

CARE
AND
CURE
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Care and Cure

Strategies of Critique XXXVI

Social and Political Thought Programme

York University, Toronto

May 17 - 19 2023

This year's Strategies of Critique Conference reflects on the relationship between care and cure, and the collective violence ordained in the name of both. Who is cared for, and by whom? What political purpose does care serve? What alternatives to care are possible? How is care deployed as a cure for violence – and in what ways does care reproduce it? These questions retain an even greater urgency within these now *precedented* times, wherein the politics of care and the standards for cure have been thrown into further crisis by a pandemic, epidemics, and racial and gendered reckonings worldwide.

In a variety of fields, care and cure are posed as the salves for paradigmatic violence, a kind of intramural politics discrete from domination. These positions take for granted a shared idea that care and cure are positive in orientation, thus divorced from the psychic forces of destruction and desire. More broadly, these assumptions neglect the question of libidinal economy and its centrality to the mechanisms of social reproduction. And so, rather than assuming all care is the antidote for violence, we offer this call and conference as a site to think critically about both care and cure in the hope that we might begin to unsettle the taken-for-granted ways these concepts circulate.

This conference is inspired by scholars who unsettle dominant discourses of care and cure. In “Antidoting,” Jared Sexton points to a direct linkage between the politics of care and the drive to cure, where this drive, the *furor sanandi*, stands in for the caregiver's unconscious mental life. Through a political economic critique, Emma Dowling has argued that care is at the centre of the problem of social reproduction and in his psychoanalytic work, Stijn Vanheule has interrogated the inter-relation between caregiving and violence. Elsewhere, Jasbir Puar illustrates the potential debilitation of the caregiver in the endeavour to care/cure. Both concepts have long registered together within trans and disability studies, speaking to a confluence of medicalization, communal praxis, and violence (Clare, Malatino, Piepza-Samarasinha). All of these scholars register care as a contested political space, or what Christina Sharpe refers to as “care as a problem for thought”. Thus, we are interested in papers that illuminate how care/cure circulates, how care/cure is thought, and how forms of care are obfuscated within the main.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE:

WEDNESDAY MAY 17, 2023

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse
106 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C6

9:00 am - 9:30 am	Opening Reception	Room A
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9:30 am - 11:00 am	Hospitality, Economy, and Care's Brutal Legacies	Room A
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Chair: Ampson Hagan

Evelyn Amponsah WKHKYD: On Heritage Tourism, Blackness and Melancholy

Jellisa Ricketts "Ghetto Paradise": Juxtapositions within Jamaica's Tourist Industrial Complex

Jason Stephens Penetration Studies: State Surveillance and Clandestine Nuclear Testing at Pruitt-Igoe

Dylan Lackey For the Love of Guilt: Interpellation and Black Language

9:30 am - 11:00 am	Madness, Subjection, and the Furor Sanandi	Virtual / Livestream in Room B
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Chair: James Trafford

Vusumzi Nkomo Dead Memory

Jersey Cosantino "Now Don't Say We Didn't Warn You": A Poetic Meditation on the (Im)Possibilities of Mad Trans Time

Max Ferguson On The Photograph, Trans Identity and Refusing to Pass: A Reflection

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

11:10 am - 12:40 pm Architectonic Compositions of Care Room A

Chair: Tapji Garba

Becka Hudson Care as a strategy of confinement: the case of personality disorders in British prisons.

Ariel Hart The Death of April Valentine: Carceral Obstetrics and the (Re)production of Medical Neglect

Dalton Lackey, Angelica "Jelly" Loback, and Teagan Murphy Behind Bars, Between Deaths: The Violence of Institutional Care in Response to COVID-19

Josh Lamers Fuck Yuh Resilience

11:10 am - 12:40 pm Orifical Openings: Queer and Trans Potential Beyond and Through Care Virtual / Livestream in Room B

Chair: Meghan Gagliardi

Abhisek Pal Ron Athey's Queer Bed

Alejandro Beas-Murillo A Queer and Trans* Way Out of the Apocalypse: The Body of War in Omar El Akkad's American War

Klee Schmidt cAre over cUre: Conceptualizing Vandalized Images as Sites for Sitting with Queer/Trans/Disabled Wounds

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

12:40 pm - 2:00 pm LUNCH BREAK

2:00 pm - 3:45 pm Raciality and the Aesthetic Room A

Chair: Patrick Teed

Semassa Boko Inoculate the Babies

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hollis o'neil Slave to the Rhythm: Gender Affirming Care,
Transmedicalism, and Other Inculcated Cures for (Anti-
Blackness

Ariel Dela Cruz “Hinahanap Kita”: Trans Sonic Intimacies and
Intergenerational Filipinx Karaoke as Care Work

Cole Adams Rewriting Care, or the Health of Poetics in Bill Gunn's Personal
Problems

2:00 pm - 3:45 pm WORKSHOP: Caring through the use of “Soft Room B
Processes”: On Being flexible, Pro-active and
Intentional within Systems that Cause Harm

Strategies Moderator: Bahar Banaei

Facilitators: Josephine Grey, K'Mesha Maloney, Esther Obotha, Evelyn Amponsah

Registration to be made available on website

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm The Intramural and Other Myths Room A

Chair: Zachariah Ezer

Jaye Austin Williams The Ruse of “Top” and “Under”: Rereading Suzan-Lori Parks’
Riff on Black Captivity Beyond Care or Redress, in *Topdog/*
Underdog

Jordan Taliha
McDonald Curing Cain

Zuri Arman

“I’d do anything for you (in the dark)”: Hunger, Confinement, and the Limelight in Barry Jenkins’s *Moonlight*

William Graves

“Who Is You?": Narratology, Social Death, and Black Masculinity in Barry Jenkin’s *Moonlight*

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

PLENARY:

Room A

Patrice D. Douglass, Sara-Maria Sorentino, & Jaye Austin Williams

Moderated by: Christina Sharpe

THURSDAY MAY 18, 2023

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse
106 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C6

9:00 am - 10:15 am **Toxic Encounters: Race as Ecological Entanglement** Room A

Chair: Cameron Butler

Dolma Ombadykow **Toward a Metabolic Materialism: Reconstellating Care after the Human**

Brennan McCracken **On Glissant's ecology**

Taylor Brough **Toxic Relationalities: Beyond Care, Cure, and the Order of Things**

10:30 am - 12:15 pm **Lose Your Kin: On Antirackness and Filiality** Virtual / Livestream in Room A

Chair: Marcelle-Anne Fletcher

Oluwadunni Talabi **Affect of Collectivism and Gendered Care Function in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and Toni Morrison's Sula**

Margaret Goldman **The Staying Power of the Self: Care as (Re)Alignment**

Marietta Kosma **Care and cure in Gloria Naylor's Mama Day**

Sarah Haughn **On the Trouble with Making Kin**

Brianna Simmons **Scales of Betrayal, Protection and Rebellion in contending with antirack genocide**

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

10:30 am - 12:30 pm WORKSHOP: LEGAL OBSERVER Room B
TRAINING with the Movement Defence
Committee

Strategies Moderator: Bahar Banaei

Workshop facilitators: Sheru Abdilhusein and Gisela McKay from the [Movement Defence Committee](#)

Registration to be made available on website

12: 30 pm - 2:00 pm LUNCH BREAK

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm The Collective and the Self: At the Limits of Room A
Autonomy

Chair: Anisha Sankar

Justin Lang Spatialized Disorder: Toward a Theory of the Black
Commune

Ampson Hagan Impossibility of Rescue: The Aporia of the Foundations of
Humanitarian Rescue in the Presence of Blackness

Osarugue Otebele If you kill your Husband: Practices of violence as care in
Nigerian Video Films.

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2:00 pm - 3:30 pm Interrogating Cure, The Gift of Care Virtual /
Livestream
in Room B

Chair: Juanita Stephen

Anidrita Saikia Help The Heathens: Cure, Care and Church Among the
Missionaries in Colonial Assam

Victoria Lupascu No Cure: The Violence of Locked Down Hospitals during
the Covid-19 Pandemic

Gracen Brilmyer	“Fixing” Archives: Incomplete provenance & the desire for archival cures
Sabrina Jamal-Eddine & Jen Ham	The function of health/care in society: Health as commodity fetish
Filipe Robles	Conceptualizing Care in Enslaved Communities of Alabama and Rio de Janeiro

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

3:45 pm - 5:15 pm	Care against Humanity: Afropessimism and Practice	Room A
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Chair: jon jon moore palacios

Zachariah Ezer and Dominique Rider	Theatre of the Abyss
E. Hughes	On Black Poetry
Kevin Rigby Jr.	On Blackness as Cure: Black Lives Matter, Black Studies, and Ontologies of Radicalism
Ebony Oldham	“Too Black for Care,” Too Fat for Cure

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Keynote: Patrice D. Douglass	Room A
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FRIDAY MAY 19, 2023

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse
106 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C6

9:00 am - 10:30 am **Psychic Defense and the Drive to Care** **Room A**

Chair: Anisha Sankar

Emma Blackett **Blue Crush Feminism: Oceanic (Media of) Feeling and Settler-colonial Women**

Hilary Thurston **In the Shadows of Systemic Trauma: Ambivalent Desires, Fantasies of Care and the Figure of the Codependent Lesbian**

Meghan Gagliardi **Non-futures of dissolution: refusing the recovery of the white-settler subject for abolition instead**

Sneha George & Emma Kauffman **The Radical (Im)Possibilities of Staying an Imposter**

10:40 am - 12:10 pm **Mammy, Midwife, Stranger, Slave** **Virtual / Livestream in Room A**

Chair: Patrick Teed

Leah Kaplan **“All We Have is What She Holds in Her Outstretched Hands” or Archē Feminine Alterity**

Chloé Samala Faux **rape, culture**

Morinade Jayla Stevenson **Black Mater(nal) Figures**

Scholastique Iradukunda **Perpetual Stranger: Derrida’s Radical Guest and the Slave in Hartman’s Lose Your Mother**

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

12:15 pm -1:30 pm **LUNCH BREAK**

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm Political Theology, Social Reproduction and Care Room A

Chair: Melayna Lamb

Tapji Garba Social Reproduction and the Machiavellian Problem

Sean Capener Care for the Slave: Kant among the Jesuits

Tenisha McDonald “She gave utterance to many great truths”: Speculative Legacies of Clairvoyance in Harriet E. Wilson’s Spiritualism

Marika Rose Care Work and/as Violence Work

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm WORKSHOP: Shifting Culture as Harm Intervention with Jasmin Banaei Virtual

Strategies Moderator: Bahar Banaei

Workshop facilitator: Jasmin Banaei

Zoom to be made available via Eventbrite.

Registration required.

3:15 pm - 4:30 pm Beyond Care Politics Room A

Chair: Joshua Falek

Melayna Lamb Care as/at the end of the world

James Trafford Care as Counterinsurgency

Amy Etherington Care and Grief and a coming to Weariness

5:00 pm - 6:15 pm KEYNOTE: Sara-Maria Sorentino Room A

7:00 pm - late DINNER AND RECEPTION Room A
With DJ [Cindy Adhiambo Ochieng](#)
Books for sale by: [Another Story Bookshop](#)
Food by: [Chef Kareema](#)

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Patrice D. Douglass



Patrice D. Douglass is an Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Previously she was an Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. She received a doctorate in Culture and Theory from the University of California, Irvine, a master's degree from the University of California, Riverside in Ethnic Studies, and her bachelor's degree from University of California, Santa Cruz in Feminist Studies with a minor in Legal Studies. Her current research interests include Black feminist theory, transatlantic slavery, gender and sexual violence, and political philosophy. In 2021, she was the recipient of the Institute for Citizens and Scholars' Career Enhancement Fellowship. Her current book manuscript, *Engendering Blackness: The Ontology of Sexual Violence* is under contract with Stanford University Press. Her publications have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Souls*, *Political Theology*, *Theory & Event*, *The Journal of Visual Culture*, *The Black Scholar*, *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik: A Quarterly of Language, Literature and Culture*, and *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature*.

Sara-Maria Sorentino



Sara-Maria Sorentino is an Assistant Professor of Gender & Race Studies at the University of Alabama. Her research and teaching excavate connections between anti-black violence, real abstraction, and social reproduction. She has articles published or forthcoming with *Rhizomes*, *Theory & Event*, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, *Antipode*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Telos*, *differences*, *Emancipations*, *Political Theology*, *The Comparatist*, *Law Text Culture*, and *Qui Parle*.

WORKSHOP ABSTRACTS:

Caring through the use of “Soft Processes”: On Being flexible, Pro-active and Intentional within Systems that Cause Harm

With Josephine Grey, K'Mesha Maloney, Esther Obotha, and Evelyn Amponsah

In 2021, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) established its first ever division to tackle anti-Black racism within the corporation. This division, called “The Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People, (The Centre)” came about through consultation with over 600 Black Identified tenants and over 200 staff, who noted the way TCHC, grounded in anti-Blackness was not set up to meet their needs but in fact was set up to cause harm. This experience informed the Centre’s methodologies and praxis of caregiving as staff and community members worked to provide service for Black and Afro-Indigenous tenants and staff. Guided by and extending bell hooks theorizing of love as the ability to extend oneself for the growth, benefit and well-being of others, we also worked to extend and bend the system for the growth, benefit and advancement of the interests of Black people. Not only did we do this in our work, we also saw the ways in which Black, Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous community members have been and continued to use what we named “soft processes” to take care of each other. Due to anti-Blackness and systems that are grounded in it, these approaches, historically are understood as “breaking rules” or “against policies,” our goal was and is to re-define this language as soft processes in order to “legitimize” these approaches and protect those who engage in them. This workshop will take up soft processes as a way to categorize how care within systems requires the ability to be flexible. You will hear from experts in the areas of food security, child welfare, youth work and housing (shelter and social housing). The tools and approaches shared teach and engage attendees on maneuvering within systems to ensure you can reach your mandate. The goal of this workshop is to equip those of us who are tasked to care within our so-called systems of care the ability to actually take good care of each other. Therefore, we would like to ensure frontline and community workers/activists are invited to this workshop.

