

antidepressant; or, a history of present illness

chloé samala faux

I could not honestly say that I had found new community, new kin. I only knew that I was inhabited by a restless roaming spirit that was seeking to learn things in a world away from my people. Much of what I learned in that world was not life-affirming. Longing to become an intellectual, I stayed in college. I learned some important information.

—bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*

Anger, or (Black) Magic

face me whose whole life is tied up to unhappiness cause it's the only for real thing i know.

—Nikki Giovanni, "Woman Poem"

My white colleague called me hostile and I was stunned into silence. "Maybe my face just looks like this," I didn't bother to say. An alternate explanation: a piece of me was ripped from my womb and I feel like I want to die and as a result I am enduring a pronounced episode of melancholia, also unvoiced. Though I never walk alone: mother, father, theirs before theirs, changing and adapting constantly, my ancestors. There is also Depression, life's loyal companion. "You (my colleague)," I wanted to say (but didn't say), remind me of the man that incites bell hooks to action after he refuses to change plane seats so she can enjoy the flight with her friend. "I am standing across from a may-as-well-be-anonymous white woman that I long to murder."¹ "I am beside myself with grief. And there you are standing across from who you think is me." "What must I do to get you off my ass?" In that moment I could not help but think of Saartjie Baartman/"Hottentot" Venus, whose ass became the site for white people to rearticulate racism as science. For me, black women (un)thinkers try to make sense of an "excess and surplus sexuality" that is imposed and inscribed by a racist society,² an innate hostility or apparently bottomless reserve of fucks to give. I try to carve out a place for myself "out there"—as well as *in* "here"—with as little subjection to violence as possible.

The deadened look in my eyes as I said, "I'm not sure what you're talking about" was an enactment of dissemblance: the performance of aloofness, part of a politics of withholding, an improvised mode of self-preservation.³ "I feel the tremendous

grief of almost/former motherhood and now, I must be your mammy. But I don't want to be." "I don't feel like I can talk to you," she said. "I didn't know that was how you were supposed to feel," I didn't say. "I don't care," I also didn't say. ~~A re-~~
~~minder/warning:~~ "Because many black women make care synonymous with love, we confuse the issue."⁴

"You can be too black for the university," a professor told mother—black woman—and me during office hours. An affirmation of what we suspected, knew to be true. If labor is a bodily disposition for *homo faber*,⁵ must we not distinguish a body from a life? A valuable perspective offered by feminists, people of color, and indigenous scholars is that reproduction is the unseen in labor-power's value, through silent support: at the university, we're the contingent diversity workers.⁶ "Out there": our experiences become the material for a whole range of "interesting" academic inquiries. I had a seminar with a white man who announced during the first-day round of introductions that his dissertation topic was "black girl magic." A student of musicology, he was especially interested in black girls' use of rhythm and gestures. When I recounted this to anyone who would listen, I couldn't help but add "did he *really* mean snaps and neck rolls?" Faces around the seminar table were countenanced, neutral, blank, unsurprised, un-hurt. Care? Love? (for whom?). A contention that has been rehearsed many times over, that is worth rehearsing once more: to call us magic undermines our labor. The non-recognition of labor is itself a process of extraction. "That hurts my heart so much," said my friend L. She told us a story about a black woman friend of hers who wanted black women and girls to be the focal point of her dissertation, but was met with resistance from faculty advisors. So painful this unroomy bind of need and use.⁷

(anti)-depressants

FLUOXETINE (floo OX e teen) belongs to a class of drugs known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). It helps to treat mood problems such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and panic attacks. It can also treat certain eating disorders. Ask your primary care provider or pharmacist if you have questions.

I was chatting with a friend on WhatsApp while I was in Sierra Leone and he in New York, and we got to talking about coffee, mainly because I wanted some. Isn't it something that the countries that cultivate coffee beans only have a taste for the powdered Nescafé that has flooded every market, grocery shop, tuck shop, spaza?

me:

"Nestle needs to chill
With their poison products
eyeroll emoji

him:

“Largest food company in the world
According to wikipedia
Is this the Man?”

