UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

The Pathologies of Flesh: Temporalities of Feminine Embodiment in Contemporary Poetry

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1xw9p1bk

Author

Nance, Sarah

Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Pathologies of Flesh:

Temporalities of Feminine Embodiment in Contemporary Poetry

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Sarah Nance

© Copyright by

Sarah Nance

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Pathologies of Flesh:

Temporalities of Feminine Embodiment in Contemporary Poetry

by

Sarah Nance

Professor Helen E. Deutsch, Chair

Doctor of Philosophy in English University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

"The Pathologies of Flesh: Temporalities of Feminine Embodiment in Contemporary Poetry" examines contemporary American poetry which considers the relationship between illness and time. The experience of illness instigates a breakdown of linear chronology, and the poets I analyze use these ruptures as a means to depict the ambiguities of illness. I draw from recent scholarship on time and the body in queer studies and disability studies in order to explore the various "times" of illness: the moments of duration, onset, prognosis, and treatment that subvert the temporal narratives of the "healthy" body. "The Pathologies of Flesh" argues that illness functions in the "gaps" of time, rather than unfolding linearly; poetry thus functions as a form of disruption, offering the writer a space of respite from these breaks in time. In acknowledging these temporal breaks, poetry opens up the possibility of approaching other

alternative experiences of time—as the chapters explore—from the slow violence of environmental disaster to the accelerated crisis of police brutality.

The project examines poetry from the early twentieth century through the present, including canonical figures such as Muriel Rukeyser, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich. The heart of the project reads the work of a group of women writing at the close of the twentieth century and into the next: Elizabeth Arnold, Claudia Rankine, Bhanu Kapil, Danielle Pafunda, Jillian Weise, and Anne Boyer, and the late poets Hillary Gravendyk and C.D. Wright. "The Pathologies of Flesh" argues that the temporal ruptures experienced within illness relate to other kinds of rupture, such as social marginalization, spatial movement, and the aggressive, abrupt ruptures of violent action. In considering a wide variety of illnesses—including cancers, chronic illnesses, and mental illnesses—the chapters draw connections between the disruptions found in geological spaces, in labor and compensation, in racial conflict, and in the documentation of death. Poetry thus makes a compelling intervention in teleological narrative structures, offering a space—linguistically and on the page itself—to examine ruptures in time and their effect on the body.

The dissertation of Sarah Nance is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Louise E.J. Hornby

Brian Kim Stefans

Stephen I. Yenser

Helen E. Deutsch, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Vita	ix
Introduction	1
CHAPTER ONE The Body as Monument: Chronic Illness, Duration, and Geological Spaces	22
CHAPTER TWO The Labor Economy: Pain, Productivity, and Female Work	66
CHAPTER THREE The Temporality of Violence: Mental Illness, Race, and Disaster	113
CHAPTER FOUR The Materiality of Death: Documentary Poetics, Rupture, and Return	168
Works Cited	211

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1 (two-page spread from Anne Boyer's <i>Garments Against Women</i>)	88
	128
	129
	132
	132

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With much gratitude:

To my committee, those teachers and mentors who have shaped both my work and my life: Helen Deutsch, who from our first meetings showed me that openness and curiosity could expand outward exponentially. You have greeted my life and work with support, interest, and kindness, and have modeled for me a kind of life that I, too, want. Thank you for your limitless patience, editing, and emails, your energy and ongoing enthusiasm. Although any errors or misrepresentations herein are mine alone, I hope the spirit of the project reflects your guiding hand and expansive interests. Louise Hornby, for consistently showing me a way forward when I thought there was no other way, in both my work and my own experiences. So many dead ends in this project have become thoroughfares in the sitting area in your office, and for your warmth, creativity, and thoughtful approach to both ideas and life, I am so grateful. Brian Stefans, for your eclectic taste, for introducing me to so many writers and ways of thinking. Stephen Yenser, for your support from early in my graduate career and your impeccable close readings. Anurima Banerji, for your care and kindness in joining this committee, and for the thoughtful feedback you have provided on the way.

To Chris Mott, for your limitless enthusiasm and perceptiveness & for endless exploration of new ways to engender both knowledge and joy. Jeanette Gilkison, for your kindness & a million small favors (including the forwarding of endless amounts of mail to us while we were away).

To many classrooms of UCLA students who have picked apart my ideas and remade them into things both stronger and previously unimaginable. I'm grateful for your eagerness and kindness.

To the participants and leaders of numerous reading groups at UCLA where parts of this work were shaped and formed, especially Brian Stefans and M/ELT (now 20/21) and Christopher Looby and Michael Cohen at the Americanist Research Colloquium (ARC). Many thanks to them and to the participants of those groups, for considering seriously and with kindness my first drafts and early ideas, and for shaping my time at UCLA.

To support received from UCLA's English Department and UCLA Graduate Division, as well as research funding from the Grace M. Hunt Library Fellowship, which funded the research and writing of this project, both in Los Angeles and across the country.

To the journal *Literature and Medicine*, where a shortened version of my second chapter is forthcoming. Many thanks for the kind permission to reprint it herein. To Ahsahta Press and Anne Boyer, for permission to reprint pages from her book *Garments Against Women*.

To a long line of teachers—in every sense of the word—that helped seed the start of this work; the project is still small but its roots are deep. Many thanks to Gordon Gilsdorf, Cyrena Pondrom, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Robert Morneau for what you have taught me about literature and the world.

To the lovely, meandering group of friends and colleagues I've found at UCLA: Michael Nicholson (and by extension, Lauren Nicholson); Jennie Scholick: what a happy coincidence to find ourselves together in all of this—you are the most gracious host, the sharpest observer, impeccably dressed and impossibly kind. Lindsay Wilhelm (and John Fernandes-Salling), my kindred(s) in my cohort; Will Clark (who also shares that role); Caitlin Benson, with gratitude for keeping tabs on me when I left; Jackie Ardam, my model advisor and guide; Rebecca Hill; Ben Beck; Jordan Wingate; Amy Wong (and Glenn Poppe). To Grant Rosson and Jay Jin, original members of the B.F.C., constant companions (writing and otherwise)—the recipients and senders (and writers) of some of the best poems I've read in recent memory, my first readers and best critics. Thank you for your poems and your friendship. To Sam Sommers, my dear long-distance coffee date and second home after leaving Los Angeles; how I hope we never stop repaying those favors to each other. To Alex Zobel and the memory of Kathryn Tunstall, for hosting us one rainy night in Napa with no electricity and a conversation by candlelight that reminded me of why I started this work in the first place, right when I needed it most; and for recollecting for me Raymond Carver's "Late Fragment" from his final collection—written while ill—and bringing me back to the beginning and, now, the end. Much gratitude and love to all of you; my doors are open and my heart is full.

To Gregory Langen and Carolyn Bergonzo, friends I've encountered along the way who have challenged my thinking and expanded my life and world. To my friends from home who now greet me both there and all over: Miranda Scheffel, who made Los Angeles home for so many years; Stephanie Hatfield, my sounding board and weekly phone call, for all of our conversations now and to come; Kim Kegel, for your effortless kindness and frequent chats; Katie Vande Castle, for grounding; Matt Woleske, for good music and a set of mixtapes; thank you for welcoming me into your homes and lives for so many years.

To the friends we've made our family, who have offered their care and kindness in every kind of weather: Patty, Denis, and Emily Roznowski; Georgia and Ted Stutzman; Dana Powers and family; Tyler Dickinson; Don, Marilú, and Edward Couch. To Pico, a rescue pup from Los Angeles with big eyes and a bigger heart who has made every day since we met a joy.

To Kelly Nance, my sister soul, first and best friend, partner in love and grief. All of our differences have become, instead, our similarities; I hope the roads of our lives continue to intersect in unexpected ways.

To Susan Nance, my guide and orbit, archive of wisdoms and laughter. I am so grateful for everything that has pushed our lives together, for your unwavering support of my every endeavor, for your bravery that has, in turn, cast its shadow upon me and many others.

To the memory of Norman Nance, timekeeper, mender, and perceiver. If I have ever looked truly closely at something, it is because you taught me how. We may no longer share this temporal experience but we continue to share so much more; I'm forever grateful that you were there at the start of it all.

And finally, to Daniel Couch: an endless debt; beloved on the earth.

VITA

EDUCATION

C.Phil, English, University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

M.A., English, University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

B.A., English, University of Wisconsin-Madison, with comprehensive honors, 2010

PUBLICATIONS

"An Economy of Illness: The Poetics of Women in Pain," *Literature and Medicine* (Spring 2018).

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

Irving and Jean Stone Dissertation Research Fellowship, UCLA, 2016-2017 Mellon Professionalization Initiative Fellow, UCLA, 2016 Collegium of University Teaching Fellows, UCLA, (declined), 2016-2017 Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, UCLA, 2015-2016 Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award (University-wide competition), 2015 Society for Disability Studies Travel Grant, 2015 Grace M. Hunt English Reading Room Archival Travel Award, 2015 Shirle Dorothy Robbins Award for Poetry, UCLA, 2013, 2015 Mellon Graduate Fellowship in Pedagogy, UCLA, 2014 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA, 2011, 2012 University Fellowship, UCLA, 2010-2011

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- "The Materiality of Death: Documentary Poetics and Ruptured Temporality," Disability as Spectacle Conference, Los Angeles, CA (April 2017)
- "An Economy of Illness: Women, Pain, and Contemporary Poetic Style," MLA Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA (January 2017)
- "Lost Temporarily': H.D. and the Queer Temporality of Anxiety," MSA Annual Conference, Pasadena, CA (November 2016)
- "Sick' Spaces: Chronic Illness, Poetry, & the Environment," Poetics: (The Next) 25 Years Conference, Buffalo, NY (April 2016)

- "Bodies at the Margin: Lyric Representations of Embodiment in H.D. and Later Female Poets," H.D. and Feminist Poetics Conference, Bethlehem, PA (September 2015)
- "Lyrical Bodies: Disability Experience in Poetry," Society for Disability Studies Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA (June 2015)
- "Female Embodiment and Deviance in Contemporary Experimental Poetry," PAMLA Annual Conference, Riverside, CA (November 2014)
- "The Body as Material in 20th Century Poetry," Friends of English Southland Conference, Los Angeles, CA (May 2014)
- "Illness, Union, and the Poetry of Adrienne Rich: Feminine Embodiment in Edward Said's Late Style," Thinking Gender Conference, Los Angeles, CA (February 2014)
- "The Embodied Feminine: Women's Time, Women's Bodies, and the Question of Late Style," Friends of English Southland Conference, Los Angeles, CA (May 2013)

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

"Critical Recursions": Friends of English Southland Conference, Los Angeles, CA (June 2017)

COURSES DESIGNED

GRADUATE LEVEL

Supervised Teaching Preparation I. Co-taught, Spring 2015

Supervised Teaching Preparation, II. Co-taught, Fall 2014

Undergraduate Level

Introduction to Creative Writing (Poetry and Fiction), Summer 2014

Introduction to Critical Reading, Writing, and Research, *dates noted below*:

Textual Bodies: Investigating Literary Portrayals of Embodiment, Fall 2014

Ghost (Writing): Embodied Specters and Literary Hauntings, Spring 2014

Writing Gender: How Literature Constructs Modes of Being, Winter 2014

Making Memory: Literary Constructions of the Past, Fall 2013

Just Like Ours?: Fictional Worlds and Their Dimensions, Summer 2013

Introduction

TESTS SHOW NO NEW CANCER; TESTS SHOW SAME OLD CANCER. SPINAL PAIN REMAINS BUT SOME LESS. TALKING ABOUT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ASK IF HER NEWS IS GOOD OR BAD — THAT IS NOT A FLEXIBLE OR PRODUCTIVE WAY OF THINKING ABOUT THIS. AN AIM NOT TO HOPE OR FEAR A LOT, NOT LEAD OTHERS TO.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Teaching/Depression"

In the wake of a new cancer diagnosis in the early 1990s, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick began seeing a therapist—Shannon Van Wey—whose advice about both her depression and her life she transcribed in journals along with her own thoughts, poetry, difficulties, and criticism. The conversations and her accompanying thoughts appear in a hybrid text interspersed with haiku that Sedgwick published in 1999: *A Dialogue on Love*.² After years of finding lumps that would, in turn, be tested and cleared as benign earlier in her life, Sedgwick was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1991. She underwent major surgery and chemotherapy, but by 1996 doctors discovered that the cancer had metastasized to her spine. Until her death in 2009, Sedgwick managed her cancer as a chronic condition. She made recourse to dozens of varying treatments and therapies—some conventional, some alternative—as a way to address her ever-changing illness.

The project of recording Shannon Van Wey's thoughts alongside her own becomes, for Sedgwick, a project of expanding the boundaries of her own subjectivity. She writes that her records are an "interspersing of my accounts with passages in small capital type from Shannon's

_

¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Teaching/Depression." *The Scholar and the Feminist Online* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2006), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/heilbrun/printese.htm. Although Sedgwick is speaking of her experiences with (eventually metastasized) breast cancer, she articulates these discussions through her experiences with mental illness. This project focuses on the temporal disruptions of illness broadly, and Sedgwick's writing emphasizes the complicated and multifaceted nature of "illness" as something that can't be confined to a singular diagnosis.

² Although best known for her work on queer theory, Sedgwick was also a poet. She describes reading and writing poetry as a child and adolescent in "A Poem is Being Written" (*Representations*, no. 17, Winter 1987: 110-143); her first collection of poems, *Fat Art, Thin Art*, was published by Duke University Press in 1994, and as late as 2006, she published poems in *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*.

notes - which record sometimes his thoughts but mostly my thoughts and dreams, in a permeable first person that refers sometimes to him and at other times to me. There are times when even I can't tell whose first person it is." This "permeable first person" is evident in the excerpt from Sedgwick's journal printed above, where any mention of an "I" is scrubbed from the lines. The only marker that remains to distinguish Shannon from Sedgwick is a gendered pronoun—"her news"—while the rest of the sentences avoid taking a subject. This blurring of subjective points of view also offers an alternative approach to chronological time; with no subject to carry the actions, they lose their sense of relationship within time. Which comes first? The actions thus become statements unmoored from context, space, and time because of the paratactic organization of the statements: "An aim not to hope or fear a lot." Without the context of temporal markers, Sedgwick's subjectless statements suggest a long duration, where she manages her feelings of both hope and fear, rather than chronological development. The form of her records also takes on a hybrid quality, blurring a prose-poetry aesthetic with factual notetaking. In one of her last published poems, titled "Death," Sedgwick writes, "The point's not what becomes you, but what's you." That is, it matters not whether one dies, or what various modes of outward appearance "becomes you"—Sedgwick writes that death "isn't a party you dress up for, man, / it's strictly come-as-you-are, so don't get too / formal, it's useless''—but rather "what's you." In the midst of a convoluted line of syntax, Sedgwick suggests the primacy—but also the ineffability—of the self as subject through the experience of death. In her illness, as represented in her records with Shannon, Sedgwick struggles to maintain subjectivity; in the process of documenting the temporal ruptures that illness creates, her understanding of

²

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sedgwick, "Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: Three Poems," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 16, no. 2 (July 2006): 327.

selfhood merges with others.

The entry reprinted above also suggests that the presence of illness itself contributes to this nonlinear temporality: "Tests show no new cancer; tests show same old cancer." There is no progression or regression, only stasis. Indeed, throughout Sedgwick's work she emphasizes the chronic nature of her illness, suggesting that the very experience of being ill can drastically affect one's experience of time: repeating treatments with no new changes; repeating tests that show no progress but also no decline. In Susan Sontag's well-known 1977 theorization of illness, *Illness* as Metaphor, she compares the contemporary pervasiveness of cancer to that of tuberculosis in earlier centuries, writing that until the advent of "cellular pathology," medical discourse collapsed the two diseases: "[F]rom late antiquity until quite recently, tuberculosis was typologically—cancer. And cancer was described, like TB, as a process in which the body was consumed." And yet, she suggests that while "TB is a disease of time; it speeds up life," cancer "has stages rather than gaits; it is (eventually) 'terminal." Unlike the speed that metaphorically characterizes tuberculosis, Sontag suggests that cancer takes its time. "Cancer works slowly, insidiously," she writes, "the standard euphemism in obituaries is that someone has 'died after a long illness":

Every characterization of cancer describes it as slow, and so it was first used metaphorically ... among the earliest figurative uses of cancer are as a metaphor for "idleness" and "sloth." Metaphorically, cancer is not so much a disease of time as a disease or pathology of space. Its principal metaphors refer to topography (cancer

⁵ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 1990), 10. She notes that "[i]n both English and French, consumption 'gallops'."

⁶ Ibid., 14.

"spreads" or "proliferates" or is "diffused"; tumors are surgically "excised").

Sontag speaks here of the metaphorization of cancer—which she finds problematic, a problem which in turn informs the writing of her Illness as Metaphor and its companion text, AIDS and its Metaphors. For Sontag, the language used to describe cancer relies on space rather than temporality. And yet, even when considering metaphor alone, cancer so often becomes, like many other illnesses in the twenty-first century, an experience of durations. Notably, temporal durations need not be considered separately from spatial dimensions. Rather, I argue that the durations of illness map on to spatial concerns, to the "topograph[ies]" that Sontag identifies. As cancer spreads or is diffused, as she writes, these activities occur within time, a temporal realm that is often governed by slow expansion. In these long moments of duration—marked by the patient's endurance, rather than a narrative of progress—space likewise refuses development. Space and time mark a moment of rupture, one which refuses both linear chronology and spatial development, characterized instead by experiences of duration and diffuse, slow expansion. I mark these moments in the genre of poetry, noting how the space of the page works with the exacting language found in poetry to portray these uneasy temporal moments with its breaks in space and linear time.

Of Durations: Illness, Time, and the Body

Managed as a chronic condition, cancer can linger in an in-between state, an ongoing reality of "tests [that] show no new cancer; tests show same old cancer," as in Sedgwick's

4

⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

account. 8 In her book Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us, the anthropologist S. Lochlann Jain reiterates Sontag's explanation of cancer as a spatial entity, a metaphoric stand-in for "anything evil or scary": "As a result, cancer—or at least the fight against it—provides a moral ground for anyone taking a stand against something bad, something that indeed might 'metastasize' or spread." But as Jain explains elsewhere, the very act of diagnosis disrupts not just space but also linear temporality for sick individuals: "[P]rognosis affects every dimension of time," Jain writes, "not just the future: the past becomes equally mysterious and unknowable," That is, the experience of illness instigates a breakdown of linear chronology. Illness does not only affect future temporal experiences but also the past, as one returns to every spent moment, looking for clues and signs that foretold one's present experience. Memories become a field of surreptitious hints and subtle clues of illness that may not resolve into any explanation. This temporal disruption, I argue, is a key part of the portrayal and experience of illness; this rejection of teleology instead privileges fragmented pauses, repetitions, and durations. Jain sees cancer's relationship with space as integrally related to these nonlinear experiences of time, an intersection which, as I noted, Sontag glosses over. Jain explains this connection as such:

Cancer itself parodies the capitalist ideal of accrual through time, and people with cancer inhabit its double consciousness. In the cancer complex, the relations among cell division, financial accumulation, and deferred gratification are *anything but linear*. For each postdiangosis [sic] individual, the story will go one of two ways: You will have a

⁸ This formulation of cancer as "slow," as Sontag explains, or even as a chronic condition, as I argue, is of course not meant to be all encompassing. Despite advances in medical technology that allow for early detection and treatment, many experiences with cancer still remain accelerated, surprising, and devastatingly abrupt.

⁹ S. Lochlann Jain, *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 43.

recurrence, or you will not. You will die of cancer, or you will not. You will be ill for a long time, or you will not.¹¹

I see more at stake here than Jain's seemingly straightforward dichotomies imply (and, I suspect, so too does Jain); within either side of her either/or scenarios, time lapses and looms, becoming, as she writes, "anything but linear." As cancer grows—here she notably employs the same spatial metaphors as Sontag—it has a distinct relationship with time. Despite Sontag's assertion that cancer prioritizes spatial dimensions over temporal, Jain portrays the illness as indivisibly involved with both. The relationships she describes—between the progression of illness and the deferral of the future, and the investment of funds in return for treatment—are nonlinear as is, I argue, the temporal experience of illness.

This nonlinear experience of time is rooted in the body, a site both emphasized and complicated by the experience of illness. For Sontag, this embodied-ness is part of the experience of cancer. She writes that unlike tuberculosis, which "dissolved the gross body, etherealized the personality, expanded consciousness"—at least in the work of the Romantics—cancer "reveals that the body is, all too woefully, just the body." Outside of metaphoric descriptions and portrayals, we can see the way that any experience of illness emphasizes one's embodied state and returns one to the body, a site that despite medical advances is paradoxically still "just the body."

_

¹¹ Ibid., 51. Emphasis added. Jain takes the notion of "double consciousness" from W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, where Du Bois uses it to mean a racial identity that is divided rather than cohesive for African Americans as marginalized figures in a white-dominated society. *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin, 1996). Here, Jain suggests that those with cancer are governed by cancer's double consciousness, a conflict between excessive growth—developing rapidly, mirroring a strange kind of progress that we seek within investments but abhor within illness—and fragmented, nonlinear time, whereby the person with cancer never knows that the next moment of diagnosis/development holds.

¹² Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 19-20, 18.

The disconnect between the body that may have once been, and the body that is now ill creates a temporal rift, writes philosopher Drew Leder. He traces this rift through the experience of a body in pain, writing that "[p]hysical suffering constricts not only the spatial but the temporal sphere. As it pulls us back to the *here*, so [bodily] pain summons us to the *now*." The temporal rift Leder describes, then, is less about a previous experience of bodily "health" and more about a disruption in a normative experience of time. In summoning us to the "here" and "now," pain and illness disrupt linear time that ignores the long present moment, instead focusing on the progression of each forthcoming future event.

And yet, there is paradoxically a distancing effect that takes place; as suffering and pain summons us to the "now," as Leder describes, this movement is also an unknown encounter: "Aversive, involuntary, and disruptive, the painful body emerges as a foreign thing," Leder writes. ¹⁴ Pain may bring you back to your body, but it may also be an unfamiliar body you find once there. Leder emphasizes that this temporal break is not only for the body in pain; indeed, the ill body also experiences this altered sense of time. ¹⁵ "Sickness," he writes, "exemplifies not only a spatio-functional but a temporal *écart* ['gap']," most notably characterized with the seemingly simple fact that "[i]n the face of such a transformation I can no longer take the body for granted." Likewise, Vivian Sobchack suggests that "[i]n a paradoxical way, then, we are

¹³ Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 75. Emphasis in original. Importantly, this focus on the physical realities of embodied experience further emphasizes the intrinsic relationship of time and space within illness.

¹⁴ Ibid., 77.

¹⁵ Although pain may be and often is part of illness, Leder structures the categories of pain and illness separately in in *The Absent Body*; see chapter 3, "The Dys-appearing Body" for more. For my purposes here, they function similarly in that they both affect one's perception and experiences of time, a point with which Leder's account agrees.

¹⁶ Ibid., 89.

most 'at home' in our bodies when we are most absent from them." That is, we feel most comfortable in our bodies when they can be safely ignored, when they are symptom-less and trouble-free. And yet, as Sobchack points out, the boundary between self and body is indistinguishable; there is no "separate" body that we can ignore or fixate on, depending on sensation. She writes,

[O]ur bodies are ourselves: they are not things that trap us ... rather, however finite, situated, and delimited, they are modes of access and capacities that enable us. At the ontological level, then, it is usually not until we suffer illness, physical incapacity, or social discrimination that our bodies become major hermeneutic problems and that we objectify (rather than merely objectivate) them. Awareness of the gap between the intentionality of our consciousness and the bodies that we are emerges precisely at the moment when our material existence in the objective and always social world nonpluses us, undermines us, overruns us, or stops us short. 18

Bodily objectification, Sobchack explains, occurs when we feel distanced from our bodies; she attributes this distancing to the effects of illness, physical incapacity of other sorts, or social discrimination. 19 This distancing is a paradoxical one, in that we are first distanced from our bodies when they function "perfectly" and we don't think about them at all; and then, when an

¹⁷ Vivian Sobchack, Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 190. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Ibid., 190. Emphasis in original. To Sobchack's point, the experience of objectification is ongoing; we "objectify" our bodies, constantly turning the abstract into the concrete.

¹⁹ Thus we can feel distanced from our bodies from how we perceive our bodies to be—say, ill or otherwise incapacitated—or from how others perceive our bodies through social marginalization or racial/social discrimination. It's important that these are perceived distances, not a Cartesian duality that separates mind and body; as Rita Charon writes, "The self depends on the body for its presence, its location. Without the body, the self cannot be uttered. Without the body, the self cannot enter relation with others. Without the body, the self is an abstraction." Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 87-88.

illness occurs, we likewise again feel distanced, but it is a new kind of distancing, one with an underlying recognition. We thus become aware of a perceived gap between body and self at moments when we experience other kinds of gaps in our world views and self-view. And yet, as Audre Lorde notes in *The Cancer Journals*, a record of her own experiences with breast cancer: "I am completely self-referenced right now because it is the only translation I can trust, and I do believe not until every woman traces her weave back strand by bloody self-referenced strand, will we begin to alter the whole pattern." Even when displaced from the ill body, Lorde articulates the importance of returning to the reality of embodied experiences, "strand by bloody self-referenced strand."

The Lyric Form and Temporal Rupture

"The Pathologies of Flesh" examines contemporary poetry which investigates this perceived gap between self and body, especially as it resonates with temporal gaps relating to illness. Lyric poetry as a form—with its penchant towards brevity and concision, its rejection of teleology and narratives of stable subjectivities—offers a compelling medium to document and explore these temporal ruptures that constitute the illness experience. What about contemporary lyric poetry makes it so well suited for these kinds of disruptive temporal experiences? Jonathan Culler points out that poetry is all too often forced into "models of narrative fiction" where it is thus expected to serve as representative "of the experiences of subjects." Instead, Culler suggests we pay attention to lyric's ability to generate an ongoing present-ness, what he calls

_

²⁰ Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980), 11.

²¹ Jonathan Culler, "Why Lyric?" *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (January 2008): 201-202. He writes that while narrative "is about what happens next," lyric is "about what happens now" (202).

"the lyric present" and describes as a "distinctive lyric temporality."²² Furthermore, he argues that language and bodily experience are inextricably intertwined:

If we believe language is the medium for the formation of subjectivity, lyric ought to be crucial, as the site where language is linked not only to structures of identification and displacement before the consolidation of subject positions but especially to rhythm and the bodily experience of temporality[.]²³

If language is related to the body's own experiences of time, it follows that lyric language forms a critical part of representing alternative bodily temporalities, as experienced through illness. And what are these alternative temporalities that illness creates? Alison Kafer suggests that the very language we use to describe disability and illness captures these nonlinear temporalities: "'Chronic' fatigue, 'intermittent' symptoms, and 'constant' pain are each ways of defining illness and disability in and through time; they describe disability in terms of duration. 'Frequency,' 'incidence,' 'occurrence,' 'relapse,' 'remission': these, too, are the time frames of symptoms, illness, and disease."²⁴

Kafer also sees within what she terms "crip time" a link to queerness, arguing that "shifts in timing and pacing [related to disability or illness] can of necessity and by design lead to departures from 'straight' time, whether straight time means a firm delineation between past/present/future or an expectation of a linear development from dependent childhood to independent reproductive adulthood."²⁵ As a disabled or ill person experiences the moments

²² Ibid., 202.

²³ Ibid., 205.

²⁴ Alison Kafer, Feminist Queer Crip (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25.

²⁵ Ibid., 34.

Kafer lists above—incident, occurrence, relapse, remission, prognosis—she finds herself in a liminal temporality, a "casting out of time" that Kafer refers to as "strange temporalit[y]."²⁶

These experiences of strange temporality deviate from linear timeframes in several ways. They reject the narratives with which linear time is imbued, the beginnings and middles and ends that help us separate different experiences. These experiences also reject broader societal narratives—what Kafer calls 'straight' time—that privilege progress narratives that illness may subvert.²⁷ Kafer's use of "strange temporality" suggests fragmented experiences of smaller moments, small-scale loops, durations, and returns that aren't linear.²⁸

Furthermore, lyric's deviation from narrative characterization allows it to depart from strict linear temporality. The "self" presented within lyric poetry is often unstable, shifting between subjectivities and refusing a narrative teleology. In their study on Victorian-era lyric, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins claim that lyrics have been long misunderstood as "personal subjective utterances of historical subjects." Likewise, Sharon Cameron suggests that lyric allows for "temporal fusions" as "past and future rise to meet the present on its own ground." Unlike narrative, which traces linearity in part through its characters, the lyric "posits a speaker

2

²⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁷ These "progress" narratives include growing up from a child to an independent adult; getting married or forming family units; contributing to economic progress via productive work. These narratives are disrupted by illness and other often-unexpected events or experiences. Elizabeth Freeman calls the perpetuation of these social expectations "chrononormativity," whereby "naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation ... the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity." *Time Binds: Oueer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

²⁸ Henri Bergson famously theorizes the notion of "duration"—*la durée*—as an experience of time which "refuses a linear narrative temporality in favor of a model of experience characterized by its 'confused multiplicity,'" writes Hillary Gravendyk. "Experimental Embodiments: Poetry, Subjectivity, and the Phenomenology of the Body" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 64. Gravendyk uses this notion within both her critical and poetic work.

²⁹ Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins. "Lyrics Studies." Victorian Literature and Culture 27, no. 2 (1999): 529.

³⁰ Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 207.

whose identity ... remains deliberately unspecified, unlike that of characters in narratives, whose first task is to particularize themselves. Lyric speakers do not even have names, and in their shirking of name they diverge from real persona or rather from single persona. Thus the lyric is a departure not only from temporality but also from the finite constrictions of identity." In certain ways, Cameron and I disagree; in many of the poems I take up in this project, the speakers are specifically distinguished to us as readers—some even have names—and yet they still manage to break the constrictions of linear temporality by dwelling in strange moments of unsettled time that linger, suddenly appear, or cycle back on themselves.³²

Although Kafer speaks of disability and illness quite broadly, "The Pathologies of Flesh" hones in more specifically on illness, which is still negotiating its space within disability studies. To instance, in Jennifer Bartlett's preface to the well-known poetry anthology *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, she writes, "There are absences in the collection: we did not include poets writing about HIV/AIDS or cancer. While these disabilities without a doubt fit into the social model, they could be arguably classified as illness." Likewise, Susan Wendell writes in "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities" that although she understands the disability community's avoidance of "medicalization" rhetoric—that is, the idea that a disability is something that can and should be "cured"—she believes that better understanding the ways that chronic illness intersects with disability can positively affect both discourses. Unlike acute illness—which typically has a cure and is handled relatively quickly—

-

³¹ Ibid., 208.

³² It is important to note that these poems I examine often look closely at the personal body, which requires a level of specificity that Cameron's claims about lyric don't include.

³³ Bartlett also notes the intrinsically limited scope of such a project: "*Beauty is a Verb* is not, nor is it meant to be, a comprehensive collection." *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, Eds. Jennifer Bartlett, Sheila Black, and Michael Northern (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011), 16.

chronic illness cannot "reliably be cured" but also won't "kill the patient any time soon."³⁴ And yet, Wendell argues, even though the borders of chronic illness and disability overlap, chronic illness lacks some of the recognition that disability advocates have pursued within disability studies. "Many of us with chronic illnesses are not obviously disabled," Wendell writes. "[T]o be recognized as disabled, we have to remind people frequently of our needs and limitations," which can be "a source of alienation from other people with disabilities."³⁵ Paradoxically, in its attempts to back away from the medical model, disability studies has avoided illness even when the two experiences intersect: "Illness is equated with impairment, even by disability activists and scholars, in ways that disability is not; hence there is anxiety to assure nondisabled people that disability is not illness."³⁶ In drawing from the wealth of recent scholarship on time and the body from scholars in queer studies, disability studies, and gender studies, "The Pathologies of Flesh" explores the temporalities of the ill body.³⁷ As Wendell suggests, and as I demonstrate, these experiences often intersect with disability, and my broader argument here aligns these experiences along the boundaries of time as well.

_

³⁴ Susan Wendell, "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities," In *The Disability Studies Reader, Fourth Edition*, Ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 163. Wendell's essay was first published in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, in November 2001.

³⁵ Ibid., 164.

³⁶ Ibid., 165. Wendell describes the common intersection in this way: "Many people who seem to have stable disabilities now will encounter illness and changing disability later in life ... and some people who seem to have stable disabilities also have chronic or recurrent health problems, either as consequences of their disabilities or independently of them," 163.

Recent scholarship in these fields has been invaluable to my work on this project and include (although are not limited to): Alison Kafer's Feminist Queer Crip (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013); Elizabeth Freeman's Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Annemarie Mols' The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Lee Edelman's No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Diana Fuss' Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Vivian Sobchack's Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); S. Lochlann Jain's Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Eric Cazdyn's The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Lauren Berlant's Cruel Optimism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); and Ann Cvetkovich's Depression: A Public Feeling (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

The Poets & Parts

"The Pathologies of Flesh" examines poetry from the early twentieth century through the present, with a special attention to writing from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The poets and work are primarily American, and the project focuses exclusively on women writers for several reasons. Besides being historically underrepresented in critical scholarly work, women are more likely to experience lingering chronic illness, and less likely to have the financial, medical, and social support that men receive.³⁸ Through this lens, I attempt to consider the intersectional concerns of race and class alongside of bodily ability and "health" status. All of these identities face challenges in our contemporary medical system; Michel Foucault writes about the changing roles of medicine in the eighteenth century to monitor and control bodies and populations. He suggests in *Birth of the Clinic* that health and illness are constructed by language and power, and that the "clinical gaze" holds what he identifies elsewhere as "power-knowledge," an indivisible subject position granted to those at the top of medical (and other) hierarchies.³⁹ A decade earlier, Frantz Fanon suggests that colonial mistreatment can lead to psychiatric illness as minority populations lose their identities under colonial rule, another instance of those with power-knowledge controlling the experiences of health, including diagnosis, treatment, and healthcare access. 40

This narrow focus, however, does not mean to erase the very real concerns of intersectional identities that men experience. As with women, studies show that minority men

-

³⁸ Carol Vlassoff, "Gender Differences in Determinants and Consequences of Health and Illness," *Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition* 25, no. 1 (2007): 47-61.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1994). *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 2012).

⁴⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005). See especially his chapter, "Colonial War and Mental Disorders."

receive both lesser and pathologizing medical attention. Similarly, men and male-identifying writers of course write on illness as well, and the terms of the project have been influenced by—and often temporally brush up against—texts like Thom Gunn's collection on HIV/AIDS, *The Man With Night Sweats*; Donald Hall's collection on his wife's (poet Jane Kenyon) death, *Without*; Douglas Donn's *Elegies*, also about the death of his wife from cancer; Jim Ferris' *The Hospital Poems*, about surgeries Ferris underwent on his legs; and Paul Monette's *Love Alone*, on the death of his partner from AIDS. For women and female-identifying writers, the pool of texts is also quite large and growing; if we take to heart the common disability studies adage that if one lives long enough, one will eventually become ill or disabled, it becomes easier to understand the proliferation of illness-related texts, especially among prolific writers who didn't necessarily address illness or disability in earlier work.

Similarly, the somewhat recent proliferation of critical work on the body and temporality—some overtly related to illness, some not—that I mentioned earlier suggests that the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are home to the intersection of medical advances, technological developments, the broad availability of health-related news and information, and an intense interest in living longer and better. As Eric Cazdyn points out in *The Already Dead*, ongoing medical developments mean that every day people are managing illnesses as chronic that would have meant an acute death only years before.⁴³ Thus, "The Pathologies of Flesh"

_

⁴¹ See Jonathan Metzl's study on how African American men are overwhelmingly diagnosed with schizophrenia: *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became A Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).

⁴² Thom Gunn, *The Man With Night Sweats* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993). Donald Hall, *Without: Poems* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999). Douglas Dunn, *Elegies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985). Jim Ferris, *The Hospital Poems* (Charlotte, NC. Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2004). Paul Monette, *Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). For a detailed analysis of many of these texts and more, see Aaron Gorelik, "The AIDS Poets, 1985-1995: From Anti-Elegy to Lyric Queerness" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014).

⁴³ Eric Cazdyn, *The Already Dead*.

skews toward the mid-to-late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, while also acknowledging that poets such as Lucille Clifton, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, Mina Loy, Muriel Rukeyser, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Sharon Olds helped pave the way for writing about the body, the self, and illness. The heart of the project reads the work of a group of women writing at the close of the twentieth century and into the beginning of the next: Elizabeth Arnold, Claudia Rankine, Bhanu Kapil, Danielle Pafunda, Jillian Weise, Anne Boyer, and the late poets Hillary Gravendyk and C.D. Wright. All of these women are American or American immigrants; they all have or have had a relationship to academia. Although they all write poetry, their styles range from more traditional lyric, to prose poetry, to poetry drawing from documentary sources and essays. Their homes and academic institutions span the country, coast-to-coast and in between. The project argues not that these poets are related in their form or even content, but rather in their approaches to time, the body, and illness through their work. Although many of the poets identify as white, I hope that this project also acknowledges and complicates the racialized and class-based histories of medicine that determine healthcare access and health outcomes today.

I begin in the first chapter by examining the temporality of chronic illness, arguing that the experience of this kind of illness tends toward what I call a chronic temporality. In examining these moments of duration, I pay primary attention to poetic instances in which both time and the subject are sequestered. In its ability to create an alternative temporal space, poetry allows for a break from the long durations of chronic illness; paradoxically, it is both a portrayal of this duration *and* a break from it for the speaker. Using work from Elizabeth Arnold, Hillary Gravendyk, and Danielle Pafunda—alongside earlier work by Adrienne Rich—I examine how images of the chronic and their associated durations undo the stable subject typically found in

lyric poetry. In closing, I consider how these durations and the unstable subjects portrayed therein are related to depictions of geographical space, especially vivid natural elements. I argue that the "long" time of geological features—the erosion of rivers, the shifting of mountains, the creation of cliffs—becomes an apt way to describe spatially the temporal dimensions of duration.

The second chapter takes these images of the chronic and examines their interaction with social life. American economies expect a clearly defined productivity, and yet the prospect of being ill subverts those expectations. Thus, the second chapter argues that durations of chronic illness challenge the "productive" living enforced by capitalist societies. I look at collections by Anne Boyer and Elizabeth Arnold—both writing in part about their prolonged experiences with cancer—to consider how illness and pain can create a valid challenge to economic "productivity." This alternative economic productivity can be seen in specifically female work as well, such as the labor of childbearing and rearing, which the closing of the chapter considers.

While the first half of the project considers an expanded temporality of sorts—one of durations, of gaps that must be reclaimed as productive—the second half of the project considers a more abrupt experience of temporality. Like the first half, this variety of temporal experience also challenges linear temporality, but in the second two chapters, I examine how violence and death map onto the body. In the third chapter, I look at work by Claudia Rankine and Bhanu Kapil to suggest that the temporal ruptures that violence creates are not unlike the ruptures created by some kinds of illness, a kind of rupture I call *disaster time*. In Rankine's *Citizen* and Kapil's *Schizophrene* and *Ban en Banlieue*, the two authors portray the effects of racial gaslighting. Their speakers are repeatedly told by others that they are crazy or otherwise mentally ill, suggesting that racial microaggressions and violence can have a direct impact on

bodily and mental health.⁴⁴

The closing chapter considers not illness as such but the temporality of death itself. Like the sudden onsets of violence and illness in the third chapter, this final chapter explores the suddenness of death as a ruptured form of temporality. Rather than crafting a linear narrative of beginning-middle-end, death creates a temporality of return, one that attempts but ultimately fails at any kind of reversal. In examining death, I use poetry that emphasizes its own documentary tendencies, exploring how the particular temporality of a document—such as a newspaper report or a photograph—can help us understand the uneasy temporality involved in writing about death. Not only does a physical document such as newspaper or photo maintain a precise moment in time and space, it is limited by its own physical space and its attendant borders. In this final chapter, I use poetry by Hillary Gravendyk and C.D. Wright—Gravenydk's *Harm* and particularly Wright's poem sequence "Breathtaken," about murder sites in New Orleans—to establish a theory of documentary poetics. It then turn to work by Danielle Pafunda and Jillian Weise that considers the strange temporality of a violent death.

In its entirety, "The Pathologies of Flesh" argues that the temporal ruptures within illness map onto other kinds of rupture, such as social marginalization (as in chapters two and three), ruptures in space (as in chapter one), and the aggressive, abrupt ruptures of violent action (as in chapters three and four). In understanding how illness functions in the "gaps" of time, rather than unfolding linearly, we can better understand how differing experiences of temporality have the potential to challenge the accepted norms of standardized spaces, institutional access, legal protection, and other structures of power. The temporal experiences of illness challenge linear,

-

⁴⁴ Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014). Bhanu Kapil, *Ban en Banlieue* (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015); and *Schizophrene* (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2011).

⁴⁵ Hillary Gravendyk, *Harm* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2011). C.D. Wright, *Shallcross* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2016).

chronological modes of power that tend to privilege male, white, able-bodied, and middle class subjects. Taken together, these alternative modes of temporal experience open up the possibility of approaching other simultaneous experiences of time—as these chapters explore—from the slow violence of environmental disaster to illness of the body to the accelerated crisis of police brutality.

§

As an alternative to the kind of progression that tidy chapter summaries project, I return, instead, to my opening anecdote, Eve Sedgwick's therapy and therapist jointly emphasizing her new experiences of time via her cancer diagnosis. Toward the end of the essay cited above, Sedgwick recounts a different kind of a-temporality that her experiences of illness and the process of therapy incite, an echo of a Buddhist meditation that she's read about—"I can even do it," she writes, and describes it as such:

It happens in a public place; the substance of it is to recognize that every other person there, one by one, male and female and young and old, has been, in some earlier life, your mother.

Or more likely, in many lives.

And regarding the people one by one, you learn to understand how this could have been so. One by one as you gaze, you can see what kind of mother they were to you; you can see as well, slowly, what kind of a child you were to them.

Over and over [.]⁴⁶

She goes on to describe a quiet moment of doubling she experiences one afternoon that contains

echoes of the Buddhist meditation. She's to meet with Shannon later—"it's therapy day," she

declares—and she's shown up early for their appointment. With the extra time, she walks across

the parking lot, then through an adjoining parking lot which houses a bank, in order to cross the

street and ask a question about her car at the nearby gas station.

In between the two parking lots is a "shrubby border ... unexpectedly steep, mulched with

its slippery pine needles." Along this sloped border, Sedgwick, "[t]vpically clumsy" trips, almost

falling, before catching herself and continuing on. And yet, as she returns from her errand, she

sees Shannon coming around the corner to cross as she did between the two parking lots; lost in

thought, he doesn't see her. And yet, unknowing of what has just transpired, Shannon carefully

pats back down the grass which Sedgwick's errant foot has displaced.

Diffident, I write to my friend Tim that there may be something inexhaustibly pleasing in

the tight, light knot of space, time, and seeing. How the small extent of Ninth Street, our

wide-skied, midwestern-feeling little college town, turns into a time-lapse graphic that

lets Shannon occupy the place where I was, encountering my ghost without recognition,

unmaking my mistake - me, turning back, seeing it. And I love that his care for me was

not care for me.

This little, spied-on scene: how does it endow me with hidden treasure?⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Sedgwick, "Teaching Depression."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

20

Sedgwick's brief scene of "hidden treasure" eschews the linear narratives that put her in a place and then, only after, place Shannon there. Instead, the two moments fold over on each other, both people literally looping back and forth in space as the moment likewise loops in time; Shannon "encountering my ghost without recognition," Sedgwick seeing but not revealing herself as he "unmak[es]" her mistake.

This brief story, which forms both the heart and the conclusion of Sedgwick's essay on depression, illustrates two important motivations of this project. First, and most obviously, Sedgwick's anecdote suggests the way time breaks down when it encounters bodies, the central argument of my work here. Second and perhaps more subtly, it suggests the kind of care that can emerge in attending to these temporal gaps. Sedgwick says that Shannon fixes her "mistake," but that is not, I would argue, what he is doing; she suggests a kind of reparative "looking back" that gives him the hierarchical power of knowing better than she. Instead, he's looking with care at something and, unknowingly, this recognition and its attendant care is cast more broadly than he can imagine, care not just for himself but for unknown others. The chapters that follow are not meant to suggest a way of fixing or altering the breaks in linear time that these poems explore, but rather to facilitate a moment of return that is also, I hope, a kind of care.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BODY AS MONUMENT: CHRONIC ILLNESS, DURATION, AND GEOLOGICAL SPACES

In Muriel Rukeyser's final poetry collection *The Gates*, she includes a poem called "Resurrection of the Right Side" that recounts the aftermath of her 1964 stroke, the first in a series of strokes that would eventually end with her death in 1980. The experience was that of a "half-body," she writes, which "dies its frightful death / forked pain ... I go running in sleep, / but waking stumble down corridors of self, all rhythms gone." This indeterminate body that is both half alive and half dead, half awake and half asleep, straddles the dream world where it runs and the waking world, where "all rhythms" vanish. Rukeyser prefaced a reading of this poem by describing the kind of "half-life" inherent in "this kind of illness [stroke], and this kind of recovery": "Half of the body and half of the imagination is quite alive and well, and the other half is somehow dragged along behind the other side." Besides the disruption of bodily "rhythms" that Rukeyser suggests in descriptions of her "stumbl[ing]" down corridors, the idea of a "half-life" and half-body suspended between two modes of time—one where she is ill, one where she is recovered—suggests a disruption of other rhythms, including temporal. The body stumbles, she writes, down corridors of self, and this unsteadiness of subjectivity is related to the unsteadiness of time, its unwillingness to progress forward, its position within a long duration.

