QUEER FUTURITY AND TOXIC TEMPORALITIES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My research aims to reconcile the gap between the futures queer theory has imagined and the futures of climate crisis. The antisocial thesis debate in queer theory represents a body of work that has grappled with temporality and futurity. Within the antisocial debate, some theorists argue that queerness and futurity are intimately linked, while others argue that queerness demands a refusal of futurity. However, in neglecting to account for the conditions of the Anthropocene, or the geological epoch that recognizes the irreparable impact of humans on the planet, none of these theories address the futures we actually face. In this project, I read concepts from the antisocial debate through the lens of the Anthropocene. In so doing, I theorize queer futurity to account for threats of climate change and pollution.

This project serves as an intervention into queer theory via the temporal. In my first chapter, I consider Lee Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism alongside the work of youth environmental activists. I analyze the hypothetical visions of these activists to argue that they offer articulations of future reproduction that do not uphold racialized heteronormativity. In my second chapter, I read José Esteban Muñoz's concepts of queer futurity and queer utopia through the lens of Anthropocene oceans. I do so to demonstrate how the conditions of the Anthropocene delimit theories of queer futurity, while I argue that we might still long for future queer utopias. In my third chapter, I return to Alison Kafer's idea of crip time to theorize the imbrication of queer and crip futurity. I examine Sins Invalid's performance *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos* as a metaphor for theories of queer-crip futurity and survival in the Anthropocene. Together, my chapters demonstrate how the Anthropocene has reconfigured notions of temporality and futurity. I argue for a commitment to both theorizing and enacting queer futurity despite the bleakness of the Anthropocene.

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INTRODUCTION

Queer Climate Futures: Local Inspirations, Global Implications

This project theorizes queer futurity to account for environmental conditions of climate change and pollution. In many ways, it has grown out of the setting of my queer childhood along the Atlantic coast in Virginia Beach. During my youth, water remained my constant companion. I spent most of my time trail running along inland waterways and swimming in the Atlantic, where encounters with dolphins were a near-daily occurrence. Though I moved away almost a decade ago, I still feel a sense of nostalgic attachment to my home along the coast. Yet, I experience this nostalgia anachronistically—I find myself not only longing for the home of my past, but also anticipatorily mourning the Virginia Beach of the future.

By 2100, it is possible that Virginia Beach will be nearly uninhabitable. A recent report published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts that sea level in the contiguous United States will rise approximately 2 to 7.2 feet by 2100 relative to sea levels in 2000.[1] One factor contributing to this range is the "uncertainty in future emissions pathways," as it is unclear if governments and corporations will take sufficient action to mitigate climate change.[2] However, another reason for this range is the geographic variability of sea level rise. While melting glaciers will cause sea levels to rise globally, geological differences will cause some areas to experience greater impacts than others. The mid-Atlantic region in general and Hampton Roads in particular—of which Virginia Beach is a part—are expected to be especially

[1] William V. Sweet et al., *Global and Regional Sea Level Rise Scenarios for the United States: Updated Mean Projections and Extreme Water Level Probabilities Along U.S. Coastlines* (Silver Spring, MD: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2022), 61.
[2] Sweet et al., *Global and Regional Sea Level Rise*, 61.

hard-hit.[3] Given this data, an article in the local newspaper anticipates that many in Virginia Beach and the southeastern Virginia region will become "climate refugees" in the coming years.[4] The newspaper continues describing the near future for the region, quoting Lauren Landis from the Chesapeake Climate Action Network: "The effects of sea level rise cannot be overstated. It's *going to be* catastrophic, truly."[5] Landis's language, the local news reports, and the scientific predictions for the region are all oriented toward the future. This orientation discursively intertwines climate change and futurity, forecasting an increasingly bleak future in the era of climate crisis.

Many scholars across the sciences and humanities are using the framework of the Anthropocene to describe this era of climate crisis. The *Anthropocene* is an imperfect and contested term that names the irreparable impact of humans on the planet, encompassing climate change but also surpassing it to account for other human-generated environmental impacts like pollution. In the Anthropocene, the specter of catastrophic futures extends far beyond the local, broadly reshaping conceptualizations of futurity and temporality. I thus begin with the example of my hometown not because it is exceptional, but because the narrative about its projected future is commonplace for countless hometowns across the globe. While the degree of impact

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[3] Katherine Hafner, "Sea Levels, Rainfall and Temperatures Will Keep Rising in Virginia, NOAA Says in New Climate Projections," *Virginian-Pilot*, February 15, 2022, https://www.pilotonline.com/news/environment/vp-nw-noaa-climate-summary-20220215-u6xpgn3g4nb6xgp63w2sdhr74e-story.html.

[4] Em Holter and Maggie More, "Contaminated Water, Land Erosion, Climate Refugees: Historic Triangle, Tidewater Regions Could Feel the Secondary Effects of Coastal Sea Level Rises," *Virginian-Pilot*, June 11, 2021, https://www.pilotonline.com/tidewater-review/va-tr-sea-level-secondary-effects-0309-20210611-vv4e4hlebfe63ogl4o6nuzetzi-story.html. Orrin H. Pilkey and Keith C. Pilkey similarly predict a large number of climate refugees fleeing from coasts, as "There is no conceivable scenario by which we can stay near today's shoreline, with its beautiful sea view, as the sea level rises three feet or more by 2100. *Sea Level Rise: A Slow Tsunami on America's Shores* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 3-4.

[5] Holter and More, "Contaminated Water" (emphasis mine).

varies from location to location, an apocalyptic future seems to await many (or most) places on Earth. How many of us experience this sort of future nostalgia as we learn that our homes are threatened by sea level rise, wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, floods, and heat waves? How many of us experience not future nostalgia, but an ongoing, profound loss from climate disaster already arrived?

Crucially, the apocalypse of the Anthropocene is not *only* temporally deferred to the future. For many people, particularly Indigenous people, people of color, and people in the Global South, climate dystopia is now. For example, Potawatomi scholar and activist Kyle Whyte argues that Indigenous people bring a critical perspective to narratives about future climate crisis, having already survived the apocalypse of colonization. Drawing on the work of Candis Callison, he writes, "the hardships many nonIndigenous people dread most of the climate crisis are ones that Indigenous peoples have endured already due to different forms of colonialism: ecosystem collapse, species loss, economic crash, drastic relocation, and cultural disintegration."[6] Following Whyte, an Indigenous perspective recognizes the present as *already* post-apocalyptic. The seeming global climate apocalypse yet-to-come emerges from the settler colonial and racist environmental apocalypse already here. While I consider the intimacy between climate crisis and futurity, I understand climate futures as a continuation of, rather than an abrupt break from, the present.

Indeed, there *is* something distinct about our Anthropocene present and the futures it portends. Heather Davis and Zoe Todd consider the Anthropocene from a decolonial perspective, identifying what makes our present moment particular even as it is continuous with centuries of

[6] Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises," *E: Nature and Space* 1, nos. 1-2 (2018): 226.

violence against Indigenous and Black people. They write, "What is truly terrifying about the times we live in is not only the cyclical recurrence of climate change. It is not the fact that white people and people with power are now having to face what Indigenous peoples, Black people whose ancestors experienced the horrors of slavery, and others have faced for the past five hundred years—that could be considered some kind of perverted justice. But the scale of the destruction has increased exponentially, while our governance systems often work against efforts to sustain liveable climates and the abilities of people to adapt."[7] In this sense, the scope and scale of environmental destruction continues to grow at an alarming rate, but a continued investment in the systems that created the climate crisis in the first place actively counters survival. This paradox of our present signals an impending apocalypse at the scale of the planetary.

The planetary future feels increasingly bleak in our Anthropocene present. I, and I think many of us, affectively sense that global climate disaster is immanent. Despite this affective understanding about the future, queer theory has not fully grappled with Anthropocene conditions.[8] While many of us theorize from places that may soon be under water, on fire, or

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[7] Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (2017): 775.

[8] My reference to *planetary* apocalypse is reminiscent of Michael Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. This edited collection, published just as queer theory was beginning to cohere as such, lays out what a queer critique might do as a social theory and as a politics. Warner's titular reference to the planetary regards his close reading of an image, which he argues serves as a signal to hypothetical beings from other planets "that earth is not, regardless of what anyone says, a queer planet." Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxiii.

While Warner references the planetary in a different way than I do, one line from his Introduction stands out: "Being queer means fighting about these issues all the time, locally and piecemeal but always with consequences. It means being able, more or less articulately, to challenge the common understanding of what gender difference means, or what the state is for, or what 'health' entails, or what would define fairness, or *what a good relation to the planet's*

otherwise uninhabitable due to environmental disaster, queer theory has yet to reconcile with the way these conditions impact the future.

While the *queer* of *queer theory* intentionally resists easy definition, in this project I deploy queer theory as a framework for understanding normativity. I understand the affordances of queer theory as exceeding the sexual, instead offering a framework for analyzing power broadly. In this project, my queer theoretical approach emphasizes the way notions of normativity are imbedded into temporality and futurity. The concept of *queer temporality* describes understandings of time that contest the normative, and *queer futurity* takes up the future-oriented aspects of queer temporalities. Like *queer*, *queer futurity* refuses explicit definition. In this project, I deploy *queer futurity* as a temporal understanding of queerness itself, or the recognition that "Queerness is not yet here" and is always deferred to the future.[9] Queer futurity, then, is an affective practice that longs for and works to bring about future queer worlds. While this project is *about* queer futurity, the slipperiness of the concept means that this work is simultaneously a performative practice that *enacts* queer futurity. If this definition is perhaps necessarily vague, I intend for readers to come to an affective understanding of queer futurity through both my analysis of case studies and my own performative writing.

As the concepts of queer temporality and queer futurity demonstrate, queer theory has long been preoccupied with questions of time and the future.[10] In particular, the antisocial thesis

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environment would be." Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet*, xiii (emphasis mine). Though Warner proposed this affinity between queer theory and environmental concerns while the field was emerging, it was not until the early 2010s that queer theory actually began making an environmental turn, a timeline that I detail later in this Introduction.

[9] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 10th anniversary ed. (2009; New York: New York University Press, 2019), 1.

[10] See, for instance, Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Muñoz, *Cruising*

debate of the late 1990s and early 2000s describes an entire theoretical conversation with profound implications for futurity. While the theorists of this debate extensively theorize queer futurity, they make no mention of the environmental conditions that shape the futures we face in the Anthropocene.[11] Additionally, while queer theory in general is beginning to make an environmental turn, the imbrication of climate crisis and queer futurity remains undertheorized. Queer theory's approach to normativity and extensive theorization of temporality offer a rich archive for considering futurity in the Anthropocene. Thus, in this project, I ask: If the future in general carries a sense of doom, what does this mean for queer futures specifically? How might queer theories of futurity emerging from the antisocial debate reconcile with the material realities of climate crisis?

To explore these questions, in this project I theorize queer futurity through the lens of the Anthropocene. I bring an environmental humanities analytic to queer theory to articulate a conceptualization of queer futurity responsive to climate crisis. I engage environmental humanities strategies by bringing scholarly discourses about the Anthropocene and cultural and scientific texts that speak to environmental destruction into conversation with queer theoretical concepts from the antisocial thesis debate. Throughout this analysis, I move in and out of a disability studies perspective to also consider the points of contact between queer futures and crip futures in the Anthropocene.

Disability studies, like queer theory, has compellingly theorized time and the future. Broadly, the field of disability studies interrogates how normative notions about bodies (able-

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Utopia; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). I elaborate on this relationship between queer theory and futurity later in the Introduction.

[11] Edelman, *No Future*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*.

bodiedness) and minds (able-mindedness) combine (able-bodymindedness) to structure society and the ways that people move through and exist within it. In contrast to able-bodyminded normativity, the field values disabled and crip experiences, practices, knowledges, and lives. Through this valuation, disability studies offers a notion of crip temporality that resists normative temporality and makes possible alternative articulations of futurity. As I elaborate later in this Introduction, I incorporate disability studies at different points throughout this project to emphasize that queer futurity is never singularly about the issue of sexuality, as it instead reverberates intersectionally. I engage most fully with a disability studies framework in the final chapter to demonstrate that the stakes of theorizing futurity in the Anthropocene are not merely theoretical; instead, they intimately impact people's material existence.

The Anthropocene, queer theory, and disability studies are the three major gears I mobilize throughout this project. I bring these frameworks together because of what they have to say about time. That is, the Anthropocene is refiguring temporality, or posing a temporal problem about the future. The antisocial thesis debate in queer theory and disability studies offer robust theorizations of temporality in general and futurity in particular that can help us make sense of the temporal problem of the Anthropocene. While scholars have begun to think about the intersections of queer theory and the Anthropocene, they have rarely done so through the lens of temporality.[12] Additionally, while scholars have theorized the intersections of queer and crip

[12] See, for instance, Beth Berila, "Toxic Bodies? ACT UP's Disruption of the Heteronormative Landscape of the Nation," in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, ed. Rachel Stein, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 127-36; Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Neel Ahuja, "Intimate Atmospheres: Queer Theory in a Time of Extinctions," *GLQ* 21, nos. 2-3 (2015): 365-85; Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Nicole Seymour, *Bad*

temporality, they have not applied such intersections to the problem of the Anthropocene.[13] Thus, I bring these three often-separate discourses together through the common thread of temporality to ultimately theorize queer futurity and its points of contact with crip futurity via cultural texts that illuminate Anthropocene conditions. My overall intervention is into the field of queer theory and centrally about temporality: I argue that the environment must be seen as constitutive of queer futurity, and I posit that our current climatic landscape necessitates a renewed commitment to queer-crip futures.

The Anthropocene

As an epoch, the Anthropocene is shifting temporality, posing a problem for futurity. The Anthropocene unofficially names our current geological epoch to acknowledge the impact of humans on the planet. According to the International Commission on Stratigraphy, the scientific body with the sanctioned authority to delimit epochs, we still live in the Holocene, which has spanned the approximately 11,500 years since the retreat of the Paleolithic glaciers.[14] While the Holocene suggests that the defining geological feature of our era is glacial retreat, the Anthropocene suggests that it is the persistent impact of the human species. In 2000, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and limnologist Eugene Stoermer proposed the concept of the Anthropocene to supplement the Holocene. They pointed to numerous effects to justify this

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Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

As I elaborate in Chapter Two, as this project was in its final stages of revision Heather Davis published her book *Plastic Matter*. One chapter of her book does theorize queer futurity through the Anthropocene. While Davis and I turn to a similar archive within queer theory, she emphasizes plastic as a material, while I emphasize queer theory. Heather Davis, *Plastic Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

[13] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*; Alison Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021).

[14] International Commission on Stratigraphy (website), WordPress, accessed October 29, 2019, http://www.stratigraphy.org.

proposal: human population growth, methane emissions from cattle farming, urbanization, fossil fuel depletion, sulphur dioxide emissions from energy use, land surface exploitation, nitrogen fertilizer pollution, nitric oxide release from fossil fuel combustion, freshwater resource extraction, rainforest deforestation leading to species extinction, greenhouse gas concentration, toxic and ozone-depleting chemical release, wetland destruction, overfishing, and modification of freshwater geochemical cycles.[15] In a subsequent publication in 2002, Crutzen explicitly connected these phenomena with enduring geological impacts on the Earth such as "acid precipitation, photochemical 'smog,' and climate warming."[16] Combined, these effects and impacts indicate that humans have marked the Earth, leaving a geological imprint that may outlive the species. Recognizing our current epoch as the Anthropocene therefore emphasizes how the human species has deeply geologically altered the planet in a way that will endure across time.

Yet, the *anthropo-* (human) of *Anthropocene* risks blaming all of humanity for the actions of a few.[17] Indeed, Crutzen notes that while the Anthropocene is "in many ways human-dominated," geological changes "have largely been caused by only 25% of the world population."[18] The perspective of the Anthropocene thus elides the complexity of the social structures and groups that caused the epoch's geological impacts. In insisting that humans have

[15] Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000): 17.
[16] Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415 (January 2002): 23.
[17] Scholars have proposed a plethora of terms as alternatives to the *Anthropocene*. While language is undeniably important, I do not think that any of these alternatives resolve what is problematic in *Anthropocene*. Rather than delving into a debate about naming, I am more interested in interrogating the conditions that the epoch describes. For a useful overview of a few of these alternatives, see Steve Mentz, "The Neologismcene," *Arcade: Literature, the Humanities, and the World* (blog), accessed March 23, 2022, https://arcade.stanford.edu/blogs/neologismcene.
[18] Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," 23.

altered the planet, the Anthropocene operates at the level of the species and risks obscuring the subject behind the verb *altered*: white colonizers, slave holders, and their descendants were and are responsible for most of the destruction of the epoch, while Indigenous and Black people most often paid and pay the price of this toxic exposure. This attention to culpability reveals that while the consequences of the Anthropocene play out in the present, they originate in the past.

Tracing this genealogy of the Anthropocene, I understand the epoch as historically emerging out of structures of colonialism and slavery. To become a formalized geological unit of time, an epoch must have an origin story. In the geological sciences, this origin is called the Global boundary Stratosphere Section and Point (GSSP), or *golden spike*. The golden spike of the Anthropocene has been a major point of contention across both the sciences and the humanities, with scholars arguing for various origins primarily between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, many scientists date the Anthropocene to the 1950s and the spread of radionuclides from atomic bomb testing, while many humanists trace the origins to colonialism and slavery.[19] Notably, Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin assert that the golden spike of

[19] Ian Baucom, *History 4° Celsius* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 9-14; Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Davis and Todd, "On the Importance of a Date"; Will Steffen et al., *Global Change and the Earth System: A Planet Under Pressure, Executive Summary* (Stockholm, Sweden: IGBP Secretariat, 2004); Will Steffen et al., "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 1 (2015): 81-98; "Working Group on the 'Anthropocene,'" International Commission on Stratigraphy, WordPress, accessed September 15, 2022, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/; Meera Subramanian, "Anthropocene Now: Influential Panel Votes to Recognize Earth's New Epoch," *Nature*, May 21, 2019, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01641-5. Still other scholars, including Crutzen and Stoermer themselves, trace the origin to the invention of the steam engine. See, for instance, Crutzen and Stoermer, "The Anthropocene"; Colin N. Waters et al., *A Stratigraphical Basis for the Anthropocene?* (London: Geological Society, 2014), 1-21; Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 62-69.

the Anthropocene is 1610, when atmospheric carbon levels reached a significant low point as a result of the genocide of nearly 50 million Indigenous peoples in the Americas.[20] What is crucial about Lewis and Maslin's proposal is that it not only recognizes the enduring social violence of settler colonialism, but it also contends that evidence of this violence is embedded into the Earth's geological record. This understanding counters any notion of the *purely environmental*, emphasizing how social and environmental violence are inextricably intertwined. Further explicating what is at stake in the recognition of this colonial origin, Davis and Todd argue, "placing the golden spike at 1610, or from the beginning of the colonial period, names the problem of colonialism as responsible for contemporary environmental crisis."[21] This origin story thus acknowledges that our present environmental crisis is not new at all. Instead, it is a consequence of the colonial logics enacted in the imperialist past and reproduced in the settler present. Moreover, Davis and Todd link settler colonialism and slavery in the Anthropocene's origin, writing, "Colonialism, especially settler colonialism—which in the Americas simultaneously employed the twinned processes of dispossession and chattel slavery—was always about changing the land, transforming the earth itself, including the creatures, the plants, the soil composition and the atmosphere."[22] In the American context, settler colonialism and slavery intertwined to exploit both people and the land, constructing the planetary conditions of the Anthropocene. Further, settler colonialism and white supremacist racial logics *still do* intertwine to maintain these conditions. The Anthropocene was born out of and remains

[20] Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519 (2015): 175.
[21] Davis and Todd, "On the Importance of a Date," 763.
[22] Davis and Todd, "On the Importance of a Date," 770. See also Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*.

perpetuated by conditions of colonial and racial violence. In this sense, the Anthropocene is a geological manifestation of the violences of settler colonialism and slavery across time.

Recognizing the roots of the epoch in colonialism and slavery means that the planet has endured Anthropocene conditions for centuries, and yet, as I explain above, there simultaneously is something distinct about the conditions of our current moment. Dana Luciano pinpoints the paradox at the center of this temporal tension in a performative letter addressed to the Anthropocene, writing, "You promise to be two things at once: an objective description—the identification of a new geological force, the human species, emerging to demarcate a recognizable period in earth history—and a performative inspiration, the unleashing of an affective-political force, a 'wake up call for humanity.'"[23] She continues, claiming, "what's most compelling about you [is] not the part of you that's a demarcation, but the part that's an *intensification*. You don't just mark a boundary—you shift the mood, you impassion the discussion. You demand a change."[24] The Anthropocene as a scientific concept purports to objectively name a series of observations about geological changes on the planet. Yet, in grouping together these various changes under one rubric and documenting their rapid acceleration, the Anthropocene also identifies the human actions that threaten the entire human species, other non-human species, and the future of the planet itself. In identifying these actions and tracing their intensifying impacts, the Anthropocene urges humanity to stop its path toward self and planetary destruction. The Anthropocene serves as a temporal boundary that recognizes

[23] Dana Luciano, "The Anthropocene, ~~1945/1783/1610/~~1492-???? (or, I Wish I Knew How to Quit You)," in *Timelines of American Literature*, ed. Cody Marrs and Christopher Hager (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 147.
[24] Luciano, "The Anthropocene," 148 (emphasis in original).

the geological impact of humans on the planet, and by pointing to the intensification of these impacts, the epoch warns of an apocalyptic future.

In this project, I take up this second iteration of the Anthropocene—the way it acts as "an affective-political force"—to consider its ramifications for queer futurity. Despite the Anthropocene's shortcomings, it is useful for me as a framework because the way it functions as an intensification works to reshape conceptions of time. As I elaborate in Chapter Two, the Anthropocene simultaneously accelerates and elongates notions of time. Carolyn Fornoff, Patricia Eunji Kim, and Bethany Wiggin point, for instance, to the temporality of melting glaciers to explain the shifting timescales of the Anthropocene. An example of accelerating temporality, ice sheets that took millennia to form have abruptly begun to melt in what is the geological equivalent of the blink of an eye.[25] Conversely, fossil fuel emissions will persist in the atmosphere for long timescales, potentially altering the planet for centuries to come. Like the melting ice sheets, these fossil fuels took millennia to form. Yet, we consume them rapidly, for instance, in a few-hours-long flight, and they then endure in the atmosphere for elongated times. Timothy Morton explains these contradictory and difficult-to-fathom temporalities, writing, "Think about it: a geological time (vast, almost unthinkable), juxtaposed in one word with very specific, immediate things—1784 [the invention of the steam engine], soot, 1945, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, plutonium."[26] Similarly, Fornoff, Kim, and Wiggin describe these uncanny

[25] Carolyn Fornoff, Patricia Eunji Kim, and Bethany Wiggin, "Introduction: Environmental Humanities across Times, Disciplines, Research Practices," in *Timescales: Thinking Across Ecological Temporalities*, ed. Bethany Wiggin, Carolyn Fornoff, and Patricia Eunji Kim (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), vii.
[26] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 5.

temporalities as "a massive temporal collision."[27] At the heart of the Anthropocene, then, is a massive reordering of time.[28]

Luciano, still addressing the Anthropocene, similarly turns to the issue of time. She writes, "So maybe it's fair if critics treat you less as a period than as a problem in time. Or perhaps that's the point—all periods are (or should be understood as) problems in time: not self-evident facts about the past, but invitations to think about it in other ways."[29] Here, I want to twist her words a bit, starting from her contention to offer my own provocation: The Anthropocene is less a "problem in time" than a *problem about time*. It is an invitation to think not only the past differently, but also the present and the future. This project is a response to that invitation.

Returning to the Antisocial Thesis Debate in Queer Theory

Queer theoretical discourses of temporality offer a way of making sense of the problem about time that the Anthropocene poses. The central premise of this project is that the antisocial thesis debate in queer theory offers a crucial framework for understanding queer futurity in the Anthropocene. The antisocial thesis debate describes a strand of queer theory primarily from the late 1990s and early 2000s broadly concerned with the social, negativity, and futurity. While the antisocial debate offers implications for theorizing the social and queer negativity, I take up the debate as it informs conceptions of temporality and futurity. I attach the term *debate* to the *antisocial thesis* because I consider both proponents and opponents of the antisocial central to

[27] Fornoff, Kim, and Wiggin, "Introduction," vii.
[28] Despite the fact that temporal issues are central to the epoch, Anthropocene discourse has largely not engaged with queer theories of temporality. There is occasional overlap between Anthropocene discourse and other areas of queer inquiry, primarily through discussion of endocrine disruptive compounds, but, in general, scholarship on the Anthropocene has not addressed queer temporality.
[29] Luciano, "The Anthropocene," 151.

this subfield. In this section, I explain the antisocial debate to lay the foundation for my intervention about temporality.

On one side of the debate, antisocial theorists argue that queerness threatens the social order. Rather than countering right-wing hysteria that figures queer people as dangerous to the nuclear family and society, proponents advocate intentionally leveraging the negativity of queerness for antisocial, antirelational, and anticommunitarian ends.[30] Ultimately, Lee Edelman applies this negativity to temporality via psychoanalysis, suggesting that queer people should refuse the future because it always upholds the heteronormative reproductive structures of the social order.[31] Edelman's polarizing antisocial polemic advanced the thesis while it also inspired anti-antisocial perspectives.[32] Anti-antisocial theorists emphasize queer kinship, relationality, and futurity.[33] For example, José Esteban Muñoz deploys a queer of color critique to resist Edelman's linkage of negativity and futurity, arguing instead that queerness is always relational and future-oriented.[34] This side of the debate is more difficult to define, as there is no singular

[30] Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Edelman, *No Future*; J. Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[31] Edelman, *No Future*.
[32] José Esteban Muñoz, a primary opponent of the antisocial thesis I take up in this project, uses the phrase "anti-antirelational" to describe his analysis of queer relationality. Muñoz coins this term in reference to Fredric Jameson's "anti-antiutopianism." *Cruising Utopia*, 14. In characterizing this side of the debate as *anti-antisocial*, I realize that I risk re-centering the antisocial perspective (as if anti-antisocial perspectives are only reactions to the antisocial rather than productive on their own terms). However, given the proliferation of diverse perspectives arguing against the antisocial thesis on a number of different grounds, I use *anti-antisocial* for the sake of clarity.

Additionally, as this quote from Muñoz demonstrates, the antisocial thesis is sometimes referred to as the *antirelational thesis*. The *antirelational* refers synonymously to the *antisocial thesis*, but, as the terminology obviously reveals, it emphasizes the relational or communitarian implications of the premise.
[33] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Freeman, *Time Binds*.
[34] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

position opposed to the antisocial. If antisocial theorists embrace negativity fully, anti-antisocial theorists adopt negativity to varying degrees. This variation means that the debate is not neatly divided into antisocial and anti-antisocial perspectives, as many theorists qualify their engagements with negativity and futurity, venturing into the "dark side" of queer representation without advocating complete destruction of the social order or outright rejection of the future.[35] In the simplest terms, the antisocial debate is not characterized by the absolutely negative on one side and the absolutely positive on the other. More accurately, the debate is represented by the absolutely negative on one side and the partially negative on the other. In this sense, the antisocial debate is more of a spectrum than two dichotomous positions, and the spectrum represents a particular moment within queer theory. Further, the spectrum of negativity corresponds with temporal investments: the absolutely negative represents a refusal of the future, while the partially negative represents an embrace of the future. The implications of queer negativity are therefore ultimately about temporality and futurity. I focus on these temporal implications to contend that the antisocial moment from the field's past remains foundational for theorizing futurity in our Anthropocene present.

The Anthropocene undeniably arrived before the antisocial thesis, but climate was not a central analytic for humanistic inquiry during the debate's prime. As Nicole Seymour explains, there was a general disconnect between ecocriticism and queer theory until the publication of several books on queer ecologies beginning in 2010,[36] a timeline that coincides with the decline

[35] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

[36] Nicole Seymour, "Queer Ecologies and Queer Environmentalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, ed. Siobhan Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 110. Seymour notes that while a special issue of *UnderCurrents: Journal of Critical*

of the antisocial's heyday. Additionally, queer ecologies address intersections between queer studies and the environment broadly, sometimes encompassing Anthropocene conditions like climate crisis and sometimes not. Queer theory is still only beginning to grapple with climate crisis in general, much less its implications for queer futurity in particular. Given this context, queer theorists of the antisocial writing in the aughts make no mention of the Anthropocene, even though the climate crisis that we are currently experiencing was already happening when they were theorizing the antisocial.[37] Despite this climatic omission, the debate presciently anticipates cultural discourse about the Anthropocene circulating now. I contend that the absence of the climate crisis in the antisocial leaves the debate unfinished. Thus, I return to the antisocial to theorize how understandings of the Anthropocene inform queer theories of futurity. Discourses about the climate crisis help us understand the unresolved aspects of the antisocial debate. I argue that reading representations of our Anthropocene present through the lens of the antisocial critically influences conceptualizations of queer futurity in a moment of climate crisis, and these conceptualizations are crucial for imagining queer and queer-crip survival.

While returning to the antisocial debate in the 2020s may seem out-of-date, such anachronism is necessary for grappling with queer futurity in the Anthropocene. Just as the

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Environmental Studies on "Queer/Nature" appeared in 1994 and Greta Gaard published an article entitled "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism" in 1997, "it would take another fifteen-plus years for queer ecology to come of age." "Queer Ecologies and Queer Environmentalism," 110.

[37] One notable exception is Mel Chen, who in *Animacies* brings together queer and environmental analysis through the concept of toxicity. Chen claims, "queer theory is an apt home for the consideration of toxicity, for I believe the two—queerness and toxicity—have an affinity. They truck with negativity, marginality, and subject-object confusions; they have, arguably, an affective intensity; they challenge heteronormative understandings of intimacy." *Animacies*, 206. Chen's deployment of the negative here seeks to redefine notions of queer sociability and relationality, though unlike most proponents of queer negativity, Chen centrally considers race. Nevertheless, while Chen's cogent analysis of queer negativity focuses on the environment through toxicity and pollution, they do not consider climate.

Anthropocene counters linear notions of time, so too does my return to the antisocial represent a temporal maneuver that recognizes how conversations that might seem past still surface in the present to shape the future. The timeline of the antisocial thesis can be traced back to the latter half of the twentieth century, largely coinciding with the AIDS crisis, with the debate reaching its pinnacle around 2010. The inception of the antisocial is most often attributed to Leo Bersani in *Homos* in 1996 and, to a lesser extent, in "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in 1987. Other scholars suggest the thesis actually begins with Guy Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire* in 1972.[38] Regardless of whether Bersani or Hocquenghem originated the thesis, the perspective emerged out of white, cisgender, gay men's theoretical tradition at the end of the twentieth century. This theoretical tradition continued through the publication of Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* in 2004. The following year, demonstrating the provocative impact of Edelman's text, a panel on "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory" convened at the annual Modern Language Association conference. Moderated by Robert Caserio, the event brought together Edelman, Muñoz, Jack Halberstam, and Tim Dean. After the conference, in 2006, *PMLA* published brief accounts from Caserio and the panel participants in the "Conference Debates" forum, which extends conversation from especially controversial conference sessions.[39] Additionally, each of the panelists published books engaging with the antisocial within a few years of the conference (Edelman's *No Future* in 2004, Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* in 2005, Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* in 2009, Dean's *Unlimited Intimacy* in 2009, and

[38] Tim Dean, "The Antisocial Homosexual," in "Forum: Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," mod. Robert L. Caserio, *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 827. See also Tim Dean, "An Impossible Embrace: Queerness, Futurity, and the Death Drive," in *A Time for the Humanities: Futurity and the Limits of Autonomy* ed. James J. Bono, Tim Dean, and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 136.
[39] Robert L. Caserio at al., "Forum: Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 819-28.

Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* in 2011), creating what I consider the antisocial debate's heyday from 2004-2011.

The inclusion of Edelman, Muñoz, Halberstam, and Dean in the MLA panel, the circulation of their ideas to wider audiences through the *PMLA* forum, and the publication of their books within a few years of each other situates them as the primary theorists of the antisocial debate. Additionally, I position Alison Kafer, whose book *Feminist, Queer, Crip* was published in 2013, as a fundamental figure in the debate. While Kafer's work is perhaps most readily recognized within disability studies, I consider her a foundational theorist of queer theory and the antisocial.

Within the debate, Edelman asserts an unadulterated antisocial approach that rejects futurity via psychoanalysis; Muñoz argues for an anti-antisocial perspective predicated on futurity through a queer of color critique; Halberstam promotes the negative but turns to a more diverse antisocial archive; Dean, though often misinterpreted, deploys an anti-antisocial psychoanalytic method that expands conceptions of queer relationality; and Kafer integrates disability studies to articulate a queer and crip desire for futurity.[40] Although these theorists all engage the antisocial through their arguments either for or against queer negativity, in this project I focus on Edelman's *No Future*, Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, and Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip* because these texts directly and specifically theorize futurity. Though I contend that antisocial debate is a spectrum, *No Future* and *Cruising Utopia* represent opposing perspectives: while for Edelman there is no future for queers, for Muñoz queerness is located only in the future. Moreover, Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* located close on the antisocial spectrum to

[40] Caserio at al., "Forum: Conference Debates"; Edelman, *No Future*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*; Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy*.

Cruising Utopia, suggests that imagining futures that include disability is both a necessary and queer move. In returning to these works through the analytic of the Anthropocene, I reassert the value of queer futurity and seek to theorize an anti-antisocial thesis that addresses the futures we actually face.

In *No Future*, Edelman's main contention, which he makes via psychoanalysis, is that queerness and futurity are diametrically opposed. This contention is tied to Edelman's definition of queerness itself. He declares, "And so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively—to insist that the future stop here."[41] Here, Edelman explicitly ties queer negativity to temporality, defining queerness through a refusal of the future. He makes this argument through a psychoanalytic critique of reproductive futurism, which explains the way that the political is always articulated through the figure of the Child. As I elaborate in Chapter One, reproductive futurism names the way that political appeals to the future structurally rely on heteronormative reproduction. Because queer sexuality refuses to reproduce this dominant logic (by literally refusing to reproduce), queers threaten the social order and its investment in futurity. For Edelman, this threat to the social order represents queer negativity, which emerges from the death drive. He writes, "the death drive names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability."[42] Edelman intimately and antisocially links queerness, negativity, and anti-futurity. In short, his polemic leverages negativity to advocate a refusal of the future—an argument that is centrally temporal. Indeed, his provocative rejection of futurity has generated

[41] Edelman, *No Future*, 31.
[42] Edelman, *No Future*, 9.

such widespread engagement from both supporters and detractors that Edelman has become nearly synonymous with the antisocial thesis.[43]

In contrast to Edelman, Muñoz deploys queer of color critique to argue that queerness is always located in the future. Though he is a generous reader who admits to feeling the "seductive sway" of some aspects of Edelman's rejection of reproductive futurism, Muñoz nevertheless contends that queerness must involve a temporal orientation toward futurity.[44] In his Introduction, Muñoz explicitly situates the central argument of *Cruising Utopia* as a response to the antisocial thesis and Edelman. He writes, "To some extent *Cruising Utopia* is a polemic that argues against anti-antirelationality by insisting on the essential need for an understanding of queerness as collectivity. I respond to Edelman's assertion that the future is the province of the child and therefore not for the queers by arguing that queerness is primarily about futurity and hope. That is to say that queerness is always in the horizon."[45] Thus, Muñoz and Edelman deploy opposite understandings of *queerness*, though both of these understandings are temporal—Muñoz defines queerness as always in the future, and Edelman defines queerness as always opposed to the future. The reason Muñoz remains insistent about "understanding queerness as collectivity" is because he contends that the antisocial thesis, specifically as formulated by Edelman, replaces the supposed queer theoretical idealization of community with the idealization

[43] As of December 10, 2021, Google Scholar metrics show that *No Future* has been cited 6,199 times. In contrast, these metrics state that *Homos* has been cited 1,670 times and *Homosexual Desire* has been cited 855 times (though *Homosexual Desire* has undoubtably been cited numerous times in the original French—citations not accounted for in this data). These metrics give a rough snapshot of the scholarly engagement with these texts, demonstrating the most widespread citation of Edelman's articulation of the antisocial.
[44] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11.
[45] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11. Muñoz makes this point twice, as a page earlier he similarly claims, "To some degree this book's argument is a response to the polemic of the 'antirelation.'" *Cruising Utopia*, 10.

of negativity and thus dismisses any sort of difference besides sexuality. Muñoz puts this point most bluntly in his *PMLA* discussion, writing, "It has been clear to many of us, for quite a while now, that the antirelational in queer studies was the gay white man's last stand."[46] In this sense, Muñoz's attachment to "futurity and hope" is not incidental but is made necessary by the antisocial turn to negativity, a turn that assumes a privileged white gay subject.