Is Fluoxetine (generic for Prozac) the Man? Is an anti-depressant selling out, a concession, or, an aspiration? Maybe it is the Man. The Man tells us stories about ourselves, about the way we move through the world. Because of the Man, because of loss, the longing, and numerous other reasons, Prozac is a part of my pharmaceutical being.

A constellation of symptoms felt together/collectively known as clinical depression or major depressive disorder: decreased interest or pleasure in most activities, most of each day, significant weight change (or change in appetite), change in sleep: Insomnia or hypersomnia, change in activity, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue or loss of energy, diminished ability to think or concentrate, thoughts of death or suicide.

Depressant can refer to a drug or chemical substance that “reduces functional or nervous activity.”⁸ A depressant: an influence that depresses economic activity. The polyvalence of “depressant” is instructive for thinking about the racializing and weathering of our bodies. The psychological toll of the emotional labor that is not only ungratifying but damaging; the slog through bureaucratic regimes, the becoming prisoners to our ailing bodies, and to The System in general; the dying when making life; our descent into ex humanity,⁹ former maternity,¹⁰ the immobility of being without verbs. Another symptom of clinical depression is the feeling of worthlessness.

An idea for a conceptual art project/installation came to mind on a day I was able to drag myself out of bed: a series of nearly-blank word-processor pages on a computer screen. Depression isn't so conducive to artistic production, “everyone” now accepts as common knowledge. Being depressed: being overwhelmed by emptiness. Motivation leaches from your bones, your nerves, your mind. A series of false starts and stops: the writings of a depressive. Intellectual/artistic/literary production: a trick of vocabulary, or an iteration of “the textuality of value”¹¹ Spivak gives us two connotations of the textual: rooted in language and following, Deleuze and Guattari, that “‘reality’ is a fabrication out of discontinuities and constitutive differences with ‘origins’ and ‘ends’ that are provisional and shifting.”¹² What if we thought with the textuality of “depressant” to think about the limits of analytical categories and, about the blockages that foreclose imaginative possibility and lived experience? How does one struggle to live under erasure[s]¹³, ~~depressants~~, which “violently

enacted cannot be resisted or prepared? What if [they] just [settle] in, awful, hurtful, and intrusive?"

In my scholarly life as an anthropologist,¹⁴ labor around ugly states of being: dis-possession, abandonment, humiliation, grief. Should we understand the study of "valuelessness" as valuable, or is another qualifier necessary, one which breaks with the language of valuation, worth, investment, return? What are the ethical and methodological implications (Ethical because the modes of valuation suffuse both labor and life, and as a result, one seems to necessitate the other. Methodological because the language of value suffuses critical inquiry)? What does it mean when one studies structures of unbearable feelings, but finds oneself deadened by a reduction of feeling, or contending with "a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death,"¹⁵ and looking for healing nonetheless? Does it matter? Not long before he contracted the ebola virus and died, after treating hundreds, Dr. Sheik Umar Khan, a Sierra Leonean epidemiologist, physician Specialist from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, is reported to have said: "I am afraid for my life, I must say, because I cherish my life."¹⁶ "Existence is not dialectical, not representable. It is barely livable."¹⁷ The thing we like to call "real life" has a way of feeling "more fabulous, more maddening, more strangely manipulative than fiction."¹⁸

Diminished Ability to Move

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

—Lord Alfred Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade"