Rukeyser—winner of the Yale Younger Poets prize at 21, single mother in the conservative 1940s —was no stranger to the often paradoxical components of her life: a lifelong poetic career marked by early success, journalistic investigation and jail time, and teaching and

.

¹ Muriel Rukeyser, *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*, eds. Janet E. Kaufman and Anne F. Herzog (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 545.

² Rukeyser, *The Collected Poems*, 633. Annotations to the poems provided by editors Janet E. Kaufman and Anne F. Herzog.

activism.³ And yet in no place does the temporality of experience play as large a role as in her writing about illness. Her 1938 collection *U.S. I* includes the moving poem sequence "The Book of the Dead," which addresses the illness and death of hundreds of miners in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, following exposure to toxic silica dust. Using investigative journalism combined in poetic form, Rukeyser approaches the legal and personal sides of the tragedy in a series of poems that are also fixated on time: How long had the miners been exposed? How long were they ill? How old are they? (victims ranged from elderly mine workers to children; the mother of an 18-year-old boy who died of silicosis was the first to press for an X-Ray after begging for money in road-side collections). There is also the unsteady temporality of avoidance, as the mine companies deny the toxicity of the exposure: "They called it pneumonia at first," Rukeyser writes in "Absalom," "They would pronounce it fever," before admitting, as she describes in "The Disease," "Does silicosis cause death? / Yes, sir." These poetic encapsulations of time point out the difficulty of the in-between moments, of the points of duration between injury and recompense, between illness and recovery.

We can see a similar expression of duration in a brief later poem by Rukeyser; titled "Two Years," it tells of her sister's illness and the subsequent break the speaker feels with linear time. In its entirety, it has the visual effect of haiku and reads:

Two years of my sister's bitter illness; the wind whips the river of her last spring.

.

³ Her first collection, *Theory of Flight*, was chosen for the Yale prize and published in 1935. Rukeyser worked for the *Student Review*, the journal of the socialist National Student League, while covering the second Scottsboro Trial of nine black men accused of raping two white women in 1933. She was jailed there in Alabama for "fraternizing with an African-American" and contracted typhoid. She later wrote her collection of poems *The Book of the Dead* about an industrial mining disaster in West Virginia, whereby hundreds of mine workers contracted silica lung poisoning and died between 1932 and 1935. Late in life, she traveled to Vietnam to protest the war, and to South Korea to stand in protest in front of the jail where poet Kim Chi-Ha was incarcerated on death row.

⁴ Rukeyser, *The Collected Poems*, 85, 87.

I have burned the beans again.⁵

The title "Two Years" appears at first to designate a passing of time—that is, "two years ago" but the first line of the poem suggests instead a duration, the two years of the speaker's sister's illness. The notion of endurance, of duration, shifts in the next line to that of cyclical time; the sister's last spring, the rebirth typically heralded by that season instead replaced with death and the violence of nature: "the wind whips the river," suggesting waves and erosion, the undoing of rocks and plants and springtime fertility. The final line returns the reader to a sense of duration, of ongoingness: "I have burned the beans again," she writes, implying her return again and again to this act of destruction, one that both mimics the violent destruction of her sister's death and suggests a chronic grief that absorbs the mind from daily tasks. Although we could read this image as a domestic one of forgetting food upon the stove, it functions duly as a landscape image: a field of beans ablaze, all hope for future fertility burned out with their demise. The speaker is doubly poised between her role as a passive mourning motherly figure, stirring a pot on the fire, and that of an active agent of destruction. Like the temporal duration the poem describes—her sister caught in two years of illness, the repetitiveness of mourning, of burning the speaker also presents a subjectivity of duration, one where her role is suggested as both and neither, always caught in-between.

Enduring illness—both of oneself and others—encapsulates the speaker in a chronic temporality. Chronic illness, as I argue in what follows, creates an alternative temporality in which time is experienced as a series of durations, rather than a progressive entity with clearly delineated pasts, presents, and futures. This in-betweenness is the "half-life" Rukeyser speaks of,

_

⁵ Ibid., 490. The editors note: "Frances Bucholtz (formerly Sussman), Rukeyser's sister, died of prolonged cancer in New York in 1971. She was seven years younger than Rukeyser. The disease was particularly 'bitter' because her physicians failed to catch it early when it would likely have been treatable" (*The Collected Poems*, 629).

the body and sense of time suspended between illness and the impossibility of cure. Furthermore, as Rukeyser's poem also demonstrates, the representation of subjectivity—the "I" speaker, so central to notions of the lyric within poetry—is also sequestered in a "half-life," a durational period where the subject refuses to settle into one fixed entity. These kinds of instability occur elsewhere in poetry—poetry as a genre is particularly interested in fluidity, in instability—and yet there is something in particular about the temporality of lingering and chronic illness that facilitates this interest in circularity—in duration—that Rukeyser's poetry so aptly demonstrates.

The intersection between time, chronic illness, and duration circles around the implicit centrality of the body to the experience of illness. In Virginia Woolf's well-known essay "On Being Ill," she writes that the body cannot be cast off from the mind; she compares our desire to do so as the mind's desire to look through the body as if though the clear glass of a window pane, casting the body off as negligible. Instead, she writes that "the creature within" the body "cannot separate off from the body like the sheath of a knife or the pod of a pea for a single instant; it must go through the whole unending procession of changes, heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, hunger and satisfaction, health and illness." Illness, then, becomes a form of embodiment in a litary of life experiences that draw the mind to the body. Nancy Mairs suggests that the "healthy" body is easy to ignore; this kind of invisible health is a step toward the idea that cerebral life is more important, more impactful, than bodily life. It is the ill body, says Mairs, that tends to draw attention to itself and, because of that, the one who is ill is "a warier and humbler creature," one who is "more apt to experience herself all of a piece." Notably, Mairs and Woolf both use the term "creature" to express their understanding of mind/body dichotomy. I argue that a linkage of the body and mind—as no "complete" cohesive union is

_

⁶ Virginia Woolf, On Being Ill (Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2002), 4-5.

⁷ Nancy Mairs, Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 41-2.

possible or even desired—crucially rests on our rejection of the body as "animal" and the mind as human, which only tends to reinforce a binary separating them.

The idea of a chronic temporality that follows chronic illness shows itself within poetry itself; in Rukeyser's "The Wards"—which is arranged directly after her poem "Resurrection of the Right Side" within her collection—the speaker investigates her sense of temporal reality while in St. George's hospital, Hyde Park Corner in the UK: "Time runs / Over the edge and all exists in all. We hold / All human history, all geography, / I cannot remember the word for what I need. / Our explorations, all at the precipice[.]" This omnipresent existence of time is an extreme version of a duration, in which the the subject is stranded—unable to remember the language to describe her experiences—as is the body, poised on the edge of a precipice, ready for movement but yet not moving. Rukeyser ends the poem with these lines: "Our selves lit clear, / This moment giving me necessity / Gives us ourselves and we risk everything, / Walking into our life." The emphasis in these final lines is on "this moment" which allows for the "sel[f] lit clear;" the lingering duration casts light—literally, according to Rukeyser's image of the self "lit"—on the nuances of subjecthood.

In this chapter, I explore representations of chronic time in writing by and about subjects with a chronic illness. These moments of duration, I argue, present to us a challenging, unstable subject that is attempting to reconcile the mind with body in the midst of illness, ultimately unsettling the notion of a stable "I" that lyric poetry tends to propagate. Through these moments of duration, the speakers offer us an alternative temporality, one which attempts to break out of the duration they experience through the poem itself. Sharon Cameron argues that it "is a commonplace, albeit a sophisticated one, that speech in poems exists across time and space, that

_

⁸ Rukeyser, *The Collected Poems*, 546. As of 1973, St. George's Hospital moved to Tooting, where it is part of St. George's, University of London teaching hospital.

a poem never happened or that it happens every time it is read. The commonplace becomes important when we acknowledge its consequences for annihilating process." That is, seeing the poem only as the timeless finished product erases the body who makes it as well as the body who reads it. To complicate Cameron's call to acknowledge both the body of the speaker and of the reader, we might also think of the poem as a call to action, rather than a passive, finished lyric. Cynthia Hogue notes that the event of writing a poem—that is, its realization temporally—also constitutes a kind of "action" that breaks out of the circularity of chronic time. She writes:

Art echoes suffering: it aurally approximates and chronologically follows pain. Poetry cannot speak of suffering without the mediation of language and the passage of time. But as [Adrienne] Rich forcefully asserts, by engaging with—that is, imaginatively (re)entering—conditions that have caused suffering, poetry resists that reduction to passivity that suffering incurs because it deprives us of language. To write poetry out of the experience of suffering constitutes, in other words, action, even when the body itself cannot be moved out of its condition.¹⁰

The subject paradoxically moves herself out of a chronic duration while remaining in it; poetry creates an alternative temporality, a break from the circulatory of chronic illness. If we push Hogue's analysis further, we can read it as suggesting that this "action" works both ways, imbuing the poem's speaker and the reader alike with a kind of agency. Thus even if we think of writing about suffering as reproducing suffering, we can also see its ability to move beyond pain.

-

⁹ Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 88. That is, Cameron notes the consequences of erasing the poem's source of origin, and the work that goes into its creation, and instead focusing on the poem as an entity created anew out of the ether with each reading.

¹⁰ Cynthia Hogue, "The 'Possible Poet': Pain, Form, and the Embodied Poetics of Adrienne Rich in Wallace Stevens' Wake." *Wallace Stevens Journal* 25, no. 1 (2001): 41.

Poetic representations of pain and suffering thus replicate the repetitious cycles of illness while also breaking through the passivity and stasis that illness often entails.

The first part of this chapter examines more closely the claim to the chronic: what exactly does it mean to be chronic? What kind of temporality functions within chronicity? Examining poetry from Adrienne Rich's Midnight Salvage (1999) and Tonight No Poetry Will Serve (2011); Elizabeth Arnold's *The Reef* (1999), *Effacement* (2010), and *Life* (2014); Hillary Gravendyk's Harm (2012), and Danielle Pafunda's The Dead Girls Speak in Unison (2014), I explore the ways that these female poets write about the intersection of illness and time, paying primary attention to moments of duration in which both time and the subject are sequestered. These collections have in common both their publication dates (for the most part, the last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first century) and their interest in the body, illness, and time. The authors also share personal accounts of illness, some more forthcoming within their work and interviews than others. Gravendyk's Harm, for instance, traces the time waiting and undergoing a lung transplant. Her airy, sparse verse focuses on moments of breath, of waiting and pausing. 11 Arnold's three collections address in varying degrees the mastectomy she underwent to treat breast cancer; her first collection *The Reef* uses the image of a scattered selfhood "wrecked again on the body's shallow reef." Her later collection *Effacement* considers a world of bodies torn apart—soldiers in war, patients with prosthetics, ill people undergoing surgery—the way the earth braces itself against forces that efface it. 13 Rich's Midnight Salvage links time with writing, academia, and pain, suggesting that pain, too, can be an object for

_

¹¹ Hillary Gravendyk, *Harm* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2012).

¹² Elizabeth Arnold, *The Reef* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 51.

¹³ Elizabeth Arnold, Effacement (Chicago: Flood Editions, 2010).

study. Study. Finally, Pafunda's work—published elsewhere in collections like *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*—considers the temporality of death, of pain, and of feeling out of sorts in the body, through the forthright voices of girls straddling a duration between death and living. 15

The second part of this chapter takes the images of the chronic—of durations that feature so prominently in these collections—and examines a physical point of intersection between them: depictions of geographical space, especially vivid natural elements. Why does writing about illness turn to the natural world, the cycles of seasons, the walls of mountains and the violence of rivers? Is this the home of the "creature" Woolf and Mairs describe when thinking about the intersection between body and mind? "We hold / All human history, all geography," writes Rukeyser in "The Wards." Time, she suggests, is deeply imbricated in our experiences of physical spaces; how easily, she notes, pain and grief become natural elements. Returning to her poem "Two Years," we can see how the "two years of my sister's bitter illness" are equated through a line break and a semi-colon with the following line: "the wind whips the river of her last spring." The river both marks the fixed time of the sister's last two years, and designates the flow of seasonal time, whipping the water in violent frenzy during her last spring. The instability of chronic time suggests both an unstable subject and an unstable physical space. The poem, then, becomes a vehicle for synthesizing these instabilities and offering the potential break of an alternative space and time.

¹⁴ Adrienne Rich, Midnight Salvage (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

¹⁵ Danielle Pafunda, *The Dead Girls Speak in Unison* (Atlanta: Coconut Books, 2014). See also *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, eds. Jennifer Bartlett, Sheila Black, and Michael Northern (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011).

The Chronic Time of Illness

In his 2009 memoir about Susan Sontag's death, Sontag's son David Rieff describes his mother's transitions through a long period of illness. Starting in 1975 when she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer, Sontag made an unexpected recovery but later faced the development first of a uterine sarcoma and then, two years later, of an aggressive form of leukemia, likely caused in part—according to her doctors—by the very medicine that had treated her breast cancer. In response, Rieff recounts a moment from Sontag's diaries: "'I feel like the Vietnam War,' she wrote. 'My body is invasive, colonizing. They're using chemical weapons on me. I have to cheer." Here her body is both the colonizer and the colonized, invaded and invading. The syntax of the sentence points to a "they" who act on her body, while also claiming that "my body is invasive," positing the body itself as the perpetrator. The line between her body as the enemy and her body as the victim is erased; that is, the subject here is unstable, fixed in between ill and healthy, enemy and friend. Her affective reaction, then, is unexpected: "I have to cheer." Is she being forced to cheer, or is cheering the only reaction in the face of internal and external invasion and the ensuing division this invasion causes? Perhaps more telling: who or what is she cheering for? Perhaps the doctors, using chemical-grade "weapons" against her cancer, or possibly both for and against herself: for the colonized body, against the colonizing disease.

According to Rieff, the overall blame seems difficult for Sontag to pinpoint. In one instance, she writes in her journal that "[w]hile I was busy zapping the world with my mind, my body fell down ... I've become afraid of my own imagination." Here, her body is portrayed as the victim who falls down; what's more, her body and mind are established as separate entities.

¹⁶ David Rieff, Swimming in a Sea of Death (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), qtd. 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 41.

The mind is the strong "zapping" power, the strength of which Sontag comes to fear for its ability to make itself central over her body. While she was focused on the powers of her mind, she attests, her body was destructing. She responds by priding herself, according to Rieff, on undergoing the "radical, mutilating treatment." ¹⁸ Her mind proceeds as the strong power against the ill body, magnifying the instability of the subject stranded between body and mind, illness and cure. The question here is: when does an illness become the body? Is she attacking her body, her illness, or both?¹⁹ American poet Adrienne Rich describes a similar instability in her poem "1941": "In the heart of pain where mind is broken / and consumed by body, I sit like you / on (like you, not with you)[.]"²⁰ Illness may bring an added awareness of the the rocky shore intersections between mind and bod, but in the midst of pain, the intellect recedes, leaving the body. Rich also suggests the difficulty of understanding the pain someone else is experiencing; she notes that her pain is "like" the other's, not "with" hers. Most notably, Rich provides a moment of duration where time is difficult to pinpoint; her line "like you, not with you" also suggests a dislocation of temporality, where she is "like" the other but not present in the same time frame ("not with you").

Elizabeth Arnold suggests similar dislocations of time in her work; she likens living her everyday life after a prolonged illness to "haunt[ing] the present now // as if it were my past. 'I

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹ S. Lochlann Jain describes the way her illness and body blurred indistinguishably after a tumor she had removed was tested for cancer: "My flesh had become the pathology report—portioned, sliced, flattened onto slides, observed, categorized, and finally rendered into this emailable document." Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 3. Likewise, in her celebrated book *The Cancer Journals*, poet Audre Lorde demonstrates the blurred lines between body as one's own and body as enemy when she describes the way she "bartered" with cancer—with her own body as payment—after a diagnosis of advanced breast cancer: "I was also afraid that I was not really in control, that it might already be too late to halt the spread of cancer, that there was simply too much to do that I might not get done, that the pain would be just too great. Too great for what, I did not know. I was afraid. That I would not survive another anesthesia, that the payment of my breast would not be enough; for what? Again, I did not know," (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980), 33.

²⁰ Rich. *Midnight Salvage*, 23. Although the date 1941 repurposed as the title could refer to many events, I would note that the opening stanza marks it as an appropriate homage to Virginia Woolf, who died in 1941.

should have died,' I'd say[.]"²¹ The possibility of her death places her in a strange temporality, a duration that lingers between present and past. Elsewhere, she attributes similar kinds of dislocation to the chronic nature of her illness. She writes: "Five years post-chemo, a knife stabbed through / my thigh. I fell in the street."²² After running tests, the doctors issue a diagnosis: "They called me crazy / in my disbelief, then chronic ... Chronic Pain at Twenty-Five." Through her diagnosis, she enters into a marginalized field where she is castigated as "crazy" before doctors realize their mistakes. Even then, she remains on the outside in a small group of those affected by chronic pain: "So with the war vets who'd been fried," she writes, "I sank down c/o Flexeril," noting the muscle relaxant that then impacts her movement in order to respond to her pain. In the rest of the poem, she outlines a walk down the street, noting how this simple task becomes a moment of duration that mirrors the duration of her illness. She "walk[s] lead-footed" down the street as passersby "flew both ways by me" as she lingers, frozen in time. Outside the Oriental Institute, she imagines the carving she always sees first when inside. Notably, the rest of the poem—about half—fixates on this image, the view from within her mind as she slowly makes her way down the street. Like the image itself—whose horse is portrayed with a "power / fully contained though on the verge of bursting out"—her body is fixed within a moment, waiting to spring with potential energy or tension. The final stanzas return the speaker to the street, where she "smelled the building's breath / as I limped past, along its heavy / high stone front, the patterned iron gates // above the marble lintel shut."²³ Here again her illness casts her outside "norms;" like the doors of the museum shut in their gates, features of the world are now cast away from her as she exists in an alternative space and time. Poetry as form is

²¹ Arnold, *The Reef*, 55.

²² Ibid., 30.

²³ Ibid., 31.

presenting these ideas of duration by actually creating them; the poem itself is a duration, forcing the reader to pause at line breaks and in between stanzas. And yet, the poem is self-contained in a sense; it ends when the reader finishes reading, and begins when the reader begins reading again. It serves as both a replication of a duration, and a break from duration.

In creating these durations, Arnold explicitly mentions the idea of the chronic; what does it mean for us to say something is "chronic"? How can we move this term productively from the language of illness to that of time, and back again? Eric Cazdyn suggests that our current understanding of the term "chronic" comes first from the term's use first in medical circles, but has expanded to included broader constructs of politics and culture. ²⁴ The "chronic," argues Cazdyn, suggests a stagnancy, an uneasy comfort with current circumstances, an on-goingness. The problem is the way that the chronic—the term here applied more broadly, not just in a medical context—resists any temporal movement outside of itself. Within the construct of the chronic, Cazdyn argues, it becomes very difficult to imagine an end point, a "terminal" stop, a revolution. ²⁵ The difficulty with chronic time is that it tends to assume that this present, ongoing time is where a person—or an economy or a culture—wants to stay. And yet, Cazdyn refers to the problematic "brutal logic" of the present moment, suggesting that although a chronic position can be life preserving, it also "effectively colonizes the future," removing unknown freedoms in favor of known limitations. ²⁶

_

²⁴ Eric Cazdyn, *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

²⁵ Cazdyn further explains, "If the system cannot be reformed (the cancer eradicated, the ocean cleaned, the corruption expunged), then the new chronic mode insists on maintaining the system and perpetually managing its constitutive crises, rather than confronting even a hint of the terminal, the system's (the body's the planet's, capitalism's) own death." *The Already Dead*, 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 6. Cazdyn knows personally of the life-preserving measures of the chronic; he was diagnosed with a form of leukemia that was said to be fatal, yet contemporary medical advances allows for him to manage his condition as a chronic one with the use of medication.

But there is still something problematic about an overly fixed future orientation as well. As queer theorists such as Lee Edelman and Elizabeth Freeman have pointed out, obsession with the future (especially in terms of reproduction) has placed destructive boundaries around who is seen as "normal" and who is excluded from social, familial, and cultural life. Likewise, disability scholar Alison Kafer describes a "crip time" which she sees as oppositional to "curative time. She sees the notion of cure as one that is future-focused, particularly fixated on a coming time that erases the very pressing concerns of the present. What I see as linking Cazdyn and Kafer's seemingly polar views is that they both problematize the situation of being "frozen" in time, whether that occurs in the chronic present or in a concentrated focus on futurity that neglects the present. Poetry about illness is able to respond to both of their concerns, entering in as a realized event, as a moment of action—in its very portrayals of chronic illness, it also provides a momentary break in duration, posing an alternative to a purely "chronic" time.

There is something problematic about this schema of linear temporal thinking (that is, past/present/future orientation) that extends beyond Kafer's future-orientated argument or Cazdyn's present-fixation. Rita Felksi suggests that a focus on temporal linearity privileges certain groups and bodies, and mistakenly encapsulates the present as a time of "recovery" for those marginalized groups, where "[w]omen, people of color, and other disenfranchised groups are portrayed as suddenly bursting onto the historical stage, as if they had no prior existence as social subjects and human agents." Poetry that breaks with this linearity—by investigating

-

²⁷ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

²⁸ Kafer unpacks Edelman's argument in *No Future* and suggests that by "[f]ocusing always on the better future, we divert our attention from the here and now. [Edelman's phrases signal] stagnation and acquiescence, an inability to move in any direction because of a permanently forward-looking gaze. This deferral, this firm focus on the future, is often expressed in terms of cure and rehabilitation, and is thereby bound up in normalizing approaches to the mind/body." *Feminist Oueer Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 9.

these moments of duration that have been left out of cultural schemas of time—thus serves as another means of resistance for women and other marginalized groups. Sharon Cameron describes the work of a poem as "a breathing space, a necessary 'time out'."³⁰ The poem is a break from linear time and, for those whose experiences already cast them out of linear time, it is also, paradoxically, a break from those experiences of durations. Importantly, Cameron suggests a link between the poem and body—of the writer, who takes this "time out" to write, and of the reader, whose body takes in the poem. The poem becomes as unnoticed yet as necessary as breath, providing an alternative break with time.

Danielle Pafunda's work in her short collection *The Dead Girls Speak in Unison* demonstrates how the poem provides this "breathing" space, allowing a productive environment for breaks with both linear time and the duration of illness. The collection, told from the voices of supposed dead girls, proceeds by numbered poems, interspersed with short fragments titled "Fragment," "Hymn," "Chant," or "Lullaby." The collection plays off the idea of a Greek chorus—the opening section, before numbering begins, is entitled "Chorus"—and the titled sections of hymn and chant and lullaby evoke a group of voices speaking to us in unison. For this reason, many of the poems use a "we" subject, which blurs indistinctly between personal memories, group experiences, and other mentions of "I" and "you"; in this strange duration between life and death, speaking and silence, the subject is always in flux, and the title's assertion of "unison" is continually unsettled. One poem begins:

Don't ask us what it's like in that moment when the body skitters away from that stupid

²⁹ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 3.

³⁰ Cameron, *Lyric Time*, 90.

sheepy shape of breath.³¹

The stanza break between "stupid" and "sheepy shape of breath" replicates the break between living body and dead, and the poem reproduces for that moment the duration of their in-between state. The poem ends with the lines, "No one axe. // No one chitters—". "Axe" aurally echoes the opening command, "Don't ask," and yet the mention of a weapon gives the girls' deaths the specter of violence, and of a multitudinous violence where it is not "one" axe but many. "No one chitters" responds as well to the opening command, and to other mentions of silence in the poem: "Down here, no one asks. / We all died // boot to throat," reads one stanza of the poem. In a poem composed of brief, stark lines with end stops that jolt the reader, the final line's meandering long dash loops readers back to the opening of the poem: "No one chitters—Don't ask us," suspending readers in a continual circuit of question and answer (or, as the poem suggests, no questions and no answers).

A later poem suggests a more straightforward break with time, showing the alternative time that the girls inhabit: "Fuck your circadian rhythm, then. / We keep queer time, // bolt time, we keep time / against a ticking / egg sack ... We sing out each hour / through mouths full of gravel. // We slit the throat you call bedtime / and swill her pinkish bleed."³² Pafunda paints a different portrait of the strange temporalities of the experience of death, and yet the examples of processing such a temporality are firmly rooted in a living environment. There are the "natural" temporalities of circadian rhythm (its disruption most poignant in the closing stanza where the speakers threaten "bedtime") and biological clock ("a ticking / egg sack") that the speakers rebel

³¹ Pafunda, *The Dead Girls*, 43.

³² Ibid., 78-9.

against, preferring instead "queer time" where they sing out each hour "through mouths full of gravel." Even the image of singing out each hour is undone by the impossibility of doing it with a full mouth; thus even "standard" notions of time like the hours are resisted.

For Pafunda, these poems deal less with illness specifically than with the body's experience of time. Pafunda writes in her prose section of *Beauty is a Verb* that she had an illness in the 1980s that led to fibromyalgia, noting that there is "an immense difference between my largely private experience of illness and limitation and the very public ways in which people with visible disabilities must confront the gaze ... My body can pass for able." As Hillary Gravendyk writes in an article about poet Larry Eigner—who had cerebral palsy—"the effects of his disability may not always be the most important aspect of the poem," noting that Eigner's work asks us "not to register *his* physical situation, but to pay attention to our own." What Gravendyk implies here is that the subject *in* the poem does not always reflect the disability of the author *of* the poem, and yet there is reason to expect the bodily *considerations* of the author to make their way into the poetry. This transferal is, as Gravendyk points out, not for the benefit of the author—nothing so simple as writing therapy or the like—but rather to call attention to the reader's body, to her own lived and embodied experiences.

_

³³ Bartlett, *Beauty is a Verb*, 314.

³⁴ Hillary Gravendyk, "Chronic Poetics," *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 1 (2014): 5. Emphasis her own.

³⁵ Although Eigner was paralyzed and wrote on a typewriter using two fingers, Gravendyk argues that "his description of his practice implies that the formal characteristics of his poems register the plural, chronic space and pace of perception rather than those particular physical terms." "Chronic Poetics," 5-6.

³⁶ As Jennifer Barlett writes in "Disability and Poetry: An Exchange," a conversation published in *Poetry Magazine* between Bartlett, John Lee Clark, Jillian Weise, and Jim Ferris: "Because of [Eigner's] severe cerebral palsy, there has been a lot of unchecked speculation on his physicality, intelligence, and how his body affected his poetics." (1) Jillian Weise follows up later: "Critics are sometimes quick to speculate, 'This feature in the poem is because of that disability.' Their speculation segregates the poet, the poem, and the critic." December 1, 2014, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70179/disability-and-poetry. As Gravendyk suggested above about Eigner, it is problematic to link a writer's body too closely to their form, as in some ways everyone's body is related to the forms of the art they create. Bartlett suggests that she often 'think[s] about how my body might

reader to take on these embodied experiences, whether they be pain, illness, or understandings of time. In considering chronic illness, disability studies has paved the way for thinking through marginalized bodies and accessible spaces (physical, social, and cultural). To prevent merely pulling from disability studies at will, I want to spend a moment to consider the ways that disability studies and illness overlap, and the moments in which they diverge.

Illness as an experience has not always been equated with disability; after all, one major reason to reject "illness" as a category of disability is that disability activists and scholars have fought long and hard to reject a medicalized approach to disability.³⁷ And yet, other scholars have pointed out the wide array of uncharted experiences on the spectrum between illness and disability. Susan Wendell suggests that there are often chronic components to disability, or disability that is caused by chronic illness.³⁸ Based on this spectrum, Wendell crafts an argument about "impairment," a category which she believes has been too quickly rejected by disability scholars. This term is fraught with conflict, and is often seen as the "medical" side of disability, rather than the socially constructed; the "impairment" is the medical diagnosis, while the disability is then the social marginalization based on that impairment. ³⁹ As many scholars who study the life writing of illness and disability have begun to argue, the actual suffering often experienced by those with disabilities is cast aside in pursuit of portraying what Wendell calls the "[t]he paradigmatic person with a disability." This stereotypical person, she writes, "healthy

directly relate to language and grammar. Or anyone's body, for that matter. This isn't specifically a disability thing it's a corporeal issue" ("Disability and Poetry").

³⁷ That is, the assumption that a disability is something to be "fixed" or "cured," to be avoided at all costs.

³⁸ Recall, for instance, Alison Kafer's suggestion which I quoted in the Introduction, that the language of disability evokes a different sense of time: "'Chronic' fatigue, 'intermittent' symptoms, and 'constant' pain are each ways of defining illness and disability in and through time; they describe disability in terms of duration. 'Frequency,' 'incidence,' 'occurrence,' 'relapse,' 'remission': these, too, are the time frames of symptoms, illness, and disease" (Feminist Queer Crip, 25.)

³⁹ Susan Wendell, "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities," in *The Disability Studies* Reader, Ed. Lennard Davis (Routledge: New York, 2013), 164.

disabled and permanently and predictably impaired."⁴⁰ Instead, Wendell sees a union between chronic illness and disability through the very channel of suffering that is often cast aside.⁴¹ As I suggested earlier, the poem becomes a vehicle for sharing that suffering or pain, not just as a traumatic revisiting but as a way of breaking through that moment as a disruption of duration.

Elaine Scarry's famous claim in *The Body in Pain* is that pain is inarticulable; I want to suggest that where language fails is in the representation of the chronic in-betweeness, the duration of pain—or of suffering, or illness, for each of those entails a different experience of duration—and it is poetry that most closely succeeds in presenting both these durations and a possibility for escape, even if momentarily, from them.⁴² In Hillary Gravendyk's collection *Harm*, she creates small gaps in time by her repetitious use of the small printer's mark of the asterisk (*) to serve as section markers, titles of poems, and other breaks in language.

Gravendyk's use of the marker gives us a way of considering both bodies and time through her poetry.⁴³ Brenda Hillman writes that Gravendyk's collection is "a cleanly and delicately paced volume, its pages sometimes punctuated by asterisks which suggest small flowers, snowflakes or abstract ink-breath."⁴⁴ In a collection formed around the experiences of a poet undergoing major

10 -1

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Wendell explains, "Some of that suffering [for those with disabilities] is social and could be eliminated by social justice for people with disabilities, but some of it is not. Solidarity between people with chronic illnesses and people with other disabilities depends on acknowledging the existence of the suffering that justice cannot eliminate (and therefore on our willingness to talk about impairment)." "Unhealthy Disabled," 171.

⁴² See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴³ Bonnie Mak refers to the sum total of the marks, spacing, letters, and gaps in the text as "the architecture of the page." See *How the Page Matters*, especially the first chapter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 5. Johanna Drucker notes that every mark on the page takes its meaning from accumulation and context; that is, an asterisk alone means something different than one used in a context, etc. See "Graphical Readings and the Visual Aesthetics of Textuality," *Text* 16 (2006): 267-276.

⁴⁴ Gravendyk, *Harm*, 13.

surgery on a lung, images of breath drive the poet's thoughts on time and the body. In her poem "Exuberance," found almost two-thirds of the way through the collection, Gravendyk herself gives us a clue about how to read these "abstract ink breaths":

To know me as golden is to know me all wrong. Every time I breathe in it smells rusty, like blood, and when I cough there is blood in the air.

If I were in charge of these special effects, I'd make it thicker; it's so hard to take it seriously. Bright little hearts and stars and carnations on a white cloth.⁴⁵

Instead of finding a lasting home on pieces of white cloth—handkerchiefs or tissues—the speaker's illness only manifests itself as "blood in the air," droplets too small and airborne for human sight. Unlike the heavier, notable bloodshed of other diseases such as tuberculosis—here Gravendyk plays on the cultural view of "consumption" as a romantic, upper class disease, forming delicate "bright little hearts and stars and carnations"—her illness presents itself only to her, smelling of rust and tasting of blood. She does not receive the tiny blood stars she macabrely hopes for, these tiny asterisks of ongoing disease, not quite cured and not quite visible enough to "count." The small asterisks featured elsewhere as breaks and titles throughout the collection join this one as markers of the chronic, of looping or continuous time, an ongoing illness whose inclusion in the collection becomes as customary and readable as a line break. The asterisks designate the potential for illness, the time spent in sickness waiting for definitive signs.

It is through her ongoing illness that Gravendyk argues her experience of time has changed, a development for which she finds representation within poetry:

⁴⁵ Ibid., 49.

It is my contention that illness, or at least chronic illness, isn't really a narrative. Rather it is a collection of durations, of endurances. I tried to make an argument that chronic illness brings us closer to Bergson's ideal temporality of the duree, in that it forced a subject to encounter bodily experience, bodily time, in advance of logical or rational language. I'm not sure that's right, but I do think the idea of that helps me point to the reason why I find lyric such a productive mode to express what one might call the "queer" temporality of chronic and traumatic illness. Lyric opens the possibility for an exploded language, one that can ignore the chronological and the narrative in favor of the associative and the expressive. The poems in *Harm* work hard to produce a set of affective responses out of the shards of experience. My own illness experience is characterized not by a narrative throughline but by the aporetic and the fragmentary. Lyric, and experimental lyric forms, offer a place for those kinds of (il)logics to take center stage. 46

In many ways, Gravendyk repeats what many others have said about poetry in general and illness in particular; it tends toward the fragmentary, it exists in episodes that reject narrative. However, she also refines a few key points: illness, like poetry, rejects narrative, making poetry a productive form for thinking through illness. Furthermore, poetry via illness connects to bodily form, bodily time, in a way that forces writer and reader alike to encounter bodily experience ahead of rational (i.e. what is often linear) thought. Even though she refers to "lyric," I argue that by including "experimental lyric forms" she is broadening the scope of her comments to poetry as form, rather than the specific structure of lyric as genre. Furthermore, the category of "experimental lyric forms" broadens our sense of what poetry is and what poetry can do. For

. .

⁴⁶ Hillary Gravendyk, "Of Durations, Of Endurances: Interview with Hillary Gravendyk," *Thermos*, March 24, 2012, https://thermosmag.wordpress.com/2012/03/24/of-durations-of-endurances-interview-with-hillary-gravendyk/.

many of these writers I examine, Gravendyk among them, "standard" delineated poetry seems to fail them; they often break up the page with large blank spaces, blocks of text that look almost prose-like, and other symbols or markings. The lack of narrative which Gravendyk describes is denoted in her own work by an excessiveness of fragments, all portraying the ongoing tensions between what she calls the "logics" and "(il)logics." Gravendyk's own critique of her work increases this sense of interrupted temporality as she enacts the role of reader herself, intervening in the already-episodic timeline of her poems.

Adrienne Rich shows a similar consideration of the (il)logics of pain and the body; in "Camino Real," she links the academic pursuits she has outlined in earlier poems in the collection, positing the following fragments:

To become the scholar of::

: : to list compare contrast events to footnote lesser evils calmly to note "bedsprings" describe how they were wired to which parts of the body

[...]

O to list collate commensurate to quantify I was the one, I suffered, I was there⁴⁸

Her scholarly pursuits blur with the body; she takes notes, makes footnotes, compares results, but the object of study is not a text or a museum object but the body itself. The object of study thus refuses this distanced academic approach. She notes the collapse of her intended objectivity in

⁴⁷ The term "illogics" is already a strange one, for the way it aurally implies an opposition to logic through illness, a logic that is "ill" or sick.

⁴⁸ Rich, *Midnight Salvage*, 30-31.

the following stanza, where she mourns the inability to "list collate commensurate, to quantify" in the face of her bodily reality: "I was the one, I suffered, I was there." The tension of the poem revolves around the distance between these two rhetorical positions: the body in pain and the "scholar" of pain. The collapse between these two positions, Rich suggests, is always imminent; just as the disinterested scholar of pain becomes the body in pain, so too does the writer of pain become the reader of pain. These movements between subjects in pain are always, as Rich notes elsewhere, outside of linear time. In "Midnight Salvage," the title poem to her collection, she writes that she "thought I was conspiring, breathing-along / with history's systole-diastole," when in actuality, "the new would be delivered:: though I would not see it[.]" She is outside both the temporality of "history" as well as its body, with its breath pumping through the heart's various cycles. In both of these instances, Rich presents the poem as a break from these durations, a call to action that presents herself inside an alternative temporality outside of history's "systole-diastole."

Taking this notion of alternative time and poem-as-action, I turn now to poet and scholar Elizabeth Arnold's work. Her 1999 collection *The Reef* focuses on her experiences with breast cancer and a resulting mastectomy; later collections return to the images and moments of that experience, including her 2010 collection *Effacement* in which Keith Tuma suggests that "Arnold's own history with cancer and mastectomy assumes its place among the images, history, and discourse that make up the book of the body." In her later collection *Life*, a piece called "Heart Valve" both evokes the body in its myriad parts—including such small pieces as the valve within a heart—and a broader sense of time as the shifting "I" speaker of the poem experiences

-

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁰ Tuma's comment comes from Flood Editions's website, http://www.floodeditions.com/arnold-effacement.

it. The poem moves through focused scenes from a day in the speaker's life, closing with these lines:

> [...] our dogs out like lights and almost

falling off their chairs

freed of the real-time for awhile as time began for me

to swell, slow down, carry me out

of all this almost to a where

about as strong a lure as love.⁵¹

At certain moments in this poem, Arnold writes clearly about time's interruption; her dogs, in sleep, move out of the mode of time which she refers to as "real-time." Meanwhile, "time" (appearing without a modifier such as "real") "began for me." But rather than a designated beginning that this line of the poem initially appears to posit, the speaker's experience of time is instead a change. That is, time begins to "swell, slow down, carry." Time is not starting new for the speaker but rather shifting from the "real-time" that her dogs and she experience only a few lines prior. The final lines themselves are, like her image of time, swollen with extraneous connecting words: "out / of all this almost / to a where / about as." Even though the prepositions attempt to ground the statement, the reader is forced to slow down, to take on the task of meaning-making within the poem.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Arnold, *Life* (Chicago: Flood Editions, 2014), 51.

To complicate the logic of the final image, the poem in its entirety reads as a long, unfulfilled sentence. "They told me there'd be pain," the poem opens, and continues:

so when I felt it, sitting at my beat-up farm desk

that looks out glass doors

onto the browning garden—plain sparrows bathing in the cube-shaped fountain

so violently they drain it

The poem meanders on, moving to the image of the dogs and the closing abstract lines about time, the final period the only one that appears in the entire poem. The temporally inflected phrase that she begins the poem with—"so when I felt it"—never syntactically concludes; what exactly occurs when she feels the pain? The larger point here is one about temporality; the mention of the experience of pain sets up expectations about how and when that pain is felt, and what the effect of such pain might be. Instead of completing the sentence—which is the reader's grammatical expectation—and describing the ramifications of the pain—the reader's affective expectation—the speaker loses the reader in an accumulation of particular images. First, the poem moves to that of sparrows bathing outside in a fountain, then of dogs sleeping on a chair. The closing image moves finally to abstraction where the speaker is carried out of "all this almost"—that is, all of these possible images and scenarios, yet a partial version—"to a where" that is "about as strong a lure as love." Puzzling through the geography of this final locale leaves the poem significantly more ungrounded than the stable opening images of bird in bath foretell. The reader is situated within the moment of her day, constantly looping without its grammatical

structure tightly bolted down. "They told me there'd be pain," Arnold's speaker asserts, and yet the results of pain, the "so when I felt it," remains unknown to the reader as they continue to be caught in the same expansive moment of duration that Arnold's speaker is caught in. There is no description of the pain the speaker feels, but the poem attempts to articulate the complexity of chronic time, the instability of the speaker situated within it, and the resulting instability the reader then experiences.

To return for a moment to the final stanza of Arnold's poem and its complex closing image:

as time began for me

to swell, slow down, carry me out

of all this almost

to a where

about as strong a lure as love.

This poem, so interested in the strange temporality of pain, achieves that representation in part through an instability of physical space. Descriptions of space in the poem's closing rely on descriptions typically associated with time—"out of this almost"—and abstract emotion—"to a where // about as strong a lure as love." The instability of space in this closing image raises an issue that I now turn to in the second part of this essay; namely, how do the physical spaces of these poems reflect the same chronic time that directs the temporality inherent within the poems? I argue that the physical earthly features connect directly to the physical body that is at the heart both of chronic illness and chronic time. In what follows, I trace out an intersection between the

chronic time of duration and geological time through the work of Arnold, Gravendyk, and Rich, and including the work of Anne Boyer.

Bodies in Duration: The Geological Time of Chronic Illness

In her book *Doing Time*, Rita Felski writes about a problem inherent in periodization: the tendency toward a backwards-looking view that presupposes a more advanced and sophisticated knowledge from the vantage point of the present. The movement toward "recovery" often erases a long, alternative history where the marginalized figure is situated. Instead of suggesting that we can "find" the moment when, for instance, women began to deviate from homogenous, linear, patriarchal time, we can—and should—think of them as always being both inside and outside these structures.⁵² This configuration echoes what the poets in the first section do in their consideration of durations; they are both inside the long moment of duration, while seeking a break from that duration through the vehicle of the poem. Felski continues:

An alternative response is to think of difference as vertical rather than horizontal, slicing across time rather than being enclosed within a particular period or epoch. In this view, individual groups have their own distinct histories, rhythms, and temporalities quite apart from traditional forms of periodization. History is not one broad river, but a number of distinct and separate streams, each moving at its own pace and tempo.⁵³

⁵² Susan Lanser cautions against the "add women and stir" method of historicizing in *The Sexuality of History: Modernity and the Sapphic, 1565-1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014,: 7.

⁵³ Felski, *Doing Time*, 3. There are important ramifications here for the very terms we use to identify these horizontal time periods; Felski continues, "As a result, terms such as 'modern' and 'postmodern' lose their universal reach; rather, they are merely the idees fixes of white male theorists, of little use in talking about the temporality of others. Women qua women, for example, have a unique relationship to time outside conventional, male-centered forms. Feminine difference pervades the entirety of history rather than being confined to a particular epoch" (3). Other disciplinary studies, such as post-colonialism, attempt to address these gaps that Felski addresses.

Time, Felski suggests, can be thought of in two ways. The first is one-dimensional, a line that moves forward and backward. The second takes on added dimensions in the form of the geographical markers that find their way into her language: rivers and mountains. The idea of "slicing" through time evokes layers of sediment inside of a sheared mountainside, while moving water suggests unevenness, unpredictability, a tendency toward both draught and flood. Time is also not consistent; each segment of alternative time she lays out—"distinct and separate streams"—has its own rhythms and pace. The shift to geographical imagery is common to popular science; we are used to hearing about how land masses shift and change over time, how continents separate and come back together, how one piece of rock sliced open can mark thousands of years of geological time in a single physical object. This kind of temporality requires an attention to what Wai Chee Dimock calls "deep time," a blurring of time and space that requires physical space—that is, geographical reality—to be "endlessly reinscribed in other spheres of life." 54

Much as the language of illness pervades everyday speech, the language of geological space necessarily pervades discussions of time. Here I want to focus on Felski's notion of understanding temporal difference as "vertical," an image with topographical resonances that find echoes in poetic description of natural landscapes: hills, valleys, holes, burrows, and rivers. Mary Jacobus notes in her study of objects such as trees, clouds, and rocks which show up repeatedly within Romantic poetry: "[R]ather than taking us closer to unmediated concrete or

_

⁵⁴ Wai Chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *American Literary History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 755.

