



Browse > Philosophy > Political Philosophy > Theory & Event > Volume 17, Issue 2, 2014

The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present

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Abstract

This essay addresses current theories of matter and materialism, particularly ontological approaches. My key proposition is that the Humanities' ontological turn is a theoretical primitivism that presents itself as a methodological *avant-garde*. It is so because it fetishizes the sundering of human and object worlds. We need to ask why these primitivist ontologies have come to prominence. "The molecular" – a critical object that exemplifies this primitivist turn – is the focus of my analysis here. Combining Marxism, queer studies, and Joel Olson's conception of a "fanatical approach," I argue that molecular ontologies mediate a dual intensification specific to the present: that of neoliberal forms of settler colonialism and financialized capital accumulation.

Spinoza could believe in his universal godhead because he knew nothing of Daltonian chemistry – not to mention the organic chemistry that actually solves the problems in some ways we are still not sure of. Consciousness, at least as we know it, has to be a molecular phenomenon ...¹

With these words, Mama Grace – seminarian, intellectual mentor, and mother-figure to the characters of Samuel Delany's *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* – describes the difference between Spinozist and empiricist materialisms, and hands the novel's young focalizer, Eric Jeffers, a copy of the *Ethics*.

The *Ethics* is a book with which Jeffers will keep close company for the remaining 400 pages of Delany's recently-published 800-page novel – a meditation on Spinozist immanence, interracial love stories, rural communities, the incest taboo (or lack thereof), and the near future. We could say that *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* does with Spinoza what Delany's earlier work did with Derrida, Barthes and Foucault: it is a "paraliterary" exploration of the driving theoretical concerns of its day.² Indeed, insofar as Spinoza has returned to prominence as the theorist of matter par excellence, *Through the Valley* develops a lushly embodied, sprawling, realist, graspable future – a version, perhaps, of what Fredric Jameson meant by the Utopian impulse as the merging of the "reality principle of SF [Science Fiction] and the pleasure principle of fantasy."³ This summoning of totality through texturation may suggest something like a Spinozist aesthetic; but the question of form is not one that can be addressed here at any length. Let us simply say that, in the course of *Through the Valley*, we are treated to a rich Spinozist landscape of sexually provocative animals (spiders, pigs, dogs), thunderstorms, and mucus; an immanentist theory of nonmonogamy (if one desires *someone* sexually, then one necessarily desires *anyone* sexually); and a host of hypotheses on the godhead, nature, consciousness, and the *Ethics*.

This essay is not the venue for an extended reading of this magisterial novel – nor, for that matter, of Spinozist materialism. But I open with Mama Grace's assertion because I see it as an intervention into current tendencies in thinking matter and materialism.⁴ These theories take a number of names – Object-Oriented Ontologies (OOO), new materialisms, vitalism – but they might be provisionally grouped together under the heading of a general positioning: an ontological turn, and one that, as Mama Grace might suggest, takes exemplary form in the molecular.⁵ Object-extraordinaire of a new-materialist microphysics of the subject, biocapitalist frameworks, and the micrologizing drives of ontological orientations, the molecular names a theoretical conjuncture and conceptual abstraction that calls out to be understood in historical context. What I am calling the *molecularization of sexuality* is my entry point into that project. In what follows, I wish to focus attention on the molecular's intersection with queerness, and ask a very simple question: what might queer studies have to illuminate about the ontological turn?

My approach to this symposium – and to the molecularization of sexuality – is animated by what the theorist Joel Olson has called a "fanatical approach." In his unfinished manuscript, *American Zealot*, Olson poses fanaticism as a tradition of engaged radicalism that occupies a structural position "outside the realm of respectable politics."⁶ Fanaticism, that is, functions as that denigrated location that, as Alberto Toscano has argued, is coded as an "excess of politics," and thus external to the sphere conceived as legitimately political. I want to suggest that current ontological thought has made its home in this interstice: the space between what is considered properly political and that which is derided as fanatical.

What do I mean by a "home in this interstice"? The separation of radicalism from rationality – or the separation of a genuinely emancipatory fanaticism from *realpolitik* – took place long ago, is constitutive of Enlightenment rationality and liberal governmentality, and is not in need of review here. The point, rather, has to do with the ways in which the ontological turn borrows

from a long tradition of radical bewilderment, but unlike the kinds of committed, engaged fervor traditionally linked to fanaticism, substitutes a kind of *sheer* bewilderment that depoliticizes and obscures the fissure between fanaticism and what has been authorized as recognizably political. The ontological turn, in other words, equips itself with the fanatical character of radicalism, but only as a kind of technical sheen. What I am saying is that, central to ontological thought is a flourishing of the limit to that thought, a limit that becomes internal to and constitutive of that thought. That limit is politics. The molecular is exemplary of this limit, as particulate matter becomes a kind of sublime miniature and a point at which ontological wonder blooms.

Given that we have such rich histories of thinking secular and nonsecular forms of enthusiasm as a kind of political affect, one has to wonder how and why the space of rapture has become separated from questions with which it was once so cognate: commitment, collective struggle, utopias.⁷ In an effort to generate a productive encounter between Olson's unfinished work and these questions, I want to suggest that a fanatical approach to the molecularization of sexuality would thus aim to elucidate the molecule as a suppressed or veiled engagement with an occluded historical situation. The fanatical approach, put simply, seeks to discern what Spinoza described as the "absent cause": history.⁸ An "absent cause" and a fanatical approach, in other words, are linked at a praxical and fundamental level; for it is only in understanding our conditions as historical that we can commit ourselves to their transformation.

1. Onto-Primitivism

Let me begin by briefly anticipating a key claim in deliberately polemical terms: the ontological turn is a kind of theoretical primitivism that presents itself as a methodological *avant-garde*.

What do I mean by this? Current continental philosophies have turned toward ever-smaller particulate matter for a foothold into the question of Being. As some critics have pointed out, this litanizing of the object-world exhibits a kind of lust or enthrallment with things that sits uncomfortably close to the commodity-logic of late capitalism itself.⁹ I'm not so concerned, however, to approach this question as one of commodity cathexes. Indeed, if we share the materialist conviction – with Alfred Sohn-Rethel¹⁰ – that the commodity-form comprises the secret structure of abstract thought, then such accusations are so uncontroversial as to lose analytic force: all abstract thought is cast in the same dialectical fires borne (*Träger*) by the commodity.