As Muñoz's incisive critique reveals, the stakes of the debate about futurity in the antisocial thesis primarily concern how queer theory does or should account for marginalized positionalities within power beyond the singular axis of sexuality. While Edelman defines the "queers" to whom he addresses his antisocial stance as "all so stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates," it is clear from both Edelman's citational practices and his argument itself that he more nearly means "all [white people] so stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates."[47] Here my criticism, which is a reiteration and reframing of Muñoz's criticism, is not about Edelman's own whiteness, as he attempts to dismiss critiques about his positionality as inherently identitarian. Instead, it is about the way whiteness floats—unspoken and unnamed—throughout the citational practices and examples that Edelman uses, creating a theoretical stance that purports to be universal but is actually exclusively white. Muñoz highlights the unnamed whiteness in *No Future* to question which subjects are able to refuse the future in the first place. Though Edelman claims that he is examining the Child as a

[46] José Esteban Muñoz, "Thinking beyond Antirelationality and Antiutopianism in Queer Critique," in "Forum: Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," mod. Robert L. Caserio, *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 825. Interestingly, while nearly the entirety of what Muñoz published in the *PMLA* forum made it into *Cruising Utopia* almost word-for-word, this sentence was omitted in the book.

[47] Edelman, *No Future*, 16. In Chapter One, I complicate this idea by discussing how heteronormativity is always already a racialized concept. Edelman, in contrast, deploys *heteronormativity* along the singular axis of the sexual.

figure rather than theorizing about any actual children, Muñoz argues that Edelman's "framing nonetheless accepts and reproduces this monolithic figure of the child that is indeed always already white."[48] The figure of the Child who is imagined to be the beneficiary of the future and the subject of politics is always imagined as the privileged white child. The "always already" whiteness that Muñoz points to is crucial because as Muñoz reminds readers, "The future is only the stuff of some kids. Racialized kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity."[49] He elaborates, "In the same way all queers are not the stealth-universal-white-gay-man invoked in queer antirelational formulations, all children are not the privileged white babies to whom contemporary society caters."[50] In other words, while Edelman presents the figure of the Child as an abstract, universal figure, the way this figure operates in the cultural imaginary cannot be divorced from the way it is located within normative power structures of whiteness, cisheterosexuality, and class.

Here, Muñoz's critique of Edelman's figure of the Child emphasizes a difference in methodological approaches. Deploying a queer of color critique allows Muñoz to examine the material realities of race and class that Edelman's psychoanalytic critique obscures. A queer of color critique thus emphasizes what a psychoanalytic critique overlooks: figurative evocations of the Child as a figure are not outside of the power structures that impact the lives of literal children. The white, straight, middle-class child—in both its figurative and literal forms—is the Child who inherits the future.

It is at this point about whose futures matter where Kafer enters the antisocial debate in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Kafer engages a crip critique to argue that Edelman's figure of the Child

[48] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 95.
[49] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 95.
[50] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 94.

is not only always already white but also always already able-bodyminded. Given this inherent whiteness and able-bodymindedness, Kafer argues for queer-crip futurity. Kafer first details how in some aspects, a crip critique might seem to align with Edelman's argument: the future as evoked through the figure of the Child often reinforces able-bodyminded heteronormativity, a politics that is based exclusively on the future can result in "an ethics of endless deferral," and the relationship between the history of eugenics and the conception of reproductive futurism ties together fears about both race and disability.[51] In these respects, Kafer claims, it is possible to see how a politics of futurity has harmed people with disabilities and how refusing the future might be a viable crip stance. Yet, in spite of these resonances, Kafer resolutely argues against Edelman's refusal of the future and instead invests in crip futurity. She writes, "To put it bluntly, I, *we*, need to imagine crip futures because disabled people are continually being written out of the future, rendered as the sign of the future no one wants."[52] When disabled people are imagined as not having a future, or, worse, as symbols of undesirable futures, working to build crip futures is crucial. Kafer elaborates, "these very histories [where disability is imagined as a threat to the future] ultimately make such a refusal [of the future] untenable, and it is here that I part ways with Edelman. I do not think the only response to no future—or, rather, to futures that depend upon no futures for crips—is a refusal of the future altogether. Indeed, 'fucking the future,' at least in Edelman's terms, takes on a different valence for those who are *not* supported in their desires to project themselves (and their children) into the future in the first place."[53] As Kafer emphasizes, refusing the future has different implications for people with different positionalities

[51] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 29-30.
[52] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 46.
[53] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 31.

within power. When one is not imagined as belonging in the future, insisting on futurity can be a radically queer move.

Thinking about people's positionalities within normative power structures aligns a crip critique with a queer of color critique. Methodologically, Kafer's crip critique builds on Muñoz's queer of color critique to further demonstrate the material realities that are left out of Edelman's purely psychoanalytic analysis. Both crip and queer of color critiques offer a sense of materiality that counters the theoretical abstraction of a purely psychoanalytic perspective. In other words, Kafer's crip critique and Muñoz's queer of color critique both approach power intersectionally, countering the false universalism of psychoanalysis. It is not that disability operates *like* race or vice versa, but that futurity as evoked by Edelman's iteration of psychoanalysis is structurally tied to both able-bodymindedness and whiteness.[54] Indeed, Kafer, drawing on Muñoz, explains how the whiteness of reproductive futurism always relies on an implicit evocation of able-bodymindedness: "Queer kids, kids of color, street kids—all of the kids cast out of reproductive futurism—have been and continue to be framed as sick, as pathological, as contagious."[55] She continues, "I offer these examples not to make the case that racism and classism are really ableism, or that what Muñoz is *really* talking about is disability, as if everything collapses into disability; rather, I want to insist that these categories are constituted through and by each other. The always already white Child is also always already healthy and nondisabled; disabled children are not part of this privileged imaginary except as the abject other."[56] In this sense, whiteness and ability co-constitute the unmarked Child of reproductive futurism. I detail this

[54] Of course, while I focus on race and ability in my reading, this structural critique could be extended to any sort of positionality marginalized by normative power structures.
[55] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* 32.
[56] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* 33 (emphasis in original).

point of contention with Edelman on one side and Muñoz and Kafer on the other to emphasize that while the "stealth-universal-white-gay-man" might be able to abstract the future purely to the level of the theoretical, the future has real, material, lived consequences for queer people of color, queer and two-spirit Indigenous people, queer women, queer disabled people, queer poor people, queer people in the Global South, and queer actual children. When accounting for climate crisis, theorizing the material consequences of the future becomes even more urgent. How we read, interpret, and deploy the antisocial *today* is centrally a political question about whose futures matter in a moment of climate crisis.

With this political question in mind, I return to the antisocial in the Anthropocene because I am motivated by hope and survival. I want to imagine how queerness might endure in generative futures despite the bleak planetary conditions we face. Anti-antisocial discourses about temporality and futurity help me locate hope and imagine survival in these bleak conditions. In particular, I contend that returning to Muñoz's concepts of queer futurity and queer utopia and Kafer's idea of queer-crip futurity can help us imagine futures otherwise in the Anthropocene. Additionally, Edelman's criticism of reproductive futurism, though it represents a myopic perspective, nevertheless offers a means of making sense of environmental rhetoric in our Anthropocene present. I turn to Edelman to, ironically, offer an articulation of queer futurity in the Anthropocene. Together, these antisocial texts offer a means of working through the Anthropocene problem about time to imagine queer futurity in climate crisis.

Queer-Crip Futurity: A Disability Studies Framework

Disability studies lends another perspective for working through the temporal problem of the Anthropocene and imagining futurity in climate crisis. Like queer theory, disability studies

interrogates normativity and offers a robust theorization of temporality and futurity.[57] Importantly, many of the temporal theorizations in disability studies emerge from engagement with the antisocial debate in queer theory. As this genealogy demonstrates, disability futures intersect with and inflect queer futures, and a queer-crip critique helps make sense of the futures we face in the Anthropocene.

While there are different models within disability studies for analyzing power and normativity, in this project I turn to the work of Kafer and deploy her political/relational model, which is particularly apt for considering the implications of climate crisis. Kafer explains, "In . . . the political/relational model, the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being."[58] While a medical model situates disability in

[57] For readers less familiar with disability studies, I offer an example of what such an analytic might entail: A disability studies perspective reveals how the recent United Nations COP26 climate summit, like many events, relied on and enforced able-bodymindedness, or normative notions that privilege particular bodies and minds. The conference was hosted in a building that required entrance via stairs, demonstrating how the event was intended for able-bodied people because attendees who use mobility aids were unable to access the space. Indeed, on the first day of the conference, Karine Elharrar, Israel's Energy Minister, announced that she was excluded from the day's events because they were inaccessible to wheelchair users. Here, a disability studies lens emphasizes that the problem is not located in individuals like Elharrar who use wheelchairs, but in a social and architectural structure that only accommodates able-bodied people. Additionally, disability studies makes clear that COP26 was not only *spatially* created for particular bodies and minds, but it was also *temporally* so. For example, the schedule for the conference presumed that delegates could think, focus, and participate in all-day back-to-back time blocks of events for two weeks (often after traveling from different time zones). Finally, these normative presumptions about space and time collide. The short, typically fifteen-minute break between sessions was assumed to be long enough for delegates to traverse across the conference grounds from one event to another, a spatial and temporal design that again relies on a normative pace of movement and thought. These design choices are neither natural nor neutral, and instead are constructed to privilege able-bodiedmindedness while simultaneously obscuring the fact that they do so. Thus, the COP26 example illustrates that a disability studies perspective understands disability and ability as political, or as imbued with power relations in space and time.

[58] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 6.

individuals, the political/relational model recognizes how structural design, social expectations, and people's experiences like pain and fatigue intertwine to construct disability. I turn to a disability studies perspective in general and Kafer's political/relational model in particular to consider how power intersectionally informs queer futurity in the Anthropocene. I resist conceptions of queer temporality that converge exclusively around the single issue of sexuality and instead understand queer futurity as intersecting with and being constituted by other temporalities like crip futurity, Afrofuturism, and Indigenous futurism. Queer temporalities are not equivalent to these other temporalities, but they collide in ways that crucially impact conceptualizations of the future. In this project, I turn specifically to crip futurity because of its close kinship with queer futurity.

Here, I, following Kafer, move between the language of *disability studies* and that of *crip temporality* and *crip futurity*.[59] *Crip*, a reclamation of the epithet, names a "contestatory" means of self-identification and theorization that expansively extends beyond identity politics.[60] *Crip* parallels *queer* in its slipperiness and political efficacy: if both *gay* and *disabled* name individual subject positions, both *queer* and *crip* speak to ways of living, thinking, and theorizing that exceed mere identification. *Queer* and *crip* are orientations that reclaim negativity to challenge the normativity of the social; they are frameworks one *does* or *deploys* rather than simply descriptors of what one *is*. Eli Clare explains this affinity between *queer* and *cripple*: "*Queer*,

[59] Kafer notes, "I move back and forth between naming this project one of 'feminist and queer disability studies' and one of 'crip theory,' raising the possibility that the two can be, and often are, intertwined in practice; indeed, given the rich analyses of identity that circulate within feminist and queer studies, a 'feminist and queer disability studies' may very well engage in the 'paradoxical' approach to identity practiced in crip theory while making room for those who do not or cannot recognize themselves in crip." *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 16. Because I centrally engage with Kafer in this project, I too slip in and out of the language of *disability* and *crip*. Most often, my use of these terms is dictated by Kafer's choice.
[60] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 15.

like *cripple*, is an ironic and serious word I use to describe myself and others in my communities. . . . *Queer* belongs to me. So does *cripple* for many of the same reasons. *Queer* and *cripple* are cousins: words to shock, words to infuse with pride and self-love, words to resist internalized hatred, words to help forge a politics."[61] As theorists like Clare and Kafer have recognized, *queer* and *crip* as terms do analogous discursive work because they similarly create the possibility for political action that enacts other worlds. I build on this established relationship between *queer* and *crip* in my turn to the Anthropocene and take up these crucial "cousins" to re-imagine futurity in the midst of climate crisis. What might the kinship between *queer* and *crip* lend to understandings of futurity in the Anthropocene?

As this question emphasizes, the kinship between *queer* and *crip* holds significance for temporality. *Crip time*, like queer time, describes a temporality outside of the normative. Margaret Price defines the term: "*Crip time*, a term from disability culture, refers to a flexible approach to normative time frames."[62] Here, Price first points to the way that *crip time* was used by those in the disability community long before it entered academic discourse. Indeed, the two sources most often cited as the origin of the term *crip time* in academic discourse only reference the term in passing to note that those in the disability community colloquially use the phrase.[63] In addition to indicating how the term emerged from the disability community, Price also emphasizes the notion of flexibility in crip time. In describing a "flexible approach," she means that crip time involves more than simply "'extra' time"; instead, it involves various adjustments

[61] Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 84.
[62] Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), loc. 1401 of 6576, Kindle.
[63] Irving Kenneth Zola, "The Language of Disability: Problems of Politics and Practice," *Australian Disability Review* (1988); Carol J. Gill, "A Psychological View of Disability Culture," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1995): 18.

to pacing based on people's access needs.[64] Kafer, drawing on Price, similarly defines crip time through flexibility. She writes:

> Crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of 'how long things take' are based on very particular minds and bodies. We can then understand the flexibility of crip time as being not only an accommodation to those who need 'more' time but also, and perhaps especially, a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling. Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds.[65]

In this sense, crip time "challenge[s]" normative notions of temporality, offering alternative times and paces that account for disability.

Importantly, the genealogy of crip time draws not only on disability studies, but also the antisocial debate in queer theory. As I elaborate in Chapter Three, Kafer articulates crip futurity, or the future-oriented application of crip time, partially as a response to the antisocial thesis in queer theory. Other scholars too, theorize in ways that mark the resonance between crip and queer temporalities. Ellen Samuels reflects on crip time, theorizing through a brilliant creative nonfiction essay. Beginning from the notion of flexibility, she writes, "But disability studies scholars like Alison [Kafer], Margaret [Price], and I tend to celebrate this idea of crip time, to relish its non-linear flexibility, to explore its power and its possibility. What would it mean for us to also do what queer scholar Heather Love calls 'feeling backward'? For us to hold on to that celebration, that new way of being, and yet also allow ourselves to feel the pain of crip time, its

[64] Price, *Mad at School*, loc. 1414 of 6576.
[65] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.

melancholy, its brokenness?"[66] Samuels thus makes a turn to queer negativity and the antisocial via Love to consider the ways in which crip time too can be imbued with negativity. From this provocation, Samuels offers various observations about crip time. For instance, she writes, "*Crip time is time travel*. Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings."[67] Thus, the negativity imbued within crip time can lead to anti-normative, queer experiences of and movements within time. Interestingly, Samuels turns in the penultimate passage of her essay toward nature. She muses, "Just like the leaves now turning as the year spins toward its end, I want sometimes to be part of nature, to live within its time. But I don't. My life has turned another way."[68] This ending is curious, as readers don't quite know what nature time is or why living in crip time might preclude such an existence. Thus, I pick up with the questions that the end of Samuels's essay raises. How might crip time inform understandings of living in Anthropocene time? How might articulations of crip temporality, emerging in relation to the antisocial thesis, impact theories of queer futurity in the Anthropocene?

Project Map

In this project, I integrate the antisocial debate and the Anthropocene to theorize queer and queer-crip futurity from the state of the world as it actually is. I structure each of my chapters around a concept from the antisocial debate, which I read through cultural and scientific texts that detail Anthropocene conditions. In so doing, I offer a revisionary cartography of the

[66] Ellen Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2017).
[67] Ellen Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time" (emphasis in original).
[68] Ellen Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time."

antisocial that charts a path to queer futurity through the dystopian conditions of the Anthropocene.

In Chapter One, I read the work of youth environmental activists through Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism. Interestingly, the rhetoric of youth environmental activists largely overlaps with the discourse of reproductive futurism Edelman critiques. I juxtapose Edelman's figure of the Child with the Anthropocene's figure of the youth environmental activist to demonstrate that climatic conditions prompt an articulation of reproductive futurism with difference. In particular, I analyze how youth environmental activist Jamie Margolin ties reproduction to structural social change and how Indigenous youth environmental activist Tokata Iron Eyes ties reproduction to her Lakota culture. Both activists challenge the whiteness of Edelman's figure of the Child by demonstrating how heteronormativity is always already racialized heteronormativity. Ultimately, I argue that the figure of the youth environmental activist's reproductive futurism with difference offers a way of imagining the future otherwise.

In Chapter Two, I turn to Muñoz's concept of queer utopia and theorize queer futurity via the oceanic. Muñoz defines *queerness* as both temporal and active; it involves recognizing that the present is not enough and striving toward the future through a critical engagement with hope. He represents this link between queerness and futurity metaphorically, claiming, "queerness is always in the horizon."[69] In this chapter, I take Muñoz's metaphorical contention literally to consider how polluted oceanic horizons shift queer utopia and queer futurity in the Anthropocene. I juxtapose Muñoz's horizon with news accounts from the *X-Press Pearl* disaster, a horrific shipping incident that spilled approximately seventy-five tons of plastic, twenty-five metric tons of nitric acid, other toxic chemicals, and oil into the ocean. Cultural and scientific

[69] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 11.

accounts of the disaster emphasize that the horizon is no longer a locus of hope and futurity; instead, it signals environmental destruction and devastation. Yet, rather than admitting ecological defeat, I argue that we might still reach for queer utopia from within the toxic temporalities of Anthropocene dystopia. As a final provocation, I contend that we might follow Alexis Pauline Gumbs's strategy of listening to locate new horizons of queer utopia and queer futurity in our polluted present.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the intersection of queer theory and disability studies and examine Kafer's concept of queer-crip futurity through the lens of climate crisis. I introduce crip futurity alongside queer futurity in the final chapter of this project to emphasize that theory has material implications on people's lives—the future is not simply an abstract concept. To demonstrate the resonances between queer and crip futurity, I begin by exploring how the environmental campaign against plastic straws leverages discourses of sexual normativity to simultaneously enforce normativity through ableism. In contrast to the anti-straw campaign that actively harms disabled people, I turn to the performance collective Sins Invalid, which centers intersectional environmental and disability justice. I reflect on their recent performance *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos* to consider queer-crip survival and futurity in climate crisis. Rather than focusing on the content of Sins Invalid's performance, I engage a practice of cripistemological theorizing to piece together the performance from my memory and its archive.[70] I contend that such a practice serves as a metaphor for theorizing queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene.

[70] Mel Y. Chen, "Brain Fog: The Race for Cripistemology," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014):182

CHAPTER ONE
"NO FUTURE" FOR THE PLANET: THE FIGURE OF THE YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST AND REPRODUCTIVE FUTURISM

Introduction: "The World is Literally Ending"

In March 2018, sixteen-year-old climate activist Jamie Margolin claimed, "it's hard to plan for the future if the world is literally ending. That sounds dramatic, but it's accurate. How are you supposed to plan for the future if all of the world's life systems are falling apart?"[1]

[1] Megan Jula, "This 16-Year-Old Founded a 'Movement of Unstoppable Youth' to Save the Planet," *Mother Jones*, March 30, 2018, https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2018/03/this-16-year-old-founded-a-movement-of-unstoppable-youth-to-save-the-planet/. I wrote this chapter in Spring 2021. In September 2021, Jamie Margolin was accused of sexual assault. In March 2021, Margolin, a freshman in college, publicly came forward identifying herself as a survivor of sexual violence and stalking by a fellow freshman at her university, whom she did not name. In September 2021, Margolin named the fellow student. She accused Emma Tang, an activist who focuses on issues of intersectionality, as the perpetrator. The same day that Margolin named her as the perpetrator, Tang publicly accused Margolin of sexual assault in the same incident that occurred in October 2020. Tang had been speaking about her experiences as a survivor of sexual assault since December 2020 but did not name Margolin as the perpetrator until Margolin identified her first in September 2021.

It is clear that an act of sexual violence took place between Margolin and Tang in October 2020. However, with both accusing the other, it is less clear first who perpetrated the violence and second who continues to do so by constructing a false narrative of the event. While a legal battle is ongoing (and potentially a Title IX investigation, as Margolin has again filed with Title IX after multiple initial filings were dismissed), the court of public opinion has primarily sided with Tang. Tang has released legal documents, text message conversations, and documentation that corroborate her version of the assault. In fact, given Tang's documentation, it appears that Margolin may have taken parts of Tang's earlier account word-for-word and simply reversed the role of perpetrator and survivor. While I do not think it is my role to adjudicate this act of sexual violence, given Tang's account and the evidence she has provided, it appears possible that Margolin did indeed sexually assault Tang. On the other hand, the event that took place in October 2020 is unknowable to those of us who were not there, and it is also possible that Margolin is actually a survivor of sexual violence as she has claimed.

After these accusations against Margolin became public, I have returned repeatedly to Sara Ahmed's claim: "citation is feminist memory." *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 15. I am troubled that I have built this chapter around Margolin, particularly since I consider not only her writing, but also her activism more broadly and other biographical details from her life. Simultaneously, I am constrained by the time and space of the university—namely, I have a particular and normative timeline to complete my degree. If I had the time and space to do so, I would re-write this chapter around another youth environmental

Margolin captures a sentiment of her generation: due to climate change, it is quite likely that the world as we know it is ending unless drastic measures are taken immediately. As Margolin indicates, this outlook holds temporal significance: the possibilities for the future, and even whether there will be a future, are being determined in the here and now. Because worsening impacts loom in the near-horizon, today's youth are likely to bear the brunt of the impact of a changing climate. Rather than planning for a mundane adulthood by making decisions about college or thinking about careers, youth like Margolin are confronting the fact that they may not have a future. In response, many are speaking out as environmental activists, emerging as cultural figures combatting the climate crisis. Youth environmental activists fight for a livable future, countering the realities of the Anthropocene that make it seem as if there is "no future" at all.

As my reference to "no future" implies, youth environmental justice rhetoric echoes Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Given the resonances between the rhetoric of youth environmental activists and Edelman's text, in this chapter I return to reproductive futurism from the perspective of the Anthropocene. I read the youth environmental activist as a cultural figure that both overlaps with and diverges from the figure of the Child at the center of reproductive futurism. In particular, I take up the writing and media of youth environmental activists to consider how they articulate reproductive futurism with difference. By *reproductive futurism with difference* I mean that these activists both uphold and challenge the

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activist and cut the sections on Margolin. However, given the normative temporality in which I must complete this project, I have chosen to leave Margolin in this chapter, recognizing that this writing represents a snapshot of a particular point in time. I begin with this lengthy note explaining the accusations against Margolin so that readers may consider the chapter through the lens of Margolin in the present, a temporality in which she may be a perpetrator of sexual violence.

normativity imbued in reproductive futurism—they engage in discourse that transmits the future to their children while simultaneously contesting other normative power structures. Ultimately, I consider how their rhetoric of reproductive futurism impacts queer futurity in the Anthropocene.

No Future, Reproductive Futurism, and The Figure of the Child

In *No Future*, Edelman theorizes from a psychoanalytic perspective to suggest that queerness carries negativity that queers should leverage against the social order. This antisocial project is crucial, he argues, because the social order is maintained through heteronormativity and thus can never incorporate queerness or queers. For Edelman, the structural heteronormativity of the social is predicated on ideas of both reproduction and futurity as articulated through the political. He contends that all political appeals rely on heteronormative logics because the Child serves as the "fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention."[2] He thus comes to his ultimate conclusion: queers must refuse the future because it is always reproduced through the figure of the Child, a heteronormative figure antithetical to queerness.

As I detail in the Introduction, queer theory has been slow to make a climatic turn. Interestingly, however, the burgeoning conversation at the intersection of queer theory and climate change frequently begins via discussions of Edelman. Though *No Future* does not engage the environment, scholars have turned to it as a means of considering the relationship between queer theoretical concepts and the climate. For instance, Sarah Ensor proposes the figure of the spinster as a means of thinking outside the binary of either naively accepting or nihilistically refusing reproductive futurism and the future, suggesting instead that the spinster

[2] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

"tend[s] to the future without contributing directly to it."[3] Ensor centrally engages *No Future* not so much to agree or disagree with Edelman's concepts, but to shift how we think about the future itself. She writes, "What if the queer relationship to futurity is intransitive not because of how it refuses but rather because of how it facilitates a notion of the future (and of futurity) outside the realm of objects, outside the push and pull of acceptance or refusal, both outside and beyond our capacity to control? Perhaps the question is not the future, yes or no, but the future, which and whose, where and when and how."[4] Ensor explores this generative question through the literary by turning to Rachel Carson's writing and Sarah Orne Jewett's nineteenth-century fictional texts. In this chapter I return to reproductive futurism and continue to take up the question that Ensor poses—"the future, which and whose, where and when and how."[5] But, rather than approaching the future via the figure of the spinster and the literary as Ensor does, I turn to the figure of the youth environmental activist and the cultural. In so doing, I consider how actual children both engage and disengage discourses of reproductive futurism to figure the future in the Anthropocene.

Like Ensor, many of the other scholars who link *No Future* and climate crisis do so through literary criticism. For example, Una Chaudhuri explores the relationship between the kids of cli-fi literature, films, and music and the Child of reproductive futurism; Adeline Johns-Putra applies Edelman's critique of the Child to a climatic reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*; Rebecca Evans examines heteronormative appeals to reproductive futurism in cli-fi literature to make an argument about genre; Kyrre Kverndokk combines a literary and cultural

[3] Sarah Ensor, "Spinster Ecology: Rachel Carson, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Nonreproductive Futurity," *American Literature* 84, no. 2 (2012): 409.
[4] Ensor, "Spinster Ecology," 414.
[5] Ensor, "Spinster Ecology," 414.

studies approach to contend that depictions of climate futures uphold heteronormative notions of reproductive futurism and the family; and Ariane de Waal discusses reproductive futurism in the "straight ecologies" of contemporary British eco-theatre.[6] Importantly, while this scholarship deploys Edelman's concepts, it intervenes into literary discussions in the environmental humanities and is largely divorced from the theoretical conversations around the antisocial thesis in queer theory. Published primarily in literary and environmental humanities journals, criticism that applies Edelman's concepts to environmental fiction is distinct from conversations happening around the antisocial thesis in the field of queer theory.

Within the field of queer theory, scholars have been slower to consider the resonances between the discourses of futurity that Edelman critiques and climate crisis. However, a few theorists have begun to think about this relationship. For example, Sara Edenheim takes up the childfree woman to reconsider Edelman's Lacanian concept of the sinthomosexual in the context of climate crisis and kinship.[7] Second, and more importantly for my own project, Rebekah

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[6] Una Chaudhuri, "The Sun'll Be Hotter Tomorrow: Growing Up with Climate Chaos," *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2014); Adeline Johns-Putra, "'My Job is to Take Care of You': Climate Change, Humanity, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 62, no. 3 (2016): 519-40; Rebecca Evans, "Fantastic Futures? Cli-fi, Climate Justice, and Queer Futurity," *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 4, nos. 2-3 (2017): 94-110; Kyrre Kverndokk, "Talking About Your Generation: 'Our Children' as a Trope in Climate Change Discourse," *Ethnologia Europaea* 50, no. 1 (2020): 145-58; Ariane de Wall, "More Future? Straight Ecologies in British Climate-Change Theatre," *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 9, no. 1 (2021): 43-59.

[7] Sara Edenheim, "No Kin: Between the Reproductive Paradigm and Ideals of Community," *lambda nordica* 24, nos. 2-3 (2019): 29-52. Edelman's argument is densely psychoanalytic and complex, carrying implications for queer negativity, the social, reproduction, and futurity. In this chapter, I focus less on the particulars of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and the figure of the sinthomosexual that Edelman uses to come to his ultimate conclusion and more on the implications of the conclusion itself. As I explore later in this chapter, Edelman's investment in psychoanalysis frames the limit of his argument, but his argument has ramifications far beyond the field of psychoanalysis. I take up these ramifications in terms of reproduction and futurity to reconsider his mandate of "no future" for queers from the perspective of the Anthropocene.

Sheldon considers the role of the child in ecological discourse. Building on Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism, she diverges from Edelman in that she offers a historical contextualization of the child in "American culture from the 1960s to the present" and "centers on the ways in which the child's figuration of interlocking biological processes stands in the place of the complex systems at work in ecological materiality."[8] Ultimately, she argues that the child as deployed in ecological discourse shifts understandings of life-itself in ways that prompt us to consider materialism beyond the human. She writes, "In other words, it is not sufficient to renounce or to denounce the child. If we turn our backs, we risk missing that which the child is fitted to capture: the emergent energies of posthumanity. For the same reason, though, our task cannot end with the child, either in celebration or in denunciation."[9] In this chapter, I follow Sheldon in neither denouncing nor celebrating the child. Instead, I listen to and take seriously the voices of youth environmental activists to consider how they both uphold and rework reproductive futurism.

While other scholars have considered the intersections between *No Future* and the climate, Edelman himself focuses on the sexual. As I elaborate in the Introduction, Edelman analyzes queerness to consider possibilities for intervention into the social's heteronormative structures, which he understands as exclusively related to sexuality. Agreeing with homophobic rhetoric and twisting it to queer ends, Edelman suggests, "queerness should and must redefine such notions as 'civil order' through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of

[8] Rebekah Sheldon, *The Child to Come: Life After the Human Catastrophe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 4-5. Sheldon also points to the way that the Anthropocene has shifted racial understandings, writing, "At the same time that the future has turned malignant, the organizing logic through which the child took shape—racial biopolitics—has likewise shifted. These changes redound on the child." *The Child to Come,* 17.
[9] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 21.

futurity."[10] Queerness can initiate a "rupture" in the structuring sexual logics of the "civil order." Thus, Edelman implicitly defines queerness through its function, which he contends should be interrupting "the reproduction of futurity." In one sense, he uses *reproduction* metaphorically to suggest that queerness should disturb the production and reproduction of temporal sequences that constitute the future. In another sense, though, he uses *reproduction* to signal that the future is always figured through children—quite literally through heterosexual reproduction. Taken together, these metaphorical and literal meanings define queerness via the sexual in opposition to reproduction and futurity.

Edelman uses the concept of *reproductive futurism* to name the relationship he identifies between reproduction and the future. He never quite explicitly defines the concept but comes close when he analyzes the politics of campaigns predicated on discourse about "fighting for the children."[11] He writes:

> That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate—and, indeed, of the political field—as defined by the terms of what this book describes as reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations.
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> For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it

[10] Edelman, *No Future*, 16-17.
[11] Edelman, *No Future*, 3.

> works to affirm a structure, to authenticate social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child.[12]

Building on this definition, he situates reproductive futurism and queerness as antithetical: "Indeed, at the heart of my polemical engagement with the cultural text of politics and the politics of cultural texts lies a simple provocation: that queerness names the side of those not 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism."[13] In this figuration, the Child perpetuates the foundational heteronormativity of the social order that secures the order's existence in the first place. Queerness describes that which is opposed to this logic and thus that which is opposed to reproductive futurism and the Child.[14] For Edelman, queerness is both "outside" of and "opposed" to, though impossibly so, the political logics that structure the social order. Following this logic, there is, for Edelman, no such thing as *queer futurity,* or queerness that is oriented toward the future. Reproductive futurism names the inherent heteronormativity evoked in notions of the future, therefore situating the future and queerness as opposed.

The figure of the Child thus serves as Edelman's link between futurity and the social order in his conceptualization of reproductive futurism. He explains, "we are no more able to conceive of a politics without a fantasy of the future than we are able to conceive of a future without the figure of the Child. . . . For the social order exists to preserve for this universalized

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[12] Edelman, *No Future,* 2.
[13] Edelman, *No Future,* 3.
[14] This opposition is also "impossible," as Edelman explains: "I examine in this book the pervasive invocation of the Child as the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value and propose against it the impossible project of a queer oppositionality that would oppose itself to the structural determinants of politics as such, which is also to say, that would oppose itself to the logic of opposition." *No Future,* 3-4.

subject, this fantasmatic Child, a notational freedom."[15] In the simplest terms, it becomes impossible to imagine the future without the Child who will inherit it. Sheldon historicizes Edelman's claim to demonstrate that while the relationship between the Child and the future appears "naturalized as self-evident," it actually emerged "in the long nineteenth century alongside burgeoning theories of life-itself."[16] Sheldon further contextualizes this history of the child within the history of racialization, writing, "The link forged between the child and the species helped to shape eugenic historiography, focalized reproduction as a concern for racial nationalism, and made the child a mode of timekeeping."[17]

While Edelman posits an inherent intimacy between the figure of the Child and futurity, he opposes the figure of the Child with the figure of the queer. He argues, "The sacralization of the Child thus necessitates the sacrifice of the queer."[18] The Child inherits the future *because* politics coalesces around reproductive futurism and its investment in heteronormativity at the expense of the queer. If queerness and reproductive futurism are antithetical, then so too are the queer and the Child.

Importantly, Edelman claims that the figure of the Child is distinct from actual children. He states, "In its coercive universalization, however, the image of the Child, not to be confused with the lived experiences of any historical children, serves to regulate political discourse—to prescribe what will count as political discourse—by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address."[19] Despite his theoretical disclaimer, other theorists have cogently

[15] Edelman, *No Future,* 11.
[16] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 3.
[17] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 3.
[18] Edelman, *No Future,* 28.
[19] Edelman, *No Future,* 11.

countered Edelman's supposed separation between the Child and children. As I explain at length in the Introduction, José Esteban Muñoz argues that Black, brown, and queer children are not granted futures in the first place, and Alison Kafer extends Muñoz's critique to demonstrate that the Child Edelman evokes is not only always already white, but also always already able-bodyminded.[20] As Muñoz and Kafer demonstrate, Edelman may claim that the figure of the Child operates only in the abstract, but in actuality it circulates as a cultural concept in ways that impact the lived experiences of actual children.

Muñoz and Kafer's critiques further demonstrate what I consider the limitations of Edelman's deployment of psychoanalysis. The version of psychoanalysis that Edelman mobilizes understands the social order in a very particular way—as constituted through the structuring logics of heteronormativity, where heteronormativity is a distinctly sexual concept.[21] This perspective suggests that sexuality is extricable from other positionalities within power, such as race or ability, a fantasy of singularity that, as queer of color and disability studies critiques demonstrate, is not actually possible. Edelman's iteration of psychoanalysis, then, enacts a universalizing gesture, such that his method limits his analysis. In contrast, and as I explore in Chapters Two and Three, queer of color and disability studies critiques offer methods for

[20] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 10th anniversary ed. (2009; New York: New York University Press, 2019), 95; Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 33.
[21] While I suggest that Edelman's psychoanalytic approach limits his argument, other scholars have critiqued Edelman from a psychoanalytic perspective. For instance, Tim Dean traces the genealogy of the death drive in the antisocial thesis to contend that Edelman's assertions are more melodramatic rhetorical moves than valid psychoanalytic critiques. Dean further suggests that, rather than being figures of heteronormativity as Edelman contends, Freudian psychoanalysis actually renders children distinctly queer. Tim Dean, "An Impossible Embrace: Queerness, Futurity, and the Death Drive," in *A Time for the Humanities: Futurity and the Limits of Autonomy*, ed. James J. Bono, Tim Dean, and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 125.

considering the material in ways that Edelman's psychoanalysis does not.[22] These material critiques afford a perspective for analyzing power intersectionally, demonstrating how the social order is structured beyond the sexual.

Given the universalizing psychoanalytic methods he employs, whiteness and ableism underlie Edelman's arguments; however, he does not consider how race or ability might inflect his claims. *No Future* is thus limited by implicit whiteness and ableism that remain unacknowledged throughout the text. Muñoz explains this tendency in both *No Future* and the antisocial oeuvre as a whole: "I nonetheless contend that most of the work with which I disagree under the provisional title of 'antirelational thesis' moves to imagine an escape or denouncement of relationality as first and foremost a distancing of queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference."[23] Kafer would contend—and I would echo—that disability is one of the "other particularities" that would "taint" Edelman's singular focus on sexuality. While numerous criticisms about Edelman's myopic understanding of sexuality could be, and indeed have been, made,[24] here I want to turn to queer of color critique to consider how this "distancing of queerness" from race extends beyond the universalizing whiteness of the figure of the Child into a foundational whiteness of reproductive futurism. To do so, I read

[22] Here, I intentionally use the phrase "Edelman's psychoanalysis" to emphasize that he is practicing a particular strand of psychoanalytic theorizing. Queer of color and disability studies critiques are not inherently opposed to psychoanalysis.
[23] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11. As I explain in the Introduction, the *antirelational thesis* is synonymous with the *antisocial thesis*.
[24] In addition to Muñoz and Kafer, see, for instance, Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 173-81; Michael D. Snediker, *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 21-25; and Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 210-11.

Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism through Roderick Ferguson's contention that the social construction of sexuality emerged in conjunction with the notion of white ethnicity. I engage in this theoretical exploration as a framework for my case studies, where I discuss how the youth environmental activist's reproductive futurism with difference upholds the normativity of the sexual while it challenges the normativity of whiteness.

Ferguson's "Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and Gay Identity" was published a year after *No Future,* but Ferguson never mentions or engages Edelman or the antisocial. I consider Ferguson's work within the context of the antisocial debate to extend what is perhaps implicit in Muñoz's critique: the whiteness of Edelman's figure of the Child is more insidiously a whiteness embedded into Edelman's understanding of reproductive futurism itself. Ferguson's work demonstrates how the historical production of ethnicity, citizenship, and reproduction reveal Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism as always already white. Ferguson examines ideas about immigration to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century to consider the construction of white ethnicity as a category "designed for the express purpose of assimilation."[25] He writes:

> Put simply, ethnic assimilation required European immigrants to comply with heteronormative protocols as newly racialized whites. While other Americans questioned the status of European immigrants as white, Theodore Roosevelt endorsed the naturalization of European immigrants on the basis that native whites could intermarry with European immigrants. According to Roosevelt, this 'mixture of blood' through intermarriage could produce a 'new ethnic type in this melting pot of nations.' *The*

[25] Roderick A. Ferguson, "Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and Gay Identity," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology,* ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Ge. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 54.

> *creation of this new ethnic type depended on heterosexual reproduction secured through common whiteness*. When the federal government conflated citizenship with whiteness in the post-World War II era, it was asserting that European immigrants could attain both the ideals of whiteness and heteropatriarchy—that they could be candidates for *racialized heteronormativity*.[26]

In other words, European immigrants were seen as worthy of becoming citizens of the United States precisely because of their capacity to reproduce children who would be interpreted through the new ethnic category of whiteness. The way that this conflation of citizenship, heterosexual reproduction, and whiteness has itself become naturalized in the decades since World War II means that there is no concept of unmarked heteronormativity, but that heteronormativity is always already racialized heteronormativity.[27] Reproduction is not simply a sexual category, but it is also inherently a racialized one. That is, reproduction produces, reproduces, and maintains the boundaries of whiteness while it simultaneously maintains heteronormativity. If Edelman articulates reproduction as always already linked to futurity, Ferguson articulates reproduction as always already linked to racialization. Thus, reproductive futurism maintains the *racialized heteronormativity* of the social order.

Further, Ferguson's analysis demonstrates that marginalized people have never been incorporated into the social order to begin with. He turns from a discussion of racialized heteronormativity to homonormativity, incisively precluding Edelman's entire argument with a single line: "As homonormative formations [or what we could call assimilationist politics]

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[26] Ferguson, "Race-ing Homonormativity, 55 (emphasis mine).
[27] See also Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" in *Black Queer Studies,* ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 21-51.

achieve cultural normativity by appealing to liberal capital's regimes of visibility, the immigrant, the poor, and the person of color suffer under the state's apparatuses—*apparatuses that render them the cultural antheses of a stable and healthy social order*."[28] Ferguson's trenchant point reveals what Edelman's singular focus on the psychoanalytic overlooks: the state maintains and violently enforces the social order. This maintenance is enacted not singularly through heteronormativity, but also through racism, classism, colonialism, and ableism. Reading Edelman through Ferguson reveals that people located within marginalized positions of power do not have to *choose* to refuse futurity as a means of deconstructing the heteronormativity of the social order. Instead, the state has figured their very existence as a threat to the social order from the start. Edelman situates a queer refusal of the future as a choice (or an imperative); however, this refusal is only a *choice* for white cisgender able-bodyminded gay men. By extending this imperative to all queers without naming its inherent whiteness, Edelman's oppositional stance obscures the experiences of marginalized queers who have always already been positioned outside of reproductive futurism and on the side of "no future." Together, my application of Ferguson's queer of color critique, Muñoz's queer of color critique, and Kafer's disability studies critique demonstrate the limits of Edelman's purely psychoanalytic perspective that understands the social order exclusively through the lens of the sexual. While there is perhaps something "seductive" or sexy in the idea that queers might just fuck it all and refuse the future,

[28] Ferguson, "Race-ing Homonormativity, 65 (emphasis mine). Interestingly, Edelman and Ferguson both argue for a similar stance—a refusal of assimilationist gay politics—for dichotomous reasons. Edelman opposes the liberal gay politics of the early 2000s because he views these politics as reproducing the heteronormativity of the social order, while Ferguson does so because he views these politics as reifying the structures of racial exclusion.

such a perspective overlooks people of color, Indigenous people, and disabled people who are violently excluded from futurity in the first place.[29]

Despite these very clear problems with Edelman's theory, certain climate change rhetoric resonates with his articulation of reproductive futurism. Most notably, youth environmental activists confront the fact that in the Anthropocene, there doesn't seem to be a future at all. These children therefore appeal to adults to grant them a future by mitigating the climate crisis. For example, Greta Thunberg, a youth environmental activist who has gained international notoriety, admonished at COP24, the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference: "You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes. Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible, there is no hope."[30] Thunberg's rhetoric, here representative of many youth environmental activists, suggests that there is "no future" for children because adults continue to contribute to the climate crisis. As Thunberg's plea illustrates, youth environmental activists often confront their lack of a future with appeals that deploy the discourse of reproductive futurism.[31] The direct parallel

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[29] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11.

[30] Greta Thunberg, "Greta Thunberg Full Speech at UN Climate Change COP24 Conference," COP24 United Nations Climate Change Conference, video posted Dec. 15, 2018 by Connect4Climate, speech given Dec. 12, 2018, Katowice, Poland, YouTube video, 3:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFkQSGyeCWg.

[31] The connection between *No Future* and the rhetoric of youth environmental activists is both pervasive and fascinating. For instance, Edelman writes, "Historically constructed, as social critics and intellectual historians . . . have made clear, to serve as the repository of variously sentimentalized cultural identifications, the Child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in *perpetual trust*." *No Future*, 10-11 (emphasis mine). Interestingly, *Our Children's Trust* is the name of a law firm suing various governments because of climate change; Margolin is part of the Our Children's Trust lawsuit against Washington state. The name *Our Children's Trust* makes explicit that the Child is "the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust." Despite the way that this example seems only to booster Edelman's claims, in my larger analysis I consider how the rhetoric of youth environmental activists both upholds and challenges Edelman's polemic against reproductive futurism.

between the rhetoric of youth environmental activists and the language of reproductive futurism that Edelman critiques necessitates a return to this antisocial concept in our Anthropocene present. I make this return not because I agree with Edelman or want to recuperate his text, but because despite the irreconcilably problematic aspects of *No Future*, his argument seems to exactly anticipate climate activism. Therefore, I juxtapose the figure of the Child with the figure of the youth environmental activist to reconsider Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism from the vantage point of climate crisis. Crucially, I understand reproductive futurism as always enacting *racialized heteronormativity* and thus contend that youth environmental activists make appeals to reproductive futurism with difference.

As this project as a whole makes clear, I situate myself on the anti-antisocial side of the debate. Yet, I still think that *No Future*, a text I largely disagree with, holds something for understanding our Anthropocene present. How might Edelman's imperative to refuse the future account for the Anthropocene, when it seems like the entire planet is headed toward "no future"? How might we reconcile the drastically different ethical implications in self-destruction (the death drive), social destruction (the antisocial thesis), and ecosystem destruction (the Anthropocene)? Re-reading a passage from *No Future* through the Anthropocene reveals how an environmental analytic shifts Edelman's claims. He writes:

> As Lauren Berlant argues forcefully at the outset of *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, "a nation made for adult citizens has been replaced by one imagined for fetuses and children." On every side, our enjoyment of liberty is eclipsed by the lengthening shadow of a Child whose freedom to develop undisturbed by encounters, or even by the threat of potential encounters, with an "otherness" of which its parents, its church, or the state do not approve, uncompromised by any possible access to what is

> painted as an alien desire, terroristically holds us all in check and determines that political discourse conform to the logic of a narrative wherein history unfolds as the future envisioned for a Child who must never grow up.[32]

Climate change reverses the scenario that Edelman describes. Instead of Berlant's nation "imagined for fetuses and children," refusals to mitigate climate change situate the nation as for adults who are willing to sacrifice the planet their children—represented by the youth environmental activist—will inherit. While the youth environmental activist's "parents" or "church" and "the state" may still aim to insulate her from "the threat of potential encounters" with queerness, simultaneously, her "parents," her "church, or the state" may not even *acknowledge* the threat of climate change that delimits her future. In the Anthropocene, there is no longer "a Child who must never grow up," but a youth environmental activist who never *can* grow up. The scenario that Edelman describes therefore no longer depicts our Anthropocene reality. In *No Future*, Edelman writes, "The Child, in the historical epoch of our current epistemological regime, is the figure for this compulsory investment in the misrecognition of figure."[33] Here, I want to shift from Edelman's "historical epoch" to the *geological epoch* of the Anthropocene. What might the figure of the youth environmental activist, in the geological epoch of the Anthropocene, reveal about reproductive futurism?

The Figure of the Youth Environmental Activist

I propose the youth environmental activist as an Anthropocene figure that both overlaps and contrasts with the figure of the Child. While I focus on two specific youth environmental activists in this chapter, I contend that the youth environmental activist has become a cultural

[32] Edelman, *No Future,* 21.
[33] Edelman, *No Future,* 18.

figure. Young people have an extensive history of engaging in environmental activism, but at the end of the 2010s the youth environmental activist emerged as an identifiable cultural figure.[34] Most recognizably, shortly after her first, lone protest in August 2018, at-the-time fifteen-year-old Greta Thunberg catapulted into the global spotlight for her *skolstrejk för klimatet* (school strike for the climate). Yet, a year before Thunberg began sitting outside of the Swedish Parliament with her now-notorious sign, a moment widely recognized as launching a transnational youth climate movement, fifteen-year-old Jamie Margolin began organizing a youth climate movement in the United States by founding Zero Hour, a woman-of-color-led youth climate justice organization. And, a year before Margolin and her co-organizers began their climate movement, twelve-year-old Tokata Iron Eyes, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, was instrumental in organizing protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Iron Eyes's actions, too, built upon centuries of Indigenous resistance to settler violence that ushered in many effects now associated with climate change—"ecosystem collapse, species loss, economic crash, drastic relocation, and cultural disintegration."[35]

[34] Other scholars have discussed the work of particular youth environmental activists, most often Greta Thunberg, or the work of groups of youth environmental activists, like Thunberg's organization Fridays for Future. However, to my knowledge, other scholars have not discussed the youth environmental activist as a cultural figure. See, for instance, Rachel Conrad, "Youth Climate Activists Trading on Time: Temporal Strategies in Xiuhtezcatl Martinez's *We Rise* and Greta Thunberg's *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 45, no. 2 (2021): 226-43; Amanda L. Molder et al., "Framing the Global Youth Climate Movement: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Greta Thunberg's Moral, Hopeful, and Motivational Framing on Instagram," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 27, no. 3 (2022): 668-95; Ana Belén Martínez García, "Constructing an Activist Self: Greta Thunberg's Climate Activism as Life Writing," *Prose Studies* 41, no. 3 (2020): 349-66; and Anders Svensson and Mattias Wahlstrom, "Climate Change or What? Prognostic Framing by Fridays for Future Protestors," *Social Movement Studies* (2021): 1-22.

[35] Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises," *E: Nature and Space* 1, nos. 1-2 (2018): 226.

However, in spite of the genealogy of youth climate activism that extends far beyond the three brief examples I present here, it was Thunberg—a white, European activist—who was honored in December 2019 as *Time*'s Person of the Year.[36] Thunberg's international notoriety and formal recognition through titles like Person of the Year have contributed to cementing the work of youth environmental activists as a cultural archetype.[37] While young people have been engaging in Indigenous resistance and what we would now call environmental activism since colonization, it is in our contemporary moment that the youth environmental activist has emerged as a distinct cultural figure. Thus, I present this abbreviated timeline from Iron Eyes in 2016 to Margolin in 2017 to Thunberg in 2018 not to suggest that Iron Eyes or Margolin are *really* the origin of the youth climate movement rather than Thunberg, but to demonstrate that while youth environmental activism has existed in some form or another for centuries, it has taken on precise meaning in our contemporary moment such that the youth environmental activist becomes a figure who enacts distinct cultural work.

Though the figure of the youth environmental activist has emerged amongst media attention to various forms of youth activisms, I further contend that there is a specificity to the figure of the youth environmental activist due to the temporality and scale of the climate crisis. For example, in the United States, youth gun-violence prevention has become a major cultural movement alongside—and oftentimes overlapping with—youth climate activism, particularly in the wake of the mass shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

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[36] Thunberg has stated that she was inspired by activists like Margolin and Iron Eyes, and Margolin has also cited Iron Eyes and other No DAPL youth protestors as spurring her own climate activism. For more on youth activists and race, see Cortland Gilliam, "White, Green Futures," *Ethics and Education* 16, no. 2 (2021): 262-75.

[37] Brooke Jarvis, "The Teenagers at the End of the World," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 21, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/21/magazine/teenage-activist-climate-change.html.

Youth gun-violence prevention activists like X González, a Parkland survivor, have also become recognizable due to media attention. While the work of youth activists across a variety of issues is vitally important and certainly deserves close analysis, and while there are continuities between the platforms of various youth activists, I contend that the figure of the youth environmental activist achieves specific cultural work. Because the generation of current youth—Generation Z—will be disproportionately impacted by climate change, the youth environmental activist situates herself as not having a future due to the climate crisis. This claim of "no future" extends beyond each activist herself, as she claims that her entire generation, as well as non-human species and the entire planet, face this existential threat. Additionally, to make a political intervention, she must position herself across time. Leveraging the temporalities of climate crisis, the youth environmental activist exists simultaneously as both a current child and a spectral future adult. I thus focus on the figure of the youth environmental activist because of the way these two temporal interventions—the claim of "no future" and the simultaneity of current child/future adult—directly illustrate futurity in the Anthropocene.

Given these temporal interventions, I suggest that the figure of the youth environmental activist provides a unique case study for considering reproductive futurism in the Anthropocene. I conduct this study through two cases: first, Jamie Margolin, and second, Tokata Iron Eyes. Margolin and Iron Eyes offer drastically different versions of reproductive futurism; Margolin's version links reproduction to a structural critique of the conditions that created the climate crisis, and Iron Eyes's version intimately ties reproduction to her Indigenous culture. I consider Margolin and Iron Eyes's rhetoric each in its own individual specificity, countering the universalizing impulse of Edelman's figure of the Child, while simultaneously accounting for the broader cultural role that the youth environmental activist plays as a figure. At both the

individual and figural levels, Margolin and Iron Eyes articulate understandings of temporality, futurity, and reproduction that offer reproductive futurism with difference. Reading the youth environmental activist alongside the figure of the Child thus shifts notions of reproductive futurism and queer futurity in the Anthropocene.

Moreover, while there are youth environmental activists of all genders, in this chapter I focus on two young women to further counter Edelman's universalizing perspective. How might a young Latinx Jewish woman and a young Indigenous woman theorizing their own reproductive futures counter the white, gay masculinist perspective of Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism? Interestingly, while I highlight that both Margolin and Iron Eyes are women, Margolin's own experience of gender is not central to her reproductive vision, and Iron Eyes focuses more on the analytic of Indigenous feminism than her own gender per se. Margolin and Iron Eyes do not imagine themselves as pregnant, giving birth, or as mothers. Instead, they make references to their hypothetical future children without discussing the particulars of reproduction itself. This lack of reflexive attention to the relationship between their gender and their reproductive visions means that both activists discuss reproduction in a similarly abstract way to Edelman. While the reproductive futurism that Margolin and Iron Eyes depict diverges from Edelman's articulation of the concept, Margolin, Iron Eyes, and Edelman reference *reproduction* similarly. Given that Edelman's perspective is distinctly that of a white gay man, I think it is important that these activists offer perspectives on reproduction from their positionality as young women, even if gender is not a central analytic in their conception of reproduction.[38] If the

[38] As this discussion of gender gestures toward, the antisocial discourse about reproductive futurism is distinct from important work by theorists of reproductive justice. I understand reproductive justice frameworks, often advanced by women of color, as about the particulars of reproduction itself. For instance, reproductive justice frameworks analyze who is (or what populations are) able to reproduce; who is (or what populations are) prevented from reproducing;

antisocial thesis is the "gay white man's last stand," then the reproductive discourse of young women might help us understand queer futurity differently.[39]

While my theoretical intervention in this chapter ultimately concerns queer futurity, I do not claim that the youth environmental activists I analyze themselves offer a queer politics. Instead, I claim that the rhetoric of youth environmental activists, which does not name itself as queer, holds significance for queer theory. I am interested in the way that Margolin and Iron Eyes use rhetoric directly in conversation with Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism, which is a concept that influences queer futurity. I am not suggesting that Margolin, who is a lesbian but whose reproductive vision is homonormative, or Iron Eyes, whose sexuality I do not know, have some sort of identitarian claim to queerness or that they articulate a politics of queer futurity. Instead, I contend that their engagement with reproductive futurism, an engagement that for Margolin is grounded in a homonormative lesbian perspective and that for Iron Eyes is

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and power dynamics involved in conception, pregnancy, and birth. These conversations *can* be future-oriented; for example, Alexis Pauline Gumbs mentions that reproductive justice appears in the stories we tell about future reproductive technologies. Loretta Ross and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "Reproductive Futurisms: A Conversation w/ Loretta Ross and Alexis Pauline Gumbs (ASA Freedom Course)," American Studies Association Official, posted June 17, 2020, YouTube video, 54:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-WPC0-qigE&t=1311s. However, even in these speculative narratives, reproductive justice focuses on literal reproduction rather than temporality. In contrast, reproductive futurism in the antisocial thesis is not about literal reproduction but about a temporal orientation toward the future that structures the social order through the figure of the Child. The antisocial thus takes up not literal reproduction but the way reproduction is rhetorically (or psychoanalytically) deployed temporally. I focus on youth environmental activists and reproductive futurism to make a point about futurity and the antisocial in the Anthropocene rather than about the particulars of reproduction itself. For a discussion of the relationship between reproductive futurism and reproductive rights, see Penelope Deutscher, "Reproductive Futurism, Lee Edelman, and Reproductive Rights," in *Foucault's Futures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 40-63.

[39] José Esteban Muñoz, "Thinking beyond Antirelationality and Antiutopianism in Queer Critique," in "Forum: Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," mod. Robert L. Caserio, *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 825.

grounded in an Indigenous feminist perspective, holds significance for theoretical understandings of reproductive futurism and thus queer futurity.

In turning to this archive that holds significance for queer futurity, I am influenced by Cathy Cohen's articulation of radical politics. In her foundational essay, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?," Cohen challenges the heterosexual/homosexual binary through her analysis of power. She writes, "I believe that through this issue [of a monolithic understanding of heterosexuality] we can begin to think critically about the components of a radical politics built not exclusively on identities but rather on identities as they are invested with varying degrees of normative power."[40] In this sense, the normative power of sexuality involves not only homophobia, but also racism, colonialism, classism, and ableism. To put Cohen's point in Ferguson's terms, the normative power that regulates sexuality involves not only heteronormativity (as in Edelman's singular view), but also racialized heteronormativity. The purpose of Cohen's essay, then, is to argue for a leftist queer politics grounded in coalition between those marginalized by normative power, whether lesbian, gay, bisexual or not. Cohen suggests "that the process of movement building be rooted not in our shared history or identity but in our shared marginal relationship to dominant power that normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges."[41] In this sense, I see Margolin's structural critique of the climate crisis and Iron Eyes's Indigenous feminist perspective—critiques and perspectives that do not represent queer sexuality but that are nevertheless in a marginal relationship to dominant power—as offering something to queer theory. Applying Cohen's argument to the era of climate

[40] Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 37.
[41] Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 43.

crisis, what sort of coalitions might arise between punks, bulldaggers, welfare queens, and youth environmental activists?

Jamie Margolin: The Conditional "If" and Reproductive Futurism with Difference

Jamie Margolin began her political and environmental activism in her local community when she was fourteen years old. At fifteen, she co-founded Zero Hour, a woman-of-color-led youth climate justice organization that coordinated the 2018 Youth Climate Marches in Washington DC and worldwide. She is also a prolific writer, having published several Op-Eds and essays throughout her activist career and *Youth to Power: Your Voice and How to Use It*, a book that guides young people to get started with activism, at eighteen. In this section I examine one of Margolin's short essays entitled "The Day We Save Ourselves from Ourselves." "The Day" was published online as part of the 2019 International Congress of Youth Voices Summit, an event that brought together young activists and writers from around the world. I close read her essay to argue that Margolin ties social and environmental justice to her ability to reproduce, articulating a different version of reproductive futurism in response to Anthropocene conditions.

Margolin is situated outside of racialized heteronormativity, and she brings an intersectional analytic attentive to structures of power to her work on the climate crisis. A brief biography preceding "The Day" describes Margolin as a "Colombian-American writer, community organizer, activist, and public speaker" and "a Latina Jewish lesbian."[42] The entire platform of her activism is that colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and capitalism have caused the climate crisis, and without addressing these structural issues the climate crisis will continue to accelerate. Indeed, Margolin links her own positionality to her fight for climate and social

[42] Jamie Margolin, "The Day We Save Ourselves From Ourselves," The International Congress of Youth Voices, accessed March 2, 2021, https://www.internationalcongressofyouthvoices.com/jamie-margolin.

justice, writing elsewhere, "I realise that I can't just stop being a woman, stop being gay, stop being Latinx, stop being Jewish until we solve the climate crisis—and the climate crisis was caused by the same people and systems of oppression that hold a lot of my communities down. I fight for social justice and climate justice simultaneously, knowing the two aren't mutually exclusive."[43] Thus, while Margolin is a climate justice advocate, she locates climate justice as part of a larger project for social justice that works to dismantle systematic oppression.

In "The Day," Margolin begins by describing the climate anxiety she experiences in the present and then transitions to describing what the world might be like in the future if the climate crisis is solved. Specifically, Margolin offers a hypothetical vision of reproduction that permits her to envision the future beyond climate crisis. This vision is predicated on what I term the *conditional "if"*: Margolin contends that she will reproduce only *if* the world is livable for her children, where "livable" encompasses both climate and social justice. In describing the utopian world she imagines her children will inhabit, Margolin ties together futurity, reproduction, climate justice, and social justice. While Margolin's generation, Generation Z, faces a conditional future that is often described as "no future," Margolin's turn to reproduction permits her to envision the future otherwise. In this section, I examine Margolin's use of the conditional "if" to consider how Margolin, acting as the figure of the youth environmental activist, both replicates and challenges the reproductive futurism that Edelman critiques.

"The Day" centrally engages the time and space of climate crisis, prompting Margolin's ultimate turn to reproductive futurism. In particular, Margolin deploys affect to make the climate crisis both spatially and temporally immediate. The essay begins with a visceral scene of

[43] "Jamie Margolin," Dazed 100, accessed March 2, 2021, https://www.dazeddigital.com/projects/article/48864/1/jamie-margolin-activist-biography-dazed-100-2020-profile.

Margolin frozen with anxiety: "I'm curled into a ball at the edge of my bed, panicking about climate change and the impending violence and planetary disaster heading my way."[44] This moment suspends Margolin in space, unmoving on her bed. She remains static in the fetal position, making her seem more child-like and emphasizing her youth. Margolin is not only suspended in space, however, but also in time. The embodied impact of climate change is no longer something people with privilege can attempt to displace into the future, but it is something happening now—for instance, in Margolin's immobile state on her bed. Margolin's spatial-temporal suspension interrupts the way that dominant discourses often displace climate change to either an *elsewhere* or an *elsewhen*.[45] Margolin's opening lines, however, counter these displacements. She lies on her bed *now*, bringing the disastrous effects of climate change into the middle-class American home through her mental and embodied state. Climate issues are not something that middle-class American adults can continue to displace to other geographic

[44] Margolin, "The Day."

[45] For instance, policy makers might recognize that climate change currently impacts populations in the Global South or marginalized communities in the United States due to environmental racism. However, policy makers also often subscribe to narratives that devalue these communities and construct them as somehow separate from the global population, thus making it possible for them to spatially dismiss the problems of climate change as located *elsewhere*. Similarly, policy makers frequently displace the problems of climate change temporally, as these problems are imagined as something that might impact middle-class Americans only in the future, or in an *elsewhen.* In a summit hosted by the White House in April 2021, U.N. Secretary General António Guterres said "that the world is 'racing toward the threshold of catastrophe' unless it moves more rapidly" to mitigate climate change. He continued, "We are at the verge of the abyss. . . . We must make sure the next step is in the right direction." Brady Dennis, Juliet Eilperin, and Steven Mufson, "Biden Spells Out U.S. Climate Goal, Urges Other World Leaders to Go Big," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/04/22/biden-climate-summit/. Guterres's references to the "threshold" and "abyss" of climate change situate our current moment as a precipice where humanity may tip over into a future of climate crisis. This idea of passing the threshold or falling into the abyss requires us to imagine that we are safely on the side of the climate change ledge in the here and now.

locations or into the future when their children are frozen with anxiety in their homes and in the here and now.

The experience Margolin describes in her opening sentence isn't solely individual but has become common enough—primarily among Generation Z—that there is now a term for it: ecoanxiety.[46] Extrapolating from Margolin's description, ecoanxiety combines many experiences: it is mental (panic) and embodied (curled up into a ball). We might read these experiences through the rubric of disability studies: ecoanxiety represents a particular body-minded state that spatially and temporally responds to climate crisis. It describes being frozen in the present because of the threat of impending ecological disaster looming in the not-so-distant future. However, ecoanxiety extends beyond how we might typically conceive of body-minded experiences, as it also limits the temporality of the imagination. Margolin writes, "I struggle to imagine that I will even be alive at a time where civilization isn't feeling the effects of the climate crisis."[47] Here, the temporality of ecoanxiety involves being spatially suspended in the present in a way that makes imagining the future impossible. Ecoanxiety therefore blurs the line between climate temporality and embodied spatiality, describing an embody-minded response to climate crisis. It is this unique body-minded experience of ecoanxiety that ultimately prompts Margolin's reproductive vision.

At first, Margolin turns to hope rather than reproduction as an affective counter to ecoanxiety. Margolin defines hope not as a feeling, but as an act, writing, "My hope is working every waking minute fighting for air that is clean, water that is drinkable, and a planet that is

[46] Susan Clayton et al., *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, 2017), 7. The report explicitly defines ecoanxiety as "a chronic fear of environmental doom." Clayton et al., *Mental Health*, 68.
[47] Margolin, "The Day."

livable."[48] For Margolin, hope is something one *does*, and she explains her own activist work through this lens. For instance, Margolin writes elsewhere, "So now I am a hopeful activist. You can't motivate the world with one giant existential crisis, but you can motivate them with a hope of a brighter future."[49] In this sense, doing hope is both individual and collective: individual in that it drives Margolin's personal activist work, and also collective in that it motivates others to similarly act on the climate crisis. If ecoanxiety involves being frozen in time and space, doing hope at first seems to be a way to break out of this spatial-temporal suspension and engage in action.

However, Margolin ultimately turns from hope to reproduction as a way out of ecoanxiety. She notes that sometimes, too, hope-as-action also becomes too overwhelming in the midst of already-debilitating ecoanxiety. She explains, "But even that kind of 'doing-hope' sometimes gets to be too much for me."[50] Thus, while doing hope at first seems to be a solution to ecoanxiety, it does not on its own offer a way out. It is at the moment when hope-as-action becomes too much that Margolin turns instead to reproduction via a hypothetical vision. She claims, "When I find myself in that dark trench, my thoughts in a downward spiral of 'the world is ending', there is one thought that pulls me out: my future kids."[51] Thus, the idea of her future children draws Margolin out of her body-minded experience of ecoanxiety and its attendant apocalyptic visions of the end of the world.

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[48] Margolin, "The Day."
[49] Indi Howeth, "ACE Interview: Co-Founder of Zero Hour, Jamie Margolin Details What She's Learned About Balancing Mental Health and Activism," *Alliance for Climate Education*, February 4, 2021, https://acespace.org/2021/02/04/ace-interview-jamie-margolin/.
[50] Margolin, "The Day."
[51] Margolin, "The Day."

This shift to her future children is peculiar, first because Margolin is a child at the time of writing. One might expect a parent to make a claim of this sort—"My kids keep me going"—but Margolin is a child herself. Thus, it is merely the specter of reproduction—a sort of reproductive potential and a hypothetical future family—that motivates Margolin enough to "pull [her] out" of a nearly-catatonic state. This vision therefore achieves a temporal shift: while at the opening of the essay Margolin depicts herself as child-like, the vision positions Margolin simultaneously as a present child and a future adult/parent. Positioning herself as a future parent permits Margolin to make a plea to contemporary adults along the lines of the traditional political discourse that Edelman critiques (we must give our children a future), but at the same time her position as a current child complicates this scenario (you must give me a future so I can one day give my children a future). The complex temporalities of this future scene therefore rhetorically enact changes in conceptions of both reproduction and futurity. Sheldon, analyzing a short film shown at the start of the 2009 COP15 (and before the emergence of the youth environmental activist as a cultural figure) that used footage of children pleading with the audience to save the planet, explains this conceptual shift: "The child advocates for the planet because she stands in metonymic figuration not only of the ecologically precarious world but also of all the children who will come to live in it and in whose name we should pursue environmental action. The child, then, advocates for a particular kind of action with regard to the life-itself for which she is a potent metonymy: specifically, management over the future to protect the future's children."[52] Following Sheldon, Margolin's appeal is simultaneously peculiar and mundane—it draws on a lineage of ecological discourse leveraging the child across temporalities to manage the future.

[52] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 26.

Margolin's reproductive vision is perhaps more definitively peculiar in its homonormativity—it seems to replicate precisely the political appeal to reproductive futurism that Edelman critiques. As Edelman writes, "It is true that the ranks of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and transgendered parents grow larger every day, and that nothing intrinsic to the constitution of those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, or queer predisposes them to resist the appeal of futurity, to refuse the temptation to reproduce, or to place themselves outside or against the acculturating logic of the Symbolic."[53] In imagining herself as a future parent, Margolin appears to situate herself within the ranks of lesbian parents reinforcing the logic of the Symbolic. While Margolin otherwise engages in a complex critique attentive to structural oppression, in this hypothetical vision she seems to buy into an assimilative notion of reproductive futurism.

However, I read Margolin's hypothetical vision as offering reproductive futurism *with difference*. In its homonormativity, Margolin's reproductive vision most certainly maintains the version of reproductive futurism Edelman critiques. But, by predicating her reproductive vision on the destruction of the structural conditions that created the Anthropocene—conditions that also uphold the social order—she simultaneously defies the logics of reproductive futurism. It is not my goal to recuperate the homonormativity of Margolin's text or to name her reproductive vision as queer. Instead, I take her vision seriously in spite of its homonormativity to consider how Margolin leverages the conditions of the Anthropocene to both uphold and challenge reproductive futurism. Margolin articulates reproductive futurism with difference by tying together reproduction and structural social change through a loop of conditionality, or the conditional "if." While "if" statements in general imply conditionality, I use the term *conditional*

[53] Edelman, *No Future,* 17.

"if" to doubly emphasize the rhetorical work that these statements do in Margolin's writing. In particular, the statements set up recursive loops and spirals that tie futurity and reproduction to social and environmental change.

Margolin deploys the conditional "if" to elaborate on her reproductive plans. She explains how she will decide to reproduce: "*If* the world changes into a place suitable to bring more humans into it, I see myself and my future wife with kids, watching them grow up in a world that has freed itself from our destructive fossil fuel-poisoned ways."[54] For Margolin, a "suitable" world would be one in which the climate crisis has abated and the planet is inhabitable, and also one in which oppressive structures like colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and capitalism have been dismantled. Because Margolin views these oppressive structures as underlying the climate crisis, addressing the crisis and creating a "suitable" world involves recognizing the planetary and the social as inseparably intertwined. While Margolin's conditional "if" recognizes the inseparability of climate justice and social justice, her syntax also implicitly constructs a loop: Margolin contends that "if" she can change the world enough in terms of both the climate and social justice crises, she will be able to bring children into it. At the same time, in her view, "if" she can bring children into the world, there will have been an end to both the climate crisis and structural oppression. Indeed, the entirety of Margolin's hypothetical vision hinges on this conditional "if," as she uses the remainder of her piece to imagine the world that her future child might inhabit.

Margolin deploys a complex temporality that links the present and the future to describe the conditions necessary for her to reproduce. On the first side of the conditional "if" loop, she suggests that if she and other activists are able to change the world enough, she will be able to

[54] Margolin, "The Day" (emphasis mine).

have kids. She expands on the action necessary to bring about this future world in which reproduction is possible later in her essay: "Because in order to get to this world, it will have taken many long and hard fights and sacrifices. It will have taken students all over the world protesting and striking from school until we practically shut the whole system down and forced our governments to change. Communities will have come together to block and officially put a permanent halt to all fossil fuel projects, deforestation and habitat destruction. Grassroots activists will have educated, served, and mobilized their communities to build solutions for themselves."[55] The temporality operating in this speculative reproductive vision is convoluted: Margolin, in 2019, as a child, projects herself into an undated future, where she is an adult with children of her own. From this hypothetical position as a future adult, Margolin then looks back on herself as a child in 2019 (the actual present) to argue for actions that are necessary in 2019 to make this hypothetical future reproductive world possible. In this sense, the first part of Margolin's conditional "if" loop—*if I can change the world*—offers instruction for the present from a projected future to create the conditions necessary for reproductive futurism. The figure of the Child, in its purported universalizing abstraction, does not speak but rather relies on adults to make appeals to the future on its behalf. In contrast, Margolin plays with complex temporalities through the first part of the conditional "if" loop to speak as a current child appealing for her own future and as a future adult making traditional appeals on her child's behalf. Margolin makes an appeal both *as* the Child and *for* her child. We might understand this appeal as tied to the Anthropocene itself. In her historical contextualization of the child, Sheldon writes, "This shift in focus from the child in need of salvation to the child who saves coincides historically with the first articulation of the Anthropocene, or the geological period characterized

[55] Margolin, "The Day."

by human geoscale impact first theorized by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoemer [*sic*]."[56] If the child who saves emerged alongside the "first articulation of the Anthropocene," in our present Anthropocenic moment, the youth environmental activist figures herself simultaneously as in need of salvation and as a sort of savior of the planet for her future child.

Margolin further deploys the conditional "if" to link reproduction and social and climate justice. On the other side of the conditional "if" loop, she suggests that if she can bring children into the world, there will have been an end to structural oppressions. The majority of the second half of Margolin's essay focuses on describing what this world without structural oppressions will look like, including: "Science and indigenous wisdom will coexist," "People with disabilities and chronic illnesses will no longer get left behind," and "Indigenous communities, immigrant communities, black communities, communities of color, the LGBT community, and communities in the global south will have all been given the justice and reparations they deserve."[57] The world where Margolin is capable of reproduction is a world without injustice. To readers, the changes necessary to create this world might seem insurmountable within the next few decades, which is presumably the timeframe when Margolin will decide whether to have children. However, I'm also reminded here of Alexis Pauline Gumbs's claim that feminist theorist Sylvia Wynter teaches us that "scholars in the humanities, and cultural workers more generally, have a responsibility for what is and is not imaginable in their lifetimes."[58] What is important for my analysis is not whether these structural changes are or are not possible in the next few decades, but that Margolin's use of the conditional "if" relies on an end of structural oppression in order for her to imagine herself having children. The second half of Margolin's

[56] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 6.
[57] Margolin, "The Day."
[58] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Dub: Finding Ceremony* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), x.

loop—*if the world changes*—thus situates reproduction as contingent upon remedying structural oppressions. In this loop, if humans do not address the many forms of violence enacted on both humans and the planet, reproduction will not even be possible. If Margolin does not end up reproducing, it is not so much that she is withholding her reproductive labor, but that the social and environmental conditions of the world are so dire as to be unsurvivable for her hypothetical child. Thus, if she does not reproduce, it is because she *can't*. The conditional "if" therefore sets up the achievement of social and environmental justice as the conditions for reproduction, challenging the racialized heteronormativity underlying traditional appeals to reproductive futurism. In other words, Margolin's reproductive vision does not merely replicate the social order, but imagines an entirely different anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-ableist, and anti-homophobic society that her child will inherit. Margolin's Latinx, Jewish "kid" of lesbian parents who will inherit the social order of a planet without structural oppression is not the same Child at the center of Edelman's critique.

Considering the loop in its entirety, the conditional "if" operates to articulate reproductive futurism with difference. Sheldon explains the typical role of the child in ecological discourse: "It is on behalf of, but also through, the child that the present may be safely reproduced as the future, forming a closed loop via generation."[59] Margolin's conditional "if" creates its own loop, interrupting this "closed loop" in which the future is always figured as identical to the present. Instead, Margolin's conditional "if" relies on a future that is structurally different from the conditions of the present. In her hypothetical vision, Margolin replicates homonormativity but challenges racialized heteronormativity through an iteration of reproductive futurism that attempts to write marginalized children into the future. Her

[59] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 29.

articulation of reproductive futurism is not about maintaining the social order for the sake of the white, heteronormative Child, but about creating a world where people of color, Indigenous people, disabled people, and queer people who have never been the "sovereign princes of futurity" might have a livable future.[60] When racialized heteronormativity has excluded people of color, Indigenous people, disabled people, and queer people from appeals to futurity, and when Anthropocene conditions mean that even white, cisgender, heterosexual men are headed toward "no future," insisting on the future can become a world-building move. As Kim Q. Hall writes in an intersectional critique of Edelman, "In the context of climate change, it seems very problematic, if not irresponsible, to dismiss the future as hopelessly hetero-and homonormative and, therefore irrelevant for queers."[61]

Indeed, the conditional "if" links futurity, reproduction, and world-building: a connection made evident in Margolin's essay that also extends beyond it into a generational sentiment. Specifically, Margolin's future vision rhetorically connects reproduction at the individual level to a world-building project. She elaborates on the link between climate justice, social justice, and reproduction in her imagined future: "When I close my eyes and imagine the world my kids live in, I imagine a world that has finally healed. In this world, we're healed from our deadly fossil fuel addiction . . . . The patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and excessive, abusive capitalism that caused the climate crisis will have been addressed."[62] There is a shift happening here: the world "has . . . healed," which means that the roots of "the climate crisis *will have been* addressed." In the first part of this statement, the subject of "healing" appears to be both planetary and human:

[60] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 95.
[61] Kim Q. Hall, "No Failure: Climate Change, Radical Hope, and Queer Crip Feminist Eco-Futures," *Radical Philosophy Review* 17, no. 1 (2017): 216.
[62] Margolin, "The Day."

presumably, the planet has begun the process of geological healing from the harm of the climate crisis, while the "we're healed" also invokes the human population. However, the shift to this passive "will have been addressed" obscures any sort of subject actively doing the *addressing*. Instead, Margolin's use of passive voice rhetorically works to connect reproduction and a solution to the structural issues behind the climate crisis; a particular subject or action does not make dismantling the roots of the climate crisis possible, but instead the hypothetical vision of reproduction itself creates this possibility. Margolin's hypothetical vision of reproduction is doing the work behind "will have been addressed," acting as a world-building project that links reproductive futurism with an end of structural oppression. This end of structural oppression represents a queer utopian world where patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and capitalism no longer exist.

In many ways, Margolin's description in "The Day" depicts a Muñozian queer utopian vision: not only has the planet healed from ecological harms humans have inflicted upon it, but society has also healed from all of the violent structures that oppress people and that created the climate crisis in the first place. Yet, the utopia of "The Day" contrasts with Margolin's other hypothetical visions of the near future. For example, approximately a year before writing "The Day," Margolin published an Op-Ed on CNN that depicts an apocalyptic future. She describes this hypothetical future:

> When I think of adulthood, I see my home being flooded, I see deathly heat waves, droughts, famine and intense, deadly storms.
>
> I see insects, allergens, and diseases spreading to places where they shouldn't naturally be. I see countless people dying from toxic drinking water, food full of chemicals, and air thick with pollutants. I see millions upon millions of refugees fleeing

homes in regions that have become uninhabitable. I see wars and conflict over dwindling resources."[63]

Crucially, what prompts this hypothetical vision of future destruction is "adulthood," or, implicitly, Margolin's vision of herself individually in the future. In contrast, in "The Day," what prompts Margolin's hypothetical vision is thinking about her wife and kids. When Margolin thinks about her personal future she imagines a dystopian world, but when she thinks of her familial future she imagines a utopian one. In other words, this vision of kinship and reproduction permits Margolin's shift from a dystopian to a utopian future. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz "argues against anti-antirelationality by insisting on the essential need for an understanding of queerness as collectivity."[64] He continues, "I respond to Edelman's assertion that the future is the province of the child and therefore not for the queers by arguing that queerness is primarily about futurity and hope."[65] In this sense, Margolin's turn to kinship counteracts the individualism of Edelman's articulation of the antisocial. Instead, it enacts Muñoz's "understanding of queerness as collectivity." As I explore further in Chapter Two, in the conditions of the Anthropocene, this collective vision of futurity helps counter the impending "no future" of the planet. While Edelman polemically dismisses reproductive futurism, here, reproductive futurism becomes foundational to imaging collective utopias in a moment of climate crisis.

To conclude my study of Margolin, I want to return to the peculiarity of her utopian reproductive vision. Curiously, Margolin is able to expansively imagine a world without climate

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[63] Jamie Margolin, "Dear Leaders: You've Failed Your Children on Climate Change," *CNN*, Opinion, April 22, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/22/opinions/jamie-margolin-climate-change/index.html.
[64] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 11.
[65] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 11.

crisis, patriarchy, racism, colonialism, ableism, and capitalism in the next few decades, but she is incapable of imagining queer kinship outside of the homonormative family. Indeed, Margolin remains invested in the family as a very particular and very limiting form—"myself and my future wife with kids."[66] As her hypothetical vision demonstrates, Margolin's future family is resolutely homonormative in its replication of norms of monogamy, reproduction, and respectability. Margolin elaborates on her familial vision, describing it through a homonormative appeal to assimilation: "This world will wholeheartedly love and accept people just like me and my future wife: two women married and in love with each other, raising our kids together just like any other family." [67] While Margolin imagines tearing down patriarchy, racism, colonialism, ableism, and capitalism, she imagines merely assimilating into heteronormativity, being "wholeheartedly love[d] and accept[ed]" through a homonormative nuclear familial structure. It is as if this homonormative nuclear family is necessary for Margolin to envision a world where all other structural violence no longer exists. In her preoccupation with her future wife and kids, she overlooks how the homonormative nuclear family form emerged out of the very patriarchal, racist, colonialist, ableist, and capitalist structures she longs to dismantle. How might readers reconcile this foundational reliance on the homonormative nuclear family with notions of queer futurity?

Here, I want to dwell on what is queer about Margolin's vision—not *queer* as in outside of normative sexuality, but *queer* as in odd, peculiar, or unsettling. I admit that I am unsettled by Margolin's vision. While I take her work seriously, I also wonder why she remains invested in such an uninspired understanding of kinship. I want to project my own hypothetical queer futures

[66] Margolin, "The Day."
[67] Margolin, "The Day."

onto her; I want her to imagine kinship, too, queerly and expansively. When I read her desire for assimilative acceptance, the tension between my understanding of queer futurity and her homonormative futures leaves me unsettled, disturbed. In these moments, I am reminded of Edelman's claim—one of the few I don't disagree with—"queerness can never define an identity; it can only every disturb one."[68] Might what is queer (unsettling) in Margolin's work disturb my own attachment to queer (anti-normative) futurity? And so, I do not attempt to reconcile the contradictions in Margolin's vision—I leave them unresolved, disturbingly queer as they may be.

Tokata Iron Eyes: Spiraling Hope and Reproductive Past-Present-Futurism

Indigenous youth environmental activist Tokata Iron Eyes offers a vision of reproductive futurism distinct from Margolin's. Iron Eyes is an Indigenous and climate activist and a member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. Iron Eyes, who is currently eighteen years old, first began her activism when she was nine by protesting a uranium mine on Indigenous lands. She also gained notoriety when she was twelve for her actions as a water protector at the Dakota Access Pipeline protests. Iron Eyes, whose name *Tokata* means future, continues to emphasize the necessity of centering Indigenous voices in climate justice conversations, and she has spoken worldwide about this issue.[69] In this section, I focus on Iron Eyes's reproductive vision in *My Name Means Future*. Available online, *My Name Means Future* is a film about Iron Eyes by Andrea Bowers released in 2020. The film was originally the central piece in Bowers's art installation "Think of Our Future" at the Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York.[70] While Bowers's art installation sought

[68] Edelman, *No Future,* 17.
[69] "Tokata Iron Eyes," Earth Guardians, accessed April 27, 2021, https://www.earthguardians.org/speakers-bureau/tokata-iron-eyes.
[70] "Andrea Bowers," Andrew Kreps Gallery, accessed November 5, 2021, http://www.andrewkreps.com/exhibitions/andrea-bowers4/press-release.

to engage with eco-feminism broadly through other artwork surrounding the video installation, Iron Eyes's perspective in *My Name Means Future* is distinctly an Indigenous feminist perspective. The film follows Iron Eyes to several sacred sites, where she discusses her relationship with the Land, her Indigenous culture, and her activism. In these discussions, Iron Eyes offers an Indigenous feminist politics of reproductive past-present-futurism that again enacts reproductive futurism with difference.[71]

In *My Name Means Future*, Iron Eyes explains how her Indigenous feminist perspective emerges as a response to the genocide of Indigenous people and ongoing colonial violence directed especially against Indigenous women and the land. The film begins with then-sixteen-year-old Iron Eyes standing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which is where she lived at the time. More specifically, as the film opens she stands in the midst of a landscape: behind a large puddle with a backdrop of green slightly rolling hills and a cloudy blue sky, with roads crisscrossing in the background. Iron Eyes tells viewers that she is at the site of the Massacre of Wounded Knee, which her great-great grandfather survived as a baby, though everyone else with him was among the more than three hundred adults and children murdered. It is standing against this landscape and its history that Iron Eyes tells viewers about her Indigenous feminist perspective, which is especially motivated by violence against Indigenous women and a commitment to protecting both women and the Earth. She says, "I think of myself as a feminist, simply by being an Indigenous woman and the world that I live in today because I live in a time

[71] As I explain above, I contend that Iron Eyes offers an *Indigenous feminist* politics rather than a *queer* politics. I understand Iron Eyes's Indigenous feminist perspective as making an important intervention into reproductive futurism, an intervention that holds significance for how we theorize queer futurity.

where my aunties and sisters go missing and are murdered around me."[72] Iron Eyes explains that it makes sense for her to work to protect the people she loves, including herself and the Earth, which she views as a "feminine power."[73] She continues by linking the fossil fuel industry's logic of extraction to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, noting that when industries come into Indigenous communities they often bring violence. Iron Eyes explains that she came to know her aunt, Olivia Lone Bear, through news headlines after Lone Bear was murdered. Iron Eyes thus discusses landscapes of past and present colonial and environmental violence, which she makes sense of through Indigenous feminism, before mentioning the idea of her future children.

In the final scene filmed on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and immediately following her discussion of her aunt's murder, Iron Eyes turns the conversation toward her future children. She says, "My *hopes* for the future would one day to be able to live here [on the Pine Ridge Reservation] and bring *hopefully* my future children with me back to this place and be able to look on it not as a place of sadness and hardship but as a place of joy and prosperity because I know that the people who died for this land and for me to be able to be here would want that also."[74] In this reproductive vision, Iron Eyes does not frame her future children in terms of the conditional "if"; instead, she frames them in terms of hope. It is not that Iron Eyes questions whether she will be able to reproduce, but that the hypothetical hopeful future might offer a time and space of healing from past and present violence. The idea of hope serves to interrupt the transmission of this ongoing violence and permits her to imagine a different world for her

[72] Andrea Bowers, *My Name Means Future*, accessed May 3, 2021, https://vimeo.com/389620075.
[73] Bowers, *My Name Means Future*.
[74] Bowers, *My Name Means Future* (emphasis mine).

children. Further, Iron Eyes's reproductive vision is not explicitly tied to the fate of the planet as a whole, but instead to the particular landscape at Pine Ridge. Her statement is perhaps more centrally a statement about the land than a statement about her future family, but her potential children help her imagine the land otherwise. Through her meditation on the land, she hopes to bring her children back to Pine Ridge, and she hopes that the location will evoke different emotions for them than it does for her.

Several scenes later in *My Name Means Future*, Iron Eyes again tangentially mentions her future children; crucially, what Iron Eyes reproduces in this vision is not so much the nuclear family, but her Lakota culture. In this scene, filmed in the Badlands in South Dakota, or the *mako sica* in the Lakota language, Iron Eyes discusses the violence Indigenous people have historically endured through the boarding school system, which in particular sought to eradicate Indigenous languages. In reflecting on this violence, which was inflicted on her grandmother when she was forced to attend boarding school as a child, Iron Eyes says, "For me, something that's always been a huge *hope* of mine, is to be able to um sing my Indigenous songs and speak my language with my grandma before she passes away."[75] She then turns from her grandmother's experiences of violence to the present, where she notes that many children are learning the Lakota language in schools. She states, "The *hope* is that one day I'll be able to teach my kids their own language first."[76] While this statement is perhaps more explicitly about language than Iron Eyes's familial futures, she again frames this second and final mention of her future children in terms of hope. Iron Eyes mentions her future children to explain something she hopes to be able to do with them—teach them Lakota as their first language. She evokes one

[75] Bowers, *My Name Means Future* (emphasis mine).
[76] Bowers, *My Name Means Future* (emphasis mine).

sense of reproduction ("my kids") to think about cultural reproduction ("my language"). While Margolin imagines hypothetical children to consider what the world might be like in the near-future, Iron Eyes considers what the world might be like in the near future to imagine the Lakota culture her children will inherit. Iron Eyes's vision is thus ultimately about cultural survival.

Iron Eyes's evocations of her culture and children through hope work across temporal time scales. In particular, she deploys Indigenous conceptions of time that resist divisions between the past, present, and future. Nick Estes explains how an overlapping notion of time opposes settler temporal conceptualizations and is imperative for Indigenous knowledge. Writing about the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, he explains, "Settler narratives use a linear conception of time to distance themselves from the horrific crimes committed against Indigenous people and the land. . . . But Indigenous notions of time consider the present to be structured entirely by our past and by our ancestors. There is no separation between past and present, meaning that an alternative future is also determined by our understanding of the past. Our history is the future."[77] Iron Eyes, who became well-known as an activist for her role in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, conceptualizes reproduction through this Indigenous temporal framework. She integrates notions of the past and present with her future visions, such that her visions are not merely examples of reproductive futurism, but reproductive past-present-futurism. In the first instance where she mentions her future children, Iron Eyes references "the people who died for this land and for me" in the same sentence that she mentions children. This reference therefore brings together the past ("the people who died"), the present (Iron Eyes herself), and the future ("my future children"). Similarly, in the second instance where she

[77] Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso Books, 2019), 14-15.

mentions her future children, Iron Eyes raises her desire to speak and sing in the Lakota language with her grandmother immediately before discussing her hope that her children will learn Lakota as their first language. In this reference, Iron Eyes brings together older generations (her grandmother as well as Indigenous elders whose language was repressed by residential schools), present generations (Iron Eyes herself), and future generations (her children) through her hopes about the Lakota language. While Estes claims that "Our history is the future" both in the title of his work and in the text itself, as the title of Bowers's film emphasizes, *Tokata* also means future. We might recognize Iron Eyes's reproductive visions as situating "Our history is [Tokata.]" By articulating a reproductive past-present-futurism that involves transmitting Lakota culture to her children, Iron Eyes links Lakota history and her future.

Iron Eyes's reproductive past-present-futurism exactly depicts José Esteban Muñoz's description of hope as a critical methodology. He writes, "My approach to hope as a critical methodology can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision."[78] In glancing backward in time to "the people who died" and to her grandmother, Iron Eyes "enacts a future vision" of her children. Muñoz's word choice of "enacts" is important; the backward glance is not merely a vision, but it also does something, or is productive. In Chapter Two I argue that Muñoz's visions of the future, which do not account for climate change, are no longer tenable in Anthropocene conditions. Here, however, Iron Eyes deploys Muñoz's *methodology* to re-envision futurity via hope in a way that accounts for the climatic present. In other words, she does not merely replicate Muñoz's non-environmental vision, but instead actualizes Muñoz's method to bring about Indigenous futures from within the polluted present. Hope shifts from being simply an affect to being a critical methodology, and a methodology that is distinctly

[78] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 4.

temporal. Iron Eyes demonstrates how this critical methodology can reach across temporalities to bring about futures despite the toxic conditions of the past and present.

The temporal aspects of Iron Eyes's reproductive vision, coming out of her perspective as an Indigenous person, exemplify what Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte has termed "spiraling time."[79] Whyte explains this concept, which draws on several different Indigenous cultures' understandings of time: "a perspective embedded in a spiraling temporality (sense of time) in which it makes sense to consider ourselves as living alongside future and past relatives simultaneously as we walk through life. Spiraling time . . . refers to the varied experiences of time that we have as participants within living narratives involving our ancestors and descendants."[80] Thus, spiraling time understands ancestors and descendants as overlapping in the present—a figuration distinctly divergent from psychoanalysis's understanding of the Oedipal. In spiraling time, visions of descendants, or of future reproduction, do not exist solely in the future, but are part of the experience of the present as well. Whyte elaborates, "The form of philosophizing that is promoted by these questions, I claim, is counterfactual dialogue. It is a dialogue in which—without full information—we speculate on how our ancestors and our future generations would interpret today's situations and what recommendations they would make for us as guidance for our individual and collective actions."[81] In this sense, spiraling time is an Indigenous means of acting in the present moment while being guided by how both ancestors and descendants would be and will be impacted by those actions. Because Iron Eyes's visions of her descendants, which she makes in the present, are also tied to her ancestors, her understanding of reproduction exemplifies Whyte's spiraling time. However, because Iron Eyes centrally

[79] Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction)," 229.
[80] Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction)," 229.
[81] Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction)," 229.

embeds hope into these visions, and because hope itself takes on temporal aspects as a critical methodology, Iron Eyes offers a vision of reproduction that, extending Whyte's claims, I call "spiraling hope." Both of her visions not only bring together ancestors and descendants, but they also do so through the lens of hope. Acting in the present via a critical methodology of hope to bring about futurity, Iron Eyes's articulates a reproductive past-present-futurism.

This notion of spiraling hope further sets Iron Eyes's articulation of reproductive futurism apart from Margolin's. While Margolin mentions the idea of "doing hope," or hope-as-action, Iron Eyes's spiraling hope draws on her cultural knowledge as an Indigenous person, her personal experiences with her ancestors and her descendants, and Indigenous conceptions of temporality. Margolin's belief that doing hope eventually becomes too much prompts her turn to hypothetical reproduction instead, while for Iron Eyes hope and reproduction are intertwined. For Margolin, reproduction is hypothetical, and thus best represented by the conditional "if," while for Iron Eyes, spiraling hope means that future descendants can exist not only hypothetically, but also as "living narratives" in the present moment. These "living narratives" guide Iron Eyes's visions of reproductive past-present-futurism.

Conclusion: The Figure of the Youth Environmental Activist and Queer Futurity

Individually, Margolin and Iron Eyes offer alternative versions of reproductive futurism. Tying reproduction to the end of structural oppressions, Margolin offers a reproductive futurism with difference. Grounded in her Indigenous feminist perspective, Iron Eyes's articulation of reproduction is centrally tied to hope and Indigenous understandings of time. While Margolin turns away from hope toward reproduction as a response to the climate crisis, Iron Eyes always articulates reproduction through hope. Deploying an Indigenous concept of spiraling, rather than linear, time, Iron Eyes offers less a politics of reproductive futurism and more a politics of

reproductive past-present-futurism. Ultimately, Margolin invests in reproduction by emphasizing the nuclear family as a form, while Iron Eyes invests in Indigenous cultural practices that she can pass on through reproduction. I read Iron Eyes's work alongside Margolin's to consider how youth environmental activists do not monolithically offer a singular, universalizing vision of reproductive futurism like that Edelman contests. Instead, youth environmental activists engage discourses of reproductive futurism from various perspectives, creating multiple articulations of their reproductive futures that oppose the Anthropocene conditions signaling "no future" for the planet.

Here, I want to shift from thinking about these individual articulations of reproductive futurism and return to the youth environmental activist as a figure. What might the Anthropocene figure of the youth environmental activist demonstrate about the antisocial figure of the Child? If the youth environmental activist is articulating reproductive futurism with difference, what does this signal for queer futurity?

Edelman's central dispute with the Child is that it is used to uphold the social order through its heteronormativity. Because of this heteronormativity, Edelman opposes the figure of the Child and the figure of the queer.[82] But, particular youth environmental activists interrupt the racialized heteronormativity of the social order, challenging its foundational racism, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism. Indeed, youth environmental activists like Margolin and Iron Eyes contend that these structuring logics of the social created Anthropocene conditions in the first

[82] Edelman's explanation here is complex, extending beyond heteronormativity into the death drive: "Bound up with the first of these death drives is the figure of the Child, enacting a logic of repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of the social order. Bound up with the second is the figure of the queer, embodying that order's traumatic encounter with its own inescapable failure, its encounter with the illusion of the future as suture to bind the constitutive wound of the subject's subjection to the signifier, which divides it, paradoxically, both from and into itself." *No Future,* 25-26.

place. To solve climate crisis, they insist, we must not *simply* reduce carbon emissions (as if that were a simple move). Instead, we must also restructure the racist, colonial, patriarchal, ableist, and capitalist conditions that have pushed us to this point of no planetary future. The youth environmental activist, then, does not necessarily replicate the social order like the figure of the Child. Instead, in pointing to the social's foundational violence and the way this violence impacts the Earth, she serves as a "mode of timekeeping" and imagines the future otherwise.[83]

In *No Future*, Edelman's ultimate polemical claim is that queers must refuse the future. He writes, "And so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively—to insist that the future stop here."[84] Yet, what prompts this imperative is Edelman's critique of the Child and the reproductive futurism it enables. If we consider the figure of the youth environmental activist and her reproductive futurism with difference instead, then queerness and futurity need not be inherently opposed. When the Anthropocene anticipates "no future" for the planet, an apocalyptic scenario that would continue to perpetuate racist, colonial, patriarchal, ableist, and capitalist violence, then perhaps what is "queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us" is to interrupt that violence and insist, alongside the youth environmental activist, that the future start here. In what follows, I explore what such an insistence might entail in the toxic temporalities of the Anthropocene.

[83] Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 3.
[84] Edelman, *No Future,* 31.

CHAPTER TWO
CRUISING DYSTOPIA: PLASTIC HORIZONS AND QUEER FUTURITY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Introduction: New (Plastic) Horizons

In the summer of 2009, several researchers set out on board the research vessel *New Horizon* in "the first scientific expedition to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch."[1] Chelsea Rochman, one of the researchers on the expedition, explains how the Garbage Patch was popularly conceptualized at the time as a landmass-like island of plastic floating in the middle of the ocean. However, on board the *New Horizon*, Rochman and her colleagues entered the Garbage Patch and instead discovered: "all of a sudden there were too many pieces of plastic to count . . . . Looking over the bow of the ship, we saw thousands of little pieces of plastic debris smaller than a pencil eraser. This was not a garbage patch but rather a soup of microplastic particles (particles <5 mm in size) with large plastic objects here and there."[2] The *New Horizon* expedition therefore clarified the huge magnitude of the plastic pollution problem: unlike fused plastic that could potentially be extracted from the water, tiny microplastic particles permeate the ocean in staggering quantities. Since this initial expedition, plastics have been found on "the surface of every ocean," in "the deep sea," in "sea ice," and at "every level of the food web."[3] Additionally, plastics have even been found as components in sea salt and dust.[4]

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[1] Chelsea M. Rochman, "The Story of Plastic Pollution: From the Distant Ocean Gyres to the Global Policy Stage," *Oceanography* 33, no. 3 (2020): 61.
[2] Rochman, "The Story of Plastic Pollution," 61.
[3] Rochman, "The Story of Plastic Pollution," 61. Borelle et al. estimate that between nineteen and twenty-three million metric tons of plastic entered the ocean in 2016. They predict that this number will rise to up to fifty-three million metric tons by 2030. Stephanie B. Borrelle et al., "Predicted Growth in Plastic Waste Exceeds Efforts to Mitigate Plastic Pollution," *Science* 369, no. 6510 (2020): 1516.
[4] Rochman, "The Story of Plastic Pollution," 60, 64.

As the researchers on board the *New Horizon* entered the Garbage Patch and found themselves in a soup of plastic pollution, they quite literally encountered a new horizon. Rochman notes how this discovery "demonstrated a need to shift from cleanup to the prevention of plastic emissions from land and maritime sources."[5] If such a shift was the scientific and environmental implication of the voyage, in this chapter I focus instead on the not yet noted, but nevertheless important, shift in cultural perspectives on the horizon. If the horizon was once a site of hope and possibility, the *New Horizon* expedition demonstrates how it is now a site of pollution and destruction.

In contrast to this new horizon characterized by previously unfathomable levels and types of plastic pollution, José Esteban Muñoz directly locates queerness in the (old) horizon. In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, published the same year as the *New Horizon* expedition, Muñoz situates the horizon as a key figure in his theoretical exploration of queer futurity and queer utopia. He writes, "queerness is always in the horizon. I contend that if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon."[6] Of course, Muñoz is not talking literally about landscapes; rather, he invokes the horizon to define queerness through "futurity and hope."[7] Yet, as Rochman's experience on the *New Horizon* and infamous disasters like the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill indicate, the hopeful horizons of the beginning-of-the-twenty-first-century past are not the same as the new horizons of the present.[8] If the horizon is a metaphor for queer futurity, then the environmental

[5] Rochman, "The Story of Plastic Pollution," 61.
[6] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11 (emphasis mine).
[7] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11.
[8] Ocean plastic pollution absolutely was a problem by the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, I mean to call attention to shifts in conceptualizations of the horizon—while ocean plastic pollution existed at that time, it was not a connotation of *horizon* as I claim it is now.

conditions of our present moment prompt us to think about queer futurity differently. I therefore offer a plastic provocation by turning from Muñoz's metaphorical horizons to literal horizons: How might queer theory account for the new horizons of the Anthropocene? Where are we to locate queerness in these polluted oceanic horizons? How might Anthropocene horizons shift conceptions of queer futurity and queer utopia? As I explore these questions, my primary intervention brings an environmental analysis to Muñoz's crucial concept of queer utopia to re-theorize queer futurity in our present moment characterized by increasingly critical climate change and pollution.

This chapter proceeds through a sequence of cultural responses that cruise polluted oceanic horizons to consider how Anthropocene conditions shift how we theorize queerly.[9] I take up cruising not as a sexual practice, but as a methodological metaphor for exploring the oceanic. First, I turn to a Greenpeace campaign, Choke, to think about how plastic pollution raises questions about queer utopia. I use the Choke campaign and plastic pollution as a means of exploring theoretical conceptions of dystopia and queer utopia. Next, I pivot away from the queer in its specificity and take up the *X-Press Pearl* incident, a shipping disaster that occurred off the coast of Sri Lanka, to examine how, in the Anthropocene, disaster is simultaneously spectacular and mundane. I analyze the *X-Press Pearl* disaster to argue that our present moment is an Anthropocene dystopia that has temporal ramifications. I use this argument to then return to the queer: If queer futurity and queer utopia are defined in contrast to normative temporality, then the temporal ramifications of Anthropocene dystopia necessarily impact how we theorize queerly. In conclusion, I turn to marine mammal practices of listening and echolocation as a

[9] For a feminist analysis of Anthropocene oceans, see Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

possible means of perceiving the horizon through ways that decenter human vision. I contend that such practices and perceptions help us consider how we might still work toward future queer utopias that extend beyond the human in the toxic conditions of the present. Overall, I trace how the mundane disasters of our Anthropocene present expose a dystopian reality that impacts the queer futures we can imagine. The dystopia of our Anthropocene present does not have to translate into future dystopia. But, if we are to hold on to and continue to strive for future queer utopias, we must begin to do so from the landscapes of our contaminated present.

Queer Utopia/Anthropocene Dystopia

On April 10, 2017, Greenpeace activists installed a two and a half ton sculpture, entitled *Plasticide*, blocking the entrance to Coca-Cola UK headquarters in London.[10] Made by artist Jason deCaires Taylor of pH neutral gray marine cement and surrounded by a frame of sand, the life-size sculpture depicts a family out for a day at the beach.[11] A man, clean cut and wearing a polo shirt and swim trunks, and a woman, wearing a bikini and sitting comfortably with her arm on the man's leg, appear the epitome of middle-class respectability and contentedness. The couple leans against a bench, their eyes downcast with slight smiles frozen on their faces. A cooler and three soft drink bottles surround the couple on their spot at the beach. Contrary to the happy adults, a sad-looking little girl sits on the bench behind them. Wearing water-floaties and goggles, her head tilts downward and a forlorn look marks her face. Across from her, a young boy with a volleyball under his arm sits with his head in his hand. He appears dejected as he

[10] Tom Bawden, "Greenpeace Dumps 2.5 Tonne Sculpture Outside Coca-Cola's HQ to Highlight Ocean Plastic Pollution," inews, April 10, 2017, https://inews.co.uk/news/environment/greenpeace-dumps-2-5-tonne-sculpture-outside-coca-colas-hq-highlight-ocean-plastic-pollution-57865.

[11] "Plasticide," Jason deCaires Taylor, accessed July 10, 2021, https://www.underwatersculpture.com/projects/plasticide/?doing_wp_cron=1625942284.5661070346832275390625.

looks toward the ground. The gray concrete and signs of middle-class status make the family seem unmarked and unremarkable, leaving space for passersby to imagine themselves in the sculpture's scene.

In addition to the family, five seagulls appear in the sculpture. Two of the gulls are actively vomiting mounds of plastic. Several other piles of plastic vomit surround the family. In contrast to the drab gray of the rest of the cement sculpture, the piles of vomit are a rainbow of vibrant colors—all made of plastic pulled from the ocean by a German marine clean-up organization.[12] It becomes clear that while the oblivious parents are enjoying their day at the beach, the vomiting and presumably dying seagulls provoke the children's sadness. This generational difference between the parents' and children's affective responses to their outing represents a larger social shift whereby activities that were once lighthearted, fun, and recreational are now associated with harm, suffering, and environmental decline.[13] To put it more bluntly: In the Anthropocene, spaces and objects that once connotated utopia now signal dystopia.

The Anthropocene and plastic, one of its paradigmatic objects, help to articulate the association between utopia and dystopia. In their introduction to *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*, Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash situate utopia and dystopia "as analytic categories of historical inquiry" that serve "as markers for *conditions of possibility*."[14] If utopia as a named concept emerged in the Renaissance, Gordin, Tilley, and

[12] "Plasticide," Jason deCaires Taylor.
[13] This is not to say that people from older generations do not care about environmental concerns. Rather, the parents symbolize attitudes from the past while the children represent attitudes from the present.
[14] Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash, *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4 (emphasis in original).

Prakash note that dystopia emerged only in the twentieth century.[15] They describe the relationship between these two historically situated concepts: "Despite the name, dystopia is not simply the opposite of utopia. A true opposite of utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society."[16] Produced by conditions of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and patriarchy to benefit the few at the expense of the many (human and non-human alike), the Anthropocene is a dystopian "utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society."

Further, dystopia's emergence as a concept of "utopia that has gone wrong" in the twentieth century roughly coincides with the exponential growth of industrial plastic production. Associations between plastic and utopia emerged only a few decades after the invention of the material. Susan Freinkel traces how early semi-synthetic materials, the precursors to modern plastic, began appearing in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century as more sustainable replacements for substances like ivory and tortoiseshell.[17] Primarily molded into substitutes for existing objects, like billiard balls and combs, plastic precursors evolved as

[15] While *dystopia* as term emerged only in the twentieth century (more specifically, its first use was in 1952), literature that critics now label as dystopian emerged at the end of the nineteenth. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "dystopia," accessed October 2, 2022, https://www-oed-com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/Entry/58909?redirectedFrom=dystopia#eid. For instance, for a literary analysis of dystopian literature in the nineteenth century see Jean Pfaelzer, "Parody and Satire in American Dystopian Fiction of the Nineteenth Century," *Science Fiction Studies* 7, no. 1 (1980): 61-72. For more on the emergence of the concept of dystopia through a literary lens, see Thomas Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000) and Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, eds., *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
[16] Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, *Utopia/Dystopia*, 1.
[17] Susan Freinkel, *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 16.

plastics chemistry advanced, and plastic became an innovative material that could be shaped into a multitude of objects. By the late 1920s—a decade still quite early in the history of plastic and before the true commercial plastic boom—people in the plastics industry were already hailing the dawn of the plastic age and touting plastic's utopian potential. As Jeffrey L. Meikle documents, those in the industry and consumers alike saw plastic as utopian due to its seemingly limitless material (and capitalist) potential to be molded into virtually *anything*, while at the same time they viewed it as a democratizing substance that could bring what were once luxury goods to a wider array of consumers.[18] Further, as Max Liboiron notes by drawing on Freinkel and Meikle's histories, in these early years, "plastic was described as an environmental good" because it replaced products derived from animals.[19] In spite of this optimistic outlook in plastic's past, the magnitude of plastic pollution, particularly ocean plastic pollution, in our Anthropocene present situates the material as a dystopian "utopia . . . gone wrong."[20] Indeed, utopia literally means "no place," a pun on the Greek "good place." However, literal places, like the landscape of the oceanic horizon, demonstrate plastic's present dystopian ramifications.

Developing in parallel during the twentieth century, plastic as a material and dystopia as a concept both now characterize our Anthropocene present. This development is not merely coincidental, but rather indicative of the social and environmental characteristics of our Anthropocene present. It is precisely the characteristics of plastic that once indicated its utopian promise—it's longevity and mutability—that now situate it as dystopian. Plastic can photodegrade, or break into smaller pieces due to light, but it does precisely that—break into

[18] Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), loc. 1196 of 6420, Kindle.
[19] Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 2.
[20] Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, *Utopia/Dystopia*, 1.

smaller and smaller pieces while only rarely molecularly breaking down.[21] That is, plastic retains its material identity as plastic—and thus its ability to pollute various ecosystems—as it breaks down into smaller particles, but it seldom decomposes into a substance other than plastic. This constant degradation rather than disintegration is what creates microplastics smaller than five millimeters in size and nanoplastics, or especially small microplastics (for instance, <150 μm) that are so minute that they can transfer out of the gut after ingestion and permeate other cells within an organism.[22] In this chapter, I explore how these material and temporal implications of plastic are refiguring our Anthropocene present and delimiting how we understand queer futurity.

DeCaires Taylor's sculpture and the larger Greenpeace campaign of which it was part highlight the environmental, temporal, and dystopian aspects of ocean plastic pollution through their emphasis on Coca-Cola.[23] While the sculpture had previously been installed outside the

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[21] Heather Davis, *Plastic Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 84.
[22] Chelsea Rochman et al., "Rethinking Microplastics as a Diverse Contaminant Suite," *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry* 38, no. 4 (2019): 709.
[23] Queer studies, and more often, trans studies, have considered notions of *plasticity* as a concept; however, until recently, these fields have not thoroughly grappled with *plastic* as a material. Heather Davis's *Plastic Matter*, which was published as this chapter was in the final stages of revision, is the first book on plastic that incorporates a queer theoretical analytic, though primarily only in one chapter. See Davis, *Plastic Matter*. Prior to the recent publication of Davis's text, in the few instances where queer theory has considered plastic as a material, research has primarily focused on endocrine disruptive compounds (EDCs), which mimic human hormones and thus shift sex expression. See Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward, "Toxic Sexes: Perverting Pollution and Queering Hormone Disruption," *O-Zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 1-12 and Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016) for cogent explorations of the relationship between queer theory and EDCs. Additionally, see Reena Shadaan and Michelle Murphy, "Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) as Industrial and Settler Colonial Structures: Towards a Decolonial Feminist Approach," *Catalyst* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1-36 for a decolonial feminist perspective. However, occasionally this research contends that plastic, which can release chemicals that act as endocrine disruptive compounds, queers human embodiment. Such arguments rely on a biological understanding of *queerness*, reducing its creative potential to differences in embodied sex expression.

Figure 2.1. Greenpeace activists installing Jason deCaires Taylor's *Plasticide* outside of Coca-Cola UK headquarters in London. (Reproduced by permission from Greenpeace Media. © 2017 by Jiri Rezac / Greenpeace.)

National Theatre in London, it was moved to Coca-Cola headquarters to launch a Greenpeace UK campaign, Choke.[24] A play on the name *Coke*, Choke mimics the recognizable Coca-Cola brand font and logo to draw attention to the role of the company in the ocean plastic crisis. The UK Choke campaign that began with this act of artistic protest eventually evolved into a global Greenpeace campaign.[25] Though the specific Choke campaign has now ended, environmental organizations remain internationally committed to reducing pollution by putting pressure on

[24] "Plasticide—A Monument to Coke's Plastic Pollution," Liberation Works, accessed July 10, 2021, https://liberationworks.co.uk/plasticide-a-monument-to-cokes-plastic-pollution.
[25] "Greenpeace Launches Global Campaign to Shrink Coke's Growing Plastic Footprint," Greenpeace, October 3, 2017, https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/greenpeace-launches-global-campaign-to-shrink-cokes-growing-plastic-footprint/.

companies like Coca-Cola to decrease their reliance on plastic.[26] While Coke is a paradigmatic example of the plastics problem, the issue extends far beyond The Coca-Cola Company. Just as *coke* can stand in for soda in general—for example in the question "Would you like a coke?"—so too does Coke come to represent the major global problem with plastic pollution from food and beverage packaging. The Greenpeace Choke campaign draws attention to the impacts of corporate plastic pollution, emphasizing how non-human animals consume plastic waste. Consumerism thus operates on dual fronts: Humans consume Coke from a multibillion dollar company, and non-human animals consume human waste. Choke thus confronts a dystopian reality through deCaires Taylor's statue: the once-utopian "environmental good" of plastic has grown into an Anthropocene dystopia of staggering proportions through corporate production, putting both human and non-human species at risk. Considered alongside other symptoms of the Anthropocene—rising sea levels, ocean acidification, increasing temperatures, and frequent climate-related weather disasters—pollution and climate change threaten the future.

Ironically, for Muñoz, Coca-Cola holds potential as a queer utopian object. In the introduction to *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz reads Frank O'Hara's 1960 poem, "Having a Coke with You," alongside Andy Warhol's 1962 silk screen *Coke Bottle*.[27] Muñoz considers these Cold War artistic renderings of Coke to argue that the artists use the object to represent a queer sense of utopia in the quotidian. In Muñoz's reading, both O'Hara and Warhol are able to "detect an

[26] "Coca-Cola It's Time to Stop Your Pollution at Source," Greenpeace, April 20, 2021, https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/coca-cola-its-time-to-stop-your-pollution-at-source/.
[27] While Muñoz references Warhol's silk screen *Coke Bottle* in the text of his analysis, he only includes an image of the ballpoint ink on Manila paper *Still-Life (Flowers)*, which depicts a Coke bottle holding flowers. This reference to the silk-screens but illustration of the sketch suggests the mobility of the bottle as an object.

opening and an indeterminacy in what for many people is a locked-down dead commodity."[28] For Muñoz, O'Hara and Warhol's depictions of Coke bottles open up the potential for queer connections, pleasures, and affective experiences based in quotidian acts of consumption that extend beyond the beverage itself. Muñoz writes, "Using Warhol's musing on Coca-Cola in tandem with O'Hara's words, I see the past and the potentiality imbued within an object, the ways it might represent a mode of being and feeling that was then not quite there but nonetheless an opening."[29] Muñoz's reading of the Coke bottles therefore locates utopia in the everyday as a means of moving beyond the present via the past and toward queer futures. In this sense, the Cokes referenced in O'Hara and Warhol are not *inherently* queer but become symbols of queer utopian potentiality in the mundane through the artists' deployments.

Coke appears incidentally in *Cruising Utopia*; Muñoz's overarching project takes up the realm of the aesthetic to examine queerness as a doing, longing, and mode of desiring that brings about future worlds. As the title quite obviously suggests, utopia is central to Muñoz's text. He defines the relationship between queerness and utopia, or what he calls *queer utopia*: "Queerness is utopian, and there is something queer about the utopian. . . . Indeed, to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer. To participate in such an endeavor is not to imagine an isolated future for an individual but instead to participate in a hermeneutic that wishes to describe a collective futurity."[30] In other words, queer utopia is defined as a *desire* for "another time and place" characterized by collective futures; it is what Muñoz refers to as a "then and there."[31] Thus,

[28] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 10th anniversary ed. (2009; New York: New York University Press, 2019), 9.
[29] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 9.
[30] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
[31] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.

queer utopia is summoned by affect and carries a temporal dimension: it is a mode of queer desire (affect) within straight time (temporal).[32]

Muñoz's concept of queer utopia is influenced by his engagement with Ernst Bloch and Frederic Jameson's ideas of utopia. For instance, Muñoz draws on Bloch to understand queer utopia through the lens of concrete utopias, or "a collectivity that is actualized or potential."[33] Nevertheless, *queer utopia* means something different than *utopia* without the modifier *queer* as referenced in high theory and literary criticism.[34] Muñoz queers the iteration of utopia that critical theorists offer, writing of his engagement with Bloch, "I am using Bloch's theory not as orthodoxy but instead to create an opening in queer thought."[35] Similarly describing his use of Jameson, Nishant Shahani explains how Muñoz's queer utopia is characterized by a "reject[ion of] the repudiation of sexual politics implicit in Jameson's critical utopianism.[36] Shahani explains, "Muñoz offers a useful antidote to critical utopianisms in which gender and sexuality are not only inadvertently marginalized but also considered insufficiently political."[37] *Queer* and *utopia* mutually inform each other such that *queer utopia* is a distinct affective practice of longing for other worlds within normative temporality.

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[32] Indeed, the title of Muñoz's introduction is "Feeling Utopia," emphasizing this affective dimension.
[33] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 3.
[34] For an analysis of the relationship between utopia as referenced by high theory and literary criticism and the Anthropocene, see Anahid Nersessian, "Utopia's Afterlife in the Anthropocene," in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (London: Routledge, 2017), 91-100. The absence of any mention of Muñoz in Nersessian's analysis further exemplifies that discourses in high theory and literary criticism on utopia and in queer theory on queer utopia are largely disparate.
[35] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 2.
[36] Nishant Shahani, "The Future is Queer Stuff: Critical Utopianism and Its Discontents," *GLQ* 19, no. 4 (2013): 547.
[37] Shahani, "The Future is Queer Stuff," 546.

This understanding of queer utopia makes possible the idea of queer futurity, or actions that work beyond the "here and now" and toward a "then and there."[38] For Muñoz, queerness and futurity, like queerness and utopia, are inherently linked. He writes of queer futurity: "We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain."[39] Muñoz's definition of queer futurity involves recognizing that the present is not enough and striving toward the future through a critical engagement with hope. This orientation toward the future is simultaneously an orientation toward queer utopia. He elaborates, "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world."[40] Thus, *queer futurity* describes actions that operate beyond the present to bring about future worlds, and *queer utopia* describes the collective desire of what those future worlds might look like. Both concepts are affective and temporal, orienting us toward queer times and places beyond the devastating realities of the present.

However, Muñoz theorized queer futurity and queer utopia when topics like climate change and pollution were on the periphery of queer studies scholarship. As I elaborate in the Introduction, at the time Muñoz was writing, it was still possible to imagine the future without questioning the state of the planet or the survival of humanity. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz claims: "Ultimately, we must insist on a queer futurity because the present is so poisonous and insolvent."[41] I follow Muñoz and insist that the future is worth striving for; nevertheless, our current environmental conditions alter the meaning of the "poisonous and insolvent" present. I

[38] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[39] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[40] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[41] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 30.

therefore shift from Muñoz's emphasis on the poisonous social world to my own analysis of the poisonous environmental world to theorize queer futurity and queer utopia from the conditions of the Anthropocene.[42] How might we act to bring about queer futurity and collectively desire queer utopia from our increasingly dystopian Anthropocene present?

I begin this section from the *Choke* campaign and bring up Muñoz's analysis of Warhol and O'Hara's Cokes not because I am concerned with the specificity of how Muñoz references the beverage in his text, but to instead trace a shift in perception: the object transforms from a symbol of the mundane potential of queer utopia to a symbol of mundane environmental disaster. This transformation of the Coke bottle metonymically represents the shift whereby climate change and pollution transmute what we might think of as queer utopian objects and, simultaneously, how we might theorize queer futures. I take up Coca-Cola plastic pollution and the broader idea of the oceanic that it references to examine how what was once imagined as utopian has become distinctly dystopian. In re-examining ideas of queer futurity and queer utopia from an Anthropocene perspective, I argue for queer utopian futures that begin from our dystopian present.

My argument for cultivating future queer utopias from within present Anthropocene dystopias diverges from other criticism at the intersection of queer theory and the environmental humanities. In Chapter One I explain that while this intersection is largely undertheorized, the scholars who have begun to think about queer futurity in the Anthropocene often do so by taking up Lee Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism. If the resonances between discourses of the Anthropocene and reproductive futurism are readily apparent, here I explore what we might learn

[42] While I make this shift to the environmental, I do not mean to separate out the social and the environmental. Social violence is inseparable from environmental violence, which I elaborate on in the Introduction.

from turning instead to a different antisocial debate concept—queer utopia—through the lens of the Anthropocene. Perhaps the most sustained engagement addressing climate change and queer utopia exists not in the field of queer theory but within theology, where Brian James Tipton analyses *Cruising Utopia* to make an intervention into biblical ecocriticism.[43] Within queer theory, scholars have more often incorporated brief mentions of queer utopia alongside more thorough discussions of the ecological implications of reproductive futurism. For instance, in *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination*, Nicole Seymour explains how the adoption of antisocial theories such as Edelman's means that "many queer theorists have reached a point at which they cannot imagine a queer futurity, and by extension, where they cannot imagine environmentalism, much less a queer one."[44] She then briefly counters, "But Muñoz's idea of queer utopianism . . . could inspire environmentalist agendas that seek to achieve positive ends without resorting to heterosexist, homophobic, or pro-reproductive ideologies."[45] Despite the near decade since Seymour's provocation, queer utopianism has not yet inspired environmentalist agendas. I heed her provocation about Muñoz's queer utopianism—not necessarily to spur environmentalist agendas, but to motivate queer theoretical ones.

In theorizing queer futurity and queer utopia, Muñoz is methodologically committed to "an associative mode of analysis that leaps between one historical site and the present."[46] He describes how he engages the work of other philosophers in this associative mode, writing, "I am

[43] Brian James Tipton, "A Backward Glance for a Queer Utopian Future: Genesis, Climate Change, and Hope as a Hermeneutic," *Biblical Interpretation* 28 (2020): 466-94.
[44] Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 8.
[45] Seymour, *Strange Natures,* 12.
[46] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 3.

using the occasion and example of Bloch's thought, . . . and other philosophers, as a portal to another mode of queer critique that deviates from dominant practices of thought existing within queer critique today."[47] Jumping across temporalities and spatialities, Muñoz follows and forges connections between theoretical approaches and objects of analysis that may on the surface seem disparate. In parallel, I employ "the occasion and example" of Muñoz's thought to push queer critique to account more thoroughly for realities of climate change and pollution. I deploy Muñoz's associative method to read his own work, bouncing across times and spaces to reconceptualize theories of queer futurity and queer utopia through an environmental lens.

Anthropocene Dystopia: The *X-Press Pearl* Disaster

I turn to the contaminated oceanic landscape off the coast of Sri Lanka: The *X-Press Pearl* disaster that occurred there is being hailed as "the worst maritime disaster in Sri Lanka's history."[48] Incidents involving plastic, oil, and chemical pollution flowing into the ocean are not uncommon,[49] so the *X-Press Pearl* disaster is unique in scale rather than in occurrence.[50] On May 10, 2021, the Singapore-based *X-Press Pearl* departed from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, heading for Malaysia. The cargo ship was hauling nitric acid, bunkering oil, caustic soda, sodium

[47] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 2.
[48] Zinara Rathnayake, "Sri Lankans Face up to 'Unmeasurable Cost' of Cargo Ship Disaster," *The Guardian*, June 4, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/04/sri-lankans-face-up-to-unmeasurable-cost-of-cargo-ship-disaster.
[49] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Raw Incident Data," Incident News, accessed September 3, 2021, https://incidentnews.noaa.gov/raw/index. In this sense, the *X-Press Pearl* incident is not necessarily exceptional, and I could have selected any number of recent environmental disasters at sea to examine here.
[50] Hassan Partow, a member of the United Nations Environment Programme's disaster response team, "said the disaster is the single-largest release of nurdles into the ocean ever reported." "Oil, Acid, Plastic: Inside the Shipping Disaster Gripping Sri Lanka," United Nations Environment Programme, July 22, 2021, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/oil-acid-plastic-inside-shipping-disaster-gripping-sri-lanka.

methoxide, cosmetic material, methanol, vinyl acid, and plastic across the sea.[51] While at the time of writing an investigation is ongoing, preliminary reports indicate that the crew noticed a leak in a nitric acid container on May 11, 2021.[52] As a result, the ship re-routed to Qatar and then India but was not allowed to unload the leaking container at either port due to complexities involving such a toxic chemical. So, the *X-Press Pearl* continued onward and was allowed to enter Sri Lankan waters despite being turned away from other ports. On May 20, 2021, fire first broke out on board the ship as it was anchored nine nautical miles off the western coast of Sri Lanka, likely ignited by the leaking nitric acid. By May 22, 2021, part of the cargo exploded. The *X-Press Pearl* continued to burn, prompting a second explosion three days later. As salvage experts attempted to tow the ship farther out to sea on June 2, 2021 to mitigate environmental impacts on the Sri Lankan coast, the ship sunk, still only nine nautical miles off the shore and still with hazardous cargo on board. By mid-June, a sheen was spotted on the water surrounding the sunken ship, indicating oil leaking from the wreckage. Experts contend that the disaster spilled approximately seventy-five tons of plastic nurdles (the lentil-sized pellets used to make plastic objects), twenty-five metric tons of nitric acid (a volatile chemical used to make both fertilizer and bombs), other toxic chemicals, and oil into the ocean.[53]

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[51] Laurel Wamsley, "Sri Lanka Faces an Environmental Disaster as a Ship Full of Chemicals Starts Sinking," NPR, June 2, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/1002484499 /sri-lanka-faces-environmental-disaster-as-ship-full-of-chemicals-starts-sinking; "Media Update on the MV X-Press Pearl," Marine Environment Protection Authority, accessed September 3, 2021, https://mepa.gov.lk/mv-x-press-pearl/.

[52] "X-Press Pearl: Ship Carrying Oil and Chemicals Poses a Serious Environmental Risk If It Sinks," BBC, Newsround, June 3, 2021, https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/57337244.

[53] Reports on the amount of plastic nurdles spilled in the disaster range from seventy to eighty tons depending on the news source. Aanya Wipulasena, "Dead Animals Wash Ashore in Sri Lanka After Ship Spills Chemicals," *New York Times*, published June 30, 2021, updated August 10, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/30/world/asia/sri-lanka-dead-animals-ship.html; Sarah Cahlan et al., "Tons of Toxic Cargo," *Washington Post*, June 15, 2021, https:// www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/sri-lanka-cargo-ship-fire-pollution/; Helen

By July 2, 2021, 176 dead turtles, 20 deceased dolphins, and 4 lifeless whales had washed ashore across Sri Lanka's coast.[54] Scientists caution that additional information is needed to directly link these marine deaths with the *X-Press Pearl* disaster—one might recall the familiar adage that "correlation does not prove causation." However, Sri Lankan environmentalists and coastal locals insist that the "exponential increase" in dead animals and embodied evidence in turtle carcasses with "scorch marks . . . , swollen eyes and salt glands, and red engorged blood vessels and legions [*sic*]" indicate an indisputable link between the ship fire, its chemical and plastic pollution, and these animals' deaths.[55] Moreover, various species of dead fish with bloated stomachs and plastic clogging their gills and mouths have drifted onto beaches.[56] In addition to the violence inflicted on marine animals and ecologies, people in Sri Lanka, who were already on lockdown due to COVID-19, have been unable to fish in the affected area due to both temporary fishing bans and local anxieties about consuming potentially contaminated fish. While insurance money may eventually aid those affected by the crisis, many coastal communities that center both their economies and their sustenance on fishing are suffering. [57]

One of the most prominent ways the *X-Press Pearl* disaster has been made visible to and circulated beyond the communities directly impacted by the destruction is through photographs,

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Regan and Chandler Thornton, "Dead Turtles and Waves of Plastic Show Sri Lankan Ship Disaster's Deep Ramifications," CNN, July 24, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/24/asia/sri-lanka-ship-disaster-aftermath-intl-dst-hnk/index.html.

[54] "Sri Lanka: Hundreds of Sea Animals Washed Ashore after Ship Disaster," BBC News, July 2, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57691640.

[55] Regan and Thornton, "Dead Turtles."

[56] Ranga Sirilal and Andreas Illmer, "X-Press Pearl: The 'Toxic Ship' that Caused an Environmental Disaster," BBC News, June 10, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57395693.

[57] "Sri Lanka: Hundreds of Sea Animals Washed Ashore."

primarily in news articles.[58] Despite their slight variations, the photographs all do the same cultural work through their juxtaposition of the alarmingly apocalyptic and the strikingly normal. I take up this aesthetic archive to analyze the dystopian and temporal implications of the *X-Press Pearl* disaster. Although a documentary news archive might not fall under traditional notions of the aesthetic, I contend that the images *become* aesthetic through their capacity to elicit affect. The work these hauntingly banal photographs do, and the affective response they evoke from viewers, situates them as aesthetic. My archive intentionally parallels that of *Cruising Utopia*, where Muñoz turns to the aesthetic as his primary locus of analysis. He writes, "The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity. Both the ornamental and the quotidian can contain a map of the utopia that is queerness."[59] I thus analyze photographs from the *X-Press Pearl* disaster to reintegrate a sense of quotidian materiality—specifically the materiality of pollution—with the aesthetic. In so doing, I demonstrate how the material conditions of the Anthropocene are shifting normative notions of temporality.

The archive of *X-Press Pearl* photographs depicts an apocalyptic landscape that exposes present dystopia. The images show members of the Sri Lankan navy, air force, and coast guard raking, sifting, scooping, and bagging plastic nurdles from the beach. Those involved in the clean-up were primarily members of the military, as the COVID-19 lockdown prevented local volunteers from participating, further serving as a reminder that the *X- Press Pearl* crisis

[58] For the most compelling (and devastating) collection of these photographs, see Alan Taylor, "A Cargo Ship Burns Off Sri Lanka, Covering Beaches in Plastic Debris," *The Atlantic*, June 3, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2021/06/photos-a-cargo-ship-burns-off-sri-lanka-plastic-debris/619089/.
[59] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 1.

Figure 2.2. A representative image depicting the beach clean-up of the *X-Press Pearl* disaster on the Sri Lankan shore. (Photograph from Shutterstock. © 2021 Ruwan Walpola / Shutterstock.com.)

occurred within the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the photographs, the military members conducting the clean-up are dressed in full-body protective suits with rubber boots and gloves. They all wear surgical face masks—though this is likely due just as much to the pandemic as to the pollutants—and most also have protective eye goggles.

Combined, the military response and full-body protective gear make the scene reminiscent of a nuclear emergency. This association was evident to those present at the site, as Muditha Katuwawala, a member of a Sri Lankan marine protection group, explicitly stated, "It's very close to a nuclear disaster, what has happened here."[60] Yet, despite the resemblance, the

[60] Cahlan et al., "Tons of Toxic Cargo."

disastrous scene depicted in the beach clean-up images is not a *nuclear* apocalypse but a *plastic* one. This analogy captures a shift in cultural understandings of catastrophe: if the paradigmatic example of apocalypse for those in the Cold War generation was nuclear holocaust amid the AIDS epidemic, apocalypse is now also plastic disaster amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Though nuclear apocalypse was previously an unactualized threat in the metaphorical horizon, plastic apocalypse has already arrived in the literal horizon. Plastic apocalypse does not *supplant* nuclear apocalypse, but *supplements* it—in the Anthropocene, there are a proliferation of catastrophes that may signal the end of the world. [61]

The *X-Press Pearl* photographs depict the horizon as a site of complete plastic inundation, extending from the nurdles on the beach to the technologies of decontamination. If plastic pollution is typically disastrous, that from the *X-Press Pearl* is potentially exceedingly so: due to both the fire aboard the ship and the chemical spill, the nurdles may have leeched toxins as they burned and absorbed chemicals as they floated to shore. Ironically, while the military members involved in the beach clean-up were instructed to avoid touching the spilled plastic due to this threat of increased toxicity, the cleaners were clad nearly entirely in plastic during the operation. Their protective body suits and face masks were made from plastic synthetic fibers,

[61] While I locate plastic apocalypse in the *X-Press Pearl* disaster photographs, for the climate change generation, there is no *one* exemplary image of catastrophe. Instead, disaster has become staggeringly commonplace. What apocalyptic scene will supplant the *X-Press Pearl* disaster photographs tomorrow? (As I have worked on completing this chapter a devastating but unsurprising succession of images of wildfires, flooding, hurricanes, and oil spills have been in the news.) The increasingly fast pace with which we are inundated with apocalypses that are "like nuclear destruction" creates a sense that on a planetary level, humans and non-human animals alike are all doomed. News of disaster after disaster and the accompanying sensory barrage of apocalyptic images creates an affective experience that makes it seem like we are witnessing the end of the world.

Additionally, I initially wrote this chapter before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Now, nuclear apocalypse again looms on the Anthropocene horizon as one of several paradigmatic examples of apocalypse in our dystopian present.

their eye goggles were completely plastic, and while their rubber boots and rubber gloves may have been made of natural rubber, it is likely that they were made from synthetic rubbers that are actually plastic, like vinyl or PVC.[62] The everyday clothes the cleaners were wearing underneath their protective suits were also highly likely to include plastic synthetic fibers like polyester, nylon, or acrylic. This overwhelming amount of plastic further extends beyond attire, as the plastic-outfitted cleaners used plastic rakes to scrape the plastic nurdles into what appear to be heavy-duty plastic bags. In some of the clean-up images, piles of plastic debris bags stretch along the sightline of the shore.

Looking at these images, I cannot help but wonder where these plastic bags full of plastic nurdles—potentially toxic nurdles—go once they leave the beach? On a smaller scale, what happens to the discarded plastic goggles, face masks, body suits, boots, and gloves once the clean-up is complete? Indeed, the major reason that plastic pollution is so threatening is because of the lifespan of the material. Given its longevity and deteriorative potential, the ultimate destination of the more than 53,000 nurdle-filled plastic bags collected from beaches and uncounted plastic gear worn during the operation remains catastrophically concerning.[63] According to reports, "the recovered nurdles would be dumped in MEPA's [Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority] hazardous waste yard until they are analyzed and the legal

[62] For example, "Disposable face masks (single use face masks) are produced from polymers such as polypropylene, polyurethane, polyacrylonitrile, polystyrene, polycarbonate, polyethylene, or polyester," and recent research has indicated that the widespread use of masks during the pandemic is increasing microplastic pollution. Oluniyi O. Fadare and Elvis D. Okoffo, "Covid-19 Face Masks: A Potential Source of Microplastic Fibers in the Environment," *Science of the Total Environment* 737 (2020): 1.
[63] "Oil, Acid, Plastic."

Figure 2.3. Plastic bags full of plastic debris collected from the Sri Lankan shore. (Photograph from Shutterstock. © 2021 Ruwan Walpola / Shutterstock.com.)

process is concluded, after which the nurdles will be destroyed."[64] The reports do not indicate how this destruction will happen, as disposing of even non-contaminated plastic can leach harmful chemicals. Neither do the reports make any mention of what will happen to the plastic protective attire and tools worn and used by the cleaners. The single-minded focus on eradicating the plastic pollution from the beach and simultaneous seeming obliviousness to the cleaners' immersion in plastic creates a false dichotomy between "bad" plastic pollutants that must be

[64] Malaka Rodrigo, "With Fire Contained, Sri Lanka Faces Plastic Pellet Problem from Stricken Ship," Mongabay News, May 31, 2021, https://news.mongabay.com/2021/05/with-fire-contained-sri-lanka-faces-plastic-pellet-problem-from-stricken-ship/.

contained and ultimately destroyed and "good" plastic objects intricately and intimately interwoven into our everyday lives.

This false separation of supposed "bad" plastic spilled in the *X-Press Pearl* disaster and presumably "good" quotidian plastic has direct implications in terms of violence, particularly for non-human animals.[65] For example, Thushan Kapurusinghe, a turtle conservationist, said of the turtle deaths presumably caused by the *X-Press Pearl* disaster: "This is not *normal*. When you observe them [the dead turtles] you can say they did not die because of becoming tangled in fishing nets."[66] In this sense, conservationists have come to expect a "normal" level of death and violence caused by humans in non-human animals like turtles. However, fishing nets are made of plastic (nylon), and are a major singular source of plastic pollution in the ocean. In fact, a recent study on plastic pollution in the Arabian Sea-Indian Ocean with sampling sites less than five hundred miles from the Sri Lankan coast found that fishing line comprised forty-seven percent of the plastic pollution in surface waters, the greatest percentage of any single pollution type in the study.[67] Yet, turtle deaths from plastic nets are so commonplace as to be considered "normal," while deaths caused by the *X-Press Pearl* disaster are seen as an aberration. In actuality, there is a continuity between turtle deaths caused by fishing nets and those caused by the *X-Press Pearl*

[65] Liboiron suggests shifting from narratives of harm to narratives of violence, writing, "In short, instead of focusing on harm (the effects of plastics on a particular species of fish) we can look at violence, which is the origin of potential harms. Regardless of whether I find plastics in any given fish species, the pipeline that moves plastics into waterways remains the same. We can move from a question of harm that asks 'how much' . . . to 'how' and 'why' questions about violence (the relational questions that matter at a different scale)." *Pollution is Colonialism*, 85.
[66] Regan and Thornton, "Dead Turtles" (emphasis mine).
[67] S.A. Naidu et al., "Characterization of Plastic Debris from Surface Waters of the Eastern Arabian Sea-Indian Ocean," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 169 (2021): 4. Sri Lanka is situated on the Laccadive Sea-Indian Ocean immediately adjacent to the Arabian Sea. The study sampled sites off the eastern coast of India, while Sri Lanka is situated off the western coast of India, meaning the geographic area is proximate but not exact.

disaster. Both are related to plastic entanglement, whether literally in plastic fishing lines or figuratively in plastic dystopia.[68] As I explore below, this entanglement has distinct implications for understandings of queer futurity and queer utopia.

Anthropocene Dystopia

Halfway across the world from Sri Lanka, I—a queer, white, disabled settler on Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw land—sit in my plastic desk chair pondering my own entanglement in plastic dystopia. I am wearing clothing made from plastic fibers and writing about the *X-Press Pearl* disaster on my plastic laptop. Every once in a while, I drink a Coke in a plastic bottle while I write. From my own plastic-inundated backdrop, I reflect on the landscape depicted in the beach clean-up images: the scene of plastic apocalypse on the Sri Lankan coast signals a much broader problem of Anthropocene dystopia. In this dystopia, we accept the toxic and harmful aspects of mundane contamination—for instance, the Coke bottles that fall off the side of recycling trucks and eventually make their way into the Great Pacific Garbage Patch as microplastics—while we simultaneously recognize the same material as causing an emergency in different contexts. In a sense, the cargo on board the *X-Press Pearl* was the raw material of dystopia: If the nurdles on board the ship hadn't spilled, would they have become Coke bottles? Would those Coke bottles have ended up in the ocean anyway? The ramifications of the *X-Press Pearl* disaster will undoubtedly reverberate into the future, particularly through the spilled

[68] For a perspective that recognizes ocean plastic entanglement as not inherently negative, see Kim De Wolff, "Plastic Naturecultures: Multispecies Ethnography and the Dangers of Separating Living from Nonliving Bodies," *Body & Society* 23, no. 3 (2017): 23-47.

nurdles.[69] However, these reverberating impacts are only a concentration or intensification of the impacts the material would have had otherwise. There is most certainly disaster in this event, but this disaster is continuous with the everyday disaster of our Anthropocene dystopia.

In turning to my own positionality in respect to the *X-Press Pearl* disaster, I mean to first acknowledge that there is a specificity to what happened in Sri Lanka, and the people and animals in closest proximity to the event are undoubtably disproportionately harmed. However, I also mean to highlight that Anthropocene dystopia is not only located "there"; it is also continuous with my use of plastic "here." This continuity demonstrates how our present is characterized by violence and harm at the scale of the planetary, by once utopian objects turned destructive in their quotidian consumption. In the Anthropocene, dystopia is mundane, and this mundane present dystopia constrains our ability to reach future queer utopias.

Crucially, as the polluted oceanic horizon illustrates, Anthropocene dystopia is already here. While environmental rhetoric sometimes frames dystopia as a threat that looms in the near future if we fail to mitigate climate change, Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte emphasizes that an Indigenous perspective recognizes dystopia in the present. He writes, "the environmental impacts of settler colonialism mean that quite a few indigenous peoples in North America are no longer able to relate locally to many of the plants and animals that are significant to them. In the Anthropocene, then, some indigenous peoples already inhabit what our ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future. So we consider the future from what we believe is already a dystopia."[70] In our present, a "utopia that functions only for a particular segment of

[69] For instance, experts expect nurdles from the disaster to continue to wash up on beaches globally for years to come "and become a permanent part of the currents and tides of the world's oceans." Regan and Thornton, "Dead Turtles."

[70] Kyle Powys Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene," in Heise, Christensen, and Niemann, *The Routledge Companion,* 207.

society," those who experience violence from settler colonialism, racism, capitalism, and patriarchy across the globe are living in dystopia now.[71] Particularly for those of us in marginalized positions, how we "consider the future" is shaped by our present Anthropocene dystopia.

Consequently, Anthropocene dystopia is situated within settler colonial, racial, capitalist, patriarchal, and transnational networks of power.[72] How we experience and understand

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[71] Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, *Utopia/Dystopia*, 1.

[72] Globally, the large-scale networks of production and disposal of plastic are intricately tied to colonialism. Indeed, Liboiron succinctly makes this argument through the title of their book, *Pollution is Colonialism*. They expound further on this titular claim: "pollution is not a manifestation or side effect of colonialism but is rather an enactment of ongoing colonial relations to Land. That is, pollution is best understood as the violence of colonial land relations than environmental damage, which is a symptom of violence." Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*, 6-7. For instance, they analyze the scientific approach that suggests waterways can hold a certain amount of waste before this waste causes harm and is defined as pollution. This model relies on bad relations that assume access to Indigenous lands. Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*, 5. Therefore, Liboiron argues that an anti-colonial approach to pollution must centrally consider land relations and "not reproduce settler and colonial entitlement to Land and Indigenous cultures, concepts, knowledges (including Traditional Knowledge), and lifeworlds." Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*, 27. Further, in arguing for this anti-colonial approach, Liboiron contends that specificity is crucial. They are writing and researching in the settler colonial context of Canada; I am examining the post-colonial context of Sri Lanka. In this sense, the pollution from the *X-Press Pearl* disaster does not enact identical land relations as pollution in different contexts, like Canada or the United States.

While plastic pollution in Sri Lanka does not enact the same land relations as pollution in a settler colonial setting, colonial implications still reverberate there. For example, while Liboiron does not mention Sri Lanka specifically, they briefly discuss the #breakfreefromplastic movement as a means of "'study[ing] up' toward structures of violence." Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*, 88. The #breakfreefromplastic movement involves activists worldwide organizing brand audits, or citizen science projects where people collect waste from their local environments to identify the brand that produced the product that ended up as pollution. The most recent brand audit conducted in Sri Lanka collected 12,823 pieces of plastic, and, unsurprisingly, Coca-Cola products were the second highest source of branded plastic found in this endeavor. Friends of the Earth International and Centre for Environmental Justice, *Brand Audit 2019 – Sri Lanka: Breaking the Plastic Cycle in Asia*, March 2020, https://ejustice.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sri-Lanka-Brand-Audit-2019-CEJ.pdf. Again, I wonder if the nurdles from the *X-Press Pearl* disaster would have ended up as Coke bottles polluting Sri Lankan shores regardless of the disaster. Interestingly, however, Coca-Cola branded waste was second only to pollution from Elephant House products, a Sri Lankan beverage and ice cream brand

Anthropocene dystopia is therefore influenced by our perspective and impacted by our situation within power. For instance, the lack of mainstream American attention to the *X-Press Pearl* disaster demonstrates how those of us in the West might not even understand emergency in the Global South as disastrous at all.[73] This sort of syphoning off of disaster—imagining that pollution and climate crises only occur "elsewhere" and therefore do not need to be urgently addressed—is not only patently false, but also exacerbates dystopian harm. Further, this relegation of environmental disaster to "elsewhere" happens not only from the West to the Global South, but also from privileged people in Western nations to marginalized people in those same nations, permitting those with privilege to ignore or deny environmental racism and disparate environmental impacts on the poor at home. Who creates the conditions of dystopia and who lives in those conditions? Who benefits at the end of the world and who suffers in its demise?

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housed under the larger Ceylon Cold Stores corporation. This seemingly innocuous naming reinforces that "pollution is colonialism": Ceylon was the British colonial name (based on the Portuguese colonial name) for Sri Lanka. Historically founded in Sri Lanka by a European businessman in colonial relation to the land, Ceylon Cold Stores now pollutes the countryside with plastic packaging. "Heritage," Corporate, Elephant House, accessed October 13, 2021, https://www.elephanthouse.lk/corporate/our-company/our-history.html. In the post-colonial landscape of Sri Lanka, remnants of the colonial past continue to enact bad land relations.

[73] Though the *X-Press Pearl* disaster was covered in major American newspapers like the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, it was not a major topic on American social media. However, a few weeks after the *X-Press Pearl* disaster, a pipeline leak in the Gulf of Mexico caused the surface of the ocean to catch on fire. Images from the Gulf of Mexico incident were turned into a meme that circulated widely on American social media. When I mentioned my research on the Sri Lankan disaster to American friends and colleagues, several asked if the incident was what was depicted in the Gulf of Mexico meme. These conversations reveal first that environmental disaster has become so commonplace that news of extreme destruction, particularly in the Global South, does not necessarily grasp attention in the West, and, second, that apocalyptic scenes like the ocean on fire have become prevalent enough to become interchangeable in the popular imagination.

While communities, corporations, and countries are differentially responsible for and impacted by Anthropocene dystopia, I use "we" in my initial contention to indicate that all humans (and most non-human species) are part of this Anthropocene dystopia, no matter our responsibility for the problem, consumer practices, or ideological stances. For instance, Liboiron and colleagues have found that plastic pollution is concentrated in Arctic waterways, disproportionately impacting Indigenous communities, even though these communities are not responsible for the source of the pollution.[74] Elsewhere, Liboiron explains that the solution to plastic pollution lies with production rather than individual choices, such that "Your consumer behaviors do not matter. Not on the scale of the problem."[75] And, as Alexis Shotwell reminds us, purity is a futile political stance, as "We're complicit, implicated, tied in to things we abjure."[76] Following Liboiron and Shotwell, there is no intervention at the level of the individual—for instance, a personal choice to refuse plastic—that provides an escape from our implication in Anthropocene dystopia. Even if it were possible to cease all use of plastic (in American society, at least, it is not), we would still inhale plastic in the air we breathe, and atmospheric transport carries microscopic plastic particles even to remote areas of the Earth.[77]

This global implication in and ubiquity of Anthropocene dystopia—here exemplified by plastic as its paradigmatic object—is reminiscent of concepts of power. If postmodernism taught

[74] This finding is the first of two parts of Liboiron et al.'s argument; they further argue for a "reconciliation science" that "respect[s] Indigenous sovereignty" and challenges colonial relations in science. "Abundance and Types of Plastic Pollution in Surface Waters in the Eastern Arctic (Inuit Nunangat) and the Case for Reconciliation Science," *Science of the Total Environment* 782 (2021): 11.
[75] Emily Budler, "'Recycling Is Like a Band-Aid on Gangrene,'" *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/591640/recycling-plastics/.
[76] Shotwell, *Against Purity*, 7.
[77] Steve Allen et al., "Atmospheric Transport and Deposition of Microplastics in a Remote Mountain Catchment," *Nature Geoscience* 12 (2019): 339.

us that "Power is everywhere," environmental studies demonstrate that, in our present moment, *plastic* is everywhere.[78] Not only does power work *through* plastic, for instance, in the privileges and harms the material grants and enacts within global networks of capitalism, but plastic also works *like* power, encompassing us all within its dispersed yet inescapable grip. Like power, we are all implicated—though disparately so—in this plastic Anthropocene dystopia. In raising this analogy, I also mean to emphasize that just as power as a concept is neither inherently "good" nor "bad," neither is plastic as a material. While I use these morally loaded terms to discuss how discourses of plastic pollution circulate culturally and are depicted in the *X-Press Pearl* photographs, the material itself is morally neutral.[79] Plastic can be used for "good," and often lifesaving ends, just as it can be discarded in "bad" and often life-ending ways.[80] It is how plastic *circulates* that is "good" or "bad," rather than an inherent property of the material itself. Additionally, there is not yet a scientific consensus about the impacts of plastic ingestion in non-human animal species, meaning that for some species, ingestion might not lead to death.[81] I am

[78] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 93.
[79] See Gay Hawkins, "Plastic Materialities" in *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*, ed. Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 119-138 for an argument that challenges the moral judgement suggesting that all plastic is bad matter.
[80] Liboiron situates these ideas about the morality of plastic within a larger analysis of colonialism. They write, "I use the case of plastics, increasingly understood as an environmental scourge and something to be annihilated, to refute and refuse the colonial in a good way. That is, I try to keep plastics and pollution from being conflated too readily, instead decoupling them so existing and potential relations can come to light that exceed the popular position of 'plastics are bad!'—even though plastics are often bad." *Pollution is Colonialism*, 7.
[81] One problem with toxicology studies that examine plastics is that they often occur in a laboratory environment where particular plastics can be isolated from each other and treated as separate variables. Outside of a laboratory setting, for instance, in the ocean, organisms are exposed to plastics in combination, or as a "diverse contaminant suite," complicating research. Rochman et al., "Rethinking Microplastics," 703. Additionally, Liboiron mentions how some studies conflate differences between species, where for instance, a particular species of fish is

not claiming that individuals should attempt to live outside of plastic—that would be as impossible as living outside of power—and instead am encouraging us to think in critically nuanced ways about how large-scale production and disposal of the material situates us within Anthropocene dystopia.