I met up with my friend Tebogo during a weekend visit home to Johannesburg. He is a doctor doing a year of community service in the South African province of Mpumalanga in a not-quite-industrial, not-quite-rural town. He said he prefers emergency medicine to anything else. "Someone has a heart attack, you treat them and then they're on their way," he said. "Maybe that's just a defense mechanism on my part," he added. But maybe, I ventured, emergency medicine, more accurately reflects the state of affairs (as though, it is this isomorphism one seeks)? The constellation of factors that makes life barely livable in the material sense, make for a slow dying. How to find words to narrate a demise, a weathering, that is incremental and unspectacularly spectacular? Chronic illnesses like diabetes require luxuries of regularity and certainty that one will regularly have food to eat to accompany one's

supply of insulin. Taking insulin while running on empty means diabetic coma, means emergency (which may or may not mean, trip to the emergency room). Care only happens when slow death becomes too much, no longer abated by desperate writhing or Panadol. And fittingly, emergency medicine seems to stage this discrepancy between who is seen and the process by which they are seen. A (emergency) case received: A *gogo*¹⁹ in pain. Classic symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis: stiff, painful joints, diminished joint range, fatigue. Rheumatoid arthritis cannot be cured, but it can be treated to varying degrees of effectiveness depending on when it is diagnosed. Degenerative illness that makes movement painful. Knuckles and fingers warp into charred branches. Tebogo couldn't help but marvel aloud that nothing was done sooner. "*Mntwan'am*:"²⁰ Life is like the charge of the light brigade. Following the orders of Lord Cardigan, Crimean War's Battle of Baclava, British light cavalry charged Russian troops into a bloody frontal assault. Strategically/militarily speaking, the deaths that resulted were senseless, but the battle looms large in the British mythic-historical imagination as a metaphor²¹ for selflessness. Mixed metaphors are emblematic of the colonial experience; school kids learn to confidently recite poetry about snow-capped mountains, despite only knowing rainy and dry seasons. And yet, over there in that town in Mpumalanga life sometimes rhymes with the charge of a light brigade: the poorly equipped foot soldiers, obeying the orders of empire, even in the face of certain death. A (noble) act of selflessness or a self that is less (than)?

On Insomnia, precious metals, and feeling lackluster.

Though it's thousands of miles away
Sierra Leone connects to what we go through today
Over here it's a drug trade, we die from drugs
Over there they die from what we buy from drugs
The diamonds, the chains, the bracelets, the charms
I thought my Jesus piece was so harmless
'Til I seen a picture of a shorty armless

—Kanye West, "Diamonds From Sierra Leone (Remix)"

Sierra Leone's civil war "officially" broke out in 1991. Control over the country's diamond mines is often said to be a cause, but really, we can never know. Public servants shuffled to work, shoulders slumped forward, and unpaid until they were so fed up they started to break into government offices and buildings, taking what they knew was theirs. The public education system was barely on its knees. Neighboring Liberia was going through coups, executions, and widely-seen-as-fraudulent elections, all drenched in blood, and as we know, borders are lines to be crossed as well as an affective vestibule where anxiety and fear reside and proliferate. Joseph Momoh deployed troops to ward off Charles Taylor's rebels, who called themselves

the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Momoh's army came under attack not only from the NPFL, but also from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a Sierra Leonean rebel group led by Foday Sankoh, a disillusioned corporal of Sierra Leone's army, who found it more worthwhile to collaborate with the Liberians. Violence begets violence; in turn, Sierra Leone struggled through a series of coups, beginning with the overthrow of Momoh in 1992. He was replaced by military officer Valentine Strasser, making him one of the youngest dictators, turning 25 shortly after seizing power. During this time, the RUF gained more control over the diamond mines. The war escalated. Little boys were abducted and taught to wield AK-47s. They were given cocaine and were shown *Rambo* until it no longer made them cry. Little and teenaged girls became sex slaves and were forced to take up arms.

