations shift and change in order to reinforce themselves.⁵ The over-criminalization and over-incarceration of Indigenous people, are simply modifications in the technologies of power which ensured precarity, effectively debilitating not just individuals but entire communities, across systems, geographies, and generations.

4 Elaina Nguyen, *GRSJ 500: Discussion Post*, March 2, 2022. Retrieved from https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/88079/discussion_topics/1289091 on May 12, 2022.

5 Foucault conceptualizes power and knowledge as a web of power relationships and systems of knowledge, the majority of which are implicit, and for the most part invisible.

It is hardly surprising that power emerged as a central theme from a speaker series called *Entangled Knowledges: Dreaming, Reflecting and Being Present*. As Foucault argued, power and knowledge are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. Knowledge gives rise to power, and power is present wherever knowledge is present. In engaging with the knowledge-power matrix through various practices of “dreaming, reflecting and being present” in struggles for social justice across disciplines and movements, the Noted Scholar Series presented many examples of how settler-colonial states exert disciplinary power over the human body, and how this power operates to ensure and enforce the debilitation of racialized communities. Moreover, an investigation of these works as an effort to disentangle the knowledge-power matrix offers opportunities to consider the ways social justice movements are constantly seeking to usurp biopolitics, by subverting the right to maim.

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On Tara Mayer

THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF LOVE

By Melissa Plisic

The Institute for the Study of Love
was founded in the gentle hours of the morning
by the black-capped chickadees in my neighbour's yard,
and when my mom slices oranges for her anaks
even though we are in our 20's now

It has campuses worldwide (and beyond!), including:

Drivenik, HR

in a canoe

the underside of a salmonberry leaf in the rain

Anduin

on your mom's fridge

the Cretaceous Seaway

bunk beds

the crick

Polaris

At the Institute for the Study of Love

We are not Rational

We are not Human

We are not Man

We are barely I

We tell stories together in all shapes and forms

It's beautiful, and it's together, and that's it

"Wow, Melissa, your research is so unique!"

Yes, I took off the Anthropos-shaped cloak

My research question is:

How do I keep safe what I love?

And by that I mean

ALL OF IT

POSITIONALITY

Croatian, Filipinx settler (second generation)
colonially occupied x^wməθk^wəyəm, səlilwətaʔl,
and Skwxwú7mesh lands
non-binary, bisexual (they/ she/ siya)
able-bodied and neurotypical (mostly)
from the suburbs
homo sapiens
in the so-called “Anthropocene”



ETHICS

Trust through intimacy

Also, reparations.

METHODS

Step 1:
be bad at it

Step 2:
listening
looking
watching
waiting
breathing
breaking
trying again
to think the unthinkable
to speak the unspeakable

Step 3:
impossible beauty



LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework of this project is caring,
deeply

As for literature,
I read the ashes floating down the creek, the hesitant wag of my dog's tail,
the sunburns on Oregon grapes, the local news in November 2021,
the overflowing storm drains and highways strewn about,
the growing absence of huckleberries in my parents' driveway,
the lining of my stomach, the label of my SSRI's,
the tears and other bodily stuffs on my sheets,
the birth charts of my lovers and friends,
the story of Cassandra, my flower cards shuffled again and again,
the thrice-daily wildfire update emails when I lived in the Okanagan,
the family photo album from our road trip to Alberta in August 2002,
the way my parents don't meet my eyes when I talk about "current events",
the leaves too red too soon, the frostline, the low fuel light on my dashboard,
the corrected "Barge Chilling Beach" sign, the travel warnings on the DriveBC website,
the sheer number of white people with their -oodles at any given park in Metro Vancouver,
some books and journal articles,
and every waking moment

The gap in the field is a flaming Anthropos-shaped crater
Not at Chicxulub this time
To fill it is an impossible task for an Individual
Luckily, at the Institute, that is not how We do things
Stranger is my most sacred friend
I'm just the one that can type a thesis

As an amalgam of voices,
I will weave my feelings into the crater
one tapestry closer to the truth
Threads from my fingers
and into the clay
to make a new field
where frog's ear and huckleberries grow

ARTISTS' STATEMENT

I wrote this poem inspired by the conversation between Dr. Tara Mayer and Dr. Ross Gay that was part of the *On Feeling and Knowing* series (2021) and Dr. Mayer's talk titled "Things I Learned But Was Not Taught" (2022). An "institute for the study of love" is an idea that Dr. Gay brings forth (33:37), raising questions about what learning could look like if it didn't take place in halls that have the "residue" of white supremacy on them (1:42). Talking with Dr. Mayer gave me specific insights into how I might take up my autoethnographic voice. I take Dr. Gay and Dr. Mayer's invitations to explore what *my* masters research would look like if I was a student at the Institute for the Study of Love, rather than at the University of British Columbia; even if my disciplinary alignment is with the Institute for Social Justice, even this context is tainted with coloniality. My thesis project is about multispecies justice during a mass extinction, with an explicitly anti-colonial, feminist, queer orientation; this includes anti-speciesism/anti-anthropocentrism, which I invite the Social Justice Institute to take more seriously. To respect my own words and work, I will let the rest of *The Institute for the Study of Love* speak for itself.

