

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Alien Invasions, Vulnerable Bodies: Science Fiction and the Biopolitics of Embodiment from H. G. Wells to Octavia Butler

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6qr256tg>

Author

Diaz, Rosalind

Publication Date

2018

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Alien Invasions, Vulnerable Bodies:
Science Fiction and the Biopolitics of Embodiment from H. G. Wells to Octavia Butler

By
Rosalind Diaz

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
English
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Katherine Snyder, Chair
Professor Mark Goble
Professor Mel Chen

Fall 2018

Alien Invasions, Vulnerable Bodies:
Science Fiction and the Biopolitics of Embodiment from H. G. Wells to Octavia Butler

© 2018

Rosalind Diaz

Abstract

Alien Invasions, Vulnerable Bodies:
Science Fiction and the Biopolitics of Embodiment from H. G. Wells to Octavia Butler

by

Rosalind Diaz

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Katherine Snyder, Chair

This dissertation turns to alien invasion narratives to elucidate the social, ethical and political consequences associated with the modern body as an entity with clearly defined borders. The imperatives of liberalism and neoliberalism constitute the modern body as a white, male, heteronormative body, navigating appropriate relationships to production and consumption. How does the human body emerge as a bounded entity in science and science fiction from the nineteenth century onward? Alien invasion narratives offer a fruitful way to trace this concept and its development over time. These narratives model proper ways of attending to one's body as well as proper ways of defending oneself—and, by extension, the planet—from alien invasion. The present inquiry focuses on three different alien invasion narratives, beginning with H. G. Wells's influential *The War of the Worlds* (1897), before moving to consider a pair of twentieth-century American texts: Philip Kaufman's film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and Octavia Butler's novel *Fledgling* (2005).

This project connects these fictional narratives to biological understandings of the body and to the biopolitical formations that govern embodiment. Each of the three chapters foregrounds a different biopolitical apparatus: immunity, quarantine, and addiction, respectively. These three concepts all focus on the body's relationship to a "foreign" entity or substance. Immunity defines the body's natural ability to fend off germs, while quarantine attempts to protect the body from germs and other harmful encounters; addiction represents the body's failure to keep out the category of substances known as drugs. Each of these concepts further entails a theory of how interior and exterior relate to each other, which is at once biological and biopolitical. Each is invested in monitoring the boundary between interior and exterior of the body. The event of alien invasion illuminates the deployment of these concepts in order to re-constitute humanity as whiteness, police the borders of the bounded body, and fend off the incursions of non-normative modes of embodiment.

The War of the Worlds and subsequent alien invasion narratives such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* deploy biological discourse in order to address the question: who can claim membership in the supposedly universal category of "the human"? *Fledgling's* intervention into this tradition points toward the queer utopian possibilities of disrupting the category of the

human. Rather than asking who rightfully belongs to the category of the human and who has earned the right to participate in the continuation of the human race, *Fledgling* asks, who is protected by invoking such a category? What if the category of the human did not need to have rigidly defined boundaries? What if interdependency and fluidity were not understood to be fatal flaws in the body? *Fledgling* reveals that doing away with the premise that the body must remain bounded does indeed disrupt white hegemony and heteronormativity, along with the normative construction of “health.” However, the novel figures this disruption not as a catastrophe, but as a necessary step towards queer utopia.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Menacing Tentacles of the Abject Other	1
1. Invaders of the Body Politic	13
2. Aliens in the Age of Gunk	39
3. Flesh, Blood, Venom	68
Bibliography	96

Acknowledgements

This project owes much to the encouragement, enthusiasm, and brilliance of many people. Katie Snyder's keen insights, curiosity, and unfailing generosity of spirit helped keep me on track throughout the long process. My interest in contemporary literature and embodiment first took shape in her seminar on the post-9/11 novel. The current form of this project reflects the profound influence of Mel Chen, who encouraged me to seek out the intellectual experiences that sparked the questions at the heart of this dissertation. Mark Goble provided invaluable assistance with the broader landscape of contemporary fiction. Jac Asher's example has inspired me to grow as a thinker and educator over the last six years. Thanks are also due to my fellow graduate students, particularly Ianna Hawkins-Owen, Julia Havard, and Aileen Liu, and to all of the undergraduate students that I have had the pleasure of teaching and mentoring. My parents, Katie and Ricardo Diaz, fostered my lifelong interest in Darwin, H. G. Wells, and nineteenth-century science. I am constantly inspired by my prodigious sister, Ren (it's a good thing there are two of us) and buoyed up by Bobby Dunne's unflagging support, smart advice, and sense of humor.

Introduction:
The Menacing Tentacles of the Abject Other

In H. G. Wells's short story "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" (1905), a diffident and retiring Englishman encounters a carnivorous orchid. The protagonist, orchid collector Winter-Wedderburn, is a "shy, lonely, rather ineffectual man" but becomes "bright and garrulous [...] in the glory of his strange adventure" (51, 60). He purchases a mysterious orchid at a London auction. In the climactic scene, the orchid's "exultant tentacles" attempt to penetrate and consume him, but he is rescued with the help of his housekeeper, his "remote cousin" (58, 51), who destroys the orchid hothouse. This science-fiction story depicts white masculinity fending off the tendrils of an exotic orchid.

The exultant tentacles of the orchid are intertwined with the tendrils of empire—emerging networks comprising the transport of physical goods, the transmission of information, and the influence of power reaching across the globe. Winter-Wedderburn tells the story of the original collector of the strange orchid with relish. This original orchid-collector died while abroad in an unspecified location, traveling in "the Andamans and the Indies" (51). Winter-Wedderburn reports that his body was found in a mangrove swamp, and that "every drop of blood, they say, was taken out of him by the jungle-licees" (54). Eventually Winter-Wedderburn discovers, to his personal peril, that the orchid-collector was actually drained of blood by the very orchid that Winter-Wedderburn has purchased.

The story adopts a whimsical tone, combining the trappings of amateur botany with the prurient pleasures of sensationalist fiction, and yet it also depicts a truly disturbing vision of monstrosity. Elements such as the stolid, practical figure of the housekeeper and the playful alliteration of Winter-Wedderburn's name contrast with the descriptions of the orchid itself. The orchid occupies a liminal state between liveliness and deathliness that strongly suggests Giorgio Agamben's formulation of "bare life," biological life that is alive but not invested with humanity and thus can be "killed and yet not sacrificed" (8). The opening paragraph of the story points out that all orchids begin as "brown shrivelled lump(s) of tissue" and that it is difficult to tell a dead orchid from a dormant one (50). The strange orchid combines this liminal deathliness with an uncannily human-like agency. The housekeeper observes that its aerial roots look like "little white fingers... trying to get at you," and associates them with the corpse of the original orchid-collector (55). Later the orchid "[clings] with the grimmest tenacity to its victim" (59). It ought to be a plant, an object of the collector's interest—but instead the plant appears to be interested in collecting the collector.

Through its encounter with Winter-Wedderburn, the orchid threatens to transfer its deathliness to Winter-Wedderburn himself, entwining him in its tentacles and attempting to drink his blood. The narrator refers to the unconscious man as "the inanimate body" (59). After its defeat, the orchid appears to die and rot rapidly. Its flowers begin to brown immediately and by the next day it is "black [...] and putrescent" (60). By the next day, all of Winter-Wedderburn's orchids lie "shrivelled and prostrate" in the ruins of the orchid hothouse (60). Even in defeat, however, the orchid remains threatening: a shriveled orchid is not reliably a dead orchid, as the opening of the story establishes. The orchid disturbs the borders that separate life and death, plant from predator, civilized society from primitive outpost. Conveyed by the orchid-collectors across the borders of England, it then penetrates the skin-boundary of the human body. The strange orchid refuses to remain quiescent in the realm of bare life. Instead, it attempts to contaminate English society with its deathliness.

The orchid is at once a menacing and seductive object. Winter-Wedderburn clearly desires and takes pleasure in the collecting of orchids, referring to the strange orchid as “his new darling”; he reacts to the “overpowering sweetness” of its scent with an “ecstasy of admiration” (57). Orchids are legible as raced and gendered symbols of empire: white men travel into the heart of the jungle to collect these delicate, beautiful, and yet savage orchids, which they display in their greenhouses back in England. Winter-Wedderburn’s strange orchid is an abject, racialized, parasitic entity attempting to feed on the blood of Englishmen. The orchid thus evokes a queer erotic of the tentacular that is simultaneously threatening and alluring. This strange orchid both demonstrates the danger of collecting these exotic objects, and allows Winter-Wedderburn to overcome his diffidence and embody English manhood.

The unmistakable racialization and gendering of the orchid points to the imbrication of race and biopolitics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As Sylvia Wynter has argued, the eugenic logic that renders certain subjects eligible for inclusion in society and relegates others to the realm of bare life has been deployed from its inception as a means for underwriting white supremacy and the subjugation of racialized populations. Wynter’s concept of the contingent of the dysselected describes this sector of the population that is rendered ineligible for inclusion in society, and reveals how the biopolitical concept of bare life is intimately related to Darwin’s theory of natural selection. As propounded by Darwin and others, the theory of natural selection indicates that certain organisms are more successful than others at reproducing. Reproductive success is linked to survival, which in turn is linked to biological “fitness.” The “fittest” individuals are thus responsible for the continuance of the species. When applied to the human organism, this theory tends to justify existing power structures by suggesting that those who hold power are biologically destined to do so. As Wynter points out, Darwin’s work in *The Descent of Man* proposed unambiguously that “some human beings can be [...] ostensibly naturally dysselected by the processes of Evolution, in the same way as other human beings can ostensibly be naturally selected” (“How We Mistook,” 126). The logic of natural selection transformed a historically contingent distribution of power into a biologically “natural” one. The domination of racialized populations was understood to prove the biological supremacy of the population group that declared itself to be the “white race.” The binary between “white” and “native” served to demonstrate the superiority of the white race. Their “dominant position in the global order over all groups” was taken as proof that “they had been, as a ‘race’, optimally selected by evolution to embody ostensibly the biological norm of being human” (126). This logic also relegates “native” population groups, particularly those of Black African descent, to an anachronistic temporality: they are supposedly a stage in the evolution of mankind, “‘backward,’ primitive, and atavistic” (126). Wynter refers to this as a “biodicy,” a new kind of theodicy underwritten by science instead of religion (132). Her language emphasizes the implication that the white race was selected by evolution. This reflects the slippage between understanding evolution as a means of describing a biological process governed by randomness, and the ascription of teleological purpose to the notion of “fitness.”

Nineteenth-century scientists cited the concept of evolutionary fitness not just to explain existing social relations, but to argue that it was possible to engineer and shape society in accordance with these biological dictates. Evolution underwrote the creation of the contingent of bare life, individuals whose manifest un-fitness to participate in society justified treating them as part of humanity’s primitive past—unable to contribute to the vitality of the species, and hence already dead. This eugenic logic conferred the right to dominance in terms of biological fitness. Biological fitness circularly underpinned the right to power: those in power gained it because

they were fitter than others, and they established their fitness through the very fact of their power. Conversely, subjugated, racialized “native” populations were circularly defined as biologically un-fit because they allowed themselves to be subjugated. The quality of biological fitness emerged as a visible virtue that could be seen on and in the body itself. As the terminology suggests, this valorization of “fitness” was deeply ableist and fat-phobic, investing in an idealized version of the white male body as hard-muscled, energetic, and active. Individuals who deviated from the norm of white male embodiment were assumed to belong to an outdated version of humanity, closer to monkeys than men, and thus not fully human. The racializing logic of nineteenth century biopolitics sometimes ordered non-European races in complex taxonomies, and sometimes lumped them all together, erasing differences between societies and cultures and instating a binary between white and non-white.

The vision of white futurity articulated in terms of evolution of the species created a dense imbrication of axes of normativity and difference. The emphasis on proper, healthy reproduction to guarantee proper heredity linked white supremacy to race, heteronormativity, gender, and ableism. Sexuality, conceived in strictly reproductive terms, was haunted by the possibility of miscegenation. Proper sexual object choice became a racial duty. Queer practices of sexuality which exceeded this paradigm became deeply suspect, pathologized and criminalized. White and non-white women both needed to behave properly (in different ways), since both white femininity and racialized femininity posed threats to white masculinity. Deviations from bodily fitness imperiled white masculinity and white supremacy. Disability and non-normative embodiment implied character defects. Physical characteristics became keyed to behavior, and character became inscribed upon the body: vice, intemperance, gluttony, and even criminality were understood to leave their tell-tale traces. The category of bare life was thus inscribed on individual bodies and could be diagnosed from physiological characteristics.

Narratives of biological inheritance and heredity envisioned futurity in terms of heterosexual reproduction. This nineteenth-century formation forms the foundation of what Lee Edelman has called “reproductive futurity”—a recurring trope that imagines proposed futures in terms of an idealized Child, rendering certain subject positions and social formations beyond the pale of state sanction “for the sake of the children.” Reproductive futurity identifies the heteronormative nuclear family as the guarantor of social stability, and the means of extending the duration of the state into the future, thereby consolidating its hegemony in the present.¹ Sara Ahmed further explicates how “heterosexuality becomes a script that binds the familial with the global” (144). As Ahmed observes, “it is this narrative of [the coupling between man and woman] as a condition for the reproduction of life, culture and value that explains the slide in racist narratives between the fear of strangers and immigrants (xenophobia), the fear of queers (homophobia) and the fear of miscegenation (as well as other illegitimate couplings)” (144-145). Such confluences are visible in the nineteenth-century concepts of evolutionary “fitness” and “success.”

“Fitness” and “success” operated simultaneously as characteristics of individuals and characteristics of species. The fitness of the individual was linked to the fitness of the species; it became conceivable to engineer social futures by attending to the embodiment and the reproductive activities of individuals. This imbrication of the political and the biological thus carried with it attendant anxieties regarding the continued success of the white race. Whiteness emerged as vulnerable to contamination. While racialized populations functioned as a key location of difference, the category of bare life was unstable and threatened to subsume individuals who failed to measure up to the standards of idealized white embodiment. This

anxiety mobilized a project of border control focused on maintaining the boundary between civilized society and the dysselected and racialized outcasts.

What was the fate of this contingent of the dysselected? They were not yet dead, and yet consigned to the realm of deathliness. They lurked in anachronistic geographies, zones of bare life which were understood to belong to humanity's primitive past: darkest Africa; the Amazon; London's East End. These primitive geographies not only served to highlight the modernity of other spaces; they also supplied the raw materials for and absorbed the byproducts of modernity. Relegated to these supposedly remote locations, the contingent of the dysselected remained an object of fascination for civilized society. *Fin-de-siècle* modernity hinged on the twin possibilities that the naturally-selected would regress and become dysselected, or that the dysselected would break through the barrier separating them from modernity.

The obsession of the supposedly naturally-selected with the dysselected manifested in part via scientific investigations. Cartographers, botanists, and naturalists ventured into these primitive geographies in search of knowledge. These journeys were fraught with the anxiety of contamination. Scientific discourse from this period shared this obsession with popular fictional genres: science fiction, but also the Gothic. Stephen Arata has termed such narratives "fantasies of reverse colonization," characterized by their obsession with "the spectacle of the primitive and the atavistic" (623-4). Wells's "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" combines the registers of amateur botany and sensationalist science fiction to create a particularly suggestive tale of reverse colonization.

This short story reveals the link between the construction of the body as a bounded entity and the project of empire, via biological discourse. Wells articulates a threat to English empire by representing the orchid's desirous designs on the human body and in particular its thirst for human blood, paired with its triple abjection: the orchid is feminized, racialized, and queered. The orchid infiltrates the borders of England, aided by its allure for English collectors, and subsequently attempts to invade the bodies of Englishmen. The tendrils of empire have opened up lines of communication that allow Englishmen to travel to the colonies, but also allow the colonial Other to return home to England. Winter-Wedderburn aspires to emulate Darwin in his study of exotic plants; he achieves contact with primitive spaces by proxy through his orchid-collecting. He almost succumbs to the allure of the exoticized, feminine orchid. In fact, it is not Winter-Wedderburn but his cousin the housekeeper who vanquishes the orchid. Her stolid practicality contrasts with the orchid's sensual exoticism. This story recruits white womanhood in the project of destroying the threat posed by racialized femininity. Locating the racialized and gendered threat in a plant, rather than a human being, allows the white male protagonist to stand in for all of humanity. The orchid captures the uncanny threat of the dysselected, who are supposed to be non-human and yet mimic humanity, threatening revenge upon the colonizer. The white male protagonist attains his completeness and reaffirms his masculinity by fending off an entity that attempts to penetrate the borders of his body.

This is the central question that this dissertation seeks to explore: How does the human body emerge as a bounded entity in science and science fiction from the nineteenth century onward? Alien invasion narratives offer a fruitful way to trace this concept and its development over time. H. G. Wells published the hugely popular and influential novel *The War of the Worlds* in 1898. The present analysis links this *fin-de-siècle* text to the popularity of alien invasion stories in twentieth-century America. Alien invasion narratives in the second half of the twentieth century continued to draw on the tropes established by Wells at the end of the nineteenth century. Is this resurgence of alien invasion stories a coincidence? Or does it reflect

the similar anxieties of global hegemony experienced by Great Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century, and by dominant American culture at the end of the twentieth? We do not live in a postcolonial era, in the sense that colonialism and imperialism have ended, but in an era of neocolonial formations. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that popular culture in both of these time periods engages with a cluster of fictional tropes related to anxieties of empire in its various formations. This dissertation focuses primarily on alien invasion, and secondarily on the figure of the vampire—which, as we will see, often lurks beneath the surface of these alien invasion narratives.

I am also focusing particularly on texts that pair the alien invasion narrative with biological discourse. As other scholars (recently, Ladelle McWhorter and Troy Duster) have observed, biological discourse has the powerful effect of appearing to transcend racial politics. Biology supplies convenient answers for inconvenient questions: How to assert that those in power deserve to be in power? How to justify a precarious and ethically unjustifiable hegemony? And, ultimately, how to recruit individual subjects into the project of constituting the national body and closing its borders against invaders? Thus, in an important sense, my project insists on the “bio” of biopolitics, interrogating the history of biology and exploring how it informs the development of biopolitical apparatuses from the nineteenth century onward. My project delves into the twin discourses of science and science fiction to ask: What kind of object is the body? When is the body represented as bounded and separate? What threatens the body? What is at stake when the body is threatened? And what responses are elicited by these threats to the body?

Alien invasions locate the threat to the human body in outer space, and yet the racialization of the figure of the alien suggests that, like “The Flowering of the Strange Orchid,” these stories rehearse anxieties of empire—staging the reversal of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. Alien invasion narratives tend to pit creatures from outer space against “humanity” in the persons of plucky white protagonists, establishing an alien versus human dynamic that installs white heroes as the representatives of the human. This aspect of the genre recalls Sylvia Wynter’s critique of “the overrepresentation of Man as if it were the human” (“Unsettling” 267). The view from space itself flattens important differences. As Raymond Williams cautions, it is “important to be aware of the implications of the capitalized singular” and “the abstract Men” (159). Williams argues that such “assumptions of universality” violently erase “historical and cultural variation” (159). Zoe Samudzi articulates an important critique of universality’s corollary, “unity,” when she observes that unity is often “weaponized as a means by which to bludgeon and silence the critiques of multiply marginalized people” (n.p.). Samudzi argues that “where solidarity recognizes our differing social contexts and positions but still highlights the criticality of working together, “unity” pushes a violent doctrine of sameness” (n.p.). While alien invasion narratives seem to move beyond difference by calling on humanity to work together against the alien threat, they also reinforce xenophobic attitudes and reinscribe racist logics that operate to constitute humanity as coextensive with whiteness.

Alien invasion narratives link the boundedness of the human body to the boundedness of the planet. Invasions of the body threaten the integrity of the planet, and vice versa. These narratives figure crossings of the borders of the body in violent, militaristic terms as “invasions.” Crossings of the borders of the body from within and without are conflated in classic alien invasion narratives, in which characters defend themselves and their bodies from alien invasion through their personal heroism, self-control, and vigilance. The specific threat of the alien invader, in these narratives, is manifested through texture: the aliens model a slimy, tentacular embodiment that seeks to penetrate the borders of the human body. Slime and ooze threaten to

rupture the fantasy of the completely bounded body, a fantasy that has roots in the ideal of the self-sufficient liberal subject and is deeply sexist, heteronormative, fat-phobic and ableist.

Before exploring the specific figurations of the body that appear in narratives of alien invasion, it is helpful to consider the broader question: what kind of object is the human body? Varied conceptions of the human body have different political and ethical consequences. What one imagines the body to be, and to be like, affects how one conceives of the body in relation to others and in interdependence with others. Is the body an object that can be abstracted from its environment? Or does the human body only exist in context and in time, as a collection of becomings? What is necessary to represent the human body and its capacities, and how do different representations of the body constitute the object that is the body?

My project elucidates the social, ethical and political consequences associated with the modern body as an entity with clearly defined borders. The imperatives of liberalism and neoliberalism constitute the modern body as a white, male, heteronormative body, with an appropriate relationship to consumption. This way of thinking about the body relies on what Mel Chen has called “the body’s former fictions of integrity, autonomy, heterosexual alignment and containment, and wellness” (8). It serves as the foundation of biopolitical apparatuses that construct white, heteronormative, healthy bodies as biologically fit and racialized, queer, disabled bodies as abject and dysselected. Figuring the body in this way requires quite a lot of work, and the construction of the normative human body requires an ongoing construction of and sustained defense of whiteness. The body is vulnerable to invasions from without as well as failures of vigilance and self-control from within. Such logic demands that good liberal and neoliberal subjects pay constant attention to the boundaries of the body.

A very concise history of the body in Western thought

What came before this modern conception of the body as a separate entity? Mikhail Bakhtin has famously formulated a distinction between the medieval, grotesque, open body, and the modern body. Bakhtin described the grotesque body as “the ever unfinished, ever creating body” (26). He asserted that “contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits” (26). This grotesque, premodern body is constituted as a series of processes rather than a stable object, remaking itself via “copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation” (26). It is characterized by its orifices, “apertures or convexities [...], various ramifications and offshoots”: “the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose”—“the parts through the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world” (26).

As part of the long process of colonialism and imperialism and the formation of empire, this open, unfinished body became closed off and bounded. Norbert Elias has traced the influence of “civilization” on conceptions of the body, beginning with the Cartesian principle of the separateness of mind and body. The spread of white European hegemony depended on the rationalization that it was civilizing the territories it invaded. A concomitant civilizing process operated on the bodies of white Europeans, producing a biopolitical apparatus which allowed some subjects to assert control over the bodies of others. Deportment—how one carries one’s body in daily activities, and in particular, how one manages one’s orifices, excretions, and ingestions, from blowing one’s nose to eating in company—became biologized and associated

with race (Elias). The lack of proper deportment emerged as a racial defect, in one example of how “race becomes pinioned to human physiology,” so that “the politicization of the biological always already represents a racializing assemblage” (Weheliye 12).

The formation of the modern body inaugurated a biopolitical construction of the bounded self, in which the prerequisites for citizenship—rationality, autonomy—came to be associated with a particular form of embodiment. As Gillian Rose has argued, the creation of the liberal subject during the Enlightenment rested on “ideals of autonomy and selfhood which constitute masculinity and masculine bodies” imbricated with a “masculinization of the body politic” (36). In the nineteenth century, health, hygiene, and other biopolitical discourses link the project of national virtue to the proper construction and maintenance of the body (see: Cohen, Burstyn, Mrozek). A common thread in these discourses of health and models of the body is the attention to the borders of the body, via the imperative to scrutinize and regulate what one consumes/incorporates and what one expends. This is a gendered and sexualized project, one which envisions the white male body embodying virtue in order to ensure reproductive futurity.

The spermatic economy, as theorized by H. G. Barker-Bensfield, exemplifies the conjunction of theology, utopianism, capital, medical science, and the boundaries of the white male body. In varying versions of this theory, food, blood and semen are part of the same economy of fluids, an “economy” which may be thriftlessly spent via masturbation. The specifics of anti-masturbation doctrines differ—from positing that the amount of semen is fixed and that each ejaculation drains a limited reservoir of vitality, to speculating about how food might renew this resource. Laqueur has argued more recently that the threat of masturbation lies in its endless cyclicity. In this formulation, thrift, continence, and productivity are virtues that emerge at the site of the male body. Rather than the state imposing public health controls, responsibility for the health and vitality of the body politics lies in the hands of the non-masturbating boy who becomes a vigorous, virile man. What these varied anti-masturbation discourses have in common is an obsessive attention to what crosses the borders of the body and how the unrestrained release of fluid from the body might damage it.

In the twentieth century, the founding of the liberal subject gave way to neoliberal formations. Imperatives toward self-governance insisted on individual responsibility to “fabricate subjects capable of bearing the burdens of liberty” (Nikolas Rose 1999, viii). Informed by the nineteenth-century investment in the bounded body, this capability was understood to be inscribed on the body itself. As Richard Dyer has argued, the “white male ego” rested on “a sense of separation and boundedness” (152). The bounded ego stands in for the bounded body. Gillian Rose has articulated the tension between the denial of the existence of the body and the concern with the boundaries of the body. She observes that the physiology of a bounded body is “a peculiarly selective one, since bodily processes which transgress the boundary between inside and outside the body—childbirth, say, or menstruation—are ignored as characteristics of the body” (32). Rose goes on to make the point that the “unbroken border between inside and outside” is both masculinist and racist:

A history of the white masculine heterosexual bourgeois body in Euro-America can therefore be told in terms of a series of denials of its corporeality. [...] This corporeality was merely a container for a consciousness capable of classifying others, for the Enlightened masculine mind was argued to be clearly separate from and untainted by its body. [...] The concern with clear boundaries is an expression of separation not only from Man’s own body, then, but also from others represented as less able to overcome theirs. (32)

As Dyer suggests, this formulation of the male body and ego as bounded is haunted by the possibility of the failure of these bounds. Loss of rational control, agency, and autonomy once again go hand in hand with the threats of racialization, feminization, disability, and queerness. Dyer calls this “a model of white male identity in which anxieties about the integrity and survival of the self are expressed through fantasmic fears of the flooding, invading character of women, the masses and racial inferiors” (153). In such a model, “only a hard, visibly bounded body can resist being submerged into the horror of femininity and non-whiteness” (Dyer 153).

In the later twentieth century, ecology and environmentalism inflected a reimagining of human embodiment as contiguous with the environment, rather than abstracted from context and surrounded by rigid boundaries. The school of thought known as “deep ecology” proposed a new way of understanding the human body and the human self. Despite positioning itself as “subversive,” this trend illustrates the persistence of the racist and masculinist ideology that formed the foundation of the modern neoliberal subject; yet it is useful because it indicates how one might start to re-think the body. Neil Evernden, writing in the late 1970s, asserts that “the question of the role of the environment in the life of the individual is now transformed” (18). He insists, “Rather than thinking of an individual spaceman who must slurp up chunks of the world—“resources”—into his separate compartment, we must deal instead with the individual-in-environment, the individual as a component of, not something distinct from, the rest of the environment” (18). Evernden argues for the “subversive” potential that lies within ecology’s denial of “discrete entities,” claiming that “ecology begins as a normal, reductionist science, but to its own surprise it winds up denying the subject-object relationship upon which science rests” (16). Evernden asks, “Where do you draw the line between one creature and another? Where does one organism stop and another begin? Is there even a boundary between you and the non-living world, or will the atoms in this page be a part of your body tomorrow? How, in short, can you make any sense out of the concept of man as a discrete entity?” (17). Evernden’s redefinition of the body as relational offers a glimpse of an alternative to the entrenched concept of the bounded body. However, for Evernden, this interpenetration of self and environment ultimately leads to an investment in a form of nativism imbued with settler-colonialism; Evernden’s theory of the body asserts that environment constitutes an extension of individual embodiment and therefore should be understood as the property of organisms. Evernden’s contemporary Paul Shepard, another proponent of deep ecology, observes that “in one aspect the self is an arrangement of organs, feelings and thoughts—a “me”—surrounded by a hard body boundary: skin, clothes, and insular habits. This idea needs no defense. It is conferred on us by the whole history of our civilization” (2). Shepard proposes instead a view of “the self as a center of organization, constantly drawing on and influencing the surroundings, whose skin and behavior are soft zones contacting the world instead of excluding it” (2). Shepard famously insists that “the epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration” (2). Shepard’s “subversive” investment in ecology is somewhat undercut by his investment in a universalizing view of “mankind” (2). These insights afforded by deep ecology exemplify the complicated history of ecology as both a tool and technology of empire, and a resource for imagining alternatives.

Contemporary theorists seeking an anti-oppressive model of human embodiment have offered versions of this idea of the body as radically open and interconnected. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the “body without organs” proposes an understanding of the body as becoming rather than being. They suggest that the skin-bound body is a fiction; various leaks and flows cross the porous borders of the body. Similarly, Bruno Latour proposes a model of the

body as “an interface that becomes more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements” (206). The body as an interface, as process, and/or as becoming has proved a generative starting place for re-thinking the body.

Feminist critical science studies scholars Donna Haraway and Bailey Kier exemplify an understanding of the body as porous, but not without specificity, difference, or history. Donna Haraway emphasizes the dissolubility of the body, the body’s material fungibility—in the sense of its capacity to become a fungus—and ability to nourish other organisms through its decomposition. Haraway seeks to reframe the current era of human history as the Chthulucene, linking her vision of the human body to an ethical mode of relating to others. Haraway writes:

[W]e need a name for the dynamic ongoing sym-chthonic forces and powers of which people are a part, within which ongoingness is at stake. Maybe, but only maybe, and only with intense commitment and collaborative work and play with other terrans, flourishing for rich multispecies assemblages that include people will be possible. I am calling all this the Chthulucene—past, present, and to come. [...] ‘My’ Chthulucene, even burdened with its problematic Greek-ish tendrils, entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus. (160)

Haraway subsequently declares, “I am a compost-ist, not a posthuman-ist: we are all compost, not posthuman” (161). This is a revision of Agamben’s “bare life” as an undifferentiated mass of putrefaction: it is crucial to balance the assertion that “we are all compost” with the acknowledgement that the use of the pronoun “we” encompasses a range of different hierarchies and histories.

Bailey Kier draws on disability studies and trans theory to frame a theory of queer embodiment in a toxic world. Kier proposes an understanding of “‘bodies’ as constant processes, relations, adaptations, and metabolisms, engaged in varying degrees of re/productive and economic relations with multiple other ‘bodies,’” substances, and things, in which no normal concept of re/production, as based on our common categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, exists” (300). Kier’s formulation explicitly resists the universalizing impulse which seeks to flatten out differential versions of embodiment, even as it insists on dissolving the rigid borders of the individual body.

Queer embodiment in science fiction

Wells’s vision of the threatening Other in “The Flowering of the Strange Orchid” pits an unstable, oozy, tentacular mode of embodiment against the stability of the white male bounded body. The texture of slime itself has a threatening and alluring queer potential. DeVere Brody offers a meditation on slime, observing that “the nightmarish and feminine aspects of such viscous material [slime] threaten to subsume supposedly solid (male) subjects that invade its malleable parameters” (98). If slime is threatening to white male supremacy, it holds out tantalizing possibilities for an anti-oppressive politics of embodiment. Heidi Lypps riffs on the queer possibilities of slime:

In its slippery liminality between body and environment, or body and body, slime troubles inner and outer borders, resisting classification between self and other, forming instead a third thing: a zone of contact. In its perceived excess, leaking out of neat bodily economies, slime is a nexus between pleasure and disgust, spilling out across surfaces to

render them navigable or ingestible by the bodies that exude it. [...] Slime is the body that is not a body, a contaminating contact with animality itself, otherness that leaves a trail and a trace. (n. p.)

This project draws heavily on science fiction as a site where important cultural meanings take shape and a fertile ground for generating alternate conceptions of the body. In particular, this project cultivates a fascination with slimy, messy, organic science fiction, especially featuring oozy, tentacular aliens that contaminate and penetrate humanity. While science fiction studies scholars have taken up theoretical frameworks inspired by biopolitics,² biopolitics rarely considers science fiction and its theorizations of the body. The slimy, tentacular bodies of alien invaders offer a queer version of embodiment with the potential to rupture our investment in the bounded body. What new orientations toward embodiment arise at the conjunction of the alien and the human? How is humanity remade through these rupturing encounters? And how might alien invasion narratives offer opportunities to both clarify and resist the logic of abjection and disgust that consigns race, disability, and queerness to the contingent of the dysselected?

This dissertation focuses on three different alien invasion narratives, beginning with H. G. Wells's influential *fin-de-siècle* British novel, *The War of the Worlds* (1898), before moving to consider two subsequent twentieth-century American texts. These alien invasion stories, like other apocalyptic fantasies such as zombie apocalypse narratives, posit degrees of heroism and failure through the reactions of the characters to this state of global emergency. These texts thus implicitly offer responses to the following questions: What is under threat? What happens if the invaders succeed? Whose fault is the invasion, and how should one respond to invasion? In this respect, they serve as modern-day myths or fables; they model proper ways of attending to one's body as well as proper ways of defending oneself—and, by extension, the planet—from alien invasion. This project connects these fictional narratives to biological understandings of the body and to the biopolitical formations that govern embodiment. Each of the three chapters foregrounds a different biopolitical apparatus: immunity, quarantine, and addiction, respectively. These three concepts all highlight the body's relationship to a "foreign" entity or substance. Immunity defines the body's natural ability to fend off germs, while quarantine attempts to protect the body from germs and other harmful encounters; addiction represents the body's failure to keep out the category of substances known as drugs. Each of these concepts further entails a theory of how interior and exterior relate to each other, a relation that is at once biological and biopolitical. Each is invested in monitoring the boundary between interior and exterior of the body. In the fictional texts that I analyze, the event of alien invasion illuminates the deployment of these concepts in order to re-constitute humanity as whiteness, police the borders of the bounded body, and fend off the incursions of non-normative modes of embodiment.

Chapter One takes up the question of how the biological entity of the bounded body is formulated in the last decades of the nineteenth century, through H. G. Wells's foundational alien invasion narrative *The War of the Worlds* (1898). This novel provides an important starting point for a study of the alien invasion narrative in its modern form. This enormously influential text depicted an apocalyptic alien invasion scenario that captured the popular imagination at the time and continues to define the trope of alien invasion. Wells's vision of alien invasion is imbued with his intellectual investment in the life sciences. My reading of the novel focuses on its points of contact with scientific discourse. This novel constitutes Martian embodiment as a threat to white English masculinity, depicting an invasion crisis in which slimy, tentacular, bloodsucking aliens from Mars attempt to prey on the white body and thus destroy the white

body politic. I turn to Wells's explicitly political writings to illuminate the biopolitical subtext of Wells's depiction of the aliens, linking this to nineteenth-century biological science. The slimy embodiment of the aliens engages with an existing racialized binary of disgust and desire, which operates to constitute the human species as whiteness and relegate racialized embodiment to what Sylvia Wynter calls "the contingent of the dysselected." The mode of scientific objectivity affords a defense against the particular threat of the Martian invasion, as it serves to stabilize a white male hegemony perceived to be under threat. The Martian's eventual defeat illuminates the conjunction of immunity and evolution as scientific concepts that connect the fate of the individual body to the fate of the species, and ultimately install white men as the biological heirs to the planet. The gendered virtue of continence emerges alongside immunity as a guarantor of the intactness of the body. Working in tandem with immunity to shore up the boundaries of the body, continence links affect (especially disgust and desire) with the appetites, leaks, and flows of embodiment. Continence is gendered male and constructed as white, in opposition to the racialized alien Other.

Chapter Two moves from *fin-de-siècle* England to postwar America, taking up a pair of texts from the later part of the twentieth century: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1968) and Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978). While these two texts appear to belong to very different genres and traditions, *Silent Spring*'s rhetoric, aimed to communicate scientific ideas to a popular audience, borrows from the same generic tropes associated with myth and horror that inspire *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* manifests an engagement with the horror that Carson exposes, producing a horror story deeply imbued with ecological thinking. This version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a remake of Spiegel's 1956 film of the same title (which was itself based on Jack Finney's 1954 novel *The Body Snatchers*). Kaufman's film differs from Spiegel's in ways that suggest the influence of *Silent Spring*'s ecological thinking on this new form of horror. In Kaufman's film, paranoia and anxiety are directed at *substances* rather than people. By attending to the racialization of substances and textures, my analysis exposes the underlying racial dynamics which run throughout ecological thinking and particularly the emerging field of invasion ecology. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* demonstrates the potential for ecological thinking to double down on racialized discourses of purity, falling back on the logic of quarantine to protect white bodies and borders while outsourcing toxic substances to an imagined "elsewhere." The slimy pod people represent the ultimate invasive species. Their uncanny resemblance to both humans and plants, as well as their dissemination of their own kind via pods, spores, and ooze illustrate the slippage between human and non-human entities in emergent versions of ecological thinking. White femininity plays an important role in this discourse, as both environmental activism and eco-horror exploit the spectacle of vulnerable white women under attack by toxic, racialized substances.

The first chapter provides important context for the second, demonstrating that nineteenth-century British anxieties of empire continue to inform twentieth-century American anxieties of global hegemony. Although this project encompasses several genres, primarily Kaufman's film and Wells's novel, analysis of genre is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, it is important to note that these texts—*The War of the Worlds*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and even *Silent Spring*—represent popular media in their respective time periods. These are influential texts that circulated in the public imagination and shaped common perceptions. What links the second chapter to the previous one, then, is its continued focus on

classic and popular narratives of alien invasion, and its interest in how these narratives rehearse anxieties of global hegemony in these respective cultural contexts.