The ontological turn, I want to offer, has less to do with the libidinal object-urges of the ontologists, and more to do with a species of temporalization. Beyond the question of commodity-lust, I think we ought to be far more unnerved by the ways in which the ontological turn focuses its attention toward what Quentin Meillassoux has admiringly termed the "ancestral realm" of the pre-conscious world, and of object life.¹¹ Surely, some of us have been wondering what the appeal of ancestralness might be for contemporary theorists, and why it has come into relief at present.

Here, then, is one polemical hypothesis: the urge towards objects comports itself in a very particular fashion, one that will be familiar to scholars of colonialism and settler-colonialism, and that calls to mind any number of New-World-style fantasies about locations unmediated by social order. The ontological turn, that is to say, reshapes an old paradigm, a primitivist fantasy that hinges on the violent erasure of the social: the conjuring of a realm – an "ancestral realm" – that exists in the present, but in parallax to historical time. A *terra nullius* of the theoretical landscape. The burden of this essay will be to show first that this ontological turn is primitivist; next how this ontological primitivism intersects with work on sexuality; and finally, what might be specific about our current conjuncture that would activate such primitivisms and give them contemporary form. To anticipate this final claim at the outset: I believe that the primitivist turn mediates a dual intensification specific to the present: that of neoliberal forms of settler colonialism and financialized capital accumulation. I will expand on this claim in greater detail throughout.

A caveat. The ontological turn may be or may become many things. It may have many layers to exfoliate and explore.¹² And let me be clear; it would be reductive and absurd to argue that the ontological turn is itself a colonialist project. Nevertheless, we must reckon with the ways in which, in their current iterations, ontologies so frequently and aggressively drive toward the occlusion of the dynamics of social mediation. We need to ask why the lust for dehistoricization, for demediation, for a temporality outside of history, is flourishing now, and in this way.

2. Why Primitivism?

What is happening such that primitivist theoretical currents have cast themselves as the leading edge of Humanistic thought? In what follows, I will suggest that the primitivist turn has some yet-to-be-parsed relationship to what Sandro Mezzadra describes as the "violent (catastrophic) reopening of the question of the origin" that accompanies periods of transition – particularly the recent intensification of both the settler-colonial and financial character of capital accumulation.¹³ More specifically, I wish to argue that there is not only an escalation in the present of what Marx called "primitive accumulation" – or, the original and reiterated violence necessary to the reproduction of capitalism as a system – but also the narrative logics that accompany such escalation. In essence, then: object-ontologies are origin narratives. They are origin narratives that mediate a set of intensifications to one or more fangs of capital accumulation in the present. The fangs under consideration here are the intensification of settler colonial dynamics (including historical dynamics that are encoded into state and legal formations), and the "empowerment," as David Harvey says, of the financial "moment" or arena of capital accumulation.¹⁴ Together, these dynamics produce an accelerated or particularly sharp version of Marx's well-known diagnosis of the laws of capital's constant self-expansion: the "annihilation of space by time."

Is there a way to test these claims? Let us consider the first – that object ontologies are origin narratives. To the extent that the period we are currently occupying (otherwise known as “the rise of finance,” “neoliberalism,” “hegemony unraveling”) represents a set of shifts – shifts that one understands as internal to capitalism – this transition is accompanied by a set of violent practices of expropriation as well as a specific narrative dimension: a fantastical preoccupation with origins. I wish to argue that the turn to ontology is one such origin narrative – a narrative that takes the form of appearance of a methodology, but that is, in essence, driven by a figural logic.¹⁵

We know that object-ontologies are origin narratives not just because they are compelled to project forms of “ancestralness,” but more specifically, because they exchange frictionlessly between two sets of seemingly opposed orientations – origins and prognostication. Object ontologies, in other words, cast a twin temporal shadow: the ancestral and the futural. Or, the primitive and the brink. These two temporalities are linked, of course, primitiveness having long been the dialectical verso-face of millennialism. In what follows I will explore the contemporary iteration of this well-established and only apparently contradictory suture. I say “only apparently contradictory,” because, as Andrea Smith has argued so incisively, these two temporalities are locked together at their root: “normative futurity depends on an origin story.”¹⁶ We have only to recognize that for much ontological thought “normative futurity” is apocalyptic, to begin to see the relevance of Smith’s diagnosis for our purposes here.

But: what has any of this to do with sexuality? In what follows, I will argue that the study of sexuality offers a unique register for the ontological turn. Indeed, we might recall that “the object” has been a foundational question for queer studies. For Judith Butler, notably, that “object” was sex/gender, and unsettling the appearance of its ontological reality was the project of *Gender Trouble*’s genealogical inquiry. Butler sought to show how gender is a specific kind of object – what Kevin Floyd describes as an “ontological illusion” – and then to show how the occlusion of the illusory status of gender ontologies was inextricable from other ontological illusions that circulate through the social field.¹⁷

I am thinking here as well of Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s interrogation of the political contexts that produce the queer object and method of analysis. In “What Can Queer Theory Teach Us About X?” they suggest that “[t]he question of x might be more ordinary in disciplines that have long histories of affiliation with the state”, and offer that distance from the authorizing functions of the state has allowed queer theory the “power to wrench frames.” After describing a number of frames so wrenched, Berlant and Warner conclude that what Queer Theory does, is to “transfor[m] both the object and the practice of criticism.”¹⁸

Would it be unorthodox to suggest that what was once a methodological question attending queer theory at its outset – what is theory’s relation to its object? – has now taken on the character of an apriori answer? In other words, we no longer ask: *what is the object of queer studies?* Rather, the object of queer studies – at the present moment – appears to be *the object*.¹⁹