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On Y-Dang Troeung & Thy Phu

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CONSENT? CONTEXT?:

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON [REDACTED]

REDACTION IN DOCUMENTATION [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

By Allen Baylosis

INTRODUCTION

In the previous noted scholars' lecture, Professor Becki Ross was asked by Professor Rosanne Sia and Professor JP Catungal on the archiving in her work—how photos of criminalized sex workers became markers of loss, as what is bound on the photos cannot be represented in the now. It is an excellent connection from that to the lecture on looking into archives of subjectivity, displacement, and trauma. How do we approach documentation on events that we feel there is nothing left to be done, just like how photos attempt to freeze the time and capture the context surrounding the event? Some initial reflections are drawn from Hartman, Best, and Tang's concept of the interval between "the no longer and the not yet" (p. 18). How do these strips frame what is hidden and bound to be seen as the camera film? How do these archives breathe? What happens when we activate a "liquidation of personal memory?" In the case of Tang and his engagement with Ra, how does one distinguish [through listening] the silence and noise of the past? What does it contribute to one's long-term healing?

In answering these questions, I turn to a gesture that either protects or preserves what is on the archival photos: the act of redaction. Although there is alteration involved in redacting an image, an affective citation covers the within and beyond the context of the image's captured yet stored narrative. To serve as a thinking piece, I attempt to flesh out the possibilities of treating redaction as performative, constituting agential practices that would impact erasure. In a way, I contest that redaction, as a form of erasure, performs absence while reflecting presence—or presencing the past. Thus, I look at redaction in two critical ways: (1) consent and (2) context.

CONSENT

Departing from the question addressed to Professor Ross regarding the use of the archives, Y-Dang presented a redacted family photo of her when she was still a child. What struck me is not the way I listened to the image but the four black rectangular "markings" on the photograph—a form of censoring private data. The presence of the markings led me to a speculative thought of treating them as gestures of **consent**. Phu argues that there is "a struggle to piece together incomplete stories told by images, many of which were defaced, discarded, or destroyed. At the same time, such photos represent a tie to the families left behind,

whether as memories of artifacts that no longer exist or as surviving images that evoke layers of memories."

Redaction can also be treated as an erasure: "Who are these people? To whom do these photos belong? To address these questions, erasure encourages visitors to witness what Le describes as the 'liquidation' of personal memory through their voyage across this chaotic swirl of images, churned up in the course of a violent passage. (Phu, 2014)." It was a purposive choice of the storyteller to redact the "eyes" of her family members, which only showed Y-Dang and her mother's faces. Overall, looking and listening to the image itself brought me to a context that suggests their departure from Cambodia. It might be a peaceful day back then, but a forthcoming terror will lead to her family's migration to Canada. Erasure ends up challenging our definition of family by leaving open the possibility of multiple claims from unexpected sources—by allowing for what Nayan Shah calls, in a wholly different context, "stranger intimacy." I bring the acknowledgment of integrity in redacting the faces of the photos. It does something—two things: redaction hides someone or something and allures you to investigate why it was redacted. This is where the role of the spectator towards their activation or emancipation would let them interpret what they see. Hence, my second approach in redaction deals with context.

CONTEXT

The use of redaction explicitly tells something about certain information that needs to be censored or hidden due to privacy concerns. Nevertheless, can a redaction be a form of alteration? If so, does the **context** of the image also change? As spectators, we ask: "who are the families pictured? They may be strangers to him, but they are the ones he came upon and incorporated when he sought but could not find his own. They are the ones viewers could claim, though they may not recognize who is pictured in each family photo [...] the notion of a stranger intimacy conjured in this way ends up reframing 'family'" (Phu, 2014).

Moreover, Campt (2017) writes:

When we look at a photograph, we automatically look at faces to distinguish the identities of the human subjects. But in the absence of the faces, in which white frames are put over instead, we distinguish their identities through the clothes

they wear, their poses, and postures, meaning we get to know them based on the choices of their clothes and the choices of their gestures when they were being photographed in a certain moment. Therefore, all of their individual choices give spectators context clues to their similarities and differences as people (20).

This suggests the affective turn of such redaction impacting the context of the image based on the spectator's interpretation. Instead of focusing on the faces found on the image, one directs their attention to everything else. The focal point of the images is not what was presented, but what was exposed through such absence.

BEYOND THE VISUAL IMAGE-INARIES

In understanding the context of an image, one does not only rely on the image's visual value. The alterations made to the images may speak for themselves. One must revolve around the aesthetic implications of an image through both haptic temporalities and auditory perception. Then, I ask with Campt (2017): "do [faceless] images emit sound? If so, at what frequencies do they register? If not, what can we apprehend in and through their muteness?" (p. 23). To answer this, I attempt to juxtapose Y-Dang's anecdote to Tina Campt's cover of her book "Listening to Images" (see Figures 1 and 2).

This juxtaposition places the subjected beings as the primary objects of the image. "Reckoning with the losses of the past, a sense of futurity propels it; keen to preserve, it also inevitably destroys" (Phu,



Figure 1. Anecdote 1 - The Ground (Troeung, 2021)



Figure 2. Assemblage from *Gulu Real Art Studio* (Campt, 2017)

2014). This vis-a-vis analysis of the photos exercises "a listening practice focused on the affective registers of [black] family photography; on how and why such photos touch and move people both physically and affectively; and on excavating the gendered narratives of diaspora captured in images of communities, often overlooked in many scholarly accounts" (Campt, 2017, 23). Indeed, the two images reverberate from different contexts, but both are entangled with the imperial and colonial effects of political violence.