Legal Observer Training

With Sheru Abdulhusein and Gisela McKay ([The Movement Defence Committee](#))

How do we support people who are at risk of police violence at demonstrations and protests? At this training, you will learn how to provide legal support at protests and other direct actions as a legal observer. We will also discuss the organizing that goes into providing legal observer support, and some of the challenges and lessons encountered in this work.

Legal Observers act as the eyes and ears of the legal team at protests: they watch the police and document evidence (e.g. of police activity/misconduct) that could be used to support protesters. You can usually recognize the MDC at protests as the people in orange hats or armbands.

Please note that the MDC prioritizes legal support to those most at risk of police or state violence. The MDC recognizes that this is a state built on oppression, the theft of Indigenous land, racism/colonialism against BIPOC people, cisheteropatriarchy, misogyny, homo/trans/lesbo/biphobia, ableism and capitalism, and that policing reflects this.

Shifting Culture as Harm Intervention

With Jasmin Banaei

This is a healing justice and transformative justice workshop. This workshop focuses on anti-carceral responses to harm by building relational culture, as a form of healing and harm prevention/intervention.

The workshop will include a mini lecture, case studies and scenarios to work through, and a support group for emotional and somatic processing.

PAPER ABSTRACTS:

Cole Adams – Duke University

Rewriting Care, or the Health of Poetics in Bill Gunn's Personal Problems

Bill Gunn's recently restored 1980 film *Personal Problems* is a slice of life drama focusing on Johnnie Mae Brown, a Harlem-based hospital nurse played by the Black Arts Movement figure Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor. Like Smart-Grosvenor, Brown is a poet; she writes during rare moments of downtime at her job, away from her chaotic and demanding family life, in a workplace environment that is the beating heart of a racialized geography of vulnerability where care work performed by black women is saddled with the moral imperative of both individual therapy and social healing. As Brown cautiously recites her writing to the film's mock-documentary camera, Gunn invites viewers to consider how poetry comes to embody something like the experience of freedom, or insulation from the logic of capital, while also remaining tethered to the social and technological conditions of its production and circulation as a minor artform that habitually fails to make things happen. Gunn considers the uncertain status of poetry and the fantasies that cohere around the ideal of poetic creativity in the post-Fordist era of work that increasingly integrates physical, intellectual, and affective labor. These problems come to the fore as the revival and recirculation of the film in the 2010s coincides with increasing theoretical fervor in black feminist criticism surrounding the value of poetics—considered, for example, as an ethical practice of love or justice (Nash 2019) or even as a tool for reaching “beyond the horizon of thought” (Da Silva 2014). Gunn's film, I argue, allows us to consider the political desires invested in the health of poetics, both in the afterlife of Theory in the critical humanities and in the precarious scenes of artmaking in the present.

Evelyn Amponsah – York University

WKHKYD: On Heritage Tourism, Blackness and Melancholy

Anna Cheng, theorist on racial melancholia, notes “[i]n the landscape of grief, the boundary between subject and object, the loser and the thing lost, poses a constant problem” (Cheng, 2003). I am thinking about spatiality and its relation to the legacies of enslavement and diaspora. Through the space of the Atlantic, I argue that, Africa was lost to the Black subject and since then, there has been a need to recuperate the loss. This paper will explore heritage tourism projects taken up by the Ghanaian state. Specifically, the Joseph Project, the Year of Return and Beyond the Return. These

three projects rely on notions of Blackness that are grounded in the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to mobilize members of the diaspora to fill this loss.

For Ghana, the loss is about investment and for diaspora the loss is about home. While these projects are seemingly grounded in questions of care, a caring for the pan-African family, I am interested in what happens to care when it manifests as desire. I pursue this inquiry through the lens of Afro-pessimism, Black optimism, a Fanonian understanding of psychoanalysis and melancholia. My goal is that by thinking these projects in this way, I am able to demonstrate how heritage tourisms that mobilize under notions of care for the sake of global political economies can reproduce the same violences they intend to cure.

dee (dee) ardan - the whirlwind

Mo'nin Cure: or Moten Beyond Moten?

“Everything moves, for Hartman, after the fact of what opens her text, an opening decision not to reproduce what she calls Douglass’s ‘primal scene,’ the horrific and spectacular beating of his Aunt Hester. ... This decision is, in some sense, illusory: first in that it is reproduced in her reference to and refusal of it; second in that the beating is reproduced in every scene of subjection the book goes on to read—.... The question here concerns the inevitability or inescapability of such reproduction even in the denial of it.” So writes Fred Moten in a 1999 review of Saidiya Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection*. Four years later, Moten would add a counterpoint to these considerations by way of *In the Break*’s own incomplete refuse-reproduction, though not of Douglass and Hester, but rather psychoanalysis and a photo of Moten’s mother, B. Jenkins. *In the Break*, however, does not open, but closes with this refuse-reproduction; does not move from, but stalls because of. “The Mo’nin Cure” emanates out of the funk of this refuse. What, this composition asks, becomes of the refuse-reproductions in, and in excess of, *In the Break*? What becomes of psychoanalysis, the “talking cure,” and how does this shape the sound of the photo Moten cannot reproduce? How do the two duet in ways that interrupt and exceed the promise of their refusal? In other words, if, as James Strachey suggests in comments preceding the Standard Edition translation of *Studies on Hysteria*, the incipient developments of psychoanalysis emerge out of Freud’s “abandonment of hypnosis” and sustained attention to “patients’ ‘resistance’ to the treatment..., their unwillingness to co-operate in their own cure,” this is a wager on what might come of Freud’s resistance’s contemporary compounding.

zuri arman - Brown University

'T'd do anything for you (in the dark)': Hunger, Confinement, and the Limelight in Barry Jenkins's Moonlight

The discourse sparked by *Moonlight* since its 2016 release reveals as much about the function of queer identity as the film itself. It was singularly exceptionalized within the genre of queer cinema by many critics in ways that pathologized black men as incapable of intimacy. Rinaldo Walcott's "Moonlight's Necessary Company" undermined this claim but criticized the film's lack of an adult sex scene as a failure. In this essay, I interpret his call for an authentic representation of queer sexuality "beyond the stereotype" as a "hunger" for aesthetic care. I query, however, if this desire—which is understandable and not to be pathologized—for the on-screen representation of Black engaging in intimate relations is symptomatic of both a deeper yearning for a cure to the abjection of the queer(ed) Black subject and a dangerous yet alluring conflation of identity and identification, sustenance and devoration. Rather than being a method of naming one's hunger, queerness denotes a means through which the Black is identified, violated, and starved. Reading Robert O'Hara's 2014 play, *Bootycandy*, and the final diner scene in *Moonlight* together, I argue that the Black is always fed under the confining gaze of the "limelight" which illuminates queer(ed) Black hunger under the guise of representation to plasticize that very hunger and devour the Black. Consequently, the "cure" for Chiron's abjection, specifically, and queer(ed) Black people, generally, is not found in being fed representation or identity. No representation of a queer(ed) Black subject transcends humanism's script because it always already conscripts Blackness into shifting roles and overdetermines Black sexuality regardless of self-proclaimed identity. *Moonlight's* refusal to represent (the) Black's sexual encounter—a refusal of the limelight—is not a cure itself, but is an opening towards confronting our hunger by re-appropriating Blackness' (sub)versive capacity without the viewer's fixing gaze of identification.

Alejandro Beas-Murillo - University of Massachusetts Amherst

A Queer and Trans Way Out of the Apocalypse: The Body of War in Omar El Akkad's American War.*

War is waged in how bodies—human, animal and vegetal bodies, bodies of water, bodies of knowledge—are presented and engaged with, in the ways the urban and the rural become habitable or uninhabitable, in the forced disappearance and removal of peoples and entire ecosystems. War, after Victor Grove, "is not a metaphor; it is an intensive fabric of relations," the ideological ground in which we stand, an atmosphere of violence. It is in the ecology of war in Omar El Akkad's *American War* that the

figure of the queer border crosser turned terrorist arises, a Black queer woman with two names, Sara and Sarat, or as this paper proposes, Sara | Sarat. The vertical line, acting not as a border but as a membrane, captures the character's queer and trans* capacities, as well as her constant state of motion, flight, return, movements that become moments of dismemberment, deterritorialization and reassembly into a body of war. Located at the intersection between Marxist trans* and queer theories and eco-criticism, my paper aims to explore the utopian possibilities contained in the relation between nature and the queer and trans* individual of color, an *oikeios* that seeks to generate engagements with time and space that can disrupt capital's racist and murderous logics. By putting El Akkad's novel in dialogue with the work of the likes of Katherine McKittrick, Jason W. Moore, Keguro Macharia, Achille Mbembe, and José Esteban Muñoz, I will juxtapose a queer and trans* of color politics of care, hope and failure-as-possibility to the ontological and epistemological horrors of war and racial capitalism. In the words of Joseph Pierce, "land is not an object, not a thing. Land does not require recognition. It requires care. It requires presence", which this paper understands as necessarily, hopefully, rebelliously queer and trans*.

Emma Blackett - McGill University

Blue Crush Feminism: Oceanic (Media of) Feeling and Settler-colonial Women

This paper concerns contemporary feminist new materialist writing about water, where a world-enveloping self-dissolving care for watery environs can become, I speculate, a kind of cure for the subject (the writer) of the theory. I compare said theory to images of settler-colonial femininity at work in two films that foreground the Pacific ocean, *Blue Crush* (John Stockwell, 2002) and *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993). With these film readings, I offer a critique, albeit admiring, of the feminist new materialist project of watery care and solidarity that Astrida Neimanis calls a "hydrocommons of wet relations." The blue feminist turn aims to amplify the oceanic sensorium's potential to dissolve the always-illusory boundedness of Western subjectivity into a recognition of watery enmeshment, and it aligns importantly (though it rarely engages) with Indigenous Pacific and trans-Pacific Asian anti-colonial hydropolitics. Bringing blue feminism into conversation with film theory and psychoanalysis, what I call blue crush cinema—so as to sketch, by a stretchy kind of extension, blue crush feminism—has the following elements and functions: (1) It tells of a white settler woman with a powerful draw towards the water; here crush has a double valence, referring to both her longing to enter the sea and the potential violence of oceanic pressure; (2) The ocean is at once literal and psychic-metaphorical; (3) The film camera allows water's diffractive animacy to distort human form, a distortion that hydrological feminists associate with dissolving Western subjectivity, and that Julia Kristeva associates with "oceanic

feeling,” but (4), in the end, the blue crush momentarily satiates the subject’s death drive and thus enables her to return to colonial work. This final function has critical implications for feminist readings of water, which may work paradoxically to recuperate Western/Imperial thought.

Semassa Boko - University of California Irvine

Inoculate the Babies

“Fuck a pandemic/Flint water been fucked up/Ain’t nobody send nobody there to help us,” - Sada Baby, “Free Joe Exotic”

The COVID-19 pandemic did not reveal our fundamental interconnectedness. Instead it proved that a lot of folks ain’t been lookin’ - or they been lookin’ with a log in their eye. Building from a similar orientation that animates Axelle Karera’s critique of anthropocenic discourses, I argue that the *contingent* moral edicts surrounding vaccination, social distancing, and other pandemic mitigation measures aim to paper over wounded seams of antiblack antagonism. In addition, the animus underlying the moral arguments in favor of these edicts presuppose subjects whose lives have been interrupted by this catastrophic virus, obscuring those for whom death is already a constituent element of the daily atmosphere. My readings highlight affective responses indicative of apathy, “whataboutism,” and silence as affective registers that are degraded under the pro-pandemic precaution framework, but must be evaluated differently under a blackened ethical accounting of action and agency in the midst of these precedented times.

This presentation finds me looking at how black artists, particularly rappers and hip-hop artists, have interpolated the pandemic in the content and form of their music. The centerpiece of my reading is Earl Sweatshirt’s 2022 album *SICK!*, a record that replaced a previously recorded but never released album set to drop shortly after the pandemic began. I am particularly interested in the ways that dominant readings of the album in music reviews understand it squarely under the rubric of lightness and positivity, in contrast to Earl’s past works. Instead I propose that the work engages a sobering account of the surreality of black time in relation to any historical approach that exceptionalizes the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other artists include Sada Baby, Lil Baby, Moor Mother, and billy woods.