⁵⁵ For instance, recent work on the Anthropocene suggests that the geological temporality of Earth is divided into smaller durations for easier comprehension and analysis: "To cope practically with such an extent of geological time, it is divided into more manageable packages that range from eons encompassing hundreds of millions—or indeed billions—of years, through smaller packages of time, such as the eras …These in turn are subdivided into periods of geological time … Periods are divided further into epochs and ages." "The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?" Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Alan Haywood, and Michael Ellis, *Philosophical Transactions*, 369, no. 1938 (2011), January 31, 2011, doi: 10.1098/rsta.2010.0339.

physical reality, things and words make take us ... toward a 'dim and undetermined sense." That is, rather than take us closer to traditional notions of "unmediated ... reality"—which is in many ways a fantasy—physical objects such as natural elements complicate our understanding of linear time and bounded subjecthood. Elsewhere Jacobus notes an important contrast between a subject in flux and the firm outlines of rocks; there is some kind of boundary to a rock, an enduring quality that challenges both the shifting boundaries of selfhood and the timescale of the human. Anne Boyer's work takes this idea of physical objects of the natural world and pushes it further in a collection that blurs poetry with philosophy, mixing traditional delineated poetry with prose-like lyrics. In "The Innocent Question" she notes:

Monuments are interesting mostly in how they diminish all other aspects of the landscape. Each highly perceptible thing makes something else almost imperceptible. This is so matter of fact, but I've been told I'm incomprehensible: *Anne, what do you mean that noticing one thing can make the other things disappear*?⁵⁸

Just as Jacobus argues that the presence of these natural objects in nature blurs objective boundaries, Boyer suggests that the presence of an object—perhaps natural, perhaps human-made, as "monument" suggests both—diminishes other features of the landscape. A rock may contain discrete boundaries that challenge the shifting nature of selfhood, and Boyer also suggests that her experience of the monument as central challenges these boundaries. Is the fact of the monument's eminence a "matter of fact" or is its power "incomprehensible"? In the case of shifting between body and space, Boyer argues that "noticing one thing can make the other

⁵⁶ Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁸ Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women* (Boise: Ahsahta Press, 2015), 4.

things disappear." The ill body calls attention to itself in the same way that a natural feature—a monument, a river, a mountain—calls attention to itself as well. Shifting between these two consuming experiences straddles the subject in a position between perceptibility and imperceptibility, between bounded objects and fluctuation self.

Later, Boyer strengthens this claim about objects. In a meditation on "things" in "Twilight Revery," she notes the verticality implicit in created objects. She suggests that as objects increase in stature they often paradoxically erase themselves from view:

The world of things so often barely perceptible. It's a condition. It can be diagnosed. To be precise, it is a condition called an entire city built on a city. It is a condition called "infinite sedimentary monument not to cities but to sediment itself." But it is a condition: that is, it is a set of unstable foundations, holes, tunnels, passageways from one strata to the next. And in the strata, not ruin, but the war before it. And every movement is a movement upward rather than the settling. What moves up?⁵⁹

Like layers of sediment in rock, Boyer imagines layers of civilization built on the bones of the city before it. Boyer leverages the language of geology as she names this infrastructure a "sedimentary" monument, tracing the levels from "one strata to the next." This layered city evokes the vertical layers Felski uses to describe time, but also implies an embodied relationship to time in the pathologizing language of "[i]t's a condition," "[i]t can be diagnosed." Boyer describes the instability of the structure, its unsteady foundation and the holes and tunnels left standing as each new layer is added, without allowing time for settling. Importantly this multilayered city is situated in a cycle of duration: "What moves up?" asks Boyer, having

_

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

answered her own question only a line before: Everything moves up, and every movement is an upward one, without allowing for downward settling. It occurs such that it is "barely perceptible."

Like this lingering, slowly aggregating structure, I argue that there is a chronic dimension to this "earth"ly time that uses geological imagery to suggest a stable duration marked by slow time and slow change. Like the duration of illness, earthly features such as mountains or rivers are also caught in moments of duration—just much longer in timespan—between formation and destruction. Unlike the quick severity of a flood or a tornado, features such as cliffs and valleys have a slower lifespan. Natural features can change; mountains develop over eons as the earth buckles, and then gradually erode as wind and water press against them. So too do bodies change over time, even when experiencing the long durations of chronic illness. The scales of time are different; the experience is not.

There is a similar blurring of time and space—especially in descriptions of illness and trauma—when theorists describe spaces or "jumps" in narrative and structure, referencing the physical movements of representations of time. Sharon Cameron writes tellingly of the connection Freud perceives between narrative cohesion and "health," specifically in the "intelligibility" that such cohesion implies: "The severing of connection, the gaps in chronology, the faulty memory—it is these psychoanalysis claims to treat so that the end result is nothing less than a complete story that is, in Freud's words, 'intelligible, coherent, unbroken." Cameron's description (and Freud's) uses the terminology of landforms, of earth, noting "gaps" and praising that which is "unbroken," calling to mind unfarmed land in spring. Even Cameron's description of a faulty memory circles her imagery back to landforms and faultlines.

51

⁶⁰ Cameron, *Lyric Time*, 61.

Furthermore, a critical perception of vertical historical moments—outside of typical horizontal temporality—must consider the verticality of landforms and the importance of these metaphors to writing about illness. So much of the language we use to describe illness involves horizontal movement—journey, traveling, roads—that vertical spaces become differentiated types of movement that can paradoxically imply transcendence (lifting, upward movement) as well as death (burial, downward movement). To return to Arnold's poem "Heart Valve," the geography is blurred and the space refuses much movement, whether vertical or horizontal, and yet the poem itself, with its short lines and alternating one- and two-line stanzas suggests a vertical drop to the end of the poem. This downward movement is echoed by other more subtle imagery in the poem, of births "on the long way south still" and dogs "almost / falling off their chairs." The verticality of landforms expressed in the poem itself becomes another way for the poem to break from the duration of the chronic time of illness, as well as the long duration of earthly time.

In "Gone," Arnold plays with the intersections between horizontal and vertical, within time and space alike. The ending of the brief poem reads:

My love was

deep

—deep as what he seemed to be at night?

Seemed lives long.

Night traveling

at the speed of light. A was

⁶¹ Arnold, *Life*, 51.

-

he is now

on the

Passing Years River.⁶²

The indention on the first line quoted here draws attention to the horizontal linearity of language, to our dependency on reading from the start of a sentence to the end to understand first syntax and then meaning. The next line begins the juxtaposition of metaphor with space; is her love metaphorically "deep"—that is, fully realized? Or does it have a physical depth? The temporal construction of "night" takes on a physicality as it travels at lightspeed, and the verb tenses that form the closing sentence suggest a chronicity as past and present intermingle. A linear river takes on a metaphorical significance through its name, the "Passing Years River," serving as an image both of the development of time and the forward flow of nature. The passage of time has become a spatial reality that carries the subject of the poem away, both horizontally (along the path of the river) and vertically ("deep," as he appears to the speaker at night).

Similarly, Hillary Gravendyk's own brief poem "Assessment" presents the image of a day erased, any notable or defining features of this common linear structure of time (such as day and night, the measured scale of 24 hours) having vanished:

Goes the day, bleached

of its figures:

The creature

of every failure,

62 Arnold, *Life*, 91.

53

skittering across the road.

They found an error, black with a white line,

and decided to have it removed. A blank warren

folded behind every one of their chests.

Goes the day and the day's administration:

organs flat as mirrors, the hour, a deflated body.⁶³

The structured hours of the day morph into a "deflated body," the day itself "bleached / of its figures." The poem circulates descriptions of collapse and mistakes: "failure," "error," "blank," "folded," "deflated." The fragmented structure of the half line "Goes the day" precedes fuller sentence structures, yoking fragment and full expression together in a jarring way. A tactile, dimensional understanding of time flattens down to one layer: a black error line with a strikeout; bodily organs that become mirrors which reflect backwards and forwards without substance; the body itself deflated into yet another erroneous line.

Strangely, this perception of the day is filled below the surface vertically with small animals, like a burrow hidden underground. These "creatures of every failure" skitter across the

-

⁶³ Gravendyk, *Harm*, 23.

road (if we think of time as a line, these creatures avoid the "line" of the road to cross at random perpendicular intersections). An unnamed "They" decide to have the error removed, behind their chests a "blank warren"—here the word "warren" could take on a standard meaning of a den for animals or land for rabbits, the home of the creatures mentioned before. And yet this warren is "folded" and blank, almost like a slip of paper. OED lists a slang definition for "warren" that is a misapprehension of "warrant," a term which takes on a plethora of meanings: "a conclusive proof," "assurance," "pledge," "bail," "refuge," "protector," "safeguard," "defense" (OED) while also serving the more vernacular meaning of warrant for arrest. Does the word here mean permission given, or action taken under the law? Is it a sense of protection, a sanctuary? What does it mean that the "warren" is blank? Or does the more physical sense of "warren" as a field or home for small animals become flattened, just like the body and organs, becoming empty and foldable? The space of the warren hole contrasts with the flatness of road and line, breaking the chronological version of time that the poem has already attempted to discard (the day itself fails, "bleached of its figures"—that is, emptied of its numerical markers). The form of this poem is important too—the images in the poem become flattened but the form itself refuses to break down, maintaining the two-line stanza structure systematically to the end. The short lines require the reader to read horizontally and vertically, across and down, the poem itself visually appearing like a railroad spike or other such long object, serving as a startling alternative to the deflated body and flat mirrors imagined in the poem.

Likewise, in "Waiting," Gravendyk again blurs time and space—that is, standard markers of temporality morph via the vehicle of the poem into markers of geographical space. This shift from a temporality rooted in the body to that of geological temporality presents a moment of

instability that breaks the duration. Her poem opens with brief images of natural settings mixed with temporal stages:

> Spun sky, unhappy stairway. Stark record of summer: bright, harrowing. But it wasn't the brink. It was an uneven surface, was a jumble of absences. They waited for me in the sycamore shade. Violent current, stuttering eye. Watching me disappear by degrees. You pressed my shoulder, held it to the wheel. And I haven't even told you what I fear most, what's buried in the flesh.

Gravendyk describes the way that the sky becomes a "stark record of summer," bright yet unhappy. The next line, "But it wasn't the brink," sets up the reader to consider the "brink" of summer, of a specific calendar time, but the "brink" morphs into a geological feature with an "uneven surface" full of absences. The poem continues to move in a jumbled space/time as it continues:

> Selfish desire, I kept you like a secret. Wanted what I could get. We built a boat from all this, set it adrift in the tarpaper night. Mended my skin with barbed-wire. Covered ourselves in refusal. I forced your hand into mine, though I knew you couldn't go where I had to go.⁶⁴

The ongoing events of a day in the summer ("watching me disappear," "you pressed my shoulder, "we built a boat from all this") synch up unevenly with bodily events that appear to exist outside the structures of time: "stuttering eye," "mended my skin with barbed wire." The

⁶⁴ Ibid., 43.

selfish desire the speaker feels mirrors what she "fear[s] most, what's buried in the flesh," "selfish" becoming a visual and aural pair with "flesh."

Time is not only jumbled in its description of bodies in space; it also shifts abruptly in individual images. "Covered ourselves in refusal," notes one fragmented sentence; a "surface" is described as a "jumble of absences." These actions and events refuse standardized time because the second half of the action is not what the reader expects — how do you cover yourself in refusal? What does a jumble of absences look like? These mismatched descriptions force us to consider actions that exist outside of objective clock time, near the brink; a break in duration of time and geographical space.

Like the body, geographical spaces also embody a slowness for change, for disruption of duration. Even though the earth is always in micro-motion—John McPhee notes that "The sea is not all that responds to the moon. Twice a day the solid earth bobs up and down, as much as a foot"—the effects of change are virtually unnoticeable in the span of a human life. McPhee describes this slow process of duration as one of small fluctuations that tend to balance each other out over time: "Mountains are not somehow created whole and subsequently worn away. They wear down as they come up, and these mountains have been rising and eroding in fairly even ratio for millions of years—rising and shedding sediment steadily through time, always the same, never the same." These subtle changes, like the subtle daily movements of earth, mirror the body in the duration of illness; the changes are difficult to quantify and the overall effect is often one of stasis. As McPhee points out, "[n]umbers do not seem to work well with regard to

⁶⁵ John McPhee, *Basin and Range* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1981), 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 47.

deep time."67 What does seem to work well, however, is language. In *Basin and Range*, McPhee takes the role of amateur geologist and theorist of "deep time", interviewing and traveling with professors and scientists to paint a picture of the Basin and Range between eastern Utah and eastern California. In his descriptions of the landscape—the proliferation of geological verbiage he deems "verbal deposits"—geological feature and human bodies merge. "There was almost enough resonance in some terms," he claims, "to stir the adolescent groin," noting how as a teenager he became interested in geology by "staring up the skirts of the Eastern valleys." 68 Ruptures in faults become to him "seismic scar[s]." As we can see from his examples, there is an embodied understanding of both time and geographical space. What does this interconnection mean for the poetry I examine here? I argue that in search of language for understanding the chronic time of lingering illness, many of these writers I look at turn to images of natural geographic spaces. These spaces and objects embody similar relationships to time, but on a larger scale. Just as there are moments of disruption in geographical durations—a warren that ends up blank, a violent current that stops at the brink—their presence within the poems creates a break within the speaker's sense of duration. The body becomes space in their shared experiences of time, and duration finally has a language through the blurring of body and natural feature.

As we have already seen in the poetry I examine, descriptions of time and bodily duration shift into geographical space. These shifts are small breaks from the durations already presented, moments where the poem itself briefly becomes an alternative temporality. Now I want to turn to depictions of the body *as* natural elements, to see the shift that McPhee's work points out

⁶⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 25-6, 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

manifested in poetic form. It is not just the image of a body naturalized that is important here, but also the sustained interest in chronic time, in the unstable subject. In closing, I will examine several moments where these bodies-turned-nature are pathologized, cast as ill. These poems will, in a way, circulate us back to the start of the chapter, to understanding representations of illness and their effect on time through the poetry that captures these images.

In one brief poem in Arnold's first collection *The Reef*, the speaker feels her self in flux until she becomes a wave; within the shift to the natural, the subject is consumed: "Rubbed till she was numb, she was consumed. / Not to say she didn't try to run away. / But like a breaking wave it widened, foamed, / passed through and over, no escape, as if she were / a wave and spreading, fanning ... who she was she was no longer, was erased." Like a wave spreading until its force dissipates, the self in the poem is eviscerated. The speaker plays both destructor—the wave—and object of destruction—the self "rubbed" out until erased. In the final image, the destructor becomes destructed; the self is unable to maintain this conflict between those two roles and is consumed. In her later collection *Effacement*, Arnold moves from comparing bodies to natural entities ("as if she were / a wave") to imagery that casts bodies *as* nature, the metaphorical structure abandoned for more direct contact. In one brief poem, the task of mining blurs with surgery, casting doubt on what body precisely is being examined here:

With mountaintop-removal, valley-fill mining they clear the trees first

then proceed to surgery.

The rubble from it chokes the streams.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Arnold, *The Reef*, 17.

⁷¹ Arnold, *Effacement*, 11.

59

Is this process "surgery" when performed on a mountain? Or does the "mountaintop-removal" and "valley-fill[ing]" refer to a person? Either way, the lasting ramifications of the surgery are evident: "The rubble from it chokes the streams." The unidentified "they" of the poem is the cause of this lasting pain, casting a designated "patient" in the image that is a passive bystander to the clearing and surgery, and resulting aftermath.

Another poem from *Effacement* traces the blending of body with earth after death. "In a freezer when I read it he was / probably gray," the speaker says, adding, "My sister saw his body turn gray / as he died, then suddenly / grayer." A burial accompanies the death; the hole as she describes

Not so deep in the ground as I'd thought, the concrete, swimming-pool-like vault

halting for a little while the give of earth.

I want to be against earth

bodily, I said.

As against you in our bed, Jack.⁷²

The body, at once in the earth, seems to *become* the earth in the final stanzas. "I want to be against earth bodily," says the speaker, comparing this closeness to the intimacy she feels toward her partner. The familiar image of a body in the ground turning into earth is expanded by the speaker's suggestion that she, too, becomes earth, a living burial in this grave-like swimming pool.

60

⁷² Ibid., 70.

These images of surgery and death find their logical collaboration in Arnold's poems about war; Effacement provides ample imagery of bodies pulled apart in battle, of attempts at surgery and prosthesis—the dual tasks of tearing the body apart and piecing it back together. In one such poem, the trenches in battle become sutures in surgery. In its entirety, the poem—titled only by number, "III"—reads:

Trenches across the face of France filled in now, the surface sewn

—crenellated, to stop shots going straight down the line.

Coronal suture arcing across the skull's hood with its tongue-and-groove-edged bone plates joined,

frontal to parietal, parietal to occipital, to shield the mysterious weave

of dendrites and their endless-seeming axons lining the live bone underneath.⁷³

The opening stanza's "sew"ing of the filled trenches in France echoes the implied stitches of the term "coronal suture." Not actually stitches at all, the coronal suture is a dense fiber of connective tissue separating parietal and frontal bones within the skull. The crenellated surface of the field becomes the ridges and valleys of the brain, the "live bone" that connects to brain tissue with the "mysterious weave / of dendrites and their endless-seeming axons." The collapsing of these two entities—brain and field—draws attention to the vulnerability of both.

⁷³ Ibid., 4.

The battlements placed on the field "stop shots going / straight down the line," breaking up open space to prevent easy targeting. Likewise, the coronal suture, for all of its fibrous density, is all that connects the "skull's hood with its ... bone plates" from the live tissue underneath. Both of these images exist in a fractured (and sutured) temporality. The trenches are "filled in now" and yet the guards are still in place to stop bullets. Is this moment located in wartime or post-war? Likewise, the final three stanzas position the reader as poised within the cranium, before some imagined moment of impact, the neurons and synapses moving rapidly below. The ongoingness of the closing image leaves the reader waiting for the moment post-activity, when the trenches of tissue will be "filled in."

These images of lingering or imminent death lead to a few final poems, where we can see this transition between bodies and geography (and back again) emerge in poetry that directly addresses illness. Adrienne Rich's long poem "From Sickbed Shores" in her last published collection crafts an image of sickness as its own continent:

```
skin of the globe stretches and
snakes
out and in room sound of the universe bearing
undulant wavelengths to an exhausted ear
```

(sick body in a sick country: can it get well?

what is it anyway to exist as matter to

matter?)⁷⁴

62

⁷⁴ Adrienne Rich, *Tonight No Poetry Will Serve* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 35.

The globe has its own skin, the landscape becoming body, then transitioning back to a landscape yet again; the skin is said to "stretch" and snake, becoming first a river reaching out, then sound waves casting "undulant wavelengths to an exhausted ear. Rich's poem argues that the collapse between body and space is inevitable; a sick body mirrors a sick country and both are sequestered within a moment of duration, where they question if wellness is possible. Rich's image of the "skin" of the globe raises another point that echoes Jacobus's earlier claim about the boundaries of a rock: neither the perceived boundaries of skin and body or country and continent are stable, permanent, or defined. Jacobus sees the concreteness of natural space as a contrast to the instability of self; Rich instead argues that boundaries are created and collapsable entities. All is only matter ("exist[ing] as matter to matter") with permeable borders and shared experiences of temporality; in this case, the shared temporality of illness—can it get well?

In her earlier work, Rich writes a long poem with a section about Muriel Rukeyser's stroke, the same experience Rukeyser contemplated in "Resurrection of the Right Side" in the opening of this chapter. Like Rukeyser, Rich suggests the role of illness in understanding the instability of selfhood. The "half-body" with its half-life that Rukeyser records as resulting from the stroke is only a more pronounced version of an ongoing instability of self, regardless of the state of illness. In Rich's poem, she explores the temporal expanse of this new illness situated in geographical space—I quote the section in its entirety for cohesion:

After one stroke she looks at the river remembers her name—Muriel

writes it in her breath on the big windowpane

never again perhaps to walk in the city freely

but here is her landscape this old industrial building converted

for artists

her river the Lordly Hudson

Paul named it which has no peer in Europe or the East

her mind on that water widening⁷⁵

Rich notes that she is "conjuring" Rukeyser (along with the likes of Hart Crane, Miles Davis, and Paul Goodman) in the same way that Crane "hallucinated" Edgar Allan Poe on the subway in New York. The acknowledgement of a ghostly apparition underlying in the poem suggests an already disrupted temporality between life and death, present and future. The poem's presentation of illness also fractures the temporality of the poem, literally splitting the stanzas in the final few lines, fracturing the visual form of the piece. The "stroke" of the first line does double duty in suggesting the event of a stroke and resonating with the "artists" mentioned later—could this stroke actually be the flick of a paintbrush or the tracing of a finger in frost on the window? Could illness function as art? Rich notes that she may "never again" walk in the city freely, and yet her body transforms into the natural landscape, providing alternative movement through "her river," her mind "widening" as she looks upon it. This widening of mind

⁷⁵ Rich, *Midnight Salvage*, 47.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 72. The lines "... the Lordly Hudson / ... which has no peer / in Europe or the East" comes from Goodman's "The Lordly Hudson" in *The Lordly Hudson*.

expands on the opening stanza's initial moment of remembrance: after the stroke, Rukeyser recalls her own name in the act of looking at the river. The water serves as a connection to a deep kind of embodied knowledge, one that reflects the self back to the speaker, continuing the transference of knowledge throughout the poem and after, leaving the reader with the image of Rukeyser and the water, her mind continuing to widen. "This is her landscape," Rich writes as Rukeyser looks out over the city below, but through the river Rukeyser *is* the landscape.

The process of body-turning-landscape and landscape-as-body is ongoing; bodies and landscapes alike exist in long moments of duration, of in-betweeness that becomes chronic in its endurance. These resonances become a capable vehicle of discussing the durations of illness as the speaker surveys the ill body as a thinking, changing landscape. The instability of chronic time—that is, of the time of chronic illness—finds its expression in the unstable subject situated in an unstable physical environment. Poetry as a form synthesizes these instabilities and offers the potential break in these durations. The poem is action—is object—interrupting these durations through the very presentation of duration. The "half-body" and "half-life" are the reality of every subject and every landscape; the poetry of illness allows for readers—ill, not ill, and every variation in between—to process these "halves" at work in their own subjectivities and encourage them to re-think their own relationships to physical space.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LABOR ECONOMY: PAIN, PRODUCTIVITY, AND FEMALE WORK

In her 1999 collection *The Reef*, American poet and scholar Elizabeth Arnold describes her experiences with Hodgkin's disease, a form of lymphoma that targets the lymph nodes. The collection—with its emphasis on moments of surgery, terror, diagnosis, and prognosis—demonstrates a multitude of competing temporalities that Arnold experiences within her illness. As Arnold addresses and eventually survives her experience with cancer, she traces the lines of treatment, interference, and blind luck that land her in what her doctors call "remission." In one poem from her collection, Arnold recounts the story of a shaman, based on an interview she heard with him about the nature of sacrifices. In this poem, Arnold focuses not on the "fact"-based care and treatment of the medical institution but on the possibilities of mystical or supernatural knowledge, transmitted to the shaman through the act of the sacrifice.

The poem leaves unclear whether the sacrificed beings are human or animal—or perhaps one becoming, mystically, like the other—but it is clear that the sacrificed beings have bodies and the speaker assigns them human-like characteristics such as feelings and souls. These nameless, mysterious bodies are used as the medium for interpreting signs through the final positioning of their decimated body parts:

Sacrificed for some such sign, the shamans' lonely victims, disemboweled and hurled though air, would never see the words their own intestines spelled above them as they fell.¹

_

66

¹ Elizabeth Arnold, *The Reef* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 6.

There is a mystic quality implicit in the act of intestines rearranged seemingly by chance as they tumble through the air; the parts are beholden only to natural law, the forces of gravity. As occurs elsewhere in the collection, the varying temporalities of the moment accumulate in layers.

Arnold suggests that the quick shift from life into death is what prevents the victims from being able to see the "signs" their own intestines spell as they fall through the air. And yet the temporality of the stanza suggests an ongoing consciousness to the bodies—"lonely victims ... hurled through air"—already dead, and yet the tenses used in the phrase "would never see the words their own intestines spelled / above them as they fell" suggests the possibility of being still alive, that what they "would never see" is a moment located still further in the future.

After the bowels dry, "stretched taut from the altar down to the low cliff's foot," the priests return to listen to the sound of the wind moving through them, hoping that those sounds translate into some specific meaning, intended for them:

They hoped for god talk, caught where the victim's souls had left their tortured bodies. The shaman I heard interviewed admitted they got nothing but their questions back,

which they would ask and ask and listen for until they died, the echoes opening onto nothing, dispersed among and by the dust, the sun-singed scrub, the sky.²

The shaman admits the impossibility of productive pain here, of pain's transference into a notation that they can trade for signs, for "god talk." The suffering of tortured bodies doesn't

<u>-</u>

² Ibid

reproduce meaning in any significant way. Furthermore, the timeline of the poem tangles even more; the sacrificed bodies—perpetually stranded in the previous stanza between life and death—mirror the questions of the shamans, perpetually repeated back to them, caught in an echo until death.

This record of pain—pain that is quickly understood as unnecessary, pointless—rejects any kind of uplift narrative that is often so prevalent within discourses surrounding illnesses. Instead, the poem suggests a different kind of observation, an alternative understanding of disgust's role in new kinds of taste formation. After all, we as readers are left with images that refuse to coalesce into meaning. Instead, we are faced with body parts and fragments that can only leave us, in Arnold's view, filled with disgust, an emotion that I will argue later has its own potential for creating aesthetics. Most notably, this need to turn disgust, pain, or suffering into action, into a thing of "value," undercuts the possibilities of open-ended witness as its own valuable outcome. Just as in illness, what would it mean to serve as a witness to pain without needing to make meaning? The opening stanza of the poem sets up these possibilities for witness, for disgust not cast aside as contamination or contagion:

What window opens from what's seen? What door cracks onto what? Door, window, song—what physical vibration for the eye or ear could hack a way through fact?

The payoff here is the possibility of an opening, of bodily experiences—"physical vibration for the eye or the ear"—that can reorient our understanding of what we previously took to be the

³ I speak here of pain that is untreatable, not, of course, advocating for pain for pain's sake. There is certainly a great deal of medical documentation that suggests that much pain is unnecessary, a topic this chapter will address in greater detail.

"fact" of disgust. These experiences themselves are often painful—Arnold suggests that they violently "hack" through fact—the communicable after-effect of the communication of pain. Alyson Patsavas writes of her hope that new disability-based knowledges (what she and other scholars call "cripistemologies"), "materialize in ways that permit us to think pain otherwise, to produce painful new knowledge, but also to construct analyses about pain that are less painful, and less dangerous to those of us in pain, and, in doing so, to re-imagine our (shared, pained) futures." Writing about pain is not just about creating or reliving pain; it is about accessing shared pain and finding ways to discuss and access the pain of others in empathetic ways, to perceive a window opening without concern for its worth.

In what follows, I investigate a poetics of temporality and economy that is generated by bodies experiencing illness. First, I analyze Arnold's *The Reef* alongside American poet and writer Anne Boyer's recent collection, *Garments Against Women*, in order to explore the role of women within capitalist systems of labor. Next, I examine the intersection of illness and time, arguing that the asynchronous temporality found within Arnold and Boyer's writing plays a role in creating an alternative economy within their work. In Pierre Bourdieu's sociological study on taste-making, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, he suggests that matters of taste directly influence economic structures by suggesting objects of desire for consumers to pursue. These taste innovations are based, at their root, in affective responses, and tend to

⁴ Susan Wendell asks if part of the problem is our inclination to not accept illness as a valid embodied difference in the same way that disability activists ask us to accept disability: "Is illness *by definition* an evil, or have we made less progress in recognizing chronic illnesses as potentially valuable differences than we have in relation to other disabilities?" "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities, *Hypatia* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 30. Emphasis in original.

⁵ Alyson Patsavas, "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 216.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

privilege positive bodily reactions and respond inversely to affective reactions to disgust. In simpler terms, "good" taste tends to power the economy, and disgust, it would follow, tends to flatline it. I purposely use that word, "flatline," to further suggest the embodied implications of Bourdieu's study, as the genesis of taste, he argues, is located within the body itself. That is, our recoil at what is "bad" is more closely related to the bodily experience of disgust than a solely cerebral calculation of taste, a reaction that Bourdieu compares to illness: "sick-making." "Disgust," he writes, "[is] provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes of others." There is thus an implied connection in Bourdieu's work between illness and other embodied experiences, and disgust. I then examine the intersection of this disgust with pain, maintaining that pain forms a new kind of economy out of its relationship with disgust. In the chapter's final turn, I briefly look at the most common "labor" of the female body, that of pregnancy and motherhood. In closing, I show how the alternative economies produced within illness often function similarly as the economies of other female labor. The poetry of Anne Boyer and Adrienne Rich demonstrates how the female body is expected to enter into "productive" economies, of which the foremost is motherhood.

As this chapter will explore further, expressions of disgust are closely related to similar feelings that compel us to rejection, to disavowal. If good taste powers the economy and this taste is the result of affective, embodied reactions to that which we deem good or pleasing, then we might consider an expansion of Bourdieu's discussion of taste to include the body itself.

Thus, as I suggest in what follows, popular versions of "taste" tend to endorse the "healthy" body—or the illusion of such a body—while illness, pain, and suffering easily fall into "bad" taste, into disgust. We tend to reject the experiences and sensations of illness as running counter

⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 56.

to accepted categories of taste. Indeed, we build entire programs, government structures, and familial cultures around erasing or alleviating those experiences. And yet I would argue that pain does not have to have *value* (in the saccharine sense of "this all happens for a reason") in order to *do* something. In the two collections I examine here, Boyer and Arnold address a non-reproductive component of the economy: that of disgust, of pain. They both take part in an alternative economy, one that conceptualizes (and experiences) pain not as something of value, but as a possible outcome of a non-chronological temporality, of the duration they experience within illness. This economic model functions via the unnoticed and thus un(der)valued, whether ignored or avoided: the unpaid labor of women, the unacknowledged pain of those who are ill. It is true that these women—Arnold and Boyer—both have experiences with cancer, and yet I do not want to draw conclusions too tightly around this similarity of personal experience. For this chapter, the moments of similarity arise out of their shared experiences of serious illness writ large, their shared experiences of inhabiting and interacting in alternative economies of production. As women—as ill women but importantly as women—they inhabit untimeliness,

⁸ Wendell explains that developing our understanding of illness relies, in part, in acknowledging impairment and shifting our perceptions of the "bad taste" of illness: "Illness is not by definition an evil, but people fear and try to avoid illness because of the suffering it causes. Some of that suffering is social and could be eliminated by social justice for people with disabilities, but some of it is not. Solidarity between people with chronic illnesses and people with other disabilities depends on acknowledging the existence of the suffering that justice cannot eliminate (and therefore on our willingness to talk about impairment). It also depends on acknowledging that illness is not *only* suffering" ("Unhealthy Disabled," 30-31, emphasis in original).

⁹ If anything, we could pay broader attention to pain to facilitate more open discussions about pain, illness, the body, and death. I am not suggesting that we should not alleviate pain, rather that we should be more open to experiences of pain, both within ourselves and others.

¹⁰ This assertion that an emotive, embodied experience has real-world ramifications builds on the work of Sara Ahmed; in her essay "Affective Economies," she writes that "we might notice that fear *does something*; it reestablishes distance between bodies whose difference is read off the surface." "Affective Economies," *Social text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 126. Likewise in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, she similarly claims that "disgust does something, certainly: through disgust, bodies 'recoil' from their proximity." *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 83. Likewise, as I argue in what follows, pain is able to *do* something, even if it doesn't necessarily "produce" in the way a capitalist economy expects.

¹¹ Cancer is broad, it encompasses and engulfs. As an illness, cancer unites vastly disparate diseases under a common umbrella but not a common treatment, or prognosis, or cultural awareness.

utilizing pain through their work as a formative structure within the economy in which they take part.

Medical Timelines and the Time of Illness

Arnold's *The Reef* is a book-length sequence of poems where doctors and nurses drift in and out of hospital and waiting rooms as she describes moments of sitting "(cold) in the waiting room in shorts," coughing up "tainted, yellow jelly cells," and "lying on a metal bed in sheets" over and over again as the cancer is treated, recurs, and is treated again. ¹² This circularity causes readers to lose track of the timeline of her illness, and this out-of-time feeling forms a defining thematic component of her collection: the uncertain trajectory of illness and treatment, the possible reappearance of the cancer, and the potential impossibility of total cure. She does, however, lay out one particular timeline very clearly in an untitled poem near the end of the slim volume:

I think: had I been born five years before I was, I wouldn't have survived to haunt the present now

as if it were my past. "I should have died," I'd say, the "cure" for Hodgkin's coming just a couple of years

before they found it rooted in me, meaning business.¹³

Arnold presents a temporal movement of discovery/treatment/survival that she depicts as linear in its course. The timeline's parameters are clear: five years divide a "curable" disease from an

72

¹² Arnold, *The Reef*, 22, 23, 16.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

incurable one. And yet Arnold uses the linearity of this medical intervention to problematize larger questions about illness and temporality. The sequential framework here becomes the structure around which she builds a fragmented, nonlinear temporality, one where she "haunt[s] the present now / as if it were my past." Unlike the crystalline delineation of five years—although this clarity is already undermined with the purposeful clunky-ness of the vague line "just a couple of years" that follows—the speaker's past intersects with her present, overlapping her own understanding of her bodily temporality with an alternative timeline where she "should have died." The speaker's own use of verb tenses here mirrors the problem of past-becoming-present, as the present "I think" shifts into the conditional: "I'd say." This latter phrase gestures toward the possibility of an alternative past where these conversations occur, or perhaps an ongoing present where the speaker continually has conversations with herself or others about her illness, an ongoing life-in-death.

The timescale that appears so structured on first read—five years ago, medical research becoming cure—thus begins to break down. Was it five years that made that difference, or "just a couple"? How "close" of a call is this coincidence? Arnold's speaker puts "cure" in scare quotes, emphasizing the flimsiness of this designation, the improbability of the illness following a neat, linear unfolding that ends with clear-cut survival. ¹⁴ She also suggests that the speaker is indebted to the economics of the situation, to the processes of research, funding, trial, and sale that ultimately result in each step forward in the treatment of diseases and illness. The cancer "root[s]" in her like a plant, one organic entity invading another, but it "mean[s] business." This

¹⁴ The notion of cure has a troubled history within disability studies, where acceptance and understanding of embodied difference is forefront, and activists often reject what they call the "medical model" of disability, the idea that disability is a problem to be cured. Susan Wendell argues that although chronic illness is often medicalized, it should be considered alongside more stable disabilities, which she refers to as the "healthy disabled": "Social constructionist analyses of disability, in which oppressive institutions and policies, prejudiced attitudes, discrimination, cultural misrepresentation, and other social injustices are seen as the primary causes of disability, can reduce attention to those disabled people whose bodies are highly medicalized because of their suffering, their deteriorating health, or the threat of death" ("Unhealthy Disabled," 18).

language of commerce suggests less a battle with cancer than colonization, trade, or capitalist exchange, in which the illness increases its stakes within the body and spreads its capital around. This development of cancer as battle or fight to cancer as economic entity is widespread; anthropologist S. Lochlann Jain argues that the rhetoric of cancer has "unquestioningly overlapped with notions of progress and accumulation in capitalism." Jain compares the growth of cells, as in a tumor or diseased organ, to that of retirement or other wealth compounding. American economies are those of accumulation, she posits, but "cancer itself parodies the capitalist ideal of accrual through time." American economic tendencies toward accumulation, toward safeguarding wealth with concrete end goals like retirement, are built around certain timelines that illness then disrupts, creating a "competing version of time," one that I would argue is much less focused on linear structures than on collapsed moments of lingering duration. These poets, then, suggest the possibility of an alternative economic structure, one which focuses less on production—a process which emphasizes a linear structure of time, from start to finish—and more on the body's unproductive experience of pain. The pain

¹⁵ Susan Sontag describes the tendency to mark illness as a "battle" or fight in her book, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 1989). More specifically, Sontag's well-known text argues that metaphorizing illness, although appearing to give illness a language and expression, instead only serves to diminish the lived realities of those who are ill.

¹⁶ S. Lochlann Jain, "Be Prepared," in *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, ed. Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland (New York: New York University Press), 180.

¹⁷ S. Lochlann Jain, *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 51. That is, cancer exhibits an unwanted form of accumulation, often despite our best medical and caretaking efforts to the contrary.

¹⁸ Jain, "Be Prepared," 180. "Timeline" here is meant to designate the formal structures of chronological time, a narrative way of reading that can clearly define beginning, middle, and end. That definition is, necessarily, an oversimplification, as a rejection or complication of a timeline does not always denote a complete rejection of narrative, but I do hope to suggest the ways that narrative and chronological time often work together, and the ways, then, that Arnold's work moves away from both. Sharon Cameron writes that a lyric poem is "like a breathing space, a necessary 'time out'," implying that poetry as a genre is especially equipped—through its general lack of narrative, of characters, of formal linear structure—to function in moments of (embodied) duration (a "breathing space"), rather than in linear or chronological portrayals of time. *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 90.

and suffering of illness, that which may fill us with pity or anxiety or a shade of disgust, becomes an alternative mode of taste-making, forming an alternative economy in which pain is a byproduct.

In an earlier poem in *The Reef*, Arnold describes the similar unsettling of linear temporality that she experiences when her cancer returns—"recurred,' awakened, de-remissed," she writes—"But I don't freeze; just when I hear the words / I'm more alert than even in those heady times when nothing hurts: beginning, middle, end make one clear time frame, inside of which I fit." ¹⁹ Even her sentence structure in these lines resists clear delineation, instead connecting into a long run-on with colons and semi-colons. This experience is not a moment "out" of time; Arnold's speaker asserts that she doesn't freeze up. Instead, this instance serves as a moment of collapsed time, one where typical markers of time—beginning and end, start and finish—dissolve from their traditional places and shift to exist in palimpsest, in layers that cover and uncover each other in a singular "clear time frame." Her cancer, which has heretofore been at a temporal "end," loops the speaker back to somewhere in the middle with its recurrence. Within her illness, Arnold's speaker inhabits an alternative temporality, one focused less on sequential events or narratives, and more on the durations and collapsed moments of time inhabited by the chronic nature of her illness.²⁰ Furthermore, in yet another layer of shifting palimpsest, Arnold herself merges with the speaker within her poems, the subjects converging throughout the text.

¹⁹ Arnold, *The Reef*, 16.

²⁰ With advances in medical technology and treatment, many cancers—once seen as illnesses with clear-cut beginnings and ends—can now be managed as chronic conditions. Wendell explains that chronic illnesses are typically understood to be illnesses that "do not go away by themselves within six months, that cannot reliably be cured, and that will not kill the patient any time soon" ("Unhealthy Disabled," 20). This temporality is always shifting as an illness can change course, severity, and stage at any moment.

As a result of illness, Arnold and her speaker(s) are cast into a thriving consumer economy of medical intervention while they are simultaneously cast out of standard economies of production.²¹ Put another way, an ill person is often excluded from the modes of economy in which they previously participated, perhaps having less time, or less stamina, or less money.²² For women especially, being ill often means shifting from the position of a care *giver* to a care receiver, from producing labor that may not be compensated at all (care giving, housekeeping, other often female-designated work) to receiving labor from others, who also may or may not be compensated (via private and public services of care toward those who are ill).

Female Labor and the Economics of Writing

Before investigating the role of disgust in forming an alternative economy, I want to first establish a framework about the roles women—especially ill women—play within capitalist systems of labor. For ill women, already cast outside standard economic temporality, situating themselves in the chronic, durative temporality of their illness often entails participating in an alternative economy. Within the text of "A Woman Shopping" from *Garments Against Women*,

²¹ "economy, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.

http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59393?redirectedFrom=economy. In the commonly understood sense, "economy" refers to the "administration" of production and consumption. By "standard economies of production," I draw from that component of general "economy" that focuses on production, with the assumption that an "ideal" player within an economic setup is both a producer of a needed good and a consumer of (typically other, different) goods. Illness then shifts this economy of give-and-take to one more focused on consumption—or, depending on social structures, financial means, etc., one focused on neither consumption nor production. These variations within social strata—and available financial means—when it comes to illness are, of course, often a matter of life or death.

²² Being cast out of the production-based economies of capitalism is not limited, of course, to those who are ill. Sunny Taylor suggests the ways that those who are elderly or disabled form a larger group—alongside those who are ill, at any age—all of whom have an "especially precarious relationship to the machine that is production and consumption," describing how, all too often, their economic "value" comes from their role as medical consumers instead of acknowledging that personal value is not solely determined by one's "productivity as a worker." Indeed, the medical industry directly benefits from what Taylor calls "a lack of productive opportunity in the current economy for disabled people." She goes further to claim that it is capitalism itself that disables people, as "impaired people become unproductive members of society and thus disabled," unable to serve as expected in the capitalist economy of production. "The Right to Not Work," *Monthly Review* 55, no. 10 (March 2004). http://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/the-right-not-to-work-power-and-disability/.

Boyer describes a book that she plans to write, "long [and] sad", called A Woman Shopping. This prospective book will describe the paradox women face in doing "what we are required to do and also [...] what we are hated for doing."²³ In list form, the speaker catalogues the chapters:

On a woman shopping

On men shopping, with and without women

On children with women as they shop

On the barely moving lips of the calculating and poor

On attempting to open doors for the elderly and in the process of this, touching their arms

On the acquiring of arms in action movies

On Daniel Defoe

On the time I saw a homeless man murdered for shoplifting

On whether it is better to want nothing or steal everything

On how many of my hours are gone now because I have had to shop

On how I wish I could shop for hours instead

"If a woman has no purse, we will imagine one for her," the speaker asserts prior to this list, and the potential chapter descriptions follow these women, with real and imaginary purses, as they are continually implicated in an economy that forces them to be the primary household shopper and caregiver, while also reprimanding them for excessive consumerism, for shopping too much.²⁴ It is not just women who lose in this economic structure, suggests Boyer, but also the

²³ Anne Boyer, Garments Against Women (Boise, ID: Ahsahta Press, 2015), 47.

²⁴ Ibid. Emphasis in original. All of this unpaid labor does have an objective monetary value, however. A 2014 survey by Salary.com breaks down the tasks of both a stay-at-home mother and a working mother, calculating that a stay-at-home mother's tasks (plus overtime) would amount to a paycheck of over \$118,000. A working mother would add about \$70,000 to her salary to compensate for her own mothering work. Kuang Keng, "How Much Should We Pay Moms?" International Business Times, May 9, 2015, http://www.ibtimes.com/pulse/how-muchshould-we-pay-moms-our-mothers-day-wage-calculator-shows-you-how-much-moms-1914907. Noah Zatz, a professor of law at UCLA, describes the dangers of ignoring this type of care-taking labor: "Unlike the low-wage worker, the 'housewife' gets no credit for contributing to the household economy. That means no protection against future disability, unemployment or retirement via Social Security or related social insurance programs." "Taking

poor, the elderly, the disabled, anyone for whom the economic world of shopping and buying is not available or accessible, anyone who yearns for more hours than their chores allow them in a day.²⁵

The problem of invisible and uncompensated labor is not just personal, existing in the everyday realities of shopping for a family. Boyer suggests in her poem "Sewing" that our American economy is predicated on hours of under- and uncompensated work by women and children, both in the goods available for purchase and in the buyers who have to shop to run a household, raise children, or clean up after and for those for whom they care:

I make anywhere from 10 to 15 dollars an hour at any of my three jobs. A garment from Target or Forever 21 costs 10 to 30 dollars. A garment from a thrift store costs somewhere between 4 and 10 dollars. A garment at a garage sale costs 1 to 5 dollars. A garment from a department store costs 30 to 500 dollars. All of these have been made, for the most part, from hours of women and children's lives. Now I give the hours of my life I don't sell to my employers to the garments [I sew]. 26

Her catalogue of the money she brings into her home situated against the rising cost of clothing suggests the impossibility of survival in a consumer economy. Within this economy, the wide range of clothing costs (from 1 to 500 dollars in her examples) does not map on evenly to the

Unpaid Housework for Granted is Wrong," The New York Times, September 9, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/09/09/wages-for-housework/taking-unpaid-housework-for-granted-iswrong.

²⁵ Although more men joining the ranks of caretakers and stay-at-home fathers has not yet brought economic equality to these positions, it has shifted the conversation around these roles and raised the general consensus that there should be economic recognition for such roles, in terms of economic value if not monetarily. Gretchen Livingston, "Growing Number of Dads Home with the Kids," PewResearchCenter, June 5, 2014, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/06/05/growing-number-of-dads-home-with-the-kids/#.

²⁶ Boyer, *Garments*, 29.

"hours of women and children's lives." Even if she can adjust her own economic experience by sewing clothes for very little money, the labor of others adheres to every button and pattern and piece of woven cloth with which she comes in contact: "My costs are low: 2-dollar fabric from Goodwill, patterns bought for 99 cents or less, notions found at estate sales for 1 or 3 dollars. I almost save money like this. The fabric still contains the hours of the lives, those of the farmers and shepherds and chemists and factory workers and truckers and salespeople and the first purchasers, the givers-away, who were probably women who sewed."²⁷ Bover's alternative clothing economy *almost* has positive gains; even after investing her own unpaid hours of labor, she still cannot quite make clothing for less than she can buy it secondhand or from an inexpensive clothing manufacturer. Furthermore, the price at which she purchases either readymade clothing or cloth for sewing does not negate the numerous histories inherent in the garment or fabric; the hours of labor cling to the items. Even the notion of giving (clothing) away suggests the uncompensated exchange of labor. She wears the work of other women on her own body. These garments are physical manifestations of incalculable labor; how would one measure the precise number of hours "contain[ed]" within fabric? The impossibility of such a calculation recalls the passage quoted above, where Boyer's layout of different incomes and purchases rivals a math equation: If she makes X dollars and spends Y dollars, what is the total cost if we subtract the labor of women, farmers, and workers? The idea of "notions" she finds at estate sales continues the straddling of conceptual and physical: the "notion" is both an idea or concept, and "small wares, esp[ecially] cheap, useful items." The "notions" she pays a few dollars for are

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "notion, n," *OED Online*, December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128609?rskey=H3kq5b&result=1.

likely buttons, zipper pulls, and other sewing wares, and provide a sharp contrast to the wealth typically implied in sales from an "estate."