CONCLUSION

My reflections revolve around the concept of activation vis-a-vis emancipation when looking into and through the archives. I depart from the speakers' question: "how do we document the undocumented?"; as the title of the lecture suggests, "Refugee Archives across the Transpacific: Activating Anecdotes and Family Photography". This thinking piece arrives at listening to family archives, anecdotes, images become modes of episteme to which we can document the undocumented. "They are archetypically quiet

photos, yet they are photos that ruminate loudly on practices of diasporic refusal, fugitivity, and futurity.” (Campt, 2017, 24). While redaction mimics the violence experienced by the subjects in the images, it also exposes the human cost of suppression, and symbolically restores a voice to the silenced (Stone, 2017). In other words, these are communities entangled around the photographs that they by turns take apart, conjure up, and resignify for one another.” (Phu, 2014). To end, one must always ask: how does activating family archival photos and anecdotes contribute to locating the intimate imaginaries of diasporic interconnection for social justice?

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VIOLENCE AT THE INTERSECTION: THINKING BORDERS THROUGH THE WORK OF HORTENSE SPILLERS

By Z. Brimacombe

A month ago, I crossed an international border for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic over two years ago. As I dug out my passport, updated my phone's roaming plan, and planned where I would exchange my Canadian currency for US dollars, it felt much the same as other trips I'd taken to the states. However, this time I also had to pay a nurse to watch me administer my own rapid COVID test over a video call, so that they could certify my negative result, so that I could present myself at the border as "safe." It was no longer enough not to be carrying firearms, batteries, fresh fruit, or cannabis; now I also needed to prove that I was not carrying microscopic particles of virus in my breath. In my mind, the image of the border morphed from chain link fence into N95 respirator mask.

In her lecture "At the Margins: Borders in the Age of a Pandemic" (2022), Hortense Spillers invoked the space of the border as a theoretical and material opening for transformative ethical questions. Throughout, she emphasized the dual nature of borders as both material and immaterial; real and imagined. Borders do not apolitically mark pre-existing edges between places or people; rather, they are sites of struggle that serve as necessary grounds for the construction of moral, political, and cultural geographies

In this short essay, I recount my recent experience witnessing a shooting while travelling in Los Angeles, California. I situate this story in relation to Spillers' critical theoretical perspective on borders, as well as her crucial work "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987). In my analysis, the reality of violence threatens the myth of the protective border. Further, I consider the danger of the normalization of violence; highlight the nebulous notion of "safety" itself; and consider how to think across and through borders.

On May 28th, 2022, I was returning to my hostel in Marina Del Rey, Los Angeles from a gallery opening in neighbouring Culver City. I was in town to attend a Queer Studies graduate conference at UCLA, one of a handful of presenters who had arrived from across the Canadian border. It was around 10:30 pm and the driver and I were alone on the bus. As we approached the corner of Lincoln and Washington Boulevard, I pulled on the yellow cord to request my stop. I was gathering my things and preparing to stand up. As we pulled forward, just about to enter the intersection, I heard gunfire to my left. It took me a long moment to place the sound, and even longer to figure out how to react. It wasn't until the driver had climbed out of his seat and pressed himself against the ground, calling "Get down!" that I realized I needed to move.

I dropped to the floor and listened as more and more shots rang out. People were shouting, cars were honking, and after a few moments sirens began wailing in the distance. I stayed pressed to the floor. When police were clearly on the scene and the driver decided that enough time had passed since the last shots, he climbed back into his seat, told me to stay down, and turned right to drive away from the scene. When he dropped me off on the other side of my hostel, I could see that the intersection was completely blocked off by a makeshift border of fire trucks and police cars, with a news helicopter circling overhead.

In the days that followed, researching the incident, I learned that it was an attempted drive-by shooting. According to news sources, the suspect fired at patrons outside a restaurant, and the restaurant's security guard then returned fire, shooting and injuring both the suspect and a bystander (CBSLA Staff, 2022).

Cowering on the floor of the bus, wondering if I was about to die due to sheer coincidence and poor timing, I felt immensely vulnerable. I had no idea what the shooter's motives were. Would they climb on to the bus and take me out? Could a stray bullet pierce the exterior of the bus with enough momentum to injure me?

In "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," (1987) Hortense Spillers critiques dominant narratives of gender and race by linking African-Americans' histories of dispossession, enslavement, forced migration, and torture with the formation of both gender categories and social subjectivity. In Spillers' analysis, the Black woman (and, specifically, the figure of the "Sapphire") emerges as the subject with the potential to "rewrite [...] a radically different text for a female empowerment" (Spillers, p. 80). This potential comes from the particular experience of violence that enslaved women underwent, being subjected to both "interiorized," feminized violations such as rape, and "externalized," masculinized physical attacks (p. 68). As Spillers writes, "this materialized scene of unprotected female flesh — of female flesh "ungendered" — offers a praxis and a theory ..." (p. 68). In other words, the way that slavery made no distinction between the forms of violence appropriate for male and female flesh opens up (through violence) a way of thinking about bodies without gendered divisions.

This insight is salient for the way that it presents violence as a liminal space. The intention here is not to glorify or excuse acts of torture, slavery, and violence; but rather to construct a theoretical grounding that moves beyond simply condemning these acts. Engaging with the lived experience of violence enables us to ask: what logics, knowledges, and subjectivities emerge within and alongside violence? And how could we mobilize these knowledges towards liberation and against violence itself?

This theme returned in our discussion of borders. In titling her lecture "At The Margins," Spillers directly called to us to consider the space of the margin, or border, as more than just a dividing line. While borders are discussed as non-spaces, as simply lines separating two entities from one another, they are also material. Those who have been "marginalized," constructed as not-belonging on either side of a

border, then inhabit a unique positionality. Again, as in the ungendered violence of slavery, a population is forced to see, feel, and experience the world from outside the logic of the ruling power structure. When you are an undocumented immigrant, for example, not protected by the rights and freedoms of the country, the border can not be the protective wall imagined by citizens.

Spillers highlighted the way that borders are bound up in "myths and aspirations" that figure prominently in ideology. The US-Canada border that I crossed over certainly serves a mythological purpose. Despite the fact that legal slavery took place in Canada as well as the United States, the national discourse redirects our attention continuously to the border as the end of the Underground Railroad. Canada is supposed to be safer, kinder, less violent. This myth obscures, among other oppressive structures, the colonial foundations of the nation (Maynard, 2017). By comparing the United States and Canada in the piece, I do not mean to minimize the reality that violence does occur in Canada, or to reproduce this myth. As well, I'm aware that my insulation from the everyday reality of violence emerges not just from the political border I live within, but also from my position as a white, settler, cis-passing, university-educated citizen. In other words, there are many borders at work.

One moment from my experience in LA has particularly stuck in my mind. As the driver and I lay on the ground, after the shots themselves had stopped, he shared his surprise: "I've never seen this kind of thing before, and I've been driving this route for years." In response, all I could think to say was "I'm Canadian!" — a statement that I cringed at as soon as it left my mouth. He didn't react except to tell me, later, that this would be a good story for when I went back to Canada.

I read my assertion of my nationality, in this context, as an attempt to draw the safety of a border back around me. Although I am a social justice scholar and an activist, frequently working to highlight the contradictions and erasures embedded in Canada's discourse of liberal exceptionalism; I am also a product of the Canadian nation-state and some part of me clings to Canada as "better," as the place with health insurance and gun control and multiculturalism. In asserting that "I am Canadian" in response to this

experience of danger, I was also saying “this isn’t supposed to happen to me. I’m from a place where this doesn’t happen.” Perhaps, I was trying to escape the liminal space of being a citizen beyond ‘my’ border.

Reflecting on this experience of fear now, I am struck by the paradoxical discourses of safety that structured my time in LA. On the one hand, I had to be fully vaccinated and tested to even enter the country. On the other hand, there was nothing I could have done to prepare for this gunfire. I was wearing my surgical mask, safe from airborne microbes, but without a bulletproof vest.

The border inhabits our imaginations as a shield, defending the citizens of the country against foreign invasion. This metaphor constructs those outside the border as dangerous. However, this simple us/ them, inside/outside binary is insupportable. Clearly there are important borders within the state as well, between different cities, communities, cultures, and racial groups, to name a few. And clearly, as with the combined forces of police from LA and Culver City who responded to the shooting, there are alliances and interactions between and across borders.

So ongoing violence constructs and maintains borders, as in the case of colonial expansion across Turtle Island, but individual acts of violence also force us to question the reality and materiality of borders. The US-Canada border serves a material function, regulating entry and exit of people and goods, but it also functions as an ideological dividing line. Back at the hostel, I spoke to other guests about my experience. Most were surprised or apologetic, but those from major US cities just responded with knowing nods and sighs of “yeah, that’ll happen,” sometimes accompanied by a story of how they had witnessed another shooting, or places they’d lived where they would hear gunshots every night.

I spoke with an acquaintance from the area the next day, and she commented on how she could see herself normalizing the violence, but she couldn’t see any way around it. The reality of her life is that gun violence *does* happen around her regularly. In her lecture, Spillers noted that everyone in the United States lives in a liminal space because of the constant threat of violence. While US citizens do not have recourse to my assertion of Canadian identity as a way to

distance themselves from this reality, they do have other strategies: blocking out the news, focusing on themselves, becoming desensitized. My acquaintance even shared that one day when she had seen a car on fire on her way to work, her first thought was not “I hope everyone’s okay,” but rather “this is going to make me so late.”

The banality of this violence must be addressed. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Justice* (2004), Judith Butler states that experiences of violence and grief make us aware of our own inherent vulnerability, writing, “mindfulness of this vulnerability can become the basis of claims for non-military political solutions, just as denial of this vulnerability through a fantasy of mastery (an institutionalized fantasy of mastery) can fuel the instruments of war” (Butler, p. 29). In other words, the shock of violence presents a choice: will we respond with further violence, or will the threat open us up to seeing ourselves as interconnected with those around us, and working to develop new non-violent solutions?

Butler’s powerful words present grief as a space where new worlds can be made. But how do we even get to grief? If the response to a shooting is to brush it off; if the response to a car on fire is to groan about the commute; then how do we get to grief? The sad truth, it seems to me, is that there is simply too much grief for us to hold. The people who responded to my story in these ways did not do so because they are heartless and uncaring, but rather because they live in a culture oversaturated by the same kinds of stories. Earlier that same day, I had been eavesdropping on locals in a cafe discussing the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Texas just four days earlier. Later when I tried to find information on what I had witnessed, I had a hard time locating the right articles because there had been two other shootings in the LA area that day. I sat at my computer, trying more and more specific search terms, my heart in my stomach. How could it be that this event was so commonplace I couldn’t even easily find tweets about it?

