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Global Refuse, Planetary Remainder

Keywords
good life, disposable life, global refuse, servitude, socialized reproduction, colonial ecology, planetary remainder

Abstract
The line separating the "good life" and the savagery that the "good life" requires, or, perhaps what might be articulated as the line between the space of biopolitics and the space of necropolitics, is maintained in the present through both practices of global policing and imperial war. These practices of policing and war produce the very global refuse that constantly threatens the "good life"—actively wasting the lives and livelihoods of people and non-human lifeworlds Western colonialism established as the raw materials, instruments, and objects of its civilizational goal—against which violence acts to protect a fundamentally human life worth living. At the same time, through capital-intensive projects of "saving" the very targeted populations it destroys, permanent war also produces the subordinated life that will come to serve as the means of maintaining and upholding that "good life." Beyond this mode of colonial inhabitation, however, subsist other ecologies of life-making practices on the part of those deemed disposable, a planetary remainder which might well be our only hope for a possible future.

Globalni odpadek, planetarni preostanek

Ključne besede
dobro življenje, življenje za enkratno uporabo, globalno zavračanje, suženjstvo, socializirana reprodukcija, kolonialna ekologija, planetarni preostanek

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Povzetek
Meja, ki ločuje »dobro življenje« in divjaštvo, ki ga »dobro življenje« zahteva, ali morda to, kar se lahko artikulira kot meja med prostorom biopolitike in prostorom nekropolitike, se v sedanjosti ohranja s praksami globalnega policijskega nadzora in imperialno vojno. Te prakse policijskega in vojnega delovanja proizvajajo prav tisti globalni odpadek, ki nenehno ogroža »dobro življenje« – ki aktivno zapravlja življenja ter preživetje ljudi in t. i. nečloveških življenjskih svetov, ki jih je zahodni kolonializem vzpostavil kot surovine, orodja in objekte svojega civilizacijskega cilja. Edina zaščita temeljnega človeškega življenja, vrednega življenja, pa je nasilje proti »dobremu življenju«. Hkrati z intenzivnimi projekti kapitala, ki na videz »rešujejo« prav tiste ciljne populacije, ki jih ta nenehno uničuje, permanentna vojna proizvaja podrejeno življenje, ki služi kot sredstvo za ohranjanje in vzdrževanje tega »dobrega življenja«. A onkraj takšnega načina kolonialnega bivanja obstajajo še druge ekologije praks, ki ustvarjajo življenje. Prihajajo od tistih, ki so obravnavani kot odvečni, planetarni preostanek. Ta pa je morda naše edino upanje za možno prihodnost.

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In his book, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, Ghassan Hage argues that two types of sociality obtain in the world today: "One is defined by a civilized, cosmopolitan, state-regulated, lawful, welfare-supported, ecologically concerned exploitation. The other is defined by a savage, anarchic capitalism, [. . .] dominated by unchecked exploitation, theft and pillage."[1] The first is regulated with a policing logic, the second is a space of war. The first is dependent on the second.

The "Good Life"

Of the distinction between the good life and the savage life, Hage writes, "The line separating cosmopolitan goodness from colonial savagery [. . .] aims to ensure that its citizens' experience of the 'good life' is not perturbed by the experience of the savagery needed for this good life to be experienced."[2]

The offshoring of violence necessary for the "good life" in the metropole is undoubtedly a remnant of Western colonialism in the modern era. Yet it is also a

1 Ghassan Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 60.
2 Hage, 66.

structural relation of imperialism operating within the contemporary global capitalist economy, exemplified not least in the dumping of toxic industrial waste to the waters and lands of postcolonial and indigenous nations, that is, in the imperial exercise of what Max Liboiron understands as the power and permission to pollute the habitations and lifeworlds of others.[3] By offshoring the forms of waste that capitalist production inevitably creates—waste as not the byproduct but rather as the constitutive condition of the mode of producing capitalist value—imperialism continues to actively make the present lifeworlds of the descendants of the colonized into places of global refuse. Global refuse thereby becomes the space where "savagery," as Hage designates the practices of unchecked exploitation, theft, pillage, and constant war, is allowed and normalized.

The line separating the "good life" and the savagery that the "good life" requires, or, perhaps what might be articulated as the line between the space of biopolitics and the space of necropolitics, is maintained in the present through both practices of global policing and imperial war. Even as these practices of policing and war produce the very global refuse that constantly threatens the "good life"—actively wasting the lives and livelihoods of people and non-human lifeworlds Western colonialism established as the raw materials, instruments, and objects of its civilizational goals—the violence that policing and war constantly wield is embraced by those it protects as necessary to ensure the protection of a fundamentally human life worth living.

Counter-insurgent policing and war hold at bay for the enfranchised citizenry of that good life, of the very violence they inflict and stoke elsewhere, no longer only to quell rebellion but also to fuel greater and greater enterprise. For war is a global enterprise with proliferating subsidiaries—certainly the auxiliary industries of security (immigration agencies, their border police, offices of records and documentation, courts and detention jails, weapons of surveillance and debilitation, technologies of control), but also industries of humanitarian rescue, relief, aid, and reconstruction, closely aligned and even overlapping with the very military agencies whose work of devastation necessitates the projects of welfare assistance, social rehabilitation and development, and economic growth that follow in the wake of war. In this way, permanent war does not only increase the price of the "good life," but, through capital-intensive projects of

3 Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

"saving" the very targeted populations it destroys, also produces the defeated, subordinated life that will come to serve as the means of maintaining and upholding that "good life."

In the contemporary moment, the "good life" is valued life—that is, life that intrinsically bears value and is potentially valorizable (able to accrue more value). The "good life" functions not simply as a moral ideal, but also and perhaps more importantly as a socio-economic imperative, which failure to heed is met with punishment.