In Chapter Three I turn to Octavia Butler's last novel, *Fledgling* (2005), reading it as an alien invasion novel with a difference. Butler deploys the trope of alien invasion to critique the conception of the human body as a stable, bounded entity vulnerable to attack. Butler's work more generally explores issues of alien invasion and power; however, *Fledgling* examines these questions by foregrounding vampirism and addiction. These tropes resonate in powerful, unexpected ways with the foundational elements of the alien invasion narrative as H. G. Wells penned it in 1898. Of Butler's works, it is not the most obvious choice for a project focused on alien invasion (since Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy and her short story "Bloodchild" more prominently feature alien invasions) but I find it to be the most provocative and ultimately the most useful. Its deep engagement with human history insists on the continued relevance of nineteenth-century constructions of race and embodiment to contemporary efforts to re-think embodiment and relationality. I seek to move beyond previous readings of *Fledgling* by tackling the issue of addiction head-on, reading it as central to the novel's critique of neoliberal subjectivity rather than a troubling detail. *Fledgling* offers a vision of embodiment that reframes invasion as mutualism and addiction as kinship. The novel draws on clinical and physiological theories of addiction, countering these models with an experiential description of the characters' mutual addiction which pushes back against the idea that addicted bodies represent subjects incapable of agency or consent. Leaks and flows across the boundaries of human and alien bodies disturb conceptions of the human body as bounded, separate, and independent. In *Fledgling*'s narrative, the puncturing of the boundaries of the human body does indeed result in the dismantling of white reproductive futurity and of heteronormativity, suggesting that Wells's anxieties of empire were in fact justified. The human-alien kinship formations in *Fledgling* draw on a tradition of Afrofeminist theories of identity and embodiment as relational. In the place of the white body politic, Butler posits an Afrofeminist utopia founded on open, leaky bodies.

¹ Scholars such as Alison Kafer and José Muñoz have taken up this term, while critiquing Edelman's attendant turn away from futurity, in order to articulate the stakes for queer-of-color critique and disability studies of continuing to imagine and work toward utopian futures.

² Science fiction scholars and scholarship inspired by biopolitical frameworks range from Madhu Dubey to Lisa Dowdall to Lorenzo Servitje. See, especially, *Science Fiction Film and Television*'s special issue entitled *Science Fiction and Biopolitics* (2011), and *Biopolitics and Utopia*, ed. Patricia Stapleton and Andrew Byers.

Chapter One
Invaders of the Body Politic:
Alien Invasions, H. G. Wells's Racialized Biopolitics, and Nineteenth-Century Bioscience

My investigation of alien invasion narratives begins with H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1897). This enormously popular and influential novel reached a broad audience at the time of its publication and remains a *locus classicus* of the narrative of alien invasion. The novel famously dramatizes a Martian invasion of Planet Earth. Wells's narrative deploys Western *fin-de-siècle* biological theory—specifically, the interrelated discourses of evolution and immunity—to depict the Martians as the embodiment of an alien other, relegating them to the status of an already-defeated enemy from the moment they arrive on the planet.

This novelistic depiction of an alien threat to the planet echoes a set of concerns that circulate in H. G. Wells's explicitly political writings. Both his fiction and his political philosophy attest to Wells's lifelong interest in the conjunction of biology and politics, and his firm belief that the first ought to inform the second.¹ *The War of the Worlds* draws on the Darwinian postulate of survival of the fittest, paired with the related concept of immunity, in order to represent the defeat of the Martians.

In this dramatic and sensational tale, alien attacks on the planet take the form of attacks on the human body. As long as the human body manages to fend off these invaders, there is hope for the planet, and vice versa. Wells's political writings, especially *Anticipations* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), explicitly position a healthy body as foundational to a healthy world-state. In both of these texts, the health of both the world-state and the human body depend upon the regulation of appetites, leaks, and flows. Wells envisions the world-state as a body politic which requires “surgery” to maintain its fitness. This metaphorical language reveals an investment in an idealized, “fit” body that depends on excising and excluding the abject. Similarly, the citizen of Wells's world-state is incorporated as a bounded body, materially incorporating ideals of purity, hygiene, and continence.

The depiction of this healthy, continent body emerges in contrast to the alien-Other's disorderly embodiment, which is represented as slimy and viscous. The Martians' disorderly bodies evoke a pair of interrelated monsters linked to nineteenth-century narratives of colonialism and imperialism: the cannibal and the vampire. The raced and gendered history of these monstrous figures elucidates the racializing logic that excluded these disorderly bodies from the contingent of “fit” bodies. Central to this logic is the binary of desire and disgust, which links sexual object choice to the physical and textural qualities of bodies. Slime emerges in this novel as a queer, racialized texture that crosses boundaries and dissolves the existing social order.

Despite the novel's framing of the Martian invasion as a global emergency, this crisis of bodily borders evokes a cluster of specifically English anxieties associated with the continued hegemony of white men. As Jennifer DeVere Brody explains,

The representative Englishman questioned his ability to maintain the various boundaries (economic, geographic, gender, sexual, psychological) he created [...] Would the English nation be able to control its growing hybrid border-populations, such as the Irish Catholics, the Africans, and the Hindus? More important, would the strong Anglo-Saxon race survive the threats to its assumed racial purity when some of its own breed seemed to succumb to the power of the horrific hybridity “invading” England? Was man evolving

or devolving? What role did his sexuality and heredity play in determining his position? (130, 132)

Wells's staging of alien invasion wrestles with the anxieties attendant on the health of the English national body and the place of the Englishman in the global order.

An Englishman looks at the alien

Wells's application of biological theory in *The War of the Worlds* demonstrates an abiding concern with Englishness and the place of English manhood in the global order. Wells comments in an essay reflecting on Louis Bleriot's flight across the English Channel (a piece later published in the collection titled *An Englishman Looks at the World*):

And now our insularity is breached by the foreigner who has got ahead...It means, I take it, first and foremost for us, that the world cannot wait for the English. [...] We have fallen behind in the quality of our manhood. [...] We are displayed a soft, rather backward people. Either we are a people essentially and incurably inferior, or there is something wrong in our training, something benumbing in our atmosphere and circumstances. (3)

For Wells, Bleriot's feat represents an incursion into Englishness—the English body is revealed as “soft,” just as the borders of England's insularity are breached and punctured by the aircraft. A similar complex of anxieties concerning English national borders and national bodies characterizes the Martian invasion of earth, which is also conceived as an invasion from above, a breaching of planetary insularity that troubles complacency and reveals that mankind has fallen behind. In *The War of the Worlds*, these metaphorical breachings of English-ness become embodied and biologized.

The Martians' alien physicality captures the nature of the threat that they pose to humanity. Wells's novel stages not just an invasion, but a face to face confrontation with the alien. The narrator's personal observation and description of the Martian body is key to the novel's imagining of alien invasion. The Martians land on Earth in a cylindrical capsule that appears to fall from the sky like a meteor and embeds itself in the ground near London. Interested spectators gather around the crater, marveling at the odd object; soon people come from miles around to join the crowd. The narrator is one of the Londoners who travel to see this odd spectacle. The first Martian emerges from the capsule before the narrator's eyes:

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather. [...] There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air. (21)

The narrator's initial description of Martian embodiment registers a disgust not just at the creature's non-human physiology, but at its particular wet and oozy form (or formlessness). The narrator couches this description as a kind of grotesque blazon, enumerating individual parts while emphasizing his inability to see or comprehend the shape of the whole body. The Martian's constant movement—quivering, heaving, panting, pulsating, convulsing—suggests its instability of form, borne out by its lipless mouth and uncounted tentacles. Its bulging, pulsating mass threatens to ooze out of the cylinder which barely contains it; its possession of an indeterminate number of tentacles produces the unsettling possibility that another may appear,

and another. This moment foreshadows the larger tensions that the novel stages. The narrator finds himself face to face with the danger that the Martians pose to society: will the Martians depose humanity from the pinnacle of the social order? Will they dissolve human society and reduce it to a quivering, disordered mass? Does the Martian's grotesque embodiment predict humanity's own future?

By dramatizing the moment of encounter between a human being (the narrator) and an extraterrestrial alien (the Martian), this scene constitutes the human and the alien in opposition to each other. The "human" voice of the narrator emerges in opposition to this alien presence. The resulting crypto-universalist slippage recalls Sylvia Wynter's critique of "the overrepresentation of Man as if it were the human" ("Unsettling" 267). As a member of what Wynter calls "our present ethnoclass (i.e. [white] Western bourgeois)," the narrator already possesses the power to inhabit the unmarked position of objectivity ("Unsettling" 260). He can speak for humanity and speak to humanity to describe the frightening body of the Other. Linked to Man and produced as the negative of humanity, as the other term in this dialectic, the Martian embodies the alien: the anti-human, that which threatens to breach and undo humanity. Gazing at this Martian for the first time, the narrator reports that the Martian's eyes "were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous." The narrator goes on to identify "something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty" (22). This Martian is clearly marked as repulsive and abject, not just non-human but inhuman. An idealized version of the human takes shape via the exclusion of the brown-skinned, oily, and unstable Martian. The narrator's description rejects the inhuman and stabilizes "humanity" in terms of a normative ableist embodiment, gendered male and racialized as white.

Reading this scene in terms of "first contact" makes visible its imbrication within existing discourses of colonialism. Mary Louise Pratt has theorized the "contact zone" as a generative reframing of the trope of first contact; she deploys this concept in *Imperial Eyes* to designate a space where colonizers and colonized meet, generating new discourses and cultural productions, and where power can and does flow in multiple directions. *The War of the Worlds*, through this scene that markedly diverges from Pratt's generative "contact zone," excludes the Martians from the realm of discourse and narration. Even the Martian's eyes are "crippled;" the narrator's description denies the Martians the capacity to look back at the narrator in a meaningful way, much less the capacity to enter the realm of discourse. The narrator thus asserts control over the co-constitution of the human and the alien.

As this early scene implies, scientific discourse functions in the novel as a crucial strategy that allows the narrator to stabilize and explicate the threat posed by alien invasion. Specifically, scientific discourse is characterized by an empiricism that relies on observation and description to produce an optics of control. Wells's narrator participates in a methodology of dissection and explication, bent on unfolding and exposing the interiors of bodies to produce visible surfaces. These objectivist strategies install bourgeois, white, English, able-bodied men in the position of objectivity. Mary Louise Pratt uses the term "seeing-man" to describe the figure who inhabits this mode, the white male European imperial subject who passively "look[s] out and possess[es]" but is not himself seen or described (7). Donna Haraway's analysis of what she calls the "God-trick" further explicates the centrality of visibility to the forms of control enacted by scientific objectivity.² These interrelated strategies serve to distance the scientific narrator from his object of study, obscuring the salience of hierarchies of race and gender and rejecting the intimate contact that dissection and observation entail.

The War of the Worlds takes the form of a first-person account, narrated throughout by the same voice. The narrator presents himself as a man experienced in philosophic-scientific writing, a “philosophical writer” working on a series of papers on “morality” and “civilization,” reminiscent of Wells himself (12, 34). This narrator’s account of the Martian invasion relies heavily on a scientific or clinical mode, lapsing periodically into commentary on his own emotions and state of mind, but always returning to the detached perspective of objectivity. He intersperses his narrative of events with information based on scientific study of the Martians. His scrupulous and detailed observations privilege the mode of visual scrutiny as an optics of control.

The narrator thus emerges as a natural philosopher-hero whose position as hero depends upon his skills as empiricist; his rational, detailed observations assist him in wrestling with his own fear and panic. His account indirectly establishes that he is the single person in the world best qualified to narrate the story of the Martians, because he *saw* the Martians and survived. The narrator’s scientific credibility allows him to aspire to the position of the seeing-man.

At the same time, *The War of the Worlds* reveals fissures that occur in the scientific record as a result of the Martian invasion. Scientific discourse functions to stabilize the alien and the human; however, the Martians rupture the surface of the narrator’s scientific discourse. One such rupture occurs as Wells’s narrator discusses the details of Martian physiology and reveals that the Martians feed by extracting human blood.

[A]ll the complex apparatus of digestion, which makes up the bulk of our bodies, did not exist in the Martians. They were heads—merely heads. Entrails they had none. They did not eat, much less digest. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and *injected* it into their own veins. I have myself seen this done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal... [emphasis and ellipses in the original] (125)

The narrator’s account abruptly veers from the clinical language of the comparative anatomist: his repulsion will not allow him to continue his observations, producing an explicitly marked rupture in this quasi-scientific record. Wells’s Martians threaten to puncture the borders of the bounded human body, and at this moment, scientific discourse breaks down. The anatomist’s knife, that crucial technology of empire, is turned back on the body of the colonizer in the form of the Martian’s “little pipette.”

This rupture serves as a reminder that the specific position of white masculinity undergirds the universalist formulation of the narrator as “humanity.” If visibility is crucial to the God’s-eye trick of empiricism—a model which, disavowing the viscosities and visceralities of dissection, positions the scientist and research subject in separate realms, divided by sterile barriers, bridged by the microscope, lens or loupe—then the textural and the haptic represent an inadmissible intimacy between scientist and subject, registering the imminence of physical contact and the possibility of “contamination.” The Martians threaten to ooze out of the position of the object of scientific study; their unstable bodily nature registers as a visibility that constantly impinges on the haptic. The tentacular bodies of the Martians threaten to reassert the narrator’s position as a person who, in fact, inhabits a physical body.

Biopolitics and biology at *fin-de-siècle*

This tension between the (English) scientist and the alien, revealed in moments of confrontation such as these, characterizes the novel as a whole. Wells turns to the field of biology—the discipline in which the scientific gaze is trained on living creatures, including the human organism—in order to imagine the horror of the Martian invasion, as well as to keep the Martians at bay over the course of the novel. Biological discourse functions in the novel to both generate and resolve anxieties of empire.

The novel engages with two foundational paradigms of modern biology that developed in conjunction with each other in the nineteenth century: evolution and immunity. The classificatory logic associated with Darwin's theory of evolution motivated and legitimized projects of empire. In nineteenth-century biological discourse, the classification, description, and explication of bodies as more or less "evolved" served as a stabilizing matrix that fixed living beings in hierarchies and underwrote the superiority of white men. *The War of the Worlds* engages with this classificatory project and dramatizes the fissures and anxieties that it produces at the end of the nineteenth century. The novel draws on the interrelated discourse of immunity to imagine defense against alien invasion. As a structuring condition for the novel, immunity offers a biological logic that undergirds the biopolitics of alien encounters. Evolution, immunity, and alien invasion emerge in recognizably modern forms at the same historical moment, co-articulated and informing each other.

In the nineteenth century, European projects of imperial mapmaking allied with the emerging biological sciences to catalogue human embodiment as part of the global classificatory project. The consolidation of British imperial power in the nineteenth century operated alongside and through scientific exploration. In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt connects the "systematizing of nature" (29) with the cataloguing and mapping projects that extended European mastery of the globe. Nineteenth-century natural scientists extended work in comparative anatomy to include the racialization of human beings. Cesare Lombroso, Max Nordau, and others examined and dissected human bodies to create a vast archive that proposed to sort and fix the human population of the globe according to a hierarchical taxonomy of races. The comparative anatomist, author of dissections, emerged as a version of Pratt's "seeing-man."

This work of cataloguing and sorting specimens through comparative anatomy laid the foundations for Darwin's theory of evolution. Anne McClintock clarifies the role of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in the totalizing project of what McClintock calls "a global science of the surface" (34). As McClintock suggests, Darwin's theory presented evolution as hierarchical and teleological, progressing toward perfection—with "man" at the top of this hierarchy. This narrative of progress brought with it the attendant anxiety of degeneration: if a species can progress and evolve, it may also regress and degenerate. Both these possible trajectories locate the individual body within a futurity-oriented reproductive order in which the characteristics of the (human) organism determine the fate of the "species."

The reestablishment of a hierarchy became a crucial project of Darwinian science, which insisted that Man belonged "at the very summit of the organic scale" (*Descent of Man*, 617). In other words, as Sylvia Wynter argues, the "Great Chain of Being" which guaranteed Man's position just below the angels underwent a "mutation" in the nineteenth century, only to be reaffirmed and naturalized through "the Western intellectual's reinvention of Man, in now purely secular because biocentric, [...] bourgeois-capitalist terms" (126). Darwin's *Descent of Man* biologizes white supremacy via what Sylvia Wynter calls "the now purely secular, half-scientific, half-mythic Origin Narrative" of the category of Man ("How We Mistook" 126-7). In this widely read and oft-cited text, Darwin attempts to address public distaste for the idea that

“man is descended from some lowly organized form” (404). Darwin’s circuitous argument attempts to allay anxieties of the proximity of “man” to “savages,” explicitly relegating non-white bodies to the anachronistic status of “ancestors.” He asserts, “[T]here can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors” (404). Darwin concludes triumphantly, “He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins” (404). Darwin positions the Fuegians as more shocking and repulsive than animals; he goes on to state that he would rather be related to a “heroic little monkey” than a “savage who delights to torture his enemies” (404). Darwin’s rhetoric implicitly equates “lowly organized forms” with “barbarians” and “savages,” summoning the Fuegians and their wild landscape to stand in for all ancestral and less-developed forms of Man. This labored argument exemplifies the links between evolutionary theory and the biologization of white supremacy. Darwin makes it clear that he does not consider the Fuegians to belong to the category of “man” in his most recent and highly evolved form.

Having consigned the Fuegians to a primitive past, Darwin embarks on a similarly convoluted attempt to reconcile the supremacy of Man with his “lowly origin”: “Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future” (405). Here the “organic scale” operates as a classification system which allows Man to measure his progress. The “indelible stamp of his lowly origin” becomes a marker of how far Man has risen. Darwin’s description ascribes an obscure form of virtue to Man’s ascent on this scale. The taxonomizing impulse of nineteenth-century biology thus serves to fix the category of Man and shore up the superiority of white, Anglo-European colonizers.

The Martians pose a significant threat to this order. Their advanced technology and imperial designs on Earth suggest that they seek to displace Man from his position at the pinnacle of the evolutionary order. As science fiction scholar John Rieder has put it, the Martians are “a version of the human race’s own future” (5). In a moment of metatextual humor, the novel references an article written by Wells himself: “A certain speculative writer of quasi-scientific repute [i.e., Wells], writing long before the Martian invasion, did forecast for man a final structure not unlike the actual Martian condition” (126). In *The War of the Worlds*, Wells extends this totalizing global hierarchy into outer space. The Martians are a “final” form of “man”—but does their tentacular embodiment constitute progress or degeneration? The narrator’s consistently horrified reaction to the Martians reveals the slipperiness of the evolution/degeneration binary, gesturing toward the impossibility of imagining evolutionary progress beyond the idealized figure of Man. These invaders threaten to upset the hierarchy of evolutionary progress and reduce it to chaos.

The War of the Worlds supplies a solution to this problem that turns to biology to rescue Man. Like *Dracula* (that other 1897 novel about degenerate, parasitic foreigners invading English bodies and English borders), *The War of the Worlds* follows what Christopher Craft identifies as the “triple rhythm” of the Gothic, in which the text “first invites or admits a monster, then entertains and is entertained by monstrosity for some extended duration, until [...] it expels or repudiates the monster and all the disruption that he/she/it brings” (Craft 107). As Craft’s framework suggests, the method of expulsion is key. While the heroic characters in

Dracula turn to religion and sharp stakes to rid themselves of the monster, in *The War of the Worlds*, the hero of this novel is, in a manner of speaking, biological theory.

The eventual defeat of the Martians is signaled early on by the very fact that the narrator can describe their physiology in such intimate detail. The phase of their “entertainment” is foreclosed and stabilized by scientific inquiry, since the narrator indicates that the bodies of the Martians were dissected and studied by “distinguished anatomist[s]” (124). That is, midway through the novel, the Martians are revealed as belonging to the category of the specimen. Their bodies have already been opened up by the anatomist’s knife and stripped of their secrets.

In a concluding gesture that links the narrator’s bodily boundedness with the salvation of the body politic, the Martians are ultimately “slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared” (168). The narrator explains, “These germs of disease have taken toll of humanity since the beginning of things. [...] But by virtue of this natural selection we have developed resisting power” (168). This sensational deployment of germ theory (in conjunction with the specific language of both immunity and evolution) reflects its importance in the late nineteenth-century popular consciousness. A series of highly publicized scientific discoveries at midcentury popularized germ theory, and later, the concept of immunity itself.³

Immunity—a theory about biological properties and mechanisms which inhere in certain bodies—intertwined with the discourse of evolution to define and legitimate the modern liberal subject. Immunity functions as one of the mechanisms through which evolution determines which bodies are “fittest.” If Darwin’s theory of evolution famously demanded a reinterpretation of nature as engaged in unceasing struggle for survival, subsequent work in the emerging field of immunology reframed this struggle as located at the very boundaries of the human body itself, as the body erects “defenses” against germs. The imaginary of immunity offers a microcosm of the struggle for survival of the fittest. Immunity shores up a biomedical logic of the body in which “the human organism appears as a defended frontier, bound within an epidermal envelope that establishes the limits of a self, which is both exposed to and opposed to microbial “others” who threaten to negate its existence” (Cohen 278). It presents the human body as a self-sufficient, bounded entity, constantly at war with foreign invaders. Ed Cohen identifies this formulation of the body as explicitly biopolitical, arguing that it naturalizes ideals of liberal individualism and reframes them as biological fact.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a key phase in this constitution of the modern Western body, especially the contributions of Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, and Elie Metchnikoff to germ theory and cellular immunity. Louis Pasteur’s empiricist approach draws on the influential French physiologist Claude Bernard’s experimental framework in considering the bounded organism, separate from its environment, as the primary site of medical research. In the mid-nineteenth century, Pasteur posited microbes as the cause of disease. Indeed, he made the grandiose claim that microbes were the cause of *all* diseases. As Cohen puts it, “Pasteur and the ‘Pasteurians’ fetishize the microbe as disease’s ‘agent’ or ‘auteur’” (245). Cohen adds, “For Pasteur, disease occurs when microorganisms compete with an animal for its living property [...] in a milieu that provides the animal no additional sustenance—a philosophy that accords quite nicely with liberal individualism” (247). The governing tropes of germ theory thus rehearse a microscopic version of alien invasion in which the body identifies and defends the limits of the self by fending off foreign agents. The rhetoric of nineteenth-century germ theory strongly suggests a correlation between national health and the health of the individual body.

In 1883, Elie Metchnikoff postulated phagocytosis as the fundamental mechanism of immune response. This refinement to germ theory completed the metaphoric localization of political struggle within the boundaries of the body: if germs invade its borders, then phagocytes defend. Metchnikoff's theory incorporated Darwinian struggle for existence⁴ within the body itself on a cellular level (rather than between individuals of the same species), while reformulating the problem of public hygiene in terms of an atomistic individual. Phagocytes "eat" cells during embryonic development to constitute the self. They continue to police this self-nonsel distinction by eating invading cells, cleaning up the body just as public hygiene seeks to clean up the body politic. This formulation of immunity as a struggle located within the human body obscures the racialization of the naturalized concepts of "health," purity, and hygiene. At the same time, it lays the groundwork for a ranking of human beings as fit or unfit in terms of how well their bodily borders are defended, placing immunity in dialogue with discourses of eugenics.

The *fin-de-siècle* theory of immunity expanded on Darwin's theory of evolution by conflating individual bodily health, construed as active defense against invaders, with the health of the species. The failure to maintain one's bodily boundaries emerged as a marker of unfitness, a way to re-inscribe the consignment of racialized populations to the primitive past by claiming that their bodies are individually selected against by the forces of natural selection. This co-constitution of illness as invasion and immunity as organismic defense took shape in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, saturating not just the scientific but also the cultural milieu in which Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds*.⁵ The biopolitical consolidation of power encapsulated in this formulation of immunity underwrites the salvation of the planet from the Martian invaders.

The narrator describes this event in detail, evoking a dramatic tableau. The narrator climbs a hill and from this vantage point suddenly views the bodies of the Martians, "some in their overturned war-machines, some in the now rigid handling-machines, and a dozen of them stark and silent and laid in a row" (168). He immediately reveals that they are "dead!--slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared [...] slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth" (168). He then goes on to offer an extended meditation on this event:

For so it had come about, as indeed I and many men might have foreseen had not terror and disaster blinded our minds. These germs of disease have taken toll of humanity since the beginning of things--taken toll of our prehuman ancestors since life began here. But by virtue of this natural selection of our kind we have developed resisting power; to no germs do we succumb without a struggle, and to many--those that cause putrefaction in dead matter, for instance--our living frames are altogether immune. But there are no bacteria in Mars, and directly these invaders arrived, directly they drank and fed, our microscopic allies began to work their overthrow. Already when I watched them they were irrevocably doomed, dying and rotting even as they went to and fro. It was inevitable. By the toll of a billion deaths man has bought his birthright of the earth, and it is his against all comers; it would still be his were the Martians ten times as mighty as they are. For neither do men live nor die in vain. (168)

In the narrator's exegesis of this tableau, Pasteur's criminalized microbes become allies of "humanity," stepping in where "all of man's devices [...] fail." The narrator's invocation of "God, in his wisdom" offers a twist on what Sylvia Wynter refers to as a "biodicy" (132): rather than calling on biology alone to account for the existing order of things, the narrator imagines the

purpose of God operating through biological agents. The Pasteurian militarization of microbes as agential “invaders” makes it possible to imagine the microbes as allies against an enemy invader: these foreign agents have switched allegiances. At the same time, as “the humblest things,” these microbes do not threaten Man’s position at the top of the social order. This deployment of germ theory exemplifies what Priscilla Wald has called “the unstable meanings of microbes” (80). As Wald’s work suggests, the biopolitical meanings of microbes are easily mobilized to reaffirm white supremacy in the name of science. Here the microbes serve as principal actors in a eugenic culling that reaffirms the biological superiority of Man.

As the term of otherness in this binary—in a formulation that recalls Sylvia Wynter’s contingent of the dysselected—the Martians are revealed as always already dead, “dying and rotting even as they went to and fro.” This discursive relegation of the Martians to the category of dead matter walking creates a category of organic matter that recalls Agamben’s *homo sacer* and the biopolitical category of “bare life.” Coupled with the assertion that “neither do men live or die in vain,” a reminder of the co-constitution of the selected and the dysselected, this framing conjures the specters of the humans who have died. Martians and humans dissolve into an undifferentiated mass, dying and rotting.

This explanation of immunity and evolutionary theory explicitly rejects a contingent definition of the “fit” and the “favored” as adaptation to environment, asserting instead that biological fitness—in the form of immunity—confers rightful possession of the planet upon humanity. Framing the Martians’ death as a failure to defend their bodies against bacteria implies that the ideal human subject appears in the supremely intact and well-defended body of the narrator, who stands in for Man. The framing of “fitness” in terms of resistance to germs epitomizes the conjunction of immunity and evolution, and the way in which both of these discourses connect the survival of the individual (human) organism to the survival of the species. The intact boundaries of the individual human body ensure the continued success of humanity.

Wells’s social bodies: body, state, world

The deployment of the concept of immunity as the final plot twist of *The War of the Worlds* underscores that the threat of Martian invasion is a threat to the boundaries of the human body. Alien invasion, like the intertwined discourses of immunity and evolution, emerges as a complex process that links the individual body to the social body. It is the human body’s natural ability to maintain its boundaries against invading microbes that ultimately results in the triumph of humanity as a whole over the invading aliens.

Before the Martians succumb to the depredations of microbes, the novel emphasizes the cascading effects of the Martian invasion of the human body upon human society. Wells figures the planet itself as a bounded body ruptured and contaminated by the Martian invasion. Early in the novel, Wells’s narrator reflects, “So you have the state of things on Friday night. In the centre, sticking into the skin of our old planet Earth like a poisoned dart, was this cylinder. But the poison was scarcely working yet” (36). The narrator envisions the planet Earth as a giant organism, safely enfolded in skin—until the Martians arrive.

The panic that accompanies the Martians’ arrival on the planet has the effect of disintegrating the boundaries that distinguish one individual from another, transforming the inhabitants of London into a panicked crowd. The health of the planet, construed as a “social body,” is represented metonymically (in perhaps the ultimate Anglocentricism) as London and

its environs. The narrator describes the evacuation of London using metaphors of water, figuring the collective rush in terms that suggest a city dissolving into liquid:

So you understand the roaring wave of fear that swept through the greatest city in the world just as Monday was dawning—the stream of flight rising swiftly to a torrent, lashing in a foaming tumult round the railway stations, banked up into a horrible struggle about the shipping in the Thames, and hurrying by every available channel northward and eastward. (92)

The narrator moves directly from describing this tide of refugees from London, to commenting on the effects of this panic on social organization: “By ten o’clock the police organization, and by midday even the railway organizations, were losing coherency, losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening, running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body” (92). This same imagery recurs in the narrator’s digression recounting the parallel experiences of his brother during the evacuation of the city:

So much as [he and his companions] could see of the road Londonward between the houses to the right was a tumultuous stream of dirty, hurrying people, pent in between the villas on either side; the black heads, the crowded forms, grew into distinctness as they rushed towards the corner, hurried past, and merged their individuality again in a receding multitude that was swallowed up at last in a cloud of dust. (98)

All over London, the populace dissolves into foaming tides, streams, torrents, and other bodies of rushing water; in the process, individual bodies run the risk of losing their distinctness.

This novelistic treatment foreshadows a strand of reasoning that Wells develops in his political writings, particularly *Anticipations* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905). In these explicitly political-philosophical texts, Wells discursively links the health of the “fit” individual body to the health of the body politic. He articulates the stakes of a failure to maintain one’s bodily boundaries: not just individual dissoluteness, but a catastrophic breakdown of the body politic.

In *Anticipations*, Wells envisions a future utopian world-state based on scientific and specifically biological principles. Wells outlines a Malthusian eugenic program that will mandate the health of citizens:

[T]he ethical system which will dominate the world state [...] will be shaped primarily to favour the procreation of what is fine and efficient and beautiful in humanity—beautiful and strong bodies, clear and powerful minds, and a growing body of knowledge—and to check the procreation of [...] all that is mean and ugly and bestial in the souls, bodies, or habits of men. To do the latter is to do the former; the two things are inseparable. (322-3)

Wells “inseparably” links the welfare of humanity as a species to the health of individual bodies and minds—via the exclusion of what is socially and hence biologically undesirable. His ambiguous phrasing of “procreation” abstracts this project from the level of embodiment and obscures the direct link to a biopolitics of reproductive control.⁶

Wells goes on to envision the necessary conditions for “moral birth[s]” (332). He begins, once again, with the premise that “[t]he birth of a child, healthy in body and brain [...] gives only the beginning, the raw material, of a civilized man. The perfect civilized man is not only a sound strong body but a very elaborate fabric of mind” (332). Accordingly, Wells explains, “[h]e has to be carefully guarded from physical and moral contagions” and assured “home and education and protection without any parasitic dependence on people outside the kin of the child” (332-3). “Health” emerges here as a project of hygiene, an exclusion of impurities from the body and the immediate environment. “Contagious” and “parasitic” relations blur the distinction between

literal, physical diseases and metaphorical dis-ease. Wells's vision of a "civilized man" operates via the linked production of two types of citizen: the fit, the bounded, the healthy individual, on the one hand; and, on the other, the quasi-individual whose individuality is compromised, exposed to contagions or engaging in parasitic dependence.

The eugenic philosophy that underwrites Wells's socialist utopia entails the constitution of a category that Wells names "the People of the Abyss." He identifies these people as a "consequence of progress," a waste product of the social body: "the appearance of a great number of people without either property or any evident function in the social organism" (88). Wells continues,

For the most part its individuals are either criminal, immoral, parasitic in more or less irregular ways upon the more successful classes, or labouring [...] in a finally hopeless competition against machinery that is as yet not so cheap as their toil. It is, to borrow a popular phrase, the 'submerged' portion of the social body, a leaderless, aimless multitude, a multitude of people drifting down towards the abyss" (88-9).

Wells's "popular phrase," his reference to this contingent as "submerged," refers to William Booth's invocation of the "submerged tenth" in his 1890 polemic *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. Booth asks rhetorically whether the problem of the "submerged tenth" is "a problem as insoluble as that of the London sewage, which, feculent and festering, swings heavily up and down the basin of the Thames with the ebb and flow of the tide?" (23). Wells's use of the phrase thus resonates with concerns of hygiene and purity, as well as with the specific geography of London and the lurking shadow of "darkest Africa."⁷

Wells's paratactic linkage of the terms "criminal, immoral, parasitic" blurs these different categories: the criminal is the immoral is the parasitic. The "functionless" members of humanity, biologically construed as a "social organism," are therefore parasitic on society, and hence criminal and immoral. Wells renders the link between an imagined excess in the human body and an excess population in the social body in explicit terms: "They are an integral part of this physiological process of mechanical progress, as inevitable in the social body as are waste matters and disintegrating cells in the body of a healthy and active man" (91). Following the logic of Metchnikoffian *fin-de-siècle* bioscience, analogically identifying the People of the Abyss as the "waste matter" of a bounded body marks them as targets of phagocytosis—undifferentiated matter which must be killed (or consumed) to ensure the continued self-constitution of the organism.

Wells argues against the contemporary belief that these masses of the unfit are reproducing and threatening to overwhelm society. He claims, "[S]ooner or later, as every East End doctor knows, the ways of the social abyss lead to death, the premature death of the individual, or death through the death or infertility of the individual's stunted offspring, or death through that extinction which moral perversion involves [...]. It remains in its essence wherever social progress is being made, the contingent of death" (89-90). Wells advocates killing these people, following the logic that they are already as good as dead, as beings who are always already biologically marked for death.⁸ As another version of *homo sacer*, the People of the Abyss recall Wells's Martians, imagined as "dying and rotting" even as they appear to be living beings. Wells's reference to the East End reveals that this abstracted category, supposedly composed of individual bodies divorced from social context, can be mapped onto a very specific location in the classed and raced urban space of London.

Wells's extraordinary conglomeration of metaphors for the People of the Abyss consistently figure this group as the excess through which fit society is delineated. In *A Modern*

Utopia (1905), Wells continues to expand on this theme using the term he had coined four years earlier. In this text, the existence of the People of the Abyss is framed as a biomedical problem of social health, a form of “adiposity” which requires surgical intervention lest it enervate the entire social body. This fatphobic framing doubles down on its ableist investment in the “fit” body. Both Wells’s future utopian state and the modern capitalist state envision the health of the social body against a backdrop of a Malthusian economy of scarcity. The specter of adiposity thus evokes a parasitic body whose relationship to consumption has gone awry, threatening the survival of others. Wells understands adiposity itself as the antithesis of “muscle,” which supposedly composes the hard, vigorous, masculine body.

Wells’s rhetoric constructs adiposity as a substance that threatens the social body while simultaneously containing the seeds of its own destruction and dissolution.⁹ He identifies two social forces at work in the modern (U.S. and western European) social body, the first being “the force of invention,” which produces both the People of the Abyss and “a sort of adiposity of functionless wealthy, a speculative elephantiasis” (228). He argues that this same force “promote[s] the development of a new social order of efficient[s] [...] amidst these growing and yet disintegrating masses” (228-9). The second force, in Wells’s framing, is “the absolute determination evident in the scheme of things to smash such a body [...] under the hammer of war, that must finally bring about rapidly and under pressure the same result as that to which the peaceful evolution slowly tends” (229). Wells personifies this force as “War with the surgeon’s knife,” elaborating, “War comes to simplify the issue and line out the thing with knife-like cuts” (229). His extended metaphor links war to biomedical discourse, figuring war as a surgeon whose medical intervention assists the forces of natural selection in strengthening both the individual and the species.

Wells’s sweeping conclusion enacts a series of rhetorical slippages that reveal the biopolitical violence undergirding this vision. In this final formulation, the “functionless wealthy” have dropped out of Wells’s vision of “irresponsible adiposity,” to be replaced by the dysselected People of the Abyss:

The nation that produces in the near future the largest proportional development of [...] intellectually active people of all sorts; the nation that most resolutely picks over, educates, sterilizes, exports, or poisons its People of the Abyss [...] the nation, in a word, that turns the greatest proportion of its irresponsible adiposity into social muscle, will certainly be the nation that will be the most powerful in warfare as in peace, will certainly be the ascendant or dominant nation before the year 2000. (230)

Wells’s focus on a utopian future gives way here to an analysis of the contemporary balance of power among competing nations, illustrating the importance of nineteenth-century formations of power in structuring the future world-state. He presents several possible fates for People of the Abyss, all of which make explicit the specific violent actions that Wells’s rhetoric of “war” and “natural forces” obscures. Here it is clear that Wells envisions these as biopolitical actions of the state in order to manage its own population and consolidate its power, rather than an eruption of unsanctioned conflict or a slow evolutionary pressure. At the same time, Wells’s argument naturalizes such violence against the group constituted as the “People of the Abyss.” He associates this group of people with excess adiposity that must be converted into “muscle” for the health of the body, and furthermore, he suggests that such a substance is already “disintegrating” of its own accord.

This rhetorical slippage points toward a crucial tension that undergirds the logic of biopolitical control. The border between bare life and humanity is supposedly “naturally”

mandated, and yet it must be strenuously defended via positive action—the “surgery” of the body politic that Wells advocates. A similar contradiction characterizes the fraught binary of evolution versus degeneration. In this paradigm, humanity as a whole is understood to be teleologically progressing in a pattern that is naturally preordained; and yet it seems this biological destiny requires vigilance and virtue on the part of individuals.

The War of the Worlds dramatizes these tensions. Wells’s deployment of immunity affirms that some organisms are biologically destined to thrive and some are destined to wither. The novel’s conclusion reveals that the battle for the planet ultimately occurs at the microscopic level, between germs and phagocytes. The narrator’s eventual triumph over the Martians, and hence his rightful inheritance of the planet, is revealed to be always already biologically predetermined. And yet, the Martians do not die immediately. Although they are consigned to the state of walking dead, these appetitive, disorderly creatures still manage to prey voraciously on humanity before they succumb to earthly germs. During this crucial interval, the narrator must strive to evade the Martians and defend his body against them. The humans besieged by the Martian invasion must take positive steps to guard against the dissolution of their bodies, in order to attain their biologically predetermined triumph.