This economy of unpaid female labor is challenged by equality movements that seek to compensate or recognize this labor, but also through temporal disruptions, such as illness, which may prevent or complicate labor. Within the durations of illness, of treatment and recovery, the caregiving tasks that women might typically engage in fall by the wayside; furthermore, ill women are often left uncared for themselves. Boyer describes this problem in a recent blog post on the Poetry Foundation's "Harriet: A Poetry Blog," where she wrote a series of posts about her illness, cancer, surgery, economy, and politics:

[The availability of care] is not the case for so many people—women especially and women without money the most—who are abandoned or made to care for others when they need the care themselves. Who gets cared for and why is the most political of questions, its answer structured not just by the gendered division of labor, but by white supremacy, too, and class society and its violences ... [W]ho does the care—both the waged and unwaged kind—is also so often determined by these systems, the burden of unwaged work of care so generally and disproportionately falling on all but the wealthiest women.²⁹

The privilege of stepping away from caregiving, or of affording care for oneself, is dictated by a stringent economy that caters preeminently to wealth, not need. Illness garners attention within this economy when it begins to detract from what some see as "true" roles for women: caregiving and motherhood. Mary Felstiner notes that her illness, rheumatoid arthritis, is

²⁹ Anne Boyer, "To Cure the Sharp Accidents of Disease," *Harriet: A Poetry Blog:* Poetry Foundation, January 14, 2016, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/01/to-cure-the-sharp-accidents-of-disease/.

generally ignored by popular culture—although it affects more 1.5 million American adults, and three times as many women as men—until it interferes with expectations of female labor: "[T]he disease collides with women in their childbearing years. One thing Americans rely on to keep them fed and mended (for less than a living wage) is women who won't say, 'Take care of *me*. I'm all crippled up'."³⁰

Like women—especially mothers and caretakers—within the work force and working world, those in pain experience their own kind of economy. Once women are outside of the capitalist economy which privileges labor and production, new economic structures take over; these alternative economies privilege the production of affect over physical production. After all, pain and illness are often seen as economically inefficient, taking the surplus or "free" time that Karl Marx argues is the mark of an advanced economical situation and allowing it to bleed over (my language here is intentional) to other time that "should" be reserved for work. Women, as socially sanctioned caretakers and mothers, already give up much of their free time; in her long poem sequence "What is 'Not Writing'?", Boyer catalogues the many things she does instead of writing: "Not writing is working, and when not working at paid work working at unpaid work

.

³⁰ Arthritis Foundation, "About Arthritis," Atlanta: Arthritis Foundation National Office. http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/understanding-arthritis/what-is-arthritis.php. Mary Felstiner, "Casing My Joints: A Private and Public Story of Arthritis," *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 274. We can see in this instance an overlap between a visible physical disability and lingering chronic illness. Wendell explains the tense subject position of being an unexpected candidate for chronic illness: "My own analysis is that young and middle-aged people with chronic illnesses inhabit a category not easily understood or accepted. We are considered too young to be ill for the rest of our lives, yet we are not expecting cure or recovery. We cannot be granted the time-out that is normally granted to the acutely ill (or we were given it at first and have now used it up, overused it), yet we seem to refuse to return to pre-illness life. We are not old enough to have finished making our contributions of productivity and/or caregiving" (Wendell, "Unhealthy Disabled," 21).

³¹ That is, preferably economically productive work. See William Booth, "Economies of Time: On the Idea of Time in Marx's Political Economy," *Political Theory* 19, no. 1 (February 1991), for an explanation of how time and economic structures that privilege labor and end product work together. Lauren Berlant further suggests that capitalism defines illness simply as "the inability to work" even though the disorganizing characteristics of capitalism itself can have very real negative effects on the embodied subject, resulting in physical and personal ramifications that Berlant terms "devastating." *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 95, 163. These effects can paradoxically lead to decreased productivity, which capitalism would deem as "sickness," and yet this definition creates "conflicting models of health. Is health a biological condition, the availability for work, or a scene of longevity?" Berlant asks (109).

like caring for others, and when not at unpaid work like caring, caring also for a human body [...] There is illness and injury which has produced a great deal of not writing. [...] There is reproduction which has been like illness and injury and taken up many hours with not writing."³² Boyer draws no distinctions in her designation of "work"—everything she mentions falls under this umbrella, yet some is paid and some is not. Motherhood for Boyer mimics the demands on time that illness and injury do; these pains have not been acknowledged by others, and this absence of critical theory on female pain has recently led writers to address this lacunae in the literature.³³ Within what follows, I want to suggest that the pain of chronic illness *does* something, especially as it is articulated within poetry. Chronic illness both invites and necessitates chronic—i.e. ongoing—care, whether by caregivers or the ill person herself. The pain of these experiences functions in an ongoing, alternative, *affective* economy, where bodily experiences formerly disregarded in disgust or avoidance become new modes of style, providing an alternative system of taste to readers and writers alike.

Within this affective economy, what is privileged is not the event of labor with its physical end product, but the event of pain itself, without seeking value either in the labor of the event, or in an end product.³⁴ I use this phrase—"affective economy"—here to mean this specific

³² Boyer, *Garments*, 44. As Boyer points out, the clarity of "labor" is less clear when it comes to the work of writing: "I sew and the historical of sewing becomes a feeling just as when I used to be a poet, when I used to write poetry, used to write poetry and that thing—culture—began tendriling out in me, but it is probably more meaningful to sew a dress than to write a poem" (*Garments*, 29).

³³ See, for instance, Eula Biss, "The Pain Scale," *Harpers Magazine* (June 2005), and Joe Fassler, "How Doctors Take Women's Pain Less Seriously," *The Atlantic*, October 15, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/10/emergency-room-wait-times-sexism/410515/. In addition, see Joanna Bourke's book-length study, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkiller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Diane Hoffmann and Anita Tarzian show that female pain is neglected even when equivalent to male pain, and suggest that women are given sedatives more often than painkillers, presumably based on the belief that women are anxious rather than in pain. "The Girl Who Cried Pain: A Bias Against Women in the Treatment of Pain," *The Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 28, no. 4 (2001): 17.

³⁴ I take this idea of pain as event from Joanna Bourke, who explains that "pain is not an intrinsic quality of raw sensation; it is a way of perceiving an experience" (*The Story of Pain*, 7).

alternative economic structure that arises out of the experience of illness, although there are also broader ways to conceptualize the idea of economies based in affect or emotion. Johanna Oksala suggests that the acknowledgement of the "immaterial labor" of services, knowledge, and information—an *affective* labor—allows women to benefit economically from the domestic labor they already partake in. 35 The alternative economy that I explore in this chapter appeals to Oksala's demand for the recognition of women within reproductive labor especially, as I argue, through the reproduction of pain. Likewise, Sara Ahmed's 2004 essay, "Affective Economies," discusses not just pain but the role of emotions broadly as having exchange capabilities: "[E]motions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments." She goes on to explain, "[E]motions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation." The affective economy I describe here is less concerned with the transferal of affect, but rather examines the specific economy produced by pain and illness, an economy that arises out of an alternative experience of time.

The Chronic Time of Illness and the Poetics of Disgust

Poetry proves especially apt for representing the experience of the ill and/or disabled body, as recent work by Hillary Gravendyk, Petra Kuppers, Michael Davidson, and Susan

³⁵ Johanna Oksala, "Affective Labor and Feminist Politics," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and* Society 41, no. 2 (2016). Oksala also notes that not all affective labor is necessarily domestic; indeed, "Commodities are increasingly replacing domestically produced goods and services, and forms of caring and household work are transformed into feminized, racialized, and globalized forms of labor in the service sector" (287). Oksala's concern in her article is that the broad category of "affective" labor collapses important distinctions between forms of labor—from childcare and housekeeping, to commodified versions of those forms of labor (daycare, cleaning services), to labor that is geared at producing affective responses in viewers or the public: greeters in stores, airline attendants, the entertainment industry writ large.

³⁶ Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 119-120.

Schweik has demonstrated.³⁷ In examining the poetry that follows, I first argue that these writers exhibit a kind of chronic temporality related to illness. Secondly, I suggest that these writers reject norms about bodily appearance and "health" in order to embrace what others react to with *disgust* within their illness and their work. This turn toward disgust is, I argue, an alternative kind of productivity that challenges our understanding of how bodies "should" look and act.

In the texts I examine here, Arnold and Boyer catalogue illness in messy ways by making it spill out of lists, using extended imagery, and relying on prose-like poem pieces. These poems do not necessarily demonstrate a formal efficiency in the way we might think of a "well-wrought urn" or a tightly metered verse stanza. Rather, the "economy of illness" depicted here emphasizes excess, rather than efficiency. What I see at play in these authors's rejection of tight, measured language is an excessiveness that portrays their different experiences of duration, of being-in-illness that lacks either the certainty of closure/cure or the focused starting point of origin. Instead, these texts challenge linear time, narrative structure, and standard modes of production, what we might think of as the heteronormative chronology of time and form. Rita Felski suggests that patriarchy and other "normed" groups—heteronormative, able-bodied,

Hillary Gravendyk, "Chronic Poetics," *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2014); Petra Kuppers, "Scars in Disability Culture Poetry: Towards Connection," *Disability and Society* 23, no. 2 (March 2008); Michael Davidson's chapter "Missing Larry: The Poetics of Disability in Larry Eigner" in his book *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008): 116–141; and Susan Schweik, "The Voice of 'Reason'," *Public Culture* 13, no. 3 (2001), and "Josephine Miles's Crip(t) Words: Gender, Disability, 'Doll'," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007). What these differing essays have in common is an interest in poetry as a form that can carry the embodied realities of illness and disability, in the very way that poetry can draw attention to all bodies, including both the speaker and the reader. Gravendyk sees poetry as a way to not only "register [the speaker's] physical situation, but to pay attention to our own" ("Chronic Poetics," 4). Furthermore, Davidson suggests that poetry is formally situated to unsettle language and syntax, and thus can be quite instrumental in deconstructing norms of all kinds: "[This] is why a poetics—as much as a politics—of disability is important: because it theorizes the ways that poetry defamiliarizes not only language but the body normalized *within* language" (*Concerto* 118, emphasis in original).

³⁸ Although I am interested in the way that the language of economy spills over into that of a poetic form (an "economy" of language: that is, the efficient use of language within poetry itself), the meaning I seek here for "economy" is that of economic, capitalist structure rather than this secondary meaning of efficiency. The overlap, however, suggests the possibility for further exploration.

white, middle class—establish our understanding of time, and thus also the "breaks" with this same time, neither temporal position necessarily being inclusive of difference, whether that be gender, bodily, or racial difference. If female, minority, queer, and disabled persons and bodies are sometimes operating in a different kind of temporality, opposed to patriarchal "straight" masculine time, they are also then operating within a different kind of economy. For women broadly, this means that their labor is often taken for granted, that certain working and caring roles are assigned to them by virtue of their sex and not compensated sufficiently in monetary or societal ways, and that their time left over for other kinds of work is constantly being threatened.³⁹ Arnold's *The Reef* portrays again and again an ill bodymind who is removed from certain economic structures; Boyer's Garments Against Women shows the uneven economic payoff for a working, single mother, particularly in illness but broadly in the daily acts of living and shopping and cooking and raising a child. 40 The speakers within their poetry are both deeply invested in an economics of illness—purchasing treatment, attempting cure, with the linear timeframe that economy implies—and outside of it, in moments of duration in which they participate in an alternative economy that develops out of a different economic affect: disgust.

³⁹ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 2.

⁴⁰ Boyer's personal website suggests that her first collection, *Garments Against Women*, is less about illness than it is about economy more broadly, while her forthcoming collection on care will address her experiences with aggressive triple negative breast cancer. I want to resist reading Boyer's current biography against earlier work in a reverse chronology, so I use her recent series on health, illness, and economics from the Poetry Foundation's *Harriet Blog* as stand-alone pieces, and try to use my commentary on *Garments Against Women* to evaluate the economic structures of illness that Boyer herself suggests within the text, rather than "reading" illness into her work. I take the phrase "bodymind" from Margaret Price, who culls the term from her reading in trauma studies, yet acknowledges its role as a placeholder: "In a sense, I said bodymind every time I wanted to mark the fact that I believe mental disability matters, that it is an important category of analysis. But I hadn't really moved anywhere with the problem that body and mind tend to be treated as rhetorically distinct." Margaret Price, "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain," *Hypatia* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 269. I use the phrase here to mark the important imbrication of mind and body within illness. As Price argues that the body is an intrinsic part of mental illness, studies within illness also demonstrate the relationship of the mind to "bodily" illness like cancer.

The Reef is Arnold's first collection, a sweeping and accelerated jaunt through both everyday life and her cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survival. She intentionally blurs the timeline of her illness; after all, when is cancer "over"? When does chronic ongoingness shift into "cure"? Arnold's poetry is hyper-aware of the contradictions of the ill body, the impossibility of settling into a definitive timeline, and the book's arranged form mirrors these concerns. The text consists of a sequence of poems rather than discrete poems placed in conversation with each other. She eschews titles, favoring instead a tripartite division of the entire book, with the opening and closing poems the only ones bearing names: "Introit" begins the collection, its title a reference to the psalm or antiphon sung as a priest approaches the altar during the Eucharist, and "Envoi" finishes the book with a "sending forth." There is another, more obsolete definition of "envoi," one which suggests both the conclusion of a play and also a "catastrophe" or "dénouement," an ending which collapses on itself as an ending, becoming both a conclusion and a new inciting incident. 42

Notably, reviewers of *The Reef* laud Arnold for what they see as her light hand with pain, her removed interaction with her own suffering: "Arnold eludes the lure of confessionalism," writes one, later suggesting, "Gravely ill people are sometimes accorded undue authority because of what they can do for us: they can make us feel superior, titillated, and safe. Elizabeth Arnold does none of these things." On the contrary, I am interested in the moments of pain that Arnold does emit (admit). Indeed, part of the presentation of pain necessarily seems to be an acknowledgement of it. Another reviewer suggests that there is a "right" way to be confessional:

⁴¹ That is, when exactly can we say that a chronic illness—as cancer so often is in our current medical time—is "cured"? Does the possibility of remission always undermine the idea of "cure"?

⁴² "introit, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/98726?rskey=hc23Wj&result=1. "envoy, n.1". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63102?rskey=4CYhgp&result=1.

⁴³ Angela Sorby, "Review: *The Reef*," *Chicago Review* 45, no. 2: 137, 139.

tight, controlled, not overdoing it, best demonstrated via the work of "poets who write autobiographically, but who could never be accused of committing 'versified memoir'."44 On the one hand (here the body again intervenes in language, becomes text; Arnold unfolds this idea repeatedly in her work), I value the intention of these distinctions. And yet, I have been buoyed by recent scholarship by Alison Kafer, Alyson Patsavas, Danielle Pafunda, and Tobin Siebers⁴⁵—among others—that articulates the need for work (both critical and exploratory, analytical and experimental) that does not shy away from the loose, the uncontrolled, that which cares not for categories of either "overdoing" or "underdoing." In this sense, Arnold's work may not be an obvious candidate for this categorization of loose or uncontrolled, in that she is careful; precise, even, at times. The book is as much about her own cancer and body as it is about other organized systems, including nature, history, and personal relationships. The form of the collection, however, challenges the structure of these larger systems with its own lack of division and of discrete parts (in the sense of separation) within the poems—the text at large resists the crystalline language that we often think of poetry as inhabiting.⁴⁶ These resistances are subtle, sometimes tricking the eye: seemingly "prose" poems that upon closer examination do have

⁴⁴ Peter Campion, "Review: The Biography of Displacement," *Agni* 52 (2000): 275.

⁴⁵ I'm grateful for the following work on pain for expanding my own understanding: Alison Kafer, "Un/Safe Disclosures: Scenes of Disability and Trauma," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 10, no. 1 (2016); Alyson Patsavas, "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain"; Daniella Pafunda, "The Subject in Pain: A Poetics," *English Language Notes* 50, no. 1 (2012); and Tobin Siebers, "In the Name of Pain," in *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, ed. Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland (New York: New York University Press, 2010). Although these writers approach pain with diverse experiences, they each call for new approaches to pain that both better articulate the experiences of pain and acknowledge its precise unshareability. As Patsavas explains in her essay, "[A] cripistemology of pain produces knowledge from experience while simultaneously claiming a specific positionality to mark the limits of the knowledge," adding that, "[t]he assumption that we 'know' another person's experience is, arguably, one of the most pernicious manifestations of privilege" (205). It is not enough to merely try to "know" another's experience of pain; rather, the "structural conditions that underwrite the devaluation of lives with pain (and by extension disabled lives) must be exposed and critiqued" (Ibid.).

⁴⁶ This diffuseness contrasts with Arnold's own illness; in the course of Hodgkin's, cancer originates in one variety of white blood cells—lymphocytes—and spreads in a step-by-step fashion from lymph node to lymph node, resulting in systemic symptoms as the disease advances. The orderly, linear progression of the disease is lost in Arnold's account, as she instead focuses on the chronic temporality of a whole-body problem, of a bodily illness.

deliberate line breaks; blocky poems with lines that go to the end of each margin, the space of the page itself setting the breaks. The lack of titles, each poem designated as "ending" only with a solid black dot, allows each poem to read into the next, becoming one long mediation on time and illness.

Boyer's text, *Garments Against Women*, likewise defies categorization. This text is part poetry, part philosophy, part prose (depending on what reviewers you read and trust), part catalogue, part uncategorizable manuscript. While these categories seem unstable and shifting, the form of Boyer's work itself is generally consistent, looking a great deal like long prose poems, often with numerous paragraph breaks under each new, titled section.



fig. 2.1

The text is split into four large sections, each sandwiched between a black page of paper—a blankness, a void that suggests more than just open space—perhaps an excess of printed text so heavily layered that it consumes the page, producing a solid color (see fig. 2.1, which reproduces facing pages 40 and 41). These are no brief lyrics, no sparse verse. The text is interested in how language functions, how ideas and images accumulate, and how the spaces on the page—so like line breaks—function, thus it makes sense to treat it as poetry. Like the more subtle resistances that Arnold's *The Reef* manifests, *Garments Against Women* also takes a stand against lingual curtailing, against holding back (I speak here of language, not of ideas). Visually on the page, *Garments Against Women* looks more blocky, more dense than *The Reef*. In terms of authorial interest in pain, in alternative economies, they function very similarly, as I suggest.

Within these alternative economies, within illness, there is a more "chronic" experience of time, an experience that suggests durations rather than the linear, chronological unrolling of standardized time. ⁴⁸ Chronic time becomes especially significant for ill bodies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because as Arnold's poem about her cancer's "cure" would suggest, bodies survive and endure in physical conditions that would often have been impossible even just a century ago. Eric Cazdyn argues that we live in the time of the "chronic" precisely because of the tendencies toward lengthy cures, the ongoingness of lingering diseases, and the uncertain

⁴⁷ Or to put it a different way: I'm not concerned with limiting definitions of what is or isn't poetry; my point is that this text isn't *not* poetry. It purposefully plays with the boundaries of genre.

⁴⁸ I take this suggestion in part from Hillary Gravendyk, who writes in an interview with *Thermos*, "It is my contention that illness, or at least chronic illness, isn't really a narrative. Rather it is a collection of durations, of endurances." "Of Durations, Of Endurances: Interview with Hillary Gravendyk," *Thermos*, March 24, 2012, https://thermosmag.wordpress.com/2012/03/24/of-durations-of-endurances-interview-with-hillary-gravendyk/. Berlant also suggests that the present is notably a "temporal genre," under constant revision even as it is ongoing and related to "represented norms of bodily adjustment" (*Cruel Optimism*, 4, 20) while Elaine Scarry likewise explains that one of the felt experiences of pain is its "temporal dimension." *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 7. Berlant uses the term "impasse" to suggest something similar to Gravendyk's sense of "duration" (see especially *Cruel Optimism*, 191-222).

success of treatments that leave bodies surviving *beyond* death, in a sense.⁴⁹ The chronic mode that Cazdyn identifies as pervasive requires the constant maintenance of bodies through medicine, a process with economic restrictions that often limit the availability of treatment to certain classes and groups of people. While the chronic time experienced by ill patients works against the grain of the heteronormative chronology of time, the consumption of drugs and medical cures seeks to re-situate patients within a consumer economy. Regular treatments and scheduled appointments place patients within clinical time that subjects their illness to the conformed consumption of a cause- and cure-focused system. For the women poets examined here, poetry offers a means of producing an alternative representation of illness that does *not* feed back into the temporal cycles of a capitalist economy, even as those capitalist cycles exist in their experiences. In one untitled poem, Arnold attempts to hypothesize a concrete cause for her illness, one that would situate her within the medical economic system:

So was it all the fish I ate, the river trashed—caught and ate them anyway?

[...] My mother
cooked my catch for lunch.

Why eating rushed to mind the day they found the 'rogue' cells near my ribs, I can't explain

[...] the cancer
back because I'd had it once? —or from a cure,
the drugs or silent cobalt rays
igniting neck, heart, lungs, and back, my breasts? 50

⁴⁹ Eric Cazdyn, *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

90

⁵⁰ Arnold, *The Reef*, 50.

Arnold considers the possibility that her illness results from consuming "all the fish I ate," caught from "the river trashed" by the waste products of human beings. She targets a reproductive, capitalist economy (emphasized by the fact that the labor of her "mother" is responsible for cooking the catch), and imagines a situation in which the tainting of a natural body—the river—results in the creation of "rogue' cells." The scare quotes around "rogue" both emphasize the kind of agency the doctors grant the cancer, and indicates that the cells are *not* in fact rogue; they exist precisely as the result of certain economic conditions that follow a careful structure of consumption. Of course, the treatment of the disease follows a similar logic: she wonders if by giving her "the drugs or silent cobalt rays," the doctors have unwittingly reignited the cancer with a treatment meant to cure. The consumption of drugs and rays places the speaker both in an economic loop, where she must continually give money for medical services, and obscures the possible origins of each cancerous recurrence.

Likewise, Boyer considers how the ill are bombarded with possible causes—and cures—drawn from the products, chemicals, foods, and innovations layered into twenty-first century life. She links her illness with the process of creating written work, crafting a darkly satiric litany of possible symptoms, origins, and treatments: "I thought it was my writing that was making me sick. When I was writing I had many symptoms including back spasms and ocular migraines, and then when I was not writing I spent one month feverish, infected in many places, weak, coughing, voiceless, allergic, itchy, with swollen joints, hands, and feet." The blocky paragraph

⁵¹ Boyer, *Garments*, 6. I take from Helen Deutsch the suggestion that this portrayal of writing as a disease acts in response to a long history of men—writers in the eighteenth century—who prided themselves on authorship manifesting itself as debility. Although these portrayals were feminized, they did so at the expense of actual women, who were excluded from these experiences while male writers described their own "exemplary subjectivity." "Symptomatic Correspondences: An Author's Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Cultural Critique* 42 (Spring 1999), 36. As Deutsch writes, "There was no space, at least not in the flesh, for an embodied 'woman of feeling'" (35). In her study on the literature of sentimentality, Claudia Johnson suggests that works by women such as Wollstonecraft and Burney, "emotions are saturated in turbulent and disfiguring excess." *Equivocal Beings: Politics*,

structures of this poem allow the lists she makes to be integrated seamlessly alongside other sentences; there are no line breaks to emphasize that any of the items listed take precedence over others. "Finally," she writes, "there was something that almost cured me. The thing that almost cured me was a touch of Frost & Glow in my hair on top of a cocktail of Zyrtec, Zantac, Claritin, Benadryl, Singulair, Zithromax, Vicodin, Advil, Yaz, Retin A, and Albuteral."52 This tongue-incheek approach to the idea of a cure combines the inescapable male gaze (cured by "a touch of Frost & Glow,") with a long list of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. As Boyer notes elsewhere, "Wellness, like gender, was so constructed, on a good day I could fabricate its appearance in eighteen minutes."53

Appearances—both of a "healthy" body and an attractive feminine aesthetic—take part in a capitalistic economy where products are marketed to consumers, and any one product seems about as likely to cure one of illness or loneliness as another. The notion that affective reactions to bodily experience can mark themselves on the body (and thus must be countered) is a longstanding (often feminine) concern; Boyer opens Garments Against Women with an epigraph from Mary Wollstonecraft which sets up this same problem. The excerpt from Maria: Or, the Wrongs of Woman describes how Maria's sorrow and "the feverish dreams of ideal wretchedness or felicity" alike "equally weaken the intoxicated sensibility." For Maria, the act of writing is the only antidote to counteract the realities of her state of mind, which she vows to relate only "with the sentiments that experience, and more matured reason, would naturally suggest." In this brief extract, Wollstonecraft suggests that emotional affects can exhibit themselves within the physical

Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1, emphasis added. That is, affect has the ability to mark itself on the body, as I suggest in what follows.

⁵² Boyer, *Garments*, 6. Frost & Glow, being, of course, a kit for do-it-yourself hair dye marketed to women.

⁵³ Boyer, "I Have Taken a Farm at This Hard Rent," *Harriet: A Poetry Blog*: Poetry Foundation, January 11, 2016. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/01/i-have-taken-a-farm-at-this-hard-rent/. Emphasis in original.

reality of the body, and that these affective "weaknesses" must be critiqued and reformed—
"covered up," whether within a retelling, or quite literally through outward appearances
governed by clothing or makeup vis-à-vis the traditional feminine aesthetic—through reason and
experience.⁵⁴

Within the capitalist economy, companies and industries constantly market to those who are sick (and those who don't fit standard notions of beauty) with quick-fixes and long-term aids. A more realistic version of cure, Boyer suggests, is ongoing or chronic care, maintained by a delicate balance of self-care and often-massive changes to standard routines. In this case, Boyer's "cure" is instead an ongoing event, a routine of care that she repeats indefinitely to "almost" cure herself. Suspended within this duration of illness, poetry becomes an alternative currency in the new economy Boyer experiences. She is both inside an (illness) economy—where she spends money and receives goods related to her illness—and outside of it, in an alternative economy of illness, where her experiences of temporality place her in an ongoing moment of duration where she ingests her unusual drug cocktail and is "cured" by an application of hair dye.

While expensive cures and medical treatments necessarily depend on institutionally driven capitalist economies, Arnold and Boyer process their illnesses through poetry in order to create a production and consumption not of material goods, but of affect; namely, disgust. This affective experience places their writing outside the typical economic cycle, actively creating a

.

⁵⁴ Johnson goes on to suggest how Wollstonecraft figures the body itself via disgust in this excerpt from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: "I have often felt hurt, not to say disgusted, when a friend has appeared, whom I parted with full dressed the evening before, with her clothes huddled on, because she chose to indulge herself in bed till the last moment" (qtd. in *Equivocal Beings*, 43). Not only does an emotional and physical experience mark itself on the body via clothing (Boyer gives a nod to this notion in her title, *Garments Against Women*), but this affect is transferrable. As Johnson suggests, Wollstonecraft implies that her friend has not just slept late, but that she has had the audacity to take her clothes off in the interim, causing Wollstonecraft pain "that a friend should thus obtrude the fact of bodiliness [sic], as if this fact compelled Wollstonecraft to imagine and thereby to partake of such grossness" (43).

poetic body that refuses such commodification.⁵⁵ Bourdieu, as I explained before, links the formation of tastes to an almost reactive, un-mediated bodily response; that is, tastes are almost innate, visceral reactions that are then adopted by broader social groups. The caveat here, as Sara Ahmed rightly points out, is that bodily reactions are so often also seen as "base" reactions, so the goal of taste formation becomes to "work on the body such that you have the right reactions," which "allows the body to disappear from view." Recovering the body eliminated in discussions of taste may also mean returning to disgust, to a new economic structure that rejects Bourdieu's notion of taste, an economic structure that utilizes pain not just as commodity—as art is always already a commodity in some sense—but as formative fodder for a new understanding of taste that incorporates pain as a viable, durative state with its own complex temporalities.

There is something excessive about disgust, in too much of a "good" thing; Sianne Ngai suggests that within our late capitalist world, there are "at least as many things to turn away from ... as things to be drawn to." Winfried Menninghaus argues that "all 'pleasing' feelings" ultimately turn into disgust when the body experiences too much of them. This abundance of possible disgusts does not necessarily make them any more visible except perhaps in their absence, creating social networks in which we unite against that which disgusts us, engendering "a strange kind of sociability." These networks also serve as a means of reinforcing boundary lines between "self and 'contaminating' others"; Menninghaus's very definition of disgust is "a

⁵⁵ While on the one hand, poetic creation—in the form of a published or printed poem—*does* produce a tangible object, I am speaking here of the alternative possibility of *affective* creation.

⁵⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 34.

⁵⁷ Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 333.

⁵⁸ Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgus: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 26.

⁵⁹ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 336.

nearness that is not wanted."60 Ngai suggests the "others" implied in systemic marginalization like racism, misogyny, and homophobia, but this chapter investigates the medical implication of "contaminating": of "disgust" that results in a turning away from illness, from pain and suffering. This definition of disgust plays on the *OED*'s reference to "aversion," to "ill-feeling," rather than the more common understanding of disgust as something wretched or putrid like garbage. ⁶¹ Like Bourdieu's description of disgust as "sick-making," Menninghaus suggests that "the theoretical equivalent of practically avoiding the disgusting is defining it 'away' either as 'unnatural excrescence' or simply as a disease."62 If disgust is thought capable of making us physically ill, how do we relate to disgust, to aversion, at someone *else* who is physically ill? Arnold and Boyer work to make the sick and ill body visible, be as it may against popular "taste" or moral sensibility that strives to hide the "base"-ness of the bodily. The moral and economic value of "disgust" thus becomes acutely focused by reintroducing the relationship between disease and the body. This newfound visibility, emerging from alternative temporalities fostered dually in illness and female identification, establishes a new economy of pain, turning disgust into a viable mode of affective production.⁶³

_

⁶⁰ Ibid., 339. Meninghaus, *Disgust*, 1.

⁶¹ "disgust, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54422?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=uAX4og&. We can see how these meanings of disgust overlap, of course; my intention here is to push our definition of disgust to include more nuanced reactions that we might not typically group under the umbrella of "disgust."

⁶² Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 53.

⁶³ Sara Ahmed notes that "Disgust binds objects together in the very moment that objects become attributed with bad feeling, as 'being' sickening," (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 88). Here I specifically look at people and bodies, rather than objects of disgust.

Pain as A (/The) New Economy

The disgust portrayed within this poetry finds expression through different affective modes, as I began to suggest earlier in this chapter. There is our traditional reaction to "disgust," that of repulsion, but I think it is useful to consider other experiences that we can read as disgust in their similar aversion, their similar turning-away from the object of observation. Why do we turn away from that which affects us? Consider how pity, shame, sympathy, and some varieties of fear create similar reactions to what disgust engenders; along with other scholars, I argue that certain iterations of these emotions are closely related to disgust and can be read as such. In the section that follows, I suggest first a more traditional reading of disgust via pain, then an alternative reading that opens up the possible meanings of disgust to include the effects of pain, suffering, and illness more broadly.

In her breathtaking (how our language intervenes) essay on pain, "Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain," Leslie Jamison suggests that pain is an object of both disgust and fascination: "We've got a Janus-faced relationship to female pain. We're attracted to it and revolted by it; proud and ashamed of it. So we've developed a post-wounded voice, a stance of numbness or crutch of sarcasm that implies pain without claiming it, that seems to stave off certain accusations it can see on the horizon: melodrama, triviality, wallowing—an ethical and aesthetic commandment: Don't valorize suffering women." Like the reviewer of Arnold's *The Reef* mentioned earlier, Jamison is aware of labels like "confessional" and how they influence both our reading of texts and our assertion of their (aesthetic) value. What disgusts, according to Jamison's account, is the excessiveness of pain, the "melodrama" and "wallowing" and, paradoxically, its inverse: the focus on the trivial, on pain that somehow isn't excessive *enough*.

⁶⁴ Leslie Jamison, *The Empathy Exams* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014), 213.

Thus disgust emerges from two modes of pain expression: the pain that is so excessive that we must turn away from it, as engagement with it causes us—the reader or viewer—our own acute pain, *or* the intimation of this kind of pain that readers and viewers judge to be unfulfilled, not fully fleshed out, lacking in its depth and breadth of experience.

The other side of the valorization of suffering women is their victimization, the movement toward pity or contempt as yet another possible iteration of disgust. Danielle Pafunda suggests that we only tend to find pain "valuable" when it uplifts or gives hope. She links the project of writing about pain to the same kind of "disgust" that Bourdieu suggests helps to form tastes: "To *repulse* the audience, to describe pain without throwing it into relief (relief!) against a valiant backdrop is one of the more deviant things an artist can do." Pafunda notes in her own parenthetical commentary ("relief!") the slipperiness that language has when describing bodies and their experiences; experiences of pain, illness, healing, and chronic states already permeate language in casual, often thoughtless ways, as Susan Sontag suggests in her well-known *Illness as Metaphor* (1989). Like Ngai's assertion that deploying disgust segregates those in power from the "contaminating" effects of other-ed, marginalized groups, Pafunda likewise suggests that pain has a transferable effect (/affect): "If we teach pain to speak on its own account, we may become doctor and monster, researcher and patient, body and subject both.

When we communicate pain, it may become a communicable disease." The possibility of new

⁶⁵ This cultural valorization of suffering women has a more sinister side, Jamison implies elsewhere: "Here is the danger of wounded womanhood: that its invocation will corroborate a pain cult that keeps legitimating, almost legislating, more of itself" (*The Empathy Exams*, 212).

⁶⁶ Pafunda, "The Subject in Pain," 97.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Likewise, Ahmed discusses the transmission of affects in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, asking, "[H]ow am I affected by pain when I am faced by another's pain? Because we don't inhabit her body, does that mean that her pain has nothing to do with me?" (29). The answer, as Pafunda suggests, is that pain of another can easily become one's own pain, but that transference need not have to only be negative.

pain—or the spread of old pain—becomes an important point of consideration for both writer and reader. Like Pafunda, Jamison's essay also implies that there is the potential for a "communicable" experience of pain in paying tribute to "what happens when confession collides with butchering instructions: how we find an admission of wounds but also a vision of manipulating bloody bodies, arranging and opening their parts." The kind of violent meeting and intermingling that Jamison suggests can only result in some kind of collateral pain, although perhaps transformative in the way that it can manipulate, arrange, and open bodies both in the literal world and in the literary.

These different nuances of "disgust" are used by female poets in varying ways; there is, of course, poetry that revels in traditional disgust, in horror, in images that attempt to shock readers out of their comfort zones. There are also the more subtle uses of disgust, where through illness and pain the female poets discussed herein reject their newfound positions within capitalist, medicalized economies. Instead, they create an alternative economy that approaches pain and details disgust, as Jamison and Pafunda suggest. Magdalena Zurawski explains that poetry serves as an alternative to a capitalist economy itself, to something greater than purely commercial function:

But the *poem* is not a form of money. The *poet* is a form of money, as my paycheck from the university tells me every month. But what about the *poem* that tasks itself with the refusal of work? What about the *poem* that loafs and loiters and emerges from the mouth

.

⁶⁸ Jamison, *The Empathy Exams*, 217. These violent descriptions bring us back to Bourdieu, Ngai, and Menninghaus's explanations of disgust as related to wounds, to the broken human body, and to violence in general; Menninghaus describes disgust as "one of the most violent affections of the human perceptual system" (1).

⁶⁹ This notion that pain can "do" something runs counter to (but also resonates with) what Adrienne Rich describes as the patriarchal belief that female suffering—especially in reproductive circumstances—is a necessary good: "Patriarchy has told the woman in labor that her suffering was purposive—was *the* purpose of her existence; that the new life she was bringing forth (especially if male) was of value and that her own value depended on bringing it forth." *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (W.W. Norton: New York, 1986), 159.

of someone for whom it is criminal to loaf and loiter? In a world that continually limits the definition of the human being to economic functions, the *poem* serves as a reminder of a being that we have within us that is otherwise.⁷⁰

At first, Zurawski separates the roles of poet and poem; the poet is the economic entity, capable of earning money, while the poem exists outside of those parameters to a certain extent. But then she blurs body and poem back together: it matters, she argues, if a poem comes from someone marginalized, if its descriptions of "loaf[ing]" and "loiter[ing]" come from a bodymind for whom it is "criminal to loaf and loiter." This concern finds resonance in Arnold and Boyer's work: women who are ill writing about illness, with illness itself as an outsider position. 71 The poem becomes not financial currency but a suggestion of human positions outside of "productive" labor and economic functions. These positions are where many ill women find themselves, cast from working and caring roles into care-receiving roles, an experience where their relationship to labor changes.

Illness has its own relationship to time and its own form of productive economy. As Boyer suggests, poetry becomes its own kind of consumable product, even if not a profitable one: "Then I dreamed, wrote stories, acquired information, called my fellows to take action, fetishized parts for wholes, watched the pornography of the common disaster, submitted the spectacle of my humanity to humanity for entertainment." Illness can be a spectacle, submitted

7

⁷⁰ Magdalena Zurawski, "Feel Beauty Supply, Post 10: Hurston on Loafing and Loitering," *Jacket2*, August 27, 2015, http://jacket2.org/commentary/feel-beauty-supply-post-10. Walt Whitman famously describes the creative process as one of "loafing" within "Song of Myself": "I loaf and invite my soul, / I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass." Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 26.

⁷¹ Arnold and Boyer's poetry doesn't have the racial overtones that Zurawski implies with her notion of certain bodies criminalized for standing around, but the temporal notion of lingering resonates with the durations of illness.

⁷² Boyer, *Garments*, 62.

for entertainment, but these catalogues of pain can do more than that, too; they can be a call "to take action," an acquiring of information that is not just disaster porn. More so, Boyer and Arnold display experiences of illness without fetishization, without the taking of "parts for wholes" where the body is reproduced or represented piecemeal or understood only as its illness. In concluding, I turn now to what is often seen as the primary "approved" work for women, that of the "labor" of pregnancy and the work of caregiving and motherhood. Like illness, pregnant and mothering women are often turned into spectacle, the parts—children—becoming wholes that overtake the female body's political agency. Furthermore, as I have examined already, the experience of illness challenges the productivity demanded by capitalism, including the caring for children that American culture so often delegates to women. Within poetry, I argue, the same kinds of alternative temporalities exist: an ongoing duration that removes the speaker—here, a woman and mother—from the linear temporal modes that capitalism privileges. This is not to say that pregnancy and motherhood are an illness; quite the contrary. The medicalization of pregnancy has often portrayed it as illness, and the responses to pregnancy that I trace in the poems I examine are, in part, responding to this legacy.

Regulated Labor: The Sanctioned Work of Pregnancy and Motherhood

In her groundbreaking sociological work on motherhood and female embodiment, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich describes how the

Industrial Revolution helped form the cultural notion of the "home," placing women at its center.

Women, who were filling factories with cheap, committed labor, became seen as "subversive to 'the home' and to patriarchal marriage; not only might a man find himself economically dependent on his wife's earnings, but it would conceivably even be possible for women to

dispense with marriage from an economic point of view."⁷³ In a major cultural shift, "the productivity of women (apart from reproductivity) was seen as 'a waste of time."⁷⁴ This cultural shift has two major markers: first, the value of women's work is diminished; women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and struggle to fight for equal recognition in the workplace. Second, motherhood is still understood culturally as the most valid form of female labor, and workplace culture is often at odds with the working mother.

Rich notes that in socialist societies, women are often called upon to take up both kinds of labor: economic labor and reproductive labor. She writes:

Under patriarchal socialism we find the institution of motherhood revised and reformed in certain ways which permit women to serve (as we have actually served through most of our history) *both* as the producers and nurturers of children *and* as the full-time workers demanded by a developing economy. ... in no socialist country does the breakdown of the division of labor extend to bringing large numbers of men into child-care.⁷⁵

While this duality of labor may be expected in socialism, it is also the complex reality of many women in capitalist economies. Although motherhood is often expected of women in capitalism, women are also expected to be producers in economies that often fail to support their dual needs as wage-earners and mothers. In her poem "What is 'Not Writing'?" quoted earlier in this chapter, Anne Boyer suggests that the embodied realities of motherhood take economic tolls on her time, similar to other forms of uncompensated labor. To return to this poem, Boyer writes that, "There is illness and injury which has produced a great deal of not writing [...] There is

⁷³ Rich, Of Woman Born, 49.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰¹a

⁷⁵ Ibid., 54. Emphasis in original.

reproduction which has been like illness and injury and taken up many hours with not writing."

She also bluntly reminds readers of "all the time spent driving, particularly here where it is very long to get anywhere, and then to work and back, to take her [my daughter] to school and back, too."

The process of motherhood takes bodily tolls not unlike illness—although notably not illness, despite current American medical models of pregnancy—in its embodied realities, but also in the time it takes up, the "hours with not writing" and, presumably, numerous other things.

As Boyer notes, part of the embodied realities of motherhood also include moving one's body—alongside one's children's bodies—to different locations, the constant shuttling required in the rearing of children that also affects one's ability to be productive in a capitalistic sense. These temporal responsibilities also affect—as the poem's title reminds us—the speaker's working capacities as a writer, a tension that finds its basis in the very metaphors of creativity as "birth," a "binary system that conceives woman and writer, motherhood and authorhood, babies and books, as mutually exclusive."

The tensions between paid labor economies and uncompensated mothering economies play out in a different poem in Boyer's collection called "The Virus Reader." In the first part of the poem, a brief stanza alone on an otherwise-empty page, Boyer writes:

I offered his virus to the mechanized virus reader. It had many functions, among these the one that translated "virus" into "sick room architectures." Thus the design specs for his

⁷⁶ Boyer, *Garments*, 44.

⁷⁷ Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse." *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 65-66. For more on gender and the childbirth metaphor as creative production, see Katharina Walter's "Suspended between the Two Worlds': Gestation Metaphors and Representations of Childbirth in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry," *Estudios Irlandeses* 5 (2010): 102-112, and Amy C. Mulligan's "The Satire of the Poet is a Pregnancy': Pregnant Poets, Body Metaphors, and Cultural Production in Medieval Ireland," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (October 2009): 481-505.

recovery: a 15' x 15' outdoor room with a perimeter of medium-height pines, inside of these pines a hospital bed and an eight-foot flat-screen TV.⁷⁸

Here, Boyer demonstrates a completely mechanized medical experience where the speaker submits data to a reader, which in turn does not seek to treat the (notably male) ill person except to build him what it sees as an appropriate "sick room architecture," a space of healing for a privileged male patient, nestled among trees that mark a space the size of a small studio apartment, fitted with a bed and giant television screen. In contrast, the second part of the poem, found as a single stanza on the following page, narrates an ill-fated shopping trip between speaker and child, the entire stanza set in quotations marks and lowercase; an overheard story. The speaker describes her crying child, who at first appears to be weeping "so that I might change my mind and buy the \$44 shoes, but soon she was unable to stop weeping. she [sic] refused to try on other shoes in other stores even though the shoes she wore were too small and had recently been in a mud puddle."⁷⁹ The speaker tries to make the child understand that "even not-the-best-shoes-ever [...] would be better than dirty ill-fitting shoes," and yet the dramatic tear-filled shopping excursion continues, until the pair finally enter a discount store and the daughter manages to stop crying. Together they find "some brown sneakers for \$44 on clearance" and in the car immediately following, the speaker admits, "I wanted to weep, too."

Motherhood, as portrayed in Boyer's poetry, creates an ongoing tension between the labor of parenting and other, more capitalist, economic labor. Boyer's stanza on shopping for shoes with her daughter exhibits a tense, circular kind of temporality. Instead of a linear narrative of capitalist exchange—driving the car you bought to the store to exchange money for goods—

⁷⁸ Boyer, *Garments*, 37.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 38.

Boyer shows a speaker caught in a dizzying interaction of emotional, maternal, and economic labor. Even the basic economic transaction of buying shoes become a circular moment of return, of starting with a pair of new shoes that cost \$44 and ending with a discounted pair of shoes that likewise cost \$44. Implicit in the exchange is a child who seems to not understand the ramifications of the purchase, who exhibits a naiveté about what their family can and cannot afford. At the poem's close, Boyer addresses this apparent disconnect: "[I]n the car I wanted to weep, too, but she said to me 'I am still a child and am learning to control my impulses and emotions, you have had many years of dreams and realities to learn from so there is no excuse for you to cry.' she paused. 'do you have enough dreams?' she finally asked." Here the child breaks the expected narrative about what children know and might say. Furthermore, in a strange reversal, the child speaks to the mother as if she herself were a child, and the lack of capitalization in this stanza lends a child-like quality to its appearance. The economic issue of how much shoes should or can cost becomes suddenly less clear; the girl is a child, after all, still learning "to control my impulses and emotions." Economic significance is blurred, both in the mind of the child and for the speaker, whose forfeiture of \$44 for shoes at the end of the poem seems somehow different from her rejection of the initial pair of \$44 shoes. Boyer demonstrates the temporal circularity of this experience, a moment that stalls and repeats, rather than progressing.