Entire industries of domestic, border, and overseas or extra-territorial security oversee the meting of punishment with batons, guns, and bombs, in practices of torture, assassination, and arrest. Punitive agencies abound. These punitive agencies are assumed by ordinary people in their everyday, intimate relations as well as embodied by petty cops and bureaucrats in all the institutions of enfranchisement (education, employment, civil service, public office, social welfare). Punishment is direct but also ambient, inflicted by iron spikes on low walls to prevent seating, divided benches in parks to prevent sleeping, escalating rents and prohibitive subway tickets, poisoned drinking water, toxic food, eroding, empty soils, hazardously subpar construction standards, stolen lands, and foreclosed homes. Such is the experience of constant assaults on those "savaged" by such punishment, which is already part of imperial war—those non-citizens who by deed and definition are precluded from the "good life" of the already human.

This colonial relation, in which biota deemed lesser and lower life are conscripted to serve their eminently human superiors, expresses itself today as the relation between disposable life and valued life, or, between *life worth expending* (life with the capacity to yield value through its wasting) and *life worth living* (life with the capacity to accumulate value through its exercise and enjoyment). The former (the descendants of the colonized, deemed less than human) are charged with bearing the burdens, pains, and trauma that the latter (the always already human) are spared and offshore to others—domestic workers, caregivers, content moderators alike charged with sparing their employers and clients all that might disrupt or perturb the "good life" of their valued existence, and more, charged with caring for, comforting, and enhancing that valued life.

Disposable Life

Disposable life can be considered simply as life placed at the disposition of valued life, for which it serves as material and means of living. If in today's global economy the living of valued life—its reproduction—has been made productive (in a word, capitalized), disposable life has been made serviceable as the means, instruments, and machines of that productivity. Drivers, couriers, food service workers, janitors, housekeepers, nannies, all see to the maintenance, improvement, and facilitation of the value-productive life-movements of others. They act as private human utilities—components of what I have called vital infrastructure—for the social reproduction of valued life, and therefore as the very means of that life's productivity. Put differently, these workers serve as the means of production of *life as labor* (the global cognitariat). Subordinated to meet the needs of others, their own disposable lives comprise in aggregate form the *vital infrastructure*, like appliances, houses, and roads, supporting and enabling the activities and movements of valued life. As the life globopolitical citizens wield as their own human commodity capital in the entrepreneurship of themselves—being for themselves their own capital, being for themselves their own producers, being for themselves the source of their earnings, as Foucault would have put it[4]—valued life is what disposable life makes possible and upholds.

The Philippines is one of the biggest manufacturers, providers, and brokers of such serviceable life for the global reproductive economy. Before the global pandemic, the nation annually deployed around 2.3 million workers as overseas or migrant labor in some two hundred countries and territories, including sea-based commercial fleets, around the globe.[5] While that exported labor force has been reduced to 1.83 million as a direct result of the pandemic,[6] the Philippines

4 In neoliberalism, Foucault writes, "*Homo œconomicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself [. . .], being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the course of [his] earnings." Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), 226; brackets in the original.

5 "Total Number of OFWs Estimated at 2.3 Million (Results from the 2018 Survey on Overseas Filipinos)," The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Republic of the Philippines National Government Portal, April 30, 2019, https://psa.gov.ph/content/total-number-of-ws-estimated-23-million-results-2018-survey-overseas-filipinos-0.

6 "2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results)," The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Republic of the Philippines National Government Portal, December 2, 2022, https://

remains one of the world's most important sources of serviceable life. The majority of this labor force consists of women employed in so-called "elementary occupations" (defined by basic, lower-value skills)—cleaning and maintenance of apartments, houses, kitchens, hotels, offices, and other buildings, food preparation, kitchen assistance, etc. But a large percentage of this force also consists of men employed as low-level seafarers in the global shipping industry, which transports 90 percent of the weight of all global trade. Filipino contract workers constitute a quarter of the world's seafaring labor force of 1.6 million, making them the second largest single source of seafarers, surpassed only by China.[7]

The Philippines has also become the world's largest destination for business process outsourcing (BPO), with US companies making up the majority of its clients.[8] It is the leading contact or call center country globally, employing 1.2 million workers, which adds to the number of workers employed in overseas contract work. It is in this capacity—as a major producer and provider of deterritorialized, ancillary humans as "essential" (yet disposable) service labor in industries of global reproduction and as mediatic components of productive vital global infrastructure—that we see the importance of the Philippines' historical transformation for today's new global economy based on the production of ceaseless life-activity, boundless connectivity, and infinite circulation.

Seafarers in the global shipping industry, call center and IT (internet technology) workers in the global BPO (business process outsourcing) industry, digital operators in online healthcare and intimate labor (sex work) services, content moderators for social media, and microworkers for digital search engines and other ICT (internet and communications technology) software-as-a-service (Sass) businesses—all these workers function to conduct and maintain the logistical, transportive, and communicative flows for the global life of capital. Very importantly, these workers do not only maintain these flows by operating and maintaining the technological machinery comprising the vast infrastructures of connectivity (communication, transportation, logistical networks) that undergird global cap-

psa.gov.ph/content/2021-overseas-filipino-workers-final-results.

7 Aurora Almendral, "The Lonely and Dangerous Life of the Filipino Seafarer," *New York Times*, November 30, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/30/world/asia/philippines-mariners-cargo-ships.html.

8 Nikhil Chandwani, "Philippines' BPO Industry: In 2019 and Beyond," *Entrepreneur Asia Pacific*, February 9, 2019, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/327758.

italist supply chains and markets. They also become essential parts—vital components—of the transnational physical, technological machinery and computational platforms comprising the circulatory pathways of global capitalism.