Like the Martians, whose arrival on Earth precipitates the “swift liquefaction of the social body” (92), the People of the Abyss are discursively linked in *Anticipations* to the “deliquescence of the local social order” (93). Wells’s description of this deliquescence provides the context in which he introduces and names the People of the Abyss. He extends the metaphor of a contingent of “submerged” people to figure the current social order in the U.S. and western Europe as “a molten mass” in which “all the definite classes [...] have melted and mingled” (83). In such a liquid society, one must sink or swim. Wells identifies “a great and varied multitude swimming successfully without aid [...] and an equally varied multitude of less capable ones clinging to the swimmers, clinging to the floating rich, or clutching empty-handed and thrust and sinking down” (84). This liquid metaphor foreshadows the fear that surfaces later: that the People of the Abyss will sink the rest of society, and indeed the world.¹⁰

Wells makes this concern explicit, declaring that “these non-effective masses [the People of the Abyss] would have but the slightest interest were it not for their enormous possibilities of reaction upon the really living portion of the social organism” (93). He goes on to clarify the difference between the People of the Abyss and the “really living portion”:

This really living portion seems at first sight to be as deliquescent in its nature, to be drifting down to as chaotic a structure as either the non-functional owners that float above it or the unemployed who sink below. [...] But under a certain scrutiny one can detect [...] going on side by side with the processes of dissolution and frequently masked by these, there are other processes by which men, often of the most diverse parentage and antecedent traditions, are being segregated into a multitude of specific new groups. (93-4)

Wells’s account of this phenomenon establishes the People of the Abyss as an original locus of chaotic deliquescence. He insists that this apparent “dissolution” of society is counteracted by the reconstitution of society along new stratifications. This insistence echoes a Darwinian anxiety concerning the reconstitution of lost distinctions and boundaries.

Wells’s imagining of an undifferentiated mass of humanity in *Anticipations* and *A Modern Utopia* contrasts with the persistent hierarchies of race, gender, and power that structured nineteenth-century social relations. As Alexander Weheliye’s critique of biopolitics after Agamben in *Habeas Viscus* reminds us, biopolitical discourse constitutes an undifferentiated, supposedly deracialized “bare life” without attending to the racializing

assemblages which structure the emergence of this category. In *Anticipations*, Wells attempts to deracialize the People of the Abyss. He repeatedly suggests that race in the coming socialist utopia will be irrelevant; and yet, rather than undoing and redressing racialization, his formulation compellingly foreshadows a neoliberal “post-racial” state.

Similarly, Wells’s depiction of the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* constructs Man’s Other in terms of undifferentiated slime, a tentacular and ostensibly de-racialized mode of disorderly embodiment that crosses bodily borders. Wells’s identification of these creatures as an extraterrestrial threat (rather than a terrestrial one) obscures, but does not erase, his reliance on racializing tropes to formulate these disorderly, deathly bodies.

Disorderly bodies: the contagious racialization of the Martians

In Wells’s work, the “contingent of death,” already dead and rotten, draws together the Martians—as vampiric consumers, parasites on human bodies, and foreign invaders of the body/politic—with the human figures conflated and reviled by Wells’s Darwinian biopolitics. These human figures include the addict; the denizen of the East End; the savage; the corpulently fat. The Martians’ resemblance to these various People of the Abyss is underscored by the racialization of Martian embodiment. Although the Martians are ostensibly aliens from another planet, these creatures appear in a recognizably monstrous guise, layered with an imperialist, gendered, and racialized history.

Their tentacular, blood-sucking bodies evoke clear precursors in the colonial imaginary: the cannibal and the vampire. These tropes of other-ness collude with the long English tradition of figuring the nation as a (white) “body politic” whose purity and health are threatened by the incursions of “foreign” (racialized) bodies (Harris).¹¹ Their disorderly, racialized bodies threaten to puncture, undo, and liquefy virtuous white bodies, breaking down the fabric of the colonial social order. Not only are they racialized, they are also markedly queer, modeling a disruptive relationship to gender, sexuality, and sexual reproduction. This conjunction demonstrates the imbrication of race, gender, and heteronormativity at the site of the “alien” body.

The alien, the cannibal, and the vampire all portend the failure of boundaries: in threatening to disorder the idealized, intact body, these entities threaten to conflate natives with foreigners, humans with animals, living bodies with dead ones, hosts with parasites. They fundamentally undermine the distinction between the interior and the exterior of the body. In turn, these entities imperil the national body through their disorderly appetites—their relation to consumption and (re)production. As precursors to the Martians’ “alien” embodiment, the cannibal and the vampire reveal the raced and gendered hierarchies that underpin the abstract ideal of the bounded body—making visible the biopolitical consequences attached to this notion of “fitness.”

The War of the Worlds depicts the proximity of colonizer to colonized through the cannibalistic tendencies of the Martians. In *The War of the Worlds*, the Martians arrive on Earth with the explicit intention of colonizing the planet, and their direct attack on human bodies literalizes this cannibalistic relationship. However, the racialized stigmata of the native cannibal attaches to the alien Martians.¹² The “primitiveness” of Martian embodiment links this colonial power to racialized indigenous peoples.

The trope of cannibalism suggests a cluster of anxieties of proximity and distinction. Cannibalism threatens to undo the body so completely as to rupture distinctions of gender, race,

and even time and space. As Anne McClintock has observed, consuming human flesh enacts “a disordering of the body so catastrophic as to be fatal” (26). She argues that in cannibal narratives, “the fear of being engulfed by the unknown is projected onto colonized peoples as their determination to devour the intruder whole” (27). Cannibalism literalizes and inverts the relationship between colonizer and colonized, circling around the question of who is engulfing and digesting whom.¹³ As Peter Hulme has argued, the figure of the cannibal in imperial accounts of first contact suggests the essential same-ness of colonizing and colonized peoples. In Hulme’s account, cannibalism is taboo and horrific precisely because both eater and eaten belong to the same species. Cannibalism thus entails both proximity and essential difference. “Civilized” eaters display a proper horror at this practice, while “savage” peoples eagerly partake.

At its heart, cannibalism represents utter assimilation into the flesh of another human being. It threatens not just death but dissolution and reconstitution as the Other. McClintock underscores that this is a gendered fear, highlighting narratives of female cannibals which conflate sexual voraciousness with more literal hungers. Her formulation of “anachronistic spaces” is useful here in charting the implications of these anxieties; this term aptly describes the imperialist logic that relegates certain locations, bodies, and subject positions to a “pre-modern” time imagined to be outside the linear timeline of progress. □ Cannibalism thus threatens not only to conflate native bodies with white bodies, and male bodies with female, but to swallow up the future in a morass of the “primitive” past.

While the Martians’ alien embodiment evokes these older discourses of cannibalism, it directly references a contemporary preoccupation with vampirism. Vampires emerged as a nineteenth-century version of the cannibal trope, replacing a hunger for flesh with a thirst for blood. This reimagining of the cannibal trope emphasizes the crossing of bodily borders (the puncturing of the skin) rather than the complete engulfment and digestion of the body. The threat posed by the vampire evinces a continued obsession with the fear of becoming the monstrous Other. The figure of the vampire reveals the investment of white European masculinity in stability of bodily borders, and the imbrication of race, gender, and heteronormativity. In nineteenth-century vampire fiction, as in *The War of the Worlds*, vampiric monsters’ appetitive relationship to human blood threatens to undo careful management of bodily boundaries, particularly that of male bodies.

Scholarship on vampires has long identified the vampire as a metaphorical boundary-crosser,¹⁴ a creature that “penetrates boundaries by its very nature” (Hollinger and Gordon 7). Christopher Craft has argued that Gothic tales of monstrosity create a space for flirtation with gender-bending and homoerotics. Among the questions that Craft identifies in *Dracula* are: “Are we male or are we female? Do we have penetrators or orifices? And if both, what does that mean?” (Craft 109). Craft’s analysis focuses on the vampire’s mouth as a key site at which anxieties of penetration mingle with inadmissible desires for same-sex eroticism; the mouth constitutes a queer orifice that undoes binary systems of gender and sexuality. In *The War of the Worlds*, as in *Dracula*, the puncturing of the intact white male body is a decisive moment. Once punctured, the body changes character. The tiniest hole or penetration of its borders leads to a catastrophic draining, as its vital fluids merge with the non-human monster. Both male and female vampires bend gender in ways that are disruptive to reproductive futurity. The vampire’s relationship to the human body thus discursively unsettles gender and other foundational dichotomies of Victorian society.

In addition to these metaphorical threats, the figure of the vampire poses a specifically physiological anxiety. The vampire’s undoing of the white male body resonates with a distinctive

medical model of the body, revealing a strand of biological and medical discourse woven through these tales of Gothic monstrosity.¹⁵ As Christopher Craft and Barbara Creed note, “the act of vampirism mixes the idea of blood/semen/milk” (Creed 70). This Gothic conflation of blood and semen draws upon Aristotelian and classical understandings of human physiology which influenced Victorian models of embodiment. Aristotle’s writings expanded on the ancient idea that semen was derived from blood (Lemire 36). In sixteenth-century Western thought, this formed the basis of what Thomas Laqueur has termed “a physiology of fungible fluids,” in which semen and blood were understood to form part of the same reservoir of the body’s fluids (Laqueur qtd in Lemire 36).

This understanding of human physiology held sway on both sides of the Atlantic in the Victorian period, underpinning theories of continence and sexual hygiene and motivating U. S. utopian reformers.¹⁶ G. J. Barker-Benfield has called the nineteenth-century incarnation of this concept the “spermatic economy” (175).¹⁷ This model envisions “the body as a system of energy or vigor, represented by a metaphor of liquidity,” known in various texts as “the law of animal economy” and/or “the law of the distribution of vital powers” (178). This formulation of energy as a fluid links blood and semen via their liquidity. Such a conflation reflects the classical notion of pangenesis, which posited that “each part of the body was believed to contribute a fraction of itself to the sperm by way of the blood” (180). The spermatic economy also linked body and mind, positing that an over-emphasis on the activity of either entity would drain energy or “vitality” from the other.

This model of human physiology sustains a fantasy of “an autarkic body safe from leaks of all kinds,” a body that is “threatened by the willful expediture of its most highly elaborated fluid: semen” (Laqueur 194-5). The concept of the spermatic economy rested on a phallogocentric understanding of the healthiest, most precious and productive form of human embodiment as gendered cis-male. The comparatively scant attention paid to milk, tears, and other bodily fluids underscores the masculinist gender politics of this model of the healthy body. Male gender was understood to align with and be properly performed via a body that produced and judiciously expended semen. The economic resonances of this language enshrine the white middle-class gender binary within the capitalist logic of a consumer economy; as Barker-Benfield puts it, “men earn, women spend” (189). While all bodies excrete liquids, the problem of managing one’s excretions was assigned to men.

The fungibility of semen and blood in this phallogocentric economy of bodily fluids points to the mutual imbrication of heteronormative reproduction and the continuation of white supremacy. Blood was, of course, imbued with racial significance in nineteenth-century discourse. The cultural meanings of semen bound male embodiment to the production of normative reproductive futurity. The imagined interchangeability of these two fluids suggests the intimate ties between race, sex, and futurity. In nineteenth-century America, in particular, emerging constructions of race depended on the exact quantification of blood. In the words of Elise Lemire, “race blood” was construed as “a finite ‘unit,’” “neatly devisable” (39). In the calculus of racial mixture, “each parent contribute[d] exactly half of his or her blood to the offspring”; “‘one drop’ of ‘negro blood’ . . . was enough to make a person black” (39). At the same time, the very terminology of the “amalgamation” of races (a term which originally referred to the mixing of liquefied metals) signaled a liquidness which threatens to exceed precise quantification. Semen and blood were the unstable fluids which underpinned the structure of white futurity and threatened to capsiz[e] it into chaotic mixtures. In *The War of the Worlds*, then,

Wells's metaphors of liquefaction resonate with the vampiric Martians' desire for blood, which itself signifies an intermingling race and gender catastrophic to white reproductive futurity.¹⁸

These disorderly figures—the vampire and the cannibal—offer further insight into *fin-de-siècle* anxieties of liquefaction and dissolution. These liminal, anti-social creatures threaten to drag down all of society and undo social order completely. As Wells suggests in *Anticipations*, it is all too easy for even the “fittest” white male bodies to slip below the water line and become submerged. Immunity and contagion operate at microscopic and subconscious levels, requiring immunological defense against foreign agents; immunity functions in *The War of the Worlds* a self-justifying token of “fitness.” But the Martians' cannibalistic and vampiric mode of embodiment suggests a further dimension to this understanding of what it means to be “fit.” The threat posed by these appetitive monsters bears with it the responsibility to distinguish (white, male) humanity from the monstrous Other, most urgently because the Martians seek to consume and re-make the very bodies of humans. The necessity of fending off the vampiric Martians summons a concomitant imperative to regulate other leaks and flows across the body's border. This imperative takes shape in the novel through the binary of appetitiveness and continence.

Constituting the fit body: texture and feeling

The plot of *The War of the Worlds* pits men against the monstrous Martians. The similarity of Martian monstrosity to that of vampires and cannibals establishes them as racialized, abject, and dangerous to society—much like Wells's People of the Abyss. The protracted interval in which mankind struggles to fend off the appetitive Martians illustrates that this conflict enacts biopolitical differences between categories of humanity. Though the conclusion of the novel affirms the triumph of humanity as a whole, the events of the novel indicate that only certain men, such as the narrator, survive the invasion.

The narrator's survival depends not only on his biologically conferred immunity to germs, but also on his response to the complex threat posed by the Martians themselves. The vampire-cannibal-aliens threaten to attack the body from without, but they also precipitate a dissolution that comes from *within* the bounded subject—a melting of the mind and body that stems from fear, panic, and even a perverse desire for the alien. Surviving the alien invasion thus requires both a vigorous defense of the physical boundaries of one's body *and* a sustained investment in mental discipline. The narrator's successful navigation of this crisis depends upon his ability to master and control his panic. The narrator also models a thoroughgoing disgust for the Martians that firmly establishes them as abject. These strategies allow the narrator to retain the intactness of his body and distinguish his own embodiment from the abject and dysselected embodiment of the Martians. The novel thus recruits these forms of affect into the project of maintaining the borders of the body. Affect polices the boundary between humanity and bare life.

Disgust plays an important role in constituting the borders of the body and of humanity; disgust shores up continence and regulates desire. As previously discussed, the narrator's disgust for Martian embodiment produces a rupture in the scientific record. This lacuna in the narrator's account constitutes an eloquent silence. The Martian's repulsive embodiment both exceeds what can be set down in the scientific record, and confirms that the Martians are an appropriate *object* of study. Disgust and its opposites—affinity, preference, desire—were central to Darwinian and post-Darwinian understandings of evolutionary progress. Disgust and desire ostensibly served a variety of evolutionary purposes for the “preservation of favored races,” from the proper distinction of one species from another, to the improvement and perpetuation of the species.

Disgust is an embodied affect that evokes the specter of intimacy only to underscore difference and distance. Etymologically, disgust entails taste, “gustation.” The word evokes the intimate contact of the tongue. Disgust’s proximity to the tongue and the mouth associates this affect with sites where the orificial body is remade, and where queer intimacies leak through the social order. Disgust hinges on the fear that the disgusting object might enter into one’s body. In Sara Ahmed’s analysis of disgust, she observes that the speech act “you are disgusting” becomes “I am disgusted” becomes “we are disgusted” (98). Ahmed argues that disgust is “sticky”: it attaches to one entity but threatens to spread, sticking to whatever comes into contact with the disgusting object (89-9). To fail to be disgusted by that which is disgusting is to align oneself with the disgusting object. The social operations of disgust thus demand that one distance oneself from disgusting objects—or forfeit one’s place in the social order.

This fear of the stickiness of disgust suggests the textural qualities associated with racialized bodies. The “sticky” quality of this affect hinges on the fear of contagion and contamination. DeVere Brody theorizes sliminess in relation to blackness and whiteness in Victorian literature, arguing that “the nightmarish and feminine aspects of such viscous material [slime] threaten to subsume supposedly solid (male) subjects that invade its malleable parameters” (98). DeVere Brody observes that Victorian literature ascribes slimy, viscous qualities to black femininity. As DeVere Brody’s work suggests, repugnance at embodied forms—a repugnance framed in terms of texture—reappeared in Victorian discourse about white masculinity versus blackness and femininity on both sides of the Atlantic. Oil, slime, and brown skin were figured as contaminants that threaten the purity of the white body.

As the obverse of desire, disgust plays an important role in shoring up the white heteronormative social order. Desire, preference, and sexual appetite are linked to other modes of embodied intimacy. What one touches, licks, or ingests adheres to one’s embodiment and becomes incorporated into identity. Elise Lemire, in *Miscegenation* (2002), theorizes repugnance and preference as part of the construction of whiteness in nineteenth-century America. These affective orientations toward a possible sexual object—disgust or desire—allowed for a construction of race as simultaneously biological and social. Lemire argues that “intra-racial desire was imagined... as an instinct to perpetuate what were imagined as distinct biological entities” (3). As the opposite of sexual preference, “innate feelings of repugnance” become “evidence of species distinction” (113). As Lemire’s historical archive demonstrates, black bodies, especially black female bodies, were depicted as dropping oil and oozing sweat; “miscegenation” was imagined as “unctious” [sic].¹⁹

In nineteenth-century America, then, one established one’s whiteness by demonstrating a preference for white sexual partners and a repugnance for non-white bodies. Sexual object choice thus linked heteronormativity to racialization; feeling and expressing “preference” or disgust functioned as a performance of whiteness which co-constituted the object of desire or disgust and the choosing subject. The proliferation of representations of black bodies as dirty and disgusting depended heavily on texture to signal their inherent repugnance. Lemire shows that the fear of racialized contamination of white purity took on a biological explanation, through the function of disgust and sexual preference in supposedly preserving the purity of the species.

The metaphors of slime and liquefaction that recur throughout *The War of the Worlds*, and the disgust that they elicit, were intimately linked to the biopolitical construction of brown and black, racialized bodies as dysselected. Disgust for the slimy and viscous helped to guide desire in its proper channels. Sexual object choice had consequences, not just for one’s presumed offspring, but for one’s own racialization. White reproductive futurity depended upon the proper

sexual practices, including sexual object choice, of individuals. The self-help books of the nineteenth century “told men and women how to govern copulation in the best interests of the body politic” (Barker-Benfield *iv*). The continued functioning of the social order thus turns on the affective reaction that the Martian bodies elicit.

In *The War of the Worlds*, disgust constitutes whiteness as a bounded collective and constructs boundaries that keep out the alien invader. The narrator registers palpable disgust at the texture of Martian bodies, identifying “something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty” (22). The disgust that these Martians inspire in the narrator is a way of constituting his proper orientation toward whiteness—with important consequences for national integrity and national purity.

Wells explores the threat of internal dissolution by supplying the narrator with a traveling companion, identified only as “the curate.” The narrator and the curate take refuge in an abandoned house one night. When they wake, they find that a Martian capsule has landed in the back garden and the Martians are busily constructing some sort of pit. The pair of men spend an extended period trapped in the house, hiding from the Martians while attempting to conserve their supplies of food. Through the contrast between the narrator and the curate, it becomes apparent that the constitution of a “fit” body is simultaneously a physical trait naturally endowed and an affective orientation that must be constantly performed. The curate’s response to the Martian invasion suggests that the narrator survives because he models not just a strong immune system but also a firm, fit mind. His inability to cope with the stresses of the invasion indicates that defense against the alien invasion entails a strict regulation of the emotions. The narrator’s flexibility and resourcefulness under pressure allows him to maintain a proper relationship of exterior and interior, which contrasts markedly with the curate’s catastrophic loosening of boundaries. Lacking the narrator’s firmness of intent, the curate takes on the characteristics of the Martians and succumbs to a kind of queer intimacy with them.

The narrator’s description of his enforced companionship with the curate establishes their essential differences, rendering these in terms of a gendered binary:

[W]e had absolutely incompatible dispositions and habits of thought and action [...] His endless muttering monologue vitiated every effort I made to think out a line of action, and drove me at times, thus pent up and intensified, almost to the verge of craziness. He was as lacking in restraint as a silly woman. He would weep for hours together, and I verily believe that to the very end this spoilt child of life thought his weak tears to be in some way efficacious. And I would sit in the darkness unable to keep my mind off him by reason of his importunities. He ate more than I did, and it was in vain I pointed out that our only chance of life was to stop in the house until the Martians had done with their pit, that in that long patience a time might presently come when we should need food. He ate and drank impulsively in heavy meals at long intervals. He slept little. (131-2)

While the narrator recognizes the need to contain himself, repressing the flow of speech and tears outward and the appetite for taking food and water inward, the curate becomes both excessively appetitive and excessively talkative. Words and tears mingle in a watery flow, as he spews out “a torrent of half-sane and always frothy repentance” (137). The narrator identifies the curate’s lack of restraint as unmanly, calling him a “silly woman” and a “spoilt child.” This casually misogynistic comment infantilizes women and suggests that the failures of men can cause them to regress to an immature state. The curate’s disregard for proper restraint only becomes more pronounced as they endure subsequent days of confinement: “He would neither desist from his attacks on the food nor from his noisy babbling to himself” (136). His disordered relationship to

flows of liquid also includes his desire to get drunk and stay drunk. The narrator's climactic struggle with the curate involves a bottle of burgundy that the narrator hears him drinking in the dark of night.

As the curate's panic leads him to further and further excesses, the curate comes to resemble the oozy, unstable Martians. His excessive appetite for wine and food mirrors the voracious aliens. The curate's inability to keep his mouth shut, and his resulting conflict with the narrator, leads directly to his bodily undoing. The curate attempts to call out and attract the attention of the Martians. The narrator struggles with the curate, to keep him quiet and stop him from eating and drinking. Finally, the curate overpowers the narrator and announces his intention to go out of the house and meet the Martians. The narrator responds by hitting the curate with the handle of an ax. This "touch of humanity" comes too late, however; a Martian tentacle reaches into the house and drags out the unconscious body of the curate.

The narrator, by contrast, maintains and manages proper bodily boundaries, and escapes the tentacular clutches of the Martians. This model of continence is poised in opposition to women and children's tendency to weep, spend, and eat immoderately. The very matter of cis-male embodiment, as well as Man's secure position at the pinnacle of the evolutionary hierarchy, is constituted and maintained via a carefully managed relationship to consumption and production. Improper appetitiveness—disorderly, extravagant, and impulsive consumption, but also the undoing of male restraint—is attached to modes of embodiment gendered female.

The narrator suggests that it is his very proximity to the un-manly curate that stabilizes his own identity: "From certain vague memories I am inclined to think my own mind had wandered at times. I had strange and hideous dreams whenever I slept. It sounds paradoxical, but I am inclined to think that the weakness and insanity of the curate warned me, braced me, and kept me a sane man" (136). The narrator's use of the curate to stabilize his own sanity reaffirms that the fit body emerges always as an exclusion, a "surgery" which excises the un-fit. The Martian invasion seems to justify and necessitate the narrator's complicity in the curate's death. Once the curate has demonstrated his inability to model appropriate continence, he joins the Martians in the realm of bare life. The novel suggests that it is the narrator's duty to the human race to strike down the curate so that humanity as a whole can survive.

The narrator's success can be summed up in the word "continence," a gendered virtue that encompasses the proper regulation of affect in several forms. Continence is gendered, in part, through its link to the spermatic economy and the proper regulation of one's various fluids and desires. This mode of rational restraint is supposed to be proper to white masculinity. Continence shores up the fantasy of the self-contained, well-regulated body.

As it emerges in *The War of the Worlds*, continence is an individual practice with profound social ramifications; it mimics the logic of hygiene, inoculation, and other preventative measures against contagious disease. Maintaining the borders of the body is an individual project—because it is the individual's body under attack—but it is also a duty to society, because the event of alien invasion threatens to lead to the breakdown of the social order. Thus, the continent individual proves himself to be a worthy member of society.

Conversely, the novel implies that *in*continence is symptomatic of one's un-fitness to belong to humanity, denoting proximity to the alien and to bare life. Incontinent panic renders both the individual and society vulnerable to this alien invasion; such panic signals that one is incapable of the calm, rational thought that distinguishes humanity from lower forms of life. Incontinent desire places the social order at risk; promiscuity connotes racial amalgamation, a regression to the primitive past. Incontinent sexuality may lead to the vitiation of the individual

and hence the race. Other forms of incontinent consumption are highly suggestive of a similar un-fitness. Drunkenness and overeating emerge as symptoms of a weak will. This weakness inscribes itself on the body, both congenitally and via the accumulated consequences of one's behavior.

The event of the Martian invasion operates as a eugenic event that facilitates the culling of the un-fit. The novel's deployment of biological discourse, especially immunity, masks the essential and profound violence that such a distinction between fit and un-fit entails. As this crucial encounter between the narrator and the curate reveals, the crisis of alien invasion legitimates violence against human subjects—even white men—who fail to uphold the standard of continence.

In Wells's cautionary tale, the slimy and unstable embodiment of the Martians threatens to rupture the boundaries of the human body itself, opening fissures in the body politic. The Martians' eating (of) bodies provoke a disgusted response which attaches this instability to bodies other than the human, rendering bodies that are *open* to their environment into something monstrous and inhuman. The opened human body becomes part of the monstrous eating body and thus merges with that which is abject and alien. The sliminess of tentacular embodiment is a perverse, queer texture. It undoes the boundaries of the body, oozing into that-which-was-interior and lubricating that-which-was-exterior. Unmoored from its primitive temporality, slime destabilizes the Darwinian hierarchy in which life rises triumphantly from primordial soup and marches toward *homo oeconomicus*. Charged with the biopolitics of racialization and abjection, irreducibly other, and yet figured as dead and deliquescing all along, the Martians reveal the proximity of bodies to slime and resist assimilation into the category of Man.

Conclusion

What distinguishes men from Martians? *The War of the Worlds* obsessively rehearses versions of this question, placing emphasis on the boundary of the human body as the dividing line between the human and the alien. Wells's version of alien invasion deploys biological discourse and leverages the position of scientific objectivity in order to underscore the difference between humanity and the alien Other. The novel depicts the human body under attack by the vampiric and cannibalistic Martians. Like germs, foreign agents which threaten to penetrate and undo the body, vampires and cannibals attack the body from without. The Martians ultimately suffer defeat because their bodies are insufficiently defended against similar attacks. Their oozy, tentacular embodiment proves to be vulnerable to the incursions of germs. On the one hand, the novel reaffirms this essential difference between men and Martians. The threat of Martian invasion dissolves as the bodies of the invaders deliquesce. However, the novel also reveals the unsettling proximity of human embodiment to Martian embodiment, suggesting that humans—even white Englishmen such as the curate and the narrator—are in danger of joining the Martians on the other side of this dividing line. Like Wells's *People of the Abyss*, the Martians possess a contagious mode of embodiment that threatens to disintegrate the fabric of human society. The task of repulsing the Martians thus entails a violent, biopolitical distinction between those humans fit to survive the invasion, and those who must be consigned to the abyss.

The scientific and the sensational combine in Wells's novel to illustrate the affective component of this biological premise. Affect, particularly disgust, functions in the novel to link biologically mandated destiny and individual virtue. The boundedness of the human body is

supposedly a physiological fact rooted in biological principles, and yet the continued stability of the human body and the human race turns on the appropriate reaction of humanity, particularly the disgust, fear, and horror generated by the aliens. The crucial distinction between the (racialized) alien and the (white) human thus has both a biological and an affective dimension. Characters who fail to demonstrate the proper response to the aliens run the risk of crossing over to the side of the alien.

Wells's popular tale of alien invasion reflects the prevalent concerns of its historical moment at the end of the nineteenth century. Alien invasion, immunity, and evolution coincide at the *fin-de-siècle* to construct the human body as bounded. Despite this narrative's apparently futuristic orientation, it rehearses older nineteenth-century concerns of bodily hygiene and racial purity.²⁰ Wells's vision of the aliens is deeply imbricated within nineteenth-century biological discourse. The oozy, tentacular monstrosity of Martian embodiment reveals how nineteenth-century bioscience relies on the fantasy of the bounded body to help police the border between white, rational, civilized humanity and those consigned to the realm of bare life. *The War of the Worlds* deploys these tropes to underwrite white supremacy at a time of profound anxiety over English hegemony and the role of English masculinity in a shifting global order. In doing so, it foregrounds a cluster of anxieties that reverberate throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

One of the most powerful and persistent aspects of this alien invasion narrative is the racialization of the alien and the whitening of humanity. *The War of the Worlds* establishes the trope of alien invasion as a means of rehearsing and addressing anxieties associated with the stability of whiteness. Wells's approach sets the precedent of a move towards a universalism that merely conceals the persistence of racializing processes. This novel relocates the familiar narrative of imperialist warfare to outer space, imagining white Western subjects (who stand in for all humanity) as the rightful possessors of Earth. And yet, Wells's aliens draw on racialized tropes of monstrosity, clearly evoking the cannibal and the vampire. These monstrous figures threaten to undo the bounded bodies of Englishmen. Post-Wells, alien invasion narratives continue to serve a similar biopolitical function, defining the human in opposition to the alien—and legitimating violence in order to preserve the distinction.

Moreover, in subsequent alien invasion narratives, the threat that the alien poses to the human continues to manifest in terms of the body itself. *The War of the Worlds* envisions alien invaders as oozy, tentacular, and vampiric, focused on attacking and undoing the human body. The human body is threatened by a form of alien embodiment that is not only unstable in itself, but the cause of instability in other bodies. The nineteenth-century threat of bodily degeneration persists in the form of bodily dissolution in later narratives of alien invasion. This aspect of the trope tends to construct the *human* body as an entity that is essentially bounded, in line with the assumption that liberal subjecthood is invested in a bounded body. This logic not only insists on the boundedness of the human body, but recruits its protagonists into the project of maintaining and stabilizing these borders.

In Wells's hands, the alien invasion narrative served as an important site for exploring and consolidating the biopolitical meanings of implications of biological discourse. As biological discourse underwent a profound shift in the twentieth century, the alien invasion narrative changed to incorporate new understandings of the nature of the planet and of the human body. In Chapter 2, I turn to Philip Kaufman's 1978 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Read together, these two texts illustrate the continued relevance of the trope of the bounded human body versus the appetitive, slimy, and unstable alien invader, and show how this trope developed in the context of twentieth-century biological discourse.

¹ Wells's interest in biology was both professional and philosophical. He taught biology both at boarding schools and by correspondence, and published his own *Text-Book of Biology* in 1893. Twelve years before *The War of the Worlds* appeared in 1897, Wells had studied biology with the famous comparative anatomist T.H. Huxley (known as "Darwin's Bulldog") for a year at what would later become the Royal College of Science. In his *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells called this experience "beyond all question, the most educational year of my life" (I: 201). He referred to biology as "a vivid, sustained attempt to see life clearly and to see it whole, to see into it, to see its inter-connexions, to find out...what it was, where it came from, what it was doing and where it was going" (I: 210).

² Haraway insists on the embodiment and specificity of vision as a way to counteract the "God-trick" of objectivity and recuperate some form of feminist objectivity, articulating the concept of "situated knowledges" (581).

³ Scientist-celebrity Louis Pasteur was instrumental in bringing germ theory and immunity into the public eye. Although Pasteur's work on germ theory is often linked to immunity in histories of medicine, Cohen points out that Pasteur did not yet use the term immunity, nor did he offer a robust theory of immune response. Rather, Pasteur's explanation for the efficacy of inoculation followed a metaphor of "non-recidivism"—*la non-récedive des maladies virulents* (Pasteur qtd in Cohen 250). This framework stresses the agency of the microbe in attacking the body, constituting microbial infection as criminal activity and microbes as enemy agents. Robert Koch, Pasteur's German counterpart and rival, though famously disagreeing with Pasteur in many other respects, employed the same agonistic framework as the premise for his own work. In 1882, Koch declared that tuberculosis was caused by the "invasion" of bacilli (Koch qtd. in Cohen 250).

⁴ The discourse of immunity, as elaborated by Metchnikoff and his colleagues, owed much to Darwinian and Linnean classificatory logic. As a zoologist specializing in comparative embryology of invertebrates, Metchnikoff famously first observed the activity of phagocytes by examining the body of a starfish under a microscope (de Kruif; see also Vikhanski). He explicitly linked the operation of phagocytes to primitive unicellular organisms (Tauber, *Outsider Scientists*; Vikhanski; Chernak and Tauber). Thus, his theory of cellular defense is Darwinian not only in its adaptation of a universal "struggle for life," but in that it places humanity in a material continuum with other living creatures. Metchnikoff's addition to the Darwinian paradigm of the struggle for existence posited that while all organisms defend themselves, the fittest organism is the most highly differentiated—the one with the best-defended borders. In previous versions of Darwinism, Man occupied the pinnacle of the tree of evolution, having surpassed all previous "primitive" forms of life. In Metchnikoff's reformulated version, Man now incorporated some of the most primitive organisms into his own body in the form of phagocytes.

⁵ Metchnikoff published papers arguing for his theory of phagocytosis beginning in 1883 and 1884. Pasteur offered Metchnikoff a position at the Pasteur Institute in France in 1888, an affiliation which consolidated and extended their combined research.

⁶ Elsewhere in this same chapter of *Anticipations* this link is explicit (331-2).

⁷ Du Bois would also famously use this phrase in *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) to describe the opposite of the "talented tenth."

⁸ Wells later modified this stance in *A Modern Utopia* (1905) in order to recommend the "social surgery" of exile to islands, where these people may live out their lives after being excised from the social body (141). Here, though, Wells assumes the practice of killing "all deformed and monstrous and evilly diseased births" as part of modern-utopian ethics, in passing.

Once again, in *A Modern Utopia*, Wells compiles lists of these people: “idiots and lunatics, [...] perverse and incompetent persons, [...] people of weak character who become drunkards, drug takers, and the like, [...] persons tainted with certain foul and transmissible diseases” (141). In Wells’s formulation, these people “spoil the world for others” (141). The Bakhtinian modern body becomes the Wellsian *Modern Utopia*: its closed totality underwrites its security and purity; it achieves this modernity through the social surgery of relegating the unfit to anachronistic spaces of island-prisons.

⁹ Marilyn Wann’s *Fat!So?* (1998), a fat-positive book based on her zine of the same title, offers a way to rethink Wells’s fatphobic references to “irresponsible adiposity.” Wann documents the adventures of L. B. O’Fat. L. B. Is a representation of a blob of lost fat, “a pound of slimy, jiggly plastic” sold as a visual aid and motivation to diet. The supposed efficacy of this visual aid depends on the disgust factor: the putative dieter is supposed to observe and handle the grossness of this jiggly, translucent brick, envision its oleaginous presence inside their body, and repudiate it forcefully, losing the fat and keeping it off. Wann’s piece resists the operations of disgust and instead lingers on the “a deep, metaphysical question: Where does a pound of fat go when you lose it?” (26). Wann imagines, “The lost pound goes on vacation. It has a great time, and makes friends with other little pounds of lost fat. They globe-hop together for a while. Then they all come home, right back to where they belong, your hips and thighs” (26). Wann’s “Little Lost Pound o’Fat Sees the World” reframes the relationship between oleaginousness and embodiment as an open, intimate, and affectionate connection, in which blobs of fat detach themselves from bodies and seek queer intimacies with other “little pounds of lost fat.”

¹⁰ Wells predicts that the entire world will eventually follow the same pattern as the U.S. and western Europe. He explains, “This is the typical aspect of the modern community. It will serve as a general description of either the United States or any western European State, and the day is not far distant when the extension of means of communication, and of the shareholding method of conducting affairs, will make it applicable to the whole world” (93).

¹¹ In *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic*, Jonathan Gil Harris focuses on the long history of figuring the English nation as a body politic and invaders as pathological foreign bodies. Harris’s historical scope begins with the Norman conquest.

¹² In a strange way, contemplation of the Martians’ digestion results in the othering of Man. The narrator compares the Martians’ feeding on humans to humans’ feeding on rabbits. Rather than attempting to naturalize this hierarchy—for example, by pointing out that even Martians must eat—he instead imagines the disgust and horror experienced by “an intelligent rabbit” contemplating “our carnivorous habits” (125). This passage in the novel insists on an analogical relationship between humanity and Martians. As a result, one monster begets another: rather than being able to fold the Martians into the natural order of things, the Martians’ arrival requires a disordering of the natural, such that men become monstrous as well.

¹³ This cluster of anxieties about consuming bodies evokes late nineteenth-century narratives of “primitive” African landscapes which menace the bodies of white men. In the imperial imaginary, these landscapes are both gendered female and horrifyingly slimy, oozy, and unstable. In both Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1898) and Wells’s own *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), ambivalent narrators describe the madness of an Englishman who has “gone native” and succumbed to the perverse influence of the landscape. In *Heart of Darkness*, published two years after *The War of the Worlds*, the narrator Marlow describes the African landscape as a “formless coast” bordering an unstable interior. Marlow’s journey leads him “in and out of rivers, streams of death in life, whose banks were rotting into mud, whose waters,

thickened into slime, invaded the contorted mangroves, that seemed to writhe [...] in the extremity of an impotent despair” (16-17). Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, which immediately preceded *The War of the Worlds*, functions as a kind of dark underside of the alien invasion narrative. In *Dr. Moreau*, the spirit of scientific inquiry festers into a mad perversion of human and animal bodies, in a remote island setting that mirrors the island nation of England. DeVere Brody picks up on a climactic scene in the novel, in which the narrator runs in fear from the cry of a female puma, losing himself in a “rich and oozy” landscape and recoiling in fear from a fungus “deliquescing into slime.” DeVere Brody reads the black female puma as “the most horrific being imaginable” at the turn of the nineteenth century: “the black, monstrous, masculine ‘new’ woman” (168). In both these narratives, the strategy of depicting the landscape as simultaneously black, female, and threatening obliquely attaches monstrosity to the black female body, locating the threat of violence in the racialized and gendered Other rather than in the colonizing white man.

¹⁴ Halberstam connects this boundary-crossing tendency with the Gothic mode itself, arguing that “Gothic infiltrates the Victorian novel as a symptomatic moment in which boundaries between good and evil, health and perversity, crime and punishment, truth and deception, inside and outside dissolve and threaten the integrity of the narrative itself” (2).

¹⁵ I would argue that pathology and the discourse of the monstrous often operate in tandem to produce categories of otherness.

¹⁶ The Reverend Sylvester Graham and John Humphrey Noyes were two of the most prominent figures in this utopian anti-masturbation movement (see *Outside the Family*). This was one of several co-existing models in the Victorian period, as Thomas Laqueur has shown, rather than the only or even the dominant way of conceptualizing health and sexual hygiene; that said, it was an influential concept that clearly left its mark on fiction.

¹⁷ Barker-Bensfield’s study is based on an in-depth reading of the works of a few influential figures in nineteenth-century America, including Augustus Kinsley Gardner (Herman Melville’s doctor) and the Reverend John Todd.

¹⁸ Reading vampires and aliens together makes it possible to see how the old-world figure of the vampire elicits fears about white reproductive futurity, and the futuristic embodiment of the Martians reflects anxieties of regression to a primitive past. Rebecca Stott has gestured toward the potential richness of reading *The War of the Worlds* and *Dracula* together, positioning the Martians and *Dracula* as “the two invading monsters of the fiction of 1897-8...both presented in evolutionary and anthropological terms” (324). Here, I propose to follow Stott’s suggestion and excavate the continuities between late-Victorian Gothic and late-Victorian science fiction. In the process, I want to rethink Stott’s assertion that the Martians are “shown to be evolutionarily...superior” while *Dracula* embodies degeneracy (325). This line of inquiry reveals some intriguing conversations between biological discourse and Gothic fiction. Moreover, considering these novels together provides a useful perspective on their Janus-facing temporalities, revealing the shared preoccupations of Gothic fiction—haunted by revenants of the uncanny past—and science fiction—evoking visions of an ambivalent future. The invasions and incursions of *Dracula* and *War of the Worlds* suggest that both these novels and perhaps both these narrative modes conceive of past and future as inextricably related via degeneration and evolution.

¹⁹ This relationship between dirt, grease, and skin color has a long history, dating back at least to the late sixteenth century (see, for example, the comic scene in which two characters describe the greasy kitchen wench in Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors*, III.ii.), Travel narratives

of the seventeenth century frequently dwelt on “skin-greasing” as a practice of the “Hottentots” or the Khoekhoe. The so-called Hottentots loom large in European constructions of the Other. Samuel G. Morton, as quoted by Stephen Jay Gould, referred to the Hottentots as “the nearest approximation to the lower animals” in an 1839 text (88). In 1634, Thomas Herbert produced an account of the Hottentots that flows in rapid succession from anxieties of cannibalism, to the “glisten” of grease on skin, to the supposed devilry of these people, and concludes by accusing them of being descended from monkeys. Fear and fascination—with a strong undercurrent of sexual prurience—regarding the bodies of Hottentots is registered in terms of disgust for the oily surface of their bodies. This repugnance turns on a lack of distinction between what remains outside the body, what is taken into, and what is applied to the surface of the body: the Hottentots eat man’s flesh and grease, and they rub the same grease on their bodies. In his *Account of the Cape of Good Hope* (1707), Maxwell carefully identifies the Hottentots as “a race of men distinct both from negroes and European whites” (359). Maxwell explains, “They besmear their faces and bodies all over with grease, or other oleaginous stuff, which, with exposing their bodies to a warm sun, makes their skin of a tawny colour” (360). Cristina Malcolmson argues that Maxwell’s account suggests “an intermediate phase between a one-race theory and the establishment of scientific racism” (66), as European science debated over monogeny and polygeny. Malcolmson establishes that the skin color of other groups of people is constituted as an object of scrutiny in this time period; she points out that “for Maxwell...color is the fundamental mystery about these people” (60). Seeking a solution to this mystery, Maxwell insists that skin-greasing causes the tawny color of their skin. These texts all belong to a historical moment that predates Darwin as well as modern constructions of race, suggesting that the association between grease, disgust, and race predated biologizing discourse, which took it up and lent it scientific legitimacy.

²⁰ The physiological model which emphasizes male continence, and the evolutionary model which posits the danger of degeneration both give way to other ways of understanding embodiment over the course of the twentieth century. However, it would be a mistake to treat these preoccupations as entirely belonging to the past. The nineteenth century continues to shape and inform the twentieth century and even the twenty-first century (as Octavia Butler’s fiction suggests; see Ch. 3).

Chapter Two
 Aliens in the Age of Gunk:
 The Horror of Ecological Thinking in Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and
 Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)

This chapter moves from late nineteenth-century England to the United States in the postwar period, from H.G. Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds* (1897) to Philip Kaufman's film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), another popular alien invasion narrative. In addition to their shared fascination with alien invasions, what these cultural milieus have in common is the prevailing spirit of "late-ness" or "post-ness." *Fin-de-siècle* England was a period of anxieties of decay, dissolution, and degeneration, concerned with the position of English masculinity and English imperial hegemony; the 1970s U.S. was post-World War II, post-economic boom, post-Vietnam, experiencing a period of disillusionment with the U.S. government and with its supposedly benevolent interventions in global conflicts. Both periods were marked by the desire to shore up a supposedly benevolent white hegemony that was perceived as being under threat, a desire that found expression in fantasies of border control. In both periods, the breakdown of white imperial hegemony coincided with unsettling developments in the life sciences. Scientific breakthroughs that initially seemed to offer the promise of biological control rapidly devolved into sources of anxiety.

Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* envisions a version of alien invasion that has much in common with Wells's classic narrative. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, as in *The War of the Worlds*, the human body and Planet Earth are threatened by oozy, uncontainable alien invaders. The human body emerges as an entity that ought to remain bounded. Once again, as in Wells's foundational narrative of alien invasion, this depiction of the body under attack enables a covert installation of whiteness in the place of "humanity." This biopolitical move enacts control over who is counted among humanity and relegates some people to the contingent of death, the abjected and racialized dysselected (Wynter, "How We Mistook," 126). And, once again, this process of constituting humanity draws on contemporary biological discourse to portray both the threat of the invading aliens and the response of the human protagonists.

At the end of the nineteenth century, H. G. Wells's popular novel envisioned a scenario in which microbes rally to defeat the alien invaders and reaffirm the existing order of things. *The War of the Worlds* ends on a triumphant note, at least for the narrator. The would-be alien invaders cannot maintain their ascendancy and must cede the earth to "humanity" (especially the white male narrator and the other scientific men of London). In the second half of the twentieth century, Kaufman's film portrays human bodies under attack by more unruly creatures. These aliens are at once invasive plants and toxic substances. Whereas *The War of the Worlds* held out hope for resisting the alien invasion, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* depicts humanity's position as fundamentally precarious, inhabiting a world irrevocably infiltrated by the alien.

This shift in tone correlates with a historical shift in biological regarding human exceptionalism. In Wells's novel, the biological response of immunity enfolds the smallest organic entities into God's plan to install white men as the heirs to Earth. This narrative of human superiority is broadly consistent with the scientific classificatory systems of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Linnean classification held species in a static matrix in which species lines did not cross, a secular version of the Great Chain of Being.¹ The comparative anatomists Georges Cuvier and Geoffroy St Hilaire dissected countless organisms, peering into their insides to establish the differences between humans and other species, and thereby enacting

human superiority via the penetrating gaze. The great nineteenth-century scientific debate that framed Darwin's work—whether species were fixed or mutable—hinged on the guarantee of human exceptionalism embedded in Christian doctrine.² Religious doctrine held that humans were created by God in His image and that all species were created by God himself. The proposal that species could be mutable challenged both of these tenets and placed humanity in a potentially degrading proximity to other organisms. Darwin's account of natural selection managed to preserve mankind's exceptional status by implicitly ordering organisms from least to most highly evolved, suggesting mankind's supreme "fitness." Post-Darwinian classification systems contained within them the anxiety of degeneration: the possibility that white men, the pinnacle of evolution, might degenerate and begin to look more like the other atavistic entities that populated the planet. The very premise of this anxiety—the fear that departure from mankind's present form would constitute degradation—confirmed the superiority of the (white male) human body and its unquestioned perfection.

But after World War II, ecological thinking would implicitly depose man from the top of the hierarchy. Ecology revealed a world of invisible entities which did *not* act according to a divine plan for human ascendancy. In the early twentieth century, schematics like the food web foreshadowed a vision of life forms as interdependent and densely networked.³ The relationships between and among organisms emerged as more horizontal and rhizomatic than vertical and hierarchical. In particular, Rachel Carson's influential work in *Silent Spring* (1962) explicitly reframed the relationship of humans to other organisms, introducing a vision of ecological interdependence and exposing such an existence as inherently vulnerable.

Silent Spring provides important context in this chapter for the new forms of biological thought that characterized the postwar period in the United States. *Silent Spring* is often taken to be the starting point of a particular form of ecological thinking; *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is an alien invasion story that engages with ecological thinking to depict the particular horror of networked interdependence. Their shared rhetoric demonstrates the blurred lines between the discourses of science and science fiction, and reveals how these cross-pollinations reverberate in terms of race, gender, and nation.

Like *Silent Spring*, Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) was intended for a wide audience, achieved great popular circulation, and continues to enjoy celebrated status. However, *Silent Spring* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* occupied very different cultural niches. Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was a campy horror film, an instant "cult favorite" peppered with sly cameos and satirical takes on San Francisco culture.⁴ As a remake of an earlier film (Spiegel's 1956 film of the same title), the 1978 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* aligned itself with a tradition of Golden Age science fiction cinema. At the same time, it incorporated advances in special effects technology, participating in the distinctive "body horror" aesthetic of the late 1970s.⁵ It also capitalized on renewed interest in science fiction following the success of the first *Star Wars* movie in 1977. By contrast, *Silent Spring* positioned itself as a grim exposé. It represented the result of years of labor, an act of conscience on Carson's part. *Silent Spring* is often cited as a foundational text for the environmental movement in the United States.⁶ Yet these two texts reveal similar preoccupations and employ similar tropes. *Silent Spring* tells its own alien invasion story in which both the planet and the human body are under threat. The rhetoric of *Silent Spring*, as well as the specific fears it articulates, resurface in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

***Silent Spring*, the uncanny landscape, and the porous human body**

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was not the first text to proffer a vision of ecological interconnectedness. Rather, Carson's account of ecological interdependence is significant because it incorporates a painfully acute awareness of environmental toxicity, where previous versions invoked principles of divine order or natural balance. *Silent Spring* represents a foundational text for contemporary discourses about toxicity.⁷ Its main rhetorical tropes are those of a lost pastoral ideal "accompanied or precipitated by totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration...the spectacle of communities, population groups, and finally the whole earth contaminated by occult toxic networks" (Buell 648). In addition to linking pastoralism and toxicity, Carson's rhetoric strongly suggests a form of *revenge* by the environment, implying that this state of totalizing toxicity emerges as a punishment for human greed, violence, and short-sightedness.

Among its other implications, ecological thinking—which positions humans as linked to other organisms and substances—contradicts the idea that the human body exists as an entity separate and separable from its environment. In the opening chapter of *Silent Spring*, Carson evokes the sinister threat that ecological interdependence poses to the vulnerable human body:

The world of systemic insecticides is a weird world. [...] It is a world where a flea bites a dog and dies, where an insect may die as a result of chewing a leaf or inhaling vapors emanating from a plant it has never touched, where a bee may carry poisonous nectar back to its hive and presently produce poisonous honey. (32-3)

Carson's rhetoric imbues everyday landscapes with menace. She captures a sense of horror that arises from the necessary interdependence of fleas and dogs, insects and leaves, which now dooms all of these entities to death. The organisms she names form a food web and not a food chain, a branching schematic with no clear hierarchy or vector of contamination. She focuses on insects and animals, leaving the reader to imagine the effects of this spreading contamination on the human body. While humans, too, might chew leaves or inhale the vapors from plants, the poisonous honey poses an obvious temptation for humans to consume. The sweet and sticky honey serves as an emblem of a poisonous environment that threatens to attach itself to and infiltrate the human body itself.

Carson emphasizes the uncanny agency of these inanimate substances. She associates insecticide with another well-publicized peril of the atomic age:

Strontium 90, released into the air through nuclear explosions, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn or wheat grown there, and, in time, takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until his death. [...] Many man-made chemicals act in much the same way as radiation; they lie long in the soil, and enter into living organisms, passing from one to another. Or they may travel mysteriously by underground streams, emerging to combine, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, into new forms, which kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells. (6)

This deeply unsettling account links "man-made chemicals" to radioactive particles by aligning the similar threats that they pose to the body. Carson's language emphasizes the danger of these substances by speaking of them as foreign agents. Chemicals "act" in a way that emulates radiation; they "lie" in the soil; they "travel mysteriously." This militaristic paradigm transfers agency to the substances themselves, which, like spies turned foreign agents, exceed the intentions of their creators.

In describing these invading substances, Carson narrates the emergence of a class of entities that are deeply wrong and unnatural: man-made poisons, substances that should never have existed. They freely and insidiously enter the human body, accumulate, and linger for a lifetime. Not only that, but these substances can enter and permeate everyday features of the landscape—organisms, soil, water. The most ordinary landscapes and objects are thus imbued with invisible dangers to the human body. One possible interpretation of this toxic world is that the human body is always already porous, and that the tragedy of the altered world is that scientists and policy-makers (the creators and disseminators of these substances) fail to recognize this. However, Carson’s account tends to stress the unnaturalness of these substances, positioning them as recent discoveries.

With the emergence of this new class of substances, the human body is revealed as vulnerable, lacking in defenses against this novel threat. Carson notes that “chlordane makes use of all available portals to enter the body” (24), and that “dissolved in oil, as it usually is, DDT is definitely toxic. If swallowed, it is absorbed slowly through the digestive tract; it may also be absorbed through the lungs” (21). This portrayal of the body profoundly unsettles what Timothy Clark identifies as “the now dominant liberal humanist conception of the human self [...] a seemingly pre-given, personal, unique identity, a realm of unshakeable privacy, center of its own world of values, perceptions, beliefs, commitments and feelings” (Clark 65). *Silent Spring* insists that “boundaries among organisms, places, and systems are neither stable nor secure” (Purdy 41). These invading substances reveal, instead, “a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection” and “radical intimacy” (Morton 8).

The dissolution of these boundaries troubled not only the health of the body, but the meaning of “health” itself. Under this new paradigm of radical intimacy, which is also radical vulnerability, the determination of what constitutes a healthy body became unfixed and uncertain. Whereas prior models of health were able to place some confidence in the immune system—as Wells does in *The War of the Worlds*—*Silent Spring*’s revelation undermined the idea that the human body might be capable of defending itself. In an age of toxicity, “health” entails attending consciously to the boundaries of the body, defending against the incursion of substances which cannot be fended off by the body’s natural defenses. The activities of managing health include tracking and quantifying the body’s exposure to toxic substances when the body inevitably does become exposed.

The idea of the self as a bounded entity under threat—an innocent victim of the depredations of toxicity—requires further examination through the analytical axes of race, gender, class, and nation. It is crucial to ask: who, exactly, can be construed as an innocent victim? Whose bodies are available to occupy the position of “innocence”? These interrogations rest on the question of how some bodies could possibly be envisioned as still intact and uncontaminated in a toxic world, while others are understood to be always already abject. Whose bodies are constructed as bounded and contained, and whose bodies are naturalized to toxicity, leakiness, and interdependence?

Environmental racism and the rhetoric of *Silent Spring*

Carson’s work paved the way for the environmental justice movement in the second half of the twentieth century. Because of the wide-ranging influence of her work, it is crucial to contend with her silences around race and class, and the resulting whitening of the narrative of

environmental impacts. Rob Nixon grapples with this tension, pointing to her insistence on the “complicity of the military-industrial complex in disguising toxicity, both physically and rhetorically” as a crucial step towards environmental justice, and yet acknowledging that she “had almost nothing to say directly about empire, class, and race” (xi). As Nixon observes, Carson’s subject position as a “renegade” allowed her to operate as a much-needed figure of disruption of the establishment (xi). At the same time, her reinforcement of certain discourses of whiteness and femininity reinscribed narratives of environmental “justice” that failed to redress racially distributed environmental impacts.

Carson’s text accumulates signs of an environmental apocalypse paratactically, compiling an impressive catalogue of incidents. Her discursive style jumps from one location to another, moving from coast to coast within the U.S. and crossing international borders. Carson’s rhetoric rehearses the moment of contamination—the release of insecticide into the natural world—over and over. The details may vary, but the underlying process unfolds with a grim certainty. These long lists serve to make the point that no place on earth is safe from toxicity: once begun, the process of poisoning the landscape plays out over and over again in different locales.⁸

Silent Spring’s fluid movement from location to location never pauses long enough to consider the local contexts of any particular incident, creating the sense of a universal emergency. This appeal to universality enacts two related forms of rhetoric: what Denis Cosgrove terms “whole-earth” and “one-earth” thinking. Whole-earth thinking entails the triumphal humanistic emergence of a global perspective, in which all humanity realizes its interconnectedness; one-earth thinking emphasizes the realization of the smallness and fragility of Earth against the backdrop of empty space. These seemingly divergent conceptions of Earth overlap, intersect, and reinforce one another, especially in the context of environmental and ecological thinking. The realization of the fragility of Earth is deployed with the intended effect of uniting humanity in the common effort to take care of the planet: “we’re all in this together.” Both “one-earth” and “whole-earth” rhetorics abstract and obscure “humanity,” pointing repeatedly to the invisibility of differences between humans and nations when the entire planet Earth is visible. The challenges posed by global thinking at this scale often result in the figuration of the global as the individual. “Saving the planet” becomes a matter of individual diligence, while harm to the Earth becomes harm to the individual body (see Clark 37-38). But as Timothy Clark reminds us, to speak in the name of a collective “humanity [...] ignores vast differences between human groups” (Clark 122). While one-earth and whole-earth rhetoric in theory make it possible to motivate a collective impulse of planetary caretaking, in practice, they obscure the important ways in which all of humanity is not equally culpable, responsible, or at risk.

Ultimately, planetary entities such as “humanity,” “the world,” and “man” mask a political geography of differential benefit and risk. In the twentieth century, “the world enjoyed great benefits thanks to oil extraction, but certain places paid a high price” (McNeill and Engelke 19). The logic of capitalism’s extractive economies demanded (and continues to demand) “sacrifice zones,” locations which bear a disproportionate burden of the ecological side effects deemed necessary to propel the rest of the world into modernity. Purdy notes that the most powerful nations are able to create official or unofficial “ecological exemption zones” to protect themselves from the worst ravages of environmental destruction (47). Rob Nixon calls this phenomenon an “outsourcing of environmental crisis” (22). This differential perpetuates the economic inequality that makes it possible in the first place, in a self-reinforcing cycle of exploitation and destruction.

These unequal risks and burdens include not just the destruction of natural landscapes and natural resources, but also the distribution of pollution and toxic substances on a global scale. Rob Nixon clarifies that while Carson's rhetoric generates fear of "indiscriminate 'biocides'" rather than "scattershot victims of 'herbicides' and 'pesticides,'" in fact these substances are both "indiscriminate and discriminatory: [...] they do discriminate in the unadvertised sense of saddling the local and global poor with the highest burden of risk" (65). The burden of toxicity is thus "unevenly universal" (Nixon 65). In the words of Mark Dowie, "while created equal, all Americans...[are] not poisoned equally" (qtd in Schlosberg 88).⁹ The practice of exporting toxic waste to sacrifice zones within and without national borders shores up the boundary between (white) humanity, whose present and future are protected by regulations, and Sylvia Wynter's "contingent of the dysselected," who are assumed to be always already toxic and degraded.

Carson's rhetorical approach reinscribes this exportation of toxicity to a raced and classed "elsewhere." *Silent Spring's* cautionary tale warns that toxic substances affect the consumer as well as the worker, reiterating that there are consequences "not only for the man who may spray...[but] for the consumer of sprayed products" (31). As Purdy puts it, *Silent Spring's* great revelation is that "the suburbs [are] unsafe" (41). The vignettes in *Silent Spring* return again and again to scenes in which the toxic effects of pesticides infiltrate the pastoral landscapes of white middle-class suburbia: a pair of children playing on a swing set; a housewife running outside to see DDT being sprayed on her kitchen garden; "a town in the heart of America" (1). Carson asks, "Who is safeguarding the consumer to see that no residues of dieldrin or heptachlor are appearing in milk?" (169). Although Carson mentions the impact of pesticides on truck drivers, farm laborers, and fruit pickers, she circles back from the plight of the worker to the perspective of the white middle-class consumer. What makes these substances so dangerous and unnatural is that they refuse to stay put; they leak from the raced and classed spaces occupied by the farm laborer and the factory worker into the hallowed ground of suburbia.

The age of "gunk" and the rise of invasion ecology

Silent Spring's "unnatural" substances and species are marked by their potential to contaminate the "natural" spaces occupied by white middle-class consumers. In addition to man-made substances such as DDT, Carson identifies another class of unnatural and similarly uncanny substances: "In rivers, a really incredible variety of pollutants combine to produce deposits that the sanitary engineers can only despairingly refer to as 'gunk'"(40). Carson captures the particular horror of gunk, a substance that distills the manifold irresponsibilities of humanity and portends an unknowable hazard to its future. Gunk epitomizes what Mel Chen calls "matter that is considered insensate, immobile, deathly, or otherwise 'wrong,'" and as Chen suggests, gunk "animates cultural life in important ways" (2). The provenance of gunk is murky; its specific antecedents cannot be traced. Like slime and ooze, it surely possesses the ability to cross the borders of the human body. Gunk represents the antithesis of correct and pure embodiment.

A fable of the age of gunk emerges from Carson's text. Carson offers lineages for the unnatural substances epitomized by gunk. She provides stories of wasteful production processes that prioritize quantity and convenience; imperialist global conflicts which necessitate the invention of bioweapons; and corrupt and short-sighted pesticide companies. Driven by greed and hubris, these stories imply, Man created a monster, only to see it turn on its creators. This

strand of Carson's argument focuses on a class of unnatural substances with unprecedented capacity to harm the human body and poison the planet. This narrative comes with a somewhat reassuring corollary. It implies that there was a state of purity that existed in the past. If humanity were to stop creating and using unnatural substances, perhaps we might approximate a return to this Eden.

Alongside this relatively simple (but incredibly powerful) fable of recovery, however, Carson also becomes entangled in the intractable complexities of invasion ecology. Like gunk, invasion ecology is a condition of modernity, a disturbance of the natural order accelerated by the activities of modern man. Carson describes the phenomenon as "the spreading of thousands of different kinds of organisms from their native homes into new territories" and cites the man who is still known as the father of invasion ecology, Charles Elton (10).¹⁰ Carson observes that "the importation of plants is the primary agent in the modern spread of species, for animals have almost invariably gone along with the plants—quarantine being a comparatively recent and never completely effective innovation" (11). Invasion ecology thus exemplifies the ills of modernity. As a discipline, it contends with the emergent problem of an undisciplined spread of stowaway species in the wake of the routes humans trace over the globe.

Invasion ecology's dilemmas complicate the natural/unnatural binary because the entities that need to be regulated are not unnatural of themselves, but unnatural in context. Unlike gunk, which should never exist anywhere, a species may be invasive and "unnatural" in one location but native and natural in another. In the catastrophes of invasion ecology, the harbinger of disaster is not a substance but a species—albeit a species that *acts like* a toxic substance. A single organism does not constitute an invasion. Individual organisms are like particles that combine to form a tidal wave of invasion, an "invasive species." These unnatural hordes have the power to cross borders and take over areas where they do not belong.

The discipline of invasion ecology thus introduced a pair of interrelated and uncomfortable interpretive questions. First, there is the problem of how to identify an invasive species. It seems that species are "invasive" and "alien" if they are too successful, edging out "native" species.¹¹ A second problem presented by the paradigm of invasion ecology is how to go about restoring native landscapes. Often this issue is framed as a question of how to "control" or even eradicate an undesired species. One possible method for controlling invasive species is spraying with pesticides; another is importing another species to hold the first one in check. While the second option seems more "natural," both of these have the potential to destabilize the very ecosystem balance that they seek to restore. Carson grapples with these questions in the final chapter of *Silent Spring*, in which she suggests that importing non-native species to control other invasive species might offer "permanent solutions that preserve and strengthen natural relations" (296), and yet ultimately cautions that "the 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance" (297).

What such discussions reveal is that the "natural" and "unnatural," like the "alien" and the "native," are not fixed categories that exist prior to racial and national politics. Rather, the shifting boundaries that constitute these categories must be constantly negotiated. Banu Subramaniam, in her work on the racialization of invasion ecology, comments on the extensive parallels which link the rhetorical representation of non-native species to immigrant populations. Among these she identifies "the rhetoric of uncontrollable fertility and reproduction," in which "alien plants are characterized as aggressive, uncontrollable, prolific, invasive and expanding" (30). The racialization of plants and other invasive organisms conflate plants, animals and other organisms with racialized immigrant populations, extending a powerfully xenophobic discourse

and bringing it home to the garden. The terms “native” and “alien” function fluidly to describe whatever species is valued or vilified.

A 1945 article in *Better Homes and Gardens* illustrates the link between the politics of invasive species in the domestic space of the garden and the racially inflected politics of global conflict. The article refers to the “invasive” plant known as Japanese honeysuckle as a “Jap invader [that] has taken over large areas in the eastern United States” (Carleton qtd in Zierler 44). This discourse mobilizes fears of being invaded by “Japs” in order to justify a preemptive strike with pesticides. Of course, the pesticide company benefits from this displacement of the racialized threat onto the greenery of the garden. Significantly, it is the white suburban housewife, striving for a better home and garden, who faces off against this foreign invader.

These two aberrations—gunk and invasive species—exemplify the ills of toxic modernity. Read together, they illustrate not only the anxieties of this period, but also the racialization of the threat of toxicity. Gunk’s unknowable composition, textural qualities, and boundary-crossing properties associate it with the contaminating slime discussed in Chapter One. Moreover, like the “Jap invader” in the garden, gunk emerges as racialized through its repeated depiction as a threat to white womanhood. To understand this racialization of gunk, it is necessary to delve further into the gendered rhetoric of *Silent Spring* and its focus on the plight of white women.

White women versus gunk

Rachel Carson’s subject position was key to the production and reception of *Silent Spring*. Carson was an outsider to the scientific establishment; an educated woman; a daughter of a once-wealthy family; a woman with a strong attachment to another woman.¹² Carson’s gendered subject position on the boundaries of the scientific establishment made her the target of derision and outrage.¹³ Yet, according to biographer Linda Lear, “her outsider status [became] a distinct advantage” as well (xi). Carson served as a Cassandra for readers of the *New Yorker*: her position allowed her to reveal the havoc wreaked upon unwitting pregnant women, housewives, and children, and to lament the short-sightedness and greed of the military-industrial complex. *Silent Spring* repeatedly stages human vulnerability to pesticides, pollution and gunk through the figure of the white middle-class housewife. While Carson’s rhetorical emphasis on the experiences of women served as a powerful impetus for what would become the modern environmental justice movement, it was also deeply complicit with racialized fears which responded to the spectacle of white women struggling against the incursions of toxic substances.

Carson describes the itinerary of DDT as it travels up the food chain, until it reaches the bodies of a mother and child:

Fields of alfalfa, say, are dusted with DDT; meal is later prepared from the alfalfa and fed to hens; the hens lay eggs that contain DDT. Or the hay, containing residues of from seven to eight parts per million, may be fed to cows. The DDT will turn up in the milk in the amount of about three parts per million, but in butter made from this milk the concentration may run to sixty-five parts per million. During the process of transfer, what started out as a very small amount of DDT may end as a heavy concentration. The poison may be passed on from mother to offspring. The presence of insecticide residues in human milk has been established by Food and Drug Administration scientists. This is probably not the breast-fed infant’s first exposure, however; there is good reason to

believe that he starts receiving toxic chemicals while he is still in the womb. In experimental animals, the chlorinated-hydrocarbon insecticides freely cross the barrier of the placenta, the traditional protective shield between the embryo and harmful substances in the mother's body. (22-3)

Carson initially ends the list of DDT's travels with cow's milk, but subsequently extends its presence to human breast milk. DDT's boundary crossings facilitate this slippage from animals to humans. The "traditional" barrier of the placenta is the ultimate border that is rendered permeable in this new paradigm. DDT and other chemicals emerge as unnatural because they can cross this formerly intact "protective shield."

By stressing the vulnerability of pregnant bodies, and the stakes of their potential contamination, Carson is able to invoke an ethic of care for the future of the planet. Carson's detractors repeatedly mentioned her own status as a "spinster," suggesting that her attention should be redirected towards her own offspring. Carson's rhetorical strategy marks an important feminist reaction against this relegation of women to the confines of a limited domestic sphere. Carson links motherhood to toxicity and insists that both are political issues. However, the deployment of this trope invokes a vision of futurity that centers myopically on *white* children.

Carson's own subject position as a white woman merges with that of the pregnant woman whose body is infiltrated by insecticides. In the absence of an analysis of race and toxicity, this unmarked body remains presumptively a white body. Carson's account emphasizes the vulnerability of the mother's body and the consequences for the male fetus. This vision of DDT traveling through a network of humans, animals, and plants thus represents this chemical agent as a direct threat to white reproductive futurity.¹⁴ This trope links the health of white women with the health of the human race. In marshaling sympathy and outrage for the plight of suburban mothers, this trope naturalizes the allocation of toxicity along racial lines.

Silent Spring's message is that "[t]he suburbs [are] unsafe" and "the body...not secure" (Purdy 41). The newly revealed insecurity of the white suburban body involves a slippage, a contagion that moves from the bodies of those always assumed to be insecure to the white, middle-class consumer. While contamination by pesticides emerged in *Silent Spring* as an *anxiety* for white middle-class people, it was already a *reality* for black and brown people. It was and still is the case that black and brown people were much more likely to suffer quotidian exposure to hazardous waste. As Mel Chen's analysis of "Chinese" lead toys suggests, this differential exposure has often been paired with an association of the toxic substance with the racialized population affected, enacting a racialization of toxic substances such as lead. Chen argues that the association of toxicity with black and brown bodies is not only naturalized, but discursively *transferred* by this contact, creating a class of "toxic bodies" (217).

Silent Spring thus introduced the fear of ecological networks and at the same time popularized the trope of the white middle-class consumer—specifically, the white housewife—under attack by racialized gunk. Carson's rhetoric reverberated throughout many channels and would shape environmental policy and activism for years to come.¹⁵ The environmental movement that emerged in response to *Silent Spring* was concerned with both "middle-class consumers and farm laborers," as Linda Nash shows, and with the revelation that the human body might be "open, porous, and increasingly at risk" (218). However, as Nash also demonstrates, the discourse of healthy bodies itself made a distinction between the racialized body of the farm laborer and the presumptively white body of the middle-class consumer. The issue of pesticide poisoning was inseparable from "a racialized discourse of hygiene," a longstanding construction of the bodies of Mexican migrant workers as "impure or substandard,"

susceptible to illness (216). The racist logic which shored up this assumption insisted that "farmworkers' lack of education made them susceptible to all kinds of disease" (216). This logic exemplifies the construction of a class of toxic and racialized bodies in opposition to the white middle-class housewife.

The years following *Silent Spring* were marked by a flurry of environmental regulation and legislation, most notably the creation of the EPA. H. Patricia Hynes calls the EPA's banning of DDT in 1972 a "partial victory [...] considerably weaker than it should have been, in that it did not ban the manufacture of DDT for export to other countries and allowed for exemptions of emergency use in this country" (47). As Hynes asks pointedly: "Do more environmental laws guarantee more abundant protection of nature and people against pollution?" (145). In fact, the prevalence of the so-called "NIMBY" (Not In My Back Yard) approach of U. S. environmental activism, combined with the pressures of economic expansionism and late capitalism, led to the exporting of waste and the relocation of polluting factories outside of the United States. Paul Wapner observes that such an attitude "forces environmental harm [towards the global] South" (219). This strategy of outsourcing pollution demonstrates an unwarranted faith in national borders to keep the consequences of environmental pollution out.

As imagined in *Silent Spring*, the uncanny travels of toxic substances threatened to place the bodies of white middle-class women in dangerous proximity to substances, locations, and bodies presumed to be naturalized to toxic conditions. One effect of this rhetoric in its later elaborations was to construct toxicity as a threat posed to white bodies *by brown bodies*: a phenomenon in which the impure, unhygienic bodies of racialized laborers threaten to contaminate the purity of white middle-class consumers. The call to action that mobilized fears of gunk tended to elicit responses focused on limiting and containing the movement of toxic substances—attempting to relegate them to a racialized "elsewhere." However, as Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) so horrifyingly suggests, this strategy ensured that racialized gunk continued to lurk just beyond these barriers, threatening to invade the sanctity of white middle-class bodies at any moment.

The weird world of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978)

Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) draws on and sensationalizes the real-life ecological horror that Carson describes in her exposé. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* dramatizes the conflict between the human and the alien, displacing the origin of the "unnatural" from human agency to outer space. Despite this science-fictional element, the film's depiction of alien invasion strongly resembles the ecological crises that Carson describes. Like *Silent Spring*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* portrays a prelapsarian and postlapsarian view of the world, a world before and after the contaminating invasion of an unnatural entity. Once the aliens have invaded, nobody is safe, because no body can extricate itself entirely from ecological networks. Furthermore, the pod people's plot to displace humanity evokes both the spread of a toxic substance and the proliferation of an invasive species. These invading aliens threaten to take over the planet by infiltrating the boundaries of the human body. Although the film presents this crisis as a universal emergency, its focus on a small handful of white protagonists reveals the raced and gendered dynamics of this alien invasion. Their response to this alien invasion implicitly addresses the question of how to live in conditions of totalizing toxicity. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*'s storyline ultimately emphasizes the horror of ecological networks and evokes the

desire to return to a prelapsarian state of boundedness, which is associated with whiteness and purity.

The opening of the film dramatizes the event of invasion itself, emphasizing the irrevocable moment when the pod spores land on Earth. In the opening shot, a cluster of semi-transparent membranes undulate over a striated backdrop. A planet rises in the distance, indicating that these translucent membranes are drifting through outer space. As the shot continues to track these mysterious blobs, it becomes apparent that they are actually traveling towards Planet Earth. A series of establishing shots zoom from satellite's-view of Earth to airplane-view, tracing the spores' descent: first the planet, then the clouds, then, rapidly, a series of San Francisco landmarks emerging from fog and rain. The sequence ends with lingering shots of a banal landscape glistening with rain. This opening sequence establishes several important aspects of this alien invasion narrative. It suggests that the spores possess malevolent agency and are actively attacking Planet Earth and its inhabitants. It emphasizes the vulnerability of the planet and links it to the vulnerability of the human body. Finally, it sets the tone for the rest of the film by introducing anxiety regarding the visibility or invisibility of these invading agents.

The establishing shots that create the sense of an ever-faster descent to earth suggest not a vague drifting or traveling, but a distinctly unsettling process of homing in on a destination. The spores do not passively fall upon Earth with the rain. They move as though they are locked on to a target and seeking out bodies to invade. The rapid shift in scale, which moves quickly from outer space to a cozy San Francisco neighborhood, links the planetary body to the human body. The view of Earth from space functions as a fear-inducing spectacle of a beloved entity under attack by foreign invaders. Viewers of the film understand that Earth is our home, and that the spores coming down to Earth are “coming to get us,” infiltrating our bones as well as our Earth—just as Carson depicted the invisible paths traveled by strontium-90. This opening sequence thus collapses the moment of the invasion of earth and the invasion of the body. Once the spores are on Earth, they inevitably proceed to invade the human body.

As a consequence of this rapid descent, the membranes disappear from view—the shot cuts from the spores in space to the bird's eye view of San Francisco. First the spores are visible, if hard to see; then, suddenly, they are present but unseen. The disappearance of the membranes increases the sense of danger and creates a sense of generalized anxiety: we, as viewers, wonder where they went. The world of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is indeed a “weird world” (Carson 32), in which everyday features of the landscape—rainwater, flowers, mud—are imbued with menacing alien intent. Water, air, sunlight, trees, and flowers become the agents of a perverse “alchemy” which facilitates the replacement of the “natural” with the alien and the unnatural. As the film proceeds, it elicits the fear that these gelatinous, transparent membranes will ooze their way across planetary and bodily borders, invading the body as easily as they spread across the face of the planet.

Paranoid optics: visual style and contaminating substances

This opening sequence trains the viewer to look at wet, glistening things with suspicion, establishing that objects with this texture may have been contaminated by the pod people. The resulting visual paranoia is particularly unsettling because what is glistening can amount to a trick of the light, or of the lens through which one looks, or of environmental conditions in rainy, foggy San Francisco. (This setting offers a notable contrast to the landscape of Santa Mira, the

setting for the previous film, which is sunny and dry.) As the camera descends to earth after its flight through the fog, it focuses on drops of rain clinging to bracken; these transparent orbs look disturbingly similar to the gelatinous space spores. A rivulet of water in a muddy gutter discloses more glistening globs. In the concluding shots of this sequence, the camera lingers on glistening drops of rain on leaves and flowers and gelatinous puddles of mud. The camera's odd angles and extreme close-ups defamiliarize the rainy landscape. This myopic focus on textures and substances continues throughout the film.

This emphasis on threatening *substances* in the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* constitutes a profound shift in the mode of paranoia from that underpinning the 1956 version. Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) establishes a distinctive mode of paranoid optics, one that entails the attentive scrutiny of human faces and behaviors. The protagonist of this film is Dr. Miles Bennell. As the film opens, Miles returns to his office, having been away at a conference. He and his secretary discuss the odd fact that no fewer than six of his patients first insisted on seeing him right away and then canceled their appointments. Miles muses, "I don't understand it," as he holds up an X-ray of a human head. Miles's diagnostic focus has shifted from identifying and treating illnesses, to attempting to see through an impenetrable exterior into his patient's minds. This foreshadows the questions that drive the plot of this film: What are these people thinking? Are they still thinking and having emotions as people—or is there something missing inside them?

The film elicits an embodied response from viewers, inviting us to join Miles in his attempt to see into people's minds. In her classic analysis of Siegel's film, Vivian Sobchack comments, "[T]he subject matter is familiar, ordinary, but one experiences a tension which seems to spring from no readily discernible cause, a distortion of angle so slight as to seem almost nonexistent, but so great as to set the teeth intolerably on edge." The net effect is "an attentive paranoia which makes us lean forward to scan what seem like the most intentionally and deceitfully flat images for signs of aberrant alien behavior from the most improbable of suspects" (Sobchack qtd in Wald 201). Priscilla Wald builds on Sobchack's analysis, highlighting the specific modes of visuality and spectatorship that characterize Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*: "While grotesque creatures tempt the viewer to look away from the screen, the pod people compel intense scrutiny" (201). As Wald notes, despite Sobchack's emphasis on what is *not* there—"a gasp not gasped, a kiss not returned"—there are visible signs that suggest a pod diagnosis, particularly "an uncanny deadening of the eyes and tone" (201). That is to say, close scrutiny of the faces of suspected pods does indeed reward us with clues to their status.