In “At the Margins,” Spillers emphasized that different realities become possible when we look towards our entanglements and connections. While she was skeptical of the possibility of life without borders, at least at this historical moment, Spillers called attention to inseparability. “We can expend a great deal of energy

bounding the energy around us,” she stated, “but we cannot save ourselves. Our salvation is our sociality.” In other words, instead of investing in strengthening our borders, what if we reached across them?

This question becomes even more complex when we position it within the moment of a global pandemic. Barriers such as borders, masks, and physical distances of six feet are, in this case, life-saving. We arrive at a paradoxical situation in which we’re pushed to strengthen these physical barriers in order to protect the most vulnerable, while also striving to dismantle border-driven thinking. This entire experience highlighted for me that violence is multivalent and complex. Preserving life must take different forms depending on how it is being threatened.

It would be so easy for me to tell this story as a statement of gratitude for the safety of Canada and our higher level of gun control, or as a condemnation of the “madness” south of the border. However, I would rather reach across this border than reinscribe it. On the bus I experienced a proximity to violence, but not entering into it directly. Nonetheless, I was there, approaching the margin. Although I was not one of the shooters or the injured, I am still related to this event. What, I am prompted to consider, is my responsibility in this relationship? What can I say from where I stand, beside but in view of an event like this?

These are questions that urge me to think beyond the particularity of May 28 and into my position within my home community on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Sto:lo land. How do I respond to the ongoing violence around me, even when it is not so immediate as a gunshot? How do I avoid normalizing or ignoring it, without becoming overwhelmed and paralyzed by helplessness and grief?

I believe that this critical consideration of my experience of near-violence is a crucial starting point in responding to these questions. In this piece I have aimed to think with Spillers notion of praxis that emerges through violence, and to use the concept of the border to analyze my own experience. My experience in Los Angeles highlighted for me the dysfunction of a system in which violence has become normalized. It also demonstrated that the protective function of borders is both actual (i.e. national gun control laws) and imagined (i.e. my vulnerable

corporeality). It is clear that building walls to further and further enclose or exclude “the Other” cannot be our salvation. Instead, our project must be to reshape our discourses around safety, protection, and citizenship towards a truly liberatory, non-violent politic.

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Black musical aesthetics not only emerge within and against long-standing antiblack practices, they are heard and listened to across and in excess of the positivist workings of antiblack logics. Waveforms—beats, rhythms, acoustics, notational moods, and frequencies that intersect with racial economies and histories and available lyrical content—cannot be exacted yet speak to exacting racial technologies.

- McKittrick, pg. 90



"AT LAST I AM FREE": BLACK MUSICAL CODES AND FREEDOM

By Elys Gardiner

The quote on the previous page, from Katherine McKittrick's "Rebellion/Invention/Groove," describes how Black music exists within, throughout, and against the racist, colonial world. Similarly, Richard Iton in "Still Life" analyzes and expands upon Chic's "At Last I Am Free"; both writers describe the significance of Blackness communicated through music. Since the release of "At Last I Am Free" in 1978, Black music has continued to make meaning in popular culture in similar and different ways, just as outlined by McKittrick. Beyoncé's "Freedom" from her album *Lemonade*, released in 2016, shares a similar title to "At Last I Am Free" and is a great example of how Black music has continued throughout the decades. While employing different elements of Black musical culture, both "At Last I Am Free" and "Freedom" conceptualize the complex idea of freedom for Black Americans in a way that centres their own experience. Through comparing these two songs, the evolution of opinions on the idea of freedom for Black Americans and the creation of meaning through music can be examined.

To begin, I will briefly highlight the differences between the two songs. Structurally the songs are quite different, as they embody the typical "ballad" and hip hop "anthem" archetypes. Thus, "At

Last I Am Free" takes on a quite slow, "mournful" feel, while "Freedom" has a rhythm-centric driving tempo. "At Last I Am Free" relies on sparse instrumentals and group vocals, while "Freedom" features prominent drums, solo female voice, and rap. Also, the lyrics of "At Last I Am Free" on the surface appear to be a stereotypical emotional love song and more meaning is only imparted through intense contemplation or the backstory. "Freedom" is much more direct in stating its connections to a Black concept of freedom. Perhaps this lyrical discrepancy speaks to the place that Black artists have created for themselves in popular music, allowing them to speak more plainly about their experiences. Despite these overall differences, both songs remain meaningful and important to the Black community.

The similarities between the two songs are found in how both play with Black musical codes in ways that are different yet impart the same meaning. For those unaware, musical codes are musical shorthand used to convey a larger idea, concept, setting, group, etc. Both songs use this shorthand as a 'shout-out' to American Black culture. "At Last I Am Free" falls under the label of Rhythm and Blues (R&B), a distinct Black musical style that features soulful lyrics, smooth vocals, repetitive



Figure 1. Cover Art for Chic's album *C'est Chic*



Figure 2. Cover Art for Beyoncé's album *Lemonade*

rhythms, a strong backbeat and clean production. This song uses these elements, and even more specific group harmonies, pronunciation, and jazzy bass runs to allude to other historical Black genres and styles, such as gospel, soul, and blues. "Freedom" also could fit under the historically Black genre label of Hip Hop, through some may argue it is also a Dance song. This song not only employs the intense rhythms,

social consciousness and rap vocal styles characteristic of Hip Hop, but through its instrumentation including horns and organ, it also alludes to elements of jazz and gospel. Both songs thus centralize Blackness and Black musical codes as integral elements of the music.

Having established the similarities and differences between the two songs, including how they uniquely employ Black musical codes, Katherine McKittrick and Richard Iton's work can provide context as to why this is important. McKittrick writes: "It is suggested, therefore, that such inequitable systems of knowledge can be, and are, breached by creative human aesthetics." (2016 pg.81). This quote refers to the inherent resistance of colonial and racist knowledge systems that is contained in Black creative works. She explains that the very act of creating Black music is affirmation of Black humanity in the face of a society that has sought and continues to seek to dehumanize Black individuals. The rebellious politics ingrained within musical styles created by and for the Black community signals to and reminds members of this community that they continue to exist, continue to resist, and continue to find pleasure for themselves. While more removed from the overt dehumanizing of slavery and Jim Crow-era policies, both "At Last I Am Free" and "Freedom" use Black musical codes to convey Black freedom and Black humanity through ongoing oppression.

"At Last I Am Free" and "Freedom" may superficially seem quite different. It is true that the two songs differ in genre, structure,

tempo, and instrumentation. One may believe that the only similarity between the two songs is the respective titles. However, through listening to their unique musical codes, "histories are renarrated, kinships are reimagined, and a different mode of representation is performed, heard, repeated, enjoyed." (2016 pg.90). Black music, whether it is from 1978 or 2016, whether it is a love song or dance music, whether it is slow or fast tempoed, and whether it is performed by a group or an individual, reaffirms Black humanity. The Black music of the future will certainly continue this radical message.

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AN OVERTHINK PIECE

By Lindsey Nkem

In *The Right to Maim*, some of the central concepts Jasbir Puar (2017) engages with are ideas from disability justice and how important notions of the body and corporeality are to the state. In doing so she teases out debilitation, speaking to the mechanisms whereby the state will shoot to maim rather than kill, achieving the oppressive ends of the eradication of a movement and the disenfranchisement of a people but with a 'softer' or perhaps more seemingly 'humanitarian' edge. Debilitation is almost a benevolent reprieve from the state, a veneer that, as Puar contextualises in the ongoing occupation of Palestine, affords the state wiggle room when it comes to geopolitical oversight (if they even care) - oftentimes where the dead are counted, there isn't much in the way of accounting for those who survive the brutality and embodied violence of the regime, debilitated physically or structurally. Puar also speaks to how this debilitation is in many cases structurally necessary - police killings in the United States, while widely disseminated across media do not capture the full scope even of police brutality, of the industrial mechanisms of the US carceral system, or the ways in which the policing and surveillance of Black, Brown, Indigenous, poor, disabled, and queer bodies is structurally necessary to the continuation of the state. Puar prompts us to think further in understanding the scope of oppression and violence, to think to the ways in which in fact debilitation over killing is integral to the foundations of the state apparatus in both the US and in Israel.

Over the year we've read about how the enslavement of Black people and the genocide of Indigenous people have been integral to modernity and whiteness, and how it is in every way woven into the fabric of its continued existence and ours. When it comes to so-called America, this means that the furnace of the symbolic 'melting pot' needs bodies - Black, Indigenous, and Other - to sustain itself. I think of debility here in relation to Spillers' (1987) *Mama's Baby Papa's Maybe*, and an essay in Federici's (2020) *On the Periphery of the Skin* - and the centrality of

embodied violence, particularly that of Black and Indigenous women to nation-building on Turtle Island. Both Spillers and Federici speak to how intimately linked the economic growth of America was, and is, to the violation of the enslaved Black woman's body. Spillers (1987) underscores how constructions of the body were importantly mediated by constructions of Blackness and gender, such that enslavement, brutalisation, and denigration of Black men and women - and the sexual nature of it - was a rational imperative. How Black women were raced and gendered, such that they were seen as breeders and denied motherhood for instance, and therein considered as inviolable. Federici's (2020) consideration of the importance of this racialised embodiment to the American economy speaks to how this subjugation being linked to embodiment was fundamental to the economic development of America, a concept Cedric J. Robinson calls racial capitalism. Capitalism and racism, Robinson argued, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of "racial capitalism", dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide (Kelley, 2017). Race and racism are important to and arguably mutually dependent on class and capitalism, such that the accumulation of capital happens through producing and maintaining "relations of severe inequality among human groups" (Melamed, 2015:77). I wondered then about the possibilities for thinking through Puar's debilitation in relation to the importance of the maintenance of white supremacy upon Black and Indigenous bodies to settler colonial capitalism.

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At Green College a few weeks back, I parted ways with someone after a lovely heart to heart over breakfast and joined another group of friends chatting, somewhat disappointingly, about sports. Both I and another friend made our mild disinterest apparent - my friend offering critiques of the oftentimes hypermasculinity of popular professional sports, which I echoed (noting the frustrating denial of how amazingly homoerotic

the whole endeavour is). The conversation turned to the industrialising of football into America's Pastime and how the NFL's imperialist role in the state's military industrial complex and ongoing perpetuation of racism are undeniable in how they are intertwined to perpetuate, embody, and reinforce whiteness.

The rest of the table was somewhat skeptical. Sure, the NFL has its problems but how can sports - a sport - do this?

The question set those of us at the table off through a series clarifications and corrections - beginning with the initial question: What was being critiqued here was not sport itself (or homoeroticism) - but the political economy around sports and how racial capitalism is central to the industry of professional sports.