There is also a broader temporal issue at play in discussions of motherhood and its attendant labors. In closing, I want to consider the relationship between motherhood and futurity,

80 Ibid.

a temporal designation that also affects our understanding of illness and pain. 81 Since even early understandings of conception and pregnancy, there has been suspicion cast upon the woman and mother for any possible perceived "defect" found in the offspring. Rebecca Kukla remarks that this misconception emerges from the early impenetrability of the process of reproduction: "Though no one could see into the womb, the resulting child could be 'read' as a kind of biography of the mother's activities and (especially) private passions and cravings during pregnancy. The infant body served as a testimony and tribunal of the mother's wayward wandering and appetites."82 In the absence of medical technology, doctors believed in the threat of wide-spread imprinting on the unborn child; birth outcomes were "testimonies to maternal character and vice" alike. 83 Despite advances in medical knowledge and obstetrical practices. Kukla notes that similar rhetorics pervade pregnancy today, and commonly read sources such as the What to Expect series structure their advice around the notion of statistical risk as a way to dictate maternal behavior. 84 And yet, despite this perceived increased attention to maternal care, a recent joint NPR and ProPublica investigation reiterates that the United States has the highest rate of maternal deaths in the developed world, and the rate is rising. 85 As the research infers, pregnancy and delivery care is hyper-focused on the fetus, leaving women as the victims of careless mistakes and overlooked or neglected symptoms. This research, although hardly new

⁸¹ While not employing them directly, discussions of futurity evoke arguments outlined by Alison Kafer in *Feminist Queer Crip* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013), and Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁸² Rebecca Kukla, *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers' Bodies* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 15. We can also see how even terms like "misconception" yoke the act of a failed conception with a negative connotation.

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 131. See Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, fifth edition (New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2016).

⁸⁵ Nina Martin and Renee Montagne, "The Last Person You'd Expect to Die in Childbirth," *ProPublica.org*, May 12, 2017, https://www.propublica.org/article/die-in-childbirth-maternal-death-rate-health-care-system.

information, points to the very same temporal problem that Kukla also pinpoints in her book, namely that the obsession with futurity—with possible futures of the soon-to-be-born child—both override and undermine maternal care:

During their pregnancies, contemporary North American women are for the most part treated as having unruly bodies—bodies rendered transparent so that their insides can be properly displaced, publicized, and disciplined in line with the common good. After they give birth, these same women are asked to give up their bodily boundaries once again, so as to form an extended romantic unity with the infant. There seems to be an ironic reversal going on here: We deny that the fetus is part of the woman's body while it is inside her and insist on the infant being part of her body once it is outside of her. During pregnancy, we treat the fetus as a primary and independent "patient" or object of medical attention, and the mother's body becomes at best a medium of and at worst an obstacle to care for the fetus ... In neither case does the mother herself emerge as a coherent focus of medical care and attention. 86

The focus on futurity is paradoxical in that it ignores the mother while also hyperfixating on the mother; it suggests that the fetus is separate from the mother (while also being paradoxically at risk from the mother's every decision) and then later backtracks, uniting them permanently post-birth. Another component of the fixation on possible futures that include a possible child is the ongoing assumption that women *might* one day be carriers of children and should thus prepare

⁸⁶ Kukla, *Mass Hysteria*, 220-221. Likewise, Teresa Brennan notes that "while the mother's body is assumed to be passive in the event that a pregnancy progresses predictably, her influence in shaping embryonic life *is* acknowledged if something goes wrong." *The Transmission of Affect* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 89. Emphasis in original.

accordingly.⁸⁷ Katie Gentile notes that for women, "It is not only that her fetus has more rights to citizenship and medical care than her but also the fetus is the more valued, respected being. If she is always in a temporal state of 'could be pregnant' then she is constantly in a state of 'not an individual.'"⁸⁸ This alternate temporality erases the possibility of a true linear timeline with past and future, emphasizing instead a present that is held captive by possible futures; Gentile explains that there is "no space to hold the necessary tension between the past, present, and future."⁸⁹

This flattening of temporal possibilities is part of what Boyer experiences in the somewhat-failed shopping trip in "The Virus Reader"; despite her desire to extricate herself from this economic situation, she finds herself at the end purchasing shoes for the same price for her child. Likewise, poetry by Adrienne Rich suggests a similar temporal flattening in her own speakers' experiences of motherhood and childbirth. Rich's 1973 collection *Diving into the Wreck* was both the winner of the 1974 National Book Award for Poetry (co-won with Allen Ginsberg) and her catapult into renown after her first book, *A Change of World*, won the Yale Younger Poets Prize in 1951 while she was still in college. In between she published several other volumes, but *Diving into the Wreck* is notable biographically in that it was the first

_

women who *could* have a child supplement daily with folic acid led to outrage on social media, not unlike a 2016 CDC report that all women of childbearing age not on birth control should avoid alcohol. See US Preventive Services Task Force, "Folic Acid Supplementation for the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement." *JAMA* 317, no. 2: 183-189; and "More than 3 million US women at risk for alcohol-exposed pregnancy," *CDC Newsroom*, February 2, 2016, https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0202-alcohol-exposed-pregnancy.html. Katie Gentile likewise explains, "When it comes to fetuses, it has become a crime for women not to avoid risk factors, even if the risk is scientifically spurious. Women are expected to live in a constant liminal temporal state of 'could be pregnant,' where they avoid all substances that could be risk factors for a fetus, even if they do not plan to become pregnant." "Using Queer and Psychoanalytic Times to Explore the Troubling Temporalities of Fetal Personhood," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 16, no. 1: 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

collection published after the divorce from her husband, economics professor Alfred Conrad, and also the collection preceding publication of her controversial non-fiction study of motherhood, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution.*⁹⁰ In a poem from the collection's first section, titled "The Mirror in Which Two are Seen as One," Rich recounts in three parts the relationship between two sisters.⁹¹ Told from the perspective of a "you," the poem emphasizes first the experiences of childhood: "She is the one you call sister," the poem opens, "Her simplest act has glamor, / as when she scales a fish the knife / flashes in her long fingers / no motion wasted." In this childhood memory, "Love" with a capital "L" is defined as "the refrigerator / with open door / the ripe steaks bleeding / their hearts out in plastic film / the whipped butter, the apricots / the sour leftovers." The second section opens as the first, but the relationship between the sisters has matured:

She is the one you call sister
you blaze like lightning around the room
flicker around her like fire
dazzle yourself in her wide eyes
listing her unfelt needs
thrusting the tenets of her life
into her hands⁹²

Instead of the image of children gathering fruit ("A crate is waiting in the orchard / for you to fill it [...] the juice runs down your cheekbones / like sweat or tears"), returning to their well-stocked refrigerator in a childhood kitchen, the sisters in the second part of the poem have a new-found

 90 1976 is also the year she began her relationship with Michelle Cliff, which would continue until Rich's death in 2012.

108

90

⁹¹ Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 14.

⁹² Ibid., 15.

appreciation for each other. The sister is still glamorous, "mov[ing] through a world of India print / her body dappled / with softness," and yet impressionable. She "buy[s] fresh figs because you love them / photographing the ghetto because you took her there." She looks at the speaker with a stare of "hunger," and the speaker passes along the knowledge she has encountered: "you hand her another book / scored by your pencil / you hand her a record / of two flutes in India reciting."93

These first two sections of the poem exhibit a hazy progression of time, two sisters moving through space, moments that linger on the work of their hands as they cook or gather food. The poem's title—"The Mirror in Which Two are Seen as One"—suggests both the two sisters and the two first parts of the poem, which mirror each other, even starting with the same shared line: "She is the one you call sister." The notion of a mirror also suggests an infinite kind of looping, reflections that continue to produce images indefinitely. The sisters continually look at each other, mirroring each other's emotions back and forth; in the first section, the juice from the orchard fruit "runs down your cheekbones / like sweat or tears." Later in the second section, the speaker asks: "Why are you crying dry up your tears / we are sisters." The third section of the poem breaks this two-part mirroring, however, while serving as the lynchpin that emphasizes the ongoing repetitiveness inherent in mirroring. "Late summer night the insects / fry in the yellowed lightglobe / your skin burns gold in its light," the section begins, an image of intense sensuality—golden skin in lamplight—wedded to the violence of insects meeting their demise. The stanza continues:

In this mirror, who are you? Dreams of the nunnery with its discipline, the nursery with its nurse, the hospital

⁹³ Ibid.

where all the powerful ones are masked the graveyard where you sit on the graves of women who died in childbirth and women who died at birth⁹⁴

The poem itself becomes a mirror, showing the sisters to each other, both to the reader, and reflecting the reader back to herself. There is also the smaller mirror of the lightglobe, destroying those insects that dare get too close and reflecting the speaker in the dim light. The poem's own mirror moves through a series of institutions of power: the nunnery, the nursery, the hospital, the graveyard. Each institution manages the body at various stages in life, from birth with its attendant nurses and male doctors, the "powerful ones [who] are masked," to death and its grave markers. These dead women, in particular, have died either in childbirth or at their own births, emphasizing both the inherent dangers of childbearing as well as creating a circular relationship between nurseries and hospitals full of babies and mothers, and graveyards likewise full of babies and mothers. The poem closes by moving from the general, speaker-less "Dreams" of the nunnery and hospital to a more personal, familial set of dreams:

Dreams of your sister's birth
your mother dying in childbirth over and over
not knowing how to stop
bearing you over and over

your mother dead and you unborn your two hands grasping your head drawing it down against the blade of life your nerves the nerves of a midwife learning her trade

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The temporality folds over on itself again and again; instead of the linear narrative of a birth—or a dream—the speaker's mother dies again and again, perpetually bearing a child. The subject of the birth is in constant motion as well; in the first mention, it is the sister, but in the closing stanza, the subject shifts to the speaker: "your mother dead and you unborn." In an unsettling final movement, the speaker is both unborn subject and midwife, her hands grasping her own head, speaker and subject both teetering on between life and death, "the blade of life." In her work on the connection between possible babies and futurity, Katie Gentile suggests that fetal obsession does not only fixate on the future; instead, the temporality of this orientation is more repetitive, stranded somehow in the present. "[T]he fetal fetish," she writes, "produces a cycle of hypervigilant traumatic repetition."95 Rich captures the trauma of this repetitive cycle of women giving birth, dying while giving birth, babies dying in birth, and women living to reproduce again. The specific personal relationship between the poem's two sisters gives way to a lineage of women caught in reproductive cycles. The speaker is midwife and child, and the poem's end loops back to the beginning, mirroring yet another iteration of a world with children growing up alongside each other. "She is the one you call sister," the poem begins, and imbedded in the image of two young sisters is also the cyclical trauma of their birth at the poem's close, as well as the parallel history of graveyard monuments to women who died in the same situation.

This chapter suggests that capitalist economic structures privilege certain kinds of labor over others. This variety of labor is seen as productive in two ways: First, it is recognized *as* labor, and second, it is compensated accordingly. As I have shown, many forms of labor fall outside of this definition in one way or another, including most notably the work of women such as caregiving. In a strange turn, the reproductive work of women is both seen as women's

⁹⁵ Gentile, "Using Queer and Psychoanalytic Times," 34.

primary labor priority, and also the kind of work that is most often unrecognized and uncompensated. Women are expected to privilege motherhood over economic labor, but also to paradoxically serve as profitable economic players. As the first part of this chapter argued, bodily experiences such as chronic illness can affect one's role as a "productive" player in a capitalist economy. I suggest that the experience of pain is one possible way of reconsidering what it means to be productive. If instead of turning away from illness or pain in disgust, we consider how the affective experience of disgust could be formative, it would open up new vistas of alternative productivity that challenge linear capitalism and circular futurity. "In this mirror, who are you?" Rich's speaker asks, and her poem hints at the possibility of escaping this infinite reflection, the circularity of "not knowing how to stop / bearing you over and over" but also the linear economic reality of "a midwife / learning her trade."

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEMPORALITY OF VIOLENCE: MENTAL ILLNESS, RACE, AND DISASTER

"Grammar is emotional," British-Indian emigrant Bhanu Kapil writes in a section titled "Acknowledgements and Quick Notes" at the end of her 2011 collection *Schizophrene*. These lengthy endnotes become an extension of the main text itself, failing (intentionally) to serve as cut-and-dry gratitude alone. In a paragraph addressing her publisher—Nightboat Books—and various editors, Kapil describes the process of editing and its relationship to her next book project, *Ban en Banlieue*, published by Nightboat four years later:

As I removed the second period that came at the end of each sentence, a method of punctuation learned in England, I understood that I was reversing a line of black dots.

These dots collected, became the matter for a next work, an anti-colonial novel: *Ban*.²

The text erases more than a punctuation mark; Kapil writes that she "revers[es] a line of black dots ... a method of punctuation learned in England." In British English, the punctuation mark known as a "period" is often called a "full stop." Here, Kapil seems to be referring to the tendency to double-space after a period, whether on a computer or typewriter. Similarly, when a document is showing its printer marks—in a word processor program, these are referred to as "nonprinting characters" or "formatting marks"—the mark for a space is a filled dot. In editing, then, Kapil erases the mark of this learned grammar, the mark of the culture she encounters first in England and then reverses as an immigrant in the United States. "Grammar is emotional," she asserts, the structures of language so often the mark of the colonizer or of migration forced as a

-

¹ Bhanu Kapil, *Schizophrene* (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books: 2011), 72.

² Ibid.

result of colonial violence. And yet, her act of removal is paradoxically constructive, giving structure to a new text, this line of dots becoming part of a book notably written in fragments and parts over many years.

Kapil also suggests the interconnectedness of these two texts; indeed, they share more than a line of black dots. Ban en Banlieue shows the stressors of migration—which Schizophrene so carefully lays out—writ large in a story of riots and violence that stretches across countries and decades. Similarly, both texts map the challenges of black and brown bodies—another reading of her mention of "black dot"—as they move through space. The texts also share portions of texts, including this passage in its entirety: "I walk through the summer forest. It's abandoned. Only five or six flowers are securely in bloom. A white one, a yellow one, a red one, and three light blue/purple ones. In late July, I was walking on a gemstone path carved into the side of the mountain. Mica. Quartz. Nouns are magical to an immigrant, fundamental to a middle class education." Throughout Schizophrene, Kapil uses the importance of nouns in a new, learned language to draw attention to her word choices, often by italicizing words in the text, forming a lexicon of the immigrant's lingual experience. Linking the two texts with this shared passage serves to further emphasize the continuity of migration experience between the two books. The first—Schizophrene—records the difficulties of migration and the subsequent mental strain such movements create. The second—Ban en Banlieue—situates itself in the uneasy violences borne out of migration and initially alluded to in the text of Schizophrene.

In a text fixated on migration and its violences, the black dots removed from *Schizophrene* echo images of transit found throughout the text, the "black dots on the bright yellow wings" of migrating butterflies which visit Kapil's backyard garden, and the arc line of a notebook as she

³ Kapil, Schizophrene, 62. Bhanu Kapil, Ban en Banlieue (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015), 47.

throws it out into the snow, "A dotted line. A white hole." Her attempted destruction of the draft which would later—in its decayed, fragmented state—become the text of *Schizophrene* suggests the instability of its own journey from house to garden. Put another way, Kapil throws the book from one spot to another, its journey mapped out in a dotted line, and yet the endpoints, initially understood as final, don't stick. "It is psychotic to draw a line between two places," Kapil writes, finding this psychosis physically imagined in the "aeroplane's dotted line on the monitor as it descends to Heathrow" as she returns to her place of birth. In a serious of repetitive claims, Kapil describes the contradictions inherent in migration, and the resulting mental state, which she terms a variety of psychosis:

It is psychotic to go.

It is psychotic to look.

Psychotic to live in a different country forever.

Psychotic to lose something forever.

The compelling conviction that something has been lost is psychotic.

[...]

It is psychotic to submit to violence in a time of great violence and yet it is psychotic to leave that home or country, the place where you submitted again and again, forever.⁵

Schizophrene portrays again and again the paradoxes of migration, the idea that the speaker is

115

-

⁴ Kapil, Schizophrene, 59, 56.

⁵ Ibid., 53.

caught in between opposing needs to go and to stay, to look and to avert the eyes. It is schizophrenia in which Kapil is most interested, and the direct lines and end points of migration and travel—most clearly illustrated with the airplane's dotted flight path—contrast sharply with the repetitions and circularity of schizophrenia and psychosis. "Schizophrenia is rhythmic, touching something lightly many times," Kapil argues elsewhere in her text. And yet schizophrenia doesn't seem to just be the inverse of forward motion; rather, Kapil suggests that it is a direct reaction to the straight lines of migration: "All trajectories are [psychotic] in their reliance upon arrival." The lines of travel are "psychotic" in their tendency to assume an end point, and the process of migration itself "makes the subsequent involuntary arrival a stressor for psychosis."8

Kapil uses the work of psychiatrists Dinesh Bhugra and Peter Jones to suggest a connection between mental illness and the trauma of migration; whether this relationship is directly causal or only related is unclear. Does the physical act of migration produce stressors that may trigger mental illness, or do those stressors arise later, after the fact of migration? Bhugra and Jones speculate that the "stress and chronic difficulties of living in societies where racism is present both at individual and institutional levels may well contribute to ongoing distress." This chapter takes this relationship between mental illness and racism as its central tenant, expanding at the edges to consider how racism is rooted in everyday violences: both small and large, but often,

⁶ Ibid., 61. The question arises: Is Kapil speaking metaphorically here? As this chapter examines—and as I comment on further later—I try to interpret her mentions of illness as such, rather than as a metaphor for a way of being in the world.

⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁸ Ibid., 53.

⁹ Dinesh Bhugra and Peter Jones, "Migration and Mental Illness," Advances in Psychiatric Treatment 7 (2001): 218. A longer version of this quotation is featured as one of several epigraphs to Schizophrene. For further information on this topic, see Bhugra and Susham Gupta's edited collection, Migration and Mental Health (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), which is a wide-reaching study on the intersecting topics of migration and health.

crucially, ignored. While the two previous chapters examined the embodied temporalities of primarily physical chronic illness, I turn in this chapter to mental illness, exploring the ways that the rhetoric of mental illness seeps into violence—and vice versa—and, more importantly, examining how violence and mental illness are related through time. Violence is a complex and broad topic, and my chapter here looks primarily at racially directed forms of violence, at times at the level of a riot but more often at the level of personal conversations and everyday microaggressions. I can't claim to speak for all forms of violence ad infinitum, but I argue here that looking at these particular instances of racially inflected violence can show us important intersections with mental illness.

In what follows, I work backwards, first examining the timescales of violence, arguing that the experience of violence operates in a kind of "disaster" time, one that emphasizes disruptive breaks rather than chronicity. Paradoxically, the jagged breaks of violence must be processed through narrative—often in the form of social commentary or legal accounting—after their occurrence in order to be incorporated into larger temporal schemas. That is, narratives of enforced social order and descriptions of past violence often smooth over the breaks, imposing chronicity: consider, for instance, how we often characterize wars by their timelines, and memorialize acts of war or violence with monuments that fixate on dates. After all, can a memorial that neglects the timeline truly be a memorial at all? In an essay about M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and its historical archive, Jenny Sharpe suggests that "as a metaphoric tombstone, the legal case does not contain the standard inscription: proper name and longevity of life, next of kin, and inscription of love and/or grief." That is, a memorial needs two things: identification and a temporal context. Furthermore, James E. Young's work on memory looks at the way physical memorials often erase memory rather than perpetuate it: "[I]n their references

1/

¹⁰ Jenny Sharpe, "The Archive and Affective Memory in M. NourbeSe Philip's Zong!" Interventions 16, no. 4: 467.

to history, monuments may not remember events so much as bury them altogether beneath layers of national myths and explanations. As cultural reifications, in this view, monuments reduce or ... 'coarsen' historical understanding as much as they generate it." That is, as Young states bluntly later, "to the extent that we encourage monuments to do our work for us, we become that much more forgetful." No monument, then, is ever enough. Even though we try to make violence understandable—and by extension forgettable—through its narrativizing, I argue that contemporary poetry on violence uses the poetic form to break with chronicity and dismantle our cultural, social, and personal narratives that contextualize and contain acts of violence. In this chapter, I use the work of Claudia Rankine and Bhanu Kapil to demonstrate a poetics of violence that lingers in the temporal breaks caused by racism and other violences. Within their poetic work, I trace the alternative temporalities that the experience of violence creates and which we, too, can see, if we can resist the call of narrative and its rationalizations.

After thinking through the experiences of time that Rankine and Kapil's work illustrates, I turn in the second part of this chapter to the temporality of mental illness. The move to mental illness has two major components. First, there is the notion that ongoing stressors—in these texts, the stressors of racial microaggressions and the daily violence of racism—can serve in part or whole as a catalyst for developing a mental illness. ¹³ The other component is more slippery.

¹¹ James E. Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine* 9 (Fall 1999): 2. Young also suggests through art critics that monuments often have difficulty representing anything outside of themselves and, "by insisting that its meaning is as fixed as its place in the landscape, the monument seems oblivious to the essential mutability in all cultural artifacts, the ways the significance in all art evolves over time" (2).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bhugra and Gupta write in their introduction that "as a result of environmental changes, such as climate and food, biological changes may occur. Furthermore, continuing stress and cumulative life events will affect biological responses. ... Physical illness can contribute to mental illness and associated stress" (*Migration and Mental Health*, 2). They also remind us that the issue is more complex than environmental triggers, including widespread racial discrepancies: "According to UK studies, those of African-Caribbean descent are three to five times more likely to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital with a first diagnosis of psychosis than white people ... They have more complex and coercive pathways into care, are more likely to present to hospital services in crisis and to be assessed

One of the defining features of racial violence is that it creates a norm—in this case, the norm tends to involve bodies, appearances, class status, and culture—and aggressively punishes those who fall outside of it, in truth or in perception. The consequences of finding yourself outside of these norms can be physical as well as mental. That is, even as your body may experience harm at the hands of another, your mental states and capacities are being questioned as well. Furthermore, this implication that there is something wrong with you to put you in this position rubs both ways. After a while, it is not just the dominant culture that suggests that you are mentally incompetent because of your race, or that you are being treated with violence as a response to some persisting mental illness that potentially poses a threat. There is the circular, lingering impression that to reside outside norms implies that you *must* be "crazy" and you wonder the same. Did you always have the predisposition to illness, or has the stress of continued violence triggered this? If you are told you are "crazy" enough times, do you become mad? Is this illness real or projected? If it is projected, will you eventually become ill in some way, anyway? Rankine, in a *New York Times Magazine* article on tennis star Serena Williams, writes,

I couldn't quite shake the feeling (I still can't quite shake it) that my body's frailty, not the cancer [Rankine has had breast cancer] but the depth of my exhaustion, had been brought on in part by the constant onslaught of racism, whether something as terrible as the killing of Trayvon Martin or something as mundane as the guy who let the door slam in my face. The daily grind of being rendered invisible, or being attacked, whether physically or

2

as dangerous by healthcare workers, and to have compulsory treatment. They are also more likely to remain in long-term contact with services after discharge" (4).

verbally, for being visible, wears a body down.¹⁴

Rankine refuses to clearly differentiate between diagnosed illness—cancer, in this instance—and the physical effects of racism that may very well lead to illness: extreme and consistent exhaustion that wears the body down slowly. The increased "frailty" of the body is an embodied state of grave significance; as this chapter examines, it matters less whether someone is experiencing diagnosed migration-triggered schizophrenia or if they *feel* every day that the only explanation for the world as it is must be that they are "going crazy." I argue that these embodied experiences of mental illness—with the spectrum of nuance that I have briefly outlined here—often have an alternative temporality, one that tends to reside in a moment of rupture or breakage, and that only after the fact is incorporated into a larger narrative of illness. In this way, the temporality of mental illness echoes that of violence with its own temporality of breaks, each a moment of disaster. ¹⁵

In what follows, I argue that the poetry of Rankine's book *Citizen* demonstrates the alternative temporalities which violence constructs, including the violence of both language and silence, as well as physically inflected acts of violence. Rob Nixon suggests that "we all inhabit multiple temporal orders that often coexist in frictional states, shifting and sliding like tectonic plates. The predominance—and our awareness of—some temporal orders as opposed to others is shaped by where and how we live." Those affected by violence experience the temporal

¹⁴ Claudia Rankine, "The Meaning of Serena Williams," *The New York Times Magazine*. August 25, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-meaning-of-serena-williams.html? r=0.

¹⁵ I don't mean to imply that there is something "disastrous" or broken about mental illness; instead, I want to first challenge those kinds of rhetoric that are all too common in discussing mental illness. Second, I hope to show some of the ways that mental illness is *related* to other moments of disaster (i.e. violence); "disaster" being the best term we have for these kind of wide-spread breaks in time and social order.

¹⁶ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 61.

disruptions that such acts create, which rattle against chronological narratives of time, emphasizing the "friction" of these disparate states. By first exploring *Citizen*'s print history, I suggest that Rankine's own changes to subsequent editions of *Citizen* accomplish two goals. In one sense, these revisions suggest an alternative temporal space perpetuated by the violence she writes about while, in another sense, providing an attempt to recuperate this alternative timeframe in a productive fashion. Here "productive" isn't quite the right term, since it evokes the kinds of justifications often used in conversations about violence: Do the ends justify the means? What do we end up with, and what did we—possibly, in our own fear—prevent? What I mean rather is that Rankine uses the existence of alternative timescales born out of violent acts to preserve moments where violence occurred, both as an alternative kind of memorial, and as a bleak acknowledgement that every moment of violence is somehow less violent than the moments to come. Her recuperation is thus an exploration of the possibilities of these temporalities that reject the historicizing lens of chronicity.

I then turn to several examples from *Citizen* and Kapil's 2015 *Ban en Banlieue* to further argue that moments of violence occupy their own temporality and that the medium of poetry articulates this out-of-timeness through its form. Jonathan Culler suggests that the very form of lyric poetry separates itself from narrative. In his essay "Why Lyric?," Culler argues that the temporal possibilities of lyric differ from those of narrative and the chronicity that often accompanies such narrative form. ¹⁸ Not only does lyric allow for the expression of speech acts

¹⁷ Young writes that "[t]he traditional aim of war monuments had been to valorize the suffering in such a way as to justify it, even redeem it historically" (3). Rankine here challenges readers to consider her text as much more than a monument for a history that cannot—that refuses to—be redeemed. If history is what is imposed later on events, Rankine focuses on these unnarrated, as-of-yet unjustified moments of experience in *Citizen*.

¹⁸ Jonathan Culler argues that lyric is too often read *for* narrative structure—"Narrative [fiction]," he writes, "is treated not as one possible literary form but as the very condition of experience," (201)—which neglects the distinct qualities that lyric can bring to the table. Culler explains: "[I]t is deadly for poetry to try to compete with narrative—by promoting lyrics as representations of the experience of subjects—on terrain where narrative has obvious

not found in day-to-day life—Culler describes it as "characteristically extravagant"—but it also has its "own special tenses, such as the lyric present ... The special language of lyric generates this distinctive lyric temporality." ¹⁹ For Culler, this "distinctive lyric temporality" is grounded in the ongoing present moment; he writes that "narrative is about what happens next" while "lyric is about what happens now."²⁰

Finally, I examine how the repetition of violent dislocations creates conditions for some instances of mental illness; Kapil suggests in Schizophrene that violence perpetuated against immigrant populations can trigger the onset of certain mental illnesses within those very populations. Passages from Citizen, Schizophrene, and Ban en Banlieue depict how racism shapes the rhetoric of violence and thereby perpetuates states of mental illness. As I argue within this chapter, what links mental illness and violence is not so much a cause-and-effect relationship, but rather a shared temporality, one of the "now," that Cullers suggests lyric poetry also occupies.²¹ These experiences of the "now" aren't quite the durations we saw in Chapter One, or the chronic lapses from Chapter Two. Instead, these moments of present experience are disruptive, unsettling, and abrupt, but as the authors here demonstrate, the kind of alternative temporality that mental illness and violence enact holds subjects in discrete temporalities of onset and aftermath, challenging chronological developments of time. In her work on trauma studies, Cathy Caruth argues that the moment of trauma disrupts chronological time: "For the

advantages." "Why Lyric?" PMLA 123, no. 1 (January 2008), 202. My point here is not that lyric does not contain the experiences of subjects—what else, then, would it be?—but rather to contrast the linear structures of narrative with the temporal breaks we can find within lyric.

¹⁹ Culler, 205.

²⁰ Ibid., 202. Emphasis added.

²¹ According to Jeanne Y. Choe, Linda A. Teplin, and Karen M. Abram, incidences of violent perpetration as well as violent victimization are higher in regards to those with mental illnesses than in the general population. However, as critical work on mental illness often notes, those with a mental illness are much more likely to be a victim of violence than a perpetrator. "Perpetration of Violence, Violent Victimization, and Severe Mental Illness: Balancing Public Health Concerns," Psychiatric services 59, no. 2 (2008).

attempt to understand trauma brings one repeatedly to this peculiar paradox: that in trauma the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness."²² And yet, trauma doesn't just cause belatedness; as Caruth explains elsewhere, "What causes trauma, then, is an encounter ... that occurs, rather, as a break in the mind's experience of time."²³ What Rankine and Kapil are trying to do, I argue, is to capture that "immediacy" and "break" without necessarily addressing the numbing and the belatedness. Rankine uses the visual logics of the page, while Kapil uses spatial logics and geographies; both writers challenge linear temporalities within moments of crisis. What does it mean for a text to exist right at the moment of crisis? It is through this disruption of chronology that we can see these experiences as they are, without the contexts or narratives that we tend to place on disruptive moments in retrospect.

The Temporality of Violence

In her widely acclaimed Citizen (2014), poet, professor, and cultural critic Claudia Rankine examines the pervasiveness of violence in American culture. Arranged in part as a series of stories told in second person about latent racism, *Citizen* shows the temporal and spatial disruptions such instances of racism create. Her work avoids the "I" readers are so accustomed to finding in lyric poetry; instead, the second person's "you" takes the place of an "I," emphasizing the possibility of racial gaslighting as the "you" draws continual focus back to the reader with its direct form of interpolation.²⁴ This emphasis on the "you" contradicts the self-focused

²² Cathy Caruth, "Introduction." 3-12. In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 6.

²³ Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5.

²⁴ "Gaslighting" refers to "a form of emotional abuse where the abuser intentionally manipulates the physical environment or mental state of the abusee, and then deflects responsibility by provoking the abusee to think that the

"subjective expression"²⁵ that we come to expect from lyric, and the use of second person does something important: it helps prevent our tendency to "project a character, a situation, and a narrative" since it asks that we assume ourselves, as readers, as the character, a movement that breaks down projection.²⁶ Here, the structure created by the second person allows Rankine to communicate moments that initially seem narrative in scope, and yet the "you"s disrupt that chronology every time it starts to cohere into a timeline.

In one scene that emphasizes the possibility of gaslighting, "You are in the dark, in the car, watching the black-tarred street being swallowed by speed; he tells you his dean is making him hire a person of color when there are so many great writers out there." Rankine separates this sentence in its own stanza on the page, suggesting the space of silence that follows the conversation. In the moments after that spatial break, the speaker runs through possible scenarios—"You think maybe this is an experiment and you are being tested or retroactively insulted or you have done something that communicates this is an okay conversation to be having"—and imagines potential ways out of this lapsing silence: "Why do you feel comfortable

__

changes reside in their imagination, thus constituting a weakened perception of reality. ... By repeatedly and convincingly offering explanations that depict the victim as unstable, the abuser can control the victim's perception of reality while maintaining a position of truth-holder and authority." Tuesda Roberts and Dorinda J. Carter Andrews, "A Critical Race Analysis of Gaslighting Against African American Teachers," in Contesting the Myth of a 'Post Racial' Era: The Continued Significance of Race in U.S. Education, eds. Dorinda J. Carter Andrews and Franklin Tuitt (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013), 70. Although this kind of manipulation can occur in a wide variety of situations and relationships, I am considering here the effects of racial gaslighting. The OED's definition is briefer: To manipulate (a person) by psychological means into questioning his or her own sanity" and records this entry from a 1994 American slang dictionary, which notes an oral use of the term dating back to 1954. The term is widely understood—and the OED notes this fact as well—to have originated by way of a 1938 play performance of Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton, where a man convinces his wife she is going insane. Notably, from this first instantiation of the term, there is a resonance not just with psychological manipulation but mental illness as such. The OED cites the first record of the term in Changing Perspectives in Mental Illness (1969) that suggests that it is "also popularly believed to be possible to 'gaslight' a perfectly healthy person into psychosis by interpreting his own behavior to him as symptomatic of serious mental illness" (83). "Gaslight, v." OED Online, December 2016, Oxford University Press, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/255554?rskey=VgFKGp&result=2&isAdvanced=false.

²⁵ Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, "Lyrical Studies," Victorian Literature and Culture 27, no. 2 (1999): 523.

²⁶ Culler, 203.

saying this to me? You wish the light would turn red or a police siren would go off so you could slam on the brakes, slam into the car ahead of you, fly forward so quickly both your faces would suddenly be exposed to the wind."²⁸ The speaker searches for physical ways to return the moment to a recognizable chain of events: the light turns red; she slams on the brakes; she hits the car in front of them. Moreover, the possibility of these alternative events serve as a physical break—that is, situated within space—to an experience of affective exchange.²⁹ And yet, none of these possibilities unfold for the speaker; instead, the scene closes:

As usual you drive straight through the moment with the expected backing off of what was previously said. It is not only that confrontation is headache-producing; it is also that you have a destination that doesn't include acting like this moment isn't inhabitable, hasn't happened before, and the before isn't part of the now as the night darkens and the time shortens between where we are and where we are going.³⁰

Time and space collapse; she continues driving forward in physical space while "driving" through the moment in time, avoiding the disruption that the violence of racism created. Any chronological structure to the moment is lost; the "before" becomes part of the "now," and time itself collapses "between where we are and where we are going." Throughout *Citizen*, Rankine portrays moments of racially inflected violence as occupying a strange temporal existence, where the violences of "before" are always a backdrop, but where the moments situate themselves in the "now," in the variety of present tense that Culler identifies as unique to lyric form.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Sara Ahmed writes extensively about the transfer of emotion, saying that emotions "*do things*" (emphasis her own) and they "align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments." "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22.2 (Summer 2004): 117-139. 119.

³⁰ Ibid.

One notable instance of this lyric present takes place, I argue, through the print medium itself. Put another way, Rankine uses the printed text of *Citizen* to catalogue a history of violence that is so much more than simply a historical transcript. First, through her changes and additions, Rankine suggests the both inevitability of violence and the sheer mass of it. Second, Rankine's differing editions of *Citizen* work alongside the poetry found in the volume to provide an alternative memorial, one that catalogues both public and private violences, those known and unknown. Rankine doesn't attempt to recuperate this violence for any new or "worthy" goal; its very nature makes it irredeemable. What she does instead is raise important questions about the temporal realities of violence, the effects of violent acts *en masse*, and the ways we rationalize—and narrativize—violence. These rationalizing efforts diminish the realities of violence, whether or not we realize these effects.

Subtitled "An American Lyric," *Citizen* focuses on both specific cultural moments—the killing of Treyvan Martin, Hurricane Katrina, the 2006 World Cup—and personal anecdotes, narrated in the second person. Its subtitle, which seems to point toward a reading of genre and location, suggests at least three possible readings: First, it echoes the subtitle of Rankine's previous book, the 2004 collection *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, which examines American life, death, illness, and loneliness. This overlap points toward a continued examination of that which constitutes American culture, a ten-year followup to what Rankine uncovered earlier. Second, what might a purely "American" lyric look like? Here Rankine suggests the possibility of "American" topics for content, and possible "American" generic conventions for form. The book is a "lyric," she suggests—perhaps facetiously—but readers of both texts will quickly notice that while the formal features used might be "American" in the sense that they simultaneously evoke numerous traditions of poetry, prose, and visual art, they don't fall into any one specific category

of the lyric.³¹ Here Rankine suggest an alternative variety of lyric, a specifically "American" lyric that undoes earlier definitions, one that relies on collage and genre-blending and whose content, as I will discuss next, must necessarily be the trials of American citizens.

Third and perhaps most obviously, Rankine's evocation of "An American Lyric" following the title *Citizen* references a particularly American problem of citizenship, and the detached black hood on the cover suggests a history of racial violence. It evokes infamous events like Treyvon Martin's death, where Martin was supposedly targeted because he had the hood of his sweatshirt up over his head.³² The cover is also a created art object; upon closer examination, the hood is supported by a wire that runs through its edge. The cover image is a 1993 piece by David Hammons called "In the Hood," and it is the first of numerous reproduced pieces throughout *Citizen* by black artists who address issues of racial politics. These images are placed in the text, according to Rankine, "where I thought silence was needed, but I wasn't interested in making the silence feel empty or effortless the way a blank page would." Thus the artwork asks for the kinds of nuanced readings that the text itself also requires, a moment that is, despite being wordless, layered with possible meanings.

Alongside the pauses engendered by the reproduction of artwork, Rankine also uses the physical arrangement of her text on the space of the page to create breaks, pauses, and repetitions. Many of the pages are only filled about half way, leaving the bottom half of the page

³¹ Although as Jonathan Culler argues, "Observing particular shifts in the lyric does not, though, prevent one from maintaining a broad conception of lyric as genre and its historical tradition. Conceiving of a broad range of possibilities for lyric in many periods and languages can help prevent a certain narrowing of the conception of lyric and a tendency ... to treat lyric on the model of narrative." "Lyric, History, Genre," *New Literary History* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 885-886.

³² Despite its most salient cultural resonance (at least now) being with Trayvon Martin's death, Hammons's "In the Hood" was actually created in the wake of the Rodney King beating. I am thankful to Claudia Rankine for pointing this detail out in a talk she gave at Colorado College on August 21, 2017.

³³ Lauren Berlant, "Claudia Rankine," *BOMB Magazine* 129 (Fall 2014), http://bombmagazine.org/article/10096/claudia-rankine.

empty, a void the eye must pass before moving to the next page and its text. In two of *Citizen*'s most well-known—and, importantly, facing—pages, Rankine provides a list of names of black people killed at the hands of police with the repeating heading of "In Memory of" (fig. 3.1). This structure trails down the page, each name on a new line. Halfway through the list, the names stop and the phrase "In Memory" continues to the bottom margin, the ink fading to lighter gray and almost disappearing by the final row.³⁴ The facing page states:

because white men can't police their imagination black men are dying³⁵



fig. 3.1

³⁴ Citizen, 134.

³⁵ Ibid. 135.

As of May 2016, *Citizen* has gone through thirteen different printings at Graywolf Press.

Rankine's first edition of these pages looked very different. The facing pages initially read

"November 23, 2012 / In Memory of Jordan Russell Davis" on the left page, and "February 15,

2014 / The Justice System" on the right (fig. 3.2). This format—of date, followed by subject—is
the same style as the other fragmented moments which make up the rest of section VI of
Rankine's text, which are "Scripts" for what she calls "Situation videos." These "Scripts" are
each headed by a date and a subject (Hurricane Katrina, In Memory of Trayvon Martin, In
Memory of James Craig Anderson, Jena Six, Stop-and-Frisk [dateless], In Memory of Mark
Duggan, World Cup, and a script from a presentation called "Making Room" at the Hammer
Museum in Los Angeles).

November 23, 2012 / In Memory of Jordan Russell Davis

fig. 3. 2

Each heading is followed by poetry that incorporates interviews, images, art, fragments, and lyric lines that respond to the topic presented. Jordan Russell Davis's section, which ends this section of the book, already differed from the others in that it contains no poetry, just the heading, and the facing date that indicated a likewise-empty nod toward the disintegration of the justice system.³⁶

The updated second edition of *Citizen* included Michael Brown's name and date of death under Davis's (fig. 3.3),³⁷ and the third edition transitioned to a list of names, and removed the facing page's text about the justice system, replacing it with the brief poem quoted earlier: "because white men can't / police their imagination / black men are dying" (fig. 3.4).³⁸ The transition here from dated entries to a list suggests the movement between differing kinds of temporality. In latter editions, Rankine's list emphasizes the accumulated history of violence rather than specific details and dates. With the removal of dates, the pages begin to function less like a stationary memorial and more like a flexible, changing document. There is also an additional alternative temporality that these revisions imply: that of the time of reading itself. These continued additions appeal to a reader/viewer who notices the accumulations between editions, and yet except under specific circumstances—such as purposeful comparison—the reader has an isolated experience with one particular edition. And yet, to understand Rankine's portrayal of temporality is to acknowledge the additions between editions, to resist the notion

³⁶ Jordan Russell Davis (17) was shot and killed on November 23, 2012, by Michael Dunn (47) after Dunn confronted Davis and friends about the volume of the music playing in their car at a gas station under the guise of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" laws. On February 15, 2014, the legal proceedings against Dunn ended in a mistrial. Dunn has since been sentenced to life without parole (October 17, 2014).

³⁷ Michael Brown (18) was killed by white police officer Darren Wilson (28) on August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, starting racially charged protests around the country. The U.S. Department of Justice concluded that Wilson shot Brown in self defense.

³⁸ Rankine, *Citizen*, 135. It is key here that "imagination" is singular, not the plural that the group "white men" would typically take. Rankine seems to focus on a very particular kind of singular white male imagination, one that involves police violence and black deaths.

that the text of a book is a cohesive unit that creates a stable reading experience. It is in the third edition that Rankine's new text notably includes the line "black *men* are dying"; the list of names in later editions (starting with the tenth) also incorporates the names of women killed by police, including Sandra Bland (see fig. 3.1).³⁹ The twelfth and thirteenth editions (most current as of May 2016, not pictured) include "In Memory of Jamar Clark," as well as "of Alton Sterling" and "of Philando Castile" under Sandra Bland's line.⁴¹

This process of ongoing revision demonstrates two competing temporalities inherent in the violence, to which Rankine bears witness within her text: on one side is the brutal, specific violence of each individual event, a moment in time where "disaster struck," although I don't mean that phrase to erase culpability. Rather, I mean to imply a swiftness, a temporality of onset where an irreversible event occurred. Grouping these events in a list, however, collapses some of the individual details while emphasizing the general pervasiveness of these acts of violence. Not only do we see the specific names that recall for readers internet headlines and cable news tickers, but in the growing list of names—itself a "ticker" of sorts—we see an expanded temporality, one of afterlives, of circularity, of accumulation.

³⁹ Emphasis added. Sandra Bland (28) was arrested after being pulled over for a minor traffic violation in July of 2015. She was later found hanged in her jail cell. The cop who arrested her was put on leave for his failure to follow traffic stop procedures.

⁴⁰ Jamar Clark (24) was shot by Minneapolis police in November of 2015. Clark's girlfriend was placed in an ambulance following a dispute with another couple. According to onlookers, police and paramedics asked Clark to step away from the ambulance, after which police arrested and shot Clark. No charges were filed against the two police officers involved in the shooting.

⁴¹ I added these footnotes with details about each victim not because I suspect readers are unfamiliar with these well-publicized cases. Rather, I keep the footnotes to recall specific details of each murder, to retain, for readers, the individual facts of each. That there have been so many cases of police brutality against black people that we might confuse the details of each case does, I believe, showcase the powerful ongoing temporality of Rankine's receding list of names.

November 23, 2012 / In Memory of Jordan Russell Davis
August 9, 2014 / In Memory of Michael Brown

In Memory of Jordan Russell Davis In Memory of Eric Garner In Memory of John Crawford In Memory of Michael Brown In Memory 134

fig. 3.3 fig. 3.4

Paradoxically, this list rejects the specificity of dates yet has its own chronological component: that of accumulation, of building through space and time. This chronology doesn't necessarily depend on the dates of this violence but rather refers to how the reader or viewer experiences these names on the page. The erasure of dates after the second edition emphasizes the importance of the individual experience over any devotion to chronological time. Each named addition to the list is a visual representation of the accumulation of violence, as well as a snapshot of a moment that is always less violent than the present—assuming that each moment that progresses onward inevitably brings with it more violence, because of the unrelenting prevalence of violent acts. Thus, even in the moment of its writing, this list is always already out

of time. Comparing the first and twelfth editions shows a development that documents the repetitions of the past while predicting—via the ongoing "In Memory"s—more of the same.

Each updated edition is understood to capture only a specific progression that is independently growing; the very nature of a list suggests the possibility for additional entries. The final name on each version of the list—even the most recent—suggests a temporal remove from the reader, who is herself in a more violent present reality. Angela Hume writes of Rankine's work that "life comes to be defined at and by a limit—between near-death and actual death, living life and maintaining life—and by its state of wasting, the condition of and for life at this precarious threshold."⁴² Rankine situates her text in this threshold, and the book itself lingers in this moment of terrible potential between near-death and actual death.