To the extent that queer studies has shifted focus from queer objects to objects more generally, this shift has a double resonance. On the one hand, it represents the critical force of diasporic and queer of color critique to broaden the understanding of sexuality to a set of conjunctural questions that contextualizes the ontological illusion of subjectivity within what Roderick Ferguson describes as the ineluctably political field of subject formation and the production of desire: “If the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class constitute social formations within liberal capitalism, then queer of color analysis obtains its genealogy within a variety of locations. We may say that women of color feminism names a crucial component of that genealogy as women of color theorists have historically theorized intersections as the basis of social formations. Queer of color analysis extends women of color feminism by investigating how intersecting racial, gender, and sexual practices antagonize and/or conspire with the normative investments of nation-state and capital.”²⁰

Queer of color critique insists that queerness cannot be understood in isolation from a range of social formations. In doing so, Ferguson notes that this composite of forces (“racial, gender, and sexual practices”) operates with a double valence: an “and/or” logic. It’s this “and/or” that has marked queer theory for the past decade or more. Even as queerness remains a site of resistance to what Elizabeth Freeman has indispensably termed “chrononormativity” – or, what we might understand as the demands of racial capitalism for certain forms of productivity and submission to the status quo – as Jasbir Puar has made clear, queerness has also, in crucial ways, become folded into chrononormativity. For Puar, the conspiring between queer subjects and the nation-state is marked by the “incorporation of queers into the domains of consumer markets and social recognition in the post-civil rights late twentieth century ... [as] queers [enter into] the biopolitical optimization of life,” and become “tied to ideas of life and productivity.”²¹ In both accounts, however, we notice the ways that queer studies has expanded its focus from explicitly “queer” objects to an intersectional or conjunctural account of the social world.

In a special issue of *Social Text*, “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?,” David Eng, J. Jack Halberstam, and Jose Munoz describe this expansion as queer theory’s “subjectless turn”: “What might be called the ‘subjectless’ critique of queer studies disallows any positing of a proper subject of or object for the field by insisting that queer has no fixed political referent ... A subjectless critique establishes ... a focus on a ‘wide field of normalization’ as the site of social violence.”²² It should be said that this subjectless critique is, itself, marked by a kind of and/or logic. As Andrea Smith has argued, while the subjectless turn opens up queer work beyond the kind of “ethnographic multiculturalism” that attends the neoliberal Humanities more generally, there is also a tendency for this turn to ontologize queerness itself such that the fundamental plays of power that constitute that social world become normalized and de-specified. Drawing on Puar, Smith argues that the “subjectless” subject of queer critique often unwittingly puts into place a racialized subject that bears the burden of subjectivity: “Puar’s analysis of biopower suggests that modern white queer subjects can live only if racialized subjects trapped in primitive and unenlightened cultures pass away” (49).

Smith's focus here has to do with explicating the relationship between settler colonialism and queerness – tracing how this relation comes to be encoded at the level of the body, of desire, and in the habitus of the everyday. More than this – and more to the point for our work here – Smith elucidates how origin narratives embed themselves at the heart of not only queer subject formation, but queer theory as well. Building on her claims regarding the subjectless turn, and citing Elizabeth Povinelli, Smith argues that: “queer politics and consciousness often rely on a primitivist notion of the indigenous as the space of free and unfettered sexuality that allows the white queer citizen to remake his or her sexuality. However, once this sexual praxis is engaged, it does not translate into solidarity with indigenous peoples’ land struggles. The subjectless critique thus calls attention to both the importance of Native peoples within scholarly work and their disappearance within this work. At the same time, it may be the case that it is in fact a subjectless critique that disguises the fact that the queer, postcolonial, or environmentally conscious subject is simultaneously a settler subject” (52).

To reiterate: the despecification of the queer object, for Smith, runs the risk of despecifying, as well, the historical forces that make “queerness” appear legible as an ontologically abstract force in the first place: “what seems to disappear within queer theory’s subjectless critique are settler colonialism and the ongoing genocide of Native peoples” (49).²³ When queerness comes to indicate an ontological or essential form of resistance, we can lose sight of the conditions that make queerness as such legible in the first place. Scott Morgensen describes this in terms of a “settler rationality” at the heart of Western queer subject-formation; “settler rationality” might thus be understood as a way for queer whiteness to appropriate fantasized forms of primitive indigeneity, so to naturalize the displacement and extermination of indigenous people from the settler colony.²⁴

Although this is a necessarily hasty summary of recent developments in queer theory, we might say that the broadening of the ambit of queer study beyond the queer subject follows an “and/or” logic: it both reaches toward historical materialist and (*pace* Ferguson) intersectional analyses, and it has the potential to “conspire” with the erasure of the specificities of racial capitalism and the underlying settler-colonial logic of modern Western culture. Let us simply say, then, that the subjectless turn has been at once a turn toward the historical specification of queerness in the context of racial capitalism, and, at times, a flight into an ontological queerness that at times attenuates such specification.

The reason I am redacting this process quickly is that the subjectless turn is not itself the subject of our attention here. Rather, I want to suggest that the subjectless turn has a kind of partial legacy in current ontological work, and specifically in the turn toward the molecular as the pre-eminent “subjectless subject” of ontologically-oriented theory. The ur-object, if you will. There is no clearer demonstration of this legacy than in Timothy Morton’s announcement, in “Queer Ecology,” that because “at the DNA level, it’s impossible to tell a ‘genuine’ code sequence from a viral code insertion,” “there is no contradiction between straightforward biology and queer theory.”²⁵ I take this announcement to be representative of the de-mediating contractions characteristic of the ontological turn more broadly. Morton argues – against decades of queer theory that have sought to divorce the biological from social ontologies of gender – that in fact it is the “queerness” (by which Morton appears to mean the *aleatory nature*) of biology that mirrors with precision the queerness of the material (by which Morton appears to mean *physical*) world: “In a sense, molecular biology confronts issues of authenticity similar to those in textual studies. Just as deconstruction showed that, at a certain level at any rate, no text is totally authentic, biology shows us that there is no authentic life-form. This is good news for a queer theory of ecology ...” (275).

The molecular object, for Morton, appears to resolve the and/or of queer theory into a quasi-scientific, empiricist collision of matter and materialism, in which the aleatory (aka “*queer*”) nature of matter ratifies the physical world as imminently antagonistic to the demands and logic of contemporary capitalism – always already having escaped discipline, if you will. This is an authenticating gesture in the garb of a deconstructive one.

Morton may be influenced, in his concatenation of queerness and the aleatory, by Freeman’s field-shaping *Time Binds*. “[T]he point” of queer studies, Freeman has argued, “is to identify ‘queerness’ as the site of all the chance element that capital inadvertently produces, as well as the site of capital’s potential capture and incorporation of chance.”²⁶ For Freeman, queerness represents an “element” of potential resistance to the logic of productivity demanded by capital. I will say more about the question of production later on. For now, however, what I want to note is the unmarked inversion of this logic in Morton. In Morton, queerness and the “elemental” have become synthesized, utterly consolidated. Queerness, in other words, is not Freeman’s “chance element,” but something like *elementality*. No longer the and/or logic of conspiring and/or antagonism, the “elemental” – the molecular, the biological – figures an asocial ontology, and thus serves as the foundation for a primitive-brink temporality. Following – but strangely rearranging – an argument coming out of queer studies, Morton’s ontology casts the elemental as a kind of cellular “ancestral realm” – one that signals futurity and primitiveness at once – embedded within the subject.²⁷

I would like to offer one immediate reason why contemporary Humanistic studies may have taken this “ancestral” turn – a reason that is uniquely visible through the lens of queer studies, and that has to do with what I charted above, via Morgensen and Smith, as the long encodings of primitivism as a mode of settler rationality. As Morgensen argues, “[e]mbracing a primitive sexual nature linked to roots within Native culture articulated the defense of modern sexual minorities with normative assertions of settler citizenship.”²⁸ What I mean to suggest is that the ontological turn reiterates a version of this settler rationality, borrowing – or, rather, capsizing – a set of arguments from queer studies in order to grasp biology as a kind of *sheer* queerness (or, aleatoriness) that enshrines a primitive/brink temporal logic while appearing nonnormative and in some fundamental way resistant

to the demands of capitalism's logics of time, discipline, and subject-formation. In this process, the molecular becomes the vehicle for the cleaving of ontology from politics—investing it with a dual temporalization that is simultaneously a dehistoricization. I believe that it is critical for us to try to understand *why* this is happening – what social forces this dehistoricization is mediating. Shortly, I will try to show how this resurgence in primitive/brink figurations marks the intensification of settler-forms of dispossession under neoliberal regimes of finance capital. For the moment, however, we return to the molecule.

3. Materialism Against Matter

In handing the *Ethics* to Eric, Mama Grace explains that Spinoza's materialism – his conception of “universal godhead,” or what Fredric Jameson describes as the “absent totality, Spinoza's God or nature” – regards consciousness as material and embedded in the world, rather than transcendent and removed from it. We return to the scene of the exchange:

Consciousness, at least as we know it, has to be a molecular phenomenon ... If its components had any existence at a greater or lesser granularity, consciousness would not be what its components form, any more than a bar of calcium, a gallon or so of water, and a bag of various minerals constitute a human or even an animal body.²⁹

Consciousness *at least as we know it*. The critique is plainly imminent: the consciousness we “know” to be molecular is known only through historically-specific modes of knowing. Thinking matter through molecules, in this sense, might exemplify contemporary life-scientific approaches, but insofar as it appears to equate matter with molecules, it doesn't quite capture the Spinozist approach to materialism. I want to suggest that if we follow Mama Grace's reading of Spinoza, the *interconnectedness-of-all-things* might be a better way of thinking materialism than “matter.” This is what Cesare Casarino, following Spinoza, describes as *Deus seu concatenatio* (*God or concatenation*):

... immanent cause is the concatenation of things by a different name ... all things are related to one another, and indeed are bound and chained together, through that which at once brings them into existence as well as exists only to the extent to which it inheres in them ...³⁰

Centuries after Spinoza lived and died, we may understand consciousness as “molecular”; yet, for Mama Grace, it is the occlusion of the molecular that makes possible Spinoza's materialist methodology. Indeed, in a bravura deployment of the theory of uneven development as a history of philosophy, Mama Grace proposes that Spinoza's great theoretical leap – the assertion of consciousness as material, of affect as material, and of materiality as having the kind of immanent force formerly ascribed to a hierarchy of religious figures – depends quite literally on Spinoza's not-yet-having had access to molecularized hypotheses of how the body and the mind work. Materiality, simply put, is irreducible to molecules.

Recently, work that shapes itself within the Spinozist tradition³¹ makes recourse to the fields of molecular biology and chemistry as representative of the “self-organizing capacity of inorganic systems.”³² It appears to some as if the molecular-biological present is a realization of Spinoza's materialism. Beatriz Preciado, for example, has recently argued that the capacity to produce “molecular joy” – the “*potential gaudendi*” (or, “orgasmic potential”) of the body – represents the “raw material” of what the Italian autonomists refer to as “cognitive capitalism”: “the biomolecular and organic structure of the body,” Preciado asserts, “is the last hiding place of these biopolitical systems of control. This moment contains all the horror and exaltation of the body's political potential.”³³

While Preciado's interventions are engaging and vital – and the history of the industrial production of testosterone that she charts is invaluable – there is a certain (reductive) economism to this argument, one we might not recognize immediately but that requires our attention. Mark the logic of the claims, particularly the assertion that the molecular is a new frontier of raw material extraction/exploitation so significant as to shape the world-system: “the world economy is dependent on the production and circulation of hundreds of tons of synthetic steroids and technically transformed organs, fluids, cells (techno-blood, techno-sperm, techno-ovum, etc.)”³⁴ I think that Preciado's insistence about the epochal centrality of the molecular to the “world economy” might be debatable. As Kaushik Sunder Rajan has argued extensively, biocapital in itself does not mark a distinct phase of capitalist production: “I wish to clarify the relationship of biocapital to capital (and to capitalisms) in precisely these terms. Biocapital does not signify a distinct epochal phase of capitalism that leaves behind or radically ruptures capitalism as we have known it.”³⁵ The reason why biocapital, in itself, does not represent a critical new phase of capitalism is both that capitalism is “not a unitary category,” and that “biocapital itself takes shape in incongruent fashion across the multiple sites of its global emergence.”³⁶ Preciado's “world economy,” in other words—not to mention the figure of “biotechnology” itself – presents a figment of coherence that is illegible outside of the uneven spatial contexts of production, extraction, circulation and consumption at work in the constitution of biocapital-as-value. As Sunder Rajan explains: “The everyday existence of a biotech or a pharmaceutical company ... involves the coexistence of at least these two simultaneous, distinct, yet mutually constitutive forms of capital.”³⁷ Preciado's account of what “the world economy” “is,” however, focuses largely on circulation and commodity-usage (such as the testosterone she self-administers). From this vantage point, the molecular may appear (to Preciado) as both a uniquely “horrifyingly” exploited raw material and an immediately available resource for resistance. But to make such claims runs the risk of blurring the many mediations of labor, spatial unevenness, and geopolitical contingencies that define the production of the biotechnology itself: that constitute, in fact, its *social ontology*. The ontological Being of testosterone, put another way, is not legible from the point of its consumption, even if one claims that, in taking it, one is making one's own body available as an exploitable resource and that one is thus in some more immediate way in relation to the production of biocapitalistic value (though I think this tendency of Preciado's argument is also debatable).³⁸ What Sunder Rajan makes clear is that biotechnology is most legible from the perspective of its production.

We may hear an echo between Preciado's argument and Eugene Thacker's (to my mind) unaccountable conviction regarding revolutionary immediacies of molecular "agency" in which:

... the nonhuman domain of cells, enzymes, and genes... metabolic networks, biopathways, single-point mutations, immunoknowledge, protein folding – offer a resistance to the genecentric and reductionist approaches taken by the biotech and pharmaceutical industries.³⁹

Here, Thacker eliminates questions of confrontation, contingency, collectivization (not to mention *passion*) from the thinking of resistance, and instead ascribes a kind of determinate trajectory to the autonomization of cellular life. One wants, at this point, to ask: was it only in 1989 that Stuart Hall directed our attention to the "arena of social reproduction" as a "critical 'new' sit[e] of politics?" – one that, he argued, is "both material and symbolic, since we are reproducing not only the cells of the body but also the categories of the culture." Hall argued against a scientific socialism for which "reproduction" was restricted to cellular reproduction. The intervention here was to direct us away from cells and towards the composite of intimacies, gendered compartments, and affective life that make up the field of reproduction and that, in part after Hall's urging, we have extrapolated quite a bit since then. And yet now we are back to cells. Given that it has only been 25 years, something significant must have happened to cells to have erased the disciplinary memory of their association with the stodgiest Stalinisms. Of course, as we know, things *have* happened to cells since 1989; Nadia Abu El-Haj, Sunder Rajan, Dorothy Roberts, and Kim Tallbear have eloquently and forcefully charted the racialized geopolitics of the production of biocommodities.⁴⁰ Bruce Braun, Sandro Mezzadra, Neil Smith, Nikolas Rose and others have explained how molecular material might represent a new frontier of primitive accumulation and resource extraction.⁴¹ But if the conditions have shifted, surely this shift doesn't mean that the location of our resistance is now molecular?⁴²

Sunder Rajan's presentation of biotechnology's corrugation by the uneven terrain of capital accumulation demonstrates that the "molecular" as such – the "nonhuman domain" to which Thacker refers – is less an empirical description of the stuff of biocapital, as it is figure-of-concealment that flattens the contradictory dynamics of the production and circulation of these forms of value.

I would like now to return to the question of the molecularity of consciousness with which we began. Delany has presented us with a unique proposition regarding the molecular: that Spinoza could only imagine the materiality of affect, the potentiality of substance, and the interrelated substance of the world via an emphatically un-molecular conception of consciousness. In *Through the Valley*, materiality and the molecular are unaligned.

I have opened with Mama Grace's pronouncements on the molecular because it is here, I believe, that Delany restores the radically social quality of Spinoza's thought to a present that threatens to de-historicize and de-socialize materialism and the Spinozist tradition. What *Through the Valley* allows us to notice – and now to question – are the ways in which discourses of embodiment, subjectivity, sexuality, and life itself in the present have come to be marked by a kind of molecularization.⁴³

4. Molecularization of Sexuality/Molecularization of Sociality

By "molecularization of sexuality," then, we might be referencing at least three things: the thinking of sexuality at the particulate level of the body and of objects; the popularization of the biomedical management of sexuality (especially – but not exclusively – rendered in the coming-into-focus of transgender as a category of analysis); the Deleuze and Guattarian sense of a microphysics of desire and desiring-production.

These conceptions of the molecular are not identical. In fact, at times they are explicitly counterposed or in friction. But the discursive phenomenon of *the molecular* – rather than a catalogue of its various usages – is what we are concerned with here. More specifically, we are concerned with the way in which the molecular operates as an abstraction, and comes to function fungibly across different methodological approaches.

To say that the molecular is an abstraction is not to say that it signifies in a vague manner. Quite the opposite. A concept becomes an abstraction when it collects within itself a number of different, singular – but knotted – instantiations. Here I am drawing on Marx's well-known conception of a "concrete abstraction" as the "synthesis of many definitions, thus representing the unity of diverse aspects."⁴⁴ Along similar lines, if the molecular is an abstraction, it is so due to its variety of concrete significations and uses, and because historical forces have combined to make it so.⁴⁵ Consequently, the question with which we are concerned is not so much *what are the constituent parts of the molecular* (such a question would produce an endless list – a tendency, in fact, that is proper to object-oriented methods, and has been noted by many of its commentators), but rather: *what are the historical relationships that make possible the abstraction of the molecular as such?*

It is for this reason that when I say "molecularization of sexuality" I mean none of the above significations in particular. Rather, I mean the abstract force of the molecular as such; I mean an ontologization of the molecule that is authorized, in part, by some sense – as we saw above, in Morton's fantasies about "queer ecology" – of its putative queerness or its inherently resistant nature. Put another way, it is on the grounds of its sexualization – by which I mean, its figuration as fantastically aleatory and seemingly essentially resistant to discipline – that the molecule becomes an abstraction. Moreover, it is as an abstraction that the molecular makes a claim to periodization; it does so by subtracting historicity from temporality. By this I mean that the molecular has become linked with a seemingly inexhaustible number of claims about both the contemporaneity of ancestralness *and* our peering over the brink into a fully new historical moment. It is this concatenation of sexualization and the abstraction from history that marks the molecule as a contemporary iteration of the kind of settler-logic Morgensen and Smith note, above. Indeed, it is

for this reason – because of its simultaneous sexualization and its abstraction – that the molecule signifies futurity and primitiveness at once.

The signature statement of molecular futurity might be Thacker's insistence that we inhabit a "new era" of capitalism, one marked by the "cut-and-paste body of recombinant DNA technologies." Thacker's "global genome" is now a keystone articulation of what has appeared to some to be a mid-century shift; in some departure from industry-heavy modes of production, DNA technologies, according to Thacker, mark the leading edge of capital accumulation: a "mode of flexible accumulation," or "the transformation of certain biomolecules into "wet" factories for the generation of a range of custom-tailored proteins."⁴⁶ To this "wet," luminescent allure of the molecular, some cautions have been issued from within queer studies and cognate fields. Dana Luciano, for example, offers a cautionary note regarding queer studies' relations to these ever-multiplying objects – casting the theoretical desire for such objects into question as a potentially specious "enchantment of collecting." Puar has raised questions about the unreconstructed faith in the "truth" of matter, and Steven Shaviro has wondered if the ontological turn functions as a rehashing of a Kantian sublime. Mel Chen, furthermore, has redirected Bennett's vitalism away from "invest[ing] certain materialities with life," toward those "dead zones" – ordinarily overlooked or simply wished away in the dance of vitalism – historically informed by "queer and raced formations."⁴⁷ Against such warnings however, we have seen that the molecular can tend to function as a periodizing abstraction, by which I mean the molecular functions to suggest that the present is marked off from the past by a "new" bodily politics. The kind of epochal time that appears under the sign of the molecular is reliant, more broadly, on the proposition that objects are ontologically separate from the social field, and that this impassable separation between objects and the social order marks a new historical period – or, as Alberto Toscano puts it, that "the link between life and value heralds a transformative historical tendency, if not an epochal shift altogether."⁴⁸

Recent jubilant announcements regarding the division of the social from the object world are too many to cite. To take just one, brief, example, I offer Morton's "Here Comes Everything: The Promise of Object-Oriented Ontology" – an essay that closes by lashing the significance of OOO to a constitutive failure to capture its objects in (human?) language:

At least OOO takes a shot at saying what objects are: they withdraw. This doesn't mean that they don't relate at all. It simply means that how they appear has a shadowy, illusory, magical, 'strangely strange' quality.⁴⁹

Morton's simultaneous exasperation – "[a]t least OOO takes a shot" – and what I can only describe as a vicious, amnesiac joy in the hallucination of a world in which thinkers like Du Bois, Dussell, Fanon, and Marx had never contributed powerful, if not definitive, demonstrations of the conditions of possibility for "strangeness" (alternately: *estrangement*) in the social mechanisms of alienation, racialization, and the hierarchized division of labor, should suggest to us that OOO may reach the limit of its thought in its commitment to the ontological significance of "strangeness" as a marker of some purportedly unbridgeable and ahistorical parallax between subjects and objects.

The sign of this limit, of course, is evidenced in the attempt to overcome it. Perhaps we ought to consider the exalted litanizing and imagined extinction of humanity/absorption into a catalogue of things in which we are but an insignificant entry, as just such a desire. Along such lines, Elizabeth Grosz predicts:

The human is but a momentary blip in a history and cosmology that remains fundamentally indifferent to this temporary eruption. What kind of new understanding of the humanities would it take to adequately map this decentering that places man back within the animal, within nature, and within a space and time that man does not regulate, understand, or control?⁵⁰

Grosz's future, of course, is not Morton's. But what they share is a de-suturing of objects from the social world, an unloosing of the socius from historical time and acceleration into sheer cataclysm. To this vision, we might counterpose Pedro Lasch/the And And And Collective, who put it very simply: "Why is it easier to imagine the destruction of the planet than an end to Capitalism?"⁵¹ Indeed, one worries that such "futural" imaginaries and apocalyptic aphrodisiacs are fundamentally conditioned by the legacy of the Cold War excision of revolutionary thought from the thinking of *the horizon*. Thus, rather than imagining a world in which the horrors of instrumental reason (with its attendant racist, eugenic, and exploitative logics) are directly *confronted*—and give way to a costewardship of/with the earth – the only possible outcome is extinction: of the species, of cognition, of the problem of the socius *tout court*.⁵²

Let me assert that the problems stemming from this increasingly widespread tendency to regard objects as disembedded from the social world are not merely semantic, nor strictly internal to academic debate. As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney have recently pointed out, the political character of our current moment might be described as one in which "society" – that is to say, the commons, the undercommons, the collectivity – "is under attack."⁵³ Is it possible that such an attack is mirrored in the exclusions that shape such OOO and new materialist self-authorizations? For Moten, the remedy for such exclusions lies in an inextricably *social* conception of ontology, and one that is explicitly counterhegemonic, rather than "withdrawn." Might ontology, asks Moten, be resutured to the social world as the "imagination of ... escape as a kind of social gathering, as undercommon plainsong and dance"?⁵⁴

Perhaps we would do well to revisit a more socially-oriented theory of ontology and resistance, one that makes clear that ontology is never an unmediated field. If ontologies bear the traces of the forces that make up any specific conjuncture, surely we know no better explication of this process than Fanon's: that the "historico-racial schema" prevents blackness from having any "ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."⁵⁵ So much is lost in a theory of resistance that posits itself outside of the

contradictions of the social field – and one such loss is an understanding of the extent to which the ontological is itself inextricable from the ascriptions of race. As George Ciccariello-Maher has argued:

In his critique of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Fanon ... reveal[s] what lies beneath the ostensible universality of Ground, diagnosing a sub-ontological realm, a 'zone of nonbeing' to which certain subjects are condemned (as in the *damnés* of Fanon's last book). This is the realm of *sub-terranean* beings ... who are struggling to even gain steady footing for the climb ahead. The pre-dialectical struggle to gain that footing would not be an easy one ...⁵⁶

Ciccariello-Maher's reading of Fanon moves us beyond debates about Fanon's attachment to recognition, and also beyond the binaristic deadlock that OOO and the new materialisms alike posit between a human-saturated socius and an ontological "strangeness" or "ancestralness." Indeed, for Fanon, it is not a question of the opposition of the ontological and the social (or the object and the human), but rather of the ontological's own occlusion of "predialectical" and sub-ontological zones in which confrontation and struggle take place outside of the field of the recognizable and of representation itself. If for OOO and new materialisms, the ontological represents a realm of apparent liberation from the miasmas of the social world, for Fanon, the ontological is itself a mystifying form of appearance that posits itself as outside of social inscriptions of race, when in fact this very positing is integral to the dialectics of racialization itself.

Fanon allows us to nourish what I think is a very important skepticism about any theories of resistance that do not also theorize considered, collective confrontation with the architectures of institutional violence and power.⁵⁷ For, one thing that insisting on a parallax between objects and subjects does is to concede a kind of *a priori* political defeat. This abandonment of the social field resembles the kind of "attack" on "the social" Moten and Harney describe above. A refusal to engage in this abandonment, needless to say, returns us to our "fanatical approach," and orients us toward the political urgency of our analysis, rather than indulging in strangely exhilarated fantasies of nonrelation.

5. Primitive Accumulation as a "Fanatical Approach"

The molecule, as I've said, has two temporalities, neither of them the political opening of the now. It has the origin and it has the brink. Its time is not historical time, but rather the fungible contradictoriness of narrative: the narrative of what Marx described as "so-called primitive accumulation," to be precise.

"So-called primitive accumulation" describes the narrative, constructed by the bourgeois political economists, to address – or, more properly put, mystify – the origins of the capitalist mode of production. Adam Smith is exemplary here. For Smith, somewhere in an apocryphal past, thrifty individuals hoarded their funds until they had saved enough to purchase the means of production. As Marx explains in his critique of Smith: "This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone-by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. (...) Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work."⁵⁸ For Marx, of course, this narrative conceals the violence that in fact undergirds the transition to capitalism, in which the forces of primitive accumulation constitute a tripartite structure of historical presuppositions that have little to do with thriftiness: colonial conquest; the birth of public debt and the credit system; the "freeing" of the laborer from the land (through a combination of enclosure laws and direct force), and into the selling of his wage labor as the only means for survival.

There are, then, two concepts at stake: the *narrative* of "so-called primitive accumulation," which masks the conditions of the present in a bourgeois political-economic myth; and primitive accumulation itself, which is the set of historical pre-conditions that made possible the putting-into-motion of the capitalist mode of production.

The treatment of colonialism as a bloody and central pillar of capitalist transition has been treated in a great deal of work and I will not review it here.⁵⁹ Moreover, many of us will be familiar with Marx's claims about the forcing of subjects to wage labor through enclosures as the precondition of capital accumulation, so I will not review these claims here either.

Fewer of us, however, know well Marx's claims about the relationship of finance and public debt to primitive accumulation, and this may be in part due to the fact that his extrapolation of this argument transpires in Chapter 26 – "The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist" – rather than in Chapter 27, the "official" chapter on primitive accumulation:

The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury ... [T]he national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds, and to agiotage, in a word to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy.⁶⁰

What Marx's tripartite formula (colonialism, wage-labor, finance) allows us to see is simply that financial forms of profit-rendering are part of a larger system of primitive accumulation – one that (as David Harvey, Rosa Luxemburg, and others have argued) is not only the means by which capitalism begins, but also the means by which it continually reconstitutes itself.

The synchrony between the force of the state and the seemingly untethered abstractions of financial speculation is at the root

of primitive accumulation, and this is important to us not only for understanding how capitalism operates at a global level into the present, but also because Marx's theory of primitive accumulation might be the kind of "fanatical approach" we are looking for. Consider that although the term "primitive" might seem to reference an empirical pre-history, in Marx's original formulation, primitive accumulation is not – as was Smith's – a mythical drama of capital's origins, but rather a methodological supposition and theoretical framework for denaturalizing capitalism's self-representation as eternal and fixed. Marx asks the question of how capitalism came into being not to trace the particulars of feudal life, but rather to radicalize and denaturalize capitalism itself – to push to the foreground the possibility that this particular mode of production – *because it is a historical contingency* – did not always exist and, for this reason, can come to an end. Against the dyad of the primitive and the brink, the theory of primitive accumulation presents a horizon of overcoming that is etched into the contradictions of the present. The casting-backwards of the theory of primitive accumulation is, in other words, the bringing-into-relief of the conditions of the now – their denaturalization, and an urging toward their overthrow. This horizon of overcoming is, indeed, a fanatical approach.⁶¹ It is an approach one imagines Marx bore in mind as he gave his own account of the present, and it is one we must still bear in mind as we do the same.⁶²

6. Autonomization, Settler-Colonialism, and the Present

a) The Oil Embargo as Origin Story

Speaking of the present, recent years have seen a wealth of accounts of both the "long 1970s" as well as the period of acute financialization and crisis that is marked by the severe recession of 2008 that continues to today. This is not the place to review all of that literature. What I want to do, rather, is to follow up on the claims with which I opened this essay and to give a brief account of the present conjuncture, building off of Marx's theory of primitive accumulation, to think financialization and settler-colonial forms together.

It is a kind of historical commonplace to take the oil embargo of 1973 as a crucial marker in periodizing the recession of the 1970s, and the immediate pre-history of the present. We might say that the embargo, in fact, functions as a kind of origin narrative for financialization. There are significant geopolitical stakes to this origin narrative. I likely do not need to review the ways in which imperial and neocolonial aggressions in the Middle East more broadly, and in Palestine in particular, are framed as measures taken to shore up a recession-stricken economy, and to protect US consumers from the kind of fluctuations in oil pricing on which the recessions of the mid-70s (and after) have been blamed. Yet, as the economist Omar Dahi has recently explained, the narrative that locates financial crisis in the oil embargo – and that authorizes incursions in the name of "stabilizing" these crises – veils its opposite: the binding of Gulf and U.S. capital and the production of massive speculative profits for the U.S. and global elite. Indeed, as Dahi argues, not only did the Gulf states recycle petrodollars into military and industrial "purchases from the West," but, in 1974 (after a secret agreement with the US during the oil embargo), "Saudi Arabia committed to maintaining the value of the US dollar through large purchases of US treasuries as well as using its influence in OPEC to prevent diversification of currency basket."⁶³ These "massive amounts of petrodollars, primarily but not exclusively from Gulf based sovereign wealth funds went into US and European financial, debt, and equity markets which allowed the rise of the financial bubbles and 'easy credit.'"⁶⁴

The binding of U.S. and Gulf capital not only shaped the world-system of the mid-1970s; the credit that this binding both necessitated and made possible, Dahi explains, "contributed to the most recent worldwide recession."⁶⁵ It thus obscures both past and present history to say that the crisis of the 1970s was caused in any direct way by the embargo. Rather, what the embargo did was to demonstrate the inability of national entities to control the processes of accumulation. But more importantly, as the generation of profit shifted increasingly away from domestic production in the 1970s, and towards a volatile supra-national landscape of capital accumulation, that political volatility became integrated into the production of financial or interest-bearing profit through the derivitization of financial markets (or the creation of a mechanism of insurance for transactions that were subject to chaotic world markets). Political volatility, in other words, was integrated into the production of profit – not only through the arms economy, as had been the case in the mid-century and through the Cold War – but also, and more importantly, through the risk-staked mechanisms of derivitization, which created insurance for financial transactions that were now subject to increasingly chaotic world markets, as well as avenues for speculation on the value of those forms of insurance.⁶⁶

b) Phases of Accumulation

In the Humanities, it is not uncommon to conceive the abstractions of finance as having a rather simple spatial relation to labor. "Offshoring" is often the shorthand used to demarcate the onset of neoliberalism as the separation of the nation-state proper from the sites of production. And yet space is, as Adam Hanieh points out, "not a property that can be understood separate from the time it takes to traverse it" (*Capitalism and Class*, 20). In other words, the spaces of neoliberal capitalism are illegible outside of the temporalities that accrue to them, and any analysis of the rise of finance needs to be able to give an account of the dynamic relation between the two.⁶⁷ As Hanieh explains, citing Christian Palloix, the internationalization of finance in the 1970s meant that "the process of converting the functional money form into the commodity form and into the productive form (and vice versa)...[could] no longer be reduced to its movement within a...national space" (*Capitalism and Class*, 20). It is not that capitalism suddenly became international; capitalism has always been international in dimension, colonizing and imperialist at its root. What marked the mid-1970s, however, was the movement of a particular *phase* of capital accumulation – the money-form of capital – into an international sphere.

Let us look a bit more closely at these phases of accumulation. In Volumes II and III of *Capital*, Marx explains what capital is: “value in motion.” Indeed, in order to valorize itself, capital must constantly metamorphose through several phases: from commodities into money, from money into means of production, and again into the commodity form:

Taking the social capital as a whole, one part of this is always on the market as a commodity, waiting to pass over into money ... another part is on the market as money, waiting to pass over into commodities. Capital is always involved in this movement of transition, this metamorphosis of form.⁶⁸

Money is converted, through the application of labor to raw materials, into commodities. These commodities are then sold at a profit. This is the classic M-C-M' formula for the derivation of surplus value, where M represents money invested in capital and labor; C represents the transformation of that investment into commodity-form, and M' represents the return of profit on those commodities with a surplus.

Traditional Marxist inquiry has focused a great deal of attention onto the M-C and C-M' phases: the transformation of labor to raw materials in the production process and the extraction of surplus value from labor during that period. Since the crisis of 2008, however, the “C” moment of capital accumulation has come into richer relief in its own, as it were. Scholars have come to ask in greater detail about what happens in the “C” phase – what bearing it has on the accumulation-cycle as a whole, and what motions it contains within itself.⁶⁹

The “C” phase is rich and complex, involving many hidden moments: not only the circulation of commodities, but also the laborer's reproduction of herself outside of the sphere of production proper. Indeed, as we know, in order for the laborer to sell her labor, she will need to reproduce herself through a variety of means, including eating, sleeping, shelter – but also intimacies and an affective life. Much work has been done on the “affective value” of forms of reproduction, and this is not the place to review them.⁷⁰ What is of interest to us here has to do with the ways in which, in periods of heightened financialization the “C” phase becomes increasingly suspended, compressed, or cast into the future.

As we know, one of the effects of financialization is to generate profit through apparati of fictive capital and credit that allow speculation on future gains.⁷¹ Financial forms render profit before labor has been applied or a commodity has even been created and sold. The (extremely condensed) historical explanation for why this strategy – and its attendant crises – has been on the rise is that, since the internationalization of what Hanieh refers to as the “money-phase” of capital accumulation, the demand for capital's constant motion and metamorphosis found itself in intensified contradiction with the massive increase in capital's spatial expansiveness. As Joshua Clover has noted, the intensification of “competition for extant profits” produced “the offshoring of labor and the tax revolts that inaugurated neoliberalism,” as well as “capital's leap into finance in search of profit.”⁷² With an increase in the spatial expanses across which capital needs to invest itself, one (temporary, crisis-ridden) solution has been a qualitative shift in how these phases of capital came to be weighted. This is the shift towards finance: the “accelerated turnover” time required to produce profit in such internationally competitive conditions “demand[ed] more credit-based liquidity,”⁷³ which in turn exacted an intensification to the spatio-temporal dynamics of capital accumulation: an increased need for temporal forms of speculation to mitigate the spatial gulfs across which production-capital, labor, and commodities have had to move in order to fully realize the production of value.

Finance accelerates the exchange relation into what can appear to be a sheerly temporal field of profit-production in which speculation delivers profits without the immediate intercession of the “C” phase of exchange of either commodities themselves or the labor-commodity that adds value to the final product. We might reframe financialization, then, as not only the drive to offshore labor from the West to the global south, but also to offload production – and profit-rendering – into a sheerly temporal realm. Time *comes to appear* transcendent over or liberated from the demands of space. Thacker describes this autonomization by way of Jameson:

Jameson notes that the self-referential feedback loops of finance capital propel it into a zone of ‘autonomization,’ a viruslