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Futures

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Introduction

One way or another, this is the end of life as we have known it. This chapter was written before Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, in March 2020. Covid-19 served as yet another wake-up call for the privileged, safely employed, comfortably housed to the reality that the world has been on the brink of epochal ecological and societal transition long before state-enforced lockdowns. Prior to Covid-19 some worried that this was the end of life itself. Eco-fascist memes requalifying humans as the virus flourished all over social media as quickly as the wildlife that was depicted as thriving in previously human-occupied zones while the said humans were confined to their homes (Brown 2020; Joshi 2020). The figure of the desert – the encroachment of nonlife where life flourished (Povinelli 2016) – should preoccupy us less than the potentially inhumane, barbaric (Stengers 2013) conditions that will not go away (easily) after the humans are released from Covid-19 lockdowns – inhumane conditions that are likely to intensify as patriarchal, exploitative regimes of living become reenergized through the intensification of necropolitical forms of biosecurity surveillance (Murphy 2018).

Much depends on how long humanity clings to the old forms that have brought us here. And in such moments, the power of imagining Otherwise is one of the greatest powers there is (Bulter 2000, 2007; Haraway 1997; Imarisha and brown 2015; Le Guin 1989, 2002, 2003; Piercy 1993; Povinelli 2016; Starhawk 1989, 1994, 2016). Feminist science fiction writers such as Octavia Butler, Ursula Le Guin, and Marge Piercy – to name but some – have imagined worlds beyond (or after) patriarchy, Universal Man, gender, and heterosexual monogamy. Depending on where you stand, this is a good thing. For those whose stakes in the world are more or less tightly coupled to those of cis white men, this idea is unsettling. It is important to write these nonpatriarchal futures into being. If we don't deconstruct the

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heteronormative pronouns and grammars of the social sciences, the default speculation that will continue to take place will not be making a future that is safe for difference, for multiplicity.

My task here is to envisage future orientations of/for gender and sexuality. The feminist and women of color science fiction writing that has inspired feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS) writing has a clear orientation, and, as Ahmed (2010) beautifully writes, "orientations matter." Orientations have a temporality and a directionality that are effects of that toward which we tend Ahmed (2010), but of course there is no unified "we" from which anthropology or feminism can easily depart (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015).

I was raised a feminist, a fact that made me unprepared for the phenomenal white, toxic masculinity that brought Trump to the presidency of the United States, closely followed by the backlash to the #MeToo movement, the nomination of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court of the United States, the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil (an extreme-right-wing candidate who told a fellow congresswoman that she was too ugly to deserve being raped by him). I was not prepared for this. The feminism with which I grew up had its own tacit teleology of progress. "We" were slowly moving from less equality to more equality, from more gendered and sexual violence to less gendered and sexual violence; rights were and would continue to be expanded, not contracted. This says more about the narrow privilege of my position than it does about global events, but it does raise urgent questions about the futures beyond such teleology. And it begs, once again, critical questions from critical theory and disciplines such as anthropology. In turning to the future, however, it is essential to be critical of the metropolitan, white, heteronormative worldviews that shape a good deal of futurism, particularly in its technophile promissory transhumanist versions. Who, in sum, gets to speculate and develop what future(s) (Imarisha and brown 2015; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015)?

Feminist epistemes have long demonstrated the tangible, materializing effects of discursive practices. Speculation arises as a practice of affirming and world-making that is – in turn – performative, supplementing and supplanting hegemonic, violent, racist, patriarchal, anthropocentric world-making discourses. Feminist speculation envisages "a different world and (implies) a challenge to taken-for-granted knowledges by way of situating them in specific historical, sociocultural, material and bodily contexts" (Åsberg et al. 2015). Speculation seeks to keep a door open to other possible futures. It is a critical gesture that aims to bring into being alternatives to that which is often presented as inevitable. Speculative feminist fiction brings worlds into being that are not centered on progress, war, megaprojects, conquest, or colonization but focus instead on collaboration, regeneration, and experiment with alternative sexual orders. In this sense, feminist philosopher of nature Émilie Hache argues, feminist science fiction is the narration of ways of being and seeing that have been denied, ridiculed, denigrated. She proposes that the very impetus of speculative feminism

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resides in the conviction that analysis and critique will change nothing if they remain trapped in the imaginaries of those who are being critiqued (Hache 2015).

Anthropology, at its best, reveals the differential naturalization of gender roles and societal norms around sexuality and reproduction via a critical reflection on the conceptual apparatus it brings to bear on the analysis of various others. In this chapter, I examine how a very peculiar anthropocentric understanding of gender and sexuality has been projected onto natural and social worlds, thinking alongside scholars who are meticulously questioning this projection, and writing alternatives.

The cyborg is no longer the radically futuristic creature it seemed when Haraway published the Cyborg Manifesto in the last millennia (1991). The power of this text to capture the imagination had much to do with the way it encapsulated widespread ideas about the constructed (for this was the idiom in the 1980s and 1990s) nature of gender by tapping into the zeitgeist of the Cold War, with its peculiar affect of cybernetics, futurism, possibility, and lingering nostalgia for nature. The cyborg was – and is – a frontier, a future-orientated horizon and a remarkably domestic, mundane fact of contemporary embodiment. It revealed the tentacular threads of witting and unwitting biohacking, and the growing dependence of post–Cold War Euroamerican life on plastic, microchips, increasingly mobile telecommunication devices, pharmaceuticals for life (Dumit 2012), fossil-fueled engines for transport, and an expansive array of aesthetic prosthetics that redefined the limits of norm and enhancement in unprecedented ways. As the decades slipped by, the Cyborg Manifesto was there to be taken up by generations of scholars uncovering and exploring the ramifying cyborgization of contemporary life, and its violent, unequal ramifications in the Global South. This *was* the Future. And now the discipline is asking again, what and whose futures (Valentine and Hassoun 2019)? In this chapter, I draw on feminist and queer speculative (science) fiction and Science and Technology Studies to argue for a renewed anthropological relationship to future(s).

Speaking to the emergence of diverse Afrofuturist imaginaries, Eshun (2003: 289) argues that power functions through the

> envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures. In the colonial era of the early to middle twentieth century, avantgardists from Walter Benjamin to Frantz Fanon revolted in the name of the future against a power structure that relied on control and representation of the historical archive. Today, the situation is reversed. The powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past.

Science fiction, he argues, is "a means through which to preprogram the present" by "engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present." Mainstream Hollywood-sanctioned versions of the

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future can be read as "product-placed visions." It thus becomes evident why it is so important to hack these visions.

"Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction. All organizing is science fiction," writes Walmidah Imarisha in the introduction to the feminist, women of color science-fiction anthology *Octavia's Brood* (Imarisha and brown 2015), which honors the legacy of Black science fiction writer Octavia Butler. Noting that the authors gathered in the anthology all come from communities marked by deep collective trauma, she invites them to think of themselves as "science fiction walking around on two legs. Our ancestors dreamed us up and then bent reality to create us" (5). *Octavia's Brood* offers up the term "visionary fiction" to refer to speculations that are concerned with displacing dominant narratives of power in view of building freer, fairer worlds, ones orientated toward justice: "We believe this space is vital for any process of decolonization, because the decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is: for it is where all other forms of decolonization are born. Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless."

Toward a Speculative Anthropology

Haraway's (2016) oft-cited formula "staying with the trouble" is explicitly poised against forms of futurity that would disrupt our capacity to be fully present. There is, she notes, a delicate balance to be struck between recognizing how serious the current situation is and "succumbing to abstract futurism and its affects of sublime despair and its politics of sublime indifference" (4). Haraway proposes the term *kainos* to help us unthink the linear ideology of time: "*Kainos* means now.. . . Nothing in *kainos* must mean conventional pasts, presents, or futures" (2):

> In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present. (1)

Historically speaking, anthropology has concerned itself with questions of tradition and projects of salvage ethnography. Only by the mid- to late twentieth century did the field start to problematize its own relationship to modernity and its teleology of progress. In her review essay on the anthropology of time, Nancy Munn noted that for the discipline "the future tends to be a displaced temporal topic, absent from its homeland in the past-

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present-future relation" (1992). Although anthropologists are attending to temporality more explicitly, the focus remains on what Munn called "long-term historical-mythic time." Yet past, present, and future are entangled in complex ways, and the emergent focus on futures runs the risk of further sedimenting the problematic truncations between these interwoven temporal frames. Indeed, as Fabian (2014) has noted, the very idea of the cultural construction of time infers that there is a real time and socially constructed experiences of this. What does anthropology look like without the assumption of progress? What notions of change and cultural production and transformation become available?

Rifkin (2017) addresses the double-bind within which Indigenous peoples are caught in relation to settler-time. On the one hand, they have been represented in anthropology as living in an ethnographic present that overshadows the violence of their existence in settler colonial time. On the other, insisting, as Fabian has done, on their coevalness (i.e., that they inhabit the same time as settler time) overlooks "the ways that the idea of a shared present is not a neutral designation but is, instead, defined by settler institutions, interests, and imperatives" (viii). Settling, through the legal imposition of particular relations to land such as allotment, inculcated temporal relations into "normative non-native life cycles," radically reorganizing Native existence (xi). Indigenous temporal orientations include a wide variety of experiences of time as an unfolding, rather than a container for events, such as the felt presence of ancestors, "affectively consequential memories of previous dispossession," ongoing material legacy of dispossession, knowledge acquired from enduring occupancy of homeland, attunement to animal and climatic periodicities, ceremonial periodicities, prophecy, or responsibilities to prior and future generations absent in settler time and developmentist logics of modernity (Rifkin 2017: 19).

As the discipline has mapped the failure of modernization projects, with its violent future-orientation toward a narrowly defined common good, it has had to reckon with the realization that – as Black and Indigenous scholars have long been arguing – the problem or crisis of the future was essentially a problem for the Global North, and was actually nothing new for the many who have been living in catastrophe for centuries (Krenak 2019). As Valentine and Hassoun (2019) put it in their article on "uncommon futures": "continuity and commonality are figured very differently for communities and peoples for whom the future's dislocations are not new and, indeed, whose futures have been denied precisely in the production of modern futurity" (252). Modern futurity was, they show, predicated on the violent imposition of commonality and humanity, two "tools of white, European epistemological and territorial colonialism" (245). Coupled with the idea that human and nonhuman beings could be alienated – that is, extracted from their lively entangled existences – the idea of progress heralded a particularly violent present.

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Unraveling Gender in Human and Nonhuman Sexualities

Queer and feminist STS literatures partake in making other futures possible through a radical deconstruction of the naturalization of existing, oppressive, heteropatriarchal forms of gender and sexuality. These literatures reveal in elaborate detail the meticulous fabrication of a system of gender and sexuality that was made to appear natural, to be a reflection of an unchanging, biologically grounded reality. Demonstrating this fabrication and deconstructing the systems of naturalization on which it depends – in their historical, political, economic, and sociological dimensions – reveals other ways of assembling gender and sexual relations, which are certainly desirable. The future is an open field of possibility, unhinged from any obligatory relationship to a purported natural order.

"Whale vaginas are an enigma" because cetacean researchers spend all their time measuring penises, ran a science news headline[1] in 2017 in the wake of a *PLOS One* publication on the topic of the discovery of an "unparalleled level of vaginal diversity within a mammalian order" (Orbach et al. 2017). This example illustrates in a humorous way the heavily gendered blinkers within which biological facts on sexuality and gender get constructed (for classic feminist STS work on this topic, see Martin 1991; Moore and Clarke 2001).

In *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, Paul B. Preciado argues that we cannot think the future of gender and sexuality outside the future of capitalism itself. They define gender as a "biotech industrial artifact" (2008), like the pill or oncomouse: "The technologies of gender, sex, sexuality, and race are . . . technologies of production of somatic fictions. Male and female are terms without empirical content beyond the technologies that produce them" (101). Heterosexuality, Preciado reminds us, has not always existed, and "is in the act of disappearing now" (123). They anticipate that "normative white heterosexuality will soon be one body aesthetic among many others, a retro reproductive style that various future generations will be able to denigrate or exalt" (126). The argument that they build alongside Butler's, Haraway's, and Foucault's analyses of the performative production of not just gender but sex is that gender does not exist or function outside the constant trafficking of "gender biocodes":

> Gender in the twenty-first century functions as an abstract mechanism for technical subjectification; it is spliced, cut, moved, cited, imitated, swallowed, injected, transplanted, digitized, copied, conceived of as design, bought, sold, modified, mortgaged, transferred, downloaded, enforced, translated, falsified, fabricated, swapped, dosed,

[1] Ryan Mandelbaum, "You Have No Idea How Mysterious Whale Vaginas Are," Gizmodo.com, March 31, 2017, www.gizmodo.co.uk/2017/04/you-have-no-idea-how-mysterious-whale-vaginas-are/ (accessed May 4, 2020).

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> administered, extracted, contracted, concealed, negated, renounced, betrayed.. . . It transmutes. (129)

The trafficking of gender and sexuality "biocodes" unfolds within a heavily contested field of practices, constrained and rendered available in highly stratified ways by legal regimes, marital forms, access to biotechnologies, and knowledges concerning their uses and diversions. Parisi's (2004, 2016) work provides an important corrective to the idea that this is "new," setting such splicings of gendered biocodes into the very *longue durée* of planetary existence. She reminds us that genetic engineering (or the recombination of genetic material between independent bodies) was invented nearly 4 million years ago, in the form of bacterial sex. Drawing on Margulis's work on endosymbiosis (the phenomenon whereby a single-celled organism, such as a bacterium, resides within another cell, in a mutually beneficial relationship) as a key vector of evolution, she notes that the rule of symbiotic life is "chance encounter, unforeseeable responses to unknowable conditions" (Parisi 2004). The force of this idea is to point to the potential of "intensive mutant matter" without assuming teleological progress toward novelty. Thinking how biotech changes our understandings of sexuality and sexual difference across scales of geobiological time and size (from the atomic to the multicellular), Parisi invites us to explore the autonomy of affective relations (such as queer orientations) from the biological or discursive organizations of sex and bodies (2016). Tracing the viral contagions between technology and biology, she argues that sexual difference needs to be uncoupled from "the bio-logic of organic sex" (289).

There is a remarkable diversity of sexual expression in the five kingdoms, much of which has been analyzed and understood through an essentially anthropocentric lens despite its radical defiance of the heteronormative humanist imagination (Hird 2006). Gender and sexuality among nonhuman beings has been understood through the lens of an imperative of biological reproduction, with rare exceptions among primates where nonreproductive sexuality is analyzed in terms of its social reproductive functions (Haraway 1989). Within the broader teleological economy of "evolution," animal (in particular, primate) sexuality figures rhetorically as "our" past, alongside "primitive" peoples' sexualities as reported on by the twentieth-century ethnological canon, with its evolutionary undertones of naturalized heterosexuality. Reflecting on the speculative "futures" of gender and sexuality necessarily invites a revisiting of this construct – speculative, as well – as it continues to be projected on the past.

Despite the exuberance that characterizes nonhuman sexualities, it is often still assumed in evolutionary biology that sexual reproduction is the apex of the evolutionary pyramid and the dominant mode of reproduction with asexual reproduction presented as an evolutionary dead-end. Turning to the biological sciences reveals that it is virtually impossible to think gender and sexuality outside (biological) reproduction. Reproduction seems

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to be the only teleological tale that contemporary Western humans know to tell. And within this, the history of biological science has projected unquestioned heterosexual assumptions onto the behaviors, attributes, characteristics, and desires of the nonhuman beings it observes. So perhaps a simple speculative gesture is to reiterate – this time in more explicitly multispecies and multibeing ways – the importance of differentiating sexualities from reproduction (narrowly defined as the meiotic re-production of skin-bound, genetic individuals). As Bateson noted, Darwinism focused on the individual as distinct from its environment – presuming one could conceptually distinguish the organism from its environment, as a result of which "We are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself" (Bateson 1972).

At stake here is finding new ways to story the tales some humans tell about themselves by reference to the myriad nonhuman beings they live among. This calls for not defining others through the highly situated categories that have been forged in the violent, appropriative regime of what Kim TallBear calls "settler sexuality." An exquisite example of this is given by Ebeling (2011) in her analysis of the bewildered response of scientists as they discovered the all-female Bdelloid parthenogenetic species of rotifers. Rotifers are hardy microscopic organisms that flourish in bodies of water, from puddles to ponds, and even on the surface of moss. Despite their distinct Otherness to humans (they are not primate, nor cute, nor fluffy), feminist Science and Technology Studies have pointed to the way their difference is continually rendered against a human norm and to the way (human) biologists project naturalized understandings of sex and gender onto the capacities and behaviors of nonhuman animals. Rotifers of the Bdelloidea class exhibit parthenogenetic reproduction and their population is understood to be composed entirely of "females," directly challenging assumptions concerning the ubiquitous presence of males as a natural given. Commenting on Ebling's analysis of early scientific discussions on this puzzling sexual anomaly, Åsberg notes: "From the vantage point of these men of science, the asexual reproduction of rotifers was a great curiosity.... Unable to believe their technology-enhanced eyes, they desperately searched for the hidden, yet taken-for-granted male" (Åsberg 2011). What happens, Åsberg asks, "to the concept of 'female' in an all-female species?" (319). As Ebling (2011) notes, biologists described Bdelloidea rotifers as an evolutionary scandal, for parthenogenesis is considered an evolutionary blind alley, and this species of Bdelloidea is thought to have existed for 30 million years. This, however, "implies that the problem is the Bdelloidea, rather than the theory" (310).

Feminist scholars have turned to a range of resources, from science fiction to cinema, from psychoanalysis to ethnography, to rethink difference outside the heteronormative constraints of liberal, heteropatriarchal linguistic formations. This all too brief incursion into feminist STS analyses of non-innocent biologies can serve as alternatives to "hegemonic human gender

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regimes" (Ebling 2011). How far can anthropologists extend their speculative imagination in the rethinking of difference beyond heteronormalized human modes of being in relation? What forms of being in relation and kinship can the discipline dare to envisage for its futures?

Binaries and Nonbinary Dualism

The future is, and needs to be, nonbinary. These are the stakes. Anthropology has a considerable responsibility in clarifying the record. Where anthropologists saw dualism, they often read it through the lens of the hierarchical binaries that structure "Western" society that the discipline continues to be conceptually and grammatically constrained by.

While Strathern is seldom read as a queer theorist within the field of anthropology, she brought about one of the earliest and most cogent onslaughts to the naturalized gendered assumptions that Melanesian anthropologists dragged into the field with them as they struggled to make sense of the systems of sexual differentiation they encountered through (Western) categorical oppositions such as man/woman, nature/culture, public/private (Strathern 1988).[2] She undertook the labor of unpacking the way that the categories of "male" and "female" function dichotomously and are tightly coupled with other foundational Western dichotomies such as nature/culture, with each pair of dichotomies reinforcing the other, hierarchically. Through *Gender of the Gift* and her later work on the impact of new reproductive technologies on Euroamerican ideas of kinship, she pursued this angle, always in close dialogue with Melanesian ethnography, illuminating the knowledge practices of one ideal-type locality (Euroamerica) through the other (Melanesia).

We thus find in Strathern's early work significant anthropologically grounded premises for the kinds of futures the discipline can and should be offering. Strathern provides a vital queering of Western gender and sexual conceptualizations from ethnography, in critical engagement with both the heteronormative and patriarchal traces embedded – historically – in anthropological theory and, simultaneously, in critical engagement with feminist assumptions that do not sufficiently take distance from the Western frames of reference within which they are articulated. In *Reproducing the Future*, Strathern (1992) probes the social, intellectual, and political context in which the emergence of the (then) new reproductive technologies – in particular, in-vitro fertilization and gamete donation – and accompanying speculations concerning the transformation seen to be heralded were discussed. She locates this explicitly in Thatcherite Britain

[2] A key exception lies in the volume *Queering Knowledge: Analytics, Devices and Investments after Marilyn Strathern*, edited by Paul Boyce, EJ Gonzalez-Polledo, and Silvia Posocco, which examines the analytical devices that Strathern's work offers "in respect to the queering properties and potentialities of ethnographic knowledge" (Boyce et al. 2020).

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and the rise of neoliberal ideologies of choice and improvement, exploring how policy debates, media attention, and shifting disciplinary trajectories inflected what was, effectively, being reproduced (31) by new reproductive technologies. What vision of the social, what understanding of the relationship between individual and social, what transformation of the dialectic between given and made, between male and female? And perhaps, most fundamentally, what did all this tell us, then, and now, about culture (as she refers to it here), social life, and relationality? At key points in *Reproducing the Future*, Strathern is partaking in a critical exchange with the deconstructionist and writing culture intellectual climate that the text is chronologically situated in, engaging this from Melanesia, so to speak:

> Unlike positivist discursive practice which assumes that something brought to the surface will stay there, and unlike such deconstructionism as assumes an infinite dissemination of reference, Melanesians work at hiding again what they have made known. For they make an assumption of particularism but not essentialism. When one reveals something one does not reveal its essence or secret: one reveals that it contains something else! You cannot look inside a person to discover the true person: you will instead find other (particular) persons. (74)

We can read Strathern as carving out here a future of sorts, for anthropology within critical theory (in discussion with deconstructionist and feminist colleagues) that does not betray Indigenous conceptualizations. This practice of anthropology is not predetermined by conceptual forms that reproduce entities as distinct from their relations or interactions.

In a similar vein, Indigenous linguist Anne Waters (2003) carefully differentiates binary systems of categorization (of the kind indigenous to Western scholarly practice) from nonbinary dualist systems where difference is expressed but without any hierarchizing principle. Waters notes, "Many American Indigenous nondiscreet notions of nonbinary, complementary dualist constructs of the cosmos have been diminished and obscured by colonization." What has been obscured, she powerfully argues, is the nonbinary syntax's emphasis on complementarity between the two constructs (i.e., male/female, mind/body, day/night). In the nonbinary systems that characterize Indigenous thought, unlike in binary systems, there are no clear boundary distinctions that could enable hierarchical value judgments. Rather, the constructs (male, female) are placed in relation to one another while being contained by the other. This is particularly true for Indigenous gender categories that are ontologically less clearly bounded, or at least not strictly bound by reference to the presence or absence of particular biological appendages.

An important horizon for the discipline is to continue to critically engage with the kinds of conceptualizations that make it impossible to think relationality and difference in nonhierarchical ways. Indigenous anthropologist and STS scholar Kim TallBear situates the current state- and church-sanctioned forms of compulsory monogamous marriage (whether

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heteronormative or homonormative) clearly within a settler-colonial frame, revealing how integral reproductive heterosexual marriage was to settler colonial nation-building (TallBear 2018). Engaging this as a historically sedimented system, TallBear evokes alter forms of relationality that resist clear-cut temporalities:

> Present-past-future: I resist a lineal, progressive representation of movement forward to something better, or movement back to something purer. I bring voices and practices into conversation from across what is called, in English, time. There are many lively conversationalists at my table – both embodied and no longer embodied. I lean in to hear them all in order to try and grasp ways of relating that Dakota people and other Indigenous peoples practiced historically.. . . Before settler-imposed monogamy, marriages helped to forge important Dakota kinship alliances but "divorce" for both men and women was possible. In addition, more than two genders were recognized, and there was an element of flexibility in gender identification. People we might call "genderqueer" today also entered into "traditional" Dakota marriages with partners who might be what we today consider "cisgendered." As I try to write this, I engage in essentially nonsensical conceptual time travel with categories that will lose their integrity if I try to teleport them back or forward in time. (153)

Writing from North America, TallBear reminds us that compulsory heteronormative monogamy is "intimately tied to settler-colonial ownership of property and Indigenous dispossession." She draws on Scott Morgensen's definition of settler sexuality as "A white national heteronormativity . . . that regulates Indigenous sexuality and gender by supplanting them with the sexual modernity of settler subjects." This move is important as it calls attention to the tight coupling of specific legal ownership regimes and sanctioned marital forms, through which wealth and property circulates within state-organized family configurations. This effectively couples intimate sexual relationships, the reproduction of the population to state-sanctioned structures of wealth distribution, ownership, and domestic arrangements. Writing as she does from the perspective of the Indigenous kinship systems and collective property arrangements that were brutally displaced by settler-colonial familial relations, TallBear reveals how compulsory heterosexual monogamy served explicitly as a tool for the appropriation of collectively held land, and social relationships with both human and nonhuman beings and landscapes. She notes that there is no good English terminology for how Indigenous people lived in extended relation, beyond the commonly accepted kinship terminology that anthropologists have developed and favored, and beyond the categories that the English language idea of relationship itself allows. TallBear is asking that we turn to Indigenous kin relations that can provoke us to be in better relationship (both human

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and nonhuman) by inviting renewed conceptualization of mutual obligations and what it means to be in good relation to the beings around us.

This resonates with the work of Anishinaabe/Métis ecologist Melissa Nelson (2017), who in *Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literature* explores Indigenous storying of interspecies relationality. The lore she examines consists of "pansexual stories that outline crucial interspecies agreements and a trans-human concept of nationhood," she argues. She opens her analysis with a deeply moving and poetic account of the kind of intimacy that one can weave with the landscape;

> getting aroused by the splash of ocean waves on granite rock . . .
> intoxicated by the incessant power of a waterfall, caressed by the warm wind on top of a desert mountain, or feeling a little sleazy by the penetrating clarity, color, and twinkle of the star Sirius. All of these things arouse deep feelings in me still. They stimulate my senses and awaken a desire to be intimate, to be fully alive. These eco-erotic moments make me feel connected to something outside and distant yet connected to my human skin. They remind me that I am a semipermeable membrane and that life is filled with fluid attractions and intimate encounters, if we only allow ourselves to feel and experience them. In the face of such sensuous ecological encounters, both ordinary and spectacular, I step outside the sense of myself as a contained being. I am no longer a solid centre but part of an unending field of entwined energies. (230)

This queer and transspecies pansexuality has a deeply imaginative dimension. At stake for Nelson, if I read her correctly, is the fact that we understand these stories and their wisdom not just as metaphors that feed the cognitive brain, or provide a mental map for being in relation, but actually as imaginal practices that speak directly to our "animal bodies and senses [which] can be aroused and stimulated in erotic ways by other-than-human beings . . . Reawakening all of our senses, including the metaphoric mind but especially our kinesthetic, visceral sense, helps us remember our primal intimacy with, and fluency in, the languages of the more-than-human world" (255). On this depends the capacity for humans to engender new forms of "reciprocal coexistence" (255).

The Chronobiopolitics of Population

Feminist STS scholars Clarke and Haraway (2018) published a short pamphlet-like book called *Making Kin Not Population* that argues for a multispecies reproductive justice that takes on the vexed question of the relationship between feminisms and pro- and anti-natalisms. They express a concern with the silence (30) of some feminists who refuse to critically engage with the notion of there being a "population problem," given that this question is historically linked to abusive neo-Malthusian practices that have

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disproportionately targeted Black and Indigenous women. In her response to the critique that the book was met with, Haraway states:

> I have little sympathy for what I experience as a taboo in progressive thinking, including feminist, antiracist, decolonial, reproductive thinking, which seems to hold that practically any topic or category can be brought into intersectional work on generations and reproduction *except* counting increasing and decreasing human numbers, no matter how nuanced, situated, and attentive to violence. I want my outrageously simplified sketch to provoke uncomfortable, but comfortable enough, discussion.
>
> *(Strathern et al. 2019: 169–70)*

This is truly a tall order. What is comfortable enough? And for whom? (See Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015). Clarke and Haraway argue that feminism needs to take a stance on the problem of "population" for planetary sustainability. Feminists have, they argue, simply shied away from the question because they were too busy fighting the patriarchal ideology of anti-natalism that would rob women of their reproductive autonomy. But, they would argue, it is capitalism and colonialism – and their chrono-hetero-normative versions of gender and sexuality – that have made reproduction (in its current excess) compulsory such that other forms of relationality (kin-making) have been ignored as biogenetic reproductive kinship has prevailed. The call then is to free kinship from these biogenetic and reproductive imperatives. While important, this call seems strangely blind to the meticulous deconstruction of heteronormative kinship that Indigenous or Black scholars, thinkers, and writers have long undertaken (Bulter 2000, 2007; Imarisha and brown 2015; Kimmerer 2014; TallBear 2018; Thomas 2004). And for many reading this text from the Global South or with a decolonial sensitivity, it is disturbing that such an idea be so tightly coupled to the idea that there are currently "too many" humans on earth.

In her potent rebuttal published alongside the call to "Make Kin Not Population," Murphy (2018) tackles the problem through a scrupulous deconstruction of the notion of "population," a highly charged concept, evoking dystopic and apocalyptic futurisms: "In this moment of intensifying environmental violence, human density is attractive as a managerial policy problem and container for worry because it points the finger at preventing future human life without requiring the reordering of capitalism, colonialism, the nation-state, or heteropatriarchy as world orders" (2018). Murphy's brilliant essay reminds us that reproduction was never just about the babies, but always about

> struggles over what more-than-life relations might persist into the future for collectivities . . . a distributed reproductive politics is not about birth rates or human numbers. It is about which kinship, supports, structures, and beings get to have a future and which are destroyed. A distributed reproduction is not about babies in particular

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> (neither is it against them); instead its ambit extends into air, water, land, and a mesh of life forms into the multigenerational future. It is not merely about how bodies reproduce, it is about how life supports are replenished, cared for, and created.. . . I am against population and for a politics of differently distributed futures. #DifferentFutures. (110–11)

Many concerns are knotted in the argument that Clarke and Haraway put forward: concerns with rethinking kinship beyond naturalized biogenetic reproduction to legitimate and support "nonbiological kinfulness" (Strathern et al. 2019), concerns with environmental justice, and concerns with nonwhite experiences and framings of such questions. As Murphy notes in the book forum: "From an Indigenous decolonial perspective, human population is the quintessential frame of the colonial state" (Strathern et al. 2019). What can we make of this clearly future-orientated call to "Make Kin Not Population" then? In her review of the book, Strathern proposes that we move beyond "possessive procreation" by attending further to "kinning":

> In the spirit with which the contributors talk of reproductive justice, perhaps one should divest kinship of some of the sentiment it carries in English. Sure, we need templates for relationality. But this new kinship must be resilient enough to bear whatever compassion and responsibility and love require, while itself being indifferent to circumscription in such terms. It needs to be depersonalized while still being able to carry interpersonal relations, no more requiring affirmation through prescriptive sentiment than any structural necessity.
>
> *(Strathern et al. 2019: 161)*

The concern that Strathern articulates here might fruitfully be linked to the question of how coevalness reproduces straight time. In the necessarily cursory overview of a complex debate that follows, I want to explore the temporal logics and futurisms implicit in the notions of reproduction and population as they relate to questions of epochal transitions (into the Anthropo-, Cthulhu-, Plantation-, Capital-, or Viral-ocenes). Indeed, as I have already intimated, heteronormative conceptions of reproduction function along deeply linear and often apocalyptic temporalities that "cannot conceive of copresence without incorporation" (Boelstorff 2007: 232).

Because the control of reproduction has been a central tactic for colonialism and the heteropatriarchy, this question, as it pertains to the queering of futures, is contentious. Reproductive practices that challenge heteropatriarchal norms and interests have been proscribed by national legal regimes, to violent effect for nonbinary families. Critically engaging with the idea that queer has "no future" (Edelman 2004), Ahmed proposes a queer politics of hope that is grounded in the cumulative making of new lines or orientations. In her genealogical reading of the concept, "orientation" indicates a

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movement to the future, but also leaves open the possibility of a change of course, of finding or making other paths (Ahmed 2006). Taking up the architectural term "desire lines" that is used to describe the unofficial paths marked into landscapes where people deviate from the planned routes set out for them, Ahmed calls attention to these marks left on the ground, which can generate alternative trajectories and remap the link between origin and future in unexpected ways. Interestingly, the future emerges in Preciado's text principally around the question of reproduction. They ask us to imagine a time when cis-females are administered testosterone on masse, becoming "future technomales" (Preciado 2008: 234), capable of "breeding" and giving birth:

> Let's take the example of two male bodies, a technomale that still has a vagina and uterus and a cis-male inseminating him by vaginal penetration using a biopenis possessing fertile spermatozoids (something that seems rarer and rarer in today's highly toxic ecology). Seen from the outside, this scene resembles the gay pornographic aesthetic of the twentieth century; but in reality, it goes beyond gay sex and heterosexual sex and points to a technosex future.. . . And this is the beginning of new perspectives regarding struggles and pharmacopornographic resignifications. (235)

Nostalgically reminiscing the conversations with their deceased HIV+ lover, they write: "You and I, who are looking ahead to the future monster. We talk about synthetic reproduction. You say that it shouldn't be called reproduction but synthetic production – the fabrication of an entirely new species" (240). Through this discussion, Preciado is provocatively reminding their reader that reproduction is always already technically assisted and sociopolitically sanctioned in ways that naturalize heterosexual "breeding."

In his analysis of "straight time" Boelstorff (2007) explores the consequential limitations of queering time given that nonwhite heteronormative experiences are often reckoned or analytically situated within heteronormative temporalities that assume (or do not fully question) the assumption that time is linear (229). The future anterior orientation of straight time is "fundamentally linked to a unidirectional, straight framework that is complex in that it can burrow both backward and forward – but not laterally, in a circle, up or down. Its complexity thus meets its limit within its linear trajectory: leaving that trajectory is not a thinkable option" (231). Boelstorff's analysis, read alongside Preciado's, reveals something of the temporal logic that reinforces and enlivens the naturalization of reproduction. Dwelling on the impossibility for straight time to give way to other trajectories or orientations, Boelstorff notes that the qualities of straight time make it unimaginable to be outside it. This echoes with what Valentine and Hassoun (2019) refer to as the Munn paradox, namely, that any account of time creates something that takes the form of time.

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Haraway's initial articulation of staying with the trouble of "population" proposes no hopeful relationship to the future, but invites a collective "we" to stay present even in the most uncomfortable of discussions. For many of "us" reading her with explicitly racist Latin American biopolitical histories in mind, Haraway's plea against population came as a shock. I read the book in which she laid out this argument simultaneously with press articles on the assassination of Black feminist human rights advocate and Rio de Janeiro city councilor Marielle Franco. Franco fought (and paid with her life) the necropolitical policing pact that renders Black and *favelado* lives expendable, excessive, too many. The timing of Haraway's antipopulation turn and the neoliberal authoritarianism sweeping the world sat very uncomfortably for me and many Latin American colleagues. And while I deeply appreciate the concern for environmental justice that such a turn heralds, the framing around "population" does not take sufficient distance from straight time logics. Allow me to illustrate by way of a rather lengthy citation from Haraway's response in the book forum published by *Feminist Studies*, which begins in a tellingly epochal manner:

> About five hundred years ago, the plantation system infected the Earth. This system is based on land seizure (coupled with expulsion, genocide, and repopulation), displaced and exploited labor (especially slavery), substitutions and displacements of human and nonhuman living beings, extraction of value in old and new forms, and production of revolutionary elites and systems of governance.. . . The plantation system has persisted and proliferated.. . . Generating immense but unsustainable and distorted wealth, the plantation system and its offspring are premised on expanding waste, including expendable human and nonhuman beings, lands, and waters without any more value to extract or repackage. This system did two things crucial to my plea for a different demography. First, as Anna Tsing suggested . . . the plantation system broke love as a force in ties to place. Care of crops, lands, waters, and so on, became an extracted practice releasing violent imbalances and exterminisms. Second, extraordinary efforts in the Plantationocene were and are made to break human and nonhuman beings' control of their own reproductive and generative forms, numbers, and densities. I don't think it would ever be possible to populate the earth with 7–11 billion human beings and their associated pathogens, exploited food animals, endless mining, ruined waters, species extinctions, and degraded crops without violently breaking the control by both individuals and Peoples, and especially women's control, of their own sexuality and generations, including numbers and kin practices.
>
> *(Strathern et al. 2019)*

Who can participate, comfortably, in Haraway's "plea for a different demography"? How does Haraway imagine bridging the expendability of life under the Plantationocene and under the "different demography" she is calling

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for? Beyond recognizing how treacherous the waters below such a bridge are, what is her road map? How does her "different demography" come into being? And how are feminists to imagine the futures of sexuality and gender in response to the neoliberal authoritarian regimes sweeping the globe that mark alter-bodies and alter-populations as expendable? In the wake of the Covid-19 epidemic, we have heard many overtly necropolitical analyses emerging from the Trump and Johnson administrations (recall the "many will unfortunately die" that accompanied their laissez-faire policies). It feels urgently important for the call for a "different demography" to explicitly – indeed meticulously – spell out how it differs from such biosecurity arbitrations. Is the discomfort Haraway suggests feminists are going to feel around the discussion she prompts of the same nature? Is to refuse this reading necessarily to take a humanist position, as she seems to be implying? In the various articulations of the position she is defending, Haraway gestures to Black and decolonial thought but does not seem to recognize, as Murphy points out, that the world is already ripe with alternative, sometimes long-standing, ways of making relations and being together "that have already withstood world-breaking forces of many kinds" (Murphy 2018). Such forms of being in the world are not captured by straight time logics, as this manifesto seems to be, with its epochal call to make the future with fewer of "us."

Conclusion

Concluding this "futures" chapter from the very peculiar moment of lockdown, in France, in the full swing of the Covid-19 pandemic, one thing is very clear to me: it is urgent not to indulge in grand, sweeping pronouncements about what will come "after." Of the myriad, diverse, dystopic, innocenting, eco-fascist futures that have been virulently articulated in the wake of the coronavirus, which will anthropology rescue or feed? Presaging the shift to authoritarianism (Agamben 2020) or heralding eco-utopias can be read as modes of being coeval with futurism. Now is already after and everything is already here. We need to resist the grand, explicative gestures characteristic of patriarchal colonizing logics and authoritarian autocratic technological solutions. The future is the capacity to live, indeed thrive and regenerate through the heinous violence that has marked, and continues to mark, the world, beyond bare-bones survival. In the words of Alondra Nelson, gesturing to the future should not be an uncritical embrace of the past nor a singular conception of what is impeding it. Instead, the future is "ours for the imagining" (2000). In the introduction to the anthology of Black science fiction *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones*, Thomas (2004) compares speculative fiction to divination or prophecy, pointing to how these activities share a desire to alter one's path, to understand how things came to be as they are. Prophecy, like speculation, seeks to "gaze into the

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future in order to anticipate developments," to expose injustice, and to heal. This points to a relationship to future-making that is open-ended and regenerative.

What matters perhaps is less which concepts can displace other concepts and more what lies beyond the problematic of conceptualization (Strathern 2005). This offers a horizon outside the heteronormative, state-sanctioned categories for existing in relation, and for circumscribing self-hood. Note that our grammars entrap us in interesting ways, for to forgo a straight time logic, one is bound to a spatial one ("horizon") itself not entirely free of temporal notions of advancing frontiers and progress. Feminism provides an embodied way of knowing and being in the world that keeps feminist claims of immanence situated (Åsberg et al. 2015). In this view, presence to embodied experience may be the way through and out, not to the future, but to something else. The very possibility of such presence, what it can or cannot encompass, is deeply shaped by the categorical arrangements of the world within which we experience. TallBear (2018) invites us to perform a thought-experiment and resist categorizing relationships as "sexual":

> Can such disaggregation help us decolonize the ways in which we engage other bodies intimately – whether those are human bodies, bodies of water or land, the bodies of other living beings, and the vitality of our ancestors and other beings no longer or not yet embodied? By focusing on actual states of relation – on being in good relation-with, making kin – and with less monitoring and regulation of categories, might that spur more just interactions? (161)

Melissa Nelson's "Getting Dirty" mobilizes the notion of regeneration against that of reproduction, as an eco-erotic "coevolutionary pansexual adaptation" that brings us into deep kinship with the land and its myriad beings. Regeneration, she notes, is necessary not just for our "biological species, but also for our imaginative and spiritual capacities to be in intimate relationship with the more-than-human world on which we are completely dependent for life" (Nelson 2017: 232). Nurturing the imaginal dimension of regeneration in a world so meticulously desacralized, expropriated, enclosed, and mechanicized is a critical political task.

In view of eschewing the false choice between utopian or dystopian futures – a choice held hostage by straight time logics – I propose to close with some reflections from Afro-American lesbian poet Audre Lorde. Famously laying bare the fact that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, Lorde (1981) writes, "Within the interdependence of mutual (non-dominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being" (99). Acknowledging difference, for anthropologists, means recognizing our coevalness in the systems of colonization, even

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as we hybridize Native thought in our decolonial moves (Tuck and Yang 2012). Such "settler moves to innocence" run the risk of emptying decolonization of its substance, which is to relinquish stolen land. Acknowledging difference means asking: Who is being removed from the future? Who is given a place in the future, and how? How does the ethnographic work we do tackle the physical and symbolic removal of entire peoples from the future? What future does the work we do, as anthropologists, perpetuate or make possible? In a powerful text titled *Poetry Is Not a Luxury*, Lorde (1984) warns of the dangers of relying solely upon "*ideas* to make us free" (emphasis added). Ideas (such as those that anthropology traffics in) have been upheld as the only valid source of knowledge, at the expense of feelings and experience. For Lorde, poetry is the fusion of feelings that have been honestly explored and made known to oneself with ideas: "The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us – the poet – whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom" (Lorde 1984: 37). She warns that there are "no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us" but only old and forgotten ones or new combinations, extrapolations or recognitions "from within ourselves along with the renewed courage to try them out" (Lorde 1984: 39).

Where have we not yet dared to feel?

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