The voiceover plays a crucial role in eliciting this scrutiny of human faces and behaviors. The central action of the film is accompanied by Miles's voice retrospectively narrating and interpreting events as they unfold. This voiceover teaches the viewer to see certain traces of human behavior as clues that humans are being replaced with pods. Shortly after he returns to Santa Mira, Miles stumbles across a young boy, Jimmy, running away from his mother. As the camera lingers over the rundown vegetable stand belonging to Jimmy's parents, Miles's voice observes, "The boy's panic should have told me it was more than school he was afraid of." The voiceover thus has a pedagogical effect, teaching spectators to read details in the landscape as clues to human behavior, and hence to the interventions of the uncanny pod people. Later Becky, Miles's love interest, joins him in interpreting her past interactions with her father. Having seen the evidence that the pods are replicating and replacing people, Becky realizes that her father is already a pod. She exclaims in horror, "I felt something was wrong..." Finally, at the end of the

film, Becky herself becomes the focus of the film's paranoid scrutiny, as her face fills the screen. Her dead expression signals to the viewer, and to Miles, that something is wrong with her as well.

As Becky and Miles encounter the citizens of Santa Mira, from Jimmy's mother to Becky's father, they face the crucial problem of correctly diagnosing these people as either pods or humans based on external signs and symptoms. Many critical readings of the film hinge on the question of what a "pod" diagnosis might symbolize. It is this logic of diagnosis that enables the traditional reading of the film as a political allegory of the Cold War, and fuels the debate among critics over whether the film is anti-Communist or anti-conformist.¹⁶ These readings agree that people—the same people who were once friends and family, now turned to foreign agents—constitute the primary threat in this film.

Kaufman's 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* shifts from studying the invaded human body turned foreign agent, focusing on the invading substance instead. The key task for its besieged protagonists is no longer surveilling the human body, but shoring up its boundaries against the incursion of health threats, both alien and domestic. In the 1956 film, Miles the doctor has "a minor concussion and two cases of the common cold" waiting for him upon his return to Santa Mira. The later film introduces its protagonist, Matthew Bennell, visiting an upscale French restaurant in his professional capacity. He pushes his way into the kitchen, where he is clearly unwelcome, as signaled by the disgruntled glances of the kitchen staff. Matthew takes out a pair of metal tweezers and delicately extracts something from the soup. He inspects this tiny glob very closely. Though the chef insists that it is a caper, Matthew pronounces it a "rat turd." Matthew wins the argument by challenging the chef: "If it's a caper—eat it." This stomach-turning moment establishes the imperative to scrutinize the smallest and most harmless-looking entities, lest excrement appear in one's soup. Whereas the common cold, though contagious, is naturalized and comforting in its sheer commonness, the rat turd evokes sheer disgust. This moment signals a shift from a thematic investment in medicine as comparatively benign, even pleasant and bucolic, a safe location for stable fatherly authority, to a fraught realm of paranoid inspection and health codes. The hero of the new film models a paranoid vigilance even before the pod people arrive. Matthew infiltrates and surveils suspicious locales, obsessively plying his tweezers against a rising tide of dirt and contagion.

The shift from scrutinizing people to scrutinizing substances entails a heightened attention to the mechanism of pod infiltration itself: the breaching of the boundaries of the body by a foreign entity. While the earlier film fantasized about X-raying human heads to distinguish foes from friends, Kaufman's remake develops an optics that relies on myopic scrutiny of possible contaminants. The scientific setting that takes precedence in the 1978 film is not the doctor's office, but the lab: the site where health inspector Matthew Bennell and his employee/love interest Elizabeth work. The film thematizes the modes of visibility associated with the lab, as well as the professional trappings associated with the discipline of public health. White coats, microscopes, tests, samples, and instruments such as tweezers and forceps feature prominently in the film.

The lens—which both magnifies and distorts—is crucial to the film's visual style, producing its peculiar evocation of paranoia. The lens makes it possible to examine substances, but it also renders familiar objects uncanny and bizarre. As viewers of the film, we often look through lenses along with the characters in the films, sharing their point of view and hence their tendency toward visual paranoia. Our very first glimpse of Matthew is shot through a fisheye lens which makes his face grotesque—the peephole through which the reluctant restaurant owner

peers at Matthew, before he is compelled to open the door. Later, a group of the surly kitchen staff smashes a wine bottle on Matthew's windshield. The impact breaks the bottle and crazes the glass of the windshield, producing a weblike network of radiating cracks with a central hole, as though a gunshot had pierced and shattered a window.

This distorting windshield glass is the lens that Matthew and Elizabeth must peer through in the next sequence. Matthew picks up Elizabeth to take her to a party and the two discuss Elizabeth's suspicions as Matthew drives. The camera shows the streets of San Francisco through the shattered windshield, by turns concealing and revealing the landscape. Suddenly a wild-eyed man jumps in front of the car. Matthew hits the brakes to avoid running over him. This man (played by Kevin McCarthy, the original Miles Bennell) presses his face against the shattered windshield and shouts, "They're coming! You're next!" This cameo references the ending of the Spiegel film, in which McCarthy runs alongside a busy freeway shouting these same phrases. But in this version, a tide of people pursues him and drives him into the street. His muffled voice stops abruptly with a screech of brakes and a thud. The running crowd abruptly stops to stare at the man as he lies facedown and bleeding in the street. The disturbing and unreal quality of this bizarre experience is heightened by the camerawork. Most of the sequence is shot from the interior of the car. Matthew and Elizabeth's panicked faces crowd the shot and obstruct the view through the shattered windshield. Immediately after they continue on their way, it begins to rain. Drops of water trickle down the cracked windshield, further obscuring the view and creating new, ever-shifting patterns of refraction and distortion.

Distorting lenses thus frustrate the gaze and prevent the characters from adequately scrutinizing each other. The telltale signs of pod invasion are no longer visible in human faces. But there are other visual clues. While its precursor depicted the spread of "pod-ism" as transmitted primarily through association with the human-shaped replicants, this remake renders the mechanism of pod dispersal visible in the form of gelatinous spores and sticky filaments. The 1978 version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* elaborates on the physicality of the body snatchers' pods and of the human body, drawing out the threat to the human body of the infiltration and entanglement by these alien life forms. Bodily fluids ooze, tendrils creep, and pods birth replicants on screen. In the earlier film, Becky's double, which Miles discovers in a coffin-like box in her father's basement, resembles a plastic doll laid gently to rest in a nest of raw polyester fiberfill. In the remake, these transparent, fluffy fibers that cradle the replicants have become tendrils with a decidedly wet, sticky appearance; rather than simply cradling the replicant, they also cling to and enmesh the body of the humans being replicated. The sticky, transparent filaments that the body snatchers extrude provide a visual representation of invasion in process. While in the original version there are no tell-tale signs of replication and substitution beyond the changes in behavior and in facial expression, in this version, the sticky filaments illustrate the moment of invasion and foreshadow imminent replication. The filaments not only emerge from the pods themselves, but they also appear on the faces of humans who are about to be replaced with pods. "Contamination" by pods is thus figured as something that can be pinpointed and prevented, not by mental resistance to propaganda, but by a more literal form of vigilance: a constant visual inspection of possible contaminants.

Gunk and the racialization of the pod people

Invasion of the Body Snatchers is a horror film for the age of “gunk,” Carson’s term for the unnameable, indeterminate substance that besmirches the shores of nations. The film’s investment in the methodology of public health goes hand in hand with its evocation of the unsettling aspects of gunk. Its characters demonstrate an obsession with examining and containing abject substances. In drawing out the horror of gunk, the film exposes the link between contamination and racialization.

In the film, various types of gunk associated with the pod people pose direct threats to the human body.¹⁷ In the process of displacing attention from foreign bodies to foreign substances, the film enacts a covert racialization of these substances. As a key setting of the film, the Bellicec Baths, owned and operated by Jack and Nancy Bellicec, dramatizes the corporeality of the human body and amplifies the threat of viscous substances threatening to overwhelm and incorporate the white body. The bubbling mud in the Bellicec’s bathhouse evokes the fecal and the abject as well as the spore globs of the body snatchers from the opening sequence. The bath house is the setting for the discovery of the first complete replicated body, a double for Jack. When the body mysteriously disappears, Jack and Nancy search the bathhouse, reaching beneath the surface of the mud. As Jack says, they “lost someone in the mud once”: he had a heart attack and his corpse slid beneath the surface of the mud. This incident captures the horror of the mud as an undifferentiated substance that can swallow up the human body. The bathhouse presides over a ritual of purification in which white bodies encounter the abject mud in order to expel their own impurities, leaving them behind in the bathhouse. The brown color and sticky texture of the mud points to the racial subtext of this spectacle. Patrons of the baths emerge with their skin color temporarily changed, concealed beneath a thick coating of the brown mud. The Bellicec Baths thus illustrates the dual fear of contaminating substances and racialized bodies.

As *The War of the Worlds* suggests, the tradition of alien invasion stories has long included the theme of whiteness under threat by the alien. Earlier cultural moments explicitly racialized these aliens through the color of their skin, as zombie films did in the early twentieth century. George Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) reframed the relationship of zombies to race, conveying a nuanced critique of blackness-as-monstrosity. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* engages in a comparatively covert installation of humanity-as-whiteness, participating in a new vocabulary for justifying the designation of racialized populations as toxic. At this historical moment, the disciplining of human bodies occurs as a result of the disciplining of racialized substances, rather than through overtly racist depictions of racialized subjects. Racialization in this film operates through the depiction of whiteness under threat, especially white reproductive futurity.

Matthew’s first appearance in the film obliquely suggests this raced and classed tension. When Matthew demands entry into the kitchen of the French restaurant, he argues primarily with a white member of the staff; however, several members of the kitchen staff are black. The gross-out comedy of Matthew’s discovery of the rat turd coincides in this scene with the racially charged tension of a white inspector surveilling black workers. The staff glare at Matthew as he addresses the chef. These members of the kitchen staff reappear outside the restaurant later. They are the ones who break Matthew’s car window with the wine bottle.

As the film progresses, these racial tensions are reframed as alien-human relations. The film creates a slippage between the resentment of the service workers of color that Matthew encounters, and the baleful presence of the pod people from outer space. The blank, vaguely unfriendly gazes of people of color blend into the crowd of people who now become possible aliens. Black and brown faces appear in the ominously silent crowd that watches the man who is

run down by the car (Kevin McCarthy). Once Matthew and Elizabeth arrive at the party, Elizabeth tries to convince the psychologist Dr. Kibner that something odd is going on. Their interaction is witnessed by a crowd of silent partygoers. Once again, the sea of blank and vaguely threatening faces includes several people of color, prominently featuring a black woman. Instead of overtly depicting racialized bodies as monstrous, this film relegates black, brown, and Asian characters to the role of passive onlookers.¹⁸ Yet the very passivity of these racialized bystanders evokes the alien threat of the body snatchers.

The film further evokes complex anxieties regarding whiteness, gender, and contamination through Matthew's first encounter with a pod person. This encounter takes place after Elizabeth has confessed her suspicion of Geoffrey, but before Matthew has seen the pod bodies for himself. Matthew visits San Francisco's Chinatown to drop off his dry cleaning. He has an odd interchange with Mrs. Tong, the older Chinese woman staffing the counter at the dry cleaners. Matthew points out a stain on one of his shirts and comments offhandedly that it is a coffee stain. The woman insists, in a flat tone, "That not coffee," to which Matthew replies, "That most certainly is coffee, I put it there myself." She replies only, "Maybe not come out." As she disappears with the clothes, her husband whispers to Matthew, asking if he is a doctor. Matthew clarifies that he is a health inspector. Mr. Tong begins by saying that his wife is sick, then repeats urgently, "That not my wife!" Just as the scene in the kitchen associates black kitchen workers with the contaminated food preparation space, this incident in the dry cleaners evokes the association of toxicity (in this case, dry cleaning chemicals, particularly perchloroethylene) with the racialized space of Chinatown. Matthew's tense encounter with this woman demonstrates the uncomfortable intimacy that comes with this allocation of raced and gendered labor. Matthew hands over his clothing to a stranger; in protecting his own body from the toxic byproducts of dry cleaning, he renders himself vulnerable to the uncanny threat of alien invasion. This menacing woman evokes the specter of gunk when she questions the mysterious stain on his clothing (if it's not coffee, then what is it?). Matthew enters the dry cleaners in order to clean his clothing; but the woman reminds him that some stains will not come out.

As Carson indicated in *Silent Spring*, the particular danger of gunk lies in its ability to cross boundaries and infiltrate spaces presumed to be safe. Similarly, in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the contaminating invaders appear in the most mundane and commonplace spaces. In the first minutes of the film, the alien spores lurk in water and in mud. The pink pod flowers subsequently appear on a playground before making their way into the household. As the film continues, it thematizes the daily battles that pit white bodies against the incursions of gunk, from the bathhouse, to the French restaurant, to the dry cleaners. In this film, as in *Silent Spring*, these spaces are understood to be the domain of white middle-class normality. The invasion of the pod spores reveals the proximity of these spaces to abject substances, illustrating that the bucolic landscapes of white suburbia are dependent on forms of raced and gendered labor.

Danger in the garden: invasion ecology and white middle-class heteronormativity

In addition to associating the invading pods with the dangerous incursions of gunk, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* explicitly references the scientific discourse of invasion ecology, drawing together these two ills of modernity and revealing the links between them. In this film, the invader is a *substance* that turns into a *species*. As gunk, the pod people threaten to contaminate the white body. As an invasive species, the pod people threaten to disrupt white

heteronormativity and replace it with a distinctly queer mode of reproduction. In presenting the body snatchers as the ultimate “invasive species,” this film intensifies the racialized and gendered subtext that underpins the paradigm of invasion ecology.

The film establishes the conflation of substance and species via a time lapse sequence. First, the gelatinous spores cling to a leaf, barely distinguishable from raindrops. With alarming speed, the spores develop from a glistening mass to a fleshy bud, finally blooming into a red flower. This sequence borrows the time-lapse effect from the genre of educational films and uses it to generate horror instead. It underscores the link between dangerous substances and seemingly innocent plants. As the spores develop into pods, the category of suspicious objects and substances broadens to include plants, flowers, and trees.

As the time lapse sequence ends and the film reverts to a normal pace, Elizabeth happens along and plucks the flower, unaware of its ominous origins. She takes it back to her house and attempts to identify it with the aid of a guide to plants. She comments, “Do you know, I think I’ve actually found something rare?” and reads aloud: “Many of the species are dangerous weeds and should be avoided.” Her inattentive boyfriend, Geoffrey, scoffs, “Dangerous?” and she replies “In the garden.” Elizabeth’s botanical guidebook is a reminder that “dangerous” plants exist on Earth as well, linking the alien invasive species from outer space with the earthly discourse of invasion ecology.

The threat posed by this invasive species appears in the film as an interruption of domestic arrangements, a threat to white middle-class heteronormativity. The film immediately explores the specific danger that this plant poses in the domestic space of Elizabeth and Geoffrey’s bedroom. Elizabeth places the flower on her bedside table in a glass of water. The camera lingers on the flower, avoiding Geoffrey and Elizabeth’s faces, while the soundtrack’s ominous strains indicate danger. A few minutes later, as she goes up to bed, Elizabeth drinks a glass of milk—a wholesome, appropriate beverage for a young woman—out of an identical glass. As she puts her head on Geoffrey’s shoulder to go to sleep, the flower in the glass is illuminated with a weird blue glow. Its proximity to Elizabeth’s sleeping form suggests a fear associated with the possibility of bodily vulnerability. The glass of water on Elizabeth’s bedside table evokes *Silent Spring*’s warning that “in the glass of water served at your dinner table [...] are mingled chemicals that no responsible chemist would think of combining in his laboratory” (44). Carson’s account mobilizes fear and distrust of the promiscuous mixing of chemicals, stressing that no one can identify the resulting mixture. The flower on the nightstand similarly represents an unknown threat to the body, with an undertone of sexual aggression. The agential flower joins Elizabeth and Geoffrey in their bedroom like a malevolent voyeur. It reproduces during the night and usurps Geoffrey’s place. The pod people—as both toxic substance and invasive species—threaten not just the white body, but specifically the white couple in bed.

The alien invaders in this film resemble earthly invasive species in that that they are *too* successful at reproducing. Following the logic of invasion ecology, the pod people’s uncontrolled growth edges out the “native” human population over the course of the film. They transform the original ecosystem of Planet Earth into an alien landscape. This film depicts the pod invasion as simultaneously horrifyingly unnatural—a perversion of normative sexuality and embodiment—and quintessentially Darwinian. Once he has been revealed as a pod, Dr. Kibner insists, “We are evolving into a new life form...We adapt and we survive. The function of life is survival.” This seeming paradox undergirds the logic of invasion ecology. Plants, insects, and animals become “invasive” when they are the most successful in a Darwinian sense, able to adapt, survive, and reproduce prolifically.

The claim that these invading organisms threaten to overwhelm the native population echoes xenophobic and settler-colonialist rhetoric that pits “native” whiteness against a rising tide of immigration. Thus, the association of the pod people with the discourse of invasion ecology both underscores the racialization of the pod people and dramatizes the threat invasive species pose to whiteness. One of the taglines for this film is “Pray for the human race.” This alien invasion plot renders the “human race” synonymous with a form of reproductive futurity that guarantees the continuation of uncontaminated embodiment—conceived in terms of whiteness.

The pod invasion repeatedly interrupts and ultimately forecloses the heterosexual romance between the two white protagonists. Initially, the storyline hints at a romance plot in which two lovers are brought together by catastrophe. At the beginning of the film, it seems clear that Elizabeth is with the wrong man. Geoffrey ignores Elizabeth to watch the basketball game; Matthew makes Elizabeth laugh, calls her up late at night, and cooks her dinner. Elizabeth and Matthew even find an opportunity for flirtatious banter in a conversation about coming in early to do a salmonella test. Matthew goes so far as to suggest that Elizabeth should leave Geoffrey. As she tells Matthew, the house belongs to Geoffrey: she’s unable to tell him to “shape up or get out.” This initial situation sets up Matthew and Elizabeth as romantic partners temporarily stymied by Elizabeth’s relationship with Geoffrey.

For a time, the storyline entertains the possibility that heteronormativity will eventually enfold even the disaster of alien invasion into its plot, and uses this crisis to further the romantic relationship between Matthew and Elizabeth. The invading pods exploit the fissure in Elizabeth and Geoffrey’s relationship and make it impossible for the couple to stay together, despite their domestic involvement. In his capacity as celebrity psychologist, Dr. Kibner reveals the wish-fulfillment aspect of the pod invasion. He initially pressures Elizabeth to stay with Geoffrey. He misdiagnoses Elizabeth’s suspicions as a normal part of the ills of modernity, which include, in his analysis, the unwillingness of young people to commit to a relationship. He comments gruffly that “marriage is shot to hell.” As Kibner’s commentary highlights, Elizabeth is ready to believe that Geoffrey is an alien because she no longer wants to be with him; in turn, Matthew is willing to believe Elizabeth because he wants to rescue her from Geoffrey.

Later, as Matthew attempts to explain his actions to the police, their skeptical reaction reveals the proximity of this science fiction plot to a more banal story. The pod invasion gives Matthew a reason to break into Elizabeth’s house and carry her unconscious body out in his arms. Earlier Dr. Kibner had suggested that Elizabeth was making up the story of the pod invasion in order to make sense of her changing feelings for Geoffrey. Now, it appears that Matthew is engaging in similar confabulation. As he struggles to convince the police that Elizabeth’s pod double was in the garden and is now gone, he begins to realize that it looks as though he and Geoffrey are simply fighting over the affections of Elizabeth. The policeman tells Geoffrey that he may want to bring a charge of “unlawful entry” against Matthew, ironically aligning Matthew (not Geoffrey) with the home-invading pods.

At first the pod invasion enables the romance plot by allowing Elizabeth and Matthew to unite against a common enemy, and of course, the pod people replace the inconvenient boyfriend Geoffrey with an alien replicant. However, as the film unfolds, the pod people indicate that they actively oppose Elizabeth and Matthew’s romantic connection. Kibner, speaking on behalf of the pod people, reveals that pod existence will free them from such emotions. The end of the film effectively forecloses the romance plot altogether, as the pod people target Elizabeth herself. Elizabeth’s pod double first appears inside her own garden. Though Matthew and Elizabeth flee

through the streets of San Francisco, the pod-Elizabeth follows them and eventually takes Elizabeth's place. The pods continue to infiltrate and proliferate until there is no space left in which Matthew and Elizabeth can be together.

The pod people disrupt heteronormative sexuality and replace it with a form of queer reproduction that the film represents as inimical to human existence. These alien creatures reproduce in a nonlinear, rhizomatic pattern. As Matthew discovers, the pods are grown en masse like plants in an enormous greenhouse, then distributed by networks of pod people. Each pod appears to choose a different human to mimic and replace. The pod people's uncanny ability to shape themselves into almost perfect facsimiles of the straight white protagonists recalls queer practices such as drag and camp, which hinge on mimicry. The threat posed by the pod people draws out the anxious desire of heteronormative subjects to distance themselves from such queer reproduction with a difference. Queerness's mimicry of heteronormativity results in a form of reproduction that exceeds and undoes reproductive futurity.¹⁹

In addition to reproducing via mimicry rather than heterosexual sex, at certain key moments the pod people are associated with a form of hybridity that is inimicable to humanity.²⁰ Elizabeth comments in the course of her flower identification that she thinks the pod flower is a "hybrid." Later Nancy Bellicec blurts out that the invasion is just like "when those spacemen mated with monkeys to create the human race." Near the end of the film, the sudden appearance of the hybrid body of Harry and his dog crystallizes the film's anxieties concerning hybridity. Harry is a minor character who makes a brief appearance early in the film, playing his banjo in a park as his dog sleeps by his side. When Harry reappears in pod form, his head and face have been attached to the body of his dog. This is a notable aberration: none of the other pod people fuse together bodies, certainly not across species lines. This chimeric man-dog appears just as Elizabeth, Matthew, and Nancy pursue their last chance at escape. Elizabeth cannot contain her horror at the sight and screams, attracting the attention of the pod people and sealing their fate. This crucial jump-scare shot suggests that the most terrifying threat posed by the alien invaders is not simply that of replication or hostile takeover, but that of bodies rendered unstable. The fused bodies of Harry and his dog represent the queer embodiment that might result from cross-species intimacy, and ultimately the instability of (white) bodies in the face of alien invasion. This horrifying hybrid points to concerns about racial purity, reimagined as the purity of the "human race." Crucially, this scene generates horror not only through the grotesque spectacle of the man-faced dog, but also through Elizabeth's uncontrollable reaction. This double effect points toward the centrality of white women in establishing the threat that these racialized invaders (at once a substance and a species) pose to white racial purity and white heteronormativity.

White women and the future of the "human race"

Invasion of the Body Snatcher's deployment of eco-horror focuses on the bodies of white women and the danger posed to their bodies by substances that threaten to overwhelm and subsume their whiteness. When Matthew Bennell takes the place of Miles Bennell as the protagonist, he is joined by two white women whose expanded roles (compared to those of their counterparts in Siegel's version of the film) ultimately demonstrate the symbolic importance of white women in the biopolitical project of consolidating the boundaries of the human body. Nancy Bellicec, the wife of Matthew's friend, plays a much more significant part in this film. Elizabeth Driscoll,

Matthew's love interest, works in the lab alongside him and takes an active role in investigating the phenomenon of the body snatchers. Nancy and Elizabeth join Rachel Carson (and, e.g., Lois Gibbs of Love Canal fame) as poster girls for a particular mode of environmental politics that fails to address the racialized geographies of pollution and in fact solidifies the boundaries of humanity-as-whiteness.

The film's portrayal of these two white women, Nancy and Elizabeth, enacts a double fear: first, the bodies of white women must be protected for the future of the human race; and second, the bodies of white women serve as a way for the alien invaders to contaminate the bodies of white men. Likewise, infiltration by the pod people not only disrupts the *meaningfulness* of the heterosexual romance plot, but it does so by targeting the availability of white women as vessels for white reproductive futurity. The pod invasion begins with white women's mistrust of their husbands and boyfriends. By the end, Elizabeth's body shrivels; her human body is no longer intact, but punctured, ruptured, contaminated.

The film repeatedly lingers on the bodies of these two white women entangled and enmeshed by threatening substances. In our initial glimpse of the Bellicec's bathhouse, Nancy's thin, pale form moves among bathtubs filled with bubbling, steaming mud, glutinous in texture and opaque. The steam rises over her and she disappears from view periodically. Dressed in a white t-shirt and carrying a white rag, Nancy wipes down the white tile of the mud baths. She polices the boundary between the contaminating mud and the purity of the body. The bathhouse is full of ominous clues, such as Nancy's encounter with Mr. Gianni, a wild-eyed, bearded man who recommends that she read "*Worlds in Collision* by Velikovsky." This choice of reading material links the suggestion of alien invasion with the Cold War fear of Russian invasion.²¹ Nancy also plays classical music in the bathhouse so that her plants will grow; she tells one of the customers, "Plants have feelings, you know, just like people." These references to the menacing alien plants merge with the threat to whiteness posed by the bathhouse mud.

Elizabeth encounters and eventually succumbs to a similar peril. As Elizabeth's double hatches from one of the other pods in Matthew's garden, the camera lingers on Elizabeth's face as she sleeps. Sticky filaments, like downy hairs, begin to appear on her face and her features become indistinct. This moment visually echoes the opening sequence: the sticky, transparent tendrils evoke the glistening globs of spores landing on Earth. Elizabeth's brush with these tendrils imperils Matthew as well. Having narrowly escaped the pods and rescued Elizabeth, exhausted from his constant vigilance, Matthew falls asleep in his garden. As he nods off, his head rolls back and his lips part slightly. His open nostrils and mouth, accentuated by the low camera angle, provoke intense anxiety in the viewer that something is going to crawl into them. Slimy tendrils extrude from the body snatchers' vines, creep across the grass toward his extended hand, then disappear under his sleeve. The gooey, grotesque form of the body snatcher emerges from the center of an obscene and fleshy-looking flower. The camera pulls back to capture both Matthew and the body snatcher in the same frame, accentuating the horror of Matthew's imminent corporeal violation. Nancy saves Matthew before he succumbs, calling out to him from the window.

Nancy and Elizabeth display a particular reaction to the alien invasion that fits in with stereotypes of white women as fragile, vulnerable, hysterical, and neurotic.²² The film does not simply denigrate or dismiss these qualities. In fact, it suggests that what might otherwise be dismissed as hysteria is an appropriate reaction. Nancy's survival until the final moments of the film suggests that her tendency towards paranoia is exactly the right way to respond to alien invasion; if anything, her paranoia is not thoroughgoing enough. At the same time, however,

both Nancy and Elizabeth also display a fundamental vulnerability that proves fatal to the men who love them, and, ultimately, to all of humanity. While the white women in the film are the first to understand that something is wrong, and the best at developing strategies to trick the pod people, they are also the aliens' point of access in many ways—the weak link that the pod people exploit.

Elizabeth's willingness to suspect her boyfriend Geoffrey exemplifies the film's simultaneous mockery of feminine suspicion and its ultimate justification of that suspicion. Elizabeth goes so far as to spend a day following Geoffrey around to see if she can gather any information to bear out her vague suspicions. When Elizabeth meets the famous psychologist Dr. Kibner, she meets another woman who also insists that her husband is not her husband. While Dr. Kibner whispers to the woman to calm her down, wrapping his hands around her head in a characteristically comforting, yet aggressive gesture, Elizabeth calls out to her that she believes her. Dr. Kibner hastily disrupts this moment of feminine solidarity, taking Elizabeth outside and speaking to her in a firm and paternalistic manner. Yet Elizabeth remembers this woman later when she begins to gain confidence in her own suspicions. As the plot unfolds, Kibner reveals that he is a pod person and, perhaps, has been one all along; this twist introduces the possibility that Dr. Kibner's fatherly manner is calculated to prevent Elizabeth from trusting herself.

Nancy, Cassandra-like, is at once a figure of ridicule for her New Age paranoia and an excellent survivor of this particular alien invasion.²³ Early in the film, she proffers a disconnected string of conspiracy theories. Nancy teaches the others how to pretend to be a pod; she instructs the others in a pedagogy of paranoia that staves off the moment of invasion. Her paranoid vigilance repeatedly saves all the protagonists and ensures her survival to the very end of the film. As the non-pod characters huddle together and deduce what is happening to their friends and neighbors, Nancy exclaims vehemently, "We eat junk and we breathe junk!" She links the invasion of the aliens to the quotidian condition of the human body in an era of ecological interconnectedness. Nancy's outcry echoes Rachel Carson's denunciation of "gunk" (40).

Crucially, while Nancy and Elizabeth (and the unnamed wife who suspects her husband) possess some crucial skills for detecting and avoiding the alien invasion, they also engage in gendered feminine behaviors that increase their vulnerability to the pod people. Elizabeth is the one to actually pick the alien flower and take it home to her bedside table. This naive act suggests that women are especially vulnerable to the strategic appeals of the pod people. Moreover, as in the earlier *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the women in the film are presented as physically and mentally weaker, lacking the stamina to endure prolonged fear and sleep deprivation. It is Elizabeth who breaks down and screams at the horrific sight of Harry and his dog merged into a single body, alerting the pod people to her presence.

In the film's climactic scene, Matthew is once again rendered vulnerable by his love for Elizabeth and her physical vulnerability. In this scene, the pair run hand in hand down the streets of San Francisco, fleeing from the hordes of pod people. Elizabeth's high heels and thin red dress are hardly proper attire for a nighttime getaway. At last they reach the port and hide in the bushes. Heroically, Matthew leaves Elizabeth hidden while he investigates the ships in the port, exhorting her not to fall asleep. When he returns he searches for her among the dry vegetation. He finds her sleeping body and shakes her, her head lolling, then cradles her in his arms. As he whispers to her, the camera focuses on her face over his shoulder. Her face at first appears subtly wrong, slightly wrinkled, then peeling and flaking, producing the characteristic tendrils of the body snatchers. She begins to deflate like a balloon and finally shrivels away under his hands

while Matthew stares and whimpers in abject horror. Then pod-Elizabeth suddenly rises among the weeds, completely naked, and clearly transformed into a pod person. While pod replicants of the other characters do appear in the film, all of the others are fully clothed; we never see another human body shriveling like this. The film reserves this particular horror for the romance plot between Elizabeth and Matthew. This scene emphatically curtails their developing romance and transforms it into a horrific perversion. Pod-Elizabeth's sultry voice, brazen stare, and inviting toplessness—which all seem to indicate sexual desire—contrast with her intent, which is to recruit Matthew to the emotionless and desire-less state of the pod people. Pod-Elizabeth usurps and destroys the real Elizabeth's body and destroys the natural course of heterosexual romance in the process.

Elizabeth and her pod double demonstrate the dual nature of white womanhood: at once the most vulnerable and the most dangerous. Pod-Elizabeth haunts the film, appearing in Matthew's garden long before Elizabeth is replaced. Matthew starts to destroy it but cannot bring himself to damage it. Instead he viciously attacks and dismembers his own double before running away with the others. This moment of weakness—his inability to damage a creature that looks like Elizabeth—leads to his downfall later in the film. Elizabeth's pod body is completely naked, at once defenseless and threatening. The markers of pod-Elizabeth's non-humanness are her nakedness, but also her lack of fear or concern, conveyed through her aggressive tone and her direct stare. This pod-Elizabeth appears as a direct result of human-Elizabeth's physical failures—her lack of stamina, her inability to stay awake. Indeed, the existence of pod-Elizabeth suggests the fundamental untrustworthiness of female embodiment.

These are the catastrophes of this alien invasion: the infiltration of intact white bodies by an alien substance that is also an alien species. The film imagines the stakes of alien invasion in terms of the disruption of white reproductive futurity, universalized as the future of the "human race." These invaders lurk in domestic spaces, targeting the bodies of white women and disrupting the heterosexual romance plot. The unstable bodies of white women ultimately provide an access point for the incursion of racialized alien invaders.

Defending the borders of whiteness: the quarantine response

In addition to dramatizing this threat to the human body, the film also models possible responses to such a crisis. Nancy demonstrates an uncanny ability to understand and survive the pods; however, the film positions her equivocally, undermining the validity of her response by presenting her as offbeat and kooky. It is not Nancy but Matthew Bennell who emerges as the hero of the film. Matthew's preferred defense strategy—quarantine—constitutes a logical response to the menace of the pod people. Matthew is, of course, a health inspector, a detail which invites the turn to quarantine as a way to manage and respond to the crisis of alien invasion. His job entails preventing the spread of disease and inspecting possible contaminants. In his official capacity, he manages the border between purity and contamination. His efforts to apply this same approach to the pod invasion seem to offer the greatest hope of successfully halting the contamination of the white body politic. Through Matthew's heroic attempts to stop the spread of the pod people, the film posits quarantine as an appropriate response to this alien invasion.

Are the pod people an invasive species, a toxic substance, or a contagious disease? Quarantine seems to be an appropriate strategy for managing all three. As a preexisting model available to Matthew for stopping the pod invasion, quarantine illuminates the slippages between discourses concerned with the health of the body in an era of global interconnectedness—

immunology, epidemiology, toxicology—and discourses concerned with the planet, such as conservation biology and invasion ecology. While it originally emerged in the context of contagious disease and infection, quarantine as a concept moved easily from immunology to toxicology, and eventually to invasion ecology. Quarantine protocol supposedly affords a viable defense against both substances and species that threaten to spread uncontrollably.

At its simplest, quarantine refers to the practice of isolating a contaminated organism—human, animal, plant—to stop the spread of contagion. Etymologically, its name refers to a duration: forty days of isolation until the contagious period has passed. However, the meanings and applications of the word have proliferated, melding temporality and spatiality. An individual can be detained in quarantine; a household can be placed under quarantine, as can a neighborhood, a city, a region, or a nation. The slippage from temporality to spatiality finds its logical extension in the euphemism of “detainment.” Individuals and organisms may be detained in quarantine, an expression which suggests a mere temporal delay—a lagging behind one’s original timeline—but actually entails enforced physical confinement. Quarantine is a political event with a biological justification and biopolitical consequences. Quarantine entails presiding over the boundary between the healthy and intact, and the irreparably contaminated, sorting out which bodies to make live and which to let die. It requires attention to the borders of bodies and nations, controlling who and what can pass. Public health’s imperative to protect the health of a nation gives quarantine legitimacy to operate at the border.

In identifying quarantine as an appropriate (yet ultimately inadequate) response to the creeping contamination that is the pod invasion, the film once again follows the precedent of *Silent Spring*. Rachel Carson details the horror of landscapes and bodies infiltrated by toxic substances. These invading substances cross both national borders and bodily borders. The problem is, then, how to control, contain, and limit their flow across these boundaries. Carson’s rhetoric simultaneously creates an intense nostalgia for a pure, bounded state, and declares the impossibility of recapturing this state. She argues that the FDA’s attempts to determine “safe” levels of exposure are misguided and misleading. Carson explains that “the pesticides on [one’s] food are [...] only a part, and possibly a small part, of [one’s] total exposure. This piling up of chemicals from many different sources creates a total exposure that cannot be measured. It is meaningless, therefore, to talk about the ‘safety’ of any specific amount of residue” (98). The existence of these poisonous substances thus necessitates strategies such as containment, management, and tracking of exposure levels—although these strategies can never be quite effective enough.

While quarantine offers a way to manage the spread of contagious disease, it loses its effectiveness when faced with totalizing toxicity. Toxic substances do not always lose their potency after forty days. They will wait. They linger in the body, potentially even after death. In the age of gunk, quarantine emerges as almost nostalgic: a way to manage epidemics of disease but not the spread of DDT. Once these substances are created and released, they cannot be totally recaptured or contained. This tension between the impossibility of regaining an uncontaminated state, and the imperative to do *something*, appears in the policies implemented in the decades following *Silent Spring*.

In this era, invasion ecology turned to quarantine as a way to manage the circulation of invasive species. Invasive species constitute a problem that emerged in the era of toxicity, a symptom of the postlapsarian landscape following a toxic event. (The conditions for such invasions stem from the new conditions of global interconnectedness, combined with the fragility of local ecosystems due to the use of pesticides and other forms of pollution.) The

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service was established in 1971 to maintain control over the movement of species across borders. APHIS's functions include the inspection of animals and plants at the U.S. border, the restriction of importation of certain species as deemed necessary, and the quarantine of plants and animals. While toxic substances cannot be contained via quarantine, quarantine seemed to offer some hope of limiting the spread of invasive species. Carson identifies quarantine as a way to control the movements of invasive species across borders, but qualifies it as "never completely effective" (11).

Invasion ecology's demands for quarantine and public health's demands for quarantine both rely on a racializing rhetoric that insists on the purity of the white body politic. The entities crossing borders are constituted as slimy, oozy, and volatile—racialized textures which are also ascribed to certain bodies. Quarantine protocols establish a form of surveillance and control which may then be enacted unevenly, deployed in order to protect an ideal of purity, and thus creating a racialized geography of contamination which relegates spaces and people to the contingent of the dysselected. The paradigm of public health epitomized by quarantine links the individual body to national interest. Contamination—by a disease, or by a species—threatens the boundary of the individual body. The effort to protect one's body necessitates, and justifies, totalizing institutional protocols (the confinement of a body; the sealing of a border).

In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*'s dramatization of a planetary emergency, quarantine's linking of the state and the individual emerges with particular clarity. Theoretically, quarantine allows the state—not individual citizens—to make biopolitical decisions in defense of the border between the pure and the impure. However, the film enacts a slippage between the state and the individual. When governmental institutions succumb to the infiltration of the pod people, individual citizens inherit this power and responsibility. Over the course of the film, the duty of enforcing a quarantine response becomes increasingly individualized.