Contracted, casual workers labor as ghosts in the machines. For example, Filipino contract workers operate as human optical-character-recognition (OCR) engines for online archival databases, crucially carrying out for computers what the latter cannot as yet carry out themselves, such as recognizing and making legible the outmoded print fonts of early modern texts.[9] Contracted Filipino "freelancers" work as literal digital appendages of "click-armies" or "white troll farms" boosting circulation for a variety of platforms.[10] And they work as digital operators working in politically-motivated (dis)information networks, "seeding political content" and "engineering virality" for local and global clients, as Jonathan Corpus Ong writes.[11]

As Stephanie Santos highlights, Filipino as well as Mexican contracted workers also operate as the "artificial 'artificial intelligence'" behind digital pet avatars in online healthcare service apps, tasked with monitoring, communicating with, and providing daily reminders for the health of their client patients.[12] Compensating for the deficiencies and inadequacies of the computer programs they work for, microworkers as well as digital AI operators carry out crucial "computational" processes to supplement the algorithms generating the artificial intelligence of these technical machines. In this way, these workers function as human components of capitalist platforms—incorporated, as Santos writes, as

9 Tung-Hui Hu, *Digital Lethargy: Dispatches From an Age of Disconnection* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022), xviii.

10 Shibani Mahtani and Regine Cabato, "Why Crafty Internet Trolls in the Philippines May Be Coming to a Website Near You," *Washington Post*, July 25, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/why-crafty-internet-trolls-in-the-philippines-may-be-coming-to-a-website-near-you/2019/07/25/c5d42ee2-5c53-11e9-98d4-844088d135f2_story.html.

11 Jonathan Corpus Ong, *Trolls for Sale* (Makati, the Philippines: Everything's Fine, 2022), 28. See also Jonathan Corpus Ong and Jason Vincent A. Cabañes, *Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines* (n.p.: Newton Tech4Dev Network, 2018).

12 Stephanie Dimatulac Santos, "'Being There for the Client': The Intimate Labors of Care Coaches" (unpublished paper, presented at the Puón Institute, San Fernando, La Union, January 9–13, 2023). The notion of "artificial artificial intelligence" comes from Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora, *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

"technological apparatus[es], specifically as akin to programming or code,"[13] their embodied subjectivities and intelligences disappeared and absorbed into the software of platforms.

Like Filipino content moderators for social media platforms, human OCR engines and AI pet avatars literally inhabit the computational machines they supplement, becoming cognitive and affective capacities that are integrated as functional parts of the platforms themselves. They are "helpers" of capital machines in the same way that domestic workers and caregivers are "helpers" of the capital lives they serve—with "helper" a code word for domestic servant.[14] It is not simply coincidental that both content moderators and domestic workers are employed as "cleaners."[15] More than a simple analogy, there is a historical and social-material continuity between these two forms of capitalist servitude, which conscript Filipino workers for the reproductive maintenance of valued and valorizable life and its machines.

Alden Marte-Wood and Stephanie Santos brilliantly observe this continuity between domestic work and nursing, on the one hand, and content moderation, on the other—two industries in which Filipino workers figure prominently—in their understanding of content moderation as a remediation of older forms of exported Filipino care.[16] "Filipino content moderators work not just as custodians but as caregivers of the internet," they write.[17] Marte-Wood and Santos em-

13 Santos, "'Being There for the Client.'"

14 "Helper" is the translation of *katulong*, the term used for domestic servants in the Philippines. In another theoretical language, digital micro workers are "helpers" of fixed capital (machines of computational capital), becoming themselves parts of fixed capital, as well as "helpers" of variable capital (life as labor) and commodity capital (life as capital).

15 Adrian Chen, "The Laborers Who Keep Dick Picks and Beheadings Out of Your Feed," *Wired*, October 23, 2014, https://www.wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/. Similar topics are also addressed in the documentary *The Cleaners* (*Im Schatten der Netzwelt*, 2018), directed by Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck.

16 Alden Marte-Wood and Stephanie Dimatulac Santos, "Circuits of Care: Filipino Content Moderation and American Infostructures of Feeling," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 101–27, https://doi.org/10.1353/vrg.2021.0007.

17 Marte-Wood and Santos, 106. Similarly, Jan M. Padios argues that call center work demonstrates a contemporary instantiation and transformation of the way that the cooperative, affective, and communicative capacities of Filipinos have historically been extracted through an intimate technique of U.S. colonial power. What she calls Filipino/American relatability or relational labor, a racialized mode of sociality, has become a form of social

phasize that it is the complex mediation work, entailing emotional intelligence, interpretative sensitivity, and intimate, bodily labor and subjective fortitude (in processing psychically damaging and traumatic content), performed by these "indirect knowledge workers" that maintains safe online *environments*—"privatized online 'commons' "—for US American and other global citizen social media users. Even as the workers' physical bodies remain in the Philippines, the digital care work of Filipinos "becomes disassembled, technologically mediated, and digitally distributed through global information networks."[18] Cast as routine, basic cognitive tasks and reduced to an executable program (the binarizing decision to "delete or ignore"), complex Filipino care in content moderation becomes encoded into the data architecture of social media platforms, producing what Marte-Wood and Santos call the "infostructures of feeling"[19] making and shaping American sociality itself. In this way, the mediatic function that Filipino content moderators perform become vital components of the reproductive infrastructure (part of the larger protected, enabling *environments*) for what I referred to earlier as the valued life of globopolitical citizens.

Rather than simply a general objectification of human labor and its subordination to machines (readily recognized and explained in critiques of capitalism), what we see in global servitude is a racialized and gendered subordination and conscription of non-subject humans for the servicing of the "demands" (social needs and desires) of full-subject humans, mediated through platforms.