Around the age of 10, I became obsessed with death, overtaken by nightmares that left me an insomniac for two years. I would spend sleepless nights visualizing piles of discarded black limbs with exposed raw flesh and bone, hearing screams, pleas, and even worse, laughter. The Revolutionary United Front's principal means of brutality was amputation. Which could be read as a spectacular response to former President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's 1996 plea for citizens to "join hands for peace." "Short sleeves or long sleeves?," rebels would ask. Legs were hacked off with machetes, so were lips, and ears. Pregnant women's bellies ripped open after onlookers were taunted to guess the sex of the baby. Compromised bodily integrity indexed a compromised political life. I was haunted by broken bodies, uneven hack jobs, gripping and repulsive images at once ephemeral and chillingly overbearing, a spectacle of death in life that left me disoriented, far-flung, ill, nervous: the return to our land, the return to comfort seemed violent, painful, and long. We were flung to the Gambia, the US, the UK, France, South Africa...

Dreams and the imaginary lend themselves well as the metaphors of compromised visibility, the shadowy obverse of what remains unquestionably present in waking life. It is a theatrical way of seeing that challenges and confounds modes of subjectification, animation, gendering, and racialization, where the body appears ghostly rather than epidermal, its corporeality defamiliarized. Bodies appeared as traces, making manifest the latent relationship between flesh and memory—what once was, *history* ÷ living, breathing, entities transformed into some things that can only be cited as *spectacular*, *horrifying*, but never *known*.

Some joke that Sierra Leone (whose name leads people to assume that it is in South America) is so small that you could walk around the whole country in a huff. Sierra Leone's land area measures 27,539.736 square miles, and in this speck of a country one finds iron ore, bauxite, gold, limonite, and diamonds. Like many African countries, Sierra Leone suffers from what political economists call the "resource curse."

To speak of the resource curse is to invoke what Macarena Gómez-Barris calls the extractive view, which is to say the “logics that map territories as commodities rather than perceive the proliferation of life and activities that make up the human and nonhuman planetary.”²² And to call such a state of affairs a “curse” is to conveniently overlook valuation’s white mythology that posits the steady supply of cheap African labor for mines, plantations, and farms as natural resources. Nature is a perspectival concept that privileges the vantage point of slavers, creditors, and ruling parties.²³

In *Capital Volume 1* Marx writes: “Diamonds are of very rare occurrence on the earth’s surface, and hence their discovery costs, on an average, a great deal of labor-time. Consequently, much labor is represented in a small compass.”²⁴ This raises questions about value, which in Marx’s understanding is determined by the socially necessary labor time expended to make diamonds as a commodity available. Indeed, minerals become valuable only once they have been extracted by human beings helped by machines. Diamonds in South Africa and Botswana must be extracted from deep kimberlite reserves, with the help of “machines of the mine,”²⁵ making it a rather labor- and capital-intensive process called mining: a form of resource extraction that dates back to antiquity. Marx continues:

If man succeeded, without much labour, in transforming carbon into diamonds, their value might fall below that of bricks. In general, the greater the productivity of labour, the less the labour-time required to produce an article, the less the mass of labour crystallized in that article, and the less its value. Inversely, the less the productivity of labour, the greater the labour-time necessary to produce an article, and the greater its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productivity, of the labour which finds its realization within the commodity.²⁶

Diamond fields cover approximately 7,700 square miles of Sierra Leone’s surface,²⁷ and while diamonds are found underground in kimberlite pipes, they are mostly alluvial, which is to say they are commonly dispersed among the gravel of riverbeds. Extraction is therefore done artisanally: by hand or with simple tools, by laborers often working at the behest of dealers.