Gracen Brilmyer - McGill University

“Fixing” Archives: Incomplete provenance & the desire for archival cures

Drawing on critical disability and archival theories, this paper draws attention to the ‘curative’ and ‘rehabilitative’ orientations of provenance: a core archival concept that emphasizes the origin, history, and custody of records or fonds. Tracing the historical underpinnings of provenance, which shapes how archivists reconcile with records that have been moved, rearranged, and dispersed to reconstruct a fonds, this talk addresses the directionality of provenance in order to illuminate the violence of archival care and its relation to the erasure of disability in the historical record. Put in conversation with disability studies scholarship—which critiques rehabilitating, curing, and restoring—the concept of provenance can also be understood as a violent undertaking by archives who arbitrate access to disability history. This paper places less emphasis on ‘fixing’ or reconstructing a fonds (which might have never been complete in the first place) and instead addresses the reality of archival material, proposing that new relationships are created because archives are always already dispersed and incomplete. Given the plethora of records created around disability, such as medical records and asylum documentation, this paper looks to less obvious archival sources to tell a history of disability outside of the medical, asylum, and often violent forms of documentation of disability and thus radically reframes the concept of provenance. In so doing, this paper provides an expansive lens through which to read both lineages of archival care and disability in history.

Taylor Brough - UC San Diego

“Toxic Relationalities: Beyond Care, Cure, and the Order of Things”

In response to climate change and global environmental crises, indigenous peoples are increasingly framed in policy and legal studies as stewards of nature. Indigenous environmental guardianship and care in these studies is framed through conservationist politics that evoke non-contamination and purity. But what if we take seriously that the presumptions of cure and care that animate these recuperative projects are themselves reproductive of the conditions of colonialism that subject both Native people and “the natural” to genocide? Following Fanon’s provocation to consider healing the sick as an alibi for colonial violence, this paper reads moments of global supply chain reorganization throughout COVID-19, discourses of environmental purity, and Black and Native feminist theorizations of social reproduction together to intervene in how stewardship and care for the environment and the people are imagined globally through indigeneity. The colonial ricochet exemplified in instances like DuPont petrochemical manufacturing’s January 2020 increase in production and sale of PPE, at the same time as the company faced a fifteen-year-long class-action lawsuit for leaking PFOA’s across racialized geographies,

demonstrates how care and cure align themselves with projects of empire and global capitalism. Similarly, the production of clean, green spaces and clean, white bodies is subtended by the bodies of exhausted women of color who are, in the very practice of cleaning, subjected to the toxicities and colonial traumas they are tasked with purifying away. Rather than privileging cleanliness, health, and propriety as evidence of cure and care, this paper begins with abjection and the unsovereignty of the body, the lessons of Black and Native feminisms in sitting with death, finitude, and disease. When Leanne Simpson poses, what of the bodies who are “damaged to the point where we can no longer reproduce indigeneity” (2017), this paper offers that these toxic relations do signify otherwise - they make possible something that recuperative projects of empire disallow.

Sean Capener - Dartmouth College

Care for the Slave: Kant among the Jesuits

This paper tracks a curious case of ‘care for the slave’ in Immanuel Kant’s repudiation of voluntary slavery in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, placing it in the context of early modern theological and jurisprudential debates over the status of the voluntary slave in the Americas and the West Indies. Kant—in line with a long history of theological debate—implicitly positions the racial slave ‘outside’ the question of justice. But like his theological predecessors, he does so in the service of another possible slave, one whose humanity must come under the care of law so that he is not in a position to degrade himself or others. Reading Kant as an implicit critic of colonial jurisprudence clarifies the ways he radicalizes care-based critiques of indigenous slavery, placing his criticisms of involuntary labor in line with his treatment of parent-child relations. In the process, it enables an analysis of the way that it is precisely Kant’s insistence on certain forms of care that produces an ‘outside’ to the household of justice.

Jersey Cosantino - Syracuse University

“Now Don’t Say We Didn’t Warn You”: A Poetic Meditation on the (Im)Possibilities of Mad Trans Time

As a Mad, neurodivergent, trans, non-binary, and queer scholar, my research places in dialogue the fields of Mad studies, trans studies, disability studies, and women's and gender studies. This presentation explores the complexities of care and cure at the intersections of Mad and trans studies, Mad and trans embodiment, and Mad and trans poetic self-narration. The first part of this presentation outlines my Mad trans methodological approach via a Mad trans embodied poetic transcription to address how experiences of time, waiting, and becoming operate and manifest within the complex intersections of Mad and trans lived experiences and subjectivities. The second part of this presentation is a poetic performance of the piece "Now Don't Say We Didn't Warn You': A Poetic Meditation on the (Im)Possibilities of Mad Trans Time." This poetic meditation explores the (im)possibilities - including imaginaries and dreams, longings and desires, wonders and exhilarations, fissures and fractures, heartbreaks and heartaches - of Mad trans time via the conduit of Mad trans poesis. The nuances of Mad trans subjectivities, meaning making, and knowledge production are unpacked in relation to the archive and with attention to the residual traces and hauntings (Gordon, 2008) of Mad trans bodyminds' (Clare, 2017; Price, 2014; Schalk, 2018) movements through and in (contentious) relationship with the curative apparatuses of the psychiatric and medical industrial complexes that purport to engage in "care" (Sharman, 2021). Within this relational tension, Mad trans time unfolds as a deeply embodied theorizing, challenging and actively disrupting normative temporalities, blurring the boundaries (and binaries) between past, present, and future; knowing and (un)knowing; care and cure; being and becoming.

Ariel Dela Cruz - Cornell University

"Hinahanap Kita": Trans Sonic Intimacies and Intergenerational Filipinx Karaoke as Care Work

The globalization of the Filipinx feminine caregiving figure has not only been used as a tool to bolster Canada's political economy, but as a technology that reifies performances of tenderness, nurturing, care, and the labour that constitutes these affects as both feminine and female. Though there is a vast amount of scholarship that examines the lives of bakla and Filipinas in care work, investigations of care work rarely centre tomboy and transmasculine Filipinx who are engaging in these same affective labours. To further understand the broader scope of care work, we must expand our interrogation towards tomboys and transmasculine Filipinx across the Filipinx labour diaspora. Reflecting on performances of care between my lola [grandmother] and I before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that marked the intersection of her diagnosis with dementia and my beginning testosterone via hormone replacement therapy (HRT), this paper suggests that tomboyhood shapes

a different way of relating to others that counters American notions of female masculinity. In particular, this paper examines karaoke performances of the Tagalog kundiman song, “Hinahanap Kita” [I’m Looking/Longing For You] between my lola and I as a mode of ingatan, an alternative mode of care work with roots in anti-imperial organizing, and as a critical site of refusal of the violences of both care and cure. Building on Hil Malatino’s work on trans care, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha’s notion of care webs, and Allan Punzalan Isaac’s conceptualization of Filipino care within labour-time, these queer sonics allow my lola and I to rupture the binaristic and categorical violences of cis/trans, femme/masc, caregiver/receiver, and instead open space for other kinds of desires that refuse consumption into capitalist and imperialist formations as well as reimagine otherwise possibilities of being amongst one another.

Amy Etherington – University of Arts London

Care and Grief and a coming to Weariness

When trans people come out they are often met with grief by those that believe they care for us – friends, family, partners: “I need time to grieve. You have to give me that, it’s like you’ve died.” This violence is spoken against a backdrop of withdrawal of what little care was offered by the state – this grief at an imagined death plays out amidst conditions that demand our actual deaths. The griever recognises through their mourning that transnesses have no place within a real world given shape by real politics. Their grief is a symptom of the state as a horizon, within which care is only politics, within which our supposed care dreams only of our ends.

Demands for new or expanded forms of care often focus on a recentering, arguing that the provision of care has been neglected as a duty of society, that there is a lack of caring, or that care has become increasingly commodified – all of which are political problems and require political correction (Care Collective, Hil Malatino). Such demands affix possibilities of a different kind of care than that which is currently provided (and denied) by the state to the development and deployment of a new politics. But how could transness be present in this recentering, which understands only worlds in which we are already impossible? Care built upon a desire for a new politics might then only be the incursion of new policings into trans lives, further calcifying that which works to unmake us. Care as politics imagines a more capacious state to be found within which we might be held, but builds into being only further states of mourning. Grief and care collude in their worldings, while we – the wearisome – weave cares elsewhere.

Zachariah Ezer – UT Austin

Theatre of the Abyss

Following in the wake of Frank B. Wilderson III and Jaye Austin Williams, our artistic project is to, as the latter puts it, “engage the Black suffering borne of captivity” directly through a theatrical aestheticizing of afropessimist philosophy. Through our playwriting and directing practices, we have also come to think of ourselves as “practicing afropessimists.” As such, our notions about the taking of care when contending with the theory manifest themselves twofold: in performance and in rehearsal.

Zachariah's writing attempts to tell those who experience it (themselves very much included) that the antiblackness they experience on a constant basis is as real and baked into the world as they perceive it to be. For two hours in the dark, the goal is to reassure Us that We have not lost Our minds because, as Wilderson says, “What does it mean to go crazy without ever having been sane?” Dominique's practice (returning to Williams) strives to create care in the rehearsal room. Zachariah and Dominique's work is propaganda, but, through Dominique's facilitation, its intended targets are company members as much as, if not more than, audiences. Opening up Black space—inasmuch as such a thing can exist—in rehearsal allows for the small acts of interpersonal recognition that make life in the hold something closer to bearable.

Max Ferguson - York University

On The Photograph, Trans Identity and Refusing to Pass: A Reflection

As a passing trans man whose previous history as a genderqueer butch woman, fat activist, psychiatric survivor, and sex worker has been erased, I am not content with my appearance: I refuse to pass.

In my paper, I will introduce my series of photographs from my artistic practice, entitled “They”, which depict a series of bodily dialogues with a skeleton prop wherein I refuse to pass, and by doing so refuse the medicalization of my body and therefore the diagnosis of gender dysphoria: in essence, I refuse to be “cured.”

These photographs will also be articulated as points of discussion that replicate sites of white cisgender ableist patriarchal power but fail in their capacity to depict the multiplicities of my identity as a trans individual.

I will present my photographs as “points of refusal” through which I critique the

concepts of medicalization and passing as they relate to my experience, through a Trans, Critical Disability Studies, and Mad Studies lens.

By applying an intersectional approach (Crenshaw 1989), the work of Bobby J Noble (2006) and Ruth Frankenberg (1993) along with the writings of Eli Clare (2014, 2017) and Merrick Daniel Pilling (2022), I aim to critique the medical gaze, using self-portraits wherein I pass as a white, cisgender able bodied/minded man.

Pilling writes: “There is something [queer and]... trans about madness.” (Pilling, 2022) He documents the intersections between Queer, Trans, and Mad Studies, and “the historical and current struggles against psychiatry by queer and trans people, as well as psychiatric survivors alike”. (Pilling, 2022) He comments that there have been few critical scholarly and activist interventions within these intersections. Through discussions related to my photographs, I aim to draw from Pilling’s observations, and will facilitate a conversation between Mad Studies and Trans Studies.

Meghan Gagliardi – University of Toronto

Non-futures of dissolution: refusing the recovery of the white-settler subject for abolition instead

This paper overviews and rejects intellectual and popular conceptualizations of the anti-racist white subject through scholarship which demonstrates that there is no “cure” for the white-settler subjectivity rooted in violence and/as possessiveness. I draw from Ashon Crawley’s description of whiteness as the desire for “totalizing, pure, gratuitous violence” that is never wholly achieved (2017) and Du Bois’ oft-quoted observation that “to be white was to own the earth forever and ever” (1920). Frank Wilderson integrates these two characteristics to describe that by its “essence,” the white-settler subject is “ontologically deputized” to enact violence against Black, Indigenous, and racialized subjects (2003). Given this essence, Robyn Wiegman critiques the attempted recuperation of an anti-racist white-settler subject in whiteness studies by arguing that there “no theoretical, historical, or methodological escape from [its] impossibility” (1999). Instead, Jared Sexton argues for its abolition, which cannot begin with “recovery, or recuperation” but only “degeneration, decline, or dissolution” (2016). Fred Moten considers this dissolution through Frantz Fanon’s “lysis,” (1967) or a “biochemical process of the breakdown of cells” (Harney and Moten 2013). From here, this paper explores two lines of inquiry. First, without a “cure” for the white-settler subjectivity, is it useful to read white-settler ontology and activity through Melanie Klein’s manic defenses? Klein’s “persecution” is one of the psyche’s manic defenses against loss (1940). I study white-settler activity as a manic defense against

confrontation with the impossibility/inaccessibility of what Cedric Robinson calls “ontological totality” (2000). I explore how this manic defense suspends the white-settler subject in a state of persecution that can only be destructive and forecloses access to Klein’s “productive” space. I then conclude by imagining and mapping “lysis” as a potential productive space where the white-settler subject might become otherwise suspended in a non-future of dissolution, instead of promised an impossible future recovery.

Tapji Garba – York University

Social Reproduction and the Machiavellian Problem

In *The Machiavellian Moment*, J.G.A. Pocock homes in on the way that the reclamation of the Greco-Roman republic in Renaissance political thought plays a significant role in the emergence of modern historical consciousness because it raises the question of how a universal form of social organization can sustain itself through the vicissitudes of time. It is a form of the question regarding the relationship between necessity and contingency, but under conditions where the continuity of time is secured by the human subject who is capable of mastering necessity where before the issue was dealt with in terms of divine providence. If the continuity of political forms is now a matter of human will, then it follows that the polity must reproduce the kind of subject who is capable of maintaining its continuity across time. My paper reads Pocock’s analysis as an intervention into the nature of social reproduction in modern societies.