The racialized and gendered deployment of subordinated humans as media for already (and would-be) human subjects is a testament to how the legacies of colonialism and slavery continue to inform the dominant (racial, sex-gender) protocols codified in the most advanced capitalist media technologies (as means of value-extraction). We certainly see this continuity in the recasting of the historical function of the slave as a tool or instrument of their sovereign master in the organization of service labor within mobile-app-based enterprises. I have elsewhere described such enterprises as seeking the perfect meshing of two orders of social media: technological and human, the fusion and incorporation of the

capital and cultural resource exploited by the nation-state and fueling its neoliberal aspirations. Jan M. Padios, *A Nation On the Line: Call Centers and Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

18 Marte-Wood and Santos, "Circuits of Care," 112.

19 Marte-Wood and Santos.

disaggregated "dividuated" human parts of contemporary capitalist enterprises as component media within a total, integrated platform—the programming of "lesser" human functions as media for the already, fully human.[20] That is to say, the configuration of disassembled and distributed bodily capacities of those coded (through race and sex-gender) as less than human is placed in the service of (in servitude to) the integral bodies of individual and collective subjects of the human defined as the life-form of value.[21]

Beyond the conscription of particular individual and group social identities for this subordinated mediatic function within capitalist technologies, we also see the legacies of colonialism and slavery play out in the present through contemporary imperial forms of war, which expand the reproduction of capital by means of relentless, dispossessing assaults against postcolonial, Black, and indigenous communities' own social reproduction. Imperialism consists of these practices of "primitive accumulation" undertaken and legitimated by means of statecraft, international realpolitik, and militarist powers, all closely attuned to the global economy, which is their field and object of action. This relation of constant violence sees to the creation and forced reproduction of the environs—*the enabling means, media, and milieu*—necessary for the labor-capital relation to exist and grow, indeed, to expand. Those means, media, and milieu provide unencumbered (free-flowing) access to and availability of resources and labor-power that capital requires. More than simply a repository of disposable natures (raw materials, "free" or wage labor), means, media, and milieu indicate the broader corporeal, social, and ecological conditions necessary for the accumulation process of capital "in all its value relations and material relations" to proceed.[22]

Dispossessed by state counter-insurgency wars, forced structural adjustments, economic and financial policies detrimental to workers, peasants, and the urban poor, and outright land and natural resource theft at home, and by systemic legal exclusions, social diminishment, and racialized punishment in host coun-

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20 Neferti X. M. Tadiar, "City Everywhere," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 33, no. 7–8 (December 2016): 72, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276416675676.

21 For a discussion of the human as the life-form of value, see also my *Remaindered Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 49–52.

22 Rosa Luxemburg, "The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to the Economic Theory of Imperialism," trans. Nicholas Gray, in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, ed. Peter Hudis and Paul Le Blanc (London: Verso, 2013–), 2:262.

tries, discounted skilled workers from the Philippines as well as other parts of the global South are continuously made available for the lower tiers of the global service economy. At once "freed" up from stable places of sustainable livelihood and employment (now foreclosed) yet kept captive by the states that control their movements and control their rights, these exemplars of serviceable life can be mobilized to serve as both the means of reproduction and production of capital globally. They serve, on the one hand, as vital components of the infrastructure for the social reproduction of capitalizable life and, on the other, as vital components of the platforms for production of capitalist value.

The serviceability of the disaggregated bodily life-capacities of the dispossessed and their subordinated incorporation within the ever-expanding machines of capital is part of what Hage calls generalized domestication, "a mode of inhabiting the world through dominating it for the purpose of making it yield value: material or symbolic forms of sustenance, comfort, aesthetic pleasure, and so on."[23] In contrast to the domestication of certain species, generalized domestication is characterized by "the domestication of one's whole environment"[24] and as such is necessarily a violent process. As Hage understands it, while it is "a struggle to make things partake in the making of one's home, [. . .] a struggle to be 'at home in the world,'" it is also paradoxically "a mode of domination, control, extraction, and exploitation."[25] Such a mode of inhabitation creates precisely the conditions of global refuse concomitant with the cultivation of life and species that can yield value. War is the means of creating conditions of absolute expendability, conditions deliberately maintained for making domesticated human life available as forms of organized, technologized servitude.

Servitude

What is servitude if not the work of subordinating one's desires and needs to those you serve, of orienting yourselves always to your *amo*'s (master's) concerns, problems, preference and pleasures, even anticipating what these might be, and acting according to how these concerns, preferences, and pleasures might be addressed or met.

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23 Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, 87.

24 Hage, 87.

25 Hage, 91.

Servitude feeds the entitlement of the served. The served see themselves as higher order beings living more complex and ultimately more valuable lives. They may outwardly sympathize with the plight and hardship of those for whom "it must be so hard," yet they do not balk at having that plight benefit them. In fact, they convince themselves of their own generosity in "helping" those people who then come into their service. And yet, and for this very reason, they feel a certain level of contempt for their servants, and not just for the serving classes in general, and even more so, for the pools of disposable populations out of which these serving classes emerge, whether that contempt is very mild, nearly indiscernible, or great and unabashed. For the relationship only reinforces its premise, namely, that servants somehow deserve their place as the served deserve theirs, that their life-times are worth less than the life-times of their employers, that their skills and capacities are less valuable than the skills and capacities of those they wait on and tend to.

Good servants, epitomizing the gold standard of servitude, go beyond ministering to the declared needs of their employers. Besides their trustworthiness and "honesty"—that is, the reliable likelihood that they will not steal from those they work for, even while their "extra" skills and capacities, including their care, and their very life-times are stolen daily (the theft dissimulated by the remuneration of their service labor-time with a wage)—what good servants do is inhabit the subjectivities of their masters/employers, identify with their feelings and views, and defend their property and their interests.

Today, global servitude is the colonial and capitalist conscription of modes of cooperative living and sociality that have been described as the "ethics of care" of non-capitalist (or pre-capitalist transformed into peri-capitalist) societies.[26] This "care" is embodied in people's older, capacious capacities to incorporate others in one's actions, to act in and embody a kind of polytropic capacity—what others have defined as affectability, dividuality, fractal personhood, and social heteronomy (rather than the individual autonomy and sovereignty of modern

[26] See Stuart A. Schlegel, *The Wisdom from a Rainforest: The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

subjects).[27] These corporeal capacities for extended being, the divisibility and coordination of personal bodily faculties and social relations in everyday practices of shared life, which have been honed in domestic communities, are what countless dispossessed people rely on for their own and their family's survival. These capacities are conscripted, however, not only in their incorporation as operational functions within capitalist platforms, but also in the interface between those technological platforms and people's own social corporeal networks of social reproduction, or what I understand as their *vital platforms*, subaltern self-programming social machines of life-making that capital taps and depends on as a form of "nature" that it can freely appropriate.

Socialized Reproduction

Capitalism's development occurs through the socialization of production, emblematized by the factory in its industrial moment and the social factory in its postindustrial moment. What figures less in many historical accounts of this development is capital's reliance on the socialization of reproduction carried out by peoples who had to rely on their own resources and subsidies for subsistence survival, and further, the role of this socialized reproduction of Third World peoples in the transformation of late twentieth and early twenty-first century global capitalism.

Socialized reproduction has been the subaltern driver and condition of possibility of the migrant labor industry, the growth of the service economy, the shift of capital investment from manufacturing production to biopolitical, cognitive, immaterial and material circulation and reproduction as sites of its highest value extraction, where exploitation is distributed and multiplied over a wider and more layered expanse across the entire social field than its predecessor of modern industrial production, which nevertheless had also relied on colonial peripheries or plantations of cheap "inputs" as unrecognized sources of value—

[27] See Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward A Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Roy Wagner, "The Fractal Person," in *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia*, ed. Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 159–73; Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Marshall Sahlins, *What Kinship Is—And Is Not* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

free or next to nothing raw materials or fixed capital (including unpaid and enslaved human labor).

The unprecedented global distribution of production is matched by the unprecedented distribution of reproduction. Even as reproduction becomes capitalized (and thus socialized), whether in the service economy or in the cognitive, communicative media economy (software as service business platforms in transportation, business process outsourcing, and social media), it continues to rely on another sphere of socialized reproduction—this time on the part of peoples wielding their own "stock" (their own human capital comprised of social relations), in which they are both *shares* and *shareholders*, in order to subsidize their incomes or wages, and to buoy up their individual lives as well as their collective (kin/family) life.

These domestic social networks comprised of kin and kin-like or kin-affiliated relations are *vital platforms* of today's global capitalism, which come with their own sets of rules, obligations, needs, and histories.

James Scott notes the persistence of autonomy of these older social units in postcolonial nations (in contrast to the relative success of modern liberal states in settler colonial nations, where the legislation of individual freedoms enabled the state "to sweep away first in law and increasingly in practice, most of the 'private' individuals and social units who had functioned as intermediaries between the state and the individual").[28] Scott writes, "Having yet to secure the individual freedoms of the modern liberal state, the practical or operative freedom of most Southeast Asians depends, to a considerable degree, on the relative autonomy of the social units within which they live."[29] This "*relative* freedom of non-state social units to determine their own residence, their own forms of community, and their own forms of property and production as opposed to the imposition of state-mediated forms of these"[30] is what has propelled and enabled the continued thriving and survival of domestic communities that have historically served as resources (free, disposable nature for the taking) for colonial and capitalist powers.

[28] James C. Scott, "Freedom and Freehold: Space, People and State Simplification in Southeast Asia," in *Asian Freedoms: The Idea of Freedom in East and Southeast Asia,* ed. David Kelly and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38.

[29] Scott, 38.

[30] Scott, 38.

As the self-sustaining autonomy and forms of subsistence of postcolonial, especially rural, domestic communities come under continuous assault through processes of primitive accumulation, what remains in their possession is not simply their individual bodily labor-power, which certainly they sell on the labor market as "freed" wage workers. What also remains for them is their kinship networks, a social corporeal, cooperative life-making power (and program) that enables survival for those whose life-forms and agencies are always interactively imbricated, dependent, and attached.

Relations of Life Expenditure and Help

In the home country, people are left to care for the extended lives left by diasporic Filipinos, caring for family members who did not migrate with them, with fiat currencies earned elsewhere, converting their more valuable life-times into life-extensions of the kin of Filipinos everywhere, making possible the global "life" of Filipinos.

Everyone wastes their lives differently. In an economy of collaborative sustenance, you do what you can. Kin abroad might waste their life-times in employment, which might mean nothing more than expending their own low-value life-times in place of the high-value life-times of their employers, saving the latter valuable, capitalizable time, by taking on the unproductive work of their reproduction and maintenance, doing their chores, preserving and caring for their capital assets (houses, children, free time).

Meanwhile, local kin of those abroad might waste their life-times wading through traffic, filling out paperwork, waiting in lines, as public, bureaucratic and private agencies demand their expenditure as the content of their enterprises, which speed up and slow down, authorize and deauthorize, processes at every turn, with every turn incurring fees—notarizing documents, procuring the correct stamps, checking the boxes, filling out proper signatures.

In turn, local kin might be attended to by retinues of helpers of their own (poorer relations, or relations for hire), waiting on them, on demand, ready to do their bidding—find parking, deliver a package, run an errand, buy a part, fix things, fix papers, go out in the rain, slog through floods and crowds, be a body in a line, hold a place, be on hold, wait—to take an order, to move, to be of use. These

helpers are paid to shoulder hardship, to take on in their own bodies the discomfort, the dirt, the exhaustion and the emptiness of time lived and expended for others—life-times rented out for any reason whatsoever.

These are relations of variable expenditure, gradations of valued utility, that go all the way down chains of reproductive care of diminishing worth, each predicated on the extraction of others, until the very last drop, until one reaches those whose lives cost next to nothing, if not nothing altogether, and where people pass over to being worth more dead than alive, those whose role is now to serve as fodder for derivative value-making exchanges over murder and induced death (the police, the funeral parlors, the media, the humanitarians, the scholars)—the economy of life expenditures led by global and local enterprises of security wars.

Here everyone stands: servants, killers, and the dead—each on the precipice of falling into the other, each struggling to rise above, to accumulate and solidify, with only the last—the fully expended or eliminated—coming to a full stop.

What can make a difference (as great as the difference between living and dying) is one's relations' connection to networks of social value. Here is the meaning of social death—the severance from social being and status, from kinship, which for the disenfranchised is the primordial and remaining condition of *pagiging tao* (being human).

And yet the descendants of the colonized survive on more than these forms of expenditure. We also survive on the time-consuming lending of ourselves to each other, the very exchange, partition, and extension—the many kinds of giving—of what we have, who we are, where we might be, what we can reach, to sustain those of whom we similarly partake. We thrive to the extent that we depend on these vital platforms we come to be a part of and that we work to sustain as a matter of "mutual being," a matter of our own life and death.

Bodily Transformations and Other Life Persistence

The qualitative leap forward in technical process (attained by a new generation of machines), which each epochal shift in capitalist society entails, is propelled as much as enabled by the shifts and transformations in the collective and individual bodies (socialites and personhoods) of those whose lives and labors are

required for the social utility, operation, maintenance, facilitation, and valorization of those machines.[31]

Much is written about the shifts in subjectivity and sensibility of the vast users of digital media, many of these observed as the fragmentation and destruction of attention, the alienation and wounding of sensory and perceptual experience, the loss of memory and extension, the dispossession of youth, agency, and creativity, the derangement of human faculties and social relations, the lethargy concomitant with the imperative of productivity, etc.—changes alternately described as debilitating and sometimes differently abling—even as the online social reproductive activity of those very users seemingly permanently attached to their digital devices provides the "free labor" drawn on to build social media platforms and increase their value and power.[32]

There are certainly many detrimental social and subjective changes that are constituent effects of the digital age, but what is only now gaining more attention (and should be connected to the experiences of users, which also includes them) are the transformations required of workers on the back end of these same platforms. As the physical, psycho-affective, and social-relational living labor of workers enters directly into the operating systems of these computational machines that make possible the circulation-driven global economy, their bodily capacities become ever more integrated within and integral to the "planetary socionatural system" that is global capitalism in what Martin Arboleda terms the fourth machine age.[33]

As Arboleda understands it, the fourth machine age is characterized by the synergistic fusion of human, non-human, and extra-human capacities across physical, digital, and biological domains, an unprecedented scale and immediacy of coordination that contemporary technological and scientific advancements make possible and controllable.[34] This contemporary megastructural, industri-

31 Martin Arboleda, *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction under Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2020), 36.

32 See Jonathan Crary, *Scorched Earth: Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World* (London: Verso, 2022); Hu, *Digital Lethargy*; Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

33 Arboleda, *Planetary Mine*, 40.

34 Arboleda, 49.

al-technological organization of capitalist production has given rise to "a polarizing alienated industrial organism—the collective laborer—whose material constitution is contingent upon the uneven distribution of productive attributes among its organs."[35] While engineers, scientists, and designers are charged with complex parts of the labor process, their productive subjectivities expanded and developed, other workers are degraded "as mere appendages of technological infrastructures"[36] or slotted in manual/low-skill labor.

"The movements of worker's bodies are what make the movement of global cargo possible," Deborah Cowen notes, detailing the ways in which the rhythm of workers' bodily movements in transport industries (shipping, airlines, trucking, and trains) are minutely calibrated with the logistics systems that undergird the high-speed commodity circulation of global supply chains.[37] Workers' bodies are calibrated to the "body" of the lively transnational socio-technical system even as those same bodies are made to bear the costs of ensuring (securing) the steady flow of global trade through these chains.[38] As in past moments of capitalist machinofacuturing, workers' bodies become instruments, tools, and appendages of capitalist machines but they are no longer confined to a single factory or locale. Rather they become parts of "the concrete corporeality of the sum total of the vast multitude of labors living under the geographies of capitalist society," which are now distributed across the planet yet finely coordinated through mega computational-technical infrastructures anchored in, yet traversing, individual nation-states.[39]

Disposable workers' bodily capacities become integrated in the more degraded organs of "this multiscalar, heterogeneous, and transnational industrial organism as a working whole."[40] Beyond being simply connected and coordinated across diverse geographies in the transnational "stretching" of the factory, which prompted the rise of geo-economic calculative technics at the core of the

35 Arboleda, 79.
36 Arboleda, 79.
37 Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 125.
38 Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*, 113.
39 Arboleda, *Planetary Mine*, 52.
40 Arboleda, 80.

logistics revolution,[41] their vital capacities are fused with capitalist machinery, harnessed as both wage labor and means of production (blurring the distinction between variable capital and constant capital), exploited *and* appropriated, subsumed in the creation of increasingly sovereign megaplatforms whose powers of emergent self-directed growth and expansion are internally enhanced by vital capacities fused with their own machinic intelligence.

As Marte-Wood's and Santos' discussion of Filipino content moderation shows, the living labor and complex subjective and interpretative intelligence of humans as media are incorporated into the machine-learning of social media platforms themselves.[42] In this way, we might understand the harnessed capacities of serviceable life (transformed into components of machine intelligence)—slotted in technological labor tasks of purported low complexity—as contributing directly to the dynamism, growth, and development of platforms' programming software, and therefore to the continual leaps forward in processes of technical innovation otherwise solely attributed to high-end programmers and designers.[43] These human mediatic components therefore do more than maintain the platforms of value-productive connectivity and circulation. They are also organic to the purported self-improvement and evolution of "smart machines," whose efficiency, speed, and automation are necessary for the aggressive pursuit and accumulation of relative surplus-value (the driving force of technological innovation).

Human media act not only as vital components of capitalist platforms but also as vital constituents of those platforms' natural-technical conditions of possibility, or, what Gilbert Simondon called the associated milieu of the technical object, which I read here as the very technical being (in the contemporary moment, the planetary computational socio-technical system or, in Jonathan Beller's analysis, "the world computer") of global capital itself.[44] A view of the as-

41 Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*, 104. Cowen importantly argues that the revolution in logistics that began in the 1960s effectively realizes the value-productivity of transportation and movement (that is, of circulation as well as of manufacture production), whose potential Marx himself glimpses and suggests in the second volume of *Capital*.

42 Marte-Wood and Santos, "Circuits of Care."

43 During the 1980s rise of East Asian industrialization, much of this low-level technological labor was outsourced to surplus populations of the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Arboleda, *Planetary Mine*, 55.

44 Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects,* trans. Cecile Malaspina and John Rogove (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2017); Jonathan Beller, *The World Computer:*

sociated or enabling milieus of the labor-capital relation brings into focus those other corporeal or life conditions required for the assembly and operation of the collective laborer as "a pulsing, breathing, planetary organism."[45]

Arboleda for example notes that the consolidation of the degraded organs of the collective laborer depends on the systematic assault on older rural, communitarian, agrarian forms of sociality.[46] In the mining industry as well as other resource extractive industries, on which the digital, robotic, and microelectronic technological innovations of the fourth machine age depend, the ongoing dismantling of older social forms, including forms of intimate and interdependent relations between human and non-human natures, has resulted in entire lifeworlds transformed through destruction into disposable resources. Such lifeworlds have become turned into what in Chile are informally called *zonas de sacrificio* (sacrifice zones), degraded environments collapsing under the social privations and predatory violence (street fights, drug abuse, sexual assault, theft) as well as severe (air, water, noise) pollution and toxicity resulting from intensive extraction, exploitation, and dispossession.[47]

Imperialism is this very dispossessive process by which entire necropolitical zones of global refuse, including disposable "surplus populations" and toxic, poisoned wastelands, are produced as a necessary dimension of the natural-technical milieu of the collective laborer.

The conditions of global refuse that global capital's command over the planetary organism of global labor entails—the laying waste to people, the earth, waters and seas that a growing literature on the capitalocene has amply demonstrated is the necessary consequence of the capitalist mode of production[48]—points to

Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). For Beller, the "world computer" refers to the entire virtual operating system of the global communicative infrastructure, which results from "the practice that is information's endless computation" (Beller, 264), including the cognitive and sensual capacities folded into cybernetics.

45 Arboleda, *Planetary Mine*, 74.

46 Arboleda, 79.

47 Arboleda, 94.

48 See, for example, Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015); Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016).

the broader and longer historical colonial ecology of contemporary capitalism. Malcolm Ferdinand argues that colonization's principal action was the act of inhabiting, an act that was "based upon a set of actions that determined the boundaries between those who inhabit and those who do not inhabit," between lands that are inhabited and others not, between homes and ways of living that are proper forms of habitation and those that are not.[49] Ferdinand writes, "Colonial inhabitation refers to a singular conception with regard to the existence of certain human beings on Earth—the colonists—of their relationships with other humans—the non-colonists—as well as their way of relating to nature and to the non-humans of these islands."[50] Akin to Hage's notion of generalized domestication, colonial inhabitation is a mode of being structured by principles of territorial domination, exploitation and extraction of land and nature, and othericide, that is, the denial of Otherness and its reduction to the Same of the colonizer. Founded on the violences of land seizure, land clearing, and the massacre of indigenous peoples, colonial inhabitation establishes forms of habitation—what we might understand as forms of its own reproduction—based on intensive monocultures and mass exploitation of human beings, paradigmatically exemplified by colonial plantations and slavery. These forms of habitation, whereby the inhabitants are the masters and the enslaved are those who do not inhabit but instead exist only to be used as the tools and raw materials (resources) of the inhabitants, can be seen shaping the "good life" of contemporary global capitalism and the devastation of its enabling milieus.

Colonial Ecology, Planetary Remainder

As we've seen, colonial inhabitation shapes the relation between globopolitical citizen-subjects and human mediatic components of infrastructure and software for capitalist enterprises. It also shapes the continuous process of global depeasantization required for resource extraction industries—or what, citing Achille Mbembe, Arboleda describes as "the transformation of formerly free peasants into *bodies of extraction*—that is, bodies that extract minerals and are also rendered into living deposits for the extraction of value."[51]

[49] Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 27.

[50] Ferdinand, 27.

[51] Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), Spanish translation quoted in Arboleda, *Planetary Mine*, 78.

More than the instrumentalization of labor commodities to be expended in the production of extrinsic value, the utilization of humans as commodities with the intrinsic capacity for the incubation and (re)production of future value was historically developed through the enslaved Black woman, as Jennifer L. Morgan and Françoise Vergès have powerfully shown.[52] These historical social processes integral to the production of value continue to underpin and shape the most technologically advanced forms of capitalist mediation today. Indeed, the relations of colonialism and slavery can be understood not only to have organized the contemporary divisions of organs within the collective laborer, but also to have been codified as racial, sex-gender logics that permeate and inform the protocols of capitalist production in all its material relations, including the imperial formation of capital's associated milieus.

The ecology of colonial inhabitation, which manifested itself early on in the history of European settler colonial settlement as "a condition of continual disruption: of plowed fields, razed forests, overgrazed pastures, and burned prairies, of deserted villages and expanding cities, of humans, animals, plants, and micro life that have evolved separately suddenly coming into intimate contact," is now planetary in depth and scale.[53] To recognize the planetary scope of this colonial ecology calls us to attend to the transformation (destruction, renovation, alienation) of older forms of human-extra human cooperation and other ecologies in the face of this global generalized colonized domestication of the earth, which harnesses what it finds value-producing while sloughing off what it deems waste, while eliminating populations and species it finds threatening to its own aims and existence, producing "an ephemeralized world" composed of entire zones of disposability (of expendable resources, viewed as both surplus and waste—the former to be freely appropriated, the latter to be redeemed and repurposed through investment).

In that broad scale transformation, however, we also see the inventions and reconfigurations of agencies and engines of collective life-making on the part of

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52 Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Françoise Vergès, *The Wombs of Women: Race, Capital, Feminism*, trans. Kaiama L. Glover (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

53 Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 291–92.

those deemed disposable, such as those human populations whose capacities and faculties are to be integrated into the circulatory and nervous systems of the collective laborer. As the global pursuit of relative surplus-value through technological innovation proceeds at a relentless pace, and circulation, movement, and connectivity become ever more important to value-production, their bodies of servitude are split and fragmented, their faculties divided, made into fungible component functions in this planetary technical-natural organism of production. At the same time, other bodies are rendered absolutely expendable, becoming part of the raw materials consumed by global machines of communication, logistics, circulation, and war—fuel for the ever-enlarging sociometabolic reproduction of capital. Yet even as capital depends on these bodies of disposable life to form the sinews and flesh of its planetary corporeality, those very bodies are also engaged in their own social reproduction, engaging in forms of life-making that capital draws on as part of its enabling milieu, which it paradoxically destroys and preserves.[54]

We are therefore called upon to see the changes in the material-social fabric of planetary relations, particularly the transformed configurations of immanent socio-natural capacities of disposable humans, in terms of their own life-making practices and protocols, beyond their disassembled and distributed capacities incorporated as digital appendages of capitalist machines. I have in mind the dividual bodily and relational capacities comprising people's social matrices of survival—older forms of cooperation and social reproduction, which are harnessed to the dominant colonial-capitalist ecology but are not fully subsumed by it.

Certainly, migrant workers' bodies become fused with the tools, machines, and implements of their work, their movements finely calibrated to the algorithmic programs for global production. Through her brilliant performance and kinaesthetic archiving of Philippine workers' bodily and affective labor in the global service and entertainment industries, movement artist Eisa Jocson has highlighted both the disciplining colonial power that commands their bodily trans-

54 This is Claude Meillassoux's understanding of imperialism's paradoxical relation to non capitalist domestic communities. Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

formations and the virtuosic human mediatic capacities that workers exercise to heed that command.[55]

Jocson explores and demonstrates the pliability and malleability of their gendered, sexual, and racial identities, their physical, socio-cultural mimetic and empathetic abilities, their bodily and psycho-affective capacities for inhabiting and transmitting signs, emotions, messages, capacities for being the mediums of others' desires, fantasies, being. In doing so, she attends to the high-level of skill, fluency, and corporeal virtuosity of Filipinx bodies extracted and incorporated in and as "service machines," capacities that emerge out of another genealogy and ecology, beyond those of colonial inhabitation in the history of capital.

Even as they can mold their bodily emotive selves to meet the needs of an imperial capital sensorium, these workers are also shape-shifting to meet the needs of their own families. As Valerie Francisco-Menchavez argues, migrant workers importantly act as important nodal actants in networks of multidirectional care, their bodies occupying more than one space-time as they endeavor to be virtually at home (in the Philippines) while being physically at work often simultaneously through the very same technologies that other workers are fused with.[56] While they work to keep their host/employers' bodies and lives intact, their care work put towards reproducing the latter in the life-form of value as full-subject humans, they also engage in a mode of living and inhabiting of distributed bodily being, across multiple spaces and persons, whose distances are bridged by technologies, letters, remittances, words, and images, gifts and acts of reproducing themselves and other dividual members of another corporeal structure, which I have called vital platforms. Geraldine Pratt notes, "An individual Filipina caregiver enrolls her entire family when she migrates,"[57] and as Francisco-Menchavez observes, the roles that migrant workers' appear to have vacated to work abroad are "absorbed and distributed through the extended kin net-

55 See, for example, Jocson's works, *Host* (2015), *Happyland Part I: Princess* (2017), *Your Highness* (2017), and *Becoming White* (2018), available at https://eisajocson.wordpress.com/works/.

56 Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, *The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in the Digital Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

57 Geraldine Pratt, *Families Apart: Migrant Mothers and the Conflicts of Labor and Love* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xxviii.

works that were already there."[58] Both Pratt and Francisco-Menchavez carefully attend to these networks consisting of the bodily lives, faculties, capacities, and relationality of kin, friends, and affiliates—what I have called vital platforms—which people both continue to mobilize and revise certainly as components, but also as coders, programmers, and users.

The difference between the planetary organism that is global labor and the corporeal webs composed of the latter's extended living networks of survival spells a planetary remainder—an excess of life-making beyond capital's biopolitical command. To attend to the mycorrhizal form of these social human networks calls us to older relations of living that persist, even if under painful duress. Mycorrhizae are "fungal helpers," extending their bodies through thread-like strands which mediate the nutrient exchange between the soil and trees, whose roots they fuse with. Forming a "biological *communications network*" belowground, they figure kinds of mediating agency, symbiotic relations, and non-human forms of species cooperation on which so much living depends.[59] To view the vital platforms of people in these terms of non-human being is to consider other ecologies of lifemaking, which these matrices of living might yet imply, insofar as these forms of social reproduction on the part of dispossessed communities were historically, genealogically, and yet might be cooperatively entwined with these very non-human natures and lifeworlds. I see these other ecologies—or perhaps "alterecologies," following Michelle Murphy's notion of "alterlife"[60]—as the subsistence that happens both despite and beyond the seeming total global subsumption of planetary life. They compose the planetary remainder that may well be our only hope for another future.

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58 Francisco-Menchavez, *Labor of Care*, 31.

59 Michael Phillips, *The Holistic Orchard: Tree Fruits and Berries the Biological Way* (Vermont: Chelsea Green, 2011), 5.

60 Michelle Murphy, "Alterlife and Decolonial Chemical Relations," *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (2017): 494–503, https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.4.02. Also quoted and elaborated on in Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*.

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