Rankine's language on the page also challenges chronological temporality: The phrase "In Memory of," which instructs readers to recall the past, scrolls forward into an unknown future that we cannot help but have no memory of—this un-memory, is, of course, not the same as forgetting. This list fades at the bottom of the page into white space, with sparse hints of words that turn faint and gray. This fading into white recalls another important spread in Rankine's book which reproduces visual artist Glenn Ligon's 1992 "Untitled: Four Etchings." These etchings show the opposite phenomenon: black letters on a white page eventually build into black at the bottom, as the background begins to fill with dark splotches which obscure the words which repeat a line from Nora Zeale Hurston: "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background."43 Ligon's artwork is the result of a stencil, which he uses for tracing Hurston's words. He places the stencil again and again without cleaning it, until the black

⁴² Angela Hume, "Toward an Antiracist Ecopoetics: Waste and Wasting in the Poetry of Claudia Rankine," Contemporary Literature 57, no. 1 (2016): 80.

⁴³ Rankine, *Citizen*, 52-53.

ink accumulates, obscuring the words near the bottom of the page.⁴⁴ While he emphasizes accumulation, Rankine's list references a history of black trauma that has been white-washed and erased.⁴⁵ Paradoxically, this erasure is also one of hyper-visibility, of being black against a white background—that of the text against white paper.

This tension between the memory of past events and the unknowable future eclipses the possibility of a present moment in the text; each revised edition is always already in need of updating. And yet, there is something bleakly reassuring about the impossibility of maintaining accurate lists of violence, in that the blank lines still do exist, at least in each particular print edition. 46 Each previous edition captures a halted temporality, one that temporarily stops the reoccurrence of violence. Rankine has made clear, however, from her project of subsequent editions, that to dwell in the slightly less violent past refuses to witness to the present that is absent from her text. To encompass these soon-to-be-included events, Rankine drops the "of" in the lines that lack names, suggesting a broader memory that doesn't isolate specific people or events, but instead forms a chant that seems to suggest that we, as readers, hold all of these lines "In Memory," "In Memory," until the words fade as our own memories do. This erasure is one which our public, cultural memories of violence must disayow, and yet Rankine's point is that these acts of violence all too often lie outside standard narratives of cultural loss. For Rankine, there is no recuperation; printing a name cannot erase the fact that these lives were disregarded to begin with. And yet even as these words fade down the length of the page, there is no erasing what Rankine has disrupted here.

⁴⁴ I'm grateful to Sarah Schwartz at CUNY for explanation of this detail of Ligon's work.

⁴⁵ I am thankful for input from UCLA's Americanist Research Colloquium that helped me to develop this point.

⁴⁶ And, indeed, Rankine's list is a curated one that must leave names out by the intrinsic limits of the print medium itself.

Rankine's open spaces awaiting names also suggests the probability of future violence based on patterns of past events. Anthropologist Robert Thornton suggests that violence is inherently chaotic, and I argue that this chaos is what creates violence's deep temporal disruptions; Thornton suggests that even "emotionally charged" social interactions don't disrupt social relations the way that violence does when it "interrupt[s], disrupt[s], breach[es], break[s]".⁴⁷ He further explains,

[I]f retrospective accounts of violence appear clear and decisive, it is only after the fact, and never before that we can achieve such clarity. Before the fact, violence is always a 'risk' or a 'probability,' but never empirically predictable or confinable to one moment, place, person or mode. This paradox is what I call the 'peculiar temporality of violence,' that is, that it is only clear it happened, and only clear that it was really violence in retrospect. Violence, then, is *statistically probable*, but fundamentally *unpredictable* and therefore 'chaotic.'

Put simply: violence is probable but technically unpredictable. This kind of probability—unpredictable, but probably—is not unlike other kinds of events, but as Thornton points out, violence disrupts social relationships in a way that even "emotionally charged" social interactions don't. Furthermore, he argues that violence is inherently chaotic, and thus the "clarity" we find in a violent event or encounter is retrospective. Dominant cultural forces interpret these moments and attempt to smooth out the "structural, causal or narrative sequences

Powe

⁴⁷ Robert Thornton, "The Peculiar Temporality of Violence: A Source of Perplexity About Social Power." *KronoScope* 2, no. 1 (2002): 43.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and continuities" that violence disrupts, imposing a narrative logic on the events. 49 Although the dominant powers within society often want to group acts of violence within certain categories especially charged categories like terrorism, racial violence, and violence perpetrated by the mentally ill—Thornton stresses that "each episode requires interpretation each time." 50 With such a definition in place, we can see how violence is not just a result of structures of power but also something more complicated: an attempt to give power to these structures. Thornton explains: "To 'use' violence, then, is to control the modes of *narrative* by which it is explained, and the symbolic forms in which it is incorporated into the memories and behaviours [sic] of individuals and into the social environment and political process."51 Just like the victor writes the story of a war, so too do those in power control the narrative scripts of violence.⁵² Notably, part of the transferal of power—of suggesting that moments of violence have a political meaning that is controlled by a certain group—is the process of narrativizing. "Narrative" becomes a mode of logic imposed on the experience, rather than something intrinsic within violence itself. It follows, I argue, that lyric poetry becomes an apt mode to portray the moments of violence before they are thrust into narrative, before a normative chronology is imposed. With this pre-narrative existence in mind, I turn to the work of Bhanu Kapil, whose book Ban en Banlieue resists the established "narratives" projected onto violent events, using moments of violence against activists, artists, immigrants, and people of color. Through reconsidering very public events of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁵¹ Ibid., 47. Emphasis added.

⁵² We can see this power at work in the way our current presidential administration portrays immigrants as violent and disturbed, and emphasizes the possibilities of radical Islamic terrorism while neglecting other modes of systemic violence that take place here in America.

violence and death, Kapil reevaluates public memory and offers new ways of considering the disruptions of violence.

Ban en Banlieue works in fragments through Kapil's created character "Ban," a shadowy figure who maps on (or over or under) the other figures that populate her book: the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Ana Mendieta, Jyoti Singh—a New Delhi woman gang-raped by a group of men on a bus in 2012, also known as "Nirbhaya," the "fearless one"—and Clement Blair Peach, a protester killed in an anti-racism demonstration in Southall, Middlesex, England, in 1979. In her book, Kapil attempts to situate Ban in time and space, yet Ban is an ongoing project that Kapil continually revises, and Ban en Banlieue draws from deleted drafts and earlier works about Ban, including a novel.⁵³ The text of *Ban en Banlieue* is fragmented, built around a series of lists that attempt to describe Ban from different contexts, locations, and times. Like the list format that Rankine uses to mark violence against black bodies, Kapil's various lists suggest the impossibility of providing a cohesive whole. Alan Liu writes that the "science" of the list can be understood through this frustration of totalizing representation: "[W]holes are only knowable as aggregates in which the detail has no interior detail."54 That is, components of a list are already understood to be a detail of a larger schema and can only hold so much additional detail. This limit paradoxically contradicts our typical understanding of data: that more is better. Liu explains elsewhere: "Information is at once an emancipatory, quasi-transcendental 'vision' of the total system ... and a frustrating sense that one is seeing only disassociated pieces of the big picture (mere facts and data) because the principle of *managed* information aggressively denies

⁵³ Kapil, *Ban*, 12.

⁵⁴ Alan Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 121. Emphasis in original.

access to that total vision."⁵⁵ Put another way, the process of creating a list at all both hints at a larger system and prevents us from seeing that system. Managing information intrinsically means leaving some information out. In Kapil's book, the fantasy of presenting Ban from every angle suggests instead the impossibility of representing Ban's complexity. Furthermore, I argue that the "novel" that never quite emerges is representative of Liu's "vision' of the total system," while the lyrics that remain instead suggest the "disassociated pieces of the big picture" where we are denied the constructed narrative, what Liu calls the "total vision." Form matters here. To actively represent the moments of violence that *Ban* portrays—*before* the narratives of power are imposed—lyric poetry, via the list format, emerges as a form that can access the alternative temporalities found in these disassociated pieces.

The text of *Ban* is also made up of "notes" for what Kapil calls an "auto-sacrifice," a living memorial for the woman—Jyoti Singh—gang-raped in New Delhi. The book shifts back and forth among these different victims of violence, and Ban often becomes a stand in for their wounded or dead bodies: "To summarize," Kapil writes in a section called "Auto-sacrifice (notes)," "[Ban] is the parts of something re-mixed as air: integral, rigid air, circa 1972-1979. She's a girl. A black girl in an era when, in solidarity, Caribbean and Asian Brits self-defined as black. A black (brown) girl encountered in the earliest hour of a race riot, or what will become one by nightfall." In this sense, Ban's role in the book echoes that of activist Blair Peach, who is killed on April 23, 1979 after a night of riots in England. Kapil clarifies this palimpsest of identities: "It is, in this sense, a real day: though Ban is unreal. She's both dead and never living:

5

⁵⁵ Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Emphasis in original.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 30.

the part, that is, of life that is never given: an existence."⁵⁷ Ban is both within and outside of time, both an onlooker and contributor to a very real past, and a shadowy re-teller of a history that can't be completely known from a present that circles back on itself repeatedly.

This somewhat straightforward description of Ban as a brown girl who lies down in the midst of a riot doesn't occur until almost one-third of the way through Ban en Banlieue, a late revelation that forces the reader into another un-chronology: they must read forward in the text, unknowing, and then backward once Kapil provides this description, in order to understand Ban's role within the framework of the text. The book's title also mirrors this back-and-forth; "banlieue" means outskirts or suburbs, and Kapil pulls this term from her book's dedication to Blair Peach, "the teacher from New Zealand who protested a gathering of the National Front in the town hall of Southall, Middlessex (U.K.)—an immigrant suburb of West London—the banlieue of the title."58 Banlieues typically represent areas of low-income, often immigrant, housing; Ban's name, read as ban—to exclude, prohibit—suggests the marginalized nature of these spaces. 59 This book, then, is one of outskirts, of outliers, of moving from a center and then returning to it. It is a text that uses spatial logics—geographies—to reinscribe alternative temporalities. Ban rejects this movement by lying down, but the rest of the text circulates back and forth; Kapil writes that she "wrote the middle of the body to its end." Although "banlieue" comes from Peach's personal narrative, Ban's own name is a part of the word, suggesting that she, too, is part of the outskirts of both space and time, at once dead and never living.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁹ Later Kapil suggests this same connection: "(Ban.) To be: 'banned from the city' and thus: *en banlieues*: a part of the perimeter ... to study the place where the city dissolves" (41).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.

To be clear: *Ban en Banlieu*e contains the character of Ban, insofar as we can call a shifting, transmutable figure a "character." The narrative of the text is difficult to describe because although a character might suggest the presence of narrative, the book is fragmented, layered without catering to the demands of chronological time. As Kapil makes quite explicit, "One thing next to another doesn't mean they touch." Placing the imaginary story of Ban into Peach's narrative isn't meant to diminish Peach's actual life or violent death; the proximity of these distinct pieces within *Ban en Banlieue* does not, in this case, imply a relationship or causality but instead serves as a way in to these very real moments of violence. Kapil's book showcases the impossibility of retelling a story of violence, in part because the act of violence defies chronology, and in part because of the impossibility of imagining oneself into a violent moment you did not experience. The book's form itself—with its accumulation of lists, assorted photos interspersed in its pages, and jagged stories that diverge every time they come close to intersecting—suggests the strange temporality of violence, abandoning future development in favor of returning to the moment of disaster, of trauma, again and again.

Kapil returns repeatedly to a moment in Ban's story where she hears the riot approaching and, instead of running either toward or away from it, lies down. This image of Ban lying on the ground echoes both the death of Peach in the London riot, and also New Delhi's Nirbhaya, whose injured body was found askew on the ground after her attack. In Ban's case, the moment of her lying down clearly demonstrates the temporal mode of the disaster to come. She is aware of the future but refuses to move toward it. Kapil writes,

⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

⁶² Kapil writes that her text is an attempt to convey "what happens to bodies when we link them to the time of the event, which is to say—unlived time, the part of time that can never belong to us" (20).

⁶³ Jyoti Singh, the given name of Nirbhaya, died later in a Singapore hospital from her injuries.

Ban is nine. Ban is seven. Ban is ten. Ban is a girl walking home from school just as a protest starts to escalate. Pausing at the corner of the Uxbridge Road, she hears something: the far-off sound of breaking glass. Is it coming from her home or is it coming from the street's distant clamor? Faced with these two sources of a sound she instinctively links to violence, the potential of violent acts, Ban lies down. She folds to the ground. This is syntax.⁶⁴

Ban as a character doesn't settle into concrete details, but that specificity is not Kapil's concern; Ban is a composite figure, blurred at the edges and portable into different scenes. The first three brief sentences of this section suggest not only that Ban contains multitudes, but that her role is portable across time. Is she nine here? Seven? Kapil suggests a flexibility—a simultaneity—to a moment otherwise fixated on the chronology of aging. An uncertainty about Ban's age doesn't portray a casual hand with description or an authorial uncertainty, but rather suggests a multitude of possible timelines, separate but overlapping moments in time where this riot occurs. What Kapil shows to us are the raw edges of numerous overlapping scenes and potential narratives, each with its own set of stakes. As I described before, the form of the book exhibits these same tendencies, very clearly presenting itself as a curated pile of fragmented parts. At a pivotal moment—quite literally, that is; Ban is poised, ready to pivot in either direction—Ban hears the sounds of what she knows to be violence. Notably, she is unsure whether the noise comes from ahead or behind, her home or the street. In a very simple sense, she pauses to consider the linear structure of time: is the violence behind in her past or ahead in her future? The scene refuses an easy chronology, however, and Ban defies the progression of linear temporality. She refuses

⁶⁴ Kapil, *Ban*, 31.

forward motion, instead lying down, bisecting the development of a linear temporality with her own body.

In another retelling—one of many—of the same moment, Kapil writes, "Knowing that either way she's done for—she lies down to die," and adds immediately following: "A novel is thus an account of a person who has already died, in advance of the death they are powerless. To prevent."⁶⁵ The mention of "a novel" is purposely misleading, since *Ban en Banlieue* is not a novel at all, rather a collection of long poems, fragments, and lists, what its publisher Nightboat Books avoids categorizing by calling "Poetry/Prose." The novel Kapil references throughout the text is less an attempt at qualifying genre, but refers instead to parts of a novel Kapil has attempted to write for Ban, a project that has spanned years, publications, and a long series of performance art pieces. *Ban en Banlieue*, then, attempts to represent *some* aspects of *all* of these disparate parts and assorted temporalities. Like the novel form itself, the syntax of the speaker's sentences breaks down: "...in advance of the death they are powerless. To prevent," stalling the reader's understanding momentarily.

Although Kapil seems to endorse the novel as the ultimate form, I read her novel-rhetoric as a ruse that intentionally increases the tension between the desire for a coherent narrative, and a text that presents fragmentary moments instead of chronology. In pursuing this tension, Kapil's text undercuts both linear time and the novel as genre. Ban knows that she will die, and thus lies down to await her death, refusing any forward movement, both physical and temporal.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁶ This disruption of genre is not unlike what Rankine is doing with the subtitle of *Citizen*: "An American *Lyric*" (emphasis added), although I would argue that *Citizen* disrupts both the lyric genre and the notion of "American" as a logical designation.

Waiting becomes a form of not moving forward.⁶⁷ Writing about violence breaks the chronological progression of time as well, situating within the reader's experience of the present a person alive momentarily before their death. The text thus both undoes the moment of the death itself and repeats its violence over and over again; as we read forward in time, we are "powerless ... [t]o prevent" what happens. Like Rankine's list of names that is outdated at the moment it is printed. Ban laying down in the street, awaiting her death, both anticipates what has always already happened and, for a moment on the page, holds it off.

Racial Violence and Mental illness

For some years, I tried to write an epic on Partition and its trans-generational effects: the high incidence of schizophrenia in diasporic Indian and Pakistani communities; the parallel social history of *domestic violence*, relational *disorders*, and so on. ... On the night I knew my book had failed, I threw it—in the form of a notebook, a hand-written final draft—into the garden of my house in Colorado. ... It snowed that winter and into the *spring*; before the weather turned truly *warm*, I retrieved my *notes*, and began to write again, from the fragments, the phrases and lines still legible on the warped, decayed but curiously rigid pages.

Bhanu Kapil, Schizophrene⁶⁸

⁶⁷ I am grateful for remarks made by Sarah Dowling at the "Poetics: (The Next) 25 Years" Conference at SUNY Buffalo, April 9-10, 2016, about Kapil's Ban, which helped clarify my own thinking. In a presentation called "Materials Toward a Theory of the Supine Body," Dowling suggests that Kapil uses Ban's supine body to both suggest a body made extraneous to the social order, and also as stumbling block to narrative completion. Dowling remarks that "lying down" is a way of doing nothing that also, paradoxically, does *something*. My argument builds off this idea of a failed narrative completion, arguing that the moment of violence disrupts linear temporality (thus rejecting narrative).

⁶⁸ Kapil, Schizophrene, i.

In her prefatory remarks, what she calls "Passive Notes," Kapil outlines the series of events that led to her 2011 book *Schizophrene*. Much like her approach to *Ban en Banlieue*, Kapil begins a work that in her opinion fails, and her published text is not, then, the original work, but rather her attempts to re-approach the fragments of rejected work. The resulting text of *Schizophrene* suggests the violence of migration and the long-term effects of diaspora through disjointed fragments meant to be "schizophrenic" in their movements. ⁶⁹ In incorporating schizophrenia directly into her text, Kapil responds to a question posed by her own epigraph to the book: "[The question is] whether migration itself acts as a stressor and produces elevated rates of schizophrenia, or whether the stressors occur later ... However, the stress and chronic difficulties of living in societies where racism is present both at individual and institutional levels may well contribute to ongoing distress" (iii). ⁷⁰

Using the work of Kapil and Rankine, I ague that violence—whether the traumatic violence of migration or the ongoing, lingering aggressions of racism—is inseparably wrapped up in rhetorics of mental illness and the onset of illness. In examining this intersection, the second half of this chapter explores how illness and violence can be connected through their similar alternative temporalities. Both experiences offer—perhaps the better word here is demand—an experience of time that refuses narrative chronology, instead lingering in the jagged moment of the break itself. When we do have narratives of violence or of illness, these tend to be imposed—whether by self or outside force—retrospectively in an attempt to create logic out of what is often a logic-less situation.

⁶⁹ Her italicization of various words in this preface begin a pattern of italicized words and phrases throughout *Schizophrene*; she writes later that "[n]ouns are magical to an immigrant, fundamental to a middle-class education," (62), the italicized words creating a lexicon of the immigrant experience in English.

⁷⁰ This epigraph comes from *Migration and Mental Illness* by Dinesh Bhugra and Peter Jones. See footnote 9.

The field of trauma studies has suggested that the repetitions of re-living a traumatic experience neglects chronology in a similar way.⁷¹ While illness and violence alike can leave trauma in their wake, I am most interested in the break of the moment of illness or violence itself, and less in the processing and repetitions of return. Lauren Berlant explains that trauma broadly has its own set of temporal experiences that deviate from narrative structure, creating what she calls a "mess of temporalization": "treading water, being stuck, drifting among symptoms."⁷² Furthermore, trauma affects the relationship of subject to the present, "bridg[ing] different moments in time:

[A] sense of belatedness from having to catch up to the event; a sense of the double-take in relation to what happened in the event ... a sense of being saturated by it in the present ... a sense of being frozen out of the future (now defined by the past); and, because ordinary life does go on, a sense of the present that makes no sense with the rest of it. 73

Although not all experiences of trauma involve violence in the sense I describe it—for instance, one could be traumatized by a kind of agentless violence, that of a natural disaster or a death in old age with no discernable cause—I would argue that Berlant's description of a traumatic untimeliness also applies to the moments of violence I have already examined here. Trauma, like violence, intervenes. It "shatters" the narrative, disrupts "life's historical self-continuity." Like violence, trauma breaks narrative structure even though, paradoxically, we typically understand and describe both violence and trauma *through* narrative itself.

⁷¹ Cathy Caruth suggests that the repetitive returns of the traumatic experience are in part "to master what was never fully grasped in the first place." *Literature in the Ashes of History*, 6.

⁷² Lauren Berlant, Cruel Optimism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 81.

⁷³ Ibid., 80-81.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 81.

Here in the latter part of this chapter, I also incorporate one further nuance of Berlant's argument, that of "crisis ordinariness," a phrase which she uses to suggest both the way that small-scale trauma undercuts everyday life and the prevalence of coping skills for "living on" despite intense experiences of trauma.⁷⁵ Unlike the disastrous moments of violence of the first section that tend to end in death, this second part examines how Kapil and Rankine turn to instances of continuous, everyday violences. I argue that both varieties of violence—the disastrous "break" and the crisis ordinariness of life—inhabit alternative temporalities that disrupt chronology. In examining these breaks from linear time and narrative, these writers use portrayals of mental illness to suggest a dislocation from larger cultural narratives of space and time. Like violence, illness occupies an alternative temporal space. Within these texts, Kapil and Rankine suggest that mental illness not only has a similar temporality as violence, but that it is subject to the same retrospective narrativizing that often diminishes the effects of violence. Within these collections, speakers are told they are ill while also having their experiences of illness questioned. Speakers are told they are violent while also having their experiences of violence questioned. It is no surprise that these narratives of insanity versus sanity arise in a racial context in Kapil and Rankine's work. As Jonathan Metzl argues in his book *The Protest* Psychosis, "'History teaches us that particular psychiatric words become everyday intonations at particular moments in time. Their entry into speech is neither happenstance nor random."⁷⁶ He traces how "schizophrenia" becomes associated with African Americans at the same time the

⁷⁵ Ann Cvetkovich suggests that trauma is only one way of approaching violence: "Although trauma can be a useful category for thinking about the psychic and transgenerational effects of slavery and colonialism, a full picture of this history must include racism's connections to more chronic and low-level feelings, such as those associated with depression." *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press. 2012), 120.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 109.

term enters the American lexicon as a metaphor for a racially or politically divided nation. He writes that blacks co-opted the term and linked it—as white society likewise did—to violence:

[I]n the rhetorical circles of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Robert F. Williams, or H. Rap Brown, schizophrenia was an ethical response to racism in which violence was the only sane treatment for an otherwise insane problem. In this context, the language of paranoia, psychosis, and schizophrenia became a means of pathologizing white society while justifying aggressive self-defense.⁷⁷

Outside of the obvious connection to violence, Metzl's point also echoes Rankine: racism becomes an "insane" entity to which reaction—in his example, violent, but any kind of reaction—is the only "sane" mode of response. The connection between race and mental health has long been a fraught one; Michelle Jarmon points out that the "very real need to challenge fallacious biological attributes linked to race, gender, sexuality, and poverty—such as physical anomaly, psychological instability, or intellectual inferiority—has often left stigma around disability unchallenged—except by those specifically engaged in activism and in disability studies." In an effort to avoid metaphorizing race as some variety of disability, writers have often avoided discussing the intersections of disability and race at all. 80

⁷⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁷⁸ Marta Caminero-Santangelo makes a similar response in her book *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Insanity is Not Subversive*, a response to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's 1979 *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Caminero-Santangelo argues, "Certainly, madness can be legitimately read as a 'rejection' of the social order. But when the social order leaves no alternative but madness, the next logical step is to assert that the social order must be changed." (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁷⁹ Michelle Jarmon, "Coming Up From Underground: Uneasy Dialogues at the Intersections of Race, Mental Illness, and Disability Studies," In *Blackness and Disability*, Ed. Christopher M. Bell (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 9.

⁸⁰ For instance, Anna Mollow writes: "I would therefore suggest that, in examining intersections of forms of

And yet, as Rankine and Kapil demonstrate, there is a very clear connection between race and mental health, especially when it comes to acts of racial microaggressions. In her work on depression and emotion, Ann Cvetkovich describes depression—like the response to racial microaggressions, we might say—as a "chronic and low-level feeling":

Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as 'the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death,' offering an emphatically materialist understanding of racism's inequities. Can we add emotional life to this definition and consider how emotional debility can be one of the health problems that targets people for premature death?⁸¹

The very definition of racism that Gilmore provides focuses on temporal breaks—in this case, that of death—and Cvetkovich complicates the definition with a focus on the more insidious and invisible forms of emotional and mental violence perpetrated against people of color. Rankine's *Citizen* portrays this violence of often-casual racism and its effects on the body, captured most clearly through mental illness. As Matthew Celia suggests, "the work of negotiating a 'habitable body' and 'habitable world' go hand in hand." Celia speaks of environmental violence, but his stakes similarly apply to the threat of social and political violence against the possibility of a

-

oppression, we guard against the dangers of 'disability essentialism', "in which the experiences, needs, desires, and aims of all disabled people are assumed to be the same and those with 'different' experiences are accommodated only if they do not make claims that undermine the movement's foundational arguments." "When Black Women Start Going on Prozac": Race, Gender, and Mental Illness in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's "Willow Weep for Me," *MELUS* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 70. Likewise, Josh Luskin suggests that "from the beginnings of the United States, the claim that 'Blackness is like disability' was not used as an expression of how black Americans suffered but as a tool of their oppression." That is, disability becomes not a metaphor for understanding suffering, but rather an agent of oppression. "Disability and Blackness," In *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, Ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 311.

⁸¹ Cvetkovich, 120.

⁸² Matthew Celia, "The Ecosomatic Paradigm in Literature: Merging Disability Studies and Ecocriticism," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 20, no. 3 (2013): 575.

"habitable world." Put another way, the continual stress of taking part in social spaces that refuse to accommodate you must eventually mark itself on the body in some way. Within *Citizen*, these somatic effects are categorized as a kind of mental illness, whereby a subject who is outside of—or disagrees with, or both—the majority systems of power is first labeled as "crazy," and then begins to suspect that this rejection has become illness itself within the body. ⁸³ This movement relies heavily on the pathologization of mental illness, that is, the belief that to be called "crazy" is to be marginalized with a kind of illness and a social group that you want no part of. Michelle Jarmon explains that there is a "the long history of racist misappropriations of 'madness,' not only to justify social oppression, but to perpetuate the so-called rationality of slavery itself:"⁸⁴ Similarly, Sara Ahmed describes this misappropriation as a "stopping" mechanism of sorts:

Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing? Each question, when asked is a kind of *stopping device*: you are stopped by being asked the question ... To stop involves many meanings: to cease, to end, and also to cut off, to arrest, to check, to prevent, to block, to obstruct or to close. Black activism has shown us how policing involves a differential economy of stopping: some bodies more than others are "stopped", by being the subject of the policeman's address ... the body that is "out of place" in this place.⁸⁵

-

⁸³ Even perceptions of time itself can be dictated by power structures; Elizabeth Freeman suggests that "temporality is a mode of implantation through which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches are ways to inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls 'hidden rhythms,' forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege." "Introduction to Queer Temporalities Issue," *GLO: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 160.

⁸⁴ Jarmon, "Coming Up," 16.

⁸⁵ Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2: 161. Emphasis her own.

These kinds of questions, especially asked with the accumulative effect that Ahmed portrays, reinforce both the violence of being told you don't belong in a space, as well as the accompanying confusion as you try to make a irrational situation logical.

Rankine uses section II of *Citizen* to explore these experiences in the life of star tennis player Serena Williams, describing several instances where Williams reacted to perceived racism on the court. In one such instance in the 2004 U.S. Open, chair umpire Mariana Alves made an erroneous overrule that favored Williams's opponent. In the 2009 U.S. Open, she told the lineswoman, "I swear to God I am [expletive] going to take this [expletive] ball and shove it down your [expletive] throat" in response to a foot fault call. ⁸⁶ In *Citizen*, Rankine relates the experience of a speaker watching these various events unfold on television. In one such instance, the "you" speaker says, "Oh my God, she's gone crazy, you say to no one." Williams's reaction against "being thrown against a sharp white background," is likewise deemed as "fighting crazily." These two instances could be nothing more than sloppy colloquial speech that intends "crazy" to mean something other than a personal experience of illness, except that the speaker concludes a page later, "Perhaps this is how racism feels no matter the context—randomly the rules everyone else gets to play by no longer apply to you, and to call this out by calling out 'I

.

⁸⁶ Rankine, "The Meaning of Serena Williams."

⁸⁷ Rankine, *Citizen*, 25. The book also plays with the idea of "public knowledge." How much about each event described herein are readers expected to know? There are moments—such as Rankine's list of names killed by police—where unfamiliarity can cause shame or embarrassment; this new awareness of that which privilege allows one to overlooks is, in part, the point of Rankine's work in *Citizen*. But how much is the reader responsible for outside of the perimeter of the text? At least in part, Rankine relies on the content of *Citizen* to spill over, beyond the printed page. In the section of the book that contains "Scripts for Situation Videos," Rankine creates brief, lyrical sections that respond to events like Hurricane Katrina or the death of Trayvon Martin. Several of these "scripts" are actual scripts for videos made in collaboration with her filmmaker partner John Lucas and available on Rankine's website, claudiarankine.com.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 29. Jarmon also notes that despite efforts to build "greater awareness about and acceptance of psychiatric difference, the public venue for mental illness remains a theater for the spectacle of 'madness'" (12). As viewers in this "spectacle," we value these moments of breakage more than we desire a shift in the conversations about mental illness; Rankine's scenes of a viewer taking in Serena Williams's "crazy" episodes are a useful example of this kind of spectacle that makes good TV news and entertainment but abysmal political discourse.

swear to God!' (as Williams does in an incident Rankine describes earlier in the text) is to be called insane, crass, crazy." And yet, there is a spectrum at play here; throwing around terms like "crazy" does not also mean that the vast majority of viewers believe Williams's to be truly diagnosable as mentally ill. Her celebrity becomes a strange, shifting marker of status. On the one hand, she is a super-athlete, renowned for her body and physical acheivements; she is essentially the opposite of disabled. And yet, while renowned, her body is simultaneously the site of racist fixation, drawing comparisons between her body and animals from commentators while they also describe her victories. She is simultaneously over-realized—as a celebrity—while also belonging to a social group that is de-realized. As noted earlier, the potential "threat" mental illness has long been used to disqualify marginalized groups, and Williams faces a similar tactic as critics attempt to undermine her success.

Within Rankine's text—and in the real-life events they represent—pathologizing
Williams's body and mind with terms like "insane" and "crazy" reinforces her outsider status.

This disorientation becomes internalized as modes of logic break down: "randomly the rules everyone else gets to play by no longer apply to you," Rankine writes, and thus the speaker too begins to suspect she is inhabiting an alternative mental state. As Ann Cvetkovich suggests,

"Depression is another manifestation of forms of biopower that produce life and death not only by targeting populations for overt destruction ... but also more insidiously by making people feel small, worthless, hopeless. ... [It is a] less visible form of violence that takes the form of mind

0.0

⁸⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁹⁰ WITW Staff, "Serena Williams Subjected to Racists, Sexist Remarks Following French Open Victory," June 8, 2015, *The New York Times: Women in the World*, http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/06/08/serena-williams-subjected-to-racist-sexist-remarks-following-french-open-victory/. Jack de Menezes, "Tennis commentator Doug Adler axed from ESPN's Australian Open coverage after Venus Williams 'gorilla' comment," January 20, 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/venus-williams-gorilla-espn-doug-adler-australian-open-apologises-a7536911.html.

and lives gradually shrinking into despair and hopelessness." Mental and somatic experiences such as depression have a direct relationship to forms of biopower, Cvetkovich suggests, but the violence associated with this reaction is often subtle, easy to justify or rationalize away.

Understood this way, the connection between racial violence and mental illness becomes clearer, as we begin to see how even small—"small;" how unassuming that word can be in the mouth of the outside observer—violences emanate from the larger powers of state and institution, targeting minority and marginalized participants.

In another episode, formally marked by cycles of repetitions, Rankine tells the story of a black man pulled over by cops without due cause, rather that because being black means fitting a certain profile for a crime that has recently occurred nearby: "[Y]ou are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description," Rankine repeats again and again in a section called "Stop-and-Frisk." The section is both a narrative of a singular event and a palimpsest of countless similar events: "Each time it begins in the same way, it doesn't begin the same way, each time it begins it's the same. Flashes, a siren, the stretched-out roar—" the speaker says. In one iteration of the event, "I was pulled out of my vehicle a block from my door, handcuffed and pushed into the police vehicle's backseat, the officer's knee pressing into my collarbone, the officer's warm breath vacating a face creased into the smile of its own private joke." Halfway through the section, the speaker asserts, "You can't drive yourself sane. You are not insane. Our motion is wearing you out. You are not the guy." This appeal to the speaker's mental state explicitly shows the dual perception I mentioned

⁹¹ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 13.

⁹² Rankine, *Citizen*, 105, 106, 108, 109.

⁹³ Ibid., 107.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

earlier: first, being labeled as "crazy" or "insane" by a cultural group or ideology. In this case, the speaker reassures himself, "You are not insane." Second, despite assuring oneself to the contrary, the speaker begins to assimilate the suggestion of illness onto the body itself. The speaker says, "You can't drive yourself sane," a notable reversal of the cliché of being "driven" crazy. In both iterations of this phrase, however, the *constructedness* of the moment is important; it involves two agents, with one agent acting on the other, "driving" them crazy. When the speaker suggests that you can't "drive yourself sane," what he hints at is the impossibility of understanding yourself either as sane or "crazy" without the influence of another agent acting upon you. Here, the speaker is presumed "insane" and knows that he cannot make himself "sane" within this particular system of oppression.

The experiences of mental illness disrupt linear time in a similar way as violence, giving both an alternative temporal engagement. The tension between being pathologized as ill and feeling that there is no other logical interpretation *except* that you are ill creates a rupture, a moment where it seems impossible to continue with the narrative. In the face of this tension—this violence—a disrupted moment is not just a drawn-out understanding of time or a temporal pause, but a complete reorientation in one's relationship to the future. In a later passage, marked by a contemplative lyric sensibility, Rankine writes about this affective tension, calling it a "disturbance" within a moment:

⁹⁵ I am grateful to members of the Americanist Research Colloquium (ARC) at UCLA for suggesting this point to me, especially Carrie Hyde.

⁹⁶ This "pathologizing" has two important components that increase the tension: first, that you are assumed to be ill, and second, that you (or the power pathologizing you, or both) believe that assessment is assumed to be negative.

⁹⁷ We might recall here Cvetkovich's invocation of Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as resulting in a "vulnerability to premature death", a dramatic reorientation to the future (*Depression*, 120).

What feels more than feeling? You are afraid there is something you are missing, something obvious. A feeling that feelings might be irrelevant if they point to one's irrelevance pulls at you.

Do feelings lose their feeling if they speak to a lack of feeling? Can feelings be a hazard, a warning sign, a disturbance, distaste, the disgrace? Don't feel like you are mistaken. It's not that (Is it not that?) you are oversensitive or misunderstanding. 98

Rankine reiterates the dual perspectives of interior feeling: is it that you are oversensitive or misunderstanding? Or is it *not* that? Likewise, she portrays how an abundance of feelings—or an absence—is the result of a breakdown in logic. "You are afraid there is something you are missing," she writes, some piece of a larger picture where "randomly the rules everyone else gets to play by no longer apply to you," as she portrays Serena Williams earlier in the collection. Rankine suggests that any feeling becomes irrelevant when it is ignored; for the speaker's attackers, the process of acknowledging the speaker's feelings would be to also acknowledge her existence. Judith Butler suggests that this un-recognition is already a form of violence, and that other additional violences compound themselves on bodies: "Those who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization." Violence against these groups, then, is a doubled form of violence: first that of being erased, then that of the violent act itself. 100

This violence of erasure takes on, as we might expect, an alternative temporality, a slower, more insidious, creeping kind of violence that permeates bodies and minds. Rob Nixon's

⁹⁸ Rankine, Citizen, 152.

⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso Books, 2004), 33. Her work on "grievable" lives asks whose lives count as "real" within political and social institutions, and wonders how that reality might be remade.

¹⁰⁰ Butler further explains: "If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). ... Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object" (33). Violence thus repeats itself in an attempt to negate a subject that is already negated.

descriptions of a "slow" violence suggest this marginal temporality: a variety of violence that moves under the radar, perhaps catching fleeting attention but existing as largely undetected. His argument demands that we "complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound," calling for continued diligence to "account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions." First, Nixon's explanation emphasizes the potential "temporal dispersion" of violence, one which emphasizes alternative temporalities, rather than a singular disruptive moment. Second, Nixon calls for an acknowledgement of these less visible or invisible "social afflictions," emphasizing that their mode of temporal engagement unfolds slowly but insidiously, avoiding the "breaks" in time that often mark violent acts for us. As such, Nixon associates visible violence with "disaster" time, of newsworthy events that involve bodies. While he focuses on the environmental impact of slow violences, what I explore in this chapter blur the lines between his distinctions of conventional and slow violence. That is, what does a temporality of *slow* embodied violence look like? Or a combination of conventional and slow violence? For every moment of disaster time that ends in visible violence—the shooting of an unarmed black man, for instance—what were the slow, embodied violences that lead to that moment, and what does our understanding of the temporality of that kind of violence do? How can we acknowledge the slow violence of "[t]hose years of and before me and my brothers, the years of passage, plantation, migration, of Jim Crow segregation, of poverty, inner cities, profiling, of one in three, two jobs, boy, hey boy, each a felony, accumulate into the hours inside our lives where we are all caught hanging, the rope inside us"?¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Nixon, Slow Violence, 3.

In *Ban en Banlieue*, Kapil contrasts the disaster time of the riot—the disruptive moment of Ban laying on the ground—with more lingering forms of violence:

I think often about low-levels of racism, the very parts of a social system or institution that are hard to address, precisely because they are non-verbal—a greater trigger for schizophrenia in immigrant populations: in women, that is, than larger events, the race riot, for example, with its capacity: to be analyzed.¹⁰³

As Nixon suggests, this form of violence is difficult to capture in the news, precisely because it is non-verbal or, if verbal, then shrouded in evasive rhetoric. ¹⁰⁴ Although the terms of a violent riot ending in death differ from the subtle, lingering forms of violence that Kapil describes, the riot likewise brings with it post-violence commentary in the form of analysis. Both kinds of violence become events subjected to rhetorical spinning. Thornton argues that this kind of analysis can only take place after the fact of violence: "One the violent event has happened, that is, once the death has occurred, then everything is reinterpreted. We go back in time—we quite literally seek to reverse time by means of the cultural tools of narrative and rhetoric—in order to construct a meaning for the violent event itself:"¹⁰⁵ Again we can see the role of narrative as a mode of explanation that poetry can subvert. It is our cultural rhetorics that assign "meaning" to violence, which seek out causes and chains of events that are impossible to know. Thornton

¹⁰² Rankine, *Citizen*, 89-90. This section of *Citizen* is about the death of Trayvon Martin.

¹⁰⁰ Kapil, Ban en Banlieue, 48.

¹⁰⁴ There's a moment in *Citizen* where the speaker has lunch with a woman she doesn't know, while on a visit to this woman's campus. Between the time of ordering salads and waiting for them to arrive, the woman off-handedly notes that although "she, her father, her grandfather, and you, all attended the same college," her son wasn't accepted because of "affirmative action or minority something—she is not sure what they are calling it these days and weren't they supposed to get rid of it?" (13).

¹⁰⁵ Thornton, 53.

maintains that we constantly re-approach the past, reconfiguring the event of violence with some kind of pre-knowledge of it, "attempt[ing] to set the stage so that when violence does occur it will be explicable in terms that have already been written into the cultural 'script'." Although the "low-level" racism that Kapil describes may not receive the analytical attention of a riot, it still is subjected to a similar kind of explication from onlookers, one where its violence may be dismissed precisely because it *does* fit into accepted cultural scripts. In these accepted "scripts," subtle violences may be tolerated and acknowledgement of these violences seen as complaining and overt sensitivity.

And yet the aftermath of these "quiet" violences abide for Rankine and Kapil in the body itself, in the possibility of mental illness that situates the speaker for an unforeseen duration in the temporal disruption that a violent act initially caused. This out-of-timeness lingers, disrupting chronological timelines and narratives of forward progress, becoming what Kapil calls "[a] door you can't go back through." These subtle violences "traverse public histories in a single line," subverting chronological historical time and space. Thornton suggests that violence is "an orphaned moment that must be claimed by meaningfulness if it is to grow to social significance." Rankine and Kapil's poetic work seeks to reclaim the orphaned moments of violence, to strip them of previously assigned coherence or meaning and, rather than weaving them into a linear cultural narrative, to explore the effects of letting these moments lapse in all of their discomfort. 110

0

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁷ Kapil, *Ban*, 70.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁹ Thornton, 55.

Mental Illness, Form, and the Subversion of Chronology

As we have seen, there is often a political component to moments of violence, a component we can also see echoed in assumptions, perceptions, and claims of mental illness. Anna Mollow suggests that the oppression of those with disabilities is not just an added oppression thrust on top of a "pre-existing impairment; rather, the production of some impairments is itself a political process." With this link of political impetus, we can see how mental illness and violence share some of the same temporalities, that illness and oppression—what we might also think of as racial violence—are often inexorably interwoven, that the moment of illness and of violence is often one and the same.

In what has transpired thus far, we have considered how markers of mental illness can emerge in response to both public and private events. Furthermore, mental illness tends to present itself as more highly constructed than many physical illnesses; that is, outside observers are more likely to disbelieve a mental illness that a visible physical illness, while also being more likely to project or assume a mental illness for someone who potentially does not have one. This dual tendency to both disbelieve and assume a mental illness when convenient means that mental illness is both continuously pathologized *and* unaccommodated.

¹¹⁰ Zong! author M. NourbeSe Philip notes in the footnotes to Zong! that the process of acknowledging a past violence, even repeatedly, does not necessarily smooth out the chronology. She uses the work of Ian Baucom, focusing on his argument that "the continued witnessing of the Zong atrocity by writers and artists points to an 'order of historical time' that does not so much pass as 'accumulate'." Qtd. in Zong! (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 208.

¹¹¹ Mollow, 78.

¹¹² It's important to note that this contrast exists, as I say, between mental illnesses and *visible* physical illnesses or disabilities. Invisible illness occupies the other end of the spectrum, where it is both unlikely to be believed and unlikely to be projected (because of its tendency to not be believed). Although there isn't space for it here, I would wager that if someone falls outside norms—of efficiency, of social interaction, etc.—it is probably more likely that an outside observer would project a mental illness on them—even a sloppy configuration, such as "they're crazy"—before an invisible physical illness.

The experience of mental illness rejects the same kind of pathological temporality that we often see with physical illnesses: that is, "what is the cause, and how do we treat or cure it?"

Because most experiences of mental illness are more closely aligned with ongoing or sporadic treatment rather than "cure," the chronology of this kind of illness tends toward the chronic, which we have already examined in Chapters 1 and 2. Here in what follows, I first argue that the temporalities of mental illness are represented in part by the form of these texts by Kapil and Rankine. I find the form of the texts intrinsically linked to the representations of mental illness, especially their shared alternative temporalities. In conclusion, I stake some claims about the overlapping temporality of illness and violence, and suggest possible outcomes for the imbrication of these different modes of experiencing time.

As I've noted earlier, claiming which forms and genres best define *Schizophrene* and *Ban en Banlieue* is a slippery subject. Their publisher, Nightboat Books, describes *Ban* as "Poetry/Prose," while *Schizophrene* receives the even more nebulous designation of "Literature." This generic flexibility suits texts like these, however, which look like poetry on first glance, yet expend a lot of energy convincing the reader that they are novels—or at least something that resembles a novel. My readings here make a two-part claim: first, that Kapil describes and defends her texts as novels to draw attention to their precise *non*-novel-ness. Second, it is the lyric form of these texts that suggest the alternative temporalities that Kapil is so interested in within her work, including the alternative temporalities of illness.

For Kapil, the form of the novel is always already a deconstructed one. She has an "idea for a novel before it's shattered" and yet also takes great care to describe how both *Schizophrene* and *Ban* are collections of pieces and fragments. The concept of "novel" exists for her and her

speaker in a seemingly inaccessible place, and her books become, then, an exercise in recalling as much as possible about the dream of the novel that was or could be:¹¹³

But to write this narrative is not to split it, for which an antidote is commercially produced in quantities that exceed populations. A *schizophrenic narrative* cannot process the dynamic elements of an image, any image, whether pleasant enriching or already so bad it can't be tendered in the lexicon of poses available to it.¹¹⁴

The process of writing, Kapil asserts, is not a matter of splitting narratives into parts, in a mode she refers to as "schizophrenic." Indeed, those split narratives are inadequate vehicles for processing the nuances of an image, she suggests. I would add that this difficulty arises precisely because the schizophrenic experience is not one of narrative but rather of a different temporal order. Kapil points toward this alternative temporality in her distinction between narrative and image, the "image" being, I would argue, what encapsulates the abrupt, the experience of *present*. Repeatedly in *Schizophrene*, Kapil returns to a memory from childhood, an image passed down to her: of the bodies of women after a failed migration attempt, "row after row of women tied to the border trees." "This story," writes Kapil, "which wasn't really a story but an image, was repeated to me at many bedtimes of my own childhood. // Sometimes I think it was

¹¹³ This notion of a writer abandoning a fully realized work is not new. Furthermore, there are also numerous examples of a writer abandoning, losing, or otherwise exchanging the novel form for the lyric. For instance, there is James Merrill's *The Book of Ephraim*, which eventually becomes part of his larger collection, *The Changing Light at Sandover. The Book of Ephraim* is a long, segmented poem that starts as a way of rewriting a lost novel. James Merrill, *Divine Comedies: Poems* (New York: Atheneum, 1976).