Sneha George - University of California & Emma Kauffman - York University

The Radical (Im)Possibilities of Staying an Imposter

This paper discusses the oft-taken for granted practice of “curing” imposter syndrome. To be an imposter is to be not-quite (not-white). Indeed, the imposter’s experience is an experience of unbelonging that gets reinforced in every scenario where whiteness is present. When expressed in the university, people respond by stating they in fact belong, that this feeling can be overcome. Although this response is seemingly empowering, we wonder, what is really being said when people tell marginalized

people that they “belong” to an institution that is presently and historically violent towards them and people like them? This paper problematizes the concept of curing imposter syndrome. By referencing la paperson (2017), Craig Steven Wilder (2013), Tiffany Lethabo King (2015), Joy James (Zoom Talk, 2022), Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013), and others, and current organizing efforts such as Abolition University Collective, we demonstrate that the historical and present university is an antiblack institution. Thus, we argue that telling marginalized people that they belong to academia is part of a larger project of placing people into accepting, desiring, and assimilating into a Human world-making project.

Rather than curing imposter syndrome, we are interested in exploring the conceptual terrain of the imposter - who is the imposter and why? What can the imposter tell us about academia? Why the impulse to cure imposter syndrome rather than questioning the conditions and structures that continuously position certain people as imposters, and others as always belonging. It is our contention that in exploring the position of the imposter, we begin to construct a clearer picture of the landscape of the university - who is the university designed for? And what is its purpose? Furthermore, we wonder if the orientation of “being in but not of the university” means that we care for the imposter, and destroy the impulses to cure the imposter.

Margaret Goldman - University of California, Irvine

The Staying Power of the Self: Care as (Re)Alignment

This paper considers the role of sovereignty and self-determination in (re)formulations of care that depart from the transactional, paternalistic, and individualistic iterations of care formulated, mobilized and violently enforced by carceral institutions and regimes. To do so, more specifically, this paper ruminates on the staying power of the Self in self-determination, as distinct from the individual (and individualism) that anchors carceral and compulsory forms of care. I situate this inquiry in the context of (abolitionist) educational transformation and the symbiotic linkages between schooling and carceral regimes, drawing from ethnographic research with young people of color who have been pushed or pulled into alternative education. I focus, in particular, the education (oral) histories of two students, Kaela and Gorgeous. Informed by Kevin Quashie’s interventions on quiet, I listen for the introspective interiority that grounds their reflections on their schooling experiences (and growth as human beings), and I suggest that these introspections serve as an invitation into the Self/interiority as point of relationality, and into interdependent self-transformation, or (re)alignment, as critical processes of larger change. Through these suggestions, this paper formulates a definition of collective care as a mutually unfolding

(and non-linear) process of tending to the wounds, habits and belief systems that create chasms between the body and what is embodied, and which prioritize and police the individual at the expense of the Self. Such a process illuminates a promise for and speaks to a vision of non-carceral care that is internally and sovereignly defined, but unfolds, necessarily, in relationship with others.

William Graves - Northwestern University

“Who Is You?”: Narratology, Social Death, and Black Masculinity in Barry Jenkin’s Moonlight

Narratives or stories about black men, like the film *Moonlight* (2016), are epitaphic mediations, a deathly disappearance. Black men, when made to appear within the logics of narrative space and time, are a haunting absence that never materialize. In the film, this phenomenon is evoked through literal or metaphorical imagery of death and constraint, and this imagery is illuminated through black life’s precarity. Settings such as schools, project housing, the looming prison space, and a neighborhood drug economy, are places where time halts for the black characters. Intracommunal black space continues to disappear, and it is never possessed. Ultimately, we see a repetition of black desolation that never quite marks a progression in story.

This paper turns to contemporary cinematographic explorations of queer Black masculinities and the continued struggle for articulation via the film *Moonlight* (2016). While many scholars and critics have read the film as a black queer coming-of-age story or bildungsroman, I argue that black men can never appear as representable entities through this medium, while also disturbing the subjunctivization and meaning produced by narrative. The utterance and repetition of the phrase “Who is you?” throughout the film, functions as a metaphor for how Chiron can never quite grasp at an articulation of a self, even at the end. Furthermore, *Moonlight* visually represents the interconnectedness of carcerality and Black child rearing in an urban backdrop, while also providing a story in which Black men intimately attempt and fail to relate to one another as they remain surrounded by quotidian threats of violence. The film depicts the erosion of Black familial bonds while revealing the conditions under which relational intimacies between persons racially (un)gendered as Black men are negotiated in the afterlives of slavery.

Ampson Hagan - Michigan State University

Impossibility of Rescue: The Aporia of the Foundations of Humanitarian Rescue in the Presence of Blackness

In the contemporary Europe-Africa relation of anti-migration that is mediated by Blackness/anti-Blackness through the prism of migration control, Europe redefines itself via its border-work, and its maintenance of borders that render Africa(ns) exterior to it. Europe continues to define itself through its despotic violences against Africa(ns). Rescue, the reactionary act of saving humans in existential peril, is not the foundation or essence of humanism, but rather its limit. Rescue is the limit, the ends of humanism, that sutures together humanisms core subject, the human, to the world it created in its image. Rescue does not deliver Black peoples to the realm of the human, or even deliver them from evil, as their blackness inheres destruction and human denial. Humanitarianism's deployment of narrow rather than comprehensive interventions, in which root causes of human existential crisis go unaddressed, reinforces its own impossibility.

However, rescue remains a constant theme and critical action, a consolidation of sentiment, obligation, and political concern. It is also a moral and political scene and spectacle, with humanitarian vessels pulling shipwrecked African migrants from the waters of the Mediterranean being a common circumstance. Moreover, the humanitarian tradition considers rescue of Black peoples possible. This is an aporia. Blackness cannot be saved, as it is the unrecoverable void, a perpetual loss, encoded by its emergence into the world as Other. Similarly, liberal humanism cannot save, in the name of the human, that which is otherly human, the antithesis to Man. I constantly return to the issue of rescue and Blackness, and probe the persistent assumption and insistence of Black rescue in an anti-Black existence. I use ethnographic research I conducted in a migrant camp in Niger to think through the contours of this internal paradox that drive this moral-political, and ontological work of an impossible rescue.

Jen Ham - University of California Santa Cruz & Sabrina Jamal-Eddine - University of Illinois Chicago

The function of health/care in society: Health as commodity fetish

The first part of this paper provides an analysis of how the healthcare industrial complex (re)produces the commodity fetish of health. If we understand health broadly as “being capable of the normal physical exertions required in a particular system of labor,” (McCruer 2021) the indices of which is the ideal of an independent non-disabled liberal subject, health becomes conflated with independence. When health is transformed into a commodity fetish, the social relations integral to anyone's given health are hidden from view.

The second part begins with a brief analysis of the superficial/technical and implied/practiced definitions of health, the historical and current purpose of healthcare, the compulsion toward ‘independence’ within the US, the pathologizing of disability and disabled people’s care needs in society, and the application of ‘interdependence’ to healthcare praxis.

The third part of this paper is a co-written narrative on the authors’ experiences with practicing interdependence over the course of their friendship. The authors have lived, loved, and learned how to navigate inaccessible environments together throughout their 17 years of friendship. Prior to having the language to describe these practices of crip solidarity, including interdependence and access intimacy, they were organically practicing these relations through developing their own ways of being in the world. The authors will share the narrative of the way platonic love has served as the glue that has sustained nearly two decades of interdependence.

Ariel Hart - UCLA

The Death of April Valentine: Carceral Obstetrics and the (Re)production of Medical Neglect

On January 10, 2023, 31-year-old April Valentine died during childbirth at Centinela Hospital in Los Angeles, CA. Valentine was aware of the high rates of pregnancy-related mortality for black pregnant people and had specifically chosen a black doula and black physician for her prenatal care in efforts to avoid becoming part of these egregious statistics. Early reports of her death revealed that April was denied access to her doula and timely treatment of her condition was delayed in part because of a long-standing culture of fear that existed between nurses and her physician.

Centinela Hospital is located on a few miles from my ethnography site, the only black-owned birth center in LA County. Just hours before I found out about Valentine’s death via social media, I had been discussing the toxic culture of the hospital with my colleague, a black midwife. She explained to me how she went out of her way to ensure that patients who needed to be transferred from the center during birth, would not end up at Centinela, and in the hands of one notorious black woman Ob/Gyn.

Valentine’s case highlights the ways violence is socially reproduced within healthcare institutions through hierarchical “professional” relationships and inhumane cultural practices. In this paper, I use auto-ethnography from my experiences as a non-binary black-asian MD/PhD student and discourse analysis to interrogate the ways

Valentine's death troubles ideas about the meaning and possibilities of "care" within biomedical spaces and the limits of "curing" black pregnancy-related mortality. This analysis also builds upon my theorization of the carceral-obstetric sphere which documents the ways carceral logics and practices undergird the epistemology and practice of mainstream medicine and attitudes towards black alternative birth care.

Sarah Haughn - Iowa State University

On the Trouble with Making Kin

This paper confronts the promises of transformative kinship through a consideration of feminist STS scholar Donna Haraway's multiple engagements with the legacy of bio-conservationist Alison Jolly in Madagascar, one of the few narratives in which Haraway directly engages questions of coloniality and race. It approaches this narration not as a radical exemplar redressing and thus departing from the structures of modern consanguinity, as Haraway would have it; rather, it reads this aspect of her project of sympoiesis—making-with—as invested in a social evolutionary elaboration of kinship operationalized via natal alienation. Here the analysis intervenes in celebratory readings of sympoiesis to expose sympoiesis as a phasist contemporary redux of twentieth century psychoanalyst of colonialism and population theorist Octave Mannoni. The paper then applies Frantz Fanon's critique of Mannoni to Haraway in order to highlight the ways in which Haraway's applauded claim to radically re-envision human kinship as a cure to western-driven planetary destruction actually revises and refines its most insidious aspect: that the proliferate remaking of relationality requires and rejuvenates a symbolic order underwritten by antiblack violence. The purpose of this analysis is not only to reveal the antiblackness of Haraway's schematic at the level of intellection, but further to confront her conceptual frameworks as exemplary of the explosive popularity of such projects that "imagine life lived otherwise" and thus operate with fervently disavowed political and libidinal investments in the very antagonistic structures they dream of abolishing.

æryka jourdaine hollis o'neil - Northwestern University

Slave to the Rhythm: Gender Affirming Care, Transmedicalism, and Other Inculcated Cures for (Anti-) Blackness

"Don't cry, it's only the rhythm." The more explicit yet precedented rise of fascism in U.S. political culture and beyond has spawned a resurgence of contemporary debates around the tenets and tenses of bodily autonomy, of which the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is one of the most topical examples. This paper examines the concurrent

debates and attacks around trans children’s (and increasingly trans adults’) rights to access gender affirming care alongside the tacit racial rubrics that have so often constituted what that care looks like, how it’s defined, and its unequal administration to identify how they are each rooted in historical and present-day vestiges of anti-Blackness and slave economies of ungendered flesh. Additionally, the paper considers how the emergence of (predominantly white) transmedicalist, transnormative ideologies on the Left buttress and mirror the “trans exclusionary radical feminist” or TERF rhetoric on the Right, representing an instance of what David Marriott might call “bonding over phobia.”

Drawing from recent scholarship in Black and trans studies, the paper looks to unconventional case studies in the oeuvre of prominent Black gender non-conforming figures like Grace Jones (from which the paper draws its name) among others as allegorically instructive for illustrating these aforementioned social, political, and cultural convergences. Essentially, I interrogate antiblack visual and sonic regimes of temporality and femininity as foundational to the coercive and teleological medical-industrial administration of binarized “gender affirming care” by examining how racialized sexual and libidinal economies have paradoxically produced blackness as simultaneously seductive and grotesque in the service of desire capital and (white) transnormative emergence and becoming. I conclude with a brief anecdote of how my own experiences of negotiating the mandated medical regimens of transfeminine “care” as a non-binary Black transfemme can otherwise be understood as confrontations with attempts to “cure” blackness in its multiple valences.

Becka Hudson - Birkbeck College, University of London

Care as a strategy of confinement: the case of personality disorders in British prisons

The British prison estate is characterized by its elaborate mental health infrastructure, an edifice continually re-articulated to meet the near permanent mental health ‘crisis’ produced within its walls. From ‘trauma-informed’ prisons to group therapy, behavior-change programmes and psychometric assessment, care for mentally ‘vulnerable’ people in prison has sedimented into the backbone of penal strategy. Much of this is developed through appeals to inclusion: of the vulnerable, disordered, racialised and traumatized people who are increasingly recognised to make up disproportionate numbers of the prison population. Particularly instructive is the story of ‘personality disordered (PD) offenders’ who, since their demarcation in the early 2000s, are now understood to comprise a majority of the prison population - and are a frequent target of such interventions.

This paper, grounded in ethnographic work with PD-diagnosed prisoners and mental health professionals, explores the logics of care such an arrangement produces. It begins with testimonies of ambivalence: How do professionals square the horizon of caring inclusion for those marked vulnerable and traumatized into decisions that ultimately mean prolonged and intensified captivity? How do efforts to care for trauma end up as stricter licenses and longer sentences?

From here, the paper draws on recent policy history that has driven these practices of ‘therapeutic penalty’ (McBride 2017). Taken together, it is put forward that participants’ experience and the policy history in the case of PD offers an emblematic story of care’s hazardous character as a political category. Imperatives of inclusion, alongside appeals to recognise and care for vulnerability and trauma have, in the UK penal context, become ossified into the logics of carceral development for nearly two decades. In other contexts, too, we might pay attention to how imperatives to include and care fold us into institutions that act as engines of harm and exclusion.