So, regarding the political economy of professional sports like the NFL and the NBA, what can be said about the ways in which debilitation is important to the reinforcing of whiteness and of white imperialism? Reflecting on this conversation afterwards, I think that the function of Puar's debilitation and the possible relationships between debilitation and racial capitalism are central to the argument we were trying to make. And this example is useful for thinking through the various interstitial possibilities of Puar's debilitation.

In responding to the question challenging our critiques (how can sports reinforce whiteness) I offered the more apparent dynamics of the NFL: [the NFL is one of the few professional sports in the US with a high proportional representation of Black people as players \(alongside the NBA\)](#), meanwhile [the owners of NFL teams and decisionmakers of the NFL's administrative body are still predominantly white](#). Taking into consideration how much players make comparative to owners and the NFL as an industry ([the average value of an NFL franchise is 3.3 billion USD](#)), and [the amount of leverage owners have over players over the long term when it comes to collective bargaining](#), we can start to understand the ways in which this racial paradigm *seems* reminiscent of slavery not just in terms of the economic disparity (players can and do still make distinctly more than the average Black person in America), but with respect to the (racial) politics of embodiment entrenched in the sport.

For starters, the high representation of Black men in

sports - [particularly when compared to other more "traditional" or respected professions \(or professions of similar pay scales\) and accounting for the fact that these industries have well established issues with Black entry and upward-mobility](#) - becomes 'sus' (as the kids say) with respect to the (not-so-)subtle beliefs about Black cis men's bodies and their physicality. These beliefs about Black bodies are rooted in the racist 'science' that established racial and gender hierarchies and justified both the enslaving of Africans and their surveillance and brutalisation on plantations as well as the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous people in America and beyond. Notions about Black embodiment have continued to shift over time to serve the rationale of global capitalism, for instance to make acceptable the hyper-representation (and relegation) of Black people to certain modes of entertainment and sports while still effectively barred from other professions or industries.

It is also worth considering that [the average career span of an NFL player is 3.3 years](#). While players can and do make significant money in this time, this is largely contingent on their what they can do with their bodies and how their embodiment is received: how (white) people respond to their bodies, what they can sell with and of their bodies (to white people), and how long they can keep their bodies intact while risking significant injury for white people's entertainment. Colin Kaepernick for instance has been a free agent - that is a professional player without a team - since 2016 ([though there have been recent rumours to this changing](#)). The vitriol and distress that his actions caused for many white viewers and league administration and the resultant institutional and wider public backlash will forever be indicative of the simple fact that the Blackness of Black athletes can only extend insofar as they are there to play the sport and their living as Black people beyond this is punishable. Kaepernick's actions in his Black body too 'loudly' perhaps reflected the realities of his corporeality - his embodiment of what it means to be Black in America was for many rightly punishable as this 'view' of Blackness tainted the purity of the sport.

I would argue this wasn't the only way we saw how the white reception of Black embodiment is important to how Black people exist in professional sports: in 2018, Nike named Kaepernick as the new face of their 'Just Do It' campaign, a big step for the sports

retailer toward being on the right side of history (while continuing to benefit from exploitative labour practices in the manufacturing of their products overseas). Despite the viral outrage seen from the partisan right to Kaepernick's behaviour, the athlete and the reception of his actions on the liberal left [resulted in Nike's decision making good business sense](#). We see how Black embodiment is contingent on white reception in sports in rulings and fines passed down against other Black players and in other sports as well - [Marshawn Lynch fined for refusing to engage in post-game interviews](#), [Lewis Hamilton facing threats of fines for wearing jewelry](#), and with the Williams sisters, [time](#), and [time](#), and [time](#), and [time](#) again.

And then there's injury: [a 2019 study found that for every year of playing tackle football, the risk of developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy \(CTE\) increases by 30%, and doubles for every 2.6 years of play](#). CTE is an aggressive form of brain trauma that is believed to occur from repeated concussive brain injury and from constant rattling of the brain in the skull such as during tackles and other plays. The same study looked at over 200 brains of deceased professional football players and found CTE in over 80% of them. And while we know now that there is a link between CTE and American football, until very recently the NFL has emphatically denied it. In 2015 Will Smith starred in a biopic (sporting a trash accent) about [Dr. Bennet Omalu](#) and his research into CTE among NFL players in the early 2000s. His research reconceptualised the disease - which until then was associated mainly with boxers and victims of brain trauma - as well as the League's burgeoning issue with concussions. In response to his research the NFL launched a major campaign to discredit and undermine Omalu and his work. [Other research was similarly challenged or undermined](#).

The NFL has had a pretty significant investment in wrangling these inquiries – if the eventual introduction of concussion rules in 2016, along with a [1 billion dollar concussion settlement](#) to support 20,000 NFL retirees and 60 million dollars towards the technological development of helmets is any indication. And yet despite the League's promise to address and remedy, [in 2021 Black retirees filed a civil rights lawsuit against the NFL over the use of race science in processing claims](#) to the 1 billion concussion settlement. As it turns out, operating on

the assumption that Black people start off with lower cognitive functions that white and non-Black people, or, [race norming](#), meant that Black claimants had a harder time qualifying for the payout than white claimants.