Initially, Matthew places his trust in his friend Dr. Kibner, and in the institutional power that he hopes to access through Kibner's connections. Matthew envisions stopping the pod invasion altogether by mobilizing a citywide—and eventually nationwide—protocol for responding to outbreaks of contagious disease. Matthew suggests to Kibner that if he can help him get in touch with the mayor, he can persuade the city to institute the protocols that they would use in the case of an outbreak of cholera or Legionnaires' disease. Matthew then spends a substantial portion of the film trying to alert the appropriate authorities. His desperate quest is a public-spirited project, consistent with his self-identification as a public servant. Rather than barricading himself and his friends in his house to fight off the pod people, he hopes to leverage existing channels in order to save the entire city. Soon, however, Matthew discovers that the people he trusted to help him implement government-mandated and institutionally sanctioned quarantine protocols are not human after all. First Matthew makes a series of phone calls to various authorities, eliciting increasingly disturbing responses which are clearly designed to neutralize him as a threat. Eventually Kibner also reveals himself to be a pod person. The event of alien invasion thus goads the protagonists of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* into a state of paranoid fear regarding the power of the state. As a result, the work of quarantine is delegated to Matthew and his friends—Elizabeth, Nancy, and Jack. The film dramatizes the urgent need for individual bodies to take on the work of the government by enacting a private form of quarantine. These heroic characters must engage in a vigorous defense of their bodies in order to survive this catastrophe and protect the future of the human race.

The film initially suggests the possibility of forming a counter-cultural collective that might organize to resist the alien invasion. Although they can no longer trust the mayor, the police, or the FBI, Nancy, Elizabeth, Jack, and Matthew are still able to look out for each other. Nancy rescues Matthew from imminent invasion, and the four friends discuss possible strategies together. However, this group begins to crumble as the pod invasion intensifies. The characters eventually find themselves surrounded by pod people and decide to split up. Jack heroically sacrifices himself to allow the others to escape. As the characters succumb one by one, the project of survival becomes increasingly atomized. The responsibility for managing the boundaries of the body eventually falls directly to the individual. The film reframes quarantine as an individual project of paranoid vigilance.

Ultimately, the film exposes the protagonists' faith in an individualized version of quarantine as just another fantasy. Like the environmental regulation that exports toxicity to other countries, the invasion of the body snatchers cannot be slowed or stopped by individual scrutiny. The film sums up this failure of quarantine by crushing both of Matthew's hopes in rapid succession. Matthew and Elizabeth hope to escape by boarding a ship. Matthew leaves Elizabeth in a hiding place while he goes to hail one of the ships. But Matthew discovers that the pod people have taken over the port and are loading the ships with pods. This horrifying revelation drives home the impossibility of containing or managing the pod invasion, since the pod people are not just stowing away on ships—this invasive species now *controls* the entire shipping process. Matthew returns to find that Elizabeth has been replaced by a pod double. Not only has he failed to manage the continued spread of the pod people, but he has also failed to protect the woman he loves from the fate of pod invasion.

And yet, despite its futility, the film still presents quarantine of the individual body as not just the duty of the protagonists, but central to their humanity. Although their efforts are doomed, they still strive to protect themselves from contamination for the sake of the human race. Matthew's passionate determination to keep trying to save himself and Elizabeth comes to represent the essential nature of humanity itself, in its absolute opposition to the flat affect of the pod people. Dr. Kibner (speaking as a pod person) urges him to give up and give in, but Matthew insists on continuing to struggle to the very end.

Unlike Wells's original alien invasion narrative in *The War of the Worlds*, this film exposes the alien invasion as totalizing and unstoppable (like the toxic conditions Carson describes in *Silent Spring*). Wells's narrative turns to immunity to underwrite the security of the human race, whereas *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* evokes quarantine to defend humanity. Both of these biopolitical processes work to shore up the border between the human and the abject Other. The differentiating work of immunity takes place invisibly, at the interface between the human body and the world. Quarantine, by contrast, requires human intervention and agency. This is a form of "fitness" that must be actively performed. As such, quarantine bears a resemblance to continence as articulated in Wells's novel. The main characters establish their membership in humanity by demonstrating their obsessive investment in bodily purity and their commitment to enacting quarantine, just as the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* establishes his commitment to continence. In the age of gunk, however, quarantine becomes a practice that must be enacted although it is repeatedly revealed to be futile.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers pits white, bounded bodies against the incursions of the racialized and queer pod people. This version of alien invasion recruits the anxieties of toxic landscapes into its depiction of the alien, figuring the pod people as both an invasive species and a contaminating substance. The film reveals the raced and gendered logic that underpins these

biological discourses. The pod invaders threaten to disturb the intactness of the white body, and in the process disrupt the orderly functioning of white heteronormativity and reproductive futurity. Through its dramatization of this threat to humanity, the film recruits individuals into the project of managing the boundaries of the human body. Managing the purity of white bodies becomes synonymous with striving to protect the future of humanity as a whole, which is in turn represented as an essential characteristic of humanity. The white, bounded body emerges once again as the epitome of the “human” under threat by an invading alien.

¹ The “Great Chain of Being” or the *scala natura* was a classical understanding of the natural order of all creation. This “chain” connected all matter in an ascending hierarchy, from inanimate objects, plants, and animals, to mankind, the angels, and finally God (Wynter, “How We Mistook,” 126).

² See Ladelle McWhorter for a penetrating account of this debate on both sides of the Atlantic and its significance for proponents of chattel slavery in the United States.

³ See Charles Elton’s *Animal Ecology* (1927).

⁴ See, e.g., Janet Maslin’s review in the *New York Times*: “Mr. Kaufman’s direction is so showy, constantly heralding its own ingenuity, that the film operates as both a valentine and a rich, good-hearted joke. Mr. Kaufman entices his audience with a running what-will-he-think-up-next? technique, and each time you begin thinking he’s tried every trick in the book, he writes another new chapter.”

⁵ Darryl Jones explains, “The provenance of body horror lies in three distinct but interlinked areas, which we might call technological, ideological, and philosophical. The technological here encompasses the technology of representation—the ability, through improvements in make-up and special effects, and then through the use of Computer Generated Imagery, to present an audience with images not only technically impossible but probably literally unimaginable to previous generations of moviegoers (the real watershed year here may be 1977, the year of the release of *Star Wars*, and thus of the rise of Industrial Light and Magic, creators of the cinematic present which we now inhabit). It also, however, encompasses a specific view of the human body as unstable, adaptable not only through prosthetics but through mechanics” (176).

⁶ See, e.g., Rob Nixon, Lawrence Buell.

⁷ As Lawrence Buell puts it, “contemporary toxic discourse effectively starts with” *Silent Spring* (645).

⁸ Carson’s detractors dismissed (and continue to dismiss) this style as anecdotal and therefore unscientific (see, for example, I. L. Baldwin, “Chemicals and Pests,” 1962; also Hynes: “critics labeled her work generalist, superficial, and unrigorous: the same tactic which had been used against Ellen Swallow at MIT to delegitimize her work” (36)). It is important to take the anecdotal seriously. Dismissing evidence because it is “merely” anecdotal allows dominant discourses to exclude the embodied knowledge of those who bear the heaviest consequences of modernization. Linda Nash gives the example of migrant workers in California exposed to toxic pesticides in the postwar period. Nash notes that “movement itself obscured the relationship between bodies and environments, between sick workers and modern orchards;” as a result, “throughout the 1950s and 1960s, public health officials in California would complain that mobile bodies could not be adequately monitored or studied” (209). These complaints reframe the issue from one of excessive toxicity to one of undisciplined bodies. The construction of these migrant workers as outside the bounds of scientific study prevented their exposure to toxic pesticides from becoming legible. The invisibility of anecdotal evidence to the scientific record

meant that these workers' conditions were illegible and thus illegitimate objects of study. The genre of the anecdote provides one way to recoup these knowledges, capturing the experiences of transient bodies. But while the genre of the anecdote has the potential to redress environmental racism in certain ways, Carson's accumulative style fails to engage in such a project. Her rhetoric's mobility mimics the movement of the migrant worker and yet paradoxically renders the worker invisible.

⁹ In the United States, activists struggled to make this point in the 1960s; however, grassroots organizing and isolated protests did not develop into a national, broad-based movement until the late 1980s and 1990s (Bowen and Wells 689). The United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice published its foundational study of environmental racism in 1987, followed by Robert Bullard's oft-cited *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* in 1990.

¹⁰ Elton's book *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants* is often cited, as Carson does, as the foundational text of invasion ecology as a discipline.

¹¹ See Rodman's exploration of this question in "Restoring Nature."

¹² Carson's relationship with Dorothy Freeman became an important part of the mythos of *Silent Spring* in 1995 with the publication of *Always, Rachel*.

¹³ See in particular: "Silence, Miss Carson!", Smith 2001.

¹⁴ Lee Edelman, in *No Future*, coins the term "reproductive futurity"—a recurring trope in contemporary rhetoric that imagines proposed futures in terms of an idealized Child, rendering certain subject positions and social formations beyond the pale of state sanction "for the sake of the children." Reproductive futurity identifies the heteronormative nuclear family as the guarantor of social stability, and the means of extending the duration of the state into the future, thereby consolidating its hegemony in the present.

¹⁵ More than a decade after the publication of *Silent Spring*, the activism of Lois Gibbs and the Love Canal Homeowners Association drew heavily on the trope of the white woman facing off against "gunk." Media coverage of Love Canal emphasized the uncanny, the discrepancy between the expectation of bucolic safety in a white neighborhood and the invisible menace of the landscape. Lois Gibbs stated that at first she "didn't even know Love Canal was there. It was a lovely neighborhood in a quiet residential area, with lots of trees and lots of children outside playing. It seemed just the place for our family" (quoted in Buell 646). The activist strategies of the LCHA centered the plight of white working-class women whose aspirations to a pastoral of motherhood were tainted. Their rhetoric focused on the contaminated bodies of women and children. The shaping of the Love Canal crisis in the popular imagination relied on the spectacle of young white women fighting back against the incursions of "gunk."

Stories about Love Canal—and subsequent ecological disasters—tended to constitute these events as catastrophic rather than quotidian. Toxicity was deemed newsworthy when it disrupted the pastoral setting of white suburbia. This rhetorical strategy tacitly naturalized the relegation of toxins and pollutants to non-white communities. Emphasizing the horror of toxic substances seeping into pastoral landscapes had the effect of pushing toxicity back toward a racialized "elsewhere." At the same time, the rhetoric of the Love Canal Homeowner's Association installed Lois Gibbs and her offspring—and the children of the other white, middle-class Love Canal women—as the inheritors of the land at Love Canal. This settler-colonialist move relied on establishing their relationship to the landscape as that of a natural right. As Blum shows, the conflict between the Love Canal Homeowner's Association and the primarily African-American population of nearby Griffon Manor, a federal housing project, demonstrated

how these tropes create fissures along racial lines. The renters were characterized as transient and irresponsible, and perceived as having a smaller stake in the issue of the contamination of the landscape. The categorization of the renters as “transient” allowed the New York State Health Department to pass over Griffon Manor residents in health testing. In fact, these renters were the least able to relocate (Blum 68-70). The toxic chemicals at Love Canal continued to affect these black mothers and children long after the white homeowners were relocated.

¹⁶ See Nora Sayre, David Seed, and Harry M. Benshoff for influential readings of this film.

¹⁷ The garbage trucks, used by the pod people to facilitate the disposal of the original bodies of the humans they duplicate, collect a grayish sludge, quintessentially “gunky” in its indeterminate origin and texture. Meanwhile, the characters in the film circle around the anxiety of fecal contamination. Kibner mentions that the restaurant where Matthew found the rat turd is his favorite, a “decent place to eat.” Later, Matthew starts to tell Elizabeth a joke with a punchline about eating camel feces.

¹⁸ The gazes of the bystanders of color recall bell hooks’s theorizing of the “oppositional gaze”: “looks that were seen as confrontational, as gestures of resistance, challenges to authority” (115). hooks writes, “Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that “looks” to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating “awareness” politicizes “looking” relations—one learns to look a certain “way” in order to resist” (116). *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* disciplines this oppositional gaze by associating this manner of looking with the alien threat of the pod people. The critical gaze of the subject of color derives power from its ambiguity. Here white anxieties about black looking crystalize in a way that reframes the critical gaze as a symptom of alien invasion. This reframing reveals the power of the oppositional gaze to unsettle whiteness, even as it attempts to evacuate the oppositional gaze of its specific critical meaning.

¹⁹ Homi Bhabha and Luce Irigaray have famously theorized the subversive potential of mimicry, though in different contexts. For Irigaray and others, mimesis has the potential to reveal the performativity of gender and of heteronormative social relations; for Bhabha, mimesis serves as a strategy of resistance that can expose the contradictions and tensions of empire. José Muñoz captures the essence of queer postcolonial mimicry in his analysis of Richard Fung’s *My Mother’s Place*. Muñoz asks, “Are Queens born or made?” *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* imagines alien invaders who are born only to remake themselves in the images of Matthew, Elizabeth, Jack, and Nancy. The pod people’s mimicry of straight, white subjects threatens to disrupt and dismantle the heteronormative relations that the film equates with the security of the planet.

²⁰ The logic that fuels white fears of an alien takeover inverts the earlier logic of *The War of the Worlds*, which insists that the invading aliens are fundamentally unfit to survive and therefore die without human intervention. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, racialized organisms are now *too* successful, threatening to overrun white humanity. Although *The War of the Worlds* emphasizes the un-fitness of its racialized aliens, both strands of this contradictory logic have underpinned Darwinian fears of racial contamination since the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century biologists and eugenicists argued over the robustness of hybrid organisms and mulattos. Some argued that hybrid animals—and by extension, mixed-race individuals—were weak, sickly, and even infertile. Others insisted that hybrid organisms were perversely fertile, evoking fears of white racial death and claiming that the white race would subside under

what Lothrop Stoddard famously termed “the rising tide of color.” In Kaufman’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, this logic emerges once more and becomes part of the paradigm that pits invasive species against the native.

²¹ Immanuel Velikovsky was a Russian scholar whose books, including *Worlds in Collision*, relied on readings of ancient mythology and Biblical accounts to assert that Earth had collided with Venus and Mars within human memory.

²² See *The Heart of Whiteness* by Julian Carter for a study of the historical construction of these qualities as characteristic of *white* women. Carter argues that neuroticism emerged as a peculiarly white, middle-class trait, a sign of refinement.

²³ In many ways, Nancy exemplifies what Hofstadter dubs the “paranoid style” in his 1964 article in *Harper’s Magazine*. The paradoxical aptness of Nancy’s paranoia—which turns out to be a more or less accurate description of the *reality* of alien invasion within the film—also evokes Emily Apter’s concept of “one-worldedness.” In this respect, Kaufman’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* joins other films of the 1960s and 1970s in what Apter refers to as “the paranoid premise that ‘everything is connected’” (366). Apter’s analysis primarily considers the connections forged by global capitalism and the military-industrial complex, *à la* Pynchon; but as Nancy’s paranoia suggests, Cold War anxieties of interconnectedness have an ecological dimension as well.

Chapter Three

Flesh, Blood, Venom: Queer Embodiment and Afrofuturist Utopia in *Fledgling* (2005)

The War of the Worlds (1897) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) both depict the event of alien invasion as a crisis that threatens the borders of the human body itself. These invasions insist that the human body in its natural and proper condition is inviolable, possessing intact borders. This production of the human body as bounded is linked to white masculine hegemony. The “alien” is constructed as that which threatens to undo the borders of the body and confuse the distinction between outside and inside. The alien emerges as raced and queered in its threat to white purity and heteronormative reproduction. These narratives of alien invasion thus intensify the imperative towards a xenophobic defense of the boundaries of the “human” body against the incursions of a racialized, queered Other.

But this is by no means the only perspective on alien invasion that science fiction affords. While science fiction has the potential to theorize the body as bounded and vulnerable, this capacious and promising genre also has the potential to imagine new formations which highlight the body’s interdependence and fluidity. Renowned African-American science fiction author Octavia Butler’s works return to the theme of alien invasion and humanity. Butler tackles questions of race, gender, and ability. Her novels and short stories imagine the destruction of Earth and the reconfiguration of what it means to be human, through encounters with alien species. In many of her works, humans interbreed with aliens to produce a new species. For example, in her *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy—*Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989)—the protagonist Lilith, an African-American woman, becomes the mother of the first alien-human children. Butler reimagines humanity and reproduction queerly, both in terms of the possibilities afforded by technologies such as genetic engineering, and in social and emotional terms, in which humans and aliens form cross-species kinship units. Butler’s thinking also characteristically engages directly with issues of race, gender, and embodiment, refusing to separate the abstraction of “humanity” from the specificity of difference.

In some ways, any one of Butler’s novels could serve as a fitting conclusion to the present work. I pass over some of Butler’s more overtly “alien invasion” stories (besides the *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy mentioned above, “Bloodchild” also explores the aftermath of an alien invasion) in favor of her last novel, *Fledgling* (2005), a text which mingles the tropes of science fiction and of fantasy. I do this for several reasons. First, insightful analysis of Butler’s other works already exists, especially in terms of embodiment, hybridity, and alien/human relations.¹ Second, reading *Fledgling* somewhat against the grain as an alien invasion novel offers a particularly thought-provoking reframing of the conditions of human and alien embodiment. The novel combines alien invasions (of the planet and of the body) with the figure of the vampire and the vocabulary of biochemical addiction, activating a complex network of literary and biomedical discourses.

In *Silent Spring* (1962) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), toxic substances cross into the body, and ruptured bodies ooze bodily fluids. These crossings of the body’s borders pose a threat to white femininity and to white heteronormativity. In these texts, the slippage from unnatural substances, to species, to bodies results in the racialization of substances and the disciplining of racialized bodies. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* defines being human as being in romantic love with someone of the opposite sex, defending one’s bodily borders, and producing children (instead of pods). Both these texts mobilize fantasies of border control as an appropriate defense against these alien invaders. By contrast, *Fledgling* directly engages with anti-black

racism and discourses of white racial purity. The plot centers black queer female embodiment. In this new paradigm, heteronormativity *is* still threatened by these invasions of the body. However, the novel reveals that the results are far from catastrophic for humanity (though sometimes uncomfortable). In *Fledgling*, the venom of the Ina—an unnatural, drug-like substance that crosses the borders of the body—is life-saving and attachment-facilitating. *Fledgling* reworks the paradigm of foreign invaders of the body to posit new ways of being in community, enabling forms of queer reproduction via the continuous re-making of adult bodies.

In *Fledgling*, Butler imagines a world in which vampire-like beings have lived alongside humans for all of recorded history. These creatures call themselves the Ina. Ina do not prey on humans in anonymous, bustling cities, but forge lasting bonds and establish small matriarchal communities in isolated, rural areas. Each Ina bonds with a kinship group of eight or so humans, deriving physical and psychological sustenance from human blood. They feed primarily on the blood of their bonded humans. In addition to their hunger for human blood, the Ina possess other vampire-like characteristics: sharp teeth that allow them to draw blood; superhuman speed and strength; the ability to regenerate from wounds that would kill a human; enforced nocturnality, combined with the inability to remain conscious for long during the day; and extreme sensitivity to sunlight such that their skin burns instantly in direct sun.

As a re-imagining of the vampire novel, *Fledgling* is concerned with intimate invasions of the body—the interface between the non-human and the human. As Chapter One discussed, narratives of vampirism and alien invasion share a common history that goes back to the publication of *The War of the Worlds* and *Dracula* in the same year (1897). *Fledgling* acknowledges this mutual history by pairing the figure of the vampire with the figure of the alien. This pairing allows the novel to draw on the subversive potential of the vampire in order to rework the trope of alien invasion.

Fledgling achieves this pairing by suggesting that the Ina may be extraterrestrial aliens, as well as serving as the inspiration for human vampire myths. The protagonist, Shori, discovers that Ina myth and legend indicate a possible extraterrestrial origin for the Ina. Shori holds two brief conversations with other Ina that afford glimpses of the long history of these mysterious beings. Early in the novel, she learns more about the origin of the Ina through a conversation with her father Iosif, who explains,

“There’s a recently developed belief among some of our younger people that the Ina landed here from another world thousands of years ago. I think it’s nonsense, but who knows. I suppose that idea’s no worse than one of our oldest legends. It says we were placed here by a great mother goddess who created us and gave us Earth to live on until we became wise enough to come to live in paradise with her. Actually, I think we evolved right here on Earth alongside humanity as a cousin species like the chimpanzee.” (67)

Iosif’s account introduces the idea that the Ina are truly aliens, but refuses to settle this question decisively.

Later Shori develops an interest in studying the ancient Ina text *The Book of the Goddess*. Once again, she learns about the history of her species through conversations with an Ina mentor, this time Hayden Gordon, a member of an Ina family closely allied to Shori’s. Shori observes that, according to *The Book of the Goddess*, “The goddess who made us sent us here so that we could grow strong and wise, then prove ourselves by finding our way back to her” (187). Hayden agrees, “Back to paradise or to another planet” (187). Then Hayden continues to educate Shori on the history of her species, explaining, “Whenever we evolved or arrived, it was much longer

ago than ten thousand years” (188). He continues, “We were weak and sick... The stories say we displeased the goddess and were suffering her punishment. The group that believes in an outer-space origin says that our bodies needed time to adjust to living on Earth” (188).

These references to extraterrestrial aliens emphasize that, in the case of the Ina, there is no planet-wide event of alien invasion. The temporality of alien invasion, as depicted in Wells’s classic narrative and in subsequent films and novels, entails a catastrophic moment of contact: an encounter of the third kind that irrevocably changes (or threatens to change) the conditions of life on Earth. In *Fledgling*, this planetary invasion has always already taken place—or perhaps it never happened at all. The dramatic global emergency of alien invasion in narratives such as *The War of the Worlds* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* gives way in *Fledgling* to a series of smaller realizations from the perspective of individual humans. Rather than rupturing the fabric of society, the Ina gradually reveal themselves to trusted individuals and continue to conceal their existence from the majority of humanity. As Veronica Hollinger has suggested, what the vampire and the alien traditionally have in common is that they posit the category of the alien/vampire as monstrous Other to the human (Hollinger 8). *Fledgling*, instead, posits the alien/vampire as that which exists alongside and lives in balance with the human.

Fledgling’s unusual protagonist further revises classic alien invasion narratives and unsettles the distinction between human and alien. The novel is narrated by an alien creature who is figuring out who and what she is. The Ina narrator-protagonist, Shori Matthews, experiences amnesia as the result of a traumatic head wound; with the assistance of Wright, her first symbiont after her injury, she must piece back together her life. The opening pages of the novel establish that its narrator is clearly not quite *human*: barely conscious and weakened by her injuries, she still manages to stalk a deer and kill it with her bare hands before eating it raw. On the other hand, she possesses the capacity for language to narrate her story. She is also human enough in appearance that others take her for a human child. After she feeds on the deer, Shori wanders out to the road, where she hitches a ride from a passing car. The driver is a young white man named Wright Hamlin, who takes her in and cares for her. Through Wright’s interactions with her, she is interpellated as a young black girl, “ten or eleven... a kid” (8). Shori first reconstructs the social and cultural meanings of her embodiment, as well as the startling contradictions of her un-human characteristics, through Wright’s reactions to her. Later she meets other Ina who are able to tell her more.

As Shori begins to understand who she is and why she was injured, she discovers that she is a human-Ina hybrid, the first genetically engineered Ina with human DNA. Her brother, Stefan, shares with her the story of her mothers—three Ina sisters and one black human woman. Shori’s “elder-mothers” (her Ina mothers’ mothers) honed their skills at genetic engineering over their long lifespans until they were able to integrate elements from her human mother’s DNA into Shori’s Ina genome. Shori’s mothers correctly predicted that such a genetic hybrid would offset Ina weaknesses with human capacities, specifically the dark skin tone inherited from her black mother. As the first black Ina, Shori is able to withstand sunlight and stay awake during the day. The narrative style and plot in the opening pages of the novel emphasize the intermingling of human and alien, showing that her position in society is inflected by how humans view her even as her biological capacities are augmented by her human DNA.

Fledgling introduces the possibility of an alien origin for the Ina, only to push back against the “alien-ness” of the Ina by emphasizing their proximity to humanity. Butler borrows the vocabulary of ecology and evolutionary biology, folding the Ina into a familiar scientific narrative of life on Earth. The twinned possibilities for the origin of the Ina—that they “evolved”

or “arrived”—implies that the difference is a matter of interpretation, and that perhaps it no longer matters, given the long history of human-Ina interactions. Crucially, the differences between Ina and humans appear to be explicable within existing biomedical and evolutionary theories. The Ina “evolve,” and their bodies experience periods of weakness and adjustment. Their DNA can be combined with human DNA by human and Ina scientists. Shori and Wright are sexually attracted to each other, suggesting that they are very similar beings if not members of the same species. Moreover, despite their unsettlingly alien behaviors, the Ina are much closer to humans than humans are to, say, sea slugs. Josif’s theory that the Ina are a “cousin species” neatly accounts for this otherwise improbable coincidence. Most strikingly, Butler borrows the language of mutualistic symbiosis to characterize and name the interdependent relationship between the Ina and their bonded humans. These human symbionts enjoy longer lifespans, improved memories, superhuman healing capacities, and other biologized “enhancements” as a result of their attachment to the Ina. The use of the term “symbiont” to refer to an Ina-bonded human implicitly rejects the more hostile language of parasitism and even that of invasion ecology.²

The scientific language of ecology and evolutionary biology—from mutualism and symbiosis, to DNA and genetic engineering—has the effect of making the Ina seem biologically related to humanity, indicating this is a natural relationship and hence, perhaps, prior to ethics. This logic plays on the xenophobic response mobilized by invasion ecology and inverts it. The Ina species forms part of humanity’s ecology. It is the opposite of an invasive species. The Ina have co-evolved with humanity to confer biological benefits on certain humans. They form mutually sustaining communities on a small scale, weaving a network of Ina-human relations without taking over or disrupting the ecosystem as a whole.

Crucially, Butler also draws on biomedical discourse to figure the relationship between Ina and their symbionts in terms of addiction. The Ina secrete a substance in their saliva, identified as their “venom,” that induces the biomedical changes in their human symbionts and quickly becomes “addictive.” Bonds between Ina and symbionts are thus represented in physiological terms, but also experienced as romantic and sexual relationships: when Ina take blood, the event is erotic for both Ina and symbiont. Ina venom represents the imbrication of biomedical terminology and romantic/familial bonds. Human symbionts are literally addicted to their loving relationships with the Ina. While addiction, like symbiosis, roots the Ina-human relationship in biology—biochemistry, physiology—it also mobilizes a strong sense of the *un-natural*.

Scholars and readers of Octavia Butler’s work (including my students) have remarked on the problem of free will in the novel—a problem, because the Ina-human relationships otherwise seem to offer a compelling vision of a queer, feminist utopia. Susana M. Morris writes: “Fledgling radically reimagines identity, kinship, and intimacy through nonmonogamous queer human-vampire hybrid families that have a variety of configurations, yet it also troubles any easy notions of a vampire utopia by ambivalently regarding the concepts of free will and symbiosis” (147). The ability of the Ina to influence humans through the effects of their saliva allows the Ina to form these hybrid families; the love and intimacy that humans and Ina share is inseparably bound up with their biochemical and physiological dependence on each other—an apparent contradiction for Morris and, indeed, for some of the symbionts in the novel. Mildred Mickle has offered another way to read *Fledgling* through the lens of addiction, taking “addiction” to describe a structure of compulsive attachment and applying it to the addictiveness of racism (after bell hooks). I propose a rereading of the theme of addiction in the novel which neither

brackets addiction as a condition compromising free will, nor abstracts addiction to the allegorical level. By tracing the social and cultural meanings attached to addiction, including those that shape medical models of addiction, I read the narrative of addiction in *Fledgling* as a key element of the novel's exploration of the interdependence of bodies.

For Morris and others, it seems that in order for a novel such as *Fledgling* to offer a vision of a true "vampire utopia," the characters must possess a version of free will that is grounded in bodily independence, that is, as freedom from addiction. However, I contend that this version of agency is itself ableist, racist, and limiting. It rests upon the assumption that consent and desire are only meaningful for independent psyches inhabiting self-possessed bodies. This fantasy of a self-contained body free from constraint, compulsion, or addiction is part of a tradition of civil rights that tautologically defines agential citizens as able-bodied white men.

As a condition defined by the loss of free will to compulsive consumption, addiction exemplifies the link between the regulated, self-controlled, pure body and the self-possessed citizen. By foregrounding addiction, *Fledgling* interrogates this link and reveals its fallacies. The purity of the body operates in a twofold sense in the novel: racial purity, and the purity of the body free from chemical dependency. The novel exposes the violence of discourses of racial purity by pitting the protagonist Shori against Milo Silk, the racist white elder who seeks to kill her because she is both part human and part black. By conflating addiction to Ina venom with familial relationships, the novel implicitly pushes back against the idea of the human body as "naturally" substance-free and pure.

Fledgling draws together the themes of addiction and biochemical dependence with ideas of society and community, emphasizing the openness and interdependency of all living bodies. Recent work in critical sociology of addiction points out that medical discourse about addiction tends to reaffirm certain social and cultural norms, and circularly define the behavioral symptoms of addiction in terms of deviation from those norms.³ Instead of taking addiction for granted as "a compulsion towards self-destructive agents that affect an individual on a mental and/or a physical level" (Mickle 63), my reading embraces the suggestion that a new reading of addiction might lead us to "an ethics based on relations among bodies that are dependent and vulnerable to change, whether addicted or not...an approach [that] accepts the openness of bodies" (Keane 93). *Fledgling*'s pairing of addiction and human-alien relations offers a re-reading of the human body itself.

The meanings of addicted bodies

The concept of "addiction" is not a stable, ahistorical phenomenon but one that developed in specific cultural contexts. Its modern-day formation is a relatively recent development, taking shape in Anglo-American culture in the mid-nineteenth century and rising to startling prominence in the twentieth century.⁴ Indeed, Suzanne Fraser, David Moore, and Helen Keane suggest in *Habits* (2014) that "addiction and modern societies have...made each other, and they continue to rely on each other for meaning" (2). By imagining the addicted body as central to community, *Fledgling* disrupts this process of mutual reinforcement and pushes back against the conjunctions of race, gender, and (neo)liberalism that place the addicted subject beyond the bounds of society. *Fledgling* exposes the fissures and contradictions that undergird the concept of addiction.

Modern formations of addiction are rooted in a racialized history that dates back to the nineteenth century, overdetermined by the exigencies of extractive capitalism and the anxieties of an exploitative colonial system.⁵ Addiction “designates the genealogy of ethical deficit of the normative white Anglo-American consumer” and reveals the “overconfident idealizing of a pure, detoxified body politic as the locus of reason” (Zieger 97). As such, addiction threatens to reveal the fissures within projects of capitalism and empire. Addiction reveals the reliance of supposedly “free” white subjects on other substances and bodies, particularly those in Anglo-European colonies. It exposes the fine line that divides a rational, free, and bounded subject from an irrational and hence un-free subject: “the addict.”

In the first years of the nineteenth century, addiction took shape as an issue specifically associated with certain powerful, dangerous substances, primarily opiates and alcohol. One could thus fulfill the imperatives of liberal autonomy by strictly limiting one’s interactions with addictive substances or forswearing these substances altogether. These addictive substances were strongly linked with “the consumption patterns of certain disruptive social groups” (Reith 284)—one could thus measure one’s proximity to the perils of addiction in terms of one’s social status and associates.

Addiction in the twentieth century placed an emphasis on individual responsibility. In emerging neoliberal formations, the individual bore the burden of maintaining autonomy, particularly in the sense of freedom from addiction. This imperative to maintain one’s freedom brought with it a host of questions relating to the proper governance of the self, as well as the problem of diagnosing lapses from this state of self-possession. For example: Is it ever safe to ingest a substance such as morphine? What distinguishes the responsible use of opiates under medical supervision from the irresponsible consumption of the addict? What line separates responsible citizens who rely on Xanax or Adderal to be better workers/mothers/housewives, and irresponsible citizens whose use of the same substances spirals out of control? In addition to these questions surrounding the practice of addiction and of self-governance, the substances themselves invite the questions: What are drugs? Is addiction caused by “drugs” in the sense of a category of addictive substances, uniquely able to target the body, brain, and will? Or, is addiction a disordered mode of consumption that could apply to a wider range of substances and behaviors? While the category of “drugs” retains its powerful and dangerous agency (consider the terminology of “psychoactive” substances), it is no longer sufficient to stay away from drugs and bad company. It seems that any individual can harbor a vitiating addiction to almost any commodity or experience.

One important feature of the concept of addiction in the twentieth century is the proliferation of what Reith names “addict identities”—variations on the figure of the addict. Over the course of the twentieth century,⁶ “the addict” became not a single unified identity, but an umbrella term comprising a vast range of ways to fall short of the project of rational selfhood. These failures stem from a failure to manage the boundaries of one’s body so as to shore up one’s identity as an independent entity. Such deviancies of the body include obesity and fatness, constructed as a deviant relationship to food, and HIV-positive status, constructed as a deviant relationship to sex and to the virus itself. These are not mutually exclusive with addiction but overlap and intertwine. Furthermore, these forms of deviancy coincide with intersections of queerness, class, and race.

Although medical discourses aspire to a stable definition of what it means to become addicted, and attempt to offer prophylactic and rehabilitative protocols, the meanings of addiction exceed empirical definition. In part, addiction evades empirical definition because its

apparently physiological scope actually extends to the question of membership in the social body itself. Addiction's contradictions point to the paradoxes and tensions which underwrite the ideal of the independent rational subject. Addiction evokes fears of losing control of one's body and mind, thus becoming a deviant (queer, racialized, disabled) subject.

In reframing addiction as "a health problem," medical models of addiction embroil addicts in a train of logic which removes them from participation in society. These particular sick subjects must bear the responsibility for their illness, even as their illness disqualifies them from agency and autonomy and gives others the right to determine what happens to them. Under the terms of neoliberal ideology, "individuals have a responsibility to consume rationally in order to safeguard their health and wellbeing, and to calculate, and so avoid, potential dangers—expressed as risks" (Reith 295). The ascription of individual responsibility to manage health means that the sick subject must work hard to establish their innocence.⁷ Addiction itself represents a failure to avoid risk, a breakdown of the protocols of hygiene that require attention to the movement of substances across the boundaries of the body.⁸

Addicts are thus constructed as sick subjects who have relinquished agency and autonomy by compromising their bodies and wills, and therefore must be reintegrated into society by other people, since they can no longer make decisions for themselves. Neoliberalism demands self-governance via "shaping identities that are capable of managing their freedom through self-government, and of controlling their consumption through sovereign action" (Reith 294). Addicts remove themselves from society, but cannot remain outside society: the deviant body of the addict "must be normalized in order to normalize the social body" (Keane 1). In this double bind, addicts resemble other deviant identities generated by the ideology of neoliberalism. Failure to embody the increasingly elusive ideal of the free, rationally consuming, economically successful subject is reframed within the language of neoliberalism as a failure of self-government.

When proponents of twentieth-century medical models claim that they will set the addict free from moral judgment,⁹ they concurrently suggest that addiction is a biological condition of individual bodies abstracted from race, gender, sexual orientation, and class. However, these medical models fail to address the double bind of neoliberalism in which one must establish one's freedom by making rational, responsible choices—rendering those enmeshed in systemic racism and poverty incapable of freedom by definition. As Keane shows, "notions of impairment and inauthenticity combine with other hierarchies of social value such as gender, race, and class" with the result that "already vulnerable people are denied a voice in decisions about their lives" (Keane 97).¹⁰ Race and poverty intersect to construct certain subjects as naturalized to disease, toxicity, and addiction. This intersection has a long history and is interwoven with the naturalization of "dirt," impurity, and toxicity to racialized subjects, as discussed in the previous chapter. These deviant bodies are also constructed as in proximity to queerness, threatening social respectability grounded in heteronormativity. Addiction represents a form of deviant embodiment that is not only racialized, but also criminalized.

Addiction illustrates one of the circular fantasies of freedom that underpin the ideal of liberal citizenship: to be "free," one must be capable of abstracting one's body from its context; to do this, one must be straight, white, and non-addicted. Autonomy and rationality are linked to the intact (white) body. For some, the fall from freedom associated with drug addiction entailed loss of autonomy via medicalization and subjection to treatment protocols (see, e.g., Campbell). For other subjects, the process of the criminalization of addiction in the twentieth century led to incarceration.¹¹

While addiction had signified a failure of whiteness since its earliest conceptualization, its specific forms of deviancy became attached to racialized subjects at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. As “sobriety and self-control became the template of white middle-class respectability,” failure to maintain these standards became not just a failure of whiteness but a characteristic of racialized subjects (*The Drug Effect* 59). In the late nineteenth century, addiction shifted from a condition afflicting whiteness and became instead naturalized to non-white bodies (that is, understood to be a natural and even biologically ingrained predilection of racialized subjects). Previously, addiction as a medical condition hinged on the white subject’s ironic and pathetic fall from freedom. Later in the century, however, “signs of addicted compulsion merged with signs of femininity, queerness, and biological racialization, encroaching on the normative liberal subject and investing him with uncontrollable, deviant desire, disease, and racial defect” (Zieger 10).

Around the turn of the century, the addict emerged as a form of “bare life,” a form of life in death (Agamben 8). This “bare life” is always already racialized, embodied by subjects of color who tempt vulnerable white subjects to join them in this indeterminate biopolitical zone. Addiction, like toxicity, operates as a *contagious form of racialization*. The deathliness of non-normative subjects threatens to spread and infect the social body as a whole. Zieger makes the point that the tenor of drug policies in the U.S. is partly motivated by the complex medicalization of addiction and by its unspoken proximity to abjected racialized subjects.¹² Addicts, as sick subjects who are at the same time responsible for their own downfall, represent a contagious threat to the body politic. The figure of the addict possesses the power to vitiate the health of rational (white) society. Moreover, given their overdetermined failure to fulfill the requirements for membership in society, addicts emerge as “a kind of collateral damage in the war on drugs that intensif[ies] the international prohibitions and regulations on substances” (Zieger 240). Policies that sought to contain and manage the contagious abjection of addicted bodies remain largely untempered by concern for addicted subjects themselves.

Given the complex conjunction of biology, ideology, and even mythology that occurs at the site of addiction, it is unsurprising that important cultural meanings concerning addiction, race, and whiteness take shape in fiction. Late nineteenth-century vampire literature, in particular, laid the ideological groundwork for the abjection of addicts as racialized subjects in the twentieth century. *Fledgling*’s conflation of the figure of the addict and the figure of the vampire affords a powerful critique of this consolidation of normative whiteness.

The vampire as addict and the addict as vampire

Fledgling’s consolidation of the vampire and the addict into a single figure is a time-honored move that dates back to the emergence of the trope of the vampire in the nineteenth century. Indeed, approaching the history of addiction through attention to vampire fiction reveals the disciplinary logic of addiction more clearly. Susan Zieger directly links the two, demonstrating that “the modern ironies and paradoxes governing vampirism also structure addiction, constituting the secret of the hold that both discourses have on the twentieth and twenty first century imagination” (197). Vampires embody desire gone awry—the delicate balance of consumption, (re)production, and rational self-control reduced to a single perverse craving. This perversion of normative desires evokes a colonial return of the repressed, pitting deviant bodies against civilized society conceived in terms of white heteronormativity. Vampirism inverts the

extractive relationship in which colonial powers drain the blood from their colonies. Vampires occupy the indeterminate zone of the undead, lurking on the boundaries of society in order to prey upon the living. (This dynamic recalls the apocalyptic scenario discussed in Chapter 1, in which the bloodthirsty Martians in *War of the Worlds* threaten to puncture the bodies of white men to drink their blood.) Vampires and addicts resemble one another because of their status as failed consumers and undead subjects, as well as their imbrication with anxieties of imperialism.

Vampire fiction constructs such failed subjects as irredeemable monsters, emphasizing the necessity of destroying them for the sake of humanity. Zieger observes, “As with addicts, the normal population waits in vain for [vampires] to expire, but the processes of natural selection are too slow. For these reasons, eugenics dictates their extermination” (228). Eugenics in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a capacious discourse that conceived of a proliferation of types of deviance as incompatible with a “healthy” racial future. The figure of the vampire performs important cultural work to link addiction and eugenics, while reframing the relationship of both of these concepts to imperialism: “As an allegory for addiction, vampirism exposes the ambiguity of imperial and colonial parasitism and dependency; but through its close association to eugenics, it turns that confusion into one between life and death” (Zieger 227). Like Dracula, the foreigner who threatens to invade and prey on England, the figure of the addict connotes degeneration of the pure body politic. Subjects who carry this taint of degeneration cannot join society—the logic of degeneration constructs certain bodies as abject, both too deeply flawed to be rehabilitated and too deeply flawed to be incorporated into society.¹³ Nineteenth-century concerns about degeneration conflate heredity with contagion, locking subjects into a version of reproductive futurity in which *all* members of the body politic have the potential to pass on their traits to others (and not just to their direct descendants). There is thus no room for queer versions of subjecthood in society: deviant subjects threaten to contaminate the racial purity of humanity itself.

These degenerate and abjected subjects pose such a potent threat to social order (conceived as white reproductive futurity) through their perverse relationship to desire.¹⁴ Late nineteenth-century vampire fiction, from *Carmilla* (1871) to *Dracula* (1897) and *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), highlights the seductive potential of the vampire. These creatures embody perverse desire and introduce queer erotics that threaten to undo heteronormativity. As in the paradigm of addiction, the hallmark of vampiric erotics is that one desire overrides all others: the vampire desires only blood, and the addict desires only their chosen drug. This excessive desire for a particular substance seems capable of rerouting desire so that it attaches to people, objects, and experiences outside the strictures of heteronormative relationships. The erotics of addiction often disappear from medical models of addiction—or rather, they appear only in the form of the desire that is expressed only to be repudiated by the recovering addict’s rational self. The seductive figure of the vampire reveals the imbrication of anxieties of bodily intactness, racial purity, and erotic threats to heteronormativity, as in the racialized figure of the drug dealer who seduces white women.

Through *Fledgling*’s engagement with vampire mythology, the novel grapples with this nineteenth-century history of racialization and abjection and insists on its relevance for its characters in 2005. As undead subjects, vampires personify the long life of certain modes of thinking that simply refuse to die. Like Stoker’s vampire, the Ina live for centuries, adapting to modernity even while they bear history with them in the form of lived experience. Butler places pressure on this aspect of vampire mythology in a way that reasserts the importance of attending

to the histories of imperialism, colonialism, and exploitation that inform contemporary racial formations.

Shori's antagonist, Milo Silk—the five-hundred-year-old patriarch of the Silk family—embodies the persistence of nineteenth-century racial formations into the twentieth century. As Shori reconstructs the violent event that left her severely wounded and amnesiac, and as she narrowly escapes further attacks, she discovers that she is the target of the Silk family's murderous attempts to preserve Ina racial purity. Milo explicitly refers to the “soiled” racial purity of the Ina (232). He indicates that Shori's status as a hybrid body is a threat to Ina racial purity. Milo's racist slurs conflate two kinds of hybridity: that of the genetic hybrid and that of the racial hybrid. Although he and his adherents indicate that their primary motivation for targeting Shori is that she represents a mixing of human and Ina blood, the language they use to express contempt for Shori draws on the very human discourse of anti-black racism. They refer to Shori as a “mongrel cub” and a “dirty little n— bitch” (173); later Russell Silk calls her a “black mongrel bitch” (301). This rhetoric strongly evokes the discourses of eugenics, degeneration, and species mixing that took shape in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century debates over the nature of racial difference focused on the question of whether different races constituted different species. “Mulattos,” mixed-race subjects, were labeled as degenerate hybrids. The debate over what constitutes a “species” itself was deeply intertwined with nineteenth-century debates over the ethical grounds of slavery, and the desire of white men to distance themselves from the black and mixed-race subjects whom they held in enslavement (see Ladelle McWhorter, Samira Kawash). One school of thought held that racially mixed bodies were “infertile,” thus ensuring the dominance of the white race: mixed-race subjects were a genetic dead end, a weak and vitiated branch of the phylogenetic tree that could be relegated to the past (McWhorter 80). A related branch of nineteenth-century white racial anxiety involved concerns over “blood mixture.” The figure of the vampire connotes miscegenation in its promiscuous mixing of bloods (as discussed in Ch. 1). This racially loaded anxiety over blood contamination bridges the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—from resistance to the very concept of blood transfusions at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, to racist practices in hospitals as late as the 1930s, involving the segregation of blood from black and white donors (Lederer). Milo Silk's racially motivated violence against Shori and her family evokes this persistent discourse and reveals its capacity to structure power relations even in the early twenty-first century.

In addition to drawing on the long history of nineteenth-century vampire mythology, *Fledgling* pointedly revises contemporary vampire myths, explicitly referencing them in order to subvert them. Shori first attempts to ascertain who she is and how others see her with the assistance of her first human symbiont, Wright. He is unable to explain the history of the Ina to her because he is, like most humans, unaware of their existence. He tells her that creatures who feed on human blood are called vampires. Shori uses Wright's laptop to research vampires, hoping to discover why she seems to be so different from Wright and how her bite influences him. Her exploration of popular culture, plays, novels, and fan sites yields what she describes as “a huge amount of nonsense about vampires” (30).

In late twentieth-century vampire fiction, the figure of the white male vampire emerged as a glamorous anti-hero.¹⁵ The genre of the “vampire romance” took shape in the last decades of the twentieth century (Victoria Nelson, 127). This new genre typically featured sexually confident women and attractive bad-boy vampires. Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) is often cited as the first novel to imagine a vampire as protagonist rather than absolute

other. Rice also created the character of LeStat, the rock star-vampire of the eighties and nineties. Other prominent examples include the character Angel in the TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which first aired in 1997, and the pairing of Sookie Stackhouse and Bill Compton in Charlaine Harris's *True Blood* novels (beginning in 2001) and the subsequent TV show. As Susana M. Morris points out, these vampire romances generate “nostalgia for an all-powerful white man” fictionalized in the form of a vampire (146).

Shori embodies the reworking of the figure of the vampire—the “typically male, often violent, predatory [...] stalker”—into “a small black female who develops lasting and meaningful symbiotic relationships to those she bites” (Lacey 389). One of her symbionts observes later in the novel, “You are a vampire [...] You’re supposed to be a tall, handsome, fully grown white man” (91). As a black female vampire, Shori flouts this expectation in favor of a different, subversive tradition.¹⁶ In her study of the figure of the *soucouyant* in Caribbean and West African literature, Giselle Lise Anatole writes that this black female vampire signifies “the violation of borders of all types”:

As she pursues the blood needed for her survival, she moves between vibrant life and final death, between a thriving society and spaces of alienation and isolation. She penetrates the boundary of the skin—that which most desire to be unassailable, incorruptible—and in doing so resembles the male sexual aggressor rather than the passive female. In the case of the *soucouyant*, there is the ambiguous realm between the power and wisdom of old age and the physical weakness and mental decline that this stage of life sometimes entails; there is also the margin between human and Other as she shifts into and out of her skin, as well as the space between land and sky and physically embodied being and flaming spirit as she takes flight. (187)

Shori’s ambiguous status as young and old, vampire and human, positions her at the crossing of borders and boundaries. By turning away from white male vampires and toward this subversive tradition of black female vampires, Butler’s novel pushes back against the contemporary interest in the vampire imagined as an attractive yet dangerous white male, and invests in an alternative vision inflected by Afrofuturist feminism.¹⁷

Shori’s revision of contemporary and traditional vampire narratives presages an accompanying revision of narratives of addiction. Her research on vampires occurs before the novel fully reveals the addictive aspects of her venom. In the vampire myths that Shori dismisses as “nonsense,” vampires and vampire-human relationships have much in common with narratives about drug addicts and drug addiction. These shared resonances bring together the purity, sanctity, and inviolability of the “natural,” drug- and vampire-free human body, and the fine line between normative consumption in a consumer society and the excessive, uncontrollable consumption that is the hallmark of addiction and of vampires.

Vampires and addicts embody a disordered relationship to consumer culture, one that uncomfortably suggests the inherent contradictions of late capitalism in the twentieth century. Helen Keane draws on Levine’s work to articulate the anxiety-producing slippage between addiction and other forms of desire, particularly consumer desire: “[The addict] is...disturbing because of his or her proximity to the modern experience of ourselves as avid consumers, desiring unnecessary objects and short-lived pleasures...The disorder of addiction makes sense both because of a belief in the possibility and importance of self-control but also because of a recognition of the tenuousness and burden of that self-control” (94). Like the pod people, addicts are threatening not because they are so different from rational consumers, but because they are too similar.

Not only do vampires bite in order to feed on the bodies of their victims, but they also transform their victims into vampires in turn. The vampire's ability to "turn" victims suggests a pyramid scheme in which ever greater numbers of humans are transformed into appetitive creatures, unleashing a cascade of destructive consumption. The figure of the vampire stands in for the undesirable company or the pusher who leads upstanding young people astray by convincing them to try intravenous drugs just this once. The stigmata of puncture wounds are the signs not just of rupture and impurity, but of a profound change in one's relationship to consumption. The newly turned vampire and the newly addicted brain/body are in danger of being consumed, but they also possess a new urge to consume excessively and destructively. The contagious and endlessly replicating vampire bite evokes moral panics which envision (hetero)normative, white, "American" ways of life as under siege. Vampirism literalizes the extractive and even parasitic relations that structure global economic relations in the age of late capitalism. Certain subjects, particularly people of color and especially those in the global south, bear the disproportionate burden of others' habits of consumption. On the one hand, vampire stories transform abstracted extractive relationships into visceral horror stories in which one person drinks another's blood directly from their body. On the other hand, vampire stories obscure the realities of extractive relations by depicting the vampire as other and the victim as normative white subject.

In *Fledgling*, rather than precipitating the addicted subject's exclusion from society, the bite of the vampire (and addiction to the drug) ushers subjects *into* community—not simply the twilight-zone of bare life that Zieger identifies, but a kind of queer utopian space that offers "alternatives to hegemonic family configurations, normative constructions of sexuality and gender, and even capitalism" (Strong). Addiction is central to these alternative kinship structures—addiction via the transfer of blood and bodily fluids.

The novel's centering of addiction within Ina communities allows for engagement with the dense cultural meanings that take shape at the site of the addicted body in neoliberal understandings of embodiment and citizenship. Theri Pickens has argued that *Fledgling* creates "space to imagine black female disabled subjects wielding radical political potential to build coalitions and alliances and to transform how others understand their positions in relation to privilege" (34).¹⁸ Pickens's analysis reads the novel through the combined lenses of disability studies and critical race theory. A central feature of the novel's treatment of the intersection of race and disability is the fact that it places addiction as a source of such radical political potential. (My intention here is not to propose an analogy between addiction and disability that would reduce disability to a metaphor, to highlight the ways that addicted subjects are understood to be ill in contemporary frameworks of addiction. The category of disability brackets a wide variety of physical and cognitive differences which far exceed the frame of the present inquiry.) The figure of the addict affords such subversive potential because this figure is difficult to reconcile with neoliberal formations and troubles discourses of free will. The addict occupies a dangerous zone that is at once racialized, criminalized, and medicalized.

Addiction, consent, and love in *Fledgling*

The puncturing of the boundaries of the human body is central to the myth of the vampire and to the myth of the addict; it is the moment that supposedly precipitates the ruptured subject into a disordered state of desire. While *Fledgling* pushes back against several aspects of vampire

narratives, the novel insists on one important point: the bite of the Ina does indeed lead to deviant desires. The relationship between Shori and Wright foregrounds troubling sexual desires almost from the very beginning of the novel. When Shori meets Wright, he experiences strong sexual attraction even though she appears to be an eleven-year-old child. This aspect of the novel led to much controversy among readers, who condemned the book as “kiddie porn” (Strong, n.p.). Butler emphasizes that Shori is actually a fifty-three-year-old, immensely powerful being—capable of killing and eating a deer with her bare hands, even when she is suffering from a serious head injury—yet she also refuses to gloss over the fact that Shori possesses the physical characteristics of a child.

Both Shori and Wright are embroiled in a network of concerns about consent and power. While Wright, an adult man, seems in danger of committing an unacceptable and morally repugnant abuse of power by having sex with a lost child, Shori also seems to wield a disturbing power over Wright.¹⁹ Wright’s fascination with Shori begins with his physiological reaction to her smell, even before he feels the effects of her venom. Within minutes of meeting him, Shori bites Wright. Wright’s body is punctured and his subjectivity irretrievably ruptured in this moment. Wright’s encounter with Shori ushers him from normality into a web of deviant desire.

While all of Shori’s symbionts enter these relations of power and desire, Wright stands out from the other symbionts because he struggles to come to terms with his evolving dependence on Shori. Many of the other human characters in the novel have lived alongside the Ina for much of their extended lifespans, but Wright encounters the Ina for the first time through Shori. Wright is especially close to Shori, as her first symbiont and her rescuer. Yet he is also especially resistant to some of the requirements of his new, altered embodiment. Wright feels strongly that his addiction to Shori’s venom constrains his ability to choose to be in this relationship. Although Shori and other Ina use their venom to influence and even control other humans, Shori and Wright’s relationship is a particularly fraught one. Shori uses her venom to interrogate the person who is trying to kill her, and to get other humans to forget that she was ever there. But with Wright, she has a sexual and romantic relationship, a companionate bond. Wright frequently brings up the nature of his bond with Shori, questioning whether her influence on him is ethical in the context of their ongoing romantic relationship.

Early in their relationship, as they both begin to understand the full import of Shori’s bites, Shori makes an effort to let Wright leave. She explains, “I didn’t know what I was starting when I bit you the first couple of times. I didn’t remember. I still don’t remember much, but I know the bites tie you to me...[M]aybe you don’t want to be with me. If that’s what you’ve decided, tell me. Tell me now, and I’ll try to help you go.” She goes on to tell him that if he doesn’t leave now, he may never be able to leave her: “Freedom, Wright. Now or never.” Wright responds, “I’ve only known you for a few days, but I know I want you with me.” Shori registers profound relief at this response: “I kissed his hand, glad of his decision” (49). Her narration of this conversation frames this moment as a choice on Wright’s part.

After he discovers that Shori needs to have more than one symbiont, Wright repeatedly suggests that he did not truly have the choice of leaving Shori—evoking concepts of free will, meaningful consent, and addiction. Wright struggles with gendered and racialized forms of jealousy: each time Shori adds a new symbiont, he suggests that he has been coerced into an exploitative relationship. He insists, “I didn’t know...that I was agreeing to be part of a harem. You left that little bit out” (84). Shori counters, “You’re not part of a harem... You and I have a symbiotic relationship, and it’s a relationship that I want and need” (84). She asks, “Do you want to leave me?”, and Wright responds, “Why bother to ask me that?...I can’t leave you. I can’t

even really want to leave you” (84). Wright is particularly bothered by his relegation to the role of an exoticized woman, insisting on the term “harem” to describe the Ina’s community of symbionts.

Later, when Shori intends to add a black male symbiont to her growing family, Wright again experiences intense jealousy. Once again, he complains that he did not have a choice: “By the time Shori... offered to let me go... I was very thoroughly hooked, psychologically if not physically” (162). Wright returns to the framework of addiction as destructive compulsion when confronted with the consequences of interdependency with Shori. Wright suggests that Shori has punctured his subjectivity and compromised his former state of freedom.

Readers of *Fledgling*, like Wright himself, tend to be concerned with the question of whether Wright’s love for Shori is “just” an addiction, or whether it comprehends some element of “true” love separate from their shared chemical dependency. Keane notes that diagnosing addiction requires “a process of semiotic interpretation and decoding” (101). The reader of *Fledgling* must perform a similar task of interpretation and diagnosis in order to answer the question that Wright poses in various forms: “Do you love me, Shori? Or do you just like the way I taste?” (139).

Shori models a different approach to this question. Approaching love relationships through the defamiliarizing worldview of the Ina, she is concerned that her effect on others be beneficial and just, rather than seeking to draw a clear line between love freely chosen and addiction psychologically or chemically induced. She uses the language of addiction to express her love for Wright, to reassure and comfort him after they fight over her need for more symbionts. When Wright angrily accuses Shori of “swinging both ways,” she finds his confrontational tone confusing. She replies that she would indeed have sex with male and female symbionts “if both they and I want it” (85). Later, as Wright and Shori make up in bed, Shori tells Wright, “I crave you. I do. And I enjoy pleasuring you.” Wright responds, “That’s the right attitude” (87). Shori refuses to comfort Wright by telling him that their love is “true” or untainted by chemical addiction. Instead, she affirms her own participation in their interdependency, while emphasizing that “craving” can lead to pleasure and enjoyment rather than the downward spiral usually associated with addiction.

The framing of addiction suggests that “good” and “evil” are masquerading as “natural” and “unnatural”—the addicted body must rely on an unnatural “chemical prosthesis” (Ronell qtd in Keane 105). *Fledgling* disrupts this framework by exposing the instability of the natural/unnatural binary. Is the biochemical dependency that links Shori to her symbionts naturally or unnaturally produced? Is Shori—a member of a vampire-like species that has cohabited with humans since before recorded history—a “natural” creature? Does her body’s production of biochemical agents constitute a natural or unnatural process? What about the introduction of these agents into the bodies of her symbionts—is she naturally or unnaturally extending their lives and enhancing their ability to heal and remember? And is all of this different from the “natural” or “true” experience of love, if love has a biochemical basis when it is “normally” encountered? These questions remain unanswerable as long as one accepts this binary as the framework for inquiry. Shori dismisses them in her ongoing discussions with Wright, changing the terms of the inquiry.

Fledgling suggests that the drive to diagnose desire as *either* addiction or love is motivated by an anxiety that betrays an unfounded investment in “natural” love. As his name suggests, Wright’s character reveals the limitations of a rights-based discourse, especially when it comes to issues of love, consent, and power. Wright insists on a model of consent that rests on

the premise of an autonomous, rational mind combined with independent, bounded embodiment. His complaints point toward an unwillingness to accept the fundamental interdependency that characterizes all embodied life and love relationships—especially since his complaints arise when he is feeling jealous of Shori’s other partners, and since his complaints are not shared by Brook, Celia, or Theodora, Shori’s female partners.

Wright’s struggles arise from his sense of his own masculinity and his investment in heteronormative, monogamous relationships. In addition to expressing jealousy and homophobia regarding Shori’s other partners, Wright becomes angry when he discovers that, in Ina nomenclature, “sym Shori” will be appended to his name (255), even though earlier in the novel he took pleasure in naming Shori (13). Morris argues that “Wright’s rage stems not only from his struggle with the allure of Shori’s enchantment and his thereby decreased autonomy but also from what he perceives as the unnatural or, at the very least inappropriate social dynamics of mutualism, with its communal living, queer pansexuality, and nonmonogamy, among other nonnormative practices” (Morris 159).

The novel affords Wright a central position in the novel at first. Wright enjoys a special bond with Shori as her first (post-amnesia) symbiont. Melissa J. Strong asserts that “well-meaning Wright is the voice of the average person” (Strong, n.p.). Wright offers a human perspective on the oddness of Ina customs; as Wright discovers more about Ina kinship formations, he models a “human” reaction in the sense that he struggles to work through his internalized homophobia, racism, and possessiveness. But as the novel unfolds, the romance plot between Wright and Shori becomes less prominent in a new, broader context. Wright and Shori’s relationship takes shape as just one among several that Shori needs. Shori continues to cherish their bond even as she bonds with new symbionts and pursues an Ina mate.²⁰

Wright’s attitude contrasts with that of Theodora, Shori’s other symbiont who has no previous experience of the Ina. Theodora seems to embrace the Ina’s non-monogamous community much more easily. She initially expresses some ambivalence, or at least surprise, when she sees Shori for the first time: she stares at her “with a kind of horror” (89). However, Theodora quickly changes her mind and declares herself impatient to join Shori in an Ina community right away: “I don’t want to wait [a year]” (92). As she comes to understand more about her newfound situation, she explores Ina society with excitement and affection. She tells Shori happily, “I’ve moved to Mars...Now I’ve got to go learn how to be a good Martian” (228). Shori observes that Theodora seems “cheerful and excited,” with “no feeling of stress of falseness”; she is “truly happy” to be exploring this new world (228). Wright comments to Shori, “She’s exactly where she wants to be...She’s with you, and you’re going to keep her with you” (228). Theodora not only overcomes her internalized misgivings rapidly, but her openness to Ina life also persuades even Wright to temper his anger and shame.

Negotiating power and kinship in *Fledgling*

As Shori’s conversations with both Theodora and Wright indicate, the ethics of Ina-human relationships entail complex negotiations. The Ina have no way to form relationships with humans without the influence of venom. Human symbionts exemplify addicted subjects—persons whose bodies are rendered permanently dependent on an external chemical substance. Symbionts have no way to “detox” from Ina venom. Wright asks, “What would I die of?”, and Iosif responds, “Of the lack of what she provides” (70). However, Iosif gives Shori an

explanation in physiological terms: “They die of strokes or heart attacks” (73-4). At some moments, Wright argues that this permanent physiological addiction seems to preclude a consensual relationship; at other times, he finds Shori to be “weirdly ethical” (161). As Melissa J. Strong asks: “Given the addictive qualities of Ina venom and the Ina’s ability to influence people high on it, can humans in fact freely choose whether or not to enter into a relationship with an Ina?” Strong goes on to call this an “imperfect relationship” (Strong, n.p.). Lauren J. Lacey concurs that the relationships depicted in *Fledgling* are “less than perfect” (386). Underlying these concerns about free choice is the question: is Ina venom an unnatural substance that compromises free will in an unacceptable way? Is Shori in herself an unethical being, unable to relate to other entities except through an unethical structure of compulsion?

The novel makes room for considerable choice, negotiation, and preference within this framework of addiction, unlike paradigms of addiction which assert that addiction flattens out all desire into an undifferentiated craving. Although Shori’s physiology demands that she bond with some humans, she does not form lasting bonds with all of the humans that she feeds on. At first Shori does venture out to feed on strangers for sustenance, not wanting to take too much blood from Wright. During this period, she is re-learning her own physiology and discovering how her bond with Wright works. She reflects, “It seemed necessary to take small amounts of his blood often. I felt a need for it that was something beyond hunger. It was a need for his blood specifically. No one else’s. I took it slowly and gave him as much pleasure as I could” (38). She tells Wright, “I don’t like the others I’ve been using. I need them, but I don’t want to keep them” (75). Shori explains to her other new symbiont, Theodora, “You have a particularly good scent [...] You smell...open, wanting, alone. When I came to you the first time, you were afraid at first, then glad and welcoming, excited, but you didn’t smell of other people” (92). Shori preferentially bonds with humans who connect with her emotionally and sexually, and are excited by the possibilities that their relationship represents.

Just as Wright and Shori’s bond arises under circumstances that seem to compel Wright to choose Shori, so Shori finds herself precipitately forced into a close relationship with humans who must quickly become her symbionts. When Shori’s father Iosif is murdered by the Silks, his symbionts Brook and Celia must bond with Shori or die. This is an incredibly painful process and requires both Shori and her symbionts to overcome deep physical revulsion. Later, Celia asks Shori how she feels about their new relationship: “Are you okay with me?” (124). Shori responds, “You mean do I want you?” Their ensuing conversation explores the relationship between choice and desire:

“...yeah. You didn’t exactly choose us.”

“I inherited you, both of you, from my father’s family. You’re mine.”

“You want us?”

I smiled up at her. “Oh, yes.” (124)

Shori affirms her desire and affection for Celia even as she posits an unusual form of “inheritance,” entering into a romantic and sexual relationship with two women who previously had such a bond with her father. While the language of “inheritance” evokes the shadow of chattel slavery, the emotional register of this conversation foregrounds Celia’s desire for Shori to “want” her rather than the more violent resonances of this term. This distinctly queer take on family revises heteronormative definitions of heredity, suggesting that history and kinship might inflect Shori’s choice in ways that simultaneously compel Shori’s actions and elicit her desire.

Shori’s assumption of ethical responsibility in her relationships with her symbionts—and the shared community and reciprocal ethical care that her symbionts demonstrate—moves

beyond the framework of economic transaction and towards an ethic of caretaking. Wright raises the question of whether his relationship with the Ina is a strictly transactional exchange, in which Ina extract value from humans and give them pleasure and longevity as a reward. By contrast, Shori's symbiont Brook explains to her, "You need to touch us and know that we're here for you, ready to help you if you need us. [...] And we need to be touched. It pleases us just as it pleases you. We protect and feed you, and you protect and feed us. That's the way an Ina-and-symbiont household works, or that's the way it *should* work. I think it will work that way with you" (177). This exchange establishes that "as powerful as Ina venom is, human touch and emotion rival it" (Morris 158)—or rather, human touch and emotion work alongside and in concert with Ina venom to reinforce the bonds between Ina and symbiont.

Shori's developing understanding of her relationships to her symbionts emerges alongside a range of other ways in which Ina characters relate to their symbionts. Milo Silk, the patriarch of the Silk family, and Shori's own father, Iosif, model two possibilities that ultimately contrast with Shori's own choices. Most egregiously, Milo Silk's actions demonstrate what happens when Ina abuse their power. He and the rest of the Silk family employ their symbionts in order to kill Shori's family. Shori eventually seeks protection from the Silks by turning to the Ina justice system and calling for an Ina Council of Judgement, with the assistance of the Gordon family, her closest Ina allies after the death of her family. The response of the Ina council establishes that this instrumental use of human symbionts is considered taboo by Ina society in general. When she is given the opportunity to formally question the Silk sons before the Ina council, Shori asks, "Are humans just tools for us to use whenever we find a use for them?" (278). At the culmination of the trial, the ritual request for the council members to vote on the verdict emphasizes the instrumentalization of human symbionts as an integral part of the Silks' crimes: "Is the Silk family guilty of having made human beings their tools and sent those human tools to kill the Petrescu and the Matthews families? Are the Silks also guilty of sending their tools to burn the Petrescu guest house where Shori Matthews and her symbionts were staying?" (293). In the ensuing discussion, some Ina elders take the position that Milo was justified in trying to kill Shori. Yet all of the Ina condemn the Silks' instrumentalization of human symbionts. Ultimately, the Silk family is punished, confirming that Ina society considers the Silks' actions to be a reprehensible abuse of their power.

Shori's father, Iosif, models a second version of Ina-symbiont relations. Iosif gives Shori advice on how to relate to her symbionts, particularly on how to support Wright as he struggles with jealousy. He counsels her, "Let him mind, Shori. Talk to him. Help him. Reassure him. Stop violence. But let him feel what he feels and settle his feelings his own way" (73). Iosif's approach, while kind, has a distinctly paternalistic flavor, in the sense that it infantilizes his human symbionts:

"I suspect this kind of thing needs to be said more to my sons than to you, but you should hear it, at least once: treat your people well, Shori. Let them see that you trust them and let them solve their own problems, make their own decisions. Do that and they will willingly commit their lives to you. Bully them, control them out of fear or malice or just for your own convenience, and after a while, you'll have to spend all your time thinking for them, controlling them, and stifling their resentment." (73)

While the actions that Iosif suggests seem infinitely preferable to the Silks', his instrumentalist framing emphasizes the practical results of such an approach.²¹

Shori's own path involves a more careful attention to power dynamics. She demonstrates attention to the ethics of interdependency and questions how her saliva produces addiction. As

Shori begins to piece together the story of who she is and why she was attacked, she also begins to worry about her influence on humans. Concerned that she is taking too much blood from Wright alone, she slips out during the night to seek out other humans and feed on them. At first, these other humans are afraid, angry, or confused, but her bite calms them and she is able to make them remember her as a pleasant dream. Shori engages in an extended reflection:

I wanted to think about what I had done. It bothered me somewhat that it had all been so easy, that I had had no trouble taking blood from six people including Wright. [...] Was there something in my saliva that pacified people and pleased them? What else could it be? It must also help them heal. [...] That meant that I could at least help the people who helped me. That felt important. (26)

She goes on to express ambivalence: “It felt wrong to me that I was blundering around knowing almost nothing, yet involving other people in my life. And yet it seemed I had to involve them” (26). She resolves to learn as much as she can about herself and her impact on those around her. At the conclusion of the novel, she takes her symbionts on a picnic (284-5). During the ensuing conversation, “all share equally in the discussion...[Shori] neither dominates nor intimidates them and provides information before they need it” (Pickens 46). Shori’s emerging relationship to her symbionts contrasts with the advice given by her father, suggesting that Shori and her symbionts are creating an open-ended form of utopia that foregrounds the process of negotiating interdependency.

Flesh and blood—and venom, sweat, and smells

Fledgling resists a normative framework in which one’s relationships and entanglements with others compromise identity and impinge on personal freedom. Instead *Fledgling* offers a framework in which relationships constitute identity. Morris emphasizes that this model of relational identity draws on an existing tradition of Afrofeminism as it overlaps with a tradition of Afrofuturist science fiction, offering “an Afrofuturist feminist vision that is an epistemological shift concerning the ethics of identity, intimacy, and family” (156). By insisting on addiction as central to this vision, the novel critiques the dense imbrication of gender, race, freedom, and health that occurs at the site of the addicted body. Crucially, *Fledgling* insists on addiction as an embodied experience and a bodily practice. The novel stages scenes of mutual remaking and regenerating of bodies as humans and Ina encounter each other. The queer bonds that link Ina society are formed via the enmeshing of bodies and transfer of bodily fluids and odors, which saturate scenes of emotion and arousal.

The circulation of Ina venom in the human bloodstream offers a revision of kinship formations conceived in terms of “flesh and blood.” Shori uses this phrase early in the novel to refer to her recovered knowledge of Ina physiology: she normally needs to feed on blood, and if she is injured, she needs to consume raw meat. She tells Wright, “I don’t know why I remembered just now about flesh and blood. But you helped me do it” (20). Shori naively uses this phrase to refer to her literal need for flesh and for blood, distancing it from its usual meaning. In doing so, she also gestures toward the queer kinship bonds that she and Wright are forming. This moment obliquely references the normative meanings of “flesh and blood” in order to refuse them. As it is usually deployed, the phrase affirms a relationship in the strict sense of being “related by blood”—linked through a lineage that recognizes only heteronormative reproduction and hereditary descent as “true” kinship. This focus on heredity underpins the logic of degeneration and of racial defect, circumscribing visions of future kinship

formations within the narrow limits of reproductive futurity. In this paradigm, one's "blood" is passed on to one's descendants.

Fledgling gives a new meaning to "flesh and blood" relations; the literal transfer of blood in *Fledgling* exceeds the figurative transfer of "blood" that characterizes heredity. Blood can pass horizontally from human to Ina, in addition to vertically from parent to child. Along with other bodily fluids, blood becomes a facilitator of queer kinship formations. Saliva, blood, and venom mingle to form a potent substance. Before she knows exactly how this works, Shori speculates that she may be producing "something in [her] saliva that pacified people and pleased them" (26). Later her father Iosif confirms the biochemical mechanism that facilitates Ina-human relations: "We addict them to a substance in our saliva—in our venom—that floods our mouths when we feed" (73). Iosif conflates saliva with venom, suggesting that these bodily fluids are easily intermixed and difficult to distinguish from each other.

This revision of kinship formations entails a rethinking of the relationship of bodies and addictive substances, along the lines that Helen Keane has proposed: "It is not just that drugs affect the body, but that the body welcomes drugs [...] Drugs are not so much a foreign outsider, but a familiar neighbor, working with the body's existing repertoire of effects" (105). Keane traces the intimate circulation of drugs through the body:

Drugs can be absorbed into the bloodstream through the stomach and intestine, through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nasal passages, rectum and vagina, through the lungs, through the skin, and through muscles. Once in the bloodstream, the drug is distributed throughout the body by circulating blood, and because the entire blood volume circulates in the body about once every minute, the distribution of molecules is rapid. (104)

The Ina not only reveal that all bodies are inherently capable of giving and receiving fluids (undoing gender by pushing back against the strict linking of gender roles to bodies, as other critics have noted regarding Bram Stoker's *Dracula*); the Ina also assert the fundamental openness of human bodies to the queer bonds that they offer. In the process, the novel resists the binary thinking that insists that substances (and relationships) are either natural or unnatural, and that the relationship between human and Ina should be definitively described as either addiction or symbiosis. Instead, *Fledgling* offers a way of understanding addiction as symbiosis, a process in which bodies are mutually remade to mutual benefit.

The novel posits a relational mode of identity that, as Morris establishes, draws on a black feminist, queer, Afrofuturist tradition (156). The particular nature of Ina-human relations emphasizes that this relational aspect extends to *embodiment*: just as there is no such thing as a self-sufficient subjectivity independent from other entities, so too there is no such thing as a healthy body abstracted from its environment and from other bodies. Normative constructions of health understand the open body as unhealthy—dependent on drugs, afflicted by a parasite, vulnerable to deviant desires that threaten to re-make the body. *Fledgling* offers an alternative to the model of health that considers "health" to consist of bodily self-sufficiency and self-possession.

This vision of Ina-human symbiosis reaches its clearest expression in the context of the parties thrown by the human symbionts during the Ina Council of Judgment. For this ritual event, Ina elders from seven different families join Shori at the Gordons' compound, bringing their symbionts with them. Although the Silks' racially motivated murders precipitate this trial, as the various families begin to assemble, they reveal a strong community that has existed long before the trauma and conflict initiated by the Silks. The extended Ina-human families constitute a

support network which becomes crucial in times of crisis. As the symbionts plan a series of parties, they are “looking forward to meeting friends and relatives” (202). They anticipate gathering around the barbecue, drinking, and dancing to music on the stereo. While Shori does not attend any of the parties because she has to prepare for the Council of Judgment, the parties affect her relationships with her symbionts and provide a glimpse of how Ina communities function. Shori accompanies Joel to the door of one of the symbiont’s homes and wishes she could join their party, enjoying “the joy and the sweat and the easy sexiness of it all” (229). This description of the party links emotion and desire to the physicality of embodiment. The sweat of the human characters as they dance at this party resembles the venom of the Ina, as a bodily secretion with the power to forge kinship bonds.

One particular scene from this part of the novel encapsulates the embodied relations that underpin Ina-human society. Shori returns from the council one night in order to rest and take comfort from her symbiont Celia. Shori joins Celia in her bed; she feeds on Celia’s blood, and the two have sex. This scene is imbued with details that highlight Shori’s superhuman sense of smell. As Shori explores Celia’s body, she follows traces of another lover, reconstructing Celia’s evening at the party. Shori’s hypersensitive ability to smell allows her to participate in a form of queer sex that exceeds the temporal positioning of bodies in time and space. After smelling the scent of her other lover, Kwasi, which lingers despite Celia’s shower, Shori is “able to picture the man” as well as the path he traced over Celia’s body (247). Kwasi remains present in the form of scent traces, invisible vestiges of his own body. Both Celia and Shori enjoy retracing Kwasi’s presence and incorporating it into their own sexual experience. This interlude introduces the concept of an archive of smells that accumulate on the body, and proposes this version of the body as a crucial site for queer erotics and kinship.

This version of “healthy” embodiment as embodied relationality pushes back against ableist conceptions of health as a property of an individual, self-sufficient rational subject. However, the novel also suggests that an anti-oppressive politics of the body is not a finished project in Ina society. Theri Pickens offers an intersectional disability analysis of *Fledgling*, focusing on the ways in which race and ableism both collude and contradict each other in the novel. Pickens notes that while the Silks are undoubtedly the most egregiously racist and ableist of the Ina, normative Ina society rests on able-bodied privilege. Ina typically choose “healthy” humans to be their symbionts, even though their venom has the power to heal and strengthen humans. Ina also have the capacity to regenerate their bodies if they are injured and view incapacity as deviant. Pickens notes that Shori’s experience of cognitive impairment drastically reframes these ableist norms.

Through her relationships with her symbionts, especially Theodora, Shori continues to revise ableist Ina assumptions. Shori’s symbiont Theodora is too old to be a symbiont by Ina standards, as Manning Gordon points out to Shori. But even as he makes this judgment, he acknowledges that Shori is creating a new kind of Ina family: “I’m not sure what a good symbiont might be for you” (201). Shori’s relationship with Theodora thus represents a shifting of the ableist underpinnings of Ina society. However, Theodora’s murder at the hands of the Silk family interrupts this movement towards disability justice and casts a shadow over the novel’s conclusion. Theodora is attacked and killed by the Silk family’s symbionts during the Council of Judgment, as she is leaving one of the symbionts’ cherished parties. This harrowing plot twist unambiguously positions the Silks’ eugenic mindset as a serious threat to the queer utopian possibilities of Ina community and underscores the persistence of violence in Ina society.

Shori's playful exploration of the scent traces on Celia's body foreshadows the archive of smells that Shori finds when she discovers and examines Theodora's body. Shori identifies "sweat, blood, aftershave, cologne, food and drink of several kinds, sexual arousal, many personal scents" (252). She reconstructs Theodora's last evening, deducing from the smells on her body that she had attended a party full of people "dancing and flirting and enjoying themselves" (256). This archive of encounters is inseparable from Shori's mourning of Theodora's death at the hands of Milo Silk. This densely layered moment thus both acknowledges and resists white hegemony, positioning queer utopia (in the words of José Muñoz) as "not yet here" and yet persistently lingering (Muñoz 1).

Fledgling disrupts the consolidation of straight, white, non-addicted, national normativity by positioning addicted bodies as the foundation of a utopian community rather than the rejects of society. *Fledgling*'s Ina revise the vampire narrative to emphasize the openness of bodies, instead of the horror of bodies violated, penetrated, and pierced. In this novel, vampiric acts of feeding have the potential to be mutually pleasurable, satisfying, and beneficial. The mutuality of this exchange intervenes in traditional narratives of vampires as parasitic and destructive to human life. The novel queers social bonds by queering the relationship of the body to substances and to the alien invader. The reimagining of normative embodiment creates a ripple effect, a disturbance of the imbrication of health, heteronormativity, and racial purity at the site of the body.

Conclusion

Alien invasion narratives, from *The War of the Worlds* (1897) to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), figure the relationship between the bounded human body and racialized alien invaders. Traditionally, these narratives emphasize the catastrophic consequences of puncturing the boundaries of the body. But as Butler's novel demonstrates, alien invasion narratives also have the potential to interrogate and reimagine the relationship between the human body and the alien Other.

The biopolitical apparatuses of immunity, quarantine, and addiction construct the bounded body as a biological necessity. The openness of bodies poses a threat to the foundations of rational citizenship, and thus becomes something to be vigilantly defended and managed. Ruptures of the body, and leaks and flows across its boundaries, threaten to undo and remake the "healthy" "human" body. These biopolitical concepts link the individual body to the body politic. The well-regulated, defended body is a microcosm of the nation-state, and in alien invasion narratives, of the planet.

The biopolitical logic of immunity, as deployed in *The War of the Worlds*, conflates the boundedness of the body to evolutionary success, evoking the concept of the "fit" body. Immunity presents the constitution of the bounded body as a biological fact and renders the human body in terms of an ongoing battle between self and other at the microscopic level. As it appears in *The War of the Worlds*, this logic underwrites the claim of "humanity" to Planet Earth and dooms the Martians to abjection. In this paradigm, whoever dies of disease is *ipso facto* unfit to live. In conjunction with immunity, the logic of continence binds affect and sexual desire to the paradigm of fitness. Continent regulation of one's appetites and desires entails performing heteronormativity properly, that is, in a manner that ensures the orderly continuance of white reproductive futurity. Continence is at once a state of mental control, a physiological property of

the body that is phallogocentric and gendered male, and a daily practice. Continenence also illuminates the imbrication of biology and capitalism through its obsession with regulating consumption and “spending.” Together, continence and immunity shore up white male supremacy by doubling down on the bounded body as a biological prerequisite for rational citizenship and constituting that body as both white and male.

In the early twentieth century, ecological thinking revealed a new vision of the body as enmeshed in food webs. At the same time, discourses of toxicity declared the body to be vulnerable as a result of this entanglement. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* identified a new category of unnatural substances and figured these substances as alien invaders, agential entities capable of penetrating the borders of the body. The emerging discipline of invasion ecology facilitated the slippage from substances to species, and ultimately to racialized populations constituted as toxic and invasive. In this period, quarantine appeared to offer a way of managing and limiting exposure to these dangerous entities. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* dramatizes these issues and reinvents the concept of quarantine as an individual responsibility. Through the film’s depiction of the planet under attack, quarantine comes to resemble continence as an activity of constant vigilance that entails policing leaks and flows over the boundaries of the body.

The paradigm of addiction, in its modern form, influenced by its history over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also takes up the issue of the relationship of the body to a substance or entity deemed foreign and unnatural. Once again, the addict emerges as a figure who fails to fulfill the demands of self-regulation and continence. Biomedical addiction discourse represents the addict as fundamentally unable to resist dependence on an external, unnatural substance. The failure of the addict to uphold the responsibilities of liberal citizenship entails the relegation of the addict to the realm of bare life.

The biopolitical apparatuses of immunity, quarantine, and addiction are concerned with policing the boundaries of the body, and in the process, defining and policing the limits of what it means to be a rational human subject. They link the biopolitical construction of the category of bare life to the ostensibly biological fact of the bounded human body and the various failures to attain boundedness. *The War of the Worlds* and subsequent alien invasion narratives such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* deploy biological discourse in order to address the question: who can claim membership in the supposedly universal category of “the human”?

These invasion narratives posit the category of the alien Other as an agential entity threatening the human body, as well as a cautionary tale about what the human body may become. These narratives also evoke the category of Man; as is clear in *The War of the Worlds*, this category emerged from an imperialist discourse concerned with justifying the colonization and subjugation of racialized populations. In these narratives, failure to defend the body entails succumbing to the alien and thereby forfeiting membership in humanity. While *The War of the Worlds* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* depict the rupture of the body as a catastrophe, ending in death or worse, *Fledgling* embraces the remaking of the human body and of the category of the human.

Fledgling’s intervention into this tradition points toward the queer utopian possibilities of disrupting the category of the human. Rather than asking who rightfully belongs to the category of the human and who has earned the right to participate in the continuation of the human race, *Fledgling* asks, rather, who is protected by invoking such a category? What if the category of the human did not need to have rigidly defined boundaries? What if interdependency and fluidity were not understood to be fatal flaws in the body?

This novel posits a human-like, yet non-human species whose existence depends on infiltrating the borders of the human body. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a similar conjunction of tropes unambiguously marked the pod people as foreign invaders and consigned them to the realm of bare life. In this film, and in other alien invasion narratives, the trope of alien invasion of the human body overlaps with the racializing logic of the parasite which depicts immigrants as parasites on the body politic. By contrast, *Fledgling* imagines a relationship in which parasite and host are understood to remake each other. The Ina model a biological relationship in conjunction with an ethic of caretaking and sustainability. Addiction to Ina venom does not interfere with this dynamic, but forms its foundation.

As *Fledgling*'s movement towards queer utopia suggests, undoing the bounded body ruptures the category of Man and makes room for something better. *Fledgling* reveals that doing away with the premise that the body must remain bounded does indeed disrupt white hegemony and heteronormativity, along with the normative construction of "health." But the novel figures this disruption, not as a catastrophe, but as an act of justice and a beginning, an ushering forth into new forms of community. *Fledgling* avoids an easy or simplistic figuration of this disruption and insists that it takes place within the novel not with a single liberatory gesture. This remaking unfolds over time, with care for one another, attention to the violent histories that we bear with us into the future, and ongoing negotiation of ethical relationships.

¹ See in particular: Molly Wallace, Amanda Boulter, David Seed, and Mary M. Talbot on Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy; Stacy Alaimo on Butler, embodiment, and biological discourse.

² Elsewhere in her work, Butler depicts versions of "symbiosis" that similarly blur the distinction between mutualism and parasitism. ("Symbiosis" refers to the imbrication of two species, "living with" each other; mutualism and parasitism are two types of symbiosis.) In "Bloodchild" (1995), the Tlic insist that their relationship with humans is mutualistic—benefiting both the Tlic and the humans. But this claim to mutualism is undermined by the violent intertwining of the Tlic with their human partners and by the reactions of the human characters to this relationship. It seems more as though the Tlic are parasites claiming to be benefactors. In *Lilith's Brood* (1987, 1988, 1999), the alien Oankali see themselves as conducting an ethical exchange with the human species: they benefit from humans' genetic adaptations, and rescue a species that would otherwise be extinct. Lilith resists at first, foregrounding questions of consent, but over time she comes to accept this version of humanity and lives in uneasy relationship with the Oankali. As the trilogy continues, narrated by her descendants—hybrid human-Oankali beings—subsequent protagonists grapple with different questions which both supersede and bear out Lilith's original concerns. (See: "Symbiotic Bodies," Ferreira.) One important point that Butler explores in early texts is the slippage between individuals and species that the language of mutualism and parasitism invites. The Oankali and the Tlic justify their relationship to humans in terms of the survival of the species. And yet the relationship of species to species entails individual relationships that are often violent and coercive in these texts. "Bloodchild," *Lilith's Brood*, and *Fledgling* all depict the rupture of the human body and the transfer of hypnotic, consciousness-altering substances. In these works, symbiosis and mutualism are never easy or unproblematically utopian. However, *Fledgling* depicts human characters who seem to welcome and treasure their relationship with the Ina. They appreciate their biological enhancements as well as their romantic and emotional bond with their particular Ina. It is tempting to think of this shift as an evolution of Butler's thinking over time, but given the complexity of Butler's body of work, I find it more accurate to

think of *Fledgling*'s attitude toward mutualism as one point in a nonlinear exploration of the nature of power.

³ The DSM-IV attempts to set out objective criteria such that an individual will consistently receive the same diagnosis from different professionals in the field. This project of reliability prioritizes stable meaning and construes mental health disorders as located within the individual. In this context, the concept of addiction poses the challenge of distinguishing between someone who uses or takes drugs and someone who does so in a disordered way. The DSM-IV employs the terminology of "substance use disorder" rather than "addiction," in a move that both reflects this emphasis on disordered use and indicates a conscious turning away from a negatively charged term. Despite this attempt to avoid stigma while stabilizing meaning, the criteria for substance use disorder continue to depend on underlying concepts that are both very hard to define and very much enmeshed in neoliberal ideology. These ostensibly objective criteria rely on concepts of harm, risk, desire, self-control, and other forms of disordered, anti-social behavior which involve interpretive work to identify. It encourages a definition of "anti-social behavior" as anything which deviates from the ideal of the middle class, heterosexual, white, disembodied citizen whose habits of consumption and production accord with the neoliberal definition of "freedom." For example, the DSM-IV states that a defining aspect of substance abuse disorder is that "important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use;" and "a great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance" (110). Applying these criteria requires interpretive decisions regarding how much time one should spend at work, with friends, and enjoying forms of recreation that presumably do not include the use of drugs. Helen Keane observes that this "takes for granted a certain level and style of social functioning, assuming that in the absence of drug use the subject would not be facing problems such as unemployment and poverty" (94). The label of "substance use disorder" can thus refer to the effects of systemic racism and economic disenfranchisement—effects which may actually be resisted or alleviated by the social relations that emerge around and through the use of intoxicating substances. Furthermore, the DSM's implicit methodological approach to diagnosis entails distilling a complex set of practices enmeshed in different cultural spheres into self-reported experience—Reith's "subjective, individual evaluations of a loss of control" (284). As Room points out, such evaluations assume the existence of the "modern self"—specifically in the form of a rational entity which continuously monitors one's internal state. Another key criterion of substance use disorder is that "the substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended" (110). Diagnosis of this symptom calls forth a "self-aware and self-monitoring subject" to attest to "conflict within the self" (*Habits* 35). This criterion reveals the confessional aspects of the process of clinical diagnosis, and its alignment with other narratives of the addict's journey toward recovery as an acceptance of the diagnosis and a realignment of interiority with reality. In the process of eliciting the diagnosis of substance abuse disorder, the patient-addict admits their subjectivity to be fractured and affirms their true desire for a normative relationship to self, work, and substance.

⁴ I follow Susan Zieger in taking it to be true that "U.S. and British cultures of addiction...are best explained in relation to each other, because the overarching connections between their two histories of addiction are so similar" (9). Zieger explains specifically that "the British antislavery movement of the 1790s influenced the temperance movement in both nations; in both places, the temperance movement had close ties to abolition; the medical establishment shared disciplinary knowledge through strong professional connections; and the novels that

engaged and developed representations of addicted subjectivity were popular on both sides of the Atlantic” (9). Since my project is particularly concerned with fiction, this last point resonates strongly for my work. Zieger adds, “Although they have significantly different inflections, British and U.S. cultural histories of addiction both form around a mobile concept of colonial seduction leading inexorably to a debilitating imperial dependency and compulsion” (9).

⁵ Addiction took shape in the nineteenth century as a condition in which a subject who *ought to be free* enslaves himself to a substance, mentally and physiologically. Etymologically, the term finds its roots in a Latin word indicating bondage to a master (OED). Susan Zieger illuminates the connection between these anxieties of the addicted body—and its compromised freedom—and Anglo-European anxieties of empire in the nineteenth century. As Zieger shows, the language of addiction in this period linked the politics of intemperance and slavery, using similar rhetoric to describe the attachment of white subjects to certain substances and the literal enslavement of racialized subjects. Though nineteenth-century medical models of addiction officially recognized only alcohol and opiates, the *rhetoric* of addiction extended to a range of tempting commodities: opium and morphine, but also coffee, tea, and tobacco. One such rhetorical trend exhorted white women to break free from their bondage to sugar (Zieger 73). Such “enslavement” to commodities pointed towards the anxiety of dependence on foreign colonies whose subjects were actually enslaved. Notably, in its early formulations, addiction was not just gendered (a disorder more likely to affect women and effeminate, weak-willed men) but also racialized as a condition affecting “sensitive” white constitutions (see Valverde on “hierarchies of the will”). White subjects could be described as addicted to a substance such as alcohol, whereas racialized subjects were instead understood to have a natural, almost childlike tendency to overindulge (Zieger 74).

⁶ When exactly did addiction become a paradigm that could apply to so many substances and even behaviors? Various scholars have identified this as a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. In her classic “Epidemics of the Will” (1992), Eve Sedgwick pointed out an epidemic of “addiction attribution,” culminating in the seemingly nonsensical idea of exercise as addiction. In 1998, sociologist Robin Room noted the trend toward including more and more psychoactive substances under the umbrella of addiction. More recently, Marks, Orford, and Davis cite food as the latest substance deemed addictive in the context of contemporary panics over “obesity epidemics.” However, others have pushed back against the tendency to claim this proliferation of types of addiction as a contemporary phenomenon, locating versions of it as early as the 1940s (Parr and Rasmussen). Taken together, these works suggest that a myriad of ways of being addicted had emerged by the end of the twentieth century, and that this trend began as early as mid-century, recurring at intervals and persisting to the present day.

⁷ The paradigm of “innocence” itself belongs to a false dichotomy: as Sarah Lamble points out in a different context, the imperative to claim a position of innocent victimhood, and thus deny complicity, evacuates more promising ethical possibilities grounded in reflexivity and responsibility (38).

⁸ As Zieger puts it, “addicts signify as the weak appendage of the ordinary population: they are sick, but because they appear to have given themselves the illness, they are easily disqualified from health insurance and legal provisions for disabilities, susceptible to unusual punishment, and deprived of other minor civil rights” (240). Not only is addiction a health condition laden with implicit failures; it constructs the body and mind of the addict as flawed and therefore incapable of self-determination. Keane states that “the addicted are situated as subjects about whom the truth is known, and who cannot speak their own truth” (92). She unpacks the

centrality of denial, as a “symptom of...disease,” to this construction: “The person in denial is unable to see the truth...The addict’s expressed wishes and version of reality must be ignored in order to respect his or her genuine needs and desires” (97). This flawed mentality is grounded in “an addicted body as one that is uniquely dependent on an external and artificial substance for its continued functioning...a dependent and contaminated body, a body that is locked in a prison of repetition” (Keane 99). This physiological imprisonment of the body thus is understood to precede the addict’s loss of agency and autonomy.

⁹ Nikolas Rose stresses the normalizing effect of neuroscientific models of addiction, in that they reveal that “normal brains have an inherent capacity for addiction” (*Habits* 56). In theory, this revelation could have the effect of mainstreaming the category of the “addict.” Helen Keane’s work aspires toward the liberatory potential of this reframing. However, concurrent trends in drug policy suggest that the opposite is more likely and that neuroscientific models of addiction instead tend to reify the category of “the addict.” As this work continues to develop, it creates the possibility of, for example, scanning someone’s brain and pronouncing them an addict. It also brings up the possibility of a category of those with an underlying vulnerability to addiction. These processes produce deviant subjects whose imperfect wills are (or will be) legible in the materiality of their bodies. NIDA’s website “Drugs, Brains, and Behavior” (2014) recounts its own version of the history of addiction and claims that modern science will set addicts free from stigma. This model removes the addicted body from its social context and ignores the social meaning of drugs, even as it seeks to find the “cause” of addiction in a biological substrate that supposedly precedes culture. NIDA’s website seems to suggest that the disease model of addiction will help to dispel the social stigma associated with addiction as a failure of the will. But this logic is very deeply flawed; disease can, of course, carry extreme social stigma. Zieger refers to this wishful conversion of addiction from a moral failing to a disease as the “incomplete medicalization” of addiction (22). Medicalization is perhaps never a “complete” process—the language of disease itself mobilizes a complicated set of imperatives and norms. It constructs the addict as a deviant body.

¹⁰ A familiar aspect of anti-drug narratives in the twentieth century is the effect on drugs on “formerly exemplary young people,” dwelling on “the dramatic contrast between the individual’s happy and privileged non-addicted life and the lows of addiction” (Keane 91). This narrative in itself suggests that it is more surprising and more poignant for privileged people to become addicted, whereas those racialized and abjected “others” who are not named are naturalized to this condition. Addiction is a social ill because it threatens the (white) child. This familiar political rhetoric (see Edelman, Munoz) provided a powerful impetus for U.S. drug policy and other sociopolitical interventions in the twentieth century. Governmental initiatives focused on child welfare demonstrate how the construction of addiction upholds existing structures which perpetuate racial bias as it intersects with gender and class. As Keane observes, addiction is associated with “a constellation of negative attributes [...] almost automatically attached to members of negatively valued social categories, such as unemployed youth or welfare moms” (95). Hence, “the targeted individuals are the poor women of color whose practices of motherhood are most likely to come under the scrutiny of child welfare authorities,” with the ultimate effect that “problems of violence, poverty, and lack of resources are not presented as conditions affecting women’s welfare; rather, they are regarded as harms visited on a child by its mother because they diminish her capacity to be a responsible parent” (Keane 95).

¹¹ The regulation of drug-addicted bodies occurred not only through imposed diagnoses and treatment, but through anti-drug policies which policed the circulation of these substances

and criminalized drug use. Historian Richard Davenport-Hines documents the simultaneous criminalization of the figure of the addict, and the racialization of substances and addicted bodies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, opium emerged as an orientalised substance with the power to un-man white men and seduce “nervous” white women. The early twentieth century ushered in a form of race panic which associated drugs, specifically cocaine, with black Americans (153). The Harrison Act of 1914, which regulated cocaine and opiates, was drafted and enacted in the context of white paranoia about both domestic and international tensions: racist fears of cocaine-crazed black men raping white women within the US, and paternalistic imperialist policies towards the Philippines.

¹² Drug policies do not operate independently of systemic racial bias; in fact, they are an important way in which racial hierarchies are institutionalized and maintained. Throughout the twentieth century, anti-drug legislation in the US sought to purify the national body by controlling and restricting the movement of drugs and the activities of the people who bought and sold them. In the later twentieth century, Nixon’s War on Drugs initiative was subsequently extended by Reagan and Bush. The cumulative effect of this legislation was a disproportionate rate of arrest and incarceration of people of color. This well-documented phenomenon (see, e.g., Davenport-Hines 357-8) demonstrates that addiction cannot be abstracted from race, gender, and embodiment; approaches to addiction which fail to take into account its construction within a long history of hierarchies of the will have the effect of perpetuating these hierarchies and policing already over-policed bodies.

¹³ Zieger notes that addiction represents a “strange mixture of nervous modernity and primitive regression” (204), a problem in which the processes of modernity threaten to mire white subjects in primitive racialization.

¹⁴ Kristeva discusses the relationship between desire and disgust in *Powers of Horror*, theorizing it as central to abjection (47).

¹⁵ See *Blood Read* on the glamorous vampire.

¹⁶ The gendered implications of female vampires date back to Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872), a tale of a young, white (if ambiguously “foreign”) female vampire who is drawn to young women. Nina Auerbach argues that “the female vampire [in Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*] is licensed to realize the homosexual, interpenetrative implications of the friendship male vampires aroused and denied” (11). Auerbach characterizes *Carmilla*’s vampirism as “an interchange, a sharing, an identification, that breaks down the boundaries of familial roles and the sanctioned hierarchy of marriage” (12). Stoker’s *Dracula* thus overwrites an earlier tradition of female vampirism that seems to offer a vision of a “female world of love and ritual” (to quote Carole Smith-Rosenberg).

¹⁷ Susana M. Morris offers an overview of the tradition of Afrofuturism and situates Butler’s work at the conjunction of black feminism and Afrofuturism—which she names “Afrofuturist feminism.”

¹⁸ Pickens reads Shori as disabled because of the amnesia she suffers as a result of the Silks’ attack before the novel begins. Pickens reads this as both an impairment, in the sense that it does affect Shori’s capacity to understand herself, and a disability, in the sense that it has a socially constructed dimension that emerges through the way she is treated by other Ina who know of her injury. As Pickens’s reading shows, the novel treats Shori’s cognitive impairment with nuance and illustrates the nature of disability as a layered phenomenon often compounded by socially and culturally constructed factors.

¹⁹ Marty Fink observes, “While their relationship is de facto inappropriate, it is nevertheless treated with centrality and approval by the romance thread of the narrative, creating a sense of uneasiness that compels us to question our predetermined beliefs” (420).

²⁰ The novel also flirts with the marriage plot familiar from the novels of Jane Austen: Shori is an orphan of marriageable age seeking an advantageous match. Here, though, the novel offers a sly twist on the marriage plot. The matrilineal nature of Ina society utterly transforms the power dynamics, making Shori both naive and powerful, seductive and dangerous. Also, of course, Shori already has several romantic and sexual partners. Her matchmaking with the Gordons actually queers her relationship with Wright, displacing heteronormative romance and marriage from its centrality to the plot. The romance plot emerges as a repeated, overlapping event rather than an all-consuming, once-in-a-lifetime drama. To quote Wright: “People keep falling in love with you, Shori—men, women, old, young—it doesn’t seem to matter” (228)

²¹ Pickens notes that “part of the textured nature of *Fledgling* is that aggressors are not the only characters enmeshed in ableist or racist ideology. Shori’s allies, the Gordon family, demonstrate a remarkable investment in able-bodied privilege” (Pickens 40). Similarly, Shori’s father—and his sons—appear to be firmly invested in a paternalistic mode of relating to their symbionts.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2004. Edinburgh UP, 2014.
- Alaimo, Stacy. "Displacing Darwin and Descartes: The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1996, pp. 47–66. www.jstor.org/stable/44085415.
- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR*. American Psychiatric Association, 2000.
- Anatol, Giselle Liza. *The Things That Fly in the Night : Female Vampires in Literature of the Circum-Caribbean and African Diaspora*. Rutgers, 2015.
- Apter, Emily S. "On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as a World System." *American Literary History*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2006, pp. 365–89, doi:10.1093/alh/ajj022.
- Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1990, pp. 621–45.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Baldwin, I. L. "Chemicals and Pests: Man's Use, Misuse, and Abuse of the Products of Science Determine Whether These Valuable Assets Are Also Harmful." *Science*, vol. 137, no. 3535, Sept. 1962, pp. 1042–43, doi:10.1126/science.137.3535.1042.
- Ball, Alan, creator. *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment and HBO, 2008-2014.
- Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America*. 1976. Routledge, 2000.
- Benshoff, Harry M. *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*. Manchester UP, 1998.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2004.
- Blum, Elizabeth D. *Love Canal Revisited: Race, Class, and Gender in Environmental Activism*. University of Kansas Press, 2008.
- Booth, William. *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*. 1890. New York: Garrett Press, 1970.
- Boulter, Amanda. "Polymorphous Futures: Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* Trilogy." *American Bodies: Cultural Histories of the Physique*. Edited by Tim Armstrong. NYU Press, 1996, pp. 170-185.
- Bowen, William M, and Michael V. Wells. "The Politics and Reality of Environmental Justice: A History and Considerations for Public Administrators and Policy Makers." *Public Administration Review*, vol. 62, no. 6, 2003, 688–698.
- Brody, Jennifer DeVere. *Impossible Purities*. Duke, 1998.
- Buell, Lawrence. "Toxic Discourse." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 24, no. 3, Spring 1998, pp. 639-665.
- Bullard, Robert Doyle. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*. Westview Press, 2000.
- Burstyn, Varda. *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*. University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Adulthood Rites*. Warner Books, 1988.
- . *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995.
- . *Dawn*. Warner Books, 1987.
- . *Fledgling: A Novel*. Seven Stories Press, 2005.

- . *Imago*. Warner Books, 1989.
- Campbell, Nancy D. *Discovering Addiction: The Science and Politics of Substance Abuse Research*. University of Michigan Press, 2007.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Houghton Mifflin, 1962.
- Carter, Julian. *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America*. Duke, 2007.
- Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Duke, 2012.
- Chernak, Leon and Alfred I. Tauber. *Metchnikoff and the Origins of Immunology: From Metaphor to Theory*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Cohen, Ed. *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body*. Duke, 2009.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899. Penguin, 2007.
- Cosgrove, Denis. "Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 84, 1994, 270-294, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8306.1994.tb01738.x.
- Craft, Christopher. "'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula." *Representations* vol. 8, 1984, pp. 107-133.
- Creed, Barbara. "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection." *The Dread of Difference*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. U of Texas P, 1996. 35-65.
- Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man and Selection Related to Sex*. 1871, 1874. London: J. Murray, 1913.
- Davenport-Hines, Richard. *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics, 1500-2000*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001.
- Davis, Caroline, and Jacqueline C. Carter. "Compulsive Overeating as an Addiction Disorder. A Review of Theory and Evidence." *Appetite*, vol. 53, no. 1, Aug. 2009, pp. 1-8, doi:10.1016/j.appet.2009.05.018.
- Dawn of the Dead*. Directed by George Romero, performances by David Emge, Ken Foree, Scott H. Reiniger, Gaylen Ross, Dawn Associates, 1978.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Dowdall, Lisa. "Treasured Strangers: Race, Biopolitics, and the Human in Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* Trilogy." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2017, pp. 506-525, doi:10.5621/sciefictstud.44.3.0506.
- Drugs, Brains, and Behavior*. National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/preface>. Accessed 15 August 2018.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. 1899. U of Pennsylvania P, 1996.
- Dubey, Madhu. "The Biopolitics of Race in Futureland." *Social Text*, vol. 33, no. 2, June 2015, pp. 29-55, doi:10.1215/01642472-2869107.
- Duster, Troy. "Buried Alive: The Concept of Race in Science." *Genetic Nature / Culture: Anthropology and Science Beyond the Two-Culture Divide*, edited by Alan H. Goodman, Deborah Heath, and M. Susan Lindee, U of California Press, 2003, pp. 258-277.
- Dyer, Richard. *White*. Routledge, 1997.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke, 2004.
- Elias, Norbert. *The History of Manners*. Pantheon Books, 1982.

- Elton, Charles. *Animal Ecology*. New York: October House, 1966.
- . *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants*. Wiley, 1958.
- Evernden, Neil. "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, & the Pathetic Fallacy." *The North American Review*, vol. 263, pp. 16–20, doi:10.2307/25118053.
- Ferreira, Maria Aline. "Symbiotic Bodies and Evolutionary Tropes in the Work of Octavia Butler." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, pp. 401–15.
- Fink, Marty. "AIDS Vampires: Reimagining Illness in Octavia Butler's 'Fledgling.'" *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, pp. 416–32.
- Fraser, Suzanne, and David Moore. *The Drug Effect: Health, Crime, and Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Fraser, Suzanne, David Moore, and Helen Keane. *Habits: Remaking Addiction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Freeman, Martha, ed. *Always, Rachel: The Letters of Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman, 1952-1964*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
- Gordon, Joan, and Veronica Hollinger, editors. *Blood Read: the Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*. Norton, 1996.
- Halberstam, J. Jack. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Duke, 1995.
- Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 159–65, doi:10.1215/22011919-3615934.
- . "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575-599.
- Harris, Jonathan Gil. *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Herbert, Thomas. *Relation of Some Yeares Travaile*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012.
- Hofstadter, Richard. "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." *Harper's*, November 1964, pp. 77-86.
- Hollinger, Veronica. "The Vampire and/as the Alien." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1993, pp. 5–17. www.jstor.org/stable/43308159.
- Hollinger, Veronica, and Joan Gordon. Introduction. In *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon. U of Pennsylvania P, 1997. 11-16.
- Hulme, Peter. "Introduction: the cannibal scene." In *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
- Hynes, H. Patricia. *The Recurring Silent Spring*. Pergamon Press, 1989.
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Directed by Don Siegel. Performances by Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, Larry Gates, Walter Wanger Productions, 1956.
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Directed by Philip Kaufman, performances by Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Jeff Goldblum, Solofilm, 1978.
- Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.
- Jones, Darryl. *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film*. Arnold, 2002.
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Kawash, Samira. *Dislocating the Color Line: Identity, Hybridity, and Singularity in African-*

- American Narrative*. Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Keane, Helen. "Addiction and the Bioethics of Difference." *Ethics of the Body: Postconventional Challenges*. Edited by Arthur L. Caplan. MIT, 2005. pp. 91–112.
- Kier, Bailey. "Interdependent Ecological Transsex: Notes on Re/production, Transgender Fish, and the Management of Populations, Species, and Resources." *Women and Performance*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2010, pp. 299–319, doi:10.1080/0740770X.2010.529254.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lacey, Lauren J. "Octavia E. Butler on Coping with Power in *Parable of the Sower*, *Parable of the Talents*, and *Fledgling*." *Critique - Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2008, pp. 379–94, doi:10.3200/CRIT.49.4.379-394.
- Lamble, Sarah. "Retelling Racialized Violence, Remaking White Innocence: The Politics of Interlocking Oppressions in Transgender Day of Remembrance." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, vol. 5, no. 1, Mar. 2008, pp. 24–42, doi:10.1525/srsp.2008.5.1.24.
- Latour, Bruno. "How to Talk About the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies." *Body and Society*, vol. 10, no. 2–3, 2004, pp. 205–229, doi:10.1177/1357034X04042943.
- Laqueur, Thomas. *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*. New York: Zone Books, 2003.
- Lear, Linda. Introduction. *Silent Spring*. By Rachel Carson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Lederer, Susan. *Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion in Twentieth-Century America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *Carmilla*. 1871. Syracuse University Press, 2013.
- Lemire, Elise. "*Miscegenation*": *Making Race in America*. U of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Levine, Harry. "The Discovery of Addiction." *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1978, pp. 43–57, doi:10.1016/0740-5472(85)90022-4.
- Lypps, Heidi. "Queers in the Undergrowth, Slick Machines." Creativity: Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts Annual Conference, 4 November 2016, Westin Peachtree Hotel, Atlanta, GA. Conference Presentation.
- Malcolmson, Cristina. "Gulliver's Travels and Studies of Skin Color in the Royal Society." In *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics*. Ed. Frank Palmieri. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006.
- Marks, Isaac. "Behavioural (Non-Chemical) Addictions." *Addiction*, vol. 85, no. 11, Nov. 1990, pp. 1389–94, doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.1990.tb01618.x.
- Marryat, Florence. *The Blood of the Vampire*. Valancourt Books, 2009.
- Maslin, Janet. "Screen: Body Snatchers' Return in All Their Creepy Glory." *The New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1978, p. C14.
- Maxwell, John. "An Account of the Cape of Good Hope, by Mr John Maxwell: Communicated by the Reverend Dr. John Harris, F. R. S." *Philosophical Transactions* vol. 25, 1706–1707, pp. 2424.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather*. Routledge, 1995.
- McNeill, John Robert, and Peter Engelke. *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Harvard UP, 2016.
- McWhorter, Ladelle. "Enemy of the Species." *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, edited by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 73–101.
- Mickle, Mildred R. "The Politics of Addiction and Adaptation: Dis/ease Transmission in Octavia

- E. Butler's Survivor and Fledgling." *Contemporary African American Fiction: New Critical Essays*, edited by Dana A Williams, Ohio State, 2009.
- Morris, Susana M. "Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling*." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 3–4, 2013, pp. 146–66, doi:10.1353/ws.2013.0034.
- Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Mrozek, Donald J. *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910*. University of Tennessee Press, 1983.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York University Press, 2009.
- Nash, Linda. "The Fruits of Ill-Health: Pesticides and Workers' Bodies in Post-World War II California." *Osiris*, vol. 19, pp. 203–219.
- Night of the Living Dead*. Directed by George Romero, performances by Duane Jones, Judith O'Dea, Karl Hardman, Marilyn Eastman, Image Ten, 1968.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Orford, Jim. "Addiction as Excessive Appetite." *Addiction*, vol. 96, no. 1, Jan. 2001, pp. 15–31, doi:10.1080/09652140020016932.
- Parr, Jessica, and Nicolas Rasmussen. "Making Addicts of the Fat: Obesity, Psychiatry and the 'Fatties Anonymous' Model of Self-Help Weight Loss in the Post-War United States." Julie Netherland (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Addiction (Advances in Medical Sociology, Volume 14)*, Bingley: Emerald, 2012, pp. 181–200, doi:10.1108/S1057-6290(2012)0000014012.
- Pickens, Theri. "'You're Supposed to Be a Tall, Handsome, Fully Grown White Man.'" *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2014, pp. 33–48, doi:10.3828/jlcs.2014.3.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes*. Routledge, 1992.
- Purdy, Jedediah. *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*. Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Reith, Gerda. "Consumption and Its Discontents: Addiction, Identity and the Problems of Freedom." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2004, pp. 283–300, doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00019.x.
- Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire*. Ballantine, 1976.
- Rieder, John. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan UP, 2008.
- Rodman, John. "Restoring Nature: Natives and Exotics." *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment*, edited by Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp. 139–153, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttsp6w.10.
- Room, Robin. "Alcohol and Drug Disorders in the International Classification of Diseases: A Shifting Kaleidoscope." *Drug and Alcohol Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, Sept. 1998, pp. 305–17, doi:10.1080/09595239800187141.
- Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Rose, Nikolas S. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. Routledge, 1990.
- Samudzi, Zoe. "The Women's March and the Difference Between Unity and Solidarity." *Black Girl Dangerous*, 2017.
- Sayre, Nora. *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*. Dial Press, 1982.

- Science Fiction and Biopolitics*, special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2011, doi:10.3828/sfttv.2011.11.
- Schlosberg, David. *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements and Nature*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Seed, David. *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control. A Study of Novels and Films since World War II*. Kent State University Press, 2004.
- . “Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis*.” *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*. Ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan. New York: Routledge, 2003. pp. 91-111.
- Sedgwick, Eve. “Epidemics of the Will.” *Tendencies*, Duke University Press, 1993.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Comedy of Errors*. 1623. New York: Bloomsbury Arden, 2017.
- Shepard, Paul. “Ecology and Man—A Viewpoint.” *The Subversive Science: Essays Toward an Ecology of Man*. Houghton Mifflin, 1969.
- Smith, Michael B. “‘Silence, Miss Carson!’ Science, Gender, and the Reception of Silent Spring.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2001, pp. 733–752, www.jstor.org/stable/3178817.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America.” *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1975, pp. 1–29, www.jstor.org/stable/3172964.
- Sobchack, Vivian Carol. *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*. Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Stapleton, Patricia., and Andrew Byers, editors. *Biopolitics and Utopia: An Interdisciplinary Reader*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Stoddard, Lothrop. *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy*. Scribner, 1920.
- Stott, Rebecca. “Through a Glass Darkly: Aquarium Colonies and Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Marine Monstrosity.” *Gothic Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 305-327.
- Strong, Melissa. “The Limits of Newness: Hybridity in Octavia E. Butler’s Fledgling.” *FEMSPEC*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2010, pp. 27–43.
- Subramaniam, Banu. “The Aliens Have Landed! Reflections on the Rhetoric of Biological Invasions.” *Meridians*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 26–40.
- Talbot, Mary M. “‘Embracing Otherness’: An Examination of Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* Trilogy.” *Kimota* vol. 5, Winter 1996, pp. 45-49.
- Tauber, Alfred I. “Ilya Metchnikoff: from evolutionist to immunologist, and back again.” In *Outsider Scientists*, ed. Oren Harman and Michael R. Dietrich. U of Chicago P, 2013. 259-274.
- United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites*. 1987.
- Valverde, Mariana. *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Vikhanski, Luba. *Immunity: How Elie Metchnikoff Changed the Course of Modern Medicine*. Chicago Review Press, 2016.
- Wald, Priscilla. *Contagious*. Duke, 2007.
- Wallace, Molly. “Reading Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* after Seattle.” *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 50, no. 1, University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, pp. 94–128, doi:10.1353/cli.0.0049.

- Wann, Marilyn. *Fat!So?: Because You Don't Have to Apologize for your Size!* Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1998.
- Wapner, Paul. "Environmental Ethics and Global Governance: Engaging the International Liberal Tradition." *Global Governance*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1997, pp. 213–231, www.jstor.org/stable/27800164.
- Weheliye, Alexander. *Habeas Viscus*. Duke, 2014.
- Wells, H. G. *Anticipations*. 1901. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1981.
- . *Experiment in Autobiography*. 1934. Faber and Faber, 1984.
- . "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid." *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1911, pp. 50–60.
- . *A Modern Utopia*. 1905. U of Nebraska P, 1967.
- . *Text-Book of Biology*. London: W. B. Clive, 1894.
- . *The War of the Worlds*. 1898. Penguin, 2005.
- Whedon, Joss, creator. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Mutant Enemy, 1996-2003.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, Of Désêtre: Black Studies Toward the Project of the Human." *A Companion to African-American Studies*, edited by Jane Anna Gordon and Louis R. Gordon, Blackwell, 2005.
- . "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2003, pp. 257-337.
- Zierler, David. *The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think about the Environment*. University of Georgia Press, 2011.