¹¹⁴ Kapil, Schizophrene, 7-8.

¹¹⁵ It is important to clarify Kapil's use of "schizophrenic" here. Does she refer to the experience of a specific mental illness, or to a more colloquial and ableist sense of that which is "schizophrenic": the fragmented, the disordered? Kapil makes it clear in *Schizophrene* that she is concerned with actual mental illnesses, while simultaneously drawing attention to the more casual ways people use terms like schizophrenic. Michelle Jarmon notes in her work that she "often refer[s] to *mental distress*, which attempts to challenge the static nature illness diagnoses tend to impose" (emphasis added), 11. This term more aptly captures the fluxes of mental illness, and also emphasizes the non-static nature of illness, while rejecting the need to fit diagnoses into specific categories of identification.

not an image at all but a way of conveying information."¹¹⁶ Within the space of two sentences, the genre of this retelling changes; first, it is a "story," a retelling characterized by a narrative trajectory. Failing that, it becomes an image, more centered on a particular encapsulated moment than in any forward-moving chronology. In retrospect, the speaker suggests that "it was not an image at all" but rather a mode of conveying raw data, a description that implies more a transfer of information than a timeframe of experience. It is the image, then, that seems most tied to the kind of temporal experience that I have been exploring here, and it is the lyric which captures these image-based moments that deflect narrative.

For instance, Kapil clarifies in *Ban* that the novel is "a form that processes the part of a scene that doesn't function as an image, but as the depleted, yet still livid mixture of materials that a race riot is made from." The novel is a structure that can attempt semi-comprehensive coverage—such as considering the "mixture of materials" that go into constructing a riot—but seems to struggle, in Kapil's description, as a generic mode that can portray the image, the shape of a moment itself. Kapil also emphasizes the non-linearity of her texts, where even the bodies of women tied to trees form a "vertical grave," a disruption of horizontal progression. In *Ban*, Kapil writes that she "wanted to write a novel but instead I wrote this. [Hold up charcoal in fist.] I wrote the organ sweets—the bread-rich parts of the body before it's opened and devoured. I wrote the middle of the body to its end." This moment blurs the written text with the performances Kapil conducts as a part of her larger project on Ban, and the novel she imagines is

116 Kapil, Schizophrene, 40.

¹¹⁷ Kapil, *Ban*, 37.

¹¹⁸ Kapil, *Schizophrene*, 23. Notably, this scene occurs in a section of *Schizophrene* called "A Healing Narrative," which opens with the line, "Fragments attract each other [...]" (22-23). Although titled as a "narrative," the section emphasizes the movement of fragmented parts "[i]n correspondence." The image of the woman against the tree in her "vertical grave" also emphasizes the impossibility of the healing that the title suggests.

¹¹⁹ Kapil, *Ban*, 19.

replaced with the physical action of "hold[ing] up charcoal in fist." But there is more at stake here than a shift from text to performance; this excerpt also demonstrates the difficulty of narrative—as represented by the novel Kapil wants to write—to capture what Kapil says she writes *instead* of the novel: "the organ sweets—the bread-rich parts of the body [...] I wrote the middle of the body to its end." What she ends up writing instead suggests the body as linear disrupter in a text where chronology breaks down. Elsewhere she describes the ability of poetics to portray this alternative to chronology:

On September 4th, 2010, at 7 p.m., I began to write—but did not write—[wrote]: Notes for a novel never written: a novel of the race riot: (Ban). As my contribution to a panel at the limits of the poetic project—its capacity: for embodiment, for figuration, for what happens to bodies when we link them to the time of the event, which is to say—unlived time, the part of time that can never belong to us—I would like to present: a list of the errors I made as a poet engaging a novel-shaped space, the space of a book: set: on a particular day and at a particular time: April 23rd, 1979.¹²⁰

This section comes from the opening paragraphs that introduce a section of *Ban en Banlieue* titled "[13 Errors for Ban]." In the numbered "errors" that follow, Kapil suggests alternative histories of Ban, new ways of portraying or representing Ban, and ruminations on immigration, time, and the project of writing.

As for the section reproduced above, it is bookended by two sets of dates: the writing of Ban—or rather, notes *on* Ban—and the date of the original race riot itself. In between is a seeming suspension of time between two fixed points where the syntax and associated punctuation of the sentences starts to break down. There is a shifting movement between time

1

¹²⁰ Ibid., 19-20.

and its associated tenses—"write" becomes "did not write" becomes "wrote"—and the longdashes pile up with colons to create disruptions on the sentence level. Kapil is also interested in how time functions more overtly; she suggest that the "time of the event" is always "unlived" time that can "never belong to us." Put another way, to write about the moment of an event—in this case, the moment of violence—always requires some temporal gymnastics. There is both the difficulty of portraying a moment you didn't experience yourself, and also the acknowledgement of what Kapil calls "the part of time that can never belong to us." The "errors" Kapil makes as a "poet engaging a novel-shaped space" preclude the genre of the novel at all, the text instead dwelling in moments of strange temporality, attempting to portray the embodied experiences of ruptured time.

Challenging Linearity with Duration

For Kapil, the temporal breaks challenge both chronology and the mind's own ordering principles. "I wrote schizophrenic sentence after schizophrenic sentence until I reached the last sentence, both after and before," writes Kapil. 121 The designation of "last" is called into question as it is positioned as both after and before, although Kapil intentionally leaves out the context for these descriptors. She suggests that it is the schizophrenic quality of the sentences that alters their chronology; although she is writing "sentence after [...] sentence"—a chronological accumulation—the final culmination of these sentences into the "last sentence" is somehow still "both after and before." Later she describes the moment of the "event" as having a similar alternative temporality: "As the event unfolds both after and before. As the text of a present

¹²¹ Kapil. *Ban*. 67.

moves so rapidly it cannot be written."¹²² The moment of the event is always contextual, always situated between some version of a "before" and "after." There is, as Kapil argues, something irretrievable about the present moment of the event, something that cannot be written but that is paradoxically also a "text" (Kapil calls it the "text of a present").

Kapil continually returns—in *Ban* and *Schizophrene* alike, but particularly in thinking though the construction of *Ban*—to the moment of the break, referring again and again to the "before" and "after," but also suggesting that within the text, there are no discrete categories such as these. "This is the first problem of the project," Kapil writes, "an interest in *duration* as the force by which—something: might become." She makes the sentence itself a practitioner of duration, extending the time of reading and the space of the words with arguably unnecessary punctuation. The experience of duration is, to Kapil, a productive one, where "something: might become." The moment of duration is always in between a before and after, caught in between; "a portal, a vortex, a curl: a mixture of clockwise and anti-clockwise movements in the sky above the street." This isolated experience of time is both disruptive of chronology—it moves both clockwise and anti-clockwise, which is itself a rejection of "clockwise," more so than the standard "counter-clockwise"—and of space, where the moment cycles like a vortex and moves through physical space "in the sky above the street."

Through her work, Kapil also suggests that the experiences of mental illness occupy a similar temporal break, suspended between before and after, encapsulated in the experience of the break; of duration. These breaks become physical manifestations in space, both a reliance on the space of the lyric form to capture these fragmented temporalities, as well as an appeal to the

¹²² Ibid., 70.

¹²³ Ibid., 21. Emphasis added.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 42-43.

migratory and social spaces that cause, relate to, and respond to mental illness. In one such example in *Ban*, Kapil describes the difficulty of representing both one particular moment and the palimpsest of moments that her book creates:

But this is to individuate a common sorrow in the time extending from August 1947 to the present era, which is already past. Folds generate density on a contour map but for what? A map is a kind of short term memory: the genealogy of an historical time versus the chronology of geographical form. No. I need a different way to make this decision.¹²⁵

Here Kapil shows the intersection of numerous modes of temporality: the specificity of dated time (August 1947), the broadness of "era"s ("the present era"), the chronology of recreated and retold history, and the movements and changes of geographical or geological forms. What to make of these differing temporalities when they all are, in a sense, "already past"? Her text becomes like a folded map, the layers of historical and geographical time layered over one another with physical folds. These layers, she writes, create an image of the central riot "overlain by other riots. The riot is a charnel ground in this sense—overlain—in the present—by concrete—poured right down—over the particular spot on the sidewalk I am speaking of—as well as—migrations—from Eastern Europe—and beyond." Her text is both a burial ground and a disruption of these sedimentary layers, an attempt to drill through time to capture a moment. In this act, her book synthesizes the temporalities of illness and violence, and rejects the chronologies of narrative and novel form. The disintegration of chronology is what allows the text to focus on the moment of the break itself: "I want a literature that is not made from

¹²⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 22.

literature," she writes in *Ban*. "In a literature, what would happen to the girl? I write instead, the increment of her failure to orient, to take another step." Kapil focuses not on progression—indeed, the girl fails to move forward, orient herself in time, or even take a physical step—but on the event, the moment and its duration, a move intrinsically related to form: "In a novel that no one writes or thinks of writing, the rain falls in lines and dots upon her." These lines and dots bring us back to this chapter's opening, to Kapil's explanation that "grammar is emotional," representing an embodied education of punctuation that that she both removes from her text and uses to construct *Ban*.

Within *Citizen*, *Schizophrene*, and *Ban en Banlieue*, Kapil and Rankine return again and again to the intersections of violence, race, and illness, positing a view of the world where the disruptions of everyday racism and ill-will cause disruptions within the self and its own experiences of time. These are not just racially inflected scenarios but also, in many cases, gendered. Teresa Brennan suggests that women foremost "have carried the negative affects. But a better term than 'women' would be 'feminine beings,' by which I mean those who carry the negative affects for the other. These are most likely to be women, but the disposition of the negative affects varies, especially when racism is a factor. By disposition, I mean the direction of negative affects such as aggression. The question should be: To whom is the affect directed?" The effects of this violently endowed affect have ramifications in broad social spheres.

12

¹²⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁸ Theresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 15. She goes on to echo what Rankine and Kapil suggest so cogently: "Because whoever that object is will be prone to anxiety and then depression (both the effects of aggression turned inward). In the 1990s, depression was the most rapidly growing disorder in Europe and the United States, while concern with boundaries was also proliferating. Could these things be related?" (15).

¹²⁹ Nirmala Erevelles argues that any kind of disability or illness is an essential part of capitalism, "because [the ideology of disability] is able to regulate and control the unequal distribution of surplus through invoking biological difference as the 'natural' cause of all inequality, thereby successfully justifying the social and economic inequality

Understanding how mental illness and violence are interrelated, how they share similar fragmented experiences of temporality, allows us to challenge the kind of rhetoric that pathologizes mental illness, creates subtle forms of violence, and uses both of those manifestations to justify further systemic marginalization.

that maintains social hierarchies." "Disability and the Dialectics of Difference," *Disability and Society* 11, no. 4 (1996): 526.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MATERIALITY OF DEATH: DOCUMENTARY POETICS, RUPTURE, AND RETURN

Woke up from one dream and into another.

Hillary Gravendyk, "Imperative"

In the final poem of Hillary Gravendyk's first and only full collection, *Harm*, the speaker portrays a body caught in the long moment of transition. This poem, titled "Imperative," concludes a collection that resonates with both an ill body—one undergoing serious medical intervention—and relentless images of blood, air, and breath. The book loosely follows Gravendyk's own experiences with a double lung transplant after living with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) for eleven years. In its opening line quoted above, her poem "Imperative" foregrounds a moment of transition, waking up from "one dream and into another." This moment of waking is both subjectless and retold, as we can see by its use of past tense. The poem itself is structured as a series of stand-alone lines, each arranged as a separate stanza, made up of anywhere from one to three sentences each, with the first third of the poem reading as follows:

Woke up from one dream and into another.

I guess I'd written time was honey. Wrote myself a landscape. Slow scenery, combed gold across the mouth and the eye.

¹ Hillary Gravendyk, *Harm* (Omnidawn: Richmond, CA, 2011), 80.

² Diana Arterian, "On the Harmed Body: A Tribute to Hillary Gravendyk," Los Angeles Review of Books, February 29, 2009. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-the-harmed-body-a-tribute-to-hillary-gravendyk/. According to Gravendyk, the book is "an attempt to recover the time that was lost to my waking mind during surgery and for several days afterward."

But our fast-forwarding hearts. Every eye the thawed river, fat with snow.

Mind rode in the back of a train out of one weather and into another.³

The speaker enters in the next stanza line, positioning herself precariously in the present, between what has occurred—"I guess I'd written *time was honey*. Wrote myself a landscape"—and what is to come: "But our fast-forwarding hearts. Every eye the thawed river, fat with snow." Her malapropism of "time was honey" instead of "time is money" likewise suggests both a slowness to time—sticky and slow moving, like honey—and time's own indefinability. If time can be both money and honey, what is it at all? In her aurally similar swap of "money" for "honey," the speaker also suggests that she holds creative authority; she is the one who defines terms, who writes, and who creates, from her writing, a landscape with its "slow scenery." And yet, this landscape she creates betrays its own non-linearity. Her mind rides "in the back of the train out of one weather into another," foregrounding a speaker in perpetual transition as the poem continues; the river she describes is both "thawed" and "fat with snow," demonstrating a seasonal temporality that stumbles over itself trying to be omnipresent and eternal across time and space.⁴

This is a poem both about the moment of entering life again post-surgery—many earlier poems in the collection discuss the effects of anesthesia and recovery, including one titled "Eight Days Asleep"—as well as marking the possibility of a more final transition: death. "Woke up from one dream and into another," she writes, and the speaker enters a self-created landscape

³ Gravendyk, *Harm*, 80.

⁴ A different reading of this line—that the river's icy top layer has thawed and now it carries piles of snow that once sat upon the ice—also emphasizes the transitional nature of seasonal movement, the line portraying a moment caught dually on both sides of that boundary between winter and spring.

that refuses seasonal linearity but instead is paradoxically both suspended in time and "fast-forwarding" ahead to ponder future possibilities. Near the end of the page-length poem, the speaker admits, "I'll impose a narrative across an abrupt jumble of absences, call it *healing*. But each blank moment departs us, too." To these scenes of altered temporality, the speaker attempts to impose a narrative structure, a linear trajectory. Notably, what she specifically addresses are the absences, what she goes on to call the "blank" moments. It is these absent moments that she claims to weave into a linear narrative, yet she also suggests that "each blank moment departs us, too." That is, each of these absent moments is a point of misdirection, moments of blankness where the speaker experiences a departure from the very linear narrative she struggles to impose.

Notably, the speaker directly relates the notion of "healing" with narrative, writing that the jumbled moments-turned-narrative end up designated as such. Her use of italicizing already suggests a certain distancing from what healing implies, a suggestion that healing is impossible, or that it is merely the label we affix at the end of the narratives we create ourselves, rather than some objective reality. This uncertainty about what healing actually means for the poem perpetuates its own temporal uncertainty. Is this a poem, as its first line perhaps suggests, about waking up from surgery back into life, tracing a kind of "healing" that surgery and recovery yearn toward? Or is it a poem about a larger transition, "from one dream into another," where each absent moment "departs us" into another possible life? The poem contains both of these possibilities, and the idea of healing likewise contains dual readings. One reading is of actual bodily healing; another reading, however, projects an ending different from "healing" as we tend to conceptualize it. Instead of the lure of a "cure"—of an end to illness—this alternative reading is instead a letting go of the idea of cure.

The speaker of the poem plays a role as writer and creator; the title of the poem—

"Imperative"—suggests an urgency, a command from speaker to audience and reader.

Throughout, she references the meta quality of the poem, where the speaker is also writer: "I guess I'd written *time was honey*," she writes, "Wrote myself a landscape." In acknowledging her role as writer, the speaker positions herself as both a creator—writing her own landscape—and a documentarian, observing what unfolds around her, "impos[ing]" a narrative but as a way to simultaneously record the "jumble of absences." In the final stanza of the poem, she writes:

Lost the book of what happens next—and anyway, closed, one book looks so like another.

The point I want to make here is that the final stanza does two important things: first, it stresses the undefined temporal shift that is central to the poem. The final line rejects the linear narrative, instead claiming that the text which tells the speaker "what happens next" is gone. Where, then, does that leave the speaker? The linear progression is disrupted with the absence of "what happens next," and the speaker shrugs off this loss, claiming that "closed, one book looks so like another," which is only true in the sense that the objects are similar (both books), not that they actually are often mistakable for each other. With that claim, however, there is no definitive timeline that the speaker is objectively a part of; each "book" is interchangeable on first glance. Second, the closing line emphasizes the speaker's role as documentarian, centralizing the role of a physical text—the book—as crucial to temporal progression. Written text plays an important role in the poem's progression; the speaker wakes to see what she has written, which indicates the movement from "one dream into another." What the speaker writes is also what imposes narrative—insofar as there is a narrative progression—and also, paradoxically, breaks down linear progressions: "each blank moment departs us, too." Finally, the image of life transposed

into a book plays off an all-too-common metaphor of life itself *as* a book, with the close of the book representing the close of a life. Here, it's unclear if the book is ended or merely lost; is the text recoverable?

These questions form the start of this final chapter on the temporality of death. Like the speaker in Gravendyk's poem, I too am interested in the records we keep about death, in the process of documentation, and how both relate to the strange temporalities inherent in speaking of and about death. In what follows, I examine poets who document the process of death and perhaps more notably, for this stakes of this chapter—the aftermath of death. What does it mean to return to the death, knowing it cannot be remediated? This return evokes, of course, the long tradition of the elegy, poems written in remembrance of those who have died. In *American* Elegy, Max Cavitch suggests that memories of the dead are ultimately unfulfilling, "not because they remind us that the dead are gone, but because they are proof of a kind of presence not available to conscious experience." This inaccessible "presence" that Cavitch describes is also an apt way to describe the temporal break surrounding the moment of death, an in-between time where the speaker becomes inaccessible. Although the text of Gravendyk's "Imperative" straddles an in-between temporality at the edge of two dream worlds, Gravendyk herself died in 2014, in part the result and conclusion of her illness. This poem, which we can read with the rest of the collection as semi-autobiographical in nature, perpetuates an indefinite in-betweeness that linear time resists. Medical anthropologist S. Lochlann Jain writes that illness in general especially when it hints at a premature death—casts the ill person into a strange temporality:

The prognosis yokes the survivor to the past and future, but confusingly. The illness adage

٠

⁵ Max Cavitch, *American Elegy: The Poetry of Mourning from the Puritans to Whitman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 289-290.

of "living in the moment" nearly entirely misses the point. Living-in-the-Moment may provide a small resistance to the march of time. But it also mystifies the ways in which daily newspapers, retirement savings plans, and pharmaceutical advertisements alike ask us—even require us—to live in prognosis out there in the wild world, walking before the firing squad. I am alive. No, you are dead.⁶.

This strange temporality extends even onto death; Jain collapses the moment of death into a moment of unknowing: "I am alive. No, you are dead." Jain also emphasizes the material texts and documents that are associated with both life and end-of-life. The documentary—like any text—is always preserved as an in-between ("I am alive. No, you are dead."). In the records of violence in the previous chapter, the text perpetually records a history of violence that is always less violent than the moment in which it is read. Likewise, the text here preserves a moment of indefinite death, an imagined death that maintains its own pending status via the text.

In some ways, the poet's role becomes one of writing the "book of what happens next."

This isn't a recovery project, or—as Gravendyk claims—an attempt to impose narrative, but rather an acknowledgement of the blank, absent moments. Sometimes these poets are imagining the absence of voices created by the experience of death, which is itself an oxymoron; how does one use a speaker to acknowledge an absence of voice? More often, however, the poets imagine something else altogether. Through the process of documentation, these writers are less interested in imposing an imagined voice on the now-voiceless. Rather, in documenting these blank moments, these poets theorize a temporality of belatedness and of return. It's an extended kind of mourning, one that is always already too late to prevent what comes and what has already occurred.

⁶ S. Lochlann Jain, *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 45.

In this poetics of documentation, textual documents play a critical role. These physical, often textual objects—newspapers, books, letters, diaries—as well as more "virtual" forms of these objects, such as internet news stories and blog posts, and non-textual formats such as photography—find their way into the poetry I examine herein. However, the process of documentation that these poets exhibit goes beyond the regurgitation of facts or news stories. Instead, I argue that the documentary approach that these writers exercise distinctly breaks with the linear structures that a medium such as the newspaper typically perpetuates. Instead, these writers and poems together suggest that documenting death is a nonlinear process; the temporalities involved break with narrative linearity and instead circle, spiral, and swoon back to the places—both temporal and geographic—where death took place. In this case, what I am calling the documentary poetics of death emphasizes the in-between temporalities of loss and death. The documentary poem preserves the in-between moment, continually reinscribing the ruptured temporal experience of death.

Documentary texts and objects such as I mentioned before—newspapers, blogs, letters, photographs—likewise exist in this in-between, preserving a specific moment indefinitely, despite their other tendencies toward the linear. Benedict Anderson describes how newspapers link unrelated stories into a temporally bound narrative through juxtaposition: "This imagined linkage [between stories on the page of a newspaper] derives from two obliquely related sources. The first is simply calendrical coincidence ... the steady onward clocking of homogenous, empty time. Within that time, 'the world' ambles sturdily ahead." Anderson's description emphasizes

⁷ That is, physical documents of death both perpetuate a moment—that of the death, or the circumstances surrounding it—and emphasize the linear narrative, insofar as there is one (i.e., "First this happened, then this, then this, and now someone has died.").

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), 33.

the temporality of the newspaper itself, governed foremost by linear calendar time, but also subject to a specific timespan of relevance, after which it faces disposal. That is, the newspaper holds a certain timeliness that becomes outdated as "'the world' ambles sturdily ahead." Anderson also draws a parallel between the temporality of the newspaper with that of the novel, arguing that just because a topic might disappear from a newspaper doesn't mean that readers assume it has ended: "The novelistic format of the newspaper assures us that somewhere out there the 'character' ... moves along quietly, awaiting its next reappearance in the plot." Thus, even as newspapers are part of a daily temporality, they also exhibit a kind of narrative linearity. Stuart Sherman likewise suggests that novels and daily forms of writing—such as newspapers or diaries—share a certain temporal similarities. The novel with its plotting "combat[s] the threat of empty time," Sherman writes, while diaries and other diurnal forms "privilege successiveness and resist closure." For Sherman, both forms use a linear chronology; even if the diurnal forms resist closure, they still privilege "successiveness," the kind of linear plotting that attempts to avoid the problem of "empty time." And yet, taken as records of a momentary "break" in time, I argue that newspapers and other media forms suggest the possibility of an ongoingness rather than closure.

Although poets are the often-unacknowledged record keepers of many things, this chapter specifically focuses on their role as the record keeper of death, the markers of loss and the returners—in poetry first and foremost, and sometimes in additional, physical ways—to the

⁹ Ibid. For instance, a newspaper's omission of news of a war in one issue would not lead people to assume the war had ended.

¹⁰ Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10-11. Sherman here responds to Frank Kermode's work, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), where Kermode compares fiction to the tick-tock of a clock, suggesting that plot is what intervenes in the interval between the "tick" and "tock." Sherman, on the other hand, suggests that diurnal forms mimic the more contemporary "tick-tick" successiveness of time, an ongoingness that is less fixated on the traditional structure of beginning-end.

space and time of a passing. In an untitled poem from *Harm*, Gravendyk explains the difficult necessity of this role. The brief poem reads in full:

You were the Librarian of caution, the most unwelcome ghost.

Tiny book, tiny book keeper. You have always been accounted for.¹¹

In addition to formal echoes of Emily Dickinson, renowned poet of death, Gravendyk here also suggests the role which poets play in documentation. "You were the Librarian / of caution," she writes, a position of recording and research. It is unclear if this person was merely cautious, or one who dealt specifically in archiving and recording "caution" as such; either way, she is "the most / unwelcome ghost." Suggesting that the Librarian is, in fact, a "ghost" implies a temporal disconnect, a presence that transcends linear time in its outright rejection of a final death. Again referencing the physical records of documentation—here, books—the speaker describes the way that records themselves mirror the record-keeper, both diminutive in size: "[t]iny book, tiny book / keeper." She closes the poem with a note about documentation, one which places the Librarian in the same frame of reference as death itself: "You have always / been accounted for." This project of accounting—of recording and sorting the details—has always already occurred, an awareness that permeates, regardless of present circumstances. And yet, this process of accounting is not only relegated to the past; ending the line with a dangling modifier gives it a sense of ongoingness, of incompleteness. The task of record-keeping, especially of death, is one

¹¹ Gravendyk, *Harm*, 47.

about which we are all aware, and yet this awareness—and any kind of resulting preparation—is necessarily incomplete.

The documentary poem about death is preserved as an in-between, a record of a moment in time that is both under investigation and always accounted for. That is, death as a universal event is always known, and yet each individual instance of death requires its own processing and, depending on the circumstances, its own investigation. In what follows, I first explore the notion of documentary poetics. Using the work of Gravendyk alongside the poet C.D. Wright, I argue that documentary poetics help articulate the strange temporalities of death. Wright, who worked on several collections of poetry that drew from newspapers, court documents, and newstickers, focused on the lives of marginalized people. In her work, this group includes the southern poor, the incarcerated, and people of color targeted by police. In examining her descriptions of the uneven temporalities inherent in all of these experiences, we can see the way that death enters in, and how her work helps us to understand its paradoxical involvement in time. Gravendyk and Wright's poetry—specifically the collections I examine—is less interested in imposing a voice on the "voiceless"—even though it draws from accounts of the disenfranchised—than the process of documenting the blank moments surrounding death to theorize a temporality of belatedness and return. In the second part of the chapter, I examine poetry by Danielle Pafunda and Jillian Weise that specifically addresses death; both respond to a loud, messy, violent kind of death, not unlike the violent ends that befall many of Wright's subjects in the first section. Although the violence in their poems helps me craft an argument about the temporality of death, violence itself is not a necessary part of understanding the breaks and the returns of death, a topic I'll discuss more at the close of this chapter. In closing, I offer a few brief thoughts on the way that poetry and photography—one key feature of documentaryinteract with the temporality of death.

Belated Returns: The Strange Temporality of Death

In Hillary Gravendyk's poem "Eight Days Asleep," she describes the disembodying effects of anesthesia on the poem's unnamed speaker: "A clot of institutional / mystics watched her slip the skin, gently shook / it from her shoulders," Gravendyk writes. 12 She goes on to describe how

Everything was dazzling until everything was dim. The light wilted across the eyes. She left the body squandering its machines.

The central image is of consciousness leaving the body behind, escaping the skin and watching the light fade from in front of the eyes. The hospital's own in-house "mystics"—the anesthesiologists—are themselves fashioned as another body which the speaker leaves behind, forming a "clot" instead of a group. The body the speaker leaves is itself dissolving, spreading the "machines" of its working parts as the speaker slips away. Although "squander" often means to spend recklessly or foolishly, when it pertains to objects themselves—like machines—it can hold a different meaning: to scatter or disperse. In this isolated version of a death—slipping wordlessly into a consciousness-less sleep—the speaker leaves the body and scatters its pieces. Although the title of the poem—"Eight Days Asleep"—suggests a clear-cut temporal certainty, the poem itself rejects the linear timeline the title hints at. Like a dying subject, Gravendyk's speaker moves into a strange, blank kind of space and time, which Gravendyk's poems theorize

¹² Gravendyk, *Harm*, 20.

¹³ See the OED, "squander, v." *OED Online*. June 2017, Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/188181?rskey=qH3WH6&result=2.

as both a break with linear time and, eventually, a moment of return. To show this return, we might look at the poem that features on the facing page of Gravendyk's *Harm*, right across from "Eight Days Asleep." This sister poem, titled "First Minute, After Days," show the desire of the body to return. For Gravendyk's speaker, under anesthesia, the desire of return is also a forced awakening. She describes the incoherent spaces her body slowly finds, feeling "[d]runken or weary. Lost or left" in a dark room with a "[d]ark monitor. / Disorder on a blacker field." In this dim light, the speaker spies a set of hands and in an unsettling moment near the end of the poem, she makes a discovery in her moment of return: "Wait—Mine."

Later in the collection, her poem "Anesthesia" brings these two interconnected experiences—the sleep of anesthetized surgery, and its moment of return, of waking—together. This poem serves as a guide for how readers might unpack the temporal paradoxes of death, eking out a theory of documenting death that acknowledges its blank spaces—what Gravendyk describes earlier as "Dark monitor. / Disorder on a blacker field"—and the desire of the body for return. "Anesthesia" as title and term comes from Greek, meaning a "want of feeling" or a "defect of sensation." Being under anesthesia is, in its own small way, a mimic of death, a loss of conscious embodiment that is eventually subverted by the return of feeling and sensation.

Catherine Belling argues in her work on terminal illness that "we conceive ourselves in stories," noting the long tradition of thought which links self-narration to the development of selfhood. 17

There is a temporal dimension to these self-narrations, however, Belling argues, one which hits a

¹⁴ These two poems are found on pages 20 and 21 of *Harm*.

¹⁵ Gravendyk, *Harm*, "First Minute, After Days," 21.

¹⁶ "anaesthesia, n." *OED Online*. June 2017. Oxford University Press, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6946?redirectedFrom=anaesthesia.

¹⁷ Catherine Belling, "The Death of the Narrator," *Narrative Research in Health and Illness*, Eds. Brian Hurwitz, Trisha Greenhalgh, and Vieda Skultans (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 147. Belling uses the work of philosopher Anthony Paul Kirby to make this point.

snag when it comes to death: "My death is, to me, unnarratable," she writes. 18 There are some accounts—both in fiction and memoir, which she notes in her article—that suggest ways in which "the imagination might make it possible, though difficult, to narrate death as a future event, out of the chronological order, as if it has already happened." To do so, as she explains, requires a break in linear time and chronological order. I argue that the poets within this chapter use the poetic form to suggest possible moments of overlap within the experience of death and attempt to portray the untimely spaces that death creates. That is to say, experiences of death are more akin to Benedict Arnold's description of numerous newspaper stories related by their proximity on the page; there is a kind of palimpsest that forms in the temporal breaks that death creates. These experiences reject linearity, even the more tempered version of "successiveness" that Stuart Sherman describes earlier. Poetry, as a form that operates without the confines of narrative structure, functions differently than a prose text—for example, a memoir—to describe the untimely spaces of death.²⁰

Within Gravendyk's poem "Anesthesia," the experience of undergoing anesthesia mirrors the experience of death; for both experiences, linear temporality is upended and replaced with time that moves otherwise, characterized by moments of repetition and return. "Prepped by strangers," the poem opens, "I / counted backwards // into a storm, / the eye shuttered against // the tumult, the mouth / slapped open by rain."²¹ The speaker is instructed to count backwards, reversing the chronological development of numbers advancing. While she counts backwards, she is also moving "backwards / into a storm," where her body is paradoxically both closed ("eye

¹⁸ Ibid., 148.

¹⁹ Ibid., 152.

²⁰ That is, it is possible for a poem to engage in simultaneity without linearity—a palimpsest does not require chronicity.

²¹ Gravendyk, *Harm*, 52.

shuttered") and open ("mouth / slapped open by rain"). In the stanzas that follow, she writes,

Heard a plucked sound circling itself

[...]

My body humming like a hologram

struck from the air

Not only does her body move backwards in time and space, but her sensory experience mimics this circularity as well as the sound she hears (what she describes elsewhere as "chirrup of mechanized insects") circles on itself. Likewise, her body itself hums like the machines the speaker is hooked to, becoming a hologram "struck from the air." In identifying with a hologram, the speaker suggests her body is in two places at once, subverting standard, linear understandings of space and time; indeed, this version of the hologram is so lifelike that it can be "struck" from its space. She concludes the poem with the following lines: "I picked up a brick // light as lava rock and, blurred / with dreaming, the eye fell // over a book of impossible acts / completing themselves." The final lines suggest that appearances are not everything, that paradoxically a brick may be as light as air, or a body might move backwards in time, or that a moment might fold over on itself. Like the notion of a brick moved easily, without effort, the closing couplet likewise suggests a paradox: The speaker's eye falls upon "a book of impossible acts / completing themselves." The couplet is subjectless; the acts somehow "complete themselves" without taking a subject or body. Furthermore, the notion of undoable acts being completed despite their very definition suggests an alternative kind of space and time where this

achievement is possible, perhaps the same kind of alternative space and time that a hologram likewise suggests. Notably, these now-completed tasks are found in a book which "the eye"—again, subjectless—falls over, a document of this strange moment of blankness where holograms appear and unachievable tasks are finally achieved.²²

In her portrayal of the moments between sleep and waking, surgery and recovery, Gravendyk's collection also evokes the strange temporality of death. In these moments, the body paradoxically exists in numerous spatial and temporal iterations. More specifically, these bodily experiences demonstrate the need for some kind of temporal return. For Gravendyk's speaker, the temporal return is one of necessity; despite the similarities of her experiences with death, she is not actually dead and as such loops back through the experience. There is a belatedness inherent in this looping back, in the return to the body after a moment of unsettling. In his introduction to Edward Said's On Late Style, Michael Wood writes, "But death does sometimes wait for us, and it is possible to become deeply aware of its waiting. The quality of time alters then, like a change in the light, because the present is so thoroughly shadowed by other seasons: the revived or receding past, the newly unmeasurable future, the unimaginable time beyond time."²³ As Wood suggests, the past is paradoxically both revived and receding, the future not just simply unimaginable but rather unmeasurable. That is to say, death breaks down linear temporality. As Belling suggested earlier, death may be unnarratable to the person experiencing it, but we can use that unnarratability to examine a theory of its temporality. In the second half of this section, I turn to work by C.D. Wright to further examine both the temporality of death and the role of documentary poetics in examining that temporality.

²² If we are to believe that this image portrays an alternative time and space, then perhaps it is not just that the eye "casts" itself over the book but actually "falls"—indeed, if the body is truly as segmented as the opening of the poem leads us to believe, this kind of bodily agency seems possible in the context of this poem.

²³ Edward Said, On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain (New York: Vintage, 2007), xi.

C.D. Wright's 2016 *Shallcross* is the last collection that she oversaw before her death. Although published posthumously, it bears at least some of her editorial oversight, as detailed in a brief afterword titled "With: After Thoughts" by Michael Wiegers, Copper Canyon Press's Editor in Chief. He writes there of the shock of her sudden loss, of "this death that was not supposed to happen." Within the afterword, Wiegers's short commentary about working with Wright is interspersed with scanned images of her own editorial remarks. Her marginalia is scrawled in what looks to be red pencil, scratched out—often at a sharp sideways angle—in response to comments from the editorial staff: "I know but I'm misusing it with a certain headlong force," one comment reads, in response to an unknown suggestion. "I wish you hadn't gone down this rabbit hole," another reads, "I've jumped down it too." 26

The strange temporality of *Shallcross*'s publication history is not necessarily an unusual one in the world of publishing; after all, all books eventually "outlive" their authors and many are published posthumously, with varying amounts of authorial input.²⁷ In Wright's particular case, the timelines are somewhat uncannily close; the book was, as Wieger implies, essentially finished at the time of her death. She died in January of 2016; Wieger's note in the book is dated February, and the book was already set for press. As Craig Morgan Teicher notes in the *LA Times*:

"Shallcross," Wright's first posthumous book (it follows a collection of prose about

²⁴ Wright passed away unexpectedly in her sleep on January 12, 2016 at the age of 67. C.D. Wright, *Shallcross* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2016), 152.

²⁵ Ibid., 151.

²⁶ Ibid., 150.

²⁷ That is to say, sometimes authors have seen their manuscripts through the editing and pre-publication process, and their deaths and subsequent publications align, while other manuscripts are published long after death, often without input from the author.

poetry published just days before she died) was by no means intended as her last. In fact, she had submitted her next manuscript to her publisher already. So this extraordinary collection of poems should not be read as any kind of a final statement but instead as the next installment in a series of books by a poet at the height of her powers.²⁸

In some ways, then, the temporality of this publication is vastly different from the untimeliness of an author knowing she is going to die, knowing that this publication may be her last. And yet as I argue in what follows, Wright's work is obsessed with temporal breaks. Similarly, in her *Last Looks, Last Books*, Helen Vendler examines the last publication of five American writers: Sylvia Plath, Elizabeth Bishop, James Merrill, Robert Lowell, and Wallace Stevens. While some of the poets may have had foreknowledge—or at least an inkling—of their own quickly impending death, others such as Bishop seem to have known very little. And yet, these final works—regardless of foresight—are still invested in exploring the untimeliness of death itself, possessing what Vendler calls a "binocular" style that hones in on death while still in life.²⁹ For Wright, her interest in death is somewhat longstanding and is, I argue, best recognized through her interest in documentary-based poetics.

As her later work best demonstrates, Wright positions herself and her speakers as poet-documentarians, and her work incorporates the real-life stories of the imprisoned, the dead, and the dying.³⁰ This interest in stalled temporal frameworks instills a belatedness in her work, a

²⁸ Craig Morgan Teicher, "In 'Shallcross,' C.D. Wright was at the height of her powers," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/books/la-ca-jc-shallcross-20160424-story.html.

²⁹ Helen Vendler, *Last Looks, Last Books: Stevens, Plath, Lowell, Bishop, Merrill* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Her 1993 collection *Just Whistle* (Kelsey Street Press) is her first collaboration with photographer Deborah Luster. Later works, such as *One Big Self*, another collaboration with Luster, examines the lives of prisoners in Louisiana

literary "return" to the scenes of this violence and destruction. It is with this lens—and not necessarily some uncanny foreshadowing of her own imminent death—that we can read the temporal portrayals in her work. In his afterword, Wiegers's note ends with what is also the closing stanza of the book, the last four lines of the title poem, "Shallcross":

Don't shut it I said We lack for nothing

Indissolubly connected

Across the lines of our lives

The once the now the then and again³¹

This lyric moment is one of repeating timeframes, one that sees the speaker as "indissolubly" interconnected to the wide swath of lives that the book itself interacts with. In one sense, the lines emphasize the linearity of temporal experience; the speaker notes the "lines of our lives" stretched out. And yet, the final line of the stanza suggest an alternative temporality, one that equally privileges the past and present, "[t]he once the now the then and again" presented without punctuation or separation, ending on the word "again" as the poem and the book itself finish, suggesting a way of reading that continues onward in a similar way. Notably, this "once the now the then and again" intersects with the "lines" of life, a designation mirrored in the lines of the poem. Wright describes them as "connected / Across" this linear presentation of time.

(Twin Palms edition [2003] contains photos while Copper Canyon Press edition [2007] is just poems); Rising, Falling, Hovering (Copper Canyon Press, 2008) documents the American involvement in the war in Iraq; One With Others (Copper Canyon Press, 2010) uses archival materials to explore the legacy of Wright's friend and mentor Margaret Kaelin McHugh, who was involved in contentious civil-rights-era protesting in Arkansas. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that Wright was the child of a judge and a court reporter. Ben Lerner, "Postscript: C.D. Wright, 1949-2016," The New Yorker, January 14, 2016, http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/postscript-c-d-wright-

1949-2016.

³¹ Wright, *Shallcross*, 145.

"Don't shut it," the speaker says, and the immediately preceding lines perpetuate this broken linearity:

From a preceding life your Junoesque

Hand turning the handle to a door carved

From a Tree of Tomorrows

Don't shut it I said We lack for nothing

The door marks a metaphoric entrance in time, a forward progression emphasized by its source material, a "Tree of Tomorrows." The door also marks a threshold—a decision to be made—and yet the speaker encourages the forward flood of time: "Don't shut it." Like the ending of the poem, however, this moment contains paradoxes as well; the speaker moving forward in time is "[f]rom a preceding life"; just when time seems clearly portrayed as linear—a door you walk through, essentially labeled "Tomorrows"—a circularity intervenes, layers of lives looping back on themselves.

Is this moment representing death? Its strange temporality, I would argue, supports such a reading, and it is challenging to read these closing lines apart from the context of Wright's own untimely death. 32 And yet, this moment deliberately positioned at the end of the collection becomes a way of reading other, earlier portions, including a section of the book called "Breathtaken," devoted to documenting murder cases in New Orleans. This long poem, split into ten sections, compiles documentary news sources with personal histories to craft a lyric attempt

³² The fact that Wiegers, as Editor in Chief, reads this final poem as a farewell ode of sorts of course contributes to this reading, although Wright—as far as we know—had no forewarning of her impending death, other than knowing it would, someday, arrive.

at documentation. Wright explains in a note to the section, "I was a self-appointed gleaner from the NOLA.com Crime Blog ... with contributions from an extended cast of reporters for *The Times-Picayune*. The crime section of the site also maintains a day-to-day murder map. And St. Anna's Episcopal Church on Esplanade posts on its front lawn a murder board it endeavors to keep up."³³ She goes on to thank the people and stories who contributed:

A few individuals who lost loved ones to violence were very informally interviewed by this writer: Nakita and Yolande Shavers, sister and mother of Dinerral Shavers whose accused 17-year-old murderer three weeks after his acquittal was rearrested on a new attempted murder charge; the mother and aunt of Paul Ellis, 16, shot 29 times by four shooters with no arrests made; and Rose Preston, author of the *Crime Victims Guidebook*, whose husband and mother-in-law were brutally murdered by her mother-in-law's tenants. One of their killers died in the Parish jail of a ruptured ulcer. Charges were dropped against the other perpetrator after she participated in a restorative justice process.³⁴

Within this prose description of the project, Wright's recounting of the documentary materials and information she uses emphasizes the kind of fact-based timeframes that are often prioritized by news media. That is, Wright records the markers of linear time: ages of the victims, times between trials and acquittals and further incident, and accounts of violence distributed across perpetrators (four shooters, 29 shots). And yet, the poetry that follows dwells in the strange inbetweeness that follows and precedes the encounter with death. Wright notes at the end of her brief prefatory note that "[t]his project was conceived as a corollary to photographer Deborah

³³ Wright, *Shallcross*, 55.

³⁴ Ibid.

Luster's *Tooth for an Eye: A Chorography of Violence in Orleans Parish.*³⁵ As I argue in what follows, the frozen moment of the photograph serves as an apt reminder of the process of return that Wright describes in "Breathtaken." The poet/speaker shows up to the site of the crime, of the death and loss, and is unable to physically *do* anything to undo the linear timeline that has taken place. Instead, the poem creates and explores alternative modes of temporality that emphasize the unsettled temporality of death.

The poem, which spans eighteen pages, is split into ten sections denoted by Roman Numerals, save the ending which is titled and serves as a coda of sorts: "Petition to the Bearers of Precious Images to recollect a few things about him/her." This coda aside, the ten parts of the poem use lines that are formally spread across the page, emphasizing the breaks and missing parts not included herein. By way of example, the first section of the poem opens thus:

napping in her car with her 19-week fetus

at the tattoo parlor behind the barbershop

in a coffee-colored shotgun, Seventh Ward a triple

one of the men wore women's clothes

in the chest by a neighbor

under a cell tower

during a concert at Hush

³⁵ Ibid. Deborah Luster, *Tooth for an Eye: A Chorography of Violence in Orleans Parish* (Twin Palms Publisher, 2011).

³⁶ Wright, *Shallcross*, 74.

next to a snowball stand

in a trash bin facedown³⁷

These brief, fragmented lines suggest some of the details often recounted by news stories; at the very least, they include the "where", the "who", and sometimes the "how." The fragments are filled with prepositions—in, under, next to, behind—situating the victim in space. Other details of the crimes emerge—in the chest, a triple—as well as brief descriptions of the victims: in the car with her unborn child. Although these are the "factoids" that populate news reports or crime blogs, they lack the linear temporality and syntax required of the news genre. There are mentions of the where, who, and how, but what about "when"? As the poem progresses, Wright continues to overlay the stories and ephemera of the victims, complicating the possibility of a timeframe that places the victims in separate and discrete reported incidents. Wright notes in her opening that "[t]he homicides referred to were not exclusive to but were concentrated in a period of two years," and yet this temporal proximity alone does not explain the intersecting moments in her poem.³⁸

The ten parts of the poem continue on in a list format. Although there are no clear divisions in content between sections, certain parts tend toward topics. The first—part of which is quoted above—spends a lot of time examining what the victims of crime were doing before their deaths and *how* they were found. The second section continues this project of defining parameters by reporting on *where* victims were found:

³⁷ Ibid., 59.

³⁸ Ibid., 55.

corner of Hollygrove and Palm

over the Industrial Canal on Chef Menteur

lying on Olive Street

looking at the moon

swollen, ruinous

inside a silver Isuzu

corner of Touro and N. Roman

at the former Sugar Bowl Lanes

decomposed

near Elysian Fields overpass³⁹

Readers can assume that this mapping of murder spaces pulls directly from the information Wright gathers from police and crime blogs. Her separation of the connecting facts of the cases, however, impedes the linear narrative that such reports initially create. It is nearly impossible to trace any one person's story across the sections of "Breathtaken;" instead, the lists of places and possible deaths cause the details to blur together: "a girl totally in love with poetry / mother of a 30-month-old / the father ambushed in his car / a few days after she learned she was pregnant / he never even knew / [her cycle was off]." At times, strands of narrative make sense together—at least grammatically—but we as readers are left unsure if these characters are related by their

³⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 64.

story or only by their poetic proximity to one another.

At times, Wright's account seems to pull data directly from the documents she has been given, and the poem mimics that bureaucratic language: "[by gunshot unless otherwise noted]," one note reads, "a preponderance of evidence requires / a lower standard than proof / beyond a reasonable doubt," she writes elsewhere. 41 And yet, despite the manufactured resonance of some of the language, the lists themselves function as a memorial through their project of returning to the places and details of the crimes. The lists, then, and the places they represent, construct a kind of bodiless memorial, returning to the scene and moment of the death after it has already occurred. In her book Virtual Afterlives, Candi K. Cann describes how bodies are hidden away in the process of twenty-first century mourning. This erasure of the body seems especially relevant to crime victims, who are removed from the scene after evidence is collected, often becoming evidence themselves, making memorialization impossible. Cann writes, "In a world where the dead and their bodies are literally hidden, disappeared, or spirited away, memorialization offers a way in which survivors can reinscribe the dead into the realm of the living in a virtual and spatial way."⁴² In Cann's account, "memorialization" can occur in a number of ways; she notes that makeshift memorials are often established at the site of a public death. Using the data from police and crime blogs, then, Wright is establishing her own kind of memorial, a moment of return that blurs the boundaries between death and life for those who are still living.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 68.

⁴² Candi K. Cann, *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), 23. For more on alternative memorials and ways of grieving, see Rachel Poliquin's *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and Cultures of Longing*, especially the chapter "Remembrance." (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012).

⁴³ Photographer Amy Berbert is currently undertaking a photo project that documents every murder that took place in Baltimore in 2016. Using police data and information she mines from news articles and press releases, Berbert returns to the site of each murder at the same time on the same day one year later (2017). She photographs the space, absent of any people, and posts the images with descriptions of the victims and crimes on Instagram and Facebook

With its breaks and gaps, Wright's poem suggests the uneasiness of time when considering death. One moment in the final section characterizes this break simply:

breathtaken

in the Faubourg Marigny

beaten, burned

dumped in the woods on Dwyer Rd.

he was going into the city

to take care of some business

he told his mama

he would be back

later

With its halting progressions, this brief semi-narrative section appears to tell the story of a man who is killed and whose body is dumped in the woods. 44 The power of the story hinges on the first and last lines here, beginning with Wright's created term "breathtaken," a kenning for death. In the divided line that sums up his story, Wright emphasizes the untimeliness of his death: "He would be back / later," the gap on the page (reproduced above for context) suggesting the futility of his claim, and creating a space to hold all the violence that transpires against him before the ominous arrival of "later." Although the poem has an aesthetically even ten sections, the concluding coda—entitled, as noted before, "Petition to the Bearers of Precious Images to recollect a few things about him/her"—continues the project of memorialization via a long list of

a

accounts titled, "Remembering the Stains on the Sidewalk." I argue that Wright's project perpetuates a similar kind of memorialization. Ari Shapiro, "Stains On The Sidewalk': Photographer Remembers Year of Murders in Baltimore." *NPR.com*, July 13, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2017/07/13/536452552/stains-on-the-sidewalk-photographer-remembers-year-of-murders-in-baltimore.

⁴⁴ I say "appears" because Wright's scattered format makes it impossible to extract full narratives, even when they make sense grammatically as a sentence.

questions. Although the entire poem employs this listing format—line after line, each double spaced—"Petition" reverts to a single spaced line of questions appearing to be directed to the survivors of the crime, mimicking both the kinds of questions fellow loved-ones would ask, as well as the police in an investigation: "How long ago did you lose your loved one / to this violence / Where was your loved one taken / What time of year, what hour / What was your loved one's relation to you[.]" Like the rest of the poem before it, this closing section intersperses vague generalities with highly specific details; such detailed parts of the list ask, "Did you loved one like beets or rhubarb ... Did your loved one ever catch an eel / barehanded ... Was that your loved one's burgundy bike[.]" Despite this long list of questions—it spans three printed pages—the ultimate accumulation feels overwhelming, much like the lists of violent acts and descriptions of victims that precede it. The final two questions suggest the disconnect between memorializing the dead and "moving on":

If your loved one was a hurter can you

Pass a night with feelings other than regret

Can you lift yourself up

If your loved one never hurt a bug

Can you pass a day without rancor can you

Lift yourself up

again⁴⁷

Wright portrays a tension that exists between the loss of a person—regardless of their personal character—and the aftermath of death. Wright's speaker divides the dead into two discrete categories—hurt and hurter—and yet her similar advice to the survivors suggests that these

⁴⁷ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁵ Wright, *Shallcross*, 74.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 75.

categories are both more alike and more nuanced than the lines suggest. "Can you lift yourself up" she asks twice, with the gaps in the question—especially in the final line, between "Lift yourself up" and "again"—suggesting the temporal gaps in the experience of death. It is this gap, this inaccessible presence that Wright hints at in the final section, the inability to reclaim the dead person no matter how many questions are asked. Just like the final stanza of the entire book quoted earlier—"The once the now the then and again"—concluding the poem on the word "again" suggests a return, a rereading and revisiting that is always already inadequate. 49

Untimely Passing: Death and the Role of Documentary Reporting

The dead walk into poems all the time

Nobody complains

Jillian Weise, "Poem for His Girl" 50

In the previous section, I suggested that death's uneasy temporality can be theorized and explored through the poetic medium. In looking at Hillary Gravendyk's work on physical states that skirt death—anesthesia, surgery, sleep—and C.D. Wright's planned returns to the sites of

_

⁴⁸ Diana Fuss points out in *Dying Modern* that the "survivors" of death have often been metaphorically described as awakening as they work through their grief, "as the centuries old confusion of 'mourning' and 'morning' might suggest." *Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 78.

⁴⁹ Dana Luciano suggests that the grieving body itself disrupts linear temporality, creating "a distinctively modern affective chronometry: the deployment of the feeling body as the index of a temporality apart from the linear paradigm of 'progress." In emphasizing the final "again," Wright rejects the linear notion of progress in favor of a return-based aesthetic. *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 1.

⁵⁰ Jillian Weise, *The Book of Goodbyes* (Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2013), 22. I am grateful to Anurima Banerji for reminding me of Rainer Marie Rilke's poem "Requiem for a Friend," where he *does* complain: "If you can bear it, be / dead among the dead. The dead are occupied." *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. by Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage, 1989).

death, I argue that writing about death engenders a circular temporality, one that neglects linear narrative. In Wright's work, violence plays a key role. She pulls from an archive of documents that likely exist precisely *because* each subject met a violent death: a crime that needs reporting and investigating. I don't want to imply that representing the temporality of death requires violence, but I do want to suggest that the trail of documents *surrounding* violence might help articulate a theory about the interaction of documentary poetics with death. In this section, I examine poetry specifically about violent death by Danielle Pafunda and Jillian Weise that helps articulate a theory of the time of death, as crafted out of violence.

In Danielle Pafunda's 2014 collection titled *The Dead Girls Speak in Unison*, she presents a series of numbered vignettes spoken by a group of girls who have been killed, often violently, and found each other in a dark underworld filled with decayed and broken human bodies, crawling insects, and other things that go bump in the night. "When the auditor comes for us" one section proclaims, "we'll hold out our hands / full of fly casings, pollen spurs. // We've had nothing to eat / but our own hair / for the last dozens of years." The book's numbered poems (which span 1 to 35) are interspersed with titled pieces with names like "The Chorus," "Chant," "Hymn," "Lullaby", and "Fragment." The speaking voices are never named and often presented collectively, a "we" that mimics the chorus in a postmortem (and postmodern) Greek tragedy. 52

Notably, Pafunda's dead girls deliberately inhabit a disrupted temporality created by the experience of death. Although all of the speakers are already dead, there is a strange, stranded quality to their underworld life. In one section, the speakers say:

A murder of ghosts appears

⁵¹ Danielle Pafunda, *The Dead Girls Speak in Unison* (Atlanta: Coconut Books, 2014), 67.

⁵² This dead chorus also evokes the epic trope of a journey to the underworld, complete with all its horrors.

on the hemlock; it's extra deathy but don't be stupid, human cylinder.

There is no near to death.

There is only yes

or not yet.⁵³

Here, post-death, the idea of something or someone being "more" or less dead —what the speaker calls extra "deathy"—is impossible. There are no gradients to the experience of death—only "yes, or not yet"—and yet Pafunda's text shows the dead girls defying the very claim they posit here by maintaining a strange awareness of their own death and a life outside of it. They exist, in a sense, in the space created in the text itself: "not yet." Her postmortem speakers give us, as readers, an insight into an expanded temporality of a moment that is usually collapsed in time. As for recording that particular moment of transition, the dead girls cannot articulate it. They say:

Don't ask us what it's like in that moment when the body skitters away from that stupid

sheepy shape of breath.

Down here, no one asks.

We all died

boot to throat.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁵³ Ibid., 30.

"Boot to throat," they say, each girl in the collection a victim of violence, usually male-induced.

And yet as the collection explores, there are many individual ways these girls die, and "boot to throat" becomes a metaphor for a shared experience in the broader transition when "body skitters away" from breath, breath here literally forced out by violent means, by another's body.

Part of their "deathy" transition is a continued interaction with what the girls call the "surface world," which they say is "too bright now / wasn't made for spooks like us." As such, they also remain interested in the men who perpetuated violence against them, speaking frequently of the possibility of revenge. It's unclear throughout the collection if there is a singular, violent man or many separate instances of violence with different perpetrators. Although the girls are grouped as a chorus—with a collage of different stories but no clearcut identities—the identity of the violent man/men is even more shrouded, only identified through his/their murderous violence:

One day you will punch the wrong grouse in the gut and her stingers pour

over your guilt, your quilt your skin your hot little grin.⁵⁶

they say, and elsewhere:

We'll come for you.

And in your domicile

⁵⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁶ Pafunda, *Dead Girls*, 45.

we'll plant our hooks

and in your eyes

we'll hook our beaks.⁵⁷

This world is not some afterlife that exists far above the "petty concerns" of human life, as afterlives are often portrayed. Instead, the dead girls maintain an almost horrific—in the sense that it may induce horror in the reader—attachment to the flesh, to the particular ways that their *own* has been harmed, and to the ways that they might return this harm to their attackers: "In your eyes we'll hook our beaks," they say, planting stingers that pour over "your guilt your quilt, your skin." The guilt of deadly violence becomes skin itself for these offenders, a reality written on the body in the same way that violence was visibly written on the bodies of each dead girl.

This connection between the "afterlife" and the "surface world," then, suggests the ways in which the poems serve as documentation, as witness to the violence these girls endured and their experiences of death and after-death. Although the poems suggest incidents of violence that call to mind true-crime TV, most of the poems lack the excess of specific details that crime reporting tends toward, a move which we see also in Wright's work. It is only in the first poem of the collection, which is notably the only poem without a number or a title, that we even get the suggestion that someone is reporting on these crimes. It reads in its entirety:

On the front page

life has smeared.

We get no news of home down here.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 49.

No before, no news of storms. No new noise, no newsy skin on the surface of things.

We get nothing but the center of each *o* eaten by a worm relinquished by a worm

traveling the country
by way of worm, our sorry conduit

our sleaze and scrap nostalgia.58

In this brief moment of almost-documentation, the newspaper has someone's life "smeared" across it—that is, a destroyed life with its representation of death. The paper of the newsprint blurs with skin, and the worms that eat through everything: flesh and paper alike—are what bring little scraps of the nostalgia of "home" to the dead girls. ⁵⁹ What follows in the collection, then, is a different kind of documentation, one that doesn't rely solely on newspaper or reporting but on the details that no reporter could know—on fragments—on the pieces of "life smeared."

With this alternative documentation comes a differing temporality, one that isn't part of the daily segmentation of news stories, which tend to follow a linear temporality: that of day-by-day or week-by-week. In closing this section, I want to look at a poem by Jillian Weise that considers a murder case that relies, in part, on the material objects of documentary: news reports, TV spots, and newspapers. The final section of Weise's *The Book of Goodbyes* is called "Curtain

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁹ We might also think here of how a "wormhole" is often used to designate jumps in space and time.

Call;" the collection is segmented like a theatrical performance into "Part I," "Intermission," and "Part II." The final section is occupied solely by Weise's long poem, "Elegy for Zahra Baker." This poem is based on the life and death of ten-year-old Australian national and American immigrant Zahra Baker (November 1999 – September 2010). Baker wore "hearing aids and a prosthetic leg," in part the result of a childhood cancer. ⁶⁰ When her father remarried in 2008, the family moved with her new stepmother to North Carolina. The stepmother was eventually charged in the death and dismemberment of Zahra, whose remains—including her prosthetic leg—were found in Catawba and Caldwell Counties, North Carolina, in September 2010.

In this elegy, Weise considers the spaces that exist between news coverage and other realities, the relationship between the speaker and a famous case that makes national news, and the strange uneasiness that emerges when speaker and victim relate to each other; Weise's speaker says,

Wednesday. Poetry workshop. Here I am again talking without thinking. 'I have a fake leg and I saw this clip on the news about Zahra Baker who may be dead with a fake leg [...]

After I said the words *fake leg*, everyone in the class looked at my feet. ⁶¹

In drawing this analogue between the poem's speaker and Zahra Baker, Weise creates a multilayered experience of temporality, where the timeline of Zahra's life blurs with the news-based play-by-play of her case, both of which are intertwined with Weise's own speaker in the poem. The speaker says that she saw a clip about Zahra "who may be dead," that is, existing in this

200

⁶⁰ Weise, The Book of Goodbyes, 59.

⁶¹ Ibid., 60.

strange in-between of potential, the contrary to Pafunda's dead girls who argue that there is "only yes or not yet."

While waiting to find out news of Zahra—who, in the temporal structure of the book's publication, has already been found dead by the time this collection comes out—the poem's speaker writes notes to her:

Zahra: Here's the drill. There have been so many laws against us. Laws that say we can't go out in public and can't marry. Laws that mandate the splicing of our wombs and parts of our brains. I was going to lay it out for you in poetry, all the laws against us, but there were just too many.⁶²

Here Weise speaks of the so-called "ugly laws", nineteenth-century municipal ordinances that made it illegal for people deemed "unsightly" to appear in public, according to Susan Schweik who writes about these laws in her book, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public.* ⁶³ These laws, yet another form of documentation that reports on disabled and non-normative bodies, provide an informational trail much as the news about Zahra does. Furthermore, laws mirror new stories in their datedness; we can define our current temporal experience by laws and news alike. Weise's invoking of the old laws situates her in time, much the same way the news pieces about Zahra do. When Weise's collection is published, the laws have been repealed and Zahra has been found dead. The speaker—and also the reader—find themselves in a strange loop that maintains this brief moment of time.

⁶² Ibid., 64.

⁶³ Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: NYU Press, 2010). A poem in Weise's *The Book of Goodbyes* is titled "The Ugly Law."

In this way, the very genre of the documentary poem allows for a disruption to linear time. The documentary poem differs from other, more brief, documentary forms—such as newspapers or TV spots—because it has a more extensive scope that is not limited to chronology. When Weise's speaker looks at the news, for instance, she can see the accumulation of information, some repeating, some incorrect, some changing or developing. She can see old news with new leads tacked on. The documentary poem considers this scope and is less interested in the linear story here—Zahra disappears, is found —than this ruptured moment of temporality, where Zahra is missing, perhaps (or as it seems, likely) dead but not certainly. We can see this massive scope in the accumulation of violent deaths in Wright's work, and it works on a more focused scale in Weise's poem. "Elegy for Zahra Baker" opens in this way:

Zahra Baker is missing. "I don't know. You all know more than I know," says her father. The news on five websites tells the story the same clausal way. A girl, who wears hearing aids and a prosthetic leg, went missing.⁶⁵

"You all know more than I know," her father says, and in today's world of play-by-play news, this is perhaps true; after all, the speaker notes that she looks at this story unfolding on five different websites. She says she sees the stories being told in the "same clausal way; this description is a reference to the grammar of the sentence, which prioritizes the girl's gender and bodily status before the implication of violence against her. "Clausal"—of or relating to a clause—has close aural ties to "causal," the implication being in this sentence formation that the girl's status as female and a person with disabilities somehow leads to her vanishing. The poem

202

⁶⁴ That is, the documentary poem as a form functions more like a long-form journalistic think-piece than internet click-bait.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 59.

(and thus the book) ends with one final plea to Zahra: "You'll get better at passing. It's a pain in the ass. I know. You'll learn. I promise. Just make it out of the woods."66 Here. Weise's speaker portrays an ongoing duration, a temporality suspended between life and death where Zahra is perpetually stationed in the woods. And with the "passing" Weise speaks of, the final moment blurs the concerns of both living with a disability, and death. If Zahra is alive, there is the prospect of "passing" as able-bodied person with her prosthetic. And if she isn't, there is likewise implied a "passing" from this life into the next. Even with the wide lens cast by the documentary poetic genre, the poem leaves us suspended between these two temporal possibilities, a suspension that continues indefinitely with each reading, regardless of how the case unfolds. The documentary poem then, like a nuanced amalgamation of headlines online, rejects the daily play-by-play linear temporality of the news cycle while still incorporating detailed elements of physical news media. Like today's internet which ultimately preserves everything—good or bad—the documentary poem maintains an isolated temporality that can contain the experience of dying indefinitely. The documentary poem preserves the in-between, forever inscribing this ruptured temporal experience of unknowing, the kind of uncertain rupture Weise looks to when her speaker instructs Zahra and the reader alike: Just make it out of the woods.

Coda: The Poem as Photograph as Arrested Temporality

The artwork is only incidentally a document. No document is, as such, a work of art.

Walter Benjamin, "Thirteen Theses Against Snobs." 1928⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Thirteen Theses Against Snobs." 1924.. In *Documentary*. Ed. Julian Stallabrass (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 24.

By way of a brief conclusion, I want to consider the relationship of poetry to photography in thinking about the temporality of death. In its ability to witness people and events, poetry acts similarly to other documentary forms, in particular photography, especially when we consider the returns inherent in the photo medium. Unlike film, which by its very nature progresses, or journalism, which attempts to assemble stories into a linear progression, fragmented though they might be, the photograph focuses on the arrested moment, the still temporality of the in-between of one moment and the next.

In his famous work on photography, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes describes the photo's relationship to time and the project of witnessing: "If photography is to be discussed on a serious level, it must be described in relation to death ... It's true that a photograph is a witness, but a witness of something that is no more." Likewise, Barthes traces his own personal interest in photography as one that "probably has to with death. Perhaps it's an interest that is tinged with necrophilia, to be honest, a fascination with what has died but is represented as wanting to be alive." Barthes complicates the temporal existence of the photographed dead by suggesting that there is an untimely nature to their death in light of the existence of a photograph. In such a photo, the person pictured can be dead but also simultaneously "represented as *wanting* to be alive"; that is, their existence in the photograph seems to support a desire to still be living. Barthes thus ascribes an agency to the dead person—or at least to the representation of them provided by the photograph. This complicated agency emphasizes the tangled temporality that both death and a photograph—especially a photo of a now-dead person—represent.

Furthermore, Barthes's descriptions of the aesthetic effect of a photograph relies on

⁶⁸ Barthes notes this in a radio interview that is quoted in the introduction of *Camera Lucida*, xi. *Camera Lucida*: *Reflections on Photography*, Trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

204

⁶⁹ Ibid.

embodied reactions; he refers to two components he sees as key in responding to a photograph. The first is the *studium*, that in the photograph which grabs the viewer's attention or calls to mind a cultural, political, or historical interpretation of the photograph. The second, however, is the punctum, "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)," writes Barthes. 70 This prick or bruise suggests the embodied relationship between the photograph and the viewer. As Barthes goes on to explain, this embodied reaction is also closely aligned with time: "I now know that there exists another *punctum* This new *punctum*, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ('that-has-been'), its pure representation."⁷¹ Like the aspects of the photo which bruise the viewer, time "lacerat[es]," creating a reaction toward the photo and what it represents that is deeply rooted in the body. Barthes explains the interaction between time, death, and the body in this way:

I read at the same time: This will be and this has been ... What pricks me is the discovery of this equivalence. In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder ... over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. This *punctum*, more or less blurred beneath the abundance and the disparity of contemporary photographs, is vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a defeat of Time in them: that is dead and that is going to die.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁷¹ Ibid., 96.

⁷² Ibid.

It is not just that we use photographs as mementos of the dead, but also as Barthes suggests, that the photograph itself creates a kind of death, of subject becoming object, a "microdeath" that he characterizes thus: "(of parenthesis)." In this estimation, death is portrayed as cast out of linear time and sentence structure alike, captured instead inside a parenthetical aside. This idea of death being cast out of a sentence, however, raises another concern. Barthes finds a "certainty" in photography that he says is impossible to get from language itself. If photography is intrinsically related to death by preserving those who are or will be dead—that is, everyone and thereby creating some variety of "micro-death" itself, then it holds that death cannot be adequately captured by language. "No writing can give me this certainty," Barthes writes. "It is the misfortune (but also perhaps the voluptuous pleasure) of language not to be able to authenticate itself."⁷⁴ And yet, Susan Sontag sees the relationship between writing and photography inversely; "There can be no evidence, photographic or otherwise, of an event until the event itself has been named and characterized. And it is never photographic evidence which can construct—more properly, identify—events; the contribution of photography always follows the naming of the event."⁷⁵ For Sontag, language works in advance to contextualize the information photography can provide. I bring up these two opposing viewpoints to suggest how language and the photographic medium are intertwined, and one need look no further than C.D. Wright's collaborations with photographer Deborah Luster to understand the dual roles of poetry and photography as documentary tools. Like Wright's poems which pull apart narratives

_

⁷³ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁵ Susan Sontag, "On Photography." 1977. In *Documentary*, Ed. Julian Stallabrass (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 119.

surrounding death, dispersing them on the page, Sontag describes the photograph's format as one that also separates and removes from context:

The photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time. In a world ruled by photographic images, all borders ("framing") seem arbitrary. Anything can be separated, can be made discontinuous, form anything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently. (Conversely, anything can be made adjacent to anything else.).⁷⁶

This disconnection of the photo from linear time—lacking a framing device, or if it has one, an "arbitrary" one—echoes the way poetry too breaks from linear temporal structures. In some of Wright's work, photos even appear in her text to suggest this duality: a moment captured, often without reference, which showcases the potential of the objects in sight to be framed differently.

In the opening poem of Wright's *Shallcross*, titled "Some Old Words Were Spoken,"

Wright's speaker describes the moment of a group snapshot, "a photograph [that] was / taken in which everyone is seen / touching everyone else."

The photo, taken "beside the hole," might be at a gravesite, but regardless, Wright's speaker critiques the various bystanders, one her "dearest adversary," another who "exposed the hair, buff eggs / of my anxieties," yet another who "pulled the shivering rug from / my bones."

The speaker thus finds herself out of sync with the group:

"[N]o one here but me / to break the frame, gnashing quietly." The frame, then, becomes a arbitrary context thrust upon the photo in the moment. "Frame" here can also refer to the borders of the shot, as captured in the lensfinder of the camera, *before* the photo is taken. In this case, the speaker is the only one capable of stepping out of the "frame," a context that she finds contrary

⁷⁶ Sontag, "On Photography," 121.

⁷⁷ Wright, *Shallcross*, 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

to the truth of the situation. Despite her hesitation, Wright's speaker finds herself in a position where a photo captures a false reality, one that erases tensions: "A photograph is being set up," she writes, "by my friend, the wedding photographer, / in which everyone is touching / everyone else and then everyone drifts off / into separate cars trailing swirls of dust." The members of the photo touch, overlapping each other as if close friends, while the photographer—who typically captures the union of happy couples—shoots a tense image in the wake of a death. After the photo, the group who was once "touching everyone else" dissipates, heading off in separate cars, the moment by the graveside all that connects them—except for the photograph. And yet, Wright's speaker describes the death as paradoxically one of ease, compared to the tensions of the photograph:

For dying this way is a snap: no menus,

no wine lists, no taxis, no tickets,

no bulging duffel riding a conveyor belt

in the wrong capital [...]

No, in fact, destination in mind.

Just an unseasonable chill. For dying

this way is nothing. Is like losing

_

⁷⁹ Ibid., 7. Sontag writes, "Photographs are valued because they give information. They tell one what there is; they make an inventory. To spies, meteorologists, coroners, archaeologists and other information professionals, their value is inestimable. But in the situations in which most people use photographs, their value as information is of the same order as fiction" ("On Photography," 120-121).

a sock 80

Like Wright's speaker, who finds herself out of touch with the group gathered around the "hole," the death she describes is also undefined. Although the speaker describes it as easy—a "snap" compared to even the somewhat minor inconveniences of travel or event planning—she asserts that the death itself is destination-less. Rather, the description she gives of the death is "nothing," a moment divorced from linear time, as noted by the presence of an unseasonable chill, one that breaks cyclical structures in its refusal of any seasonal context.⁸¹

Like Barthes's description of the photograph of his mother in *Camera Lucida*, we never see Wright's photo of the group at the gravesite. ⁸² In writing about death, this somehow seems appropriate, for it is yet another untimely feature in a series of events and experiences that refuse to stay bolted in place. There is also another potential side effect, both to actually viewing these unseen photographs and to reading about them in poetry: this uneven temporality can be painful for us so accustomed to linear time and space. Barthes goes as far as to claim that he wanted to examine photography "not as a question (a theme) but as a *wound*." His determination that photography perpetuates a wound—rather than a question that can potentially be answered—suggests an ongoing state, one that can only be returned to again and again, rather than transmitted to another subject. For Wright, the lyric too works this way; "[f]or dying / this way is nothing," she writes, nothing except a moment caught in-between, one that refuses closure or

8

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6-7. This last line about the sock clearly mimics Elizabeth Bishop's famous poem of loss, "One Art." Unlike Bishop's poem, this lost object is of little material or sentimental value.

⁸¹ That is to say, unseasonable for *what* season?

⁸² Barthes's *Camera Lucida* discuses at length a photo Barthes finds of his mother after her death. It is of her as a young girl, a photo that Barthes himself had never seen until her passing. He refers to it as the Winter Garden Photograph, and even though *Camera Lucida* contains dozens of images, he never shows the readers this particular one that situates so much of the text.

⁸³ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 21. Parenthetical in original. Emphasis added.

linearity and—perhaps more importantly—one that may be enduringly painful. The potential pain of the moment depends on the subject interacting with it, whether it be a photograph or a poem. Although affect is transmittable—after all, readers may be moved by the portrayals of senseless death in Wright's work—it is also intensely personal. "I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me," Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida*, "in it, for you, no wound." Like a wound itself—a bodily mark, situated on a spectrum between "unwounded" and "healed"—the documentary poem about death situates itself in the ruptured temporal moment between alive and dead.

-

lbid., 73. Susan Sontag's son, David Rieff, writes in his memoir about Sontag's death that he was disturbed and frustrated at photographer Annie Leibovitz's deathbed portraits of his mother. In the book, he wishes outright that a sudden death might have befallen Sontag, one that would have circumvented her suffering while also preventing Leibovitz's chance at perpetrating "carnival images of celebrity death" where Sontag was "humiliated posthumously." Rieff, Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 150. Leibovitz sees these images as "complet[ing] the work she and I had begun together when she was sick in 1998." As she "forced" herself to take photos of Sontag's last days, Leibovitz writes that she "didn't analyze it then. I just knew I had to do it. [...] She had been sick on and off for several years, in the hospital for months. It's humiliating" For Leibovitz, the humiliation was not situated in the death of Sontag, but rather in her life prior to dying. Leibovitz's photos preserve the time shortly before Sontag's death as well as her body postmortem. Annie Leibovitz, "Introduction" in A Photographer's Life: 1990-2005 (New York: Random House, 2006). Sontag was first diagnosed with cancer in the late 1990s, and it returned in a terminal form in the early 2000s.

WORKS CITED

- Ahmed, Sara. "Affective Economies." Social text 22, no. 2 (2004): 117-39.

 —. The Cultural Politics of Emotion. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

 —. "A Phenomenology of Whiteness." Feminist Theory 8,no. 2: 149-168.

 —. The Promise of Happiness. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

 Arnold, Elizabeth. Effacement. Chicago: Flood Editions, 2010.

 —. Life. Chicago: Flood Editions, 2014.
- "anaesthesia, n." OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.

—. The Reef. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition. London: Verso, 2006.
- Arterian, Diana. "On the Harmed Body: A Tribute to Hillary Gravendyk." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, February 29, 2009, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-the-harmed-body-a-tribute-to-hillary-gravendyk/.
- Arthritis Foundation. "About Arthritis." Atlanta: Arthritis Foundation National Office. http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/understanding-arthritis/what-is-arthritis.php.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010.
- Bartlett, Jennifer, Sheila Black, and Michael Northern, editors. *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011.
- Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability. Edited by Jennifer Bartlett; Sheila Black; Michael Northern. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011.
- Belling, Catherine. "The Death of the Narrator." 146-155. In *Narrative Research in Health and Illness*, Edited by Brian Hurwitz, Trisha Greenhalgh, and Vieda Skultans. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Thirteen Theses Against Snobs." 1924. 24. In *Documentary*. Edited by Julian Stallabrass. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013.

- Berlant, Lauren. "Claudia Rankine." *BOMB Magazine* 129 (Fall 2014). http://bombmagazine.org/article/10096/claudia-rankine.
- —. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Berlant, Lauren and Lee Edelman. *Sex, or the Unbearable*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Bhugra, Dinesh and Peter Jones. "Migration and Mental Illness." *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 7 (2001): 216-223.
- Bhugra, Dinesh and Susham Gupta, editors. *Migration and Mental Health*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Biss, Eula. "The Pain Scale." *Harpers Magazine* (June 2005): 25-30.
- Booth, William James. "Economies of Time: On the Idea of Time in Marx's Political Economy." *Political Theory* 19, no. 1 (February 1991): 7-27.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Bourke, Joanna. *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Boyer, Anne. Garments Against Women. Boise, ID: Ahsahta Press, 2015.
- —. "I Have Taken a Farm at This Hard Rent." *Harriet: A Poetry Blog*: Poetry Foundation, January 11, 2016. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/01/i-have-taken-a-farm-at-this-hard-rent/.
- —. "To Cure the Sharp Accidents of Disease." *Harriet: A Poetry Blog:* Poetry Foundation, January 14, 2016. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/01/to-cure-the-sharp-accidents-of-disease/.
- Brennan, Teresa. The Transmission of Affect. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso Books. 2004.
- Cameron, Sharon. *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Insanity is Not Subversive*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1998.

- Campion, Peter. "Review: The Biography of Displacement." Agni 52 (2000): 275-79.
- Cann, Candi K. *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Introduction." 3-12. In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Edited by Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- —. Literature in the Ashes of History. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- Cavitch, Max. *American Elegy: The Poetry of Mourning from the Puritans to Whitman.*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Cazdyn, Eric. *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Celia, Matthew JC. "The Ecosomatic Paradigm in Literature: Merging Disability Studies and Ecocriticism." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. 20, no. 3 (2013): 574-596.
- Charon, Rita. *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Choe, Jeanne Y., Linda A. Teplin, and Karen M. Abram. "Perpetration of Violence, Violent Victimization, and Severe Mental Illness: Balancing Public Health Concerns." *Psychiatric services* 59, no. 2 (2008): 153–164.
- Clark, John Lee, Jennifer Bartlett, Jillian Weise, and Jim Ferris. "Disability and Poetry: An Exchange." *Poetry Magazine*. December 1, 2014, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70179/disability-and-poetry.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Lyric, History, and Genre." *New Literary History* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 879-899.
- —. "Why Lyric?" *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (January 2008): 201-206.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. Depression: A Public Feeling. Durham: Duke University Press. 2012.
- Davidson, Michael. *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- de Menezes, Jack. "Tennis commentator Doug Adler axed from ESPN's Australian Open coverage after Venus Williams 'gorilla' comment," January 20, 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/venus-williams-gorilla-espn-doug-adler-australian-open-apologises-a7536911.html.

- Deutsch, Helen. "Symptomatic Correspondences: The Author's Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Cultural Critique* 42 (Spring 1999): 35-80.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. Deep Time: American Literature and World History." *American Literary History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 755-775.
- "disgust, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54422?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=uAX4og&.
- Drucker, Johanna. "Graphical Readings and the Visual Aesthetics of Textuality." *Text* 16 (2006): 267-276.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk. New York: Penguin, 1996.
- Dunn, Douglas. Elegies. London: Faber and Faber, 1985.
- "economy, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59393?redirectedFrom=economy.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- "envoy, n.1". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63102?rskey=4CYhgp&result=1.
- Erevelles, Nirmala. "Disability and the Dialectics of Difference." *Disability and Society* 11, no. 4 (1996): 519-537.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Books, 2005.
- Fassler, Joe. "How Doctors Take Women's Pain Less Seriously." *The Atlantic*, October 15, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/10/emergency-room-wait-times-sexism/410515/.
- Felski, Rita. *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Felstiner, Mary Lowenthal. "Casing My Joints: A Private and Public Story of Arthritis." *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 273-85.
- Ferris, Jim. The Hospital Poems. Charlotte, NC. Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2004.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*, Translated by A.M. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1994.

- —. *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction*, Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 2012.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. "Introduction to Queer Temporalities Issue." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 159-176.
- —. Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse." *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 49-82.
- Fuss, Diana. Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- "gaslight, v." *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/255554?rskey=VgFKGp&result=2&isAdvanced=false.
- Gentile, Katie. "Using Queer and Psychoanalytic Times to Explore the Troubling Temporalities of Fetal Personhood." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 16, no. 1: 33-39.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Gorelik, Aaron. "The AIDS Poets, 1985-1995: From Anti-Elegy to Lyric Queerness." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014.
- Gravendyk, Hillary. "Chronic Poetics." *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 1-19.
- —. "Experimental Embodiments: Poetry, Subjectivity, and the Phenomenology of the Body." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009.
- —. Harm. Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2012.
- —. "Of Durations, Of Endurances: Interview with Hillary Gravendyk." *Thermos*, March 24, 2012. https://thermosmag.wordpress.com/2012/03/24/of-durations-of-endurances-interview-with-hillary-gravendyk/.
- Graywolf Press. "Citizen in the Classroom, Citizen in the World." 2016. https://www.graywolfpress.org/resources/citizen-classroom-citizen-world
- Gunn, Thom. The Man With Night Sweats. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993.
- Hall, Donald. Without: Poems. New York: Mariner Books, 1999.
- Hoffmann, Diane E., and Anita J. Tarzian. "The girl who cried pain: a bias against women in the treatment of pain." *The Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 28, no. 4 (2001): 13-27.

- Hogue, Cynthia. "The 'Possible Poet': Pain, Form, and the Embodied Poetics of Adrienne Rich in Wallace Stevens' Wake." *Wallace Stevens Journal* 25, no. 1 (2001): 40-51.
- Hume, Angela. "Toward an Antiracist Ecopoetics: Waste and Wasting in the Poetry of Claudia Rankine." *Contemporary Literature* 57.1 (2016): 79-110.
- "introit, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/98726?rskey=hc23Wj&result=1.
- Jackson, Virginia and Yopie Prins. "Lyrical Studies." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (1999): 521-530.
- Jacobus, Mary. *Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Jain, S. Lochlann. "Be Prepared." In *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, edited by Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland, 170-82. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- —. Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Jamison, Leslie. *The Empathy Exams*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014.
- Jarmon, Michelle. "Coming Up From Underground: Uneasy Dialogues at the Intersections of Race, Mental Illness, and Disability Studies." 9-29. In *Blackness and Disability*, Edited by Christopher M. Bell. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011.
- Johnson, Claudia L. Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s. Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Kafer, Alison. Feminist Queer Crip. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013.
- —. "Un/Safe Disclosures: Scenes of Disability and Trauma." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1-20.
- Kapil, Bhanu. Ban en Banlieue. Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015.
- —. Schizophrene. Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2011.
- Keng, Kuang. "How Much Should We Pay Moms?" *International Business Times*, May 9, 2015. http://www.ibtimes.com/pulse/how-much-should-we-pay-moms-our-mothers-day-wage-calculator-shows-you-how-much-moms-1914907.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

- Kukla, Rebecca. *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers' Bodies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- Kuppers, Petra. "Scars in Disability Culture Poetry: Towards Connection." *Disability and Society* 23, no. 2 (March 2008): 141-50.
- Lanser, Susan S. *The Sexuality of History: Modernity and the Sapphic, 1565-1830.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Leder, Drew. The Absent Body. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Leibovitz, Annie. A Photographer's Life: 1990-2005. New York: Random House, 2006.
- Lerner, Ben. "Postscript: C.D. Wright, 1949-2016," The New Yorker, 14 January 2016.
- Livingston, Gretchen. "Growing Number of Dads Home with the Kids." *PewResearchCenter*, June 5, 2014. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/06/05/growing-number-of-dads-home-with-the-kids/#.
- Liu, Alan. *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- —. Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Lorde, Audre. The Cancer Journals. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980.
- Luciano, Dana. Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America. New York: NYU Press, 2007.
- Luskin, Josh. "Disability and Blackness." 308-315. In *The Disability Studies Reader, Fourth Edition*, Edited by Lennard J. Davis. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Luster, Deborah. *Tooth for an Eye: A Chorography of Violence in Orleans Parish*. Twin Palms Publisher, 2011.
- Mairs, Nancy. Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Mak, Bonnie. How the Page Matters. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Martin, Nina and Renee Montagne. "The Last Person You'd Expect to Die in Childbirth." *ProPublica.org*, May 12, 2017. https://www.propublica.org/article/die-in-childbirth-maternal-death-rate-health-care-system.
- McPhee, John. Basin and Range. New York: Noonday Press, 1981.

- Menninghaus, Winfried. *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Joel Golb. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Merrill, James. Divine Comedies: Poems. New York: Atheneum, 1976.
- Metzl, Jonathan. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2009.
- Mols, Annemarie. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Mollow, Anna. When Black Women Start Going on Prozac": Race, Gender, and Mental Illness in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's "Willow Weep for Me." *MELUS* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 67-99.
- Monette, Paul. Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
- "More than 3 million US women at risk for alcohol-exposed pregnancy," *CDC Newsroom*, February 2, 2016, https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0202-alcohol-exposed-pregnancy.html.
- Mulligan, Amy C. "The Satire of the Poet is a Pregnancy": Pregnant Poets, Body Metaphors, and Cultural Production in Medieval Ireland." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (October 2009): 481-505.
- Murkoff, Heidi and Sharon Mazel. *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, fifth edition. New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2016.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2011.
- "notion, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128609?rskey=H3kq5b&result=1.
- Oksala, Johanna. "Affective Labor and Feminist Politics." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41, no. 2 (2016): 281-303.
- Pafunda, Danielle. The Dead Girls Speak in Unison. Atlanta: Coconut Books, 2014.
- —. "The Subject in Pain: A Poetics." *English Language Notes* 50, no. 1 (2012): 93-98.

- Patsavas, Alyson. "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 203-18.
- Philip, M. NourbeSe. *Zong! As Told to the Author by Setaey Adamu Boateng*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- Plog, Stanley C. and Robert B. Edgerton. *Changing Perspectives in Mental Illness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.
- Poliquin, Rachel. *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and Cultures of Longing*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012.
- Price, Margaret. "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain." *Hypatia* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 268-84.
- Rankine, Claudia. Citizen: An American Lyric. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014.
- —. Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press. 2004.
- —. "The Meaning of Serena Williams." *The New York Times Magazine*. August 25, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-meaning-of-serena-williams.html? r=0.
- Rich, Adrienne. Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972. New York: W.W. Norton, 1973.
- —. Midnight Salvage. New York: W.W. Norton. 1999.
- —. Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976.
- —. Tonight No Poetry Will Serve. New York: W.W. Norton. 2011
- Rieff, David. Swimming in a Sea of Death. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Marie Rilke*. Edited by Stephen Mitchell. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Roberts, Tuesda, and Dorinda J. Carter Andrews. "A Critical Race Analysis of the Gaslighting Against African American Teachers: Considerations for Recruitment and Retention." 69-96. Contesting the Myth of a 'Post Racial' Era: The Continued Significance of Race in U. S. Education, Edited by Dorinda J. Carter Andrews and Franklin Tuitt. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013.
- Rukeyser, Muriel. *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*. Edited by Janet E. Kaufman and Anne F. Herzog. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

- Said, Edward. On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain. New York: Vintage, 2007.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Schweik, Susan. "Josephine Miles's Crip(t) Words: Gender, Disability, 'Doll'." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 49-60.
- —. *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- —. "The Voice of 'Reason'." *Public Culture* 13, no. 3 (2001): 485-505.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "A Poem Is Being Written." *Representations*, no. 17 (Winter, 1987): 110-143.
- —. "Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: Three Poems." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 16, no. 2 (July 2006): 327-328.
- —. Fat Art, Thin Art. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- —. "Teaching/Depression." *The Scholar and the Feminist Online* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2006), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/heilbrun/printese.htm.
- Shapiro, Ari. "'Stains On The Sidewalk': Photographer Remembers Year of Murders in Baltimore." *NPR.com*, July 13, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2017/07/13/536452552/stains-on-the-sidewalk-photographer-remembers-year-of-murders-in-baltimore.
- Sharpe, Jenny. "The Archive and Affective Memory in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*" *Interventions* 16, no. 4: 465-482.
- Sherman, Stuart. *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Siebers, Tobin. "In the Name of Pain." In *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*. Edited by Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland: 183-94. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Sontag, Susan. Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors. New York: Picador, 1989.
- —. "On Photography." 1977. 118-121. In *Documentary*, Edited by Julian Stallabrass. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013.

- Sorby, Angela. "Review: The Reef." Chicago Review 45, no. 2 (1999): 137-39.
- "squander, v." *OED Online*. June 2017. Oxford University Press, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/188181?rskey=qH3WH6&result=2.
- Taylor, Sunny. "The Right Not to Work: Power and Disability." *Monthly Review* 55, no. 10 (March 2004). http://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/the-right-not-to-work-power-and-disability/.
- Teicher, Craig Morgan. "In 'Shallcross,' C.D. Wright was at the height of her powers." *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/books/la-ca-jc-shallcross-20160424-story.html.
- Thornton, Robert. "The Peculiar Temporality of Violence: A Source of Perplexity About Social Power." *KronoScope* 2, no. 1 (2002): 41-69.
- US Preventive Services Task Force. "Folic Acid Supplementation for the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement." *JAMA* 317, no. 2: 183-189.
- Vendler, Helen. Last Looks, Last Books: Stevens, Plath, Lowell, Bishop, Merrill. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Vlassoff, Carol. "Gender Differences in Determinants and Consequences of Health and Illness." *Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition* 25, no. 1 (2007): 47-61.
- Walter, Katharina. "'Suspended between the Two Worlds': Gestation Metaphors and Representations of Childbirth in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry." *Estudios Irlandeses* 5 (2010): 102-112.
- Weise, Jillian. The Book of Goodbyes. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2013.
- Wendell, Susan. "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities." *Hypatia* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 17-33.
- —. "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities." 161-167. *The Disability Studies Reader*, Edited by Lennard Davis. Routledge: New York, 2013.
- Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, Edited by Michael Moon. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.
- WITW Staff, "Serena Williams Subjected to Racists, Sexist Remarks Following French Open Victory," June 8, 2015, *The New York Times: Women in the World*, http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/06/08/serena-williams-subjected-to-racist-sexist-remarks-following-french-open-victory/.

- Woolf, Virginia. On Being Ill. Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2002.
- Wright, C.D. Shallcross. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2016.
- Young, James E. "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine* 9 (Fall 1999): 1-10.
- Zalasiewicz, Jan, Mark Williams, Alan Haywood, Michael Ellis. "The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?" *Philosophical Transactions* 369, no. 1938 (2011). January 31, 2011, doi: 10.1098/rsta.2010.0339.
- Zatz, Noah. "Taking Unpaid Housework for Granted is Wrong." *The New York Times*, September 9, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/09/09/wages-for-housework/taking-unpaid-housework-for-granted-is-wrong.
- Zurawski, Magdalena. "Feel Beauty Supply, Post 10: Hurston on Loafing and Loitering." *Jacket2*, August 27, 2015. http://jacket2.org/commentary/feel-beauty-supply-post-10.