Through all of this we start to see the racial capitalism of sports and the importance of embodiment to it – from refusing and denying the embodied risks of the sport to its predominantly Black players, to the normalisation and institutionalisation of racist assumptions of the Black body, to the further punishment of players for asserting the fullness of their racialized embodiment on their own terms. For whatever reason, I do still feel like this may be a contentious way to think about sports (maybe there's something I'm missing), but I think further consideration of these dynamics would speak to how central the debilitation of Black bodies is to sport with respect to entertainment. I think the salience of this is further contextualised in line with Puar's reflection on debilitation as a power dynamic of the state: how the sport reflects, serves, and perpetuates the state's relationships to Blackness and Black embodiment is also important to understanding the extent to which debilitation and racial capitalism can go hand in hand.

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The political economy of the NFL is not solely marked by a fiscal investment in racial capitalism in terms of viewership and consumption, but as a function of the state's investment in whiteness and white supremacy. My pal explained that the ways the symbolism of the NFL and is often linked with the military (and their actual mutual investment therein), so much so that Kaepernick's actions were considered disrespectful. What of? [The military of course](#). This arguably speaks to a major way that professional football perpetuates whiteness; in how it relies upon, furthers, and all the while profits off the normalisation of Black debilitation.

We see this in how professional sport is often seen 'the way out' of the state's systematic disenfranchisement of racialized communities, thereby justifying the existence of both. It's worth considering for instance, why despite the growing understanding that tackle football is very dangerous for children in the long term, [poorer and more Black and Brown kids continue to](#) participate in the sport. Sure, opportunities with

sport are mediated by class and geographical access, but is the normalcy of golf courses and snow sports as whiter, wealthier sports simply that? Even in the sports we see Black people in, the economic infrastructure of pursuing professional sports greatly disenfranchises them over their white counterparts (think for instance, [about the NCAA](#)). While I can't into the full extent of it here, I would argue that this speaks to how the industry of professional sports is in fact staunchly invested in the continued debilitation of African American communities.

In response to our argument, someone proposed we acknowledge the great efforts of Black and Brown athletes to give back to their communities (where it happens). But why should a community have to wait for a LeBron or a Kaepernick to have the material needs and social safety necessary to thrive? How does this narrative play into the wider state's debilitation of these same communities under this framework of 'The One' and the narratives of benevolence attributed to a system that works to keep Black people where they are? I would propose that this outlook is not so dissimilar from arguments made to justify enslavement as a good thing for Black people and of dispossessing Indigenous people as a good land management (Roedinger, 2017). This rationalisation relies on societal inequality being an apolitical given to be addressed or resolved by the very mechanisms and dynamics that have created and sustained it. The political economy of professional sports becomes a good thing in how it offers an individualistic solution to a systemic issue, meanwhile leaving the extractive and exploitative dynamics driving this systemic problem - that the very sport relies upon - intact.

From the demographics of the sport, the denial of a major workplace issue within the sport, to the risks (for Black people) and financial opportunities (for white supremacy) surrounding Black embodiment, and the view of the sport as apolitical and empowering; we can start to see how perhaps certain figurings of Black corporeality - as physically strong and low in cognitive function, as capital or chattel, as beasts of burden, or the apolitical athlete - are central and mutually reinforcing to the system. Racial capitalism - and the wider cis-heteropatriarchal white supremacist matrix of oppression - relies on embodiment, or certain readings of embodiment insofar as inflicting them upon us all in fact keeps the system going and

ensures more fodder for the furnace. Puar's debilitation then engages with how oppressive power dynamics are lived and material and constructed and structural in relation to the body (biopolitics?). In how it does so, I think debilitation offers us really cool opportunities for thinking through how white supremacy and the state's (and other similarly aligned non-state actors's) enactment of oppression is bodily and embodied, and how that has come to be - and perhaps has always been - integral to (racial) capitalism.

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I've been feeling a bit unsure of myself lately so this all kind of feels like a stretch. I also acknowledge that the conversation we had in class about debility was far from a consideration of the lives of wealthy Black athletes and how they are marginalised in a system that they do still make more money than the rest of us in. Puar's examples of the power dynamics of debility speak to the experiences of communities and groups of people whose relationship to the state is far more urgent and dire than what is discussed here. Furthermore, how I have been thinking about the debility here involves applying a conceptual framework developed through disability justice work to speak to the marginalisation of able-bodied folk (although the emphasis on able-bodied-ness in Black athletes as a form of embodied violence is perhaps worth looking at). I just thought this was interesting starting point engaging with the ways in which racial capitalism and debility are so intricately linked. It'd be interesting to think about this further in relation to Ferreira da Silva's (2017; 2022) unpayable debt and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2007) organised abandonment (which I really wish I had had more time to do here!).

In thinking through this here I am also reflecting on how, as Stuart Hall (1980: 341) puts it, "race... is the modality through which class is lived" and what that means with respect to one's embodiment and the inter-relation of wider structural paradigms. I thought a lot in writing this about how here in Canada the updates to the Medical Assistance in Dying bill would effectively acknowledge [and do away with \(some of\) the messiness of debilitation](#) as expressed in the ongoing affordability and health care access crises, and the lack of adequate social services to support and protect poor disabled people. Regretfully this is another conversation for another day, but all this is to say that though contested with respect to the nuances

of identifying as disabled, I do think there is something to be said about how debilitation speaks really eloquently to the wide and various arrays of embodied violence enacted by the state and related stakeholders on vulnerable communities. Moving forward I think the possibilities for thinking through these things will continue to emerge.

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