Mining, in general, allows us to think about capital’s transformation of populations (civilians) and lands (mines) into raw materials for the creation of surplus value and, by extension, the violence of surplus extraction. Extraction as “the action of taking out something, especially using effort or force.” Some questions that seem to emerge naturally: (taking something) out of where? To what ends? When is “effort or force” synonymous with violence? Perhaps, it would depend on what is being extracted? “Natural resources” seems to be a natural response and(/but) as a response it allows us to question how we theorize a thing rather than the critical

discourses that are haunted by the violence what they displace. The practice of mining stages this conundrum in the way the material and the immaterial, the metaphorical and the literal, oscillate in discourses of and around mining as the work of valuation. “The world is seen as an exploitable mine”²⁸ for meaning, for metals, and for diamonds. Diamonds are one of the hardest materials on earth, but that is neither here nor there. This doesn’t matter. What does matter is that diamonds undeniably do (matter). What does alluvial nature diamond mining in Sierra Leone in particular tell us about the violence against those who have come to be known as black in our global arrangement of the World? It is telling that Rajesh Gopalakrishnan Nair, in “The Diamond Resource Curse in Sierra Leone: An Analysis from a Political Economy Perspective,” characterizes the diamonds in Sierra Leone as particularly “lootable.” In the language of political economy, “[l]ootable commodities are those that have high value-to-weight ratios, and can be easily appropriated and transported by unskilled workers.”²⁹

In “1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ – ∞ or ∞ / ∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value,” Denise Ferreira da Silva asks why it is that racial violence does not matter. Da Silva is interested in “an indifference signaled by how the obvious question is never (to be) asked because everyone presumes to know why it can only have a negative answer.”³⁰ In order to elaborate her proof on the Equation of Value, she draws from Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga’s 2014 installation *In Pursuit of Bling*, which illuminates the way in which the opulence that characterizes Western aesthetics—much like “the West” itself—is encrusted with “materials that glitter-image colonial violence.”³¹ She continues:

In the modern Western Imagination, blackness has no value; it is nothing. As such, it marks an opposition that signals a negation, which does not refer to contradiction. For blackness refers to matter—as The Thing; it refers to that without form—it functions as a nullification of the whole signifying order that sustains value in both economic and ethical scenes.³²

If value is a symbolic apparatus that gestures towards the commodity’s “natural but also...purely economic existence,”³³ then the “conflict diamond”³⁴ seems to bespeak a terrible beauty. Violence works to untether the “merely” from the symbolic. To speak of “blood diamonds” is to join the material, lived, and symbolic to the “economic” in the most capacious sense. Blood diamonds bear (commodity) fetish qualities as well as claims for redress. Raw materials are not found; people are robbed. The mechanics of representation are as critical to the creation of value as the actual exchange of use values in the marketplace—the way that the mobilization and mutilation of bodies can be overlooked as long as they are mining diamonds for those who inhabit spaces of shine. Labor is indispensable to the valuation of a “natural resource.”³⁵ “What is available for virtually free to the economic process and transformed into ‘value’ within it appears to have no cost simply because it costs its

beneficiary nothing..."³⁶ Value crystallizes in the circulation of myths of eternal love and transcendence.

~~Black lives~~ ~~Temne lives~~, ~~Mende lives~~, ~~Krio lives~~, ~~Kono lives~~, ~~Koranko lives~~, ~~Limba lives~~, ~~Susu lives~~, ~~Fulani lives~~... matter then, present the material for a poetic vision of the World that is formal as well as affective; chromatic as well as social; suffused in light or shrouded in darkness; "place[s] of obscurity."³⁷ "These 'non-values' become subject to exchange—at the highest possible value."³⁸ Blackness of the body is not just what you can or cannot see, but what you can do to a black *body*—let it live or suffer, rape it, de-sacrilize it.

Asylum, or Deathly Ideations

All change can create sadness. It's when the sadness lingers that we can become stuck, mired, and unable to move.

—bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*

In 2011, I met a group of Sierra Leoneans who were afraid they were going to die. The fear of dying is the fear of most people, but it must be different when death is both imminent and immanent. The convergence of our bodies brought about by circumstance, timing, and tragedy—at once horrifying and enchanting—resembled a diasporic pastiche. I was part of an activist organization that provided those in search of refugee status with the language to write asylum claims and appeals, indices of undoing, injury persecution, stories of de-linking from the place that was once "home."

Most all of their first claims were dismissed as *fantastique, voire pas crédibles* [fantastical, not credible even]. *Ses explications orales sont dénuées de substance* [his oral explanations lack substance] read one letter of refusal from OFPRA (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides). *The incommensurability of "the real"* and "real effects" crystallizes by the UN Human Rights Commissioner's clumsy construction "manifestly unfounded or not." The notion of "manifestly unfounded" hints to a particularity of pain: "It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language."³⁹ Indeed, the "or not" assumes a groundless claim from the start. The juxtaposition of "manifest" visible or evident, with the "unfounded"—the invisible or out of reach—points to the conundrum implicit in what Michael Taussig calls "talking terror," which is to say laying claim to the injury suffered. The questions at the heart of the asylum process: *Who are you?*, *Why are you here?*, and *Why can't you go back?* are implicitly related to the ethnographic question of cultural translation. The outcomes of these "translations" were about more than the status of a copy to an original or the transmission of meaning. At stake is the transmission of

pain and the making intelligible of injury that destabilizes the discourse of the “human” at the center of humanitarianism.

‘Talking terror’ is a question of distance...a matter of finding the right distance, holding it at arm’s length so it doesn’t turn on you (after all it’s just a matter of words), and yet not putting it so far away in a clinical reality that we end up having substituted one form of terror for another.⁴⁰

“You can never know what goes on in the Bush if you’ve never been inside,” Musa said to me. He was referring to the opacity of the asylum process. On one level, the Bush indexes the “savage Africa” that informants have fled. More generally, it indexes the esoteric, the hidden, the illegible. “Modern Europe” rubs against traditionalist notions of “the bush” as a site of sequestration. Musa’s metaphor, loaded with cultural currency, puts into relief the slippage between the fear of being forcibly taken to “the bush” to be initiated into a secret society, and the anxiety of awaiting one’s fate from a rural French town; it invites a “re juxtaposing [of] the colonial gaze...where the terms and practices imposed upon and appropriated from the colonies, like *fetish*, *sorcery*...and *taboo* are redeemed and come alive with new intensity.”⁴¹ Waiting for “papers” is like being in a “civilized prison,” to use the words of Mariatu.

France is, as Obai said, a “paper country,” where paper is an irrational stand-in for *lived experience*, and yet paper has the power to alleviate pain. “Having papers” means having refugee status. “Paper” is not only materially, but socially, culturally, and symbolically central to the construction of the “Western Bureaucracy,” as an annex of the State. It is paper that constitutes the State’s archive, which works to enumerate and classify citizens, those who wish to become citizens, and those who never will be citizens. Information is life and vice-versa. “If it’s not on the computer, it doesn’t exist to them,” one of the two Ishmaels said in a discussion with Abu and me, moving his fingers across an imaginary keyboard.

Paper, in the context of political asylum emerges as an “empty semantic vessel[s], capable of being filled with a variety of ideological messages.”⁴² It is malleable by way of the imagination, “the great inbuilt instrument of othering.”⁴³ “The clash of these readings is the stuff of which bureaucratic encounters are made.”⁴⁴ Paper is shorthand for access to a “*status*.” In the words of Ishmael, “papers, it’s up to God.”

A refrain: I’d rather die here than there. Toothaches, stomach pain, chest pain, head pain. Heart pain. “Wasted energy,” Abu called it “[F]estering longevity.”⁴⁵ “That’s why we’re sick all the time,” Obai said with certainty. Each one of the guys amassed an impressive collection of appointment cards, prescriptions, and lists of blood tests to drop off at the lab for analysis. Prescriptions for sleeping pills to get through the interminable nights; Doliprane for the headaches; Anti-depressants for “the stress.”

Mariatu once told me about the “tablets” prescribed to her by a psychiatrist as she retwisted my dreadlocks. She had not seen her two children in almost three years. Friends back home told her not to take the meds because it would mean that she was crazy. “I didn't want to take them because I know I'm not mad.”

Regimes of body-imaging, where the intangible, affective, and biological dimensions of pain coalesce, the domains of medicine and human rights are appealed to when people are at their most vulnerable. In the asylum process, medical certificates issued by doctors take part in “the validation of [asylum seekers'] accounts by the corporal inscription of their persecution,” constituting a new form of transnational administration of peoples.⁴⁶ Through the accrument of medical documents, while waiting for their “papers,” the adage that “paper is proof” is recast.⁴⁷ Forced is a negotiation between their ostensible unknowability, as “*real refugees*” before the law, and their fundamental physicality, which is to say, the “bodily intensity and dynamism that energize the forces of sociality...[which] cannot be thought outside the complexities, reconfigurations, and interarticulations of power.”⁴⁸ Thrown into sharp relief is that the articulation of pain entails an “an endless spiral of subjection and subjectivation:”⁴⁹ half death, half-life.

Half Lives: Out there /in here

Of all of the SSRIs Fluoxetine has the longest half-life. Half-life refers to the “the time required for any specified property to decrease by half.”⁵⁰ It determines how much time is needed for a drug to accumulate—reach a ‘steady state’ in the system—and also how much time the system needs to eliminate it.

“The task of historical materialism,” writes Walter Benjamin in “On the Concept of History,” is to seize “that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it.”⁵¹ Elsewhere, Benjamin identifies the slag heap—the spoils⁵² of mining—as the site where one discovers that which has past. Mined for meaning, mine dumps are dialectical images wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.⁵³

And too, our displacements, violations, (depressants?) and encounters, as fragments remembered and rearranged: talking, taking care, loving, crying, wailing—are a messy entanglement of “residual historical fragments.”⁵⁴

A fragment:

Two years ago in kwaBulawayo, I accompanied my former lover and his brother to clear the weeds off the tombstones of his father and his father's kin. We passed the hospital: Mpilo hospital. A white signpost with stenciled black lettering. Mpilo means life in isiNdebele. "But there's only death inside" he said. "No bandages, no food, you cannot get well in there." Or out here.

Endnotes

1. mama bell: "I am writing this essay sitting beside an anonymous white male that I long to murder." bell hooks, "Killing Rage: Militant Resistance," in *killing rage: ending racism*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995, 8-20.
2. See: Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habes Viscus: Radicalizing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.; Hortense J. Spillers "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* vol. 17, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 65-81.; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
3. Tyrone S. Palmer, in "What Feels More Than Feeling," acknowledges the importance of the culture of dissemblance as discussed by Darlene Clark Hine. However, Palmer also acknowledges the ends of mobilizing dissemblance by arguing that "[the] enactment of dissemblance does not shift the symbolics of [the] 'Black female body' against the world's sharp white background. She is still contained, trapped in a racial imaginary" (46). See: Tyrone S. Palmer "'What Feels More Than Feeling?': Theorizing the Unthinkability of Black Affect." *Critical Ethnic Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (2017): 31-56.; Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* vol. 14, no. 4 (1989): 912-920.
4. bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*. New York: Routledge, 2015, 142.
5. Marx writes "The use and construction of instruments of labor, although present germ among certain species of animals, is characteristic of the specifically human labor process, and [Benjamin] Franklin therefore defines man as 'a tool making animal.'" Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin, 1990 [1867], 286.
6. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
7. By way of an analogy that just so happens to hint at the hell our bodies are put through, Marx asserts that capital extracts the life force of labor power "in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility" (Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 376).
8. Oxford Dictionary of English
9. João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
10. See: Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. Aereile Jackson, a character/caricature/black woman, in Allen Sekula and Noel Burch's documentary *The Forgotten Space*, whose children have been taken away by the state is referred to as a "former mother." Through her figuration, Sharpe draws attention to the naturalized relationship between black motherhood and loss.
11. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *Diacritics* (Winter 1985): 80.
12. Spivak, "Scattered Speculations," 77.
13. *Sous-rature*, invoked by Jacques Derrida via a reading of Martin Heidegger, translates to "under erasure." See: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967.
14. a black/African born to parents of the colony; we are iterations of the "native," fixtures of the anthropological imagination.
15. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press, 1968, 128.
16. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ebola-virus-top-sierra-leone-doctor-shek-umar-dies-of-disease-9636406.html>
17. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmose*. Paris: Edition Galilée, 1992, 78-79.

18. Trinh T. Minh-ha, "The Totalizing Quest of Meaning," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed., Michael Renov. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993, 96.
19. isiZulu for "grandmother."
20. "My child" in isiZulu.
21. The anthropologist Michael Jackson: "[M]etaphors which are ordinarily quiescent (yet are the verbal correlates of actual bodily dispositions) are activated on ... critical occasions to mediate changes in people's bodies and experience, as well as alter their relationships with one another and the world." Michael Jackson, "Thinking Through the Body: An Essay on Understanding Metaphor" *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*. No. 14 (1983): 134.
22. Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 133.
23. "It is everything that should be free (or as cheap as possible). This covers everything that can be appropriated through robbery (as opposed to exchange), and beyond that everything they can neither renew nor preserve. This 'everything' does indeed amount almost to *everything*: the entire globe, along with its products, commodities, and peoples." Claudia Von Werlhof, "On the Concept of Nature and Society in Capitalism," in *Women: The Last Colony*, ed., Maria Mies. London: Zed Books. 1988, 97.
24. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 130.
25. B. Wallet Vilakazi, "In the Gold Mines," in Francis Wilson, *Labour in the South African Gold Mines 1911-1969*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. 190-94 (Appx. 30)
26. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 130-131.
27. https://web.archive.org/web/20110728030648/http://www.slminerals.org/content/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=9
28. Von Werlhof, "On the Concept," 98.
29. Rajesh Gopalakrishnan Nair, "The Diamond Resource Curse in Sierra Leone: Analysis from a Political Economy Perspective," *The Thinker*, Quarter 3, vol. 69 (2016): 66n5.
30. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ - ∞ or ∞ / ∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value," *e-flux*, no. 79 (February 2017).
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin, 1993, 141.
34. Established in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly, The Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, which, through an international certification of diamond imports and exports sought to prevent the circulation of conflict diamonds. Ultimately, though, it was largely a failure and was abandoned by many of its supports such as Global Witness, the NGO whose 1998 report entitled "Rough Trade" brought international attention to the diamond trade's entanglement with armed conflict.
35. Von Werlhof, "On the Concept," 97.
36. Ibid., 98.
37. Da Silva, "On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value."
38. Von Werlhof, "On the Concept," 105.
39. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 5.
40. Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc. 1992, 11.
41. Ibid., 117.
42. Michael Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 26.
43. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 13.
44. Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference*, 74.
45. Marc Augé. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe. London: Verso Books, 1995, 78.
46. Estelle d'Halluin and Didier Fassin, "The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers," *American Anthropologist*. vol. 107, no. 4 (2005): 600.
47. Because the court no longer has an official Krio interpreter, many of my informants began the asylum process for more than two years.

48. Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula, and Kostas Yannakopoulos. "Towards a New Epistemology: The 'Affective Turn,'" *Historein: A Review of the Past and Other Stories* 8 (2008): 6.
49. *Ibid.*, 9.
50. Oxford Dictionary of English
51. Benjamin, Walter, "On the Concept of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 4: 1938–1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn, 389–401. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006: 391
52. spoil n. 2. waste material brought up during the course of an excavation or a dredging or mining operation (New Oxford American Dictionary)
53. Walter Benjamin, "Convolute N," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, 456-488 [N2a,3].
54. Allen Feldman, "Memory Theaters, Virtual Witnessing, and the Trauma-Aesthetic." *Biography*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2004): 164.