E. Hughes – Emory University

On Black Poetry

Blackness, simply, is not. Or, more aptly put—the naught-ness of not. Blackness exists in uncertain terms both caught—petrified within meanings fashioned by culture’s violent discourse. Yet, blackness insists on masquerading within those meanings, performing the transgressive, operating within its own abyssal effects, that fundamentally “damage” the laws of discourse. Further, functioning from a similar position of theoretical negativity, poetry represents for philosophy that which cannot fully arrive— “an affair of ‘private language.’” What happens when blackness encounters the private language of poetry? How does blackness accomplish the work of utterance facing the impossibility of its being within the operations of the poetic and its silences? What is black poetry?

This paper surveys the convergence of blackness with poetry, insisting that blackness presents an aesthetic conundrum to the affairs of language. From this meeting between two negativities surge the following questions: What can black poetry represent? What of naught-ness can be established in the realm of appearances? In this paper, I will

argue that under the pressure of anti-black discourse, blackness pretends to be, performing itself as poetry. Consulting the theoretical work of David Marriott and Jean-François Lyotard, I will attempt to locate this performance in Melvin Dixon's poetry collection titled *Love's Instruments*.

Scholastique Iradukunda - Emory University

Perpetual Stranger: Derrida's Radical Guest and the Slave in Hartman's Lose Your Mother

In *Lose your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman recounts her journey in Ghana as a Fulbright scholar on the trail of captives of the transatlantic slave trade. The running theme of the book is the experience of being a stranger in a place where one is supposed to be welcomed. Immediately after disembarking the bus, she is interpolated as "obruni", stranger, which leads her to declare that: "the most universal definition of the slave is a stranger." Why is "stranger" the descriptive that gathers the experience of the slave? Why is the most universal definition of the slave a stranger, and not perhaps socially dead, or non-sovereign, or any other formulation that may encapsulate the varied forms of being black in the world? What kind of experience of time is indexed by the slave? In this paper, I will show how the slave is a radical stranger in the Derridean sense, the one who turns home (Ghana) into place and disrupts the flow of the present. As such, the black cannot claim a home in the world, - from which he can demand or offer hospitality, - including, or especially in the so-called black world, and it is this impossibility that justifies the definition of the slave as a perpetual stranger in an antiblack world.

Leah Kaplan - Emory University

"All We Have is What She Holds in Her Outstretched Hands" or Archē Feminine Alterity

Saidiya Hartman writes in her article, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors" of the innumerable uses of the black female slave and her continued use beyond chattel slavery. Hartman argues, "Plantations holdovers...shaped life in the emergent ghettos of northern cities...Mothers and wives and daughters were forced into unskilled and low-paid work, with the overwhelming majority confined to labor as domestics." Within the confines of domestic labor, black women were subject to violence and the brutal labor reminiscent of slavery's field work. Blurring the lines between chattel slavery and emancipation where the black enslaved were forced into the role of the housekeeper, caretaker, and wetnurse, the

“emancipated” black woman was made to reproduce the white household, securing the lives of the white family while rendering hers at risk. In addition to the reproductive labor of the black women in the form of child-care, cooking, cleaning, and service work, she was also made to serve the sexual desires of the master of the household both during and beyond enslavement. Hartman writes, “As domestic workers, black women were conscripted to a role that required them to care for and replenish the needs of the white household... at the expense of their own...and submit to intimate relations with husbands and sons and brothers or be raped by them—you cannot choose what you cannot refuse.” Replenishing the white worker and his family, the black domestic figure served any and all needs. Hartman names this figure “the impossible domestic,” as she goes unrecognized as the central figure in reproducing the sphere of productivity and reproductivity while laboring to maintain the white family and offering her body in service of others, ultimately, risking her life and the life of her family. Hartman continues, “Those of us who have been ‘touched by the mother’ need acknowledge that her ability to provide care, food, and refuge often has placed her in great jeopardy and, above all, required her to give with no expectation of reciprocity or return. All we have is what she holds in her outstretched hands.”

The mother, the figure of the black domestic, the impossible domestic, is that which gives without return or exchange. The image of her outstretched hands offers a figure who exists as use, as an entity that gives without possession, without ownership, and without reciprocity. This is the figure that I aim to uncover in the concept of absolute hospitality offered by Derrida and his reading of Levinas’s figure of feminine alterity as the “welcome par excellence.” Through Derrida’s concept of hospitality and his reading of Levinas, we will come to understand this figure as a pre-originary site that conditions the possibility for intimacy and relation. As Hartman notes, “This care, which is coerced and freely given, is the black heart of our social poesis, of making and relation.”

In this paper, I sketch the conceptual contours of Derrida’s analysis of hospitality as both conditional and unconditional. Further, I offer his reading of Emmanuel Levinas’ figure of the Woman (feminine alterity) that for Levinas and for Derrida, opens the site of sexual difference, representing the ultimate site of welcoming. Finally, I return to Hartman’s account of the impossible domestic to think this figure along the lines of absolute hospitality and feminine alterity to argue that she symbolizes a *ārche* feminine alterity and a coerced given that illustrates the *pharmakon* of unconditional hospitality.

Marietta Kosma - University of Oxford

Care and cure in Gloria Naylor's Mama Day

In this paper, the notions of reproductive rights, reproductive justice and reproductive choice, care, cure and autonomy are explored through Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988). I will explore the Black Nationalist assumption that motherhood and the provision of care is the sole pillar of communal life, crucial to the physical and cultural survival of black communities. I will attempt to answer the question of what political purpose care serves and the possible alternatives to care. Notably, individuality and motherhood which is intricately linked with the notion of care are locked in opposition in Black Nationalist discourse. Black Nationalists expected their mothers to place their needs behind those of everyone else. I engage with one of the key historical shifts in the 1970s, the hierarchization of reproductive subjects according to social markers such as race, social class and ability. I want to examine the role that Miranda plays as a mother in the cultural construction of her community and the political purpose the care she offers serves. Miranda's repetition of material practices that include cooking and weaving and the transmission of personal and communal stories serve as a site to critically think about both care and cure. Her daughter Cocoa attempts to question, a maternal heritage that is at odds with her own understanding of her positioning in her community. I would like to examine the degree to which the maternal figure is depicted as a cornerstone of black resistance, the norms and intimate practices surrounding bodily autonomy and family. I would like to explore the alternative modes of being available to Cocoa's due to her non-communal or even anti-communal choices.

Dalton Lackey, Angelica "Jelly" Loback, and Teagan Murphy

Behind Bars, Between Deaths: The Violence of Institutional Care in Response to COVID-19

Necropolitical apparatuses must innovate, often progressing the forms of their cruelty in correspondence with exterior crises. The death-worlds they forge serve as geographic laboratories for testing the efficiency of instruments of violence (Mbembe 2003; 2019). As an extension of plantation logics, the prison is both a crisis of modernity and a state-sanctioned cure for its social ills. From Emancipation to the War on Drugs to COVID-19, the carceral system has mutated in form but endured in function, serving to eliminate the criminalized. Accordingly, such moments of turmoil present a more transparent perspective into the prison's careful application of death in various forms. We draw on first-hand accounts submitted to the American Prison Writing Archive (APWA) at the onset of the pandemic to examine how incarcerated witnesses traverse the strategic mechanisms prisons employ to isolate,

torment, and kill under the guise of emergency response. Their words speak to a half-life, where the necropolitical order perfects its violence with limited protest. Moreover, our analysis reveals salient bifurcations in the experiences of Black and non-Black witnesses that—given their degraded status—raises questions about the “race-neutral” conceptualization of social death first offered by Orlando Patterson (1982). Reading with Black-nihilist and Afropessimist thinkers, we perceive in APWA texts an important distinction, whereby Black incarcerated individuals experience the violence of state repression while assuming the inescapable position as ‘hegemony’s silent scandal’ (Wilderson 2003). In turn, we suggest living death—described by Mbembe as derivative of existence within death-worlds—presents a cogent language to account for the abject dereliction experienced by all incarcerated people, even while insisting upon the paradigmatic anti-Blackness of social death. The prison, then, cultivates a distinctive environment in which living death—the condition of the death-world—and social death—the experience of the slave—function side-by-side, cell-by-cell.

Dylan Lackey - Virginia Commonwealth University

For the Love of Guilt: Interpellation and Black Language

Excavations of Louis Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation have circulated within philosophical and psychoanalytic circles since Althusser's intervention in the 1970s. Amongst the most well known are Judith Butler's modifications on behalf of a burgeoning gender theory and Mladen Dolar's Lacanian criticism introducing love as an impossible, irreducible remainder “beyond interpellation.” While, to date, little scholarship has sought to bring these two unique responses to bear on one another beyond fleshing their evident differences, this essay seeks a revival of Althusser's Freudo-Lacanian influences, drawing first on Lacan's rereading of Freudian guilt and then on Fanon's radical response. In an amalgamation of ideology critique, Foucauldian panopticism, and psychoanalysis, I read interpellation-subjectivation as finding its reproductive footing via a guilt that is itself loved by the becoming-subject. One, it could be said, accepts and repeats the interpellative hail because one loves the guilt which is promised in the betrayal of one's radical desire—the guilt that figures as a receipt for one's jouissance, given as the price of admission to the coherence and the order of interpellation. Upon returning to Frantz Fanon through David Marriott, however, I recognize precisely by these means a necessary distinction between the ideological-psychoanalytic guilt which turns upon the hinge of love (a certain white guilt), and the guiltiness of the Black colonial subject—per Marriott, “a n'est pas [is not] that pits being a subject against the Other who is black.” Working through various

theoretical advancements since Althusser, I seek to determine why non-Black guilt is beloved or cared after in its effacement of jouissance, as well as why Blackness, as that which is not, both interrupts the interpellative schema of subjectivity (as an unassimilable irony of all irony), and underlies it (as if bound to a permanent and loveless guilt).

Melayna Lamb – University of Law, London

Care as/at the end of the world

If, as we know, many strategies of care are teleological in nature, cast as a way to ensure the continuation or adaptation of/to the world rather than its radical overthrowing, then how do we think care otherwise? This paper will return to the temporal registers of care as a way of trying to think this through.

The tying of cure to care tends to position care as a thoroughly future-oriented practice, one where the telos is the cure of whatever pathology has been identified, a making right of what has been diagnosed as wrong. But if, to modify Adorno, a right life cannot be made in a wrong world, then how can care become detached from a goal or terminus that might motivate it towards an openness that could, in the words of Garba and Sorentino, point us towards the “end of the world”? How, in other words, can care be thought of not as in service of a goal, but rather be outside of and beyond what Sexton calls ‘(the restoration of) sovereignty’? Attending to theological and philosophical discourses of eschatological and teleological understandings of time, this paper will explore how the temporality of care has been constructed and how it might be thought otherwise.

Josh Lamers – Osgoode Hall Law School, York University

Fuck Yuh Resilience

As an homage to the outrage and anger explicitly expressed by N.W.A. in their 1998 song “Fuk Da Police,” this paper is a direct challenge to the ongoing proliferation of notions and discourses of resilience found in various disciplines, and “progressive” scholarship, research projects, and professional practices in the realm of the family policing system (child welfare). Thinking through scholars and work such as Audre Lorde’s *Uses of Anger*, and by centring Black child welfare survivors’ experiences, expressions, and practices of resistance and rage, I seek to expose the idea of “fostering resilience” as an anti-Black carceral project. Namely, that the neoliberalism woven into the assumption that resilience is what, in the context of this paper, Black child welfare

survivors need is a device to individualize, contain, and control our rightful and reasonable outrage at the ways in which we experience violence in our realities and from the state under the guise of “care.”

Borrowing from Saidiya Hartman’s argument that the state, “[...] sought to replace the whip with the compulsory contract and the collar with guilty conscience,” I argue that programs and practices of instilling resilience—masquerading as care—are an aspect of this “collar” and an attempt to sedate the radical rage of Black child welfare survivors. In doing so, this paper asks for a different way of thinking about the meanings behind Black child welfare survivors’ explicit expressions of rage that are often pathologized to the point of chemical restraint or incarceration in psychiatric and/or criminal punishment systems. In fact, that resilience programs position us in various deadly ultimatums: live(resilience) or die; resilience or incarceration. Ultimately, I hope to offer insight into that which fosters our rage as one form of necessary self and collective affirmation and political motivation.

Justin Lang - Brown University

Spatialized Disorder: Toward a Theory of the Black Commune

This paper examines the political and affective functions of the “black commune” in black thought in the north american context. Through an analysis of recent discourse surrounding black communes following the 2020 uprisings, I argue that the commune represents a tendency to posit black space as redemptive and capable of existing beyond the reach of the state, even if temporarily. In this register, the commune functions as a desire for respite—“breathing space” away from carceral geographies to practice alternative relations oriented around “care, not cops.” I argue that this function of the black commune is representative of tendencies within contemporary abolitionist discourse to theorize an otherwise to the state rather than confrontation. This study aims to theorize the black commune as a mode of care and confrontation and query the (im)possibilities of black space as a cure when still surrounded by state territory. Rather than point toward constituent spatial creation as a counter to antiblack notions of black placelessness, the study attempts to theorize a destituent orientation to space which exceeds any static claim to territory. I engage George Jackson, Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement, and theorists of black negativity to work toward a theory of the black commune as spatialized disorder.

Angelica Loblack - University of Maryland

Behind Bars, Between Deaths: The Violence of Institutional Care in Response to COVID-19

Necropolitical apparatuses must innovate, often progressing the forms of their cruelty in correspondence with exterior crises. The death-worlds they forge serve as geographic laboratories for testing the efficiency of instruments of violence (Mbembe 2003; 2019). As an extension of plantation logics, the prison is both a crisis of modernity and a state-sanctioned cure for its social ills. From Emancipation to the War on Drugs to COVID-19, the carceral system has mutated in form but endured in function, serving to eliminate the criminalized. Accordingly, such moments of turmoil present a more transparent perspective into the prison's careful application of death in various forms. We draw on first-hand accounts submitted to the American Prison Writing Archive (APWA) at the onset of the pandemic to examine how incarcerated witnesses traverse the strategic mechanisms prisons employ to isolate, torment, and kill under the guise of emergency response. Their words speak to a half-life, where the necropolitical order perfects its violence with limited protest. Moreover, our analysis reveals salient bifurcations in the experiences of Black and non-Black witnesses that—given their degraded status—raises questions about the “race-neutral” conceptualization of social death first offered by Orlando Patterson (1982). Reading with Black-nihilist and Afropessimist thinkers, we perceive in APWA texts an important distinction, whereby Black incarcerated individuals experience the violence of state repression while assuming the inescapable position as ‘hegemony’s silent scandal’ (Wilderson 2003). In turn, we suggest living death—described by Mbembe as derivative of existence within death-worlds—presents a cogent language to account for the abject dereliction experienced by all incarcerated people, even while insisting upon the paradigmatic anti-Blackness of social death. The prison, then, cultivates a distinctive environment in which living death—the condition of the death-world—and social death—the experience of the slave—function side-by-side, cell-by-cell.

Victoria Lupascu - University of Montréal

No Cure: The Violence of Locked Down Hospitals during the Covid-19 Pandemic

This presentation focuses on the violence of care during the Covid-19 pandemic in hospitals in Wuhan, China, as represented through the documentary *76 Days* directed by Hao Wu, Weixi Chen and another anonymous collaborator.

As the pandemic became a reality at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 and the entire city of Wuhan shut down, China and the entire world were frantically looking for medical, social, political and cultural protocols for finding cures, providing

care and making the pandemic comprehensible to themselves and the others. Hospitals went into strict lockdown, as well, in order to contain and/or stop community transmission and have become micro-cosmoses of violence in the absence of efficient treatments, while testing different drugs and gambling with time as the medical personnel and the patients had to learn to wait with and alongside death with no hope of exiting the hospital. Hao Wu, Weixi Chen and their collaborators have gotten access to one of the hospitals and recorded the ways in which such a particular place of (potential)healing became a political space of governing bodies, even more in lockdown than before it, of enforced isolation, and medical experimentation. I argue that the documentary shows how stifled and mediated care through hazmat suits stands in for a cure or efficient treatment and becomes a violent practice of mechanical, yet uncertain and ambiguous, survival. A conversation about hospitals as violent intersectional locations of care and cure notwithstanding, I claim that the documentary and its representation of a months-long lockdown challenges our understanding of care and all its nuances and urges us to include the concept of violence into the care-cure epistemic and political duo.

Brennan McCracken - Concordia University

On Glissant's ecology

In *Poetics of Relation* (1990), the Martinican theorist and poet Édouard Glissant indexes the historical determination of ecological care through what he calls an “aesthetics of the earth.” This aesthetics, for Glissant both an “imagining” and an “acting,” is determined by structures of alterity—in this case, the wake of the plantation and the colonial reproduction of racialized ecological harm. This paper analyzes the radical (and untimely) post-environmentalist inflections of Glissant’s ecological aesthetics and argues that *Poetics of Relation* claims ecology as a historically mediated and socially reproduced form of care. This claim is not utopic or partisan: rather, it reveals the vulnerability of “care” as a discourse to co-option. Throughout *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant returns to ecology as an example of how relational forms can be evacuated of ethical nuance by an aspirational “mysticism” or a flattening “politics”: beyond an environmentalist valence, he reads in coeval cultural understandings of ecology a logic of enclosure and a “drive to extend to the planet Earth the former sacred thought of Territory.” Still, he does not abandon ecology as a model for care: he reclaims it with a “fever of passion.” This paper draws on recent scholarship on decolonial ecology (Ferdinand 2022) and ecology-as-form (Griffiths 2021), as well as critical studies of care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) and purity (Shotwell 2016) to ultimately argue that Glissant’s ecology, far from flattening ethical relations into a

closed system, is exemplary of the historical determination and disruptive potential of care as a structure of relation.

Tenisha McDonald - Princeton University

“She gave utterance to many great truths”: Speculative Legacies of Clairvoyance in Harriet E. Wilson’s Spiritualism

This paper traces the ways in which care and cure are animated in the nineteenth century archive through Harriet E. Wilson’s involvement in the Spiritualist Movement as a healer and entrepreneur. While scholars have tended to Wilson’s participation in Spiritualism through her speeches and lectures, my work aims to elucidate performative utterances of the body by tracing the formation and movement of Wilson’s care practices within and beyond Boston’s Spiritualist community. Focusing on utterances of the body sheds light on how Wilson came to be known as a “clairvoyant physician” and trance medium in the Spiritualist ranks, and it invites a deeper understanding of the conditions from which she published *Our Nig* (1859). By considering the ways in which Wilson exercises what Britt Rusert calls “fugitive science,” I argue that Wilson engages Spiritualism as an affective movement practice that challenges hegemonic ideals of Black womanhood and recasts the role of future generations of Black leaders.

While Wilson’s commitment to Spiritualism might appear, on the surface, as an endeavor that remains unique to her individual aspirations, she falls within a tradition of Black women spiritualist foremothers like Jarena Lee and Maria

W. Stewart, and set a precedent for Black women writers like Francis E.W. Harper and Pauline Hopkins, who experimented with folk healing traditions in their literature, and in doing so, countered burgeoning racial scientific theories that attempted to pathologize Black people as inferior. Using archival sources like the *Banner of Light*, the *Spiritual Scientist*, and a host of early Black periodicals, this paper surfaces the ways in which Wilson’s Spiritualist career animates her legacy as one of the first African American novelists. In doing so, I theorize clairvoyance as a sub-literary tradition that stages an intervention in first- and second-wave Black feminist interrogations of what it means for Black women to be well.

Jordan Taliha McDonald - Harvard University

Curing Cain: Toward A Theory of Black Intramural (State) Violence

Modeling what Hortense Spillers calls an “intramural protocol of reading,” (Spillers, 2003) this paper close-reads the rhetoric of betrayal and “self-betrayal” employed in popular repudiations of Black agents of the state by teasing out its narrative and psychoanalytic assumptions. Concerned with the ways this rhetoric reflects the limits of contemporary discourses of “black intimacy with state apparatuses,” (Edwards, 2021) and/or cases of “black-on-black crime,” this paper considers the 2023 police assault and murder of 29-year-old Tyre Nichols in Tennessee, as it concerns the media reception and analysis of the violence enacted upon Nichols, a Black man, at the hands of five Black officers of the Memphis Police Department. Taking seriously Spillers’s assertion in “Time and Crisis: Questions for Psychoanalysis and Race,” that the Black “crisis” of the New World is a “steady state, given historical pressures that bear in on it and that become, as a result, intramural pressures,” (Spillers, 2021) this paper asserts that the narrative of Nichols’ murder was conditioned not only by these ‘pressures’ but also the enduring structure of a Blackness made to define and exceed Western narratives of betrayal. To situate this argument within a history of anti-Black narrative, I draw on Ruth Mellinkoff’s *Mark of Cain* and W.T. Lhamon’s *Raising Cain* as they contend with the racialized mythology of the Biblical figure of Cain and his controversial career as the narrative answer to an ontological question of chattel slavery and its genealogies of terror. To close, the paper identifies the decline in this myth’s invocation (even among slavers themselves) as instructive and predictive of how our reliance on a “Black traitor” fails to account for an anti-Blackness which is “not the result of a curse” (Fanon, 1967) but rather an essential exposure to violence defined by an “absence of reciprocity, utility, and contingency” (Wilderson, 2016).

Vusumzi Nkomo - Cape Town Creative Academy

Dead Memory

Black pain, while overwhelmingly real for those experiencing it, has an altogether incontestably singular structure that exposes the incompatibility of protocols of relief with the structure of antiblackness. Reading the late South African composer Kieppie Moeketsi’s tragic sojourn in London’s Ferreira Hospital’s “mental asylum”, this paper probes, through an afropessimist critique, the tension between the unfettered access to the (pained) Black body and the enjoyment as well as the threat of Black ideation. Instead of treating and isolating this incident as merely the structural vulnerability of the exiled Black figure, I trace this crisis from Wulf Sachs’ psychoanalytic-cum-anthropological study in his 1937 *the Black Hamlet* (later adapted to *Black Anger* in a revised 1947 edition) to highlight a fundamental indifference and dependence on Black pain. Moreover, I interrogate the problem of the figure of the ‘mad African’

and the supposed incongruity of their psychic structure with the demands of modernity.

Ebony Oldham - UCLA

“Too Black for Care,” Too Fat for Cure

If, as it has been proven, the widespread engrossment over fatness did not emanate out of benevolent health concern by medical practitioners but rather is racialized in origin and linked to the transatlantic slave trade, how has cure been shaped by antiblackness? How has antifatness been deployed under the guise of care? And, to what end does care offer a reprieve for a life reduced to excess/waste? This paper stages a confrontation between the ethos of health-humanism or what might be referred to as the practice of living a life and the black fat figure. I propose a serious assessment of discursive practices related to the prognosis of black fatness. Building on contributions of afropessimism, Black feminist critiques of humanism, and critical fat studies, I explore the philosophical underpinnings of these discourses, examining how technologies of metrics and size are mobilized as a corrective tool. I investigate to what extent a cure can be administered to a figure who is situated on the brink of death and, thus, exceeding the capacity of life yet required to sustain it.

Dolma Ombadykow - Yale University

Toward a Metabolic Materialism: Reconstellating Care after the Human

How might we think the politics of seemingly essential modes of material, bodily exchange like breast feeding and organ donation alongside differently-politicized questions of hormone therapy and vaccination? This paper turns toward a critically expansive theory of the metabolic to account for all forms of embodied and intra-active material exchange as part of a shared politics that attempts to destabilize our understanding of liberal individualism. I argue that this framework allows us to consider how dominant articulations of science and democracy actively curate our understandings of life and liberty against vital forms of being in relation. Driven by Black studies, queer and trans studies, and feminist STS critiques of the category of the human, this paper offers a theorization of the metabolic that keeps at its center the processes of reception, care, alterity, and mutual dependence that not only map the expenditure of vital energy but also the flows of that labor between people and things: it allows us to map both the process of survival and the politics of it, both the violence of extraction and the politics of it, with that politics being one rooted in mutualism rather than a challenge to individual existence.

As we barrel down into the increasingly microscopic across the twentieth century, renewed crises of speciation and classification emerge. At this same time, innovations across the life sciences offer novel modes of metabolic exchange in the form of tissue donation, surrogacy, and stem cell therapy. The new materialisms promise to aid our transition beyond the human, but do so without ethical praxis for the forms of material exchange that are always already racialized, gendered, and classed. This paper takes that ethic seriously, and turns to the metabolic as a framework to help us rehearse liberation from the constraints of strategic individualism without denying the harm that individualism has already caused.

Osarugue Otebele - University of California, Berkeley

If you kill your Husband: Practices of violence as care in Nigerian Video Films.

In *Widow's Cult* (Dickson Iroegbu, 2005), as a mode of initiation, women seeking to gain access to the assumed economic and social privileges of a cult for widows engage in the sacrificial killings of their husbands. Rather than wait for their inevitable death, these women enter Nollywood's once male-centered occultic capitalism as active participants in the often-unresolvable struggles to navigate the precarity of Nigerian society. For these women, within the landscape of gendered violence, caring, specifically for the self, is inseparable from violence. Indeed, the preoccupation of these women is in the potentiality of murder as the only means for recentering care for the individual and withdrawing it from the assumed male beneficiary. While these films may feature moments of hesitation, the briefness in the in-between is discarded for the potentialities of the proximity to capital. My work takes up Nollywood films of occultic murder to rethink care as inseparable from violence within the structures of capitalism that demands human sacrifice for access to its productive gain. The concerns of this paper are two-fold: the first is with sacrificial murder and the ways inflicting harm through the mode of the occultic situates care as an individualizing practice. Within this practice, relationality encounters a literal cutting that makes bodies only valuable through their utility as sacrifice. The second is grounded in the opposing gendered performance of these violent performances of care as one that disrupts notions of women as natural caregivers and nurturers. Instead, these films offer a renegotiation of Nigerian women's desires to reenter the self within the care. Together, this paper follows the lineage of Nollywood's occultic violence and reads such scenes as performing debris of capital, but also as scenes for contending with care as a practice that necessitates the death of the other.

Abhisek Pal – Jadavpur University

"Ron Athey's Queer Bed"

The American performance artist Ron Athey is the chronicler of the post-AIDS body. Dealing with the triangulation of queerness, mortality and spirituality, his performance series "Incorruptible Flesh" had its fourth installment, "Messianic Remains," in 2013. In "Messianic Remains," Athey is seen lying face upwards on a bed-like metal frame, with hooks inserted into his brows and attached to strings tied to the structure. From afar it looks like a corpse on an altar during a funerary ritual. Up close, it seems like a vulnerable being in intense need of nursing. The spectacle is made more disconcerting by a baseball bat that can be seen inserted into his anus. In such visual representation, the performer figures as a site of conflict between his queer body and the forces of heteropatriarchy. Two figures are seen entering the space with a container of vaseline and urging the attendees to anoint the performer's body with it. In this paper, I study the confrontation between the performer's body and the gaze of the audience who are conditioned by the performance to touch it and care for it. I argue that the performance subverts heteropatriarchal constructs of kinship, art, life and death, and reinvents a radical queer subjectivity. I look at the gay male body through the lens of anality i.e. theoretical ramifications of the symbol of the anus which is informed by theological views on sodomy, legal and medical pathologization of anal sex, decadence and HIV/AIDS. The anus becomes the locus of signification for gay male identity in Athey's performance. I show that by making the audience care for what the body signifies, the queer performer reclaims the otherness of his anus/body, and adds to the queering of tactile kinship, empathy, care and cure.

Jellisa Ricketts – York University

'Ghetto Paradise': Juxtapositions within Jamaica's Tourist Industrial Complex

The tourist industrial complex is one of great polarity. What to some is an escape from the harsh realities of a mechanistic life and its laborious daily routines; is to others, a modicum of survival in the midst of a life of tremendous adversity. In other words, these industries produce spaces in which there is a stark distinction between those who enjoy the luxuries of hedonism, and those who serve the ones who enjoy the luxuries of hedonism, having little identity or value beyond their service. These binary experiences rarely, if ever transpose. In Jamaica, the most popular Caribbean destination, this polarization is a product of the neocolonialist residual legacies of enslavement that continues to thrive in the Caribbean tourist industry via means of

labour, human trafficking, and socio-spatial apparatus. This essay intends to inquire into these legacies and what they reproduce in the Jamaican tourism industry through a spatial theorist lens.

Dominique Rider

Theatre of the Abyss

Theatre of the Abyss Following in the wake of Frank B. Wilderson III and Jaye Austin Williams, our artistic project is to, as the latter puts it, “engage the Black suffering borne of captivity” directly through a theatrical aestheticizing of afropessimist philosophy. Through our playwriting and directing practices, we have also come to think of ourselves as “practicing afropessimists.” As such, our notions about the taking of care when contending with the theory manifest themselves twofold: in performance and in rehearsal.

Zachariah's writing attempts to tell those who experience it (themselves very much included) that the antiblackness they experience on a constant basis is as real and baked into the world as they perceive it to be. For two hours in the dark, the goal is to reassure Us that We have not lost Our minds because, as Wilderson says, “What does it mean to go crazy without ever having been sane?”

Dominique's practice (returning to Williams) strives to create care in the rehearsal room. Zachariah and Dominique's work is propaganda, but, through Dominique's facilitation, its intended targets are company members as much as, if not more than, audiences. Opening up Black space—inasmuch as such a thing can exist—in rehearsal allows for the small acts of interpersonal recognition that make life in the hold something closer to bearable.

Kevin Rigby Jr. - University of California, Berkeley

On Blackness as Cure: Black Lives Matter, Black Studies, and Ontologies of Radicalism

This paper considers the relationship between political life, antiblackness, and coalitional strategies of cure, taking Black Lives Matter as its object of study, to pose a question to those scholars whose political-philosophical practice is subtended by the urgency of making blackness into a political project as cure. Taking seriously the implications of the afropessimist intervention that antiblack rituals of violence suture political life, I argue that a black demand draws into question the whole of the political

as such and is disfigured by strategies of political incorporation and solidarity. This requires us to reframe both blackness and black political demands outside of their identitarian conceptualizations, toward an idea of “pro-blackness” as a challenge to many passionately held convictions about the nature and possibilities of coalition and political power. Given such, I consider two of what I am calling Black Studies’ ontologies of radicalism, in order to query by what understanding some activists and scholars conceptualize blackness as positively related to an elaboration of a radical political project based in solidarity. I argue that the unincorporated intervention that was the burning of police precincts and inconsolable grief out loud relates to an ontology of radicalism ambivalent to elaboration of political projects based on coalition. This is because the ways we have to think or engage coalition all work to reinforce a political structure and logic which extinguishes the challenge a black political demand poses.

Marika Rose - University of Winchester

Care Work and/as Violence Work

For Althusser the reproduction of capitalism relies on the twin powers of the repressive state apparatus - violence backed up by ideology - and the ideological state apparatus - ideology backed up by violence. This paper will argue that these twin powers can be fruitfully understood as paternal and maternal powers. As with modernity (white) men and women are assigned, respectively, to public and private, productive and reproductive spheres, so too the power of the state is divided into paternal and maternal functions. Reading recent work on care and the family by Melinda Cooper and Nancy Fraser alongside both Althusser’s typology of state power and Frank Wilderson’s critique of Gramsci’s similar notion of hegemony both clarifies what is at stake in the disagreements between the two and illuminates the racial politics of care and/as state violence.

Filipe Robles - University of Alabama

Conceptualizing Care in Enslaved Communities of Alabama and Rio de Janeiro

Enslaved people (as black people in the aftermath of slavery) developed ways of doing more than simply surviving to violence that structured their lives. Scholars such as Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman referred to these acts - which alleviated the suffering of people facing subjection and allowed them to live not just in subjection - as works of care. My intention in this presentation is to discuss some of the ways in which enslaved people practiced care in the communities in Rio de Janeiro and

Alabama during the Nineteenth century. I rely on the source materials of the Works Progress Administration's Slave Narrative Project (Alabama) and on the Memórias do Cativo Project, which is an oral history project that interviewed descendants of the last generation of enslaved people in the southeast Brazil. Finally, I argue in this paper that those practices had, at least three dimensions: (1) awareness, because they were (re)shaped in a critical consciousness of oppression (2) spatial, once that they were conditioned by their geographies, which facilitated or not the acts of care; and (3) connection, insofar as they were articulated by the creators and maintainers of connections lost or threatened due to enslavement.

Anidrita Saikia - University of Delhi

Help The Heathens: Cure, Care and Church Among the Missionaries in Colonial Assam

This abstract seeks to trace an exploration into the politics of care, colonialism, and evangelicalism in the borderlands of colonial Assam from the 1850's to the 1870's.

The charter act of 1833 allowed missionaries permanent presence in India, but the eastern borderlands of the colony heard the footsteps of the missionaries more than a decade later, after 1846, when two families of American Baptist missionaries - the Browns and the Cutters- set foot in the hills of the Assam to preach the Gospel. While initial conversion to Christianity among the indigenous people were unsuccessful, the missionaries are fondly remembered in Assamese history for their contributions to print culture, education, and their welfare schemes of opening schools and orphanages.

In this paper, I use the text of "The Whole World Kin" by Eliza W. Brown (1890), a memoir and biography of the Brown family interspersed with diary accounts, letters, and family anecdotes. I use this text as a primary source to delve into the theme of medical care during the 1850's: epidemics and diseases ravaged the region, and colonial policies of health were negligible only after two decades of conquest. In the absence of hospitals and dispensaries, the Browns - especially the mother, Eliza Brown - often took many native children of the village in her home and nursed them, visited households, and provided what was seemingly kindness and support to what she deemed as "heathens", while often being in ill health herself.

Here, I aim to disrupt the relationship of the cared and the carer by analyzing this relationship through a nexus of race, religion, and imperialism. How were operations of affection conducted through failures of evangelicalism? At a time when colonial powers had no facilitations or schemes of sanitation and health, how did the missionaries engage with the politics and priorities of cure? How did themes of gender and the trope of the “white female nurse” have bearings on care? What role did the British colonial government play? Did questions of nationalists of the American missionaries create conflict with the British officials in terms of cure and care?

Chloé Samala Faux - Columbia University

rape, culture

This paper argues that the black female imago is the “midwife” of historical transformation. “She” is the secreted origin of the “African Family,” at once a locus of persecution and lost object of desire that sustains culturalist discourses that enable the recursive logic of originary accumulation. Remarking a homology between originary accumulation, the incest taboo, and Frantz Fanon’s elaboration Negro Myth, I turn ethnographic scrutiny to the specters of sexual violence, illegal abortion, and the occult that animate and dominate contemporary thematizations of South Africa’s crises in social reproduction. In turn, I trace connections between the spectralization of the value-form, sexual violence and the given-ness of blackness.

Klee Schmidt - Amsterdam University College

cAre over cUre: Conceptualizing Vandalized Images as Sites for Sitting with Queer/Trans/Disabled Wounds

This paper explores the potential for vandalized images to develop a conceptual and lived embrace of woundedness. Emblematic of cure rhetoric, vandalized images are often restored as a form of “curing” their “wounds” (Clare; Siebers). New approaches that do not necessitate the restoration of vandalized images as a function of cure, but instead offer insights into the importance of extending care to these images, are vital (Siebers). Through a close-reading ALOK’s “self-vandalized” multimedia image “I don’t see trolls” this paper proposes sitting with the wound as a reparative practice of embracing the vandalized form.

This paper adopts a queercrip lens to read “i don’t see trolls”, further drawing on the insights of Tobin Siebers’ interrogation of the compulsory restoral of vandalized images. By encouraging the audience to process the impact of the vandalism and the wider systematic attempts at erasure that underlie it, this image investigates and challenges the relationship between care and normative systems of power that act on vandalized images as well as on our own body-minds (Malatino). I argue that vandalized images can reveal how cure rhetoric synthesizes systems of compulsory normativity through the construction of disability as an ideological apparatus rooted in the protection of White capital (Hsu; Erevelles). Subsequently, vandalized images can encourage the spectator to sit with woundedness rather than to “cure” the wound. When caring for vandalized images, the woundedness of the image’s form must not harm us the way vandalism/disability is understood to do, but can offer a space for interdependent grieving, healing, and joy within our own strange and wounded body-minds. Yet, to avoid reproducing cure rhetoric we must make ourselves available to the possibility of becoming wounded along the way of disrupting these systems (hooks). Embracing the vandalized form reflects this vulnerability.

Brianna Simmons – UC Riverside

Scales of Betrayal, Protection and Rebellion in contending with antiblack genocide

Black geographies, our ideological understanding of what the category of human is, and our languages to embody such an archetype are molded through antiblack logics and sexual terror. From this archetype care is enmeshed with and often instantiates violence. Alongside scholars who engage afro-pessimism, I understand and discuss antiblackness as a recursive, fractalizing thought system which has created the internal and outward worlds we occupy. As a conceptual vocabulary distinct from race and Racism and political framework, antiblackness makes a structural argument about the way of thinking which encoded the treatment of select Africans as antihuman. This established new terms of racialized relation wherein captive Africans, now Black (blackened), simultaneously coordinate what is super-, sub- and nonhuman (e.g plants, air, water etc.) and enables modern racial thinking. As a historical fact and theory of social relations, antiblackness simultaneously locates the boundaries of species (Jackson 2020) while establishing a racial hierarchy of human being. In this paper I engage the long history of Black radical traditions and reflect on aspects of ongoing dissertation research, care and agape in Joy James’ discussions on maternal (in)coherence, and Black womens’ armed resistance against antiblack genocide. My discussion is guided by two questions: (1) What is the Black psyche’s investment in the betrayal of human rights and or democracy when it implies an agreed upon

contract, trust, and relationality? and (2), What do rebellions and protections against sexual terror and antiblackness look like?

Jason Stephens – University of California, Irvine

Penetration Studies: State Surveillance and Clandestine Nuclear Testing at Pruitt-Igoe

From 1963 to 1965, the U.S. military conducted a series of atomic fallout studies in St. Louis – using the Public Health Service to disperse over one ton of aerosolized cadmium, zinc, and radium-226. These non-consensual experiments were centered around Pruitt-Igoe, a segregated public housing complex which (at the time) housed over 20,000 Black residents in 33 11-story buildings.

Although clandestine nuclear testing of that era may draw our whole attention towards the scale of the Cold War, I want to examine Pruitt-Igoe itself as a site of gratuitous state violence. The pursuit of U.S. hegemony and the violence that renders “Black home” oxymoronic are entangled by a structure “through which home, mother, father, and child ‘safety’ are secured in one direction and rendered meaningless in another” (Sharpe, 2012). Here, Christina Sharpe can help us find language for the contested domesticity of Pruitt-Igoe: where housing managers inspected every apartment “looking under rugs and checking for violations of cleanliness rules,” and night staff searched apartments “for dads and boyfriends hiding in the closet or under the bed” (enforcing a rule that prohibited anyone from receiving welfare while living with an unemployed “able-bodied man”).

How does “care” contribute to this disintegration of any putative dividing line between prison and home? What kinds of violence took place under the guise of care in Pruitt-Igoe? And how does the residents’ purported lack of care provide retroactive cover for gratuitous violence that is – in actuality – always/already without cause or transgression? For, “As the story goes, ‘those people’ didn’t know how to take care of things. [...] themselves or their home” (O’Shea, 2022).

Morinade Jayla Stevenson – Emory University

Black Mater(nal) Figures

Black womxn’s work and contributions have historically been erased, silenced, and forgotten although contributing and providing what many deem care. Black women’s domestic labor is entrenched in a network of social exploitive relations that bear witness to the afterlives of slavery. This entails the differential production of gender,

sexual violence, and the too often neglect of black women across discursive and material domains. In this paper, I consider the genealogy of the black mammy stereotype as it relates to notions of care in the present. The reproduction of the mammy image, the faithful, warm, and nurturing black servant, continues to be reproduced through logics of caregiving and who is deemed worthy of care in the present moment. Thus, one must be attuned to the ways in which black women may be further subject to violence as caregivers, and as the quintessential “faithful servant” in a white symbolic order. I turn to Zakiyyah Jackson’s notion of the black mater(nal) and Janine Jones use of black mater(nal) presences, as indicative of the kinds of foreclosures that leave black women without care.

Oluwadunni Talabi - University of Bremen

Affect of Collectivism and Gendered Care Function in Buchi Emecheta’s Second Class Citizen and Toni Morrison’s Sula

It is no new knowledge that most African cultures have historically embraced a strong collectivist principle, where the wellbeing of the group is prioritised over individual concerns and rights. With the reverberating impact of colonialism and transition to western-oriented modernity, simplistic and favourable assumptions about this social theory have often been rendered as a cure to the ills of colonialism, especially in the Black diaspora. While the merit of collectivism cannot be understated especially for marginalised groups, who do not have the privilege of safety and security within the modern fundamental infrastructures of law and security, it is naive to think that collectivism is always a place of safety and an answer to women’s entangled layers of oppression. Collectivism, like every social process is fraught with contradictions and predisposed to unconscionable articulations. Refusal to interrogate these contradictions can engender the exploitation of one group for the sustainability of the collective. I will explore one of the ways collectivist ideologues is merged with capitalist heteropatriarchy in the site of gendered care function, to produce the oppression of African women and deprive us of the “freedom which allows the ‘I’ to ‘be,’ not in order to be used, but in order to be creative” (Lorde 2015, 95).

Despite the upheaval of traditional standards in the global society, care function is still seen as the prerogative of the woman with no consideration for our personal identity and consent. I am particularly interested in the intersections between and among Indigenous African/Black consciousness, the spectacle of liberal democracy and the discourse of subjectivity, all of which address questions of centres, peripheries, identities, personhood and social cohesion.

My presentation will explore in two self-identified Black feminist novels, the reasons that draw Black/African women towards and away from their organised collectivist cultures.

The two novels, written by two prolific Black feminists from different geographical locations, prove cerebral at unsettling the site of collectivism that is profound to Black people and women's identity and creating space to reflect on discernible patterns of contradictions.

Hilary Thurston – York University

In the Shadows of Systemic Trauma: Ambivalent Desires, Fantasies of Care and the Figure of the Codependent Lesbian

This paper seeks to deconstruct the figure of the co-dependent lesbian in historical and psychopathological discourses, and to attend to the affective relations that circulate around this figure, with a focus on the ways in which care is commingled with control in representations of lesbian relationships. The co-dependent lesbian is an archetype that pervades in its influence on the lesbian imaginary through gender essentialist ideas about self-sacrificing care and romance, historical representations of lesbian characters suffering for love, queer desires for social inclusion and state-sanctioned forms of intimacy, and the discursive circulation of the figure of the 'u-haul lesbian' in popular culture and on social media (Thurston 2022). The figure of the co-dependent lesbian embodies both the violent (Vanheule 2002) and debilitating (Puar 2017) implications of caregiving. This figure is a hopeless romantic who navigates their position at the intersection of power and vulnerability by romanticizing their hopelessness, giving rise to a series of affective contradictions characterizing co-dependent orientations to interpersonal attachment: people-pleasing as a form of emotional regulation, self-sacrifice as a form of self-preservation, and care as a form of control. In this paper, co-dependency refers to a kind of fantasy bond (Firestone 1993) that is constructed through mutual emotional unavailability, denial and dissociative fantasy. Using a theoretical framework combining feminist affect theory (Berlant 2011, Ahmed 2014, Puar 2017, Cvetkovich 2003, Freeman 2022, Halperin & Traub 2009), critical addiction theory (Granfield & Reinarman 2014, Levine 2014, Hellman 2021) and attachment theory (Bowlby 1973, 1978, 1980, Ainsworth et al. 2015), the author will refer to queer life writing (Nash 1995, Lorde 1982) and historical discourses about love between women (Freud 1949, Faderman 1981, 1991, Hall 1928) to argue that the ambivalent figure of the co-dependent lesbian is animated by insecure attachment dynamics that are related to interpersonal and systemic forms of trauma, and that are

sustained by queer fantasies of care. What are the affective dynamics that characterize co-dependent attachments and what are the queer fantasies that sustain them?

James Trafford – University for the Creative Arts

Care as Counterinsurgency

In Louisiana in 2021 a group of Black fathers gathered in the form of “dads on duty” in attempt to pre-empt and prevent increasing violence amongst their children at a local high school. Activist and writer Harsha Walia hailed this as community-based care that exemplifies abolition in practice. This coheres with a recent focus on care as antidote to violence (Saidiya Hartman), which coalesces around the mobilization of care as means to recreate and rebuild, such that care becomes beholden to, or even forms, a political project (Hil Malatino; Care Collective; Emma Dowling; Cradle Community). But what if this desire to repair is a stabilisation of violence through which harms are not reduced but even expanded? This case is instructive in foregrounding the limitations of the drive to a politics of care insofar as care is sutured into the continuation of policing and violence. How could the “dads on duty” exemplify abolition when communities are required to perform care-work that does not have the capacity to undo the violences to which they are subjected?

Thinking with Fanon’s concept of incomplete death, I consider whiteness’ orienting tensions between the drive to annihilate Blackness and simultaneously to maintain Blackness as a source of exploitable value and the rights and privileges for whites. Here, we might then centre how the assumption of collective sociality within care-politics is a structural impossibility. That is to say, insofar as whiteness is incapable of forming a world in the absence of Blackness, the social becomes an arrangement of life whose form is police. If care operates in this space of incomplete death, then care-politics becomes a survival program that conciliates the violence of worlding that would render impossible its abolition. Care-as-politics is always and only possibly reform, which is to say a counterinsurgency.

Jaye Austin Williams – Bucknell University

“The Ruse of ‘Top’ and ‘Under’: Rereading Suzan-Lori Parks’ Riff on Black Captivity Beyond Care or Redress, in “Topdog, Underdog”

This paper plunges the depths of slavery's "afterlife" (Hartman) at which two brothers, sardonically named Booth and Lincoln by their estranged father, play out the fatal dynamism within a desolate apartment with all the trappings of social death. In this rereading of Parks' 2002 Pulitzer Prize-winning play (and in light of its recent Broadway revival), I recall early criticism of Parks' work, in which reviewers highlight Parks' "ingenuity and humanity," misreading her analysis as artful lament in pursuit of redress. Rather, Parks' incision deploys the Three Card Monty street hustle as a metacritique of structural antiblackness and the incapacity it engenders where the brothers' caring for themselves and one another is concerned. In so doing, Parks' play exceeds the theatre's often tyrannical demand for catharsis, as Booth's constant attempts to master the game and Lincoln's palpable desire to be free of it, both ooze with the failure to recuperate either themselves or one another from the catastrophe of their having long been discarded. I also recall the regional premiere production I directed of the play in 2003 at the Hangar Theatre, featuring Sterling K. Brown as Booth and Jeremiah Birkett as Lincoln. We worked toward (and also struggled against) an inhabitation of the void engulfing the brothers, unsettling the notion that either is on "top" of or "under" the other, when the "game" is so determinedly rigged against them both. A disgruntled, out of work actor's (John Wilkes Booth) grudge against a president (Abraham Lincoln) who is ambivalent, at best, about ending slavery haunts these two black brothers, whose brotherliness is nullified by the weight of a history that anticipates them as already dead; as it does their long-gone father, whose one signifying gesture of misnaming speaks volumes about how and against whom the deck called "life" is stacked.

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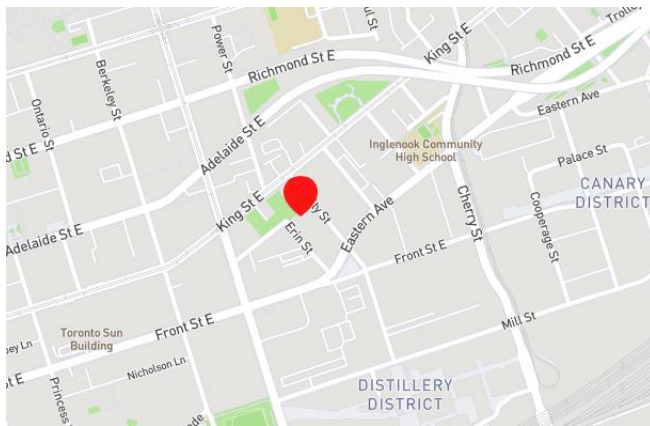
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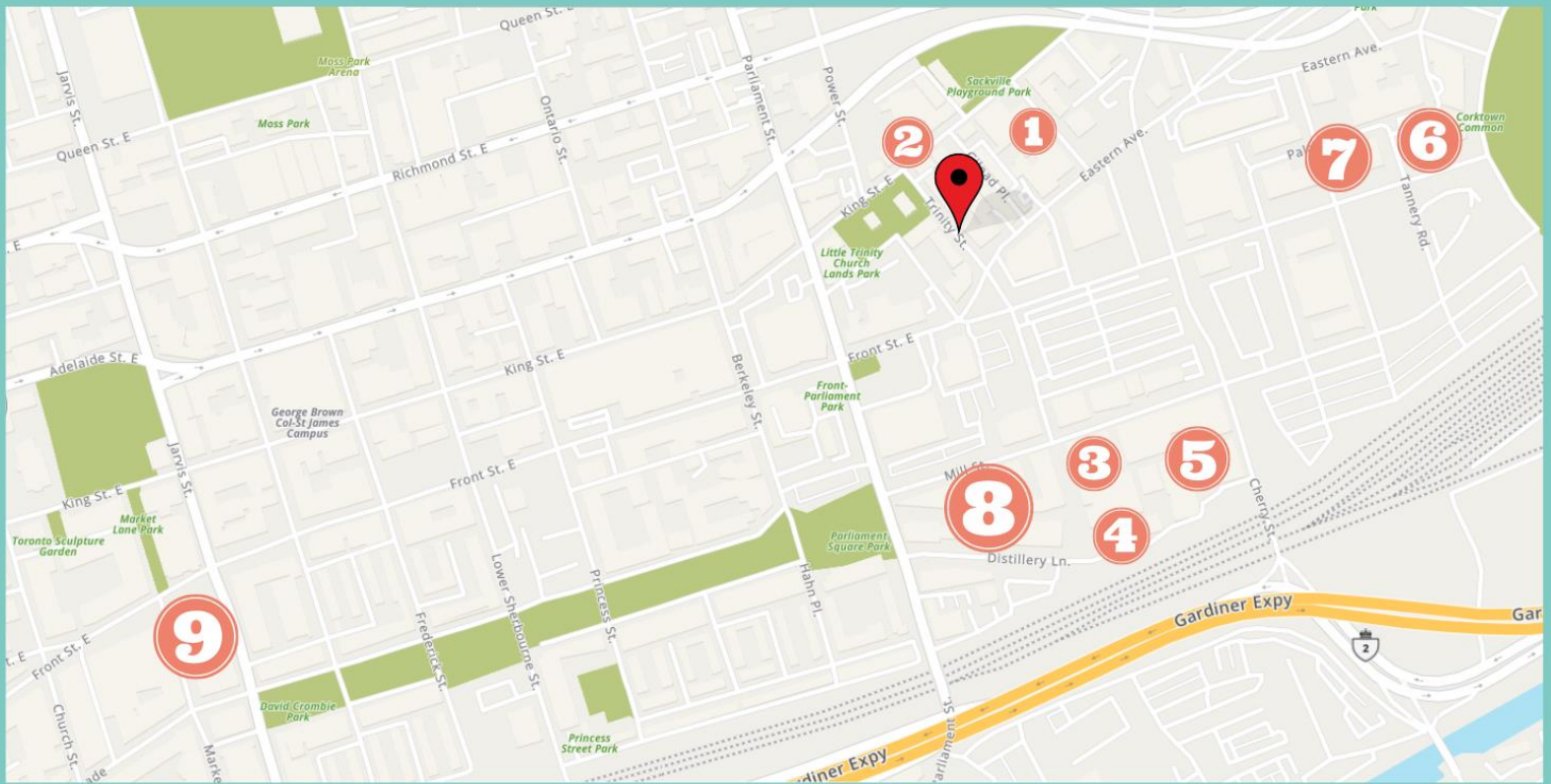
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- 1** Terroni Sud Forno Produzione e Spaccio
(Spaccio East)
22 Sackville St, Toronto, ON M5A 3E2
- 2** Tandem Coffee
368 King St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1K9
- 3** Brick Street Bakery
27 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C4
- 4** Balzac's Distillery District
1 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C4
- 5** Mill Street Brewpub (Toronto)
21 Tank House Lane, Toronto, ON M5A 3C4
- 6** Souk Tabule
494 Front St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1H7
- 7** Vivo Pizza + Pasta
460 Front St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1H7

SIGHTS

- 8** Distillery District
Trinity and Mill St.
- 9** St. Lawrence Market
93 Front St E, Toronto, ON M5E 1C3
-  CONFERENCE: Enoch Turner Schoolhouse
106 Trinity St, Toronto, ON M5A 3C6

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