Temporality of Dystopia

The *X-Press Pearl* disaster not only reveals the conditions of Anthropocene dystopia but also emphasizes its novel temporality. The continuity between the spectacular event of the *X-Press Pearl* fire, the ongoing disaster of the spilled nurdles, and mundane daily plastic pollution exemplifies Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence. Nixon coined the term *slow violence* to describe non-spectacular trajectories of violence that occur over time. He explains the concept: "By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. We need, I believe, to engage . . . a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales."[82] While violence is often conceptualized as a singular event that occurs within a precise and succinct time frame, slow violence identifies the ongoing accumulative effects of violence that are not isolated to a particular episode and that are therefore often ignored.[83] While the *X-Press Pearl* fire and initial spill are spectacular events, the enduring ramifications of this disaster—plastic nurdles that will continue to pollute marine ecologies for

found to consistently consume plastic while another species of fish is found to have an ingestion rate of zero. *Pollution is Colonialism*, 85.

[82] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

[83] While slow violence is not necessarily inherently environmental, I follow Nixon in focusing on such context.

years to come, generational impacts on species contaminated by chemical and plastic pollution, and the ongoing socioeconomic harm on coastal Sri Lankan fishing communities—constitute the slow violence of ongoing Anthropocene dystopia. This slow violence is continuous with the slow violence of everyday plastic production and consumption, represented metonymically by Coke bottles, that will eventually and ultimately have the same impacts as the spilled nurdles.

The temporality of slow violence as exemplified by the specific case of the *X-Press Pearl* disaster represents just one instance of how slow violence, plastic, and the Anthropocene are *all* refiguring notions of temporality in our present dystopia. As a concept, slow violence refigures time. Rather obviously, the *slow* of *slow violence* underscores this temporal aspect. Nixon explains, "I have sought, through the notion of slow violence, to foreground questions of time, movement, and change, however gradual."[84] If violence is typically conceptualized as immediate (which of course implies its own sense of temporality), slow violence is violence plus the accumulation of time, or violence dispersed. Because the impacts of slow violence are often "decoupled" from their origins, slow violence shifts understandings of time.[85] Nixon continues, "So to render slow violence visible entails, among other things, *redefining* speed."[86] This emphasis is thus not only a question of representation but also a question about temporality itself.

If slow violence forces us to shift our temporal perception, then so too do both plastic and the Anthropocene. Plastic juxtaposes vast geologic time scales with ephemeral immediacy. It is derived from petrochemicals (natural gas and oil) that take millions of years to form; for instance, Stephanie LeMenager describes "oil's deep geologic history as life-through-time."[87]

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[84] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 11.
[85] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 11.
[86] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 13 (emphasis mine).
[87] Stephanie LeMenager, *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

Despite the millions of years and lives embedded into its raw materials, plastic is a disposable object that humans use fleetingly for a few seconds, minutes, or months. The material then ends up discarded, where it will again persist for hundreds or thousands of years. Heather Davis explains this temporal juxtaposition: "The millions of years that go into the creation of a plastic item, and the indefinitely long time it will take for that plastic item to decompose, are seemingly obliterated by the fact that we often use plastic packaging for, at most, a few months, compressing deep time into what seems like an eternal, and eternally replicating, present. This time is not one that sits with the present to fully account for it; rather, plastic encourages a fleeting present."[88] Plastic, and the slow violence it often enacts when it ends up in places like the oceanic horizon, is reshaping temporality in the Anthropocene.

Like the ramifications of its paradigmatic material, the Anthropocene figures time itself as in flux. As Boris Shoshitaishvili claims, the Anthropocene "relates as much to conceptions of time as to geology."[89] As a geological concept, the Anthropocene relies on an understanding of deep time. Deep time describes the difficult-to-fathom timescales of billions of years since the formation of the universe (approximately 13.8 billion years) and then the planet (approximately 4.5 billion years) and in which geological events such as rock and glacier formation occur.[90] Thinking in deep time requires us to stretch our conceptualizations of temporality to imagine temporal scales in which our own lifetimes are only a mere blip. In contrast, however, the Anthropocene also accelerates and compresses the timescales in which geological events normally occur. For instance, the Great Acceleration suggests that the impact of human socio-

[88] Davis, *Plastic Matter*, 11.
[89] Boris Shoshitaishvili, "Deep Time and Compressed Time in the Anthropocene: The New Timescale and the value of Cosmic Storytelling," *The Anthropocene Review* 7, no. 2 (2020): 125.
[90] See John McPhee, *Basin and Range* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982).

economic trends on the Earth's systems began to rapidly accelerate following 1950, setting off a "cascade" or "domino effect" of geological changes.[91] Such changes, like the incredibly rapid increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, represent a compression of deep time.[92] Shoshitaishvili explains that in the Anthropocene, "The traditional timescape [as imagined by cultures drawing on Biblical traditions] has undergone a double distortion: 'deepening' into the vast timescales of evolutionary, geological, and physical cosmological history, yet 'compressing' into the accelerated time of techno-social development and human impact on the environment."[93] In one sense, human impacts on the planet such as the disruption to the carbon cycle will continue to reverberate on deep timescales for thousands of years into the future, while at the same time phenomenon like glacial melt that used to occur in deep time is now shrunk into a timescale observable within the human lifespan. The Anthropocene is therefore characterized by dichotomous temporalities: time stretched to unfathomable lengths and simultaneously compressed into rapid accelerations.[94] Crucially, these changes are about how we perceive and understand time.

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[91] Will Steffen et al., *Global Change and the Earth System: A Planet Under Pressure, Executive Summary* (Stockholm, Sweden: IGBP Secretariat, 2004), 4; "Great Acceleration," International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, accessed August 28, 2022, http://www.igbp.net/globalchange/greatacceleration.4.1b8ae20512db692f2a680001630.html. As I explain in the Introduction, there is substantial debate over the origin of the Anthropocene. Many scientists point to the Great Acceleration to justify an origin date of 1950, while many humanists point to earlier origins that account for the geological impacts of settler colonial genocide and slavery.

[92] Shoshitaishvili, "Deep Time and Compressed Time," 131.

[93] Shoshitaishvili, "Deep Time and Compressed Time," 126.

[94] I have intentionally not cited perhaps the most widely cited scholar on Anthropocene temporalities. For more on the sexual harassment allegations against him, see C. Christine Fair, "#HimToo: A Reckoning," BuzzFeed News, October 25, 2017, https://www.buzzfeed.com/christinefair/himtoo-a-reckoning.

The shifting temporalities of slow violence, plastic, and the Anthropocene are so pervasive that our Anthropocene dystopia is characterized by a particular and still evolving temporality exemplified in the seascape of the oceanic horizon. Associating slow violence and plastic as crucial components of the Anthropocene, I consider this novel temporality *Anthropocene temporality*. In proposing Anthropocene temporality through my analysis of Anthropocene dystopia, I am ultimately pointing to three different temporalities at play: Holocene temporality, Anthropocene temporality, and queer temporality.[95] Holocene temporality describes normative temporality prior to the temporal shifts ushered in by the Anthropocene. For instance, it encompasses Cold War normative expectations around timelines for heterosexual marriage and reproduction while it simultaneously encompasses normative expectations around timelines for glacial melt without human impact. In contrast, Anthropocene temporality describes the accelerations and compressions of time prompted by human-made materials like plastic and human-generated climate change. Because of the pervasiveness of Anthropocene conditions, I argue that Anthropocene temporality is now supplanting Holocene temporality *as normative temporality*. Anthropocene temporality is not "normal," but, through its pervasiveness, it is becoming normative. If queer temporality is defined in contrast to the normative, then queer theory must reconcile with the new normative temporalities of the Anthropocene.

Queer theories of temporality have not yet reconciled with the fluid temporalities of the Anthropocene. Nevertheless, because queer temporality opposes normative temporality, and because Anthropocene temporality is becoming the new normative temporality, queer futurity is implicated in this temporal movement. If the horizon symbolically represents the future, the

[95] As I explain in the Introduction, the Holocene is the geologic epoch that precedes the Anthropocene. Since the Anthropocene is an unofficial epoch, we still technically live in the Holocene.

changing conditions of the literal oceanic horizon parallel the changing conditions of queer futurity. Here, I want to return to a line from Muñoz's definition of queer utopia: "Indeed, to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer."[96] Straight time refers to the normative timelines centered around "the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction."[97] Yet, straight time is represented by the linear timelines of Holocene temporality that created the conditions for the Anthropocene; Anthropocene temporality is refiguring straight time. For instance, in Chapter One I explore how youth environmental activists tie their future reproduction to the state of the planet. This sentiment extends far beyond the activists I explore, as a 2020 poll found that "1 in 4 childless adults cite climate change as a 'major or minor' reason they don't have children."[98] Similarly, the BirthStrike movement is comprised of people who would like to reproduce but who have decided to withhold their reproductive labor due to climate change.[99] The stretching, shrinking, and speeding temporality of Anthropocene therefore redefines what it means to "live inside straight time." We can still "imagine another time and place" from within the Anthropocene temporalities we inhabit, but we must desire differently in ways that account for the toxic temporalities of our present.

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[96] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
[97] J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.
[98] Lisa Martine Jenkins, "1 in 4 Childless Adults Say Climate Change has Factored into Their Reproductive Decisions," Morning Consult, September 28, 2020, https://morningconsult.com/2020/09/28/adults-children-climate-change-polling/.
[99] Elle Hunt, "BirthStrikers: Meet the Women Who Refuse to Have Children Until Climate Change Ends," *The Guardian*, March 12, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/mar/12/birthstrikers-meet-the-women-who-refuse-to-have-children-until-climate-change-ends.

Queer theories of temporality have already grappled with shifting horizons, compressed temporalities, and the specter of death in the context of the AIDS epidemic. In theorizing queer time, J. Jack Halberstam writes, "Queer time perhaps emerges most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose *horizons of possibility* have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic."[100] He continues:

> The constantly diminishing future creates a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now, and while the threat of no future hovers overhead *like a storm cloud*, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment and . . . squeezes new possibilities out of the time at hand. . . . And yet queer time, even as it emerges from the AIDS crisis, is not only about *compression* and *annihilation*, it is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing. . . . Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death.[101]

Queer theory, queer temporality, and queer futurity emerged from the dystopian realities and compressed temporalities of the AIDS epidemic. These theories might thus help us grapple with Anthropocene dystopia—now a literal storm cloud—and its temporalities as well.

Muñoz, writing during the devastating context of the AIDS epidemic, nevertheless insisted on queer futurity and queer utopia. Indeed, the words "dystopia" and "dystopian" never appear in his text. He writes, "We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*."[102] It is still possible, still desirable, to

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[100] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2 (emphasis mine).
[101] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2 (emphasis mine).
[102] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1 (emphasis in original).

"think and feel a *then and there*" from our polluted present; we simply must do so by recognizing that the "totalizing rendering of" our Anthropocene dystopian "reality" demands new methods of navigation. That is, Anthropocene dystopia and its toxic temporalities change how we might act toward queer futurity and desire queer utopia. Further, queer futurity and queer utopia provide methods for resisting the encompassing conditions of Anthropocene dystopia. In conclusion, I consider how we might "act from where we are" to imagine queer futurity and desire queer utopia from the midst of Anthropocene dystopia.[103]

Conclusion: Navigating Toward Queer Utopia from Within Anthropocene Dystopia

To conclude, I want to consider what new methods of navigation toward queer utopia might entail. Remaining focused on the oceanic, I turn to the methodology of listening Alexis Pauline Gumbs offers in *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* to zoom out from ocean plastic in particular and analyze how marine ecologies broadly impact living and theorizing in our contaminated present.[104] I contend that the practice of listening that Gumbs

[103] Shotwell, *Against Purity*, 4. Shotwell writes, "All there is, while things perpetually fall apart, is the possibility of acting from where we are."

[104] After completing this chapter, and when this project as a whole was in its final stages of revision, Heather Davis published *Plastic Matter*. As I elaborate in the Introduction, *Plastic Matter* includes a chapter, drastically revised from an earlier article, that discusses plastic and queer futurity. While in the article version Davis turned to Mel Chen to consider the relationship between plastic and queer futurity, in the book version Davis turns to Gumbs via *Dub: Finding Ceremony*. Drawing on *Dub*, Davis writes, "Imagining a future that extends from but arrives at a place radically different from the present, as Gumbs has done, will help us navigate what is coming with more grace." Davis, *Plastic Matter*, 100. Davis and I have different emphases in our work: she turns to queer futurity as a case study for examining the materiality of plastic, while I turn to the oceanic as a case study for examining queer futurity and queer utopia. Additionally, she draws on queer futurity via Edelman, while I turn to Muñoz. Nevertheless, the fact that both Davis and I ultimately turn to Gumbs to think about queer futurity in the Anthropocene—though we were likely writing in parallel, as *Plastic Matter* was published after I initially conceived of and wrote this chapter—speaks to the compelling impact of Gumbs's archive. Indeed, both *Dub* as analyzed by Davis and *Undrowned* as analyzed by me offer powerful articulations for imagining queer futurity amidst the toxic conditions of the Anthropocene.

describes offers a method for reaching toward queer utopia—what Muñoz refers to as "then and there"—in the midst of Anthropocene dystopia.[105] Listening, for Gumbs, is grounded in Black feminist principles that recognize how our actions in the here and now influence whether we will have a future at all. That is, current actions determine collective survival in future worlds. Gumbs asserts, "We get to continue to consider what is possible from here (and here and here)."[106] Her methodology of listening means that "what is possible from here (and here and here)" might lead us to then and there (and there and there). Gumbs's praxis provides the capacity to affectively and temporally transport us to queer utopia and queer futurity via Black feminist practices in the Anthropocene.[107]

Gumbs describes listening as a pragmatic strategy readers might learn from marine mammals. Listening provides a means of navigating the toxic present through relations. Specifically, Gumbs uses a method of echolocation to advocate a practice of listening that redefines relationality. She explains practicing echolocation: "I had to focus not on what I could see and discern, but instead on where I was in relation, how the sound bouncing off me in relationship to the structures and environments that surround me locates me in a constantly shifting relationship to you, whoever you are by now."[108] That is, echolocating is about sensing and listening for relations, as the echolocator learns their own positionality through proximity to both space and others. By situating herself in relation to human and non-human others, Gumbs forges queer Black feminist collectivities beyond the human through her echolocation practice.

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[105] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[106] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020), 9.
[107] Muñoz considers "Queer feminist and queer of color critiques . . . the powerful counterweight to" strands of queer theory like the antisocial thesis that emphasize individualism and presentism. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 17.
[108] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 6.

While grounded in notions of sound, neither listening broadly nor echolocating specifically are predicated on hearing. In this sense, Gumbs's strategy is accessible to people of all bodyminds. She explains, "Listening is not only about the normative ability to hear, it is a transformative and revolutionary resource that requires quieting down and tuning in."[109] Gumbs engages the properties of sound—the way it ripples, reverberates, and returns—rather than relying literally on hearing. Listening is a broad practice that is a "revolutionary resource" in attentiveness, and echolocation is a specific listening practice for navigating an increasingly toxic world.

Gumbs's practices of listening and echolocation offer strategies for affectively navigating toward queer utopia. In the beginning of her meditation on listening, Gumbs asks, "How can we listen across species, across extinction, across harm? How does echolocation, the practice many marine mammals use to navigate the world through bouncing sounds, change our understandings of '*vision*' and *visionary action*?"[110] Here, I return to Muñoz's metaphorical musings on the horizon to re-read his claims through Gumbs's provocation. As I quoted earlier, Muñoz writes, "queerness is always in the horizon. I contend that if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be *viewed* as being *visible* only in the horizon."[111] I have argued that the horizons in Muñoz's line of sight are not the same as the polluted horizons of our Anthropocene present. Meditating on Muñoz's double references to sight through Gumbs's query, I speculate: If we cannot *envision* queer horizons anymore, can we still *listen* for them? Can we *echolocate* queer utopia? Listening for queer horizons is not so much about passively waiting to hear something on the horizon. Rather, through a practice of echolocation, we might actively send out sound signals

[109] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 15.
[110] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 15 (emphasis mine).
[111] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11 (emphasis mine).

to learn where we are "in relation."[112] Gumbs explains how river dolphins "do not trust their eyes" due to blinding currents in the water, making echolocation evermore "crucial."[113] I wonder if the thick smog of Anthropocene dystopia has made river dolphins of us all. Like river dolphins, we are forced to adapt to untenable environments, and these environments prevent us from envisioning queer utopia. But, amidst our Anthropocene dystopia, might we send out sound signals to figure out our position in relation to queer utopia, in relation to other queers longing for queer utopia? Might we be transformed through this process of signaling? Grounded in queer Black feminist practices, might this navigation strategy mitigate "extinction," mitigate "harm"?

To imagine putting this kind of signaling into practice, we might learn from blue whales. Gumbs's description of blue whale songs provides an example of how sonic practices might guide us to future queer Black feminist utopias. In her section on "practice," which details how "We can cultivate practices for finding each other in a shifting world," Gumbs turns to the species.[114] While blue whales do not echolocate, they do communicate through songs. Gumbs's interpretation of these blue whale songs creates a potentiality for queer Black feminist sonic reverberations that survive the human species, echoing across temporalities. Gumbs says of blue whales, "With one breath they send sound across entire oceans, envelop the planet in far-reaching chant."[115] She continues, drawing on Black feminist writers: "M. Nourbese Philip taught me that water holds sound, that it can reverberate on and on and keep calling us. And so maybe the calls of the great blue whales who filled the whole ocean (before twentieth-century commercial ventures killed 95 percent of them) are still blessing our water selves now. Are still

[112] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 6.
[113] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 18.
[114] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 43.
[115] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 48.

in residence, as Christina Sharpe reminds us. . . . Imagine with me that the biggest sound on the planet, exceeding the anxiety we project over airwaves, is the prayer of the blue ancestor depth. What then?"[116] In referencing the "blue ancestor depth," Gumbs draws together the ninety-five percent of blue whales and the countless humans in the Middle Passage killed by racial gendered ableist capitalism. Simultaneously, she brings these whales and these humans into a queer Black feminist collectivity with surviving blue whales and the undrowned—a collectivity forged through sound and across time. Because sound continues to reverberate, outlasting the moment in which it was produced, the impact of this collectivity ripples across the past, present, and future. And so, I reiterate Gumbs's question, "What then?" What if we reach out to "find each other in a shifting world" through practices of echolocating queer utopia? Perhaps then our sound signals will join the sonic reverberations of the blue whales. Perhaps then our sound signals will continue to ripple, forging queer Black feminist collectivities that reach backwards at the same time that they extend into the future. Perhaps then these resonating echolocations will survive us all.

In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz considers "Queer feminist and queer of color critiques . . . the powerful counterweight to" strands of queer theory that emphasize individualism and presentism.[117] Situated within and drawing on queer feminist and queer of color knowledge, Muñoz "insist[s] on the essential need for queerness as collectivity."[118] Here, Gumbs's Black feminist collectivities forged through echolocation achieve a queer utopian impulse. If the horizon is defined by a human viewpoint, echolocation helps us imagine a "collective liberation" beyond the sexual and beyond the human.

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[116] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 48-49.
[117] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 17.
[118] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11.

In proposing listening and echolocation as means of navigating toward queer utopia and thus enacting queer futurity, I am struck by the tension between the figurative and the literal. Are queer futurity and queer utopias metaphorical or literal temporalities and spatialities? In this chapter, I first took the metaphorical horizons of queer futurity literally to examine the conditions of Anthropocene dystopia before I turned to my symbolic provocation to listen for queer utopia via echolocation. I want to flow with this tension rather than presume to resolve it: In many ways, my turn to the practice of listening as a means of enacting queer futurity and queer utopia is metaphorical. In many ways it is not. I do not think that Muñoz and Gumbs are writing exclusively at the level of the metaphor. I do think they both want(ed) us—queers, Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, feminists, marine mammals—to survive. How might we reach for theoretical concepts from our material times and spaces to sustain us in unsustainable conditions? How might theory materially translate to survival?

In "Theory as Liberatory Practice," bell hooks counters the division between theory and practice. She writes, "When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process where one enables the other."[119] As embodied practices, Gumbs's notions of listening and echolocation similarly challenge the divide between theory and practice. They are a way of materially practicing theory, of desiring and imagining better worlds of "collective liberation." Ultimately, listening and echolocating are both literally and metaphorically embodied. We might, following Gumbs, literally/metaphorically listen as we

[119] bell hooks, "Theory as a Liberatory Practice," *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 4, no. 1 (1991): 2.

literally/metaphorically seek to echolocate queer utopia, both theoretically and in practice. Through this blend of literal-figurative and theoretical-practical navigation toward queer utopia, we might enact the collectivities that lead us toward queer utopia.

At the start of this chapter, I quoted Muñoz, who describes his associative method as "leap[ing] between" temporal sites.[120] I described my own deployment of his method as *bouncing* between times and spaces. For me, theorizing (associatively) is a survival practice of echolocation, of "navigat[ing] the world through bouncing sounds."[121] In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed similarly describes feminist theory in language that resonates with a practice of echolocation. She writes, "For me reading feminist theory was a series of continuous *clicks*. And later, teaching women's studies was such a delight as you can participate in other people's *clicking* moments: *what a sound it makes; how important it is that this sound is audible to others*."[122] With this text, I am sounding out to you in the hopes of forging future queer utopian collectivities. I am waiting; I am "seeing what comes back."[123] May "what comes back" be queer collectivity to sustain us all.

[120] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 3.
[121] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 15.
[122] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 29 (emphasis mine).
[123] Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 15.

CHAPTER THREE
QUEER-CRIP FUTURITY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: SINS INVALID'S *WE LOVE LIKE BARNACLES* AND A POLITICS OF FRAGMENTARY SURVIVAL

Introduction: Disability Justice, Climate Justice, and Queer-Crip Futures

In 2017, the environmental organization Lonely Whale initiated a public campaign to #StopSucking. To advertise the campaign, they released an eighty-second video on YouTube featuring several celebrities, including Adrian Grenier, an actor and co-founder of Lonely Whale. The video begins with Grenier, who opens the shot looking down and away from the camera. He slowly looks up, gestures with his hand, sighs, and divulges with difficulty, "I suck." The video then shifts to actress Amy Smart, a blonde, white woman, who in a similarly confessional style claims, "I may not look like I suck, but I do." For the next forty seconds, the video transitions through a sequence of fifteen celebrities, all of whom make provocative admissions about sucking. "I've been sucking on TV since I was ten," "Everywhere I could suck I would suck," and "I've sucked in over ninety countries," they proclaim. Halfway through the video, after more than a dozen of these admissions, the musician Yuna reveals the point: "Today, you probably used one of these," she states, holding up a disposable purple bendy straw. The celebrities who confessed to sucking in the first half of the video then narrate how plastic straws harm the environment, particularly the ocean and marine life. "Five hundred million plastic straws are used in this country every single day," the speakers proclaim, while "500 MILLION PLASTIC STRAWS EVERY SINGLE DAY" appears on the screen in bold, block letters.[1] Grenier

[1] While the #StopSucking campaign presents this figure as if it were derived from scientific research, it actually comes from a nine-year-old child who made phone calls to corporations and projected the number. The scientific community has not come to a consensus about the number of plastic straws used on a daily basis or on how many of these straws end up as pollution. Tove Danovich and Maria Godoy, "Why People with Disabilities Want Bans on Plastic Straws to Be More Flexible," NPR, July 11, 2018,

explains the impact of this pollution by describing what the ocean will be like in 2050: "You know when you're snorkeling and you look down? You won't see fish, you'll see plastic!" To avoid this catastrophic future, the celebrities each commit to quit using plastic straws, saying, "I will stop sucking." Grenier qualifies his commitment to quitting at the end of the video by challenging "If you do" as on-screen text urges viewers to "Share this video and pledge to #StopSucking."[2] Lonely Whale's message is clear: if people refuse to take the pledge and continue using plastic straws, then the world is headed toward a bleak environmental future.

Lonely Whale's #StopSucking video intentionally plays on the multiple meanings of *suck* to attach a sense of morality to straw use. In the literal sense, #StopSucking encourages people to stop sucking their drinks through plastic straws. Simultaneously, in a moral sense, it situates people who use straws as people who suck, or as selfish individuals who do not care about the environment. This double meaning therefore creates a parallel between people who use straws and people with negative characteristics. Extending beyond this double meaning, however, the video also amplifies the sexual connotations of *suck*. Before pivoting to reveal its focus on straw use, the first half of the video purposely mimics sexual language to make it seem like the celebrities are confessing to engaging in oral sex. This triple play on words constructs a moral analogy: if the queer subject who sucks sexually is a "bad subject," then the consuming subject who sucks straws is a "bad environmentalist."[3] In both instances, the queer subject and the

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https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/07/11/627773979/why-people-with-disabilities-want-bans-on-plastic-straws-to-be-more-flexible.

For a discussion of corporate environmental violence through plastic pollution, see Chapter Two where I discuss the approximately seventy-five tons of toxic plastic pellets spilled directly into the ocean in the *X-Press Pearl* incident.

[2] Lonely Whale, "#StopSucking | Lonely Whale | For a Strawless Ocean," posted August 8, 2017, YouTube video, 1:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q91-23B8yCg.

[3] Interestingly, the way this campaign figures straw users as "bad environmentalists" approximates an approach that Nicole Seymour identifies as "bad environmentalism." Seymour

consuming subject are cast outside the bounds of normativity. The normative "good subject" and "good environmentalist" do not suck—morally, sexually, or through straws.

The attachment of morality to plastic straws further demonstrates the convergence of environmentalism and disability. The campaign against plastic straws, which began with Lonely Whale and quickly grew into a global movement, metamorphosized the consuming subject as the "bad environmentalist" into the disabled subject as the "bad environmentalist." [4] As moralizing

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defines this concept as "environmental thought that employs dissident, often-denigrated affects and sensibilities to reflect critically on both our current moment and mainstream environmental art, activism, and discourse." *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 6. Lonely Whale's #StopSucking video constructs its environmental message both ironically and irreverently through its salacious references; as one YouTube commenter notes, "I really wanted to take this seriously but the intro to this video makes it sound like an extremely casual interview with a bunch of porn stars." Loki, YouTube comment on Lonely Whale, "#StopSucking." I read the anti-serious, "extremely casual" deployment of sexual references as a partial example of bad environmentalism, but, rather than leveraging this dissident affect for critical reflection, the #StopSucking video uses it to construct a group of "bad environmentalists." Thus, while the #StopSucking video begins to adopt an approach of bad environmentalism, in the end it actually perpetuates normative environmental ideals.

[4] As anti-straw momentum spread in the United States, local governments in cities such as Seattle (2018) and Washington, D.C. (2019) and state government in California (2019) banned plastic straws. Globally, national governments in England (2020), China (2021), and India (2022) and corporations such as Starbucks (2020) also enacted straw bans. These bans continue to perpetuate a moral narrative about the object, situating plastic straws and those who use them as bad objects and people. Seattle Public Utilities, "Straws & Utensils," Seattle.gov, accessed February 4, 2022, http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SPU/Services/Recycling/EnglishSPUFlyer-LetterStrawsandUtensilsAM.pdf; Department of Energy and Environment, "Material Requirements for Food Service Ware," DC.gov, accessed February 4, 2022, https://doee.dc.gov/foodserviceware; Assembly Bill No. 1884 (2018), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1884; "Plastic Straw Ban in England Comes into Force," BBC, October 1, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-54366461; "China: Single-Use Plastic Straw and Bag Ban Takes Effect," Library of Congress, March 23, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-03-23/china-single-use-plastic-straw-and-bag-ban-takes-effect/#:~:text=Article%20China%3A%20Single%2DUse%20Plastic,from%20providing%20plastic%20shopping%20bags; The Associated Press, "India Begins to Ban Single-Use Plastics Including Cups and Straws," NPR, July 1, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/07/01/1109476072/india-plastics-ban-begins;

over the object spread, the disability community began to speak out about how plastic straws are necessary tools for many people who rely on them to drink. While certain environmental organizations construed straws as frivolous and wasteful objects, the disability community countered that they are a lifesaving technology for many people. Disabled people began using the hashtag #SuckItAbleism to show how plastic straws are essential in their lives and to oppose the #StopSucking movement. #SuckItAbleism demonstrated how, for some people, plastic straws are vital for survival.

I doubt that organizers of the anti-straw movement intentionally sought to harm disabled people at the start of the campaign. However, once the campaign launched and disabled people began speaking out about the harm perpetuated, environmental organizations only intensified their crusade, expanding their push for legal actions to ban straws. For instance, campaigners suggested disabled people should simply revert to earlier practices before plastic straws even after Shaun Bickley, a disability activist, countered that in the past disabled people "aspirated liquid in their lungs, developed pneumonia and died."[5] The discourse about plastic straws therefore points to a paradox of particular mainstream environmentalist movements: disabled

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"Starbucks to Eliminate Plastic Straws Globally by 2020," Starbucks, July 9, 2018, https://stories.starbucks.com/press/2018/starbucks-to-eliminate-plastic-straws-globally-by-2020/.

[5] Danovich and Godoy, "Why People with Disabilities." Indeed, numerous disabled people have spoken out about how they have been framed as selfish, wasteful, or anti-environment for needing plastic tools and technologies to stay alive. Wong, "The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw"; Penny Pepper, "I Rely on Plastic Straws and Baby Wipes. I'm Disabled—I Have No Choice," *The Guardian*, July 9, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/09/disabled-person-plastic-straws-baby-wipes; Grayson Schultz, "Plastic Straw Bans Are Not Fair to People with Disabilities, and Here's What We Can Do About It," Creaky Joints (blog), Global Healthy Living Foundation, October 28, 2019, https://creakyjoints.org/advocacy/plastic-straw-bans-bad-for-people-with-disabilities/. While the anti-straw movement may have at first only incidentally framed disabled people as bad environmentalists, the resulting attachment between plastic and morality does actively and continually situate disabled people in this way.

people are often at best left out of environmental activism and at worst actively harmed by it; at the same time, we bear the brunt of both present and future impacts of climate change. While some environmentalists focus on objects like plastic straws, disabled people question whether we will have access to the assistive technology, resources, medication, evacuation, care giving, and electricity necessary for our survival both now and in an increasingly dire climatic landscape.[6]

The plastic straw debate demonstrates the nexus of power, futurity, and disability in environmental discourse. As Alice Wong trenchantly explains, "The entire conversation about plastic straws is about power: who knows best, who decides how change is made, who is centered in all of these activities. One example of this power is the moral reframing of plastic."[7] Wong importantly reminds us that the #StopSucking campaign, plastic straw bans, and cultural moralizing about the object all occur within matrices of power. The attachment of morality to plastic not only leverages power (by organizations furthering the campaign), but it also enacts power (by framing disabled people as bad environmentalists and actively harming us). I would add to Wong's insight: If the "conversation about plastic straws is about power," then environmental organizations ultimately leverage power in the name of futurity. The anti-straw

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[6] In this chapter, I move between various pronouns when discussing the disability community. At times I use "they," and at times I use "we," both depending on the context and in an attempt to capture the fluidity of community. In so doing, I follow Alison Kafer's rhetorical choice in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, where she writes:

> my use of "we" and "they," "them" and "us," shifts . . . . To always use the third person in discussing disabled people would be to impose a distancing between myself and my subject that rings false. It would also run counter to this notion of "claiming crip," denying the possibility of a deep and abiding connection to the identities, bodies, minds, and practices discussed here. At the same time, to always use the first person would be to answer in advance the question of a unified community of disabled people, to presume not only that we all share the same positions but also that one person—in this case, I—can represent the whole.

Feminist, Queer, Crip (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 19.

[7] Alice Wong, "The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw: Sucking in Crip Defiance," *Catalyst* 5, no. 1 (2019): 4.

movement is about the longevity of plastic and the futures this endurance might herald—thus Grenier's description of a plastic-inundated ocean in 2050. Yet, in their myopic focus on the future of *plastic*, anti-straw campaigners are willing to sacrifice the future of *disabled people*. In other words, the anti-straw movement values avoiding a plastic future more than it values creating a livable future for disabled people.[8] In this sense, the anti-straw movement is a movement about futurity, though the future it figures is a very particular one.[9] In Chapter Two I examine how in the Anthropocene plastic works like power, with the polluted oceanic horizon exemplifying shifting Anthropocene temporalities. In this chapter, I use plastic straws as a starting point to consider how normativity operates through Anthropocene temporalities, impacting both crip and queer futures.

Although some mainstream environmental organizations have generally ignored and even harmed disabled people, disability activists have organized around the imbrication of disability and environmental justice. For many disability activists, disability justice is also climate justice (and vice versa). The perspective of these activists has garnered enough cultural awareness that major news outlets like the BBC now publish articles with titles like "Climate Change: Why are

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[8] To be clear, the anti-straw movement harms disabled people in the present. I am claiming that problem lies in the way the movement *represents* and *values* the future, such that the anti-straw movement harms disabled people *now* in the name of futurity.

[9] Lonely Whale's own explanation that straws are a "gateway" plastic further exemplifies temporal logic—the organization hopes that if people think *first* about plastic straw use, they will think *next* or *later* about their other plastic consumption. Dune Ives, "The Gateway Plastic," Re:wild, October 19, 2017, https://www.rewild.org/news/the-gateway-plastic.

Further, while it may from our current vantage point seem like the plastic straw debate is outdated or over, in actuality the anti-straw movement persists in spite of the abundance of criticism from the disability community. Most recently, India banned single-use plastic, including plastic straws, in July 2022. Reporting on the ban indicates how critiques from the disability community continue to be ignored; the first items in India's ban, including plastic straws, were identified as "plastic items that *aren't very useful* but have a high potential to become litter." The Associated Press, "India Begins to Ban Single-Use Plastics" (emphasis mine).

Disabled People So Affected by the Climate Crisis?"[10] While this understanding is gaining cultural traction, and while disability *activism* has converged around the issue of climate, disability studies is only beginning to theorize the intersection of disability justice and climate justice. Though disability theorists have often turned to ideas of nature, disability studies, like queer theory, has been slow to make a climatic turn.

Many works in disability studies focus on notions of nature, ecology, and the environment, though they do not often address climate change or Anthropocene conditions. Works that focus on nature, ecology, and the environment largely follow a critical tradition emerging from ecocriticism and ecofeminism. Ecocriticism and ecofeminism developed in the 1960s and 1970s to emphasize how environmental exploitation is intertwined with social exploitation, for instance through power relations that oppress both women and the land. Disability studies has drawn on these ecocritical and ecofeminist traditions to consider how power structures such as ableism similarly impact understandings of and interactions with nature and the environment.[11] For instance, Sarah Jacquette Ray and Jay Sibara's edited collection *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory* cogently grapples with the environment. However, this collection, like other works in disability studies, primarily focuses on ideas of nature and wilderness rather than on climate.[12] Additionally, Eli Clare is often cited for his important work at the intersection of disability and environmental

[10] Keiligh Baker, "Climate Change: Why are Disabled People So Affected by the Climate Crisis?," BBC, November 4, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/disability-59042087.
[11] Queer theory's turn to the environment, too, largely emerged out of these ecocritical and ecofeminist traditions that influenced the field of queer ecologies. See, for instance, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
[12] Sarah Jacquette Ray and Jay Sibara, eds., *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

studies. Yet, like the authors in Ray and Sibara's collection, Clare meditates on the relationship between human-caused environmental change and disability without exploring climate.[13] This scholarship on nature, ecology, and the environment made way for, but nevertheless differs from, work focusing on climate change and the Anthropocene. Climate change carries a temporal orientation and raises a distinct set of questions that *nature* and *environment* do not. Similarly, as I explore in Chapter Two, the *Anthropocene* emphasizes questions of time. Thus, while there is a rich body of work at the intersection of disability and the environment, that archive addresses quite different questions than my project on climate change and the Anthropocene.[14]

While disability studies has largely focused on nature rather than climate, researchers in fields like public health and public policy have conducted studies that consider how disabled people might be impacted by climate change.[15] Yet, to generalize, these fields often approach disability as a medicalized variable in a way that is antithetical to a disability studies approach.

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[13] Clare does make a singular mention of climate in his most recent book: "We fear the far-reaching impacts of climate change as hurricanes grow more frequent, glaciers melt, and deserts expand." Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 58.

[14] For notable exceptions, see Julia Watts Belser, "Disability, Climate Change, and Environmental Violence: The Politics of Invisibility and the Horizon of Hope," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2020) and Catherine Jampel, "Intersections of Disability Justice, Racial Justice, and Environmental Justice," *Environmental Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2018): 122-35. Belser and Jampel both compellingly consider the intersection of climate and disability studies; I do not go into detail about their work here because I am specifically interested the temporal implications of the intersection of disability and climate rather than the intersection in general.

[15] See, for instance, Sarah L. Bell, Tammy Tabe, and Stephen Bell, "Seeking a Disability Lens within Climate Change Migration Discourses, Policies and Practices," *Disability & Society* 35, no. 4 (2020): 682-87; Caderyn J. Gaskin et al., "Factors Associated with the Climate Change Vulnerability and the Adaptive Capacity of People with Disability: A Systematic Review," *Weather, Climate, and Society* 9, no. 4 (2017): 801-14; Deborah Fenney Salkeld, "Sustainable Lifestyles for All? Disability Equality, Sustainability, and the Limitations of Current UK Policy," *Disability & Society* 31, no. 4 (2016): 447-64; and Nick Watts et al., "The *Lancet* Countdown on Health and Climate Change: From 25 Years of Inaction to a Global Transformation for Public Health," *Lancet* 391 (2018): 581-630.

As I discuss in the Introduction, I employ Alison Kafer's political/relational model of disability. This model demonstrates how power relations privilege able-bodymindedness and produce disability by failing to accommodate the spectrum of body-minded experiences. In contrast, the medical model understands disability as a problem located in individuals who should seek medical treatments and cure. Research that extracts disability as a variable risks perpetuating the medical model of disability. For instance, a review of literature on climate change and the vulnerability of people with disabilities found that disabled people were at greater risk during climate disasters due to "personal factors," "environmental factors," "bodily impairments," and "activity limitations and participation restrictions."[16] Locating vulnerability to climate disaster in *individuals* via "personal factors," bodily impairments," and "activity limitations" runs counter to a disability studies approach. The political/relational model of disability studies would instead locate the vulnerability of disabled people to climate disaster in social structures such as lack of access to resources, transportation, housing, and caregiving. Thus, at first glance, the proliferation of titles mentioning both disability and the environment may make it seem like the intersection of disability studies and climate change has been robustly theorized. However, disability studies tends to consider nature rather than climate, and research outside the humanities tends to consider disability from a medical perspective.

In this chapter, I consider Anthropocene intersections of queer temporality and crip temporality to articulate queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene. In so doing, I begin to address the absence of attention to climate change in disability studies. While neither disability studies nor queer theory have fully grappled with climate change, scholars have cogently theorized the resonances between queer and crip theories in general and queer and crip temporalities in

[16] Gaskin et al., "Factors Associated with the Climate Change Vulnerability," 801.

particular. Here, I extend Kafer's scholarship that places *queer* and *crip* temporalities and futurities together by bringing Anthropocene conditions into the conversation.

I introduce this framework of crip temporality alongside queer temporality in the final chapter of this project for two reasons. The first and most straightforward reason is because I agree with Kafer's argument and recognize queer and crip temporalities as imbricated—my discussion of queer futurity in the Anthropocene would be incomplete if I did not also examine the future through a crip lens. In this sense, I recognize how Kafer has transformed the discourse of queer futurity such that it is inadequate to theorize queer futurity without also addressing queer-crip futurity. Second, part of what queer-crip futurity adds to the antisocial debate is an urgent sense of materiality and the embodied stakes bound up in theorizing. Lee Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism, which I discuss in Chapter One, operates at a level of theoretical abstraction divorced from the messy, material realities of embodied experiences. José Esteban Muñoz's idea of queer utopia, which I discuss in Chapter Two, begins to remedy this antisocial abstraction through its basis queer of color critique. Yet, while specters of the material flicker in *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz's emphasis on the aesthetic still partially divorces his notion of queer futurity from the material experience of the everyday. What Kafer's intersectional disability studies perspective adds to this debate is the crucial reminder that theories of futurity do not operate in some exclusively philosophical realm. As Kafer inquires, "how do I respond to the fact that the theories we deploy, the speculations we engage, play out across different bodies differently?"[17] Kafer's conception of crip futurity emphasizes that futurity has material and sometimes painful impacts on people's embodied experiences and lives. For example, Kafer reads temporality and futurity in the Ashley X case—a case where a young girl's parents elected

[17] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 44.

to put her through a horrifying "growth attenuation" and sterilization "treatment"—making heartbreakingly clear that ideas about disability, children, time, and the future are contested on and through actual bodies and lives.[18]

This reminder that the stakes of theorizing are not only textual but also embodied is particularly crucial in the Anthropocene when climate change first and disproportionately threatens already vulnerable populations of disabled people, people of color, Indigenous people, poor people, and people in the Global South. I turn to crip futurity, then, to emphasize that my return to the antisocial through the lens of climate change is not merely a thought exercise. Instead, how I, and we, choose to theorize queer futurity, crip futurity, and Anthropocene temporality has material implications that impact real people and populations.

To attend to these material implications, I turn in the second half of this chapter to the performance collective Sins Invalid, which has linked sexuality, disability, and climate through art-activism. While certain iterations of mainstream environmentalism like the anti-straw movement rely on individual, commodity-focused politics, Sins Invalid depicts disability and climate justice intersectionally through community. I read Sins Invalid's work through queer-crip futurity to consider how their recent performance, *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos*, offers a model for theories of survival in the Anthropocene. Artist-activists are *already* theorizing and working towards queer-crip futures in climate crisis; by reading Sins Invalid's work through queer-crip futurity I aim to address a gap within academic queer and disability studies. In what follows, I begin by detailing theoretical convergences of disability studies and queer theory. I explain how Kafer conceptualizes crip time and crip futurity alongside and through queer temporality and queer futurity. I articulate this theoretical

[18] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 48.

background to argue that we must re-theorize queer-crip futurity to account for climate crisis. To make this argument, I analyze Sins Invalid's *We Love Like Barnacles* as a case study that imagines queer-crip survival amidst uncertain environmental futures.

Queer Futures, Crip Futures, Climate Futures

Like queer temporality, crip temporality confronts normative time. As I discuss in the Introduction, Kafer resists the taken-for-granted way crip time has sometimes been used and explicitly defines the concept.[19] She preliminarily explains crip time as a recognition that disabled people sometimes need different lengths of time than able-bodyminded people; however, she then complicates the concept as involving *more* than just a different *amount* of time. Following Kafer, crip time is not simply a different measurement of normative time but a "challenge" to normative temporality itself.[20] It is an altogether different temporality that contests normative temporality and its "expectations," therefore opening up possibilities to deploy its flexibility creatively.[21] Additionally, in describing crip time as a "reorientation" that defies the "normativ[ity]" of mainstream logics, Kafer centrally intertwines crip time and queer time.[22] The logics bound up in notions of normative time involve both "compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness and compulsory heterosexuality."[23] Queer time and crip time

[19] Kafer's emphasis on futurity is what pulls me to her work. As I elaborate in the Introduction, other disability studies theorists have also persuasively theorized crip time. Kafer is unique, however, because of her emphasis on futurity and, as I explain later, her explicit theoretical engagement with the queer antisocial thesis debate. For other compelling evocations of crip temporality, see, for instance Ellen Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2017); Ellen Samuels and Elizabeth Freeman, eds., "Crip Temporality," special issue, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021); and Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).
[20] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.
[21] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.
[22] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.
[23] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 17.

coincide in their opposition to normative timelines, offering alternative modes for conceiving of temporality.

This understanding of crip temporality as imbricated with queer temporality makes possible Kafer's deployment of crip futurity, which she leaves as an open-ended concept. She comes close to an explicit definition when she writes, "Ideas about disability and disabled minds/bodies animate many of our collective evocations of the future; in these imaginings, disability too often serves as the agreed-upon limit of our projected futures. This book is about imagining futures and futurity otherwise."[24] Here, Kafer addresses the tendency to figure the future as a time and place without disability.[25] For instance, we might consider how this tendency is implicit in Lonely Whale's mission statement. Their webpage explains, "Since our inception in 2015, we have worked to drive recycling systems change, develop alternatives to problematic plastics, and create a mass community of people committed to a utopian future."[26]

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[24] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.

[25] The fact that feminist and queer thinkers, too, project a future absent of disability points to friction between queer and crip futurities. Indeed, though Kafer reads crip and queer temporalities "in relation," she also notes "areas of disconnect." *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 40. For instance, she notes "the oppositional relationship between queer time and longevity" and "the queer desire for reformulated histories" as two places where queer and crip temporalities are incommensurate. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 40. Here, I am reminded of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's ethic of incommensurability, which "recognizes what is distinct, what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization in relation to human and civil rights based social justice projects." "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 28. Tuck and Yang speak to the ways that some aspects of the movement for decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty will always be inherently irreconcilable with other social justice movements, like the racial justice movement, and vice-versa. They continue, "There are portions of these projects that simply cannot speak to one another cannot be aligned or allied." "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 28. Tuck and Yang's ethic is centrally and non-negotiably about decolonization, as it counters settler moves to innocence. Yet, I wonder what other sorts of incommensurate moments between movements might exist and what these irreconcilable tensions might produce. My recognition of these moments guides my choice to hyphenate *queer-crip* futures, as I see the hyphen acknowledging and holding the occasional strain between queer and crip.

[26] "Lonely Whale," Lonely Whale, accessed April 16, 2022, https://www.lonelywhale.org/.

Implicitly, the "mass community of people" who will inhabit Lonely Whale's "utopian future" is comprised only of able-bodied people who do not rely on "problematic plastics" to drink. Given the larger context of the anti-straw movement and its willingness to sacrifice disabled people, it is safe to assume that Lonely Whale's "utopian future," like the figurations of the future Kafer contests, is a future without disability. Lonely Whale's mission statement is only one of many examples that write disability out of the future. By critiquing other such ableist articulations of futurity, Kafer therefore offers crip futurity as partly about *rejection*. Crip futurity refuses ableist narratives that construe disability as something that needs to be eradicated both now and in the future. Simultaneously, in the passage above, she offers crip futurity as about *generation*, in that it values imagination and the productive creation of new futures. That is, crip futurity also involves "imagining futures and futurity otherwise." This act of imagining works to enact futures that center disabled people.

Crucially, Kafer theorizes crip futurity in relation to queer futurity in general and the antisocial thesis in particular. As I explain in the Introduction, Kafer's queercrip argument is centrally in conversation with the antisocial. She frames her first chapter with an epigraph from Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*—"Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough"—which sets up the chapter through the antisocial debate. More substantially, Kafer devotes a major section of the chapter to a critique of Edelman's refusal of the future.[27] While Kafer recognizes discourses of reproductive futurism as harmful and problematic, she does not

[27] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 96, quoted in Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 25. Earlier, Kafer writes, "I am interested in a crip politics of access and engagement that is resolutely a work in progress, open-ended, aiming for but never reaching the horizon." *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 18. I am reminded here of Muñoz's horizons that I discuss in Chapter Two.

believe that the solution is to abandon the future. Instead, she draws on Muñoz to consider how the lives of actual disabled children challenge Edelman's claims, as discourses of race and disability are co-constituted. Given this attention to the material lives of actual disabled children and people, Kafer concludes, "The task, then, is not so much to refuse the future as to imagine disability and disability futures otherwise, as part of other, alternate temporalities that do not cast disabled people out of time, as the sign of the future of no future."[28] This "task" is what Kafer takes up in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. In this sense, her work of "imagin[ing] disability and disability futures otherwise," or crip futurity, is a response to the antisocial thesis.

Kafer elaborates on how her understanding of crip futurity emerges from a series of questions prompted by queer theory and the antisocial thesis debate. She writes, "Questions about time, temporality, and futurity continue to animate queer theory, but this work has yet to have much of an impact in disability studies, and disability studies scholars have rarely been participants in these discussions. In articulating crip temporalities, then, I am calling for a mutual engagement in these discourses."[29] Kafer's text brilliantly and compellingly addresses this mutual engagement from the vantage point of the early 2010s. However, while she thoroughly integrates crip and queer futurities, like other theorists of the antisocial, Kafer leaves climate untheorized.[30]

Interestingly, while Kafer does not theorize climate, she, unlike Muñoz or Edelman, *does* consider the environment. An entire chapter of *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, "Bodies of Nature: The Environmental Politics of Disability," considers "the role disability and able-bodiedness play in

[28] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 34.
[29] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.
[30] This chapter was reprinted in Ray and Sibara's *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities*.

representations of nature and environmentalism."[31] Kafer even names the environment as a framework "for thinking disability futures" and makes reference to "environmental futures."[32] In this context, Kafer, like other theorists of disability studies, draws on an ecofeminist perspective that considers how power relations around gender structure understandings of and interactions with the natural world. Simultaneously, she critiques the way that "ecofeminist visions of the future" rely on "ableist assumptions about how bodies look, move, sense, communicate, and think."[33] Ultimately, Kafer both uses and challenges an ecofeminist understanding of gender and nature to offer an eco-crip perspective on disability and nature.

However, Kafer's eco-crip deployment of the environment is distinct from the way I take up the environment. Broadly, she is interested in how the "wider environment of wilderness, parks, and nonhuman nature" is a "built environment."[34] Given this eco-crip recognition, she examines "nature" to consider how disabled people interact with the environment, such as through hiking. In contrast, as I explain in my discussion of disability studies, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism, I am not so much concerned with nature as with the climatic. When I analyze the environmental future, I mean the Anthropocene conditions of climate change and pollution that drastically shape what the future will look like and even whether there will be a future at all. Thus, while Kafer and I are both concerned with environmental futures, we are talking about two different concepts. Although I recognize Kafer's contributions to eco-crip theory as vitally

[31] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 23.
[32] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 22, 23.
[33] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 23.
[34] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 129.

important, here I am more interested in what her frameworks of crip temporality and crip futurity might lend to theories of queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene.[35]

If Kafer's project is centrally a "reading of queer time through disability," then this chapter serves as a reading of queer-crip time through the Anthropocene.[36] In other words, Kafer integrated disability with conceptions of queer futurity; now I seek to integrate the Anthropocene with queer-crip futurity. I thus return to the questions that drove Kafer in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*: "What can disability studies take from queer work on critical futurity and, simultaneously, how might attention to disability expand existing approaches to queer temporality? How might our understandings of queer futurity shift when read through the experiences of disabled people, or when interpreted as part of a critique of compulsory able-bodiedness or able-mindedness? What does it do to queer time to place it alongside crip time, or queer futurity alongside crip futurity? Can we crip queer time?"[37] I twist these questions to theorize how Anthropocene temporalities

[35] In the next section, I turn to the work of Sins Invalid. Kafer, too, has cogently written about Sins Invalid. In her essay on "Queer Disability Studies" in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, Kafer analyzes Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's work in the 2009 Sins Invalid performance. Kafer's primary aim is to explain a queer disability studies perspective; she analyzes Piepzna-Samarasinha's work as a demonstration of such an analytic. Kafer explains her argument: "Piepzna-Samarasinha's performance offers one way of mapping the terrain of queer disability studies in the United States. As with many cultural workers writing about disability from queer perspectives, she complicates concepts of pride and identity, explores the effects of diagnostic categories, and yearns for queer crip futures." Alison Kafer, "Queer Disability Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, ed. Siobhan Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 93. In making this argument, Kafer does briefly reference how "environmental racism" and "industrial pollution" play into Piepzna-Samarasinha's performance. Kafer, "Queer Disability Studies," 96, 100. However, because her primary purpose is to explain the relationship between disability studies and queer studies, she does not focus on Anthropocene conditions. I therefore situate my reading of Sins Invalid's *We Love Like Barnacles* alongside Kafer's analysis of their 2009 performance. I aim to extend a conversation that Kafer has already started by considering crip temporality and crip futurity through a previously untheorized Anthropocene analytic.

[36] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 28.

[37] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.

might collide with and impact queer-crip temporalities: How might attention to disability impact the queer futures I have theorized thus far in this project? How might we enact queer-crip futurity in the uncertain futures of climate crisis?

As a compelling theorist of queer futurity who transforms the antisocial debate, Kafer articulates a powerful argument on the side of futurity. She writes, "I desire crip futures: futures that embrace disabled people, futures that imagine disability differently, futures that support multiple ways of being."[38] She continues, "Thus, my desire for crip futures is, as Heather Love puts it, 'a hope inseparable from despair.'"[39] Ultimately, Kafer links this hope-despair to queer desire: "This intermingling of recognition and absence, of despair and hope, renders my desire quite queer."[40] In this sense, Kafer, like Muñoz, counters the antisocial by continuing to desire futurity in spite of the recognition that hope is intertwined with negativity and might (or must) be disappointed. In our Anthropocene present, I, too, queerly desire crip futures. I therefore turn to crip temporality and crip futurity to question how those of us who follow Kafer's insistence on queer-crip futures might continue to do so in the era of climate change. What does it mean to desire queer-crip futures in the Anthropocene? Might queer-crip futurities operate both theoretically and materially as a praxis of survival?

Sins Invalid's Fragmentary Barnacles and Queer-Crip Survival

To explore these questions of queer-crip futurity, climate change, and survival, I turn to Sins Invalid and their performance *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos*. Sins Invalid is a self-described "disability justice based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ/gender-variant artists

[38] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 45.
[39] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 46.
[40] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 46.

as communities who have been historically marginalized."[41] Offering creative workshops and education in addition to their performances, Sins Invalid intertwines activism and art. As performer Maria Palacios explains, "I like to call the work of Sins Invalid 'artistic advocacy' because our work is not just art; it's advocacy at the very core of what advocacy looks like."[42] This artistic advocacy means that Sins Invalid simultaneously educates and creates; their art is always in the service of intersectional disability justice.

Sins Invalid has been engaging artistic advocacy since Patty Berne and Leroy Moore Jr. founded the project in 2006, and in recent years their work has increasingly emphasized the climatic. For instance, in 2019 Sins Invalid released an updated version of their disability justice primer, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People*.[43] This updated version underscores the connection between disability and environmental justice and includes a new section entitled "A Call to Action from Survivors of Environmental Injury." [44] Additionally, from 2017 through 2020 Sins Invalid released "Crip Bits" videos on their Facebook page, which are recorded conversations about "disability and sexuality, art, activism, and resistance in all their nuance and cripped-out juiciness."[45] These conversations take up issues such as "Environmental Illness + Climate Chaos," furthering their activism and education at the intersection of disability

[41] "Mission & Vision," Sins Invalid, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/about-us.
[42] Maria Palacios, "Q&A: 'Goddess on Wheels' Maria R. Palacios Talks Performance Art and Disability Justice," interview by Tina Vásquez, Prism, October 21, 2020, https://prismreports.org/2020/10/21/qa-goddess-on-wheels-maria-r-palacios-talks-performance-art-and-disability-justice/.
[43] Sins Invalid, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Sins Invalid, 2019).
[44] Mordecai Cohen Ettinger, Health Justice Commons, and Sins Invalid, "A Call to Action from Survivors of Environmental Injury: Our Canary's Eye View at the Crossroads of Disability and Climate Justice," in Sins Invalid, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone,* 94-100.
[45] Sins Invalid, "Crip Bits," Sins Invalid, accessed April 17, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/crip-bits.

and climate justice. Finally, in 2020, Sins Invalid released a short podcast series, *Into the Crip Universe*, with the theme "Cripping the Anthropocene."[46] Rafi Ruffino Darrow, the podcast host, opens each episode by explaining what the theme entails: "we are discussing the present and future of climate chaos and its interactions with disabled communities. In this time some call the Anthropocene, which is the proposed name for the epoch we live in, one of human-generated change to our ecosystem, disabled people are both disproportionately affected and brilliantly thriving. Through interdependence and resistance, we assert our claim to pleasure, access, and community. We are cripping the Anthropocene."[47] Thus, the podcast discussions serve as an educational resource about disability and climate justice and simultaneously demonstrate how crip communities are "brilliantly thriving." Together, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone*, Crip Bits, and *Into the Crip Universe* demonstrate Sins Invalid's enduring commitment to intersectional disability and climate justice in the Anthropocene.

It is within this larger context of artistic advocacy about disability and climate justice that Sins Invalid's recent performance *We Love Like Barnacles* emerged. While their disability justice primer, videos, and podcast primarily offer educational discussions about disability and the environment, *We Love Like Barnacles* offers different affordances and enacts different temporalities through its format as a performance.[48] *We Love Like Barnacles* centers crip,

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[46] Sins Invalid, "Podcast," Sins Invalid, accessed April 17, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/podcast/2020/10/16/episode-1-foundations-of-climate-justice-and-disability-justice.

[47] Sins Invalid, "We Love Like Barnacles," October 16, 2020, in *Into the Crip Universe*, produced by Sins Invalid, podcast, Spotify, 36:14, https://open.spotify.com/episode/40xEfJUvvo8LpfxCSdyRjH?si=Wy2CvrAIS82NPbX7k9gdLg.

[48] I have chosen to focus on *We Love Like Barnacles* rather than Sins Invalid's other work at the intersection of disability and environmental justice because the performance enacts something temporally that the other work does not. On one hand, I see Sins Invalid as doing the analytical work about futurity in *Skin, Tooth, and Bone*, Crip Bits, and *Into the Crip Universe*—I have little to add to the conversation besides emphatically echoing Sins Invalid's astute points. On the other

particularly queer-of-color-crip, perspectives on climate change to build communities and advocate for environmental and disability justice. The performance description explains: "Holding space for love, mourning, and community healing in pandemic times, Sins Invalid brings forth a performance that centers our communities in the throes of climate chaos and our agonized planet. From the storms battering our shores to the raging fires threatening our homes, the social, political, and economic disparities faced by disabled queer and trans people of color put our communities at the frontlines of ecological disaster."[49] To this end, the show brings together the work of several different artists—Alex Cafarelli, Antoine Hunter, Bianca I. Laureano, John Bussoletti, Lateef McLeod, Maria R. Palacios, Nomy Lamm, Sean Shelly, and Seema Bahl—through a series of vignettes that range from personal narratives to poetry to scene sketches. Due to the pandemic, *We Love Like Barnacles* was screened entirely online, first on October 23-25, 2020 and then during an encore on June 25-26, 2021. Though both screenings involved streaming the pre-recorded performance, *We Love Like Barnacles* was only available on the specified dates. The show therefore blended the accessibility of web-based events with the ephemerality of in-person events. Though no longer available, the performance persists in fragmentary artifacts—snapshots, brief video clips, poems, and conversations—offering a metaphor for understanding queer-crip endurance in climate crisis. That is, the temporality of the continued circulation of the partial fragments of the performance demonstrate queer-crip survival in climate chaos.

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hand, these texts were published and remain available online in traditional ways. While *Skin, Tooth, and Bone*, Crip Bits, and *Into the Crip Universe* were created over the past few years, audiences can access, read, watch, and listen to them still. *We Love Like Barnacles*, in contrast, occupies a unique performance temporality that these non-performance texts do not. I analyze this unique temporality to argue that it acts as a metaphor for queer-crip futurity.

[49] Sins Invalid, "Recent Performance," Sins Invalid, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/upcoming-show.

I attended the virtual encore screening of *We Love Like Barnacles* in June 2021—I watched the performance because I wanted to enjoy queer-crip art and community in the midst of the pandemic. The weekend of the screening, I was quite tired, as I have been since I developed autoimmune disease a few years ago. Through my near-constant exhaustion and brain fog, I wanted to simply sit with the performance as someone who cares personally about queer-crip futurity and climate change. It did not occur to me to take notes or document it for my future scholarly self. Now, what remains for me of *We Love Like Barnacles* is a haze of nebulous memory: I vaguely recall sitting at my desk and watching on my computer screen, interrupted as I often am by my three curious cats. I remember pausing the streaming for a break at some point, as I felt the resilience of queer-crip community but simultaneously felt the weight of catastrophic climate changes and needed a few moments to step away from the show. I remember appreciating the art and being impacted by the powerful and poignant message of each piece. Beyond that, I remember little else. I have indistinct recollections of each scene but few memories of the specificity of each performer's message. I remember reflecting on the limited availability of the screening and debating watching it for a second time in the 24-hour window I had purchased but opted instead to go to bed. Now, I wish I remembered, analyzed, and documented more.

As I reflect on my experience of the performance, I am reminded of Mel Chen's situation of brain fog as cripistemological theorizing. They ask:

> what kind of cognitions, what kind of information management, what kind of memory retrieval will we require to *do the theorizing* that will be important to move forward? . . . Is it possible that we could talk about partial knowing working agonistically against and thus also with comprehension, almost as the queer works in odd partnership with the

> straight and narrow? And then recruit from these forms of knowing to devise a cripistemology that takes seriously its own cripped reach, or rather, crips its *reach* while still *feeling* the stars?[50]

Following Chen, I situate my reading as a cripistemological project that seeks to "do the theorizing" from a queer place of "partial knowing." While I make a theoretical intervention about queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene, my process of theorizing is itself inseparable from my queer-crip thinking and memory.

My process of theorizing began several months after the encore performance of *We Love Like Barnacles*, when I decided the third chapter of this project needed to be about disability futures. My motivation was partly theoretical, as I view queer and crip futures as intricately intertwined, and partly personal, as my own understanding of climate chaos has become increasingly inflected by disability as much as by queerness. I found myself haunted by *We Love Like Barnacles* as I attempted to reach out beyond my vague affective memory to piece together the content and message of the performance. In this process, I returned to Kafer, who asks, "What is the crip time of remembering? Or the temporality of preparing to remember? How does one take steps now to get ready for the future moment when one will delve into the past?"[51] Here, Kafer is directly addressing memory and trauma, as in the experience of post-traumatic stress disorder. However, I apply her questions more broadly, alongside Chen's cripistemology, to consider crip memory in general. I felt haunted by *We Love Like Barnacles* because I found myself in a loop of memory: I kept trying to return to my past self at the moment of the

[50] Mel Y. Chen, "Brain Fog: The Race for Cripistemology," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014):182 (emphasis in original). Chen's meditation on brain fog emerges from their own experience with environmental injury.
[51] Alison Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021): 423.

performance who failed to take the steps for my future (now present) self to remember the details of the show. Yet, as I reflected on this longing for return, I realized that such an approach in many ways reinforces a linear, normative notion of time. I was trying to go back, to move linearly to a moment and a performance that is now past.

As I elaborate in Chapter One, linear temporalities perpetuate the harmful structural conditions that created the Anthropocene; thinking outside of linear timelines can be a praxis of imagining futurity in climate crisis. If in Chapter One I analyze Kyle Whyte's Indigenous concept of spiraling time in the context of reproductive futurism, here I want to think about time spirals and crip temporality. Devon Price, drawing on the work of Marta Rose, articulates how many neurodivergent people experience time "as a spiral rather than a straight line."[52] He elaborates, "Rather than being parceled out in detached chunks with predetermined purposes (lunch time, work time, sleep time), we can see time as flowing and even folding back on itself, an overlapping series of cycles, periods of dormancy intersecting with growth."[53] Through Price's words, I came to understand my attempt to return to the moment of performance as an attempt to force myself into normative, linear timelines that run counter to my experience of spiraling crip temporalities. Upon this realization, I worked to dwell instead in the spiraling crip time of remembering as a practice of cripistemological theorizing. Price continues, "Because Autistic minds are all about understanding details and analyzing complex systems of information, it makes sense to think of our lives as fractal, forever expanding to new subjects and narrowing into precise focus at the same time. . . . We don't complete discrete projects. We build

[52] Devon Price, *Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity* (New York: Harmony, 2022), 177.
[53] Price, *Unmasking Autism*, 177.

worlds."[54] In my analysis of *We Love Like Barnacles*, I dwell in the "flowing," "folding," "overlapping" spirals of my crip experience of the performance temporality. In so doing, I aim to "build worlds" via cripistemological theorizing as a means of imagining the future otherwise in the toxic temporalities of the Anthropocene.

The queer-crip time spirals of my experience of the performance therefore counter normative, linear notions of time. Kafer writes of disability narratives that detail (auto)biographic or (auto)ethnographic experiences of disability, "How do these kinds of stories rely on the straightness of linear time, the belief that becoming disabled is a single moment, tangible, identifiable, turning life into a solid, singular, static before-and-after? Can we tell crip tales, crip time tales, with multiple befores and afters, proliferating befores and afters, all making more crip presents possible?"[55] Here, I want to queerly twist her point away from disability narratives to apply it instead to performance. If the temporality of performance is often understood as linear, as involving a before, a during, and an after, what might it mean to think of multiple, proliferating crip befores, afters, and presents in terms of performance? What are the crip time tales of *We Love Like Barnacles*? How do these crip time tales disrupt the linear time tales of climate crisis?

To explore these questions, I began to compile an archive of the show from the impartial fragments that linger on the internet and in my memory. Rather than trying to move backwards toward the performance, I worked to assemble and create it anew. As I did so, I realized that this work of reconstitution is as much a praxis of crip survival through crip time as the content of the performance itself. In other words, piecing together past moments from the performance in the

[54] Price, *Unmasking Autism*, 178.
[55] Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," 418.

present to imagine crip futures of endurance in climate chaos enacts crip temporality outside of linear, normative timelines. As I found and brought past pieces from the show into the present, I felt a sense of aliveness; they were not simply fleeting moments from the past time of the performance, but they became animate as I re-discovered and made them anew.[56] The animate fragments from the performance had *survived;* they were performing and doing something in the present as much as they had in the past. The fragments of the performance depict the overlapping spirals of crip temporality, as they simultaneously dwell in moments from the past, act animately in the present, and gesture toward evolving futures.

The temporality of the *We Love Like Barnacles* performance archive further demonstrates a way of understanding temporality, futurity, and survival in the Anthropocene more broadly, beyond performance. I came to understand my ongoing and spiraling process of seeking out, recreating, and analyzing the enduring fragments of the performance as a metaphor for queer-crip survival in the Anthropocene. Might crips survive like these animate performance fragments? Rather than focusing on what the *content* of *We Love Like Barnacles* might suggest about queer-crip survival, in this section I ask: What might the *temporality* of *We Love Like Barnacles* suggest about queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene?[57] How might my process of reading the fragments of the performance engage with and enact crip temporalities, and what might such engagement and enactment suggest about queer-crip futurity in climate crisis?

Temporalities of We Love Like Barnacles

[56] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

[57] While I focus on temporality rather than content, I do think that the content of the performance enables this sort of temporal reading. A performance about crip futurity lends itself to a temporal reading of queer-crip survival.

The novel format of *We Love Like Barnacles* directly contributes to the survival of its enduring fragments. *We Love Like Barnacles* was a fully digital performance due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic; the digital design had temporal impacts both for Sins Invalid in terms of production and for the audience in terms of viewership. As Shayda Kafai explains in her book about Sins Invalid, the performance was originally intended to be in-person; however, it shifted to being fully online due to COVID. While previous Sins Invalid performances followed a hybrid model, occurring simultaneously in a theater and via livestream, *We Love Like Barnacles* became the first entirely online performance.[58] Livestreams implement accessibility, as the format grants technological affordances so people with various access needs and in multiple geographical locations can engage with shows. In *We Love Like Barnacles*, the livestream became available at a designated time, though the performance was pre-recorded: each artist filmed their act(s) with a small crew in an empty theater or on location outdoors, and the individual videos were edited together to create the full-length show.[59] This necessitated a particular spatial-temporal design, as each video had to be rehearsed and shot on location prior to the editing process, which had to occur before the livestream performance dates. The streaming design and its temporality were compelled by the pandemic but built on previous crip practices of digital accessibility.

The temporality of production for Sins Invalid was unusual due to the constraints of the pandemic, as the crew and performers had to learn how to safely conduct all aspects of

[58] Shayda Kafai, *Crip Kinship: The Disability Justice and Art Activism of Sins Invalid* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021), 68.
[59] Joe Dworetzky, "Sins Invalid to Stream Performance About Climate Change and Its Impact on the Disabled Community," Local News Matters, October 22, 2020, https://localnewsmatters.org/2020/10/22/sins-invalid-to-stream-performance-about-climate-change-and-its-impact-on-the-disabled-community-october-23-25/.

production under the threat of COVID.[60] However, I am particularly interested in the unique temporal design the screening constructed for audience members. To attend the show, audience members could purchase tickets, first from October 23-25, 2020, and then again during the encore from June 25-26, 2021. Tickets permitted access to the screening during particular time windows; for instance, during the encore screening my digital ticket let me begin the performance between 7:00 and 10:00 p.m. PDT on June 25, and I had to start streaming by 10:00 to retain access. Once I began my screening, I could then play the video at any time for twenty-four hours. Thus, while the performance was digital, it was still bounded within particular dates and times. Though there were boundaries to the performance, the digital format simultaneously permitted a crip temporality in contrast to in-person performances—I could rewind, rewatch, pause, and re-start the show during my twenty-four-hour access period. The performance became ephemeral only after the twenty-four-hour period ended; during the time the show was available users could move backwards and forwards through the performance. This temporality therefore incorporates the flexibility of crip time, recognizing that the audience might engage outside of "normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling" that often structure other performance formats.[61] Finally, though the show still exists in digital format, it is no longer accessible online or available for purchase. When I reached out to Sins Invalid to inquire if it might be available for screenings again, they replied that it could not presently be available on demand due to logistical issues. The full-length performance remains in the past—though the digital recording still exists, audiences can no longer access it. The design of *We Love Like Barnacles* therefore

[60] Sins Invalid, *Loving with Three Hearts: Behind the Scenes of the 2020 Sins Invalid Performance*, posted February 15, 2022, YouTube video, 38:34, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGjV78qgv1Q.
[61] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.

combines some aspects of the fleeting temporality of in-person performance with the temporal affordances of the digital, lending to both ephemeral and enduring effects. Ultimately, the temporality of the performance demonstrates an alternative, spiraling understanding of queer-crip temporality in the Anthropocene.

Though *We Love Like Barnacles* has ended, fragments of the performance continue to endure in the present, enacting queer-crip survival in climate chaos. For instance, newspaper articles, blog posts, photographs, video clips, and the show's program all survive as pieces of the performance that remain accessible online. This survival mimics the reference to barnacles in the show's title. A local newspaper reports on the title's meaning:

> The title of the show—"We Love Like Barnacles"—comes from the way that barnacles cling. [Sins Invalid performer Maria] Palacios says, "it is about how we hold on for dear life. We attach ourselves to whatever space we're able to just so that we can stay alive."
>
> Palacios explains, "loving like barnacles means that we hold on for dear life even when people are pushing us off the edge, wanting to euthanize us, throwing us off the bridge, telling us that we're ugly, saying that we don't deserve to be here. Damnit, we're fucking barnacles, we are here to stay."[62]

If the show itself is about clinging and attachment, the perseverance of fragments that continue to exist and circulate act like barnacles, embedding themselves in culture and creating an archive that survives both during and beyond the time of the performance. I read the partial artifacts of the performance—articles, photographs, videos, and the program—as barnacles that, within internet archives, crip communities, and crip memories, have, like crips ourselves, been "hold[ing] on for dear life." Crucially, actual barnacles are *alive*, meaning that the barnacle-like

[62] Dworetzky, "Sins Invalid to Stream Performance."

fragments of the show, or what I refer to as fragmentary barnacles, continue to persist and remain resolutely attached in times and spaces beyond the timespan of the show. Through this stickiness, this clinging, the fragments remain animate, continuing to enact a queer-crip politics of survival long beyond the performance. Importantly, barnacles attach with a determined ferocity; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration notes that barnacles "secrete a fast-curing cement that is among the most powerful natural glues known, with a tensile strength of 5,000 pounds per square inch and an adhesive strength of 22-60 pounds per square inch."[63] This means that barnacles attach like "cement"—once they adhere to something, it is incredibly difficult to pry them off. Not only does crip love attach like barnacles, as Palacios describes, but so too do the animate fragments of the show. Both crip love, addressed by the content of the performance, and fragmentary barnacles, produced through the temporality of the performance, offer a politics of queer-crip survival in climate chaos.

The double meaning of *attachment* as both embedding and relating means that this fragmentary archival survival creates crip community. If, like barnacles, the pieces of the show wedge into culture, signaling crip persistence, then this persistence also creates community. Kafer connects *crip* and *attachment*, asking, "What does *crip* require? What does it ask of me, of you, of us? In these times, in these crip times, what does it mean to be attached to crip? And what might such attachments make possible?"[64] The show's full title—*We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos*—constructs and maintains an attachment to *crip*. If *crip*, like *queer*, is something one does, then "crip lives," like "barnacles" are centrally about the act of attachment. What might the attachments of *We Love Like Barnacles* make possible? Kafer

[63] "What are Barnacles?" National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed February 25, 2022, https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/barnacles.html.
[64] Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," 416.

continues, meditating on the idea of attachment: "Attachment as affiliation, as relationality, as solidarity. Disability not through identity but through relation."[65] The fragmentary barnacles of the performance forge attachment "as relationality," making possible crip community through their survival. We might say that the fragmentary barnacles construct a crip community that is, in Muñoz's terms, "anti-antirelational" in their attachment to attachment itself.[66] Barnacles are compelled to attach in community.

I have focused on the titular reference to *barnacles*, but perhaps equally important is the *we* of *We Love Like Barnacles*—both *we* and *barnacles* are about attachment and collective survival. At the time of each airing, to create community in the online setting, Sins Invalid facilitated an optional pre-show digital hangout with interactive functions.[67] This digital hangout created space for crip community building while audience members participated from various locations. Kafai, noting the pandemic context, states that the performance and the community it generated "came to all of us in a time of great crip need."[68] The fragmentary barnacles continue to enable crip community and connection, extending a sense of *we* beyond the show. Though we are no longer living in conditions identical to October 2020, many of us are still "in a time of great crip need." Encountering fragmentary barnacles—through photographs, video clips, blog posts, and articles—continues to forge connection, bringing together those encountering the archive, those who documented it, the performers, and the crew. Importantly, this sense of community is not about individuals but rather about a political orientation toward queer-crip community. For instance, reading an article about the performance does not permit me to speak

[65] Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," 416.
[66] Muñoz, *Cruising* Utopia, 14.
[67] Kafai, *Crip Kinship*, 68.
[68] Kafai, *Crip Kinship*, 68.

directly with the performers or the author of the article. Instead, reading the article connects me with a *sense* of queer-crip community—the connection is forged by encountering and engaging with the animate archive of queer-crip survival. Even if I, an audience member, have never met the performers, crew, or documenters, I come into crip community with them as I encounter the sticky attachments of the barnacles of the show. Further, in encountering fragmentary barnacles from the performance, I can become a barnacle myself, attaching to the community of fragmentary barnacles that already exist and that have already survived.

Additionally, there is queer potential in this community forged through attachment. Interestingly, barnacles counter sexual normativity. Most are not sexually dimorphic, meaning that an individual barnacle can produce both sperm and eggs. I am not suggesting that barnacles as organisms are *inherently* queer, as this is a reductive reading of queerness that reduces its potential to sexual embodiment.[69] Instead, I mean to suggest that in metaphorically referencing organisms that are sexually non-normative, Sins Invalid gestures toward ways of being not constrained by the sexual binary. While the non-normativity of barnacles as organisms is not inherently queer, the queer-crip communities that attach *like* barnacles can leverage this non-normative potential for queer ends. In particular, a politics of queer-crip survival might translate into a politics of queer-crip futurity. Survival has a particular temporal pull; it is about *remaining* attached to life, not only in the present moment but also in the next. Survival is oriented toward the future. If queerness too, is centrally an orientation toward the future, then queer-crip survival

[69] I resist categorizing barnacles as *inherently* queer, as such a claim would replicate a pattern in other work that I have critiqued. Certain theorists purport to understand queerness capaciously, but then reduce it only to same-sex sexual behaviors in non-human animals or to sexual embodiment that challenges sexual dimorphism. I understand queerness as something humans or non-human animals *do* or *enact*, rather than a characteristic that springs from sexual embodiment (whether dimorphic or not). What I consider queer about barnacles is not their sexual embodiment, but how Sins Invalid takes up and deploys the organism for queer ends.

might doubly orient queer-crip communities toward futurity in climate chaos.[70] In what follows, I explore a possibility for queer-crip futurity through orientation via an example from *We Love Like Barnacles*.

An Example: Reconstituting Lateef McLeod's "Running from the Ecological Wave"

To demonstrate the process of reconstituting *We Love Like Barnacles*, I examine fragments from Lateef McLeod's "Running from the Ecological Wave." I weave archival fragments from multiple sources together with my own narrative to reconstruct McLeod's performance in the present. McLeod has been performing with Sins Invalid since 2007; he previously participated in their theater and artist-in-residence performances. In addition to his work as a performance artist, he has published two books of poetry and is a doctoral candidate.[71] McLeod both wrote and performed "Running from the Ecological Wave," which was the fourth scene in *We Love Like Barnacles*.[72] To reassemble his performance, I turned to the following online archive: the *We Love Like Barnacles* program, the Sins Invalid photo gallery, a blog post by rose iris theodosia elysium, and a post by Kayley Whalen on The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports' blog. The *We Love Like Barnacles* program is available on Sins Invalid's website; it includes information about the performance as well as some of the poetry featured in the show.[73] The Sins Invalid photo gallery is also available on Sins Invalid's website, and it features several still images from *We Love Like Barnacles* and previous Sins Invalid

[70] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
[71] Sins Invalid, *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos*, performance program, October 23, 2020, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bed3674f8370ad8c02efd9a/t/5fa2284066cec725ca8f9ce3/1604462685187/SinsInvalid-Program-2020+Final+2.pdf.
[72] Sins Invalid, *We Love Like Barnacles*, performance program.
[73] Sins Invalid, *We Love Like Barnacles*, performance program.

performances.[74] The blog post by rose iris theodosia elysium consists of a thorough and insightful review of *We Love Like Barnacles* by elysium, a "Mad, autistic, plural crip," on eir personal blog.[75] Finally, the post by Kayley Whalen, a "disabled Latinx transgender advocate," on The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports' professional blog, astutely summarizes and analyzes McLeod's performance.[76]

Drawing on this archive, I understand reconstitution like putting together pieces of a puzzle, but a sort of three-dimensional puzzle that exists in the overlapping spirals of the past, present, and future. In this example, I pull out fragments each of these sources offer and figure out where they fit together to reconstruct McLeod's performance. This reconstruction re-tells McLeod's understanding of crip survival in climate chaos. McLeod's narrative is a powerful articulation of queer-crip futurity; in many places, I let his words that I've pieced back together speak for themselves. I intentionally choose to name the source of a fragment in the text of my narrative when an author makes an analytical point, but I simply cite the source in the footnotes when I am piecing together the plot of McLeod's performance. Similarly, I only insert myself into the narrative as an *I* when I am making an analytical point—I purposely attempt to appear as

[74] "Gallery," Sins Invalid, accessed February 27, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/media-1.
[75] rose iris theodosia elysium, "Crip Brilliance Transcending the Theater: Reviewing Sins Invalid's 2020 Climate-Chaos-Themed-Performance," *rose iris theodosia elysium* (blog), November 2, 2020, https://ryanthea.medium.com/crip-brilliance-transcending-the-theater-b0ecd0ea7242.
[76] Kayley Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater: Lateef McLeod Stars in Sins Invalid's 'We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos,'" *The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports* (blog), November 17, 2020, https://citizendirectedsupports.org/2020/11/17/self-advocacy-through-theater-an-interview-with-disabled-performer-lateef-mcleod/. The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports is an organization that aims to "ensure opportunities for people with disabilities to live fully-included lives of their own design through self direction." "About Us," The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports, accessed April 17, 2022, https://citizendirectedsupports.org/about-us/. McLeod is a board member for The Alliance, which is why the post highlights his performance.

only one voice in the communal narrative I reconstruct. As I encounter and reanimate the various textual fragments of the performance archive, I understand myself as entering into crip community with McLeod, Sins Invalid, elysium, and Whalen. Through I am piecing together the performance, the story I am telling is simultaneously McLeod's story and a communal one; the narrative I detail below emerges from this intertextual crip community. In this sense, I think of the process of reconstitution itself as anti-antirelational—it is profoundly an experience of queer-crip community across time. The process is also both theoretical and material, pedagogically countering a divide between theory and practice, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

Importantly, my intervention lies not so much in the *content* of the narrative that I develop, but in my *process and demonstration* of reconstitution itself. My process demonstrates the spiraling and animate temporalities of *We Love Like Barnacles*, which offer an articulation of queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene. McLeod's performance simultaneously exists in the past (as the original performance), in the present (as I reconstitute it on the page), and in the future (as you read this narrative and as the archive continues to evolve). I pull the fragments of the performance from the past to create something new in the present, preserving a performative future through text that continues to endure through encounters with readers across time and space. In reconstituting the fragments of McLeod's performance, I, in conjunction with the intertextual crip community of my sources, am constructing a new, spiraling (temporal) version of McLeod's performance. The narrative that I detail on the page runs parallel to, but does not precisely align with, what occurred in McLeod's actual performance—it is a sort of animate speculation enacted in a queer-crip temporality. The multiple, overlapping, animate temporalities that reconstitution enacts metaphorically represent the multiple, overlapping, animate temporalities we might reach for through queer-crip futurity in the Anthropocene.

The Reconstitution

At the beginning of "Running from the Ecological Wave," McLeod is "in his power chair, an attached tray holding" his augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device.[77] He discusses how climate crisis might impact him and "asks the audience to imagine what it would be like to be evacuated from his home, . . . how having to evacuate in a crisis could rob him both of his voice and ability to move."[78] He questions:

who will come and get me.

in my wheelchair.

when my building starts burning?

Will the firefighters listen to me

that I need my AAC device.

when they are rescuing me from the flames?[79]

Here, McLeod's word choice makes climate disaster immanent. In imagining a future of wildfires and disaster, he references "when" his "building starts burning" and "when" the firefighters rescue him. It is not a question of if climate disaster will happen, but when.

As McLeod speaks, "another man walk[s] on stage."[80] For the remainder of McLeod's performance, Christopher Sean Shelly provides access support.[81] Once on stage, Shelly "approache[s] and beg[ins] removing the wheelchair's attachments," including McLeod's AAC

[77] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."
[78] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[79] Lateef McLeod, quoted in Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[80] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."
[81] Sins Invalid, *We Love Like Barnacles*, performance program.

device.[82] Shelly continues, ultimately removing McLeod from his wheelchair "as the background of the stage turns a bright burning red, evoking the wildfires consuming the West Coast."[83] McLeod's removal causes an affective response for elysium, who describes, "I felt as though Lateef had been dismembered in some vital way. The device, the voice, was part of Lateef's bodymind. The theme that our bodyminds are not only our flesh and blood ran through the performance."[84] McLeod, too, performs an affective shift. At this point in the scene, his "face is distraught, and his pleas become desperate that people listen to him now, because he may lose his ability to communicate when climate disaster strikes."[85] His speech reflects this distress, as he asks:

> *Will my electronic voice be saved*
>
> *or will it disintegrate in the ash?*[86]

McLeod's use of passive voice emphasizes the uncertainty of what will happen to his assistive technology that is crucial for his survival; he does not question whether the "firefighters" will save his voice, but rather wonders if his voice "will" "be saved." Without a subject, I wonder who will save McLeod's voice, who will help when climate disaster strikes? Who will prioritize crip needs while the world burns?

While McLeod speaks, Shelly supports him "as he r[ises] from the chair and t[akes] halting steps across the stage."[87] elysium notes how crossing the stage in this way raises questions about what McLeod will do in a moment of climate disaster: "W[ill] he need to drag

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[82] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."
[83] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[84] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."
[85] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[86] McLeod, quoted in Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[87] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."

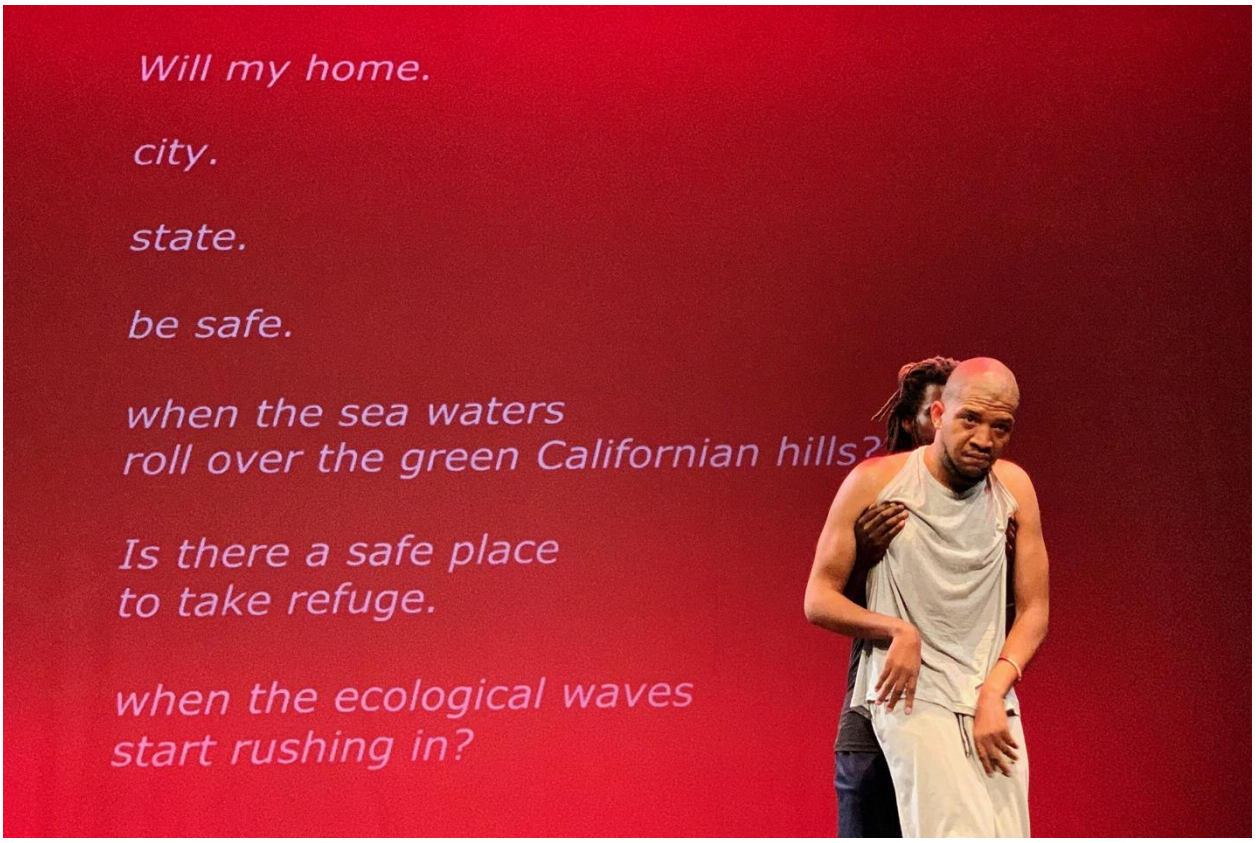

Figure 3.1. Lateef McLeod, with access support from Christopher Sean Shelly, performing in front of a fiery red screen displaying his speech during "Running from the Ecological Wave."

his own body away, with another person's help if he g[ets] lucky, as disaster str[ikes]? W[ill] there even be enough time?"[88] The flaming red screen behind McLeod makes the moment on stage feel like a moment of climate disaster. As he slowly crosses the stage, his words appear behind him on the fiery screen (see figure 1).

Will my home.

city.

[88] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."

state.

be safe.

when the sea waters

roll over the green Californian hills?

is there a safe place

to take refuge.

when the ecological waves

start rushing in?[89]

In introducing the idea of "ecological waves," McLeod broadens his discussion of climate disaster. Will he face wildfires or a rising sea? In pivoting from fires to waves, McLeod emphasizes that the specificity of the ecological threat is not important—the question of safety and "refuge" is what matters.

McLeod makes references to progressively larger geographic areas, beginning with his "home," moving to his "city," and ending with his "state." This shift in scope mimics his move from reflection on his experience as an individual to evaluation of his positionality within systemic injustice. Whalen notes that McLeod "describes how civilization is structured in a way such that both the Earth and our bodies are treated as resources from which to extract labor and

[89] "Gallery," Sins Invalid, accessed February 27, 2022, https://www.sinsinvalid.org/media-1. This text is taken from the image of McLeod's performance.

capital, while polluting us with toxins at the same time. Using language that echoes that of the enslavement and exploitation of Black people like him, Lateef makes a powerful call to stop 'this system.'"[90] McLeod speaks to this parallel between systemic exploitation of the Earth and bodies, saying:

> *This system,*
>
> *who estrange us from the land,*
>
> *like we are estranged from our bodies.*
>
> *So we don't flinch in pain,*
>
> *As they both deteriorate.*[91]

Yet, while McLeod speaks these words, his embodied presence on the stage counters a notion of estrangement. By desperately questioning what will happen to him in the event of ecological disaster as he walks across the stage immediately before this scene, I get the sense that McLeod is *not* "estranged from the land" and "estranged from [his] bod[y]." I suspect that McLeod might "flinch in pain," I myself might "flinch in pain" as the fires and waves approach. This hypothetical recoil is a moment of resistance to the systemic violence enacted on both bodies and the land.

At some point—perhaps after McLeod speaks the above words, perhaps before—he kneels on stage while Shelly kneels behind him for support. I do not remember, and none of my archival fragments confirm, precisely when this happens, but I know that it does because of photographic evidence from Sins Invalid's gallery (figure 2). The screen behind McLeod changes from fire to water, but there is something almost calming in the oceanic ripples. The

[90] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[91] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."

Figure 3.2. Lateef McLeod, with access support from Christopher Sean Shelly, kneeling in front of a rippling screen during his performance of “Running from the Ecological Wave.”

water on the screen does not look like the rushing, violent water of ecological waves, but seems almost gentle in its flow. This shift, for Whalen, "offers the audience a possibility that the future may not be so bleak."[92] The peacefulness of the final moments of the scene gesture toward community and interrelation, as elysium contends McLeod's "narration invoke[s] universal interrelation—everything connects to everything else."[93] Ultimately, McLeod "calls for solidarity amongst all marginalized people to fight environmental destruction together."[94] He says:

> *will we learn to clutch each other*
>
> *as lifelines,*
>
> *and save each other.*
>
> *no matter the condition*
>
> *of our body minds?*[95]

McLeod thus turns to crip community as a means of "sav[ing] each other," or as a survival practice in climate chaos. This call for community answers the question his earlier use of passive voice left open: Who will prioritize crip needs while the world burns? Maybe we will learn to "save each other." The conclusion of McLeod's performance is a call to action, as his "final words, as the stage goes black, challenge us to fight, asking us 'do we have the courage?'"[96]

Reflections on Reconstitution

McLeod's final question concludes my practice of reconstitution; it echoes as I, and you, reflect on his piece. In tracing and splicing together the fragmentary remains from his work, I

[92] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[93] elysium, "Crip Brilliance."
[94] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[95] McLeod, quoted in Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."
[96] Whalen, "Self-Advocacy Through Theater."

have emphasized that his performance has survived across spiraling queer-crip temporalities. Like barnacles, the pieces of his work remain attached to archival spaces, enduring both in the past and into the present. But more than that, this praxis demonstrates how "Running from the Ecological Wave" remains animate. Through reconstitution of these fragments, McLeod performs in the present and future—not in the same way that he did in the moment of the show—but he performs nevertheless. In many ways, my reconstitution is a "doing for and toward the future."[97] I have attempted to bring the fragments from the performance's past into the present to consider how they might continue to resonate. How have the fragmentary barnacles of McLeod's performance been transformed through my narration? How have the fragmentary barnacles of my narration transformed you?

Three days before I completed my draft of this chapter, I discovered that Sins Invalid had just posted a new documentary, *Loving with Three Hearts: Behind the Scenes of the 2020 Sins Invalid Performance*, on YouTube.[98] The documentary describes how Sins Invalid safely adapted the production of *We Love Like Barnacles* in response to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the documentation of these production aspects is both fascinating and commendable, I am most interested in how *Loving with Three Hearts* acts as a barnacle that provides another missing piece in the fragmentary archive of the show. Not only does *Loving with Three Hearts* describe production, but it also showcases several brief video clips from the performance that have not been available elsewhere online. Approximately a year and a half after

[97] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[98] Sins Invalid had actually posted the video on YouTube about a week before that, on February 15, 2022, but due to a technical glitch I did not receive a notification. Additionally, before it became available on YouTube, *Loving with Three Hearts* premiered online from October 15-17, 2021 at the Superfest Disability Film Festival. Like *We Love Like Barnacles*, the initial premiere of *Loving with Three Hearts* was only available during the weekend of the festival.

the initial screening, *Loving with Three Hearts* thus continues the time spirals of the performance, introducing new fragments to the performance archive and demonstrating how the animate barnacles of the show might continue to shift and evolve well into the performance "afters."

Part of the joy of *Loving with Three Hearts* is that it not only includes brief snippets from the performance, but it also incorporates new footage that shows glimpses behind the scenes. In this footage, viewers see the placement of the cameras on stage as McLeod practices. We see him smiling with Shelly as they rehearse. As I caught these glimpses and watched fragments from other scenes, I found myself eager for video fragments from McLeod's performance. What absences might these fragments fill in from my reconstitution? How might my recollection continue to animately evolve? As I shifted from reading and looking at textual and photographic fragments from "Running from the Ecological Wave" to watching video fragments, I realized I forgot how, as McLeod crossed the stage, his footsteps echoed rhythmically with his voice. I forgot that both McLeod and Shelly were covered in glitter, sparkling in front of the fiery red screen. I forgot, and maybe Whalen forgot too, the full version of McLeod's final words:

> In the aftermath of the earthquake
> Will we learn to clutch each other
> As lifelines
> And save each other
> No matter the condition of our body minds
> Or will we scatter
> Reach at each other
> Because our skin is different

Our gender is different

Our sexuality is different

Our abilities are different

Will we have the courage?[99]

As I reflect on McLeod's final question, I return to Kafer. She prompts, "Maybe we should think less about what crip time is and more of what crip time does, thinking beyond specific speeds, toward as yet unimagined imaginaries."[100] Sins Invalid, McLeod, and the fragmentary barnacles of the performance usher in "unimagined imaginaries." They animately orient us toward and help us imagine yet unimagined futures. "Will we have the courage" to follow where they lead?

Conclusion: Queer-Crip Futurity in Climate Chaos

The queer-crip futures Sins Invalid and their fragmentary barnacles invite differ markedly from the banal futures the anti-straw movement figures. If the anti-straw movement is a campaign focused on individuals and commodities that is itself marketable, Sins Invalid offers a community-oriented movement focused on disability justice that resists easy consumption. Interestingly, barnacles, like other marine creatures, consume plastic.[101] One of the plastics barnacles have been found to ingest is polypropylene, the most commonly used plastic in drinking straws.[102] Heather Davis has described plastic as "the ultimate material of tempophagy, or time-eating, one that consumes the compressed bodies of ancient plants and animals, a process

[99] Sins Invalid, *Loving with Three Hearts.*
[100] Kafer, "After Crip, Crip Afters," 421.
[101] It is important to note that not *all* organisms are harmed by plastic consumption; gooseneck barnacles, in fact, do not seem to experience acute adverse effects. Miriam C. Goldstein and Deborah S. Goodwin, "Gooseneck Barnacles (*Lepas* Spp.) Ingest Microplastic Debris in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre," *PeerJ* (2013): 10.
[102] Tao Zhang et al., "Distribution and Characteristics of Microplastics in Barnacles and Wild Bivalves on the Coast of the Yellow Sea, China," *Frontiers in Marine Science* 8 (2022): 1.

that took thousands of years, only to be transformed into a single-use take-out container"—or, I might add, a polypropylene straw.[103] If plastic is the "ultimate material of . . . time-eating," then what might it signal that barnacles eat plastic? Or, if the anti-straw movement values a plastic-free future more than it values a future for disabled people, is there a sort of metaphorical justice in a queer-crip futurity predicated on barnacles? Might barnacles metaphorically eat the consumable, ableist versions of the future the anti-straw movement offers, clearing the way for more imaginative, spiraling queer-crip futures?

[103] Heather Davis, "Toxic Progeny: The Plastisphere and Other Queer Futures," *philoSOPHIA* 5, no. 2 (2015): 234.

CONCLUSION: LONGING IN THE FACE OF LOSS

The day I began writing this Conclusion, I woke up and was listening to the news, as I do every morning. NPR was playing a story about how Arctic sea ice is melting faster than scientists previously thought, with essentially all models forecasting an ice-free Arctic by 2050. As I listened, the scientist being interviewed mentioned "interconnectedness"—how sea ice melting will set off a cascade of other climate changes.[1] In the middle of the story, I was interrupted by a notification from the *New York Times*—*Roe v. Wade* had fallen, or, rather, the Supreme Court had struck it down. In the eleven days it took me to finish my first draft, the news continued flooding in: two states either introduced or passed anti-trans legislation, two more either introduced or passed anti-gay legislation, the Supreme Court limited the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to mitigate climate change, and police murdered Jayland Walker, an unarmed Black man. Indeed, as I worked to wrap up this section, I was interrupted by yet another *New York Times* notification—this time about a mass shooting in Highland Park, Illinois, a town a few hours away that is home to many of my students. Like the melting sea ice, each of these acts of violence are interconnected in our increasingly apocalyptic Anthropocene present.[2]

If efforts by the state to exploit the environment and both control and eradicate women, trans people, queer people, people of color, and disabled people have at times been quiet and insidious, they have recently grown louder and bolder. Many of us who are part of these groups

[1] Morning Edition, "Ice in the Arctic is Melting Even Faster than Scientists Expected, Study Finds," *NPR*, June 24, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1107244530/ice-in-the-arctic-is-melting-even-faster-than-scientists-expected-study-finds.
[2] Toby Beauchamp, "Why Are So Many States Trying to Limit Transgender Rights," interview by Jodi Heckel, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Campus News, June 14, 2022, https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/1999047878.

have long known what I discuss in Chapter One—that the state can only ever incorporate those who fall into the boundaries of racialized heteronormativity, that it will always view those outside of those boundaries as a threat. Yet, even with this knowledge, the intensifying boldness of these efforts makes clear that our bodies and lives are on the line. Simultaneously, and interconnectedly, we are facing the intensifying threat of climate change, the impending ecological wave that threatens to drown us all. As we confront both unrelenting social violence and climate crisis, the future seems bleaker day by day.

In our Anthropocene present, not only does the future seem bleaker each day, but the *temporality* of that future also seems to *evolve* each day. I began this project to explore how Anthropocene conditions impact the queer and queer-crip futures we are able to imagine, and I returned to the antisocial thesis debates as a framework for understanding the toxic temporalities of our present moment. Each of the case studies I have considered—youth environmental activists, the *X-Press Pearl* disaster, and Sins Invalid's *We Love Like Barnacles*—all demonstrate how conceptions of temporality have shifted since the antisocial's heyday in the aughts due to climatic conditions. In Chapter One, I argue that the figure of the youth environmental activist articulates a reproductive futurism with difference, envisioning the future in terms that do not inherently uphold racialized heteronormativity. In Chapter Two, I consider how the toxic conditions of the literal oceanic horizon prompt shifts in conceptions of queer futurity and queer utopia, as the Anthropocene and its paradigmatic material, plastic, refigure temporality. In Chapter Three, I contend that queer-crip methods of engaging with Sins Invalid's performance offer spiraling temporalities that might serve as a metaphor for queer-crip survival in the Anthropocene. Across these examples, I have demonstrated that Anthropocene temporality is challenging previous notions of normative temporality, thus impacting how we understand

queer and queer-crip temporalities. However, just as conceptions of temporality have changed from the aughts through the present, so too have they changed from the beginning of this project through its end.

Anthropocene temporality remains massively in flux. Constantly shifting environmental and social conditions crucially continue to impact conceptions of temporality. For instance, I initially drafted this Conclusion and meditated on melting sea ice in June and July 2022. As I revise this Conclusion in September 2022, a new publication forecasts that melting sea ice in Greenland will raise sea levels by a foot regardless of what climate mitigation measures we take now.[3] News reports have taken to apocalyptically naming this phenomenon "zombie ice," as the ice is already dead, or not receiving replenishment from melting glaciers. [4] This means that it is impossible to stop this ice from melting and contributing to sea level rise in the near future. The future of this ice was already determined by emissions in the past, situating it as a "zombie" in the present—dead but nevertheless animate in its inevitable threat to the planet. This example illustrates that understandings of our climatic future continue to rapidly change even day by day, and these changing predictions increasingly signal accelerated and compressed impacts in Anthropocene time.

As I reflect on these impacts—geological, social, and temporal—I attempt to hold onto the sense of hope that motivated this project's origins. My thoughts return to my hometown of Virginia Beach. I wonder what will arrive first—the wave of sea level rise or the wave of social violence? I wonder if it even matters which wave arrives first, as waves themselves—each

[3] Jason E. Box, "Greenland Ice Sheet Climate Disequilibrium and Committed Sea-Level Rise," *Nature Climate Change* (2022).
[4] Seth Borenstein, "'Zombie Ice' from Greenland Will Raise Sea Level at Least 10 Inches, Study Says," *Virginian Pilot*, August 29, 2022, https://www.pilotonline.com/nation-world/vp-nw-greenland-zombie-ice-20220829-43txsn4ckbeodkwp2v5rnennw4-story.html.

comprised of water pushing toward the shore and water from previous waves flowing back to sea—emphasize interconnectedness and demonstrate that the rush of climate change and the rush of social violence are inextricable. I think about the people—primarily poor people, disabled people, and people of color—whose homes will be destroyed by flooding and hurricanes as climate change continues to accelerate. I think about the women and people with uteruses under threat if the governor's proposed abortion ban in Virginia passes: Will they become climate refugees and/or abortion refugees, climate casualties and/or abortion casualties? I think about the trans and queer kids who live in fear, wondering if their access to medical care in Virginia will be in jeopardy next, wondering if the planet will be inhabitable when they grow up, wondering *if* they will grow up given both of these impending threats. (Actually, exemplifying that the social landscape continues to evolve literally daily, the governor of Virginia passed violent anti-trans legislation impacting students in Virginia in the days that I finalized this Conclusion.[5]) I think about the speed of each of these changes, how what was once a distant risk is now a daily reality. I turn to the interconnectedness between "zombie" ice and social violence—how what was set in motion in the past has gained a potentially unstoppable momentum toward the future. If I began this project because I desperately want there to be better and queerer worlds, by the end I am unsure if there ever will be.

While this affect springs from my personal experience, it is far from an individual affect. Many of us who occupy marginalized positions within power have likely tried to suppress seeds of doubt about the worlds yet to come as we endure a constant barrage of terrifying new realities

[5] Hannah Natanson, "Youngkin's Rules for Trans Students Leave Many Teens Fearful, Despondent," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/09/23/virginia-transgender-youngkin-students-outing/.

from both social and environmental fronts. I am reminded of the quote attributed to Mariame Kaba that often circulates on social media and in activist circles: "Let this radicalize you rather than lead you to despair." This statement nevertheless acknowledges the shadow of the negative—the despair that is there and waiting to creep in if only we let it. I want to sit with this affect—an ambivalent sense of despair, disappointment, and devastation—rather than deny it. I do so to return to the central question motivating this project: How might people, animals, and queer and crip ways of being survive through conditions that are unsurvivable?

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz raises the specter of disappointed hope. Analyzing a sense of utopian potentiality, Muñoz maintains, "Bloch would claim that such utopian feelings can and regularly will be disappointed. They are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imagining transformation."[6] Throughout this project, I have deployed hope to "imagin[e] transformation"; I have urged readers to long for and desire other worlds. But, by the conclusion of this work and in our increasingly dire present, I am, and perhaps readers too are, left with a sense of loss in that longing. Muñoz continues, "hope can be disappointed. But such disappointment needs to be risked if certain impasses are to be resisted. . . . Bloch's hope resonates with Austin's notion of the felicitous insofar as it is *always* eventually disappointed. The eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process."[7] Muñoz, drawing on Bloch, doesn't suggest that our hope *might* be disappointed; rather, he reminds us that disappointed hope is an eventuality, a certainty. Hope *will be* disappointed. We must desire better worlds anyway.

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[6] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 10th anniversary ed. (2009; New York: New York University Press, 2019), 9.
[7] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 9-10 (emphasis mine).

The moment in which we recognize our hope as disappointed is a moment of deep devastation. And yet, such devastation might lead us toward a sort of antisociality *with difference*. In Chapter One, I contended that youth environmental activists articulate a reproductive futurism with difference that offers a means of imagining the future otherwise. Devastation, too, dwells in the liminal space between the antisocial and the anti-antisocial. It emerges from the deeply negative—from our experiences of disappointed hope. These experiences can be embodied, painful—the realization that feels like a punch in the gut and that leaves us struggling for air. But it also emerges from desire: We experience devastation where we experienced longing first. The sense of devastation that fills the space of desire is therefore also soft—it might remain in the tender, fleshy reminder of a blossoming bruise. There is something about the softness of devastation that might drive us toward others—toward queer and crip intellectual communities, toward those who might pick us up, toward those who we might in turn pick up. Devastation, in its amalgamation of negativity and softness, might then prompt us to turn toward, rather than away from, the communitarian. In other words, devastation materializes from the negative but propels us toward the social.

Might the disappointment of hope and its affect of devastation counter the white masculinist cishomosexual impulse of the antisocial? As I have demonstrated, a purely antisocial stance, such as that articulated by Edelman, relies on an unspoken white masculinist cishomosexuality. This antisocial negativity is attached to affects of anger and refusal, to simply saying "fuck it" to everything.[8] Even J. Jack Halberstam's queer feminist version of the antisocial retains hard edges—while "grounded in negation, refusal, passivity, absence, and

[8] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 29.

silence"—it is simultaneously sharp and "cutting."[9] In contrast, the not-quite antisocial but also not-quite-anti-antisocial affect of devastation is a way of *responding to*, rather than *refusing*, the world as it actually is. It is what we are left with when we desire too much, when we desire the impossible. Perhaps, then, a queer-crip politics of devastation offers an approach to the Anthropocene that might draw us together toward the communitarian.

If antisociality with difference might lead us toward the communitarian, then the intellectual communities it brings together might also be a space for exploring the collective conversations this project seeks to generate. I have put queer theoretical discourses of the antisocial and environmental humanities discourses of the Anthropocene in conversation to argue that in our climatic present, we must think of the environment as constitutive of queer temporality. However, this project represents one perspective in a burgeoning conversation at the intersection of queer theory and the environmental humanities, and it leaves open several questions: How are queer and queer-crip temporalities shaped by literal landscapes beyond the oceanic? How do Anthropocene conditions impact other queer frameworks, such as kinship, relationality, and desire? What does an Anthropocene analytic lend to further explorations of the nexus between queer and crip? How might the impending material realities of the Anthropocene prompt us to think further about the material impacts of theory? How might a performative mode of theorizing grounded in affect serve as a queer-crip method in toxic conditions? What is the role of hope in theorizing?

In the Anthropocene, when faced with the eventual disappointment of hope, it seems perhaps easier to turn to the purely antisocial—to revel in negativity and refusal, to accelerate the

[9] J. Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 124, 135.

already-fast pace of destruction. It is, I think, harder to hold on to hope, to desire and work toward better and queerer worlds that will never come. As we do so, a queer-crip softness might help us embrace the eventual devastation of lost hope. It might teach us to hold onto our vulnerability, to turn toward each other, as we confront what is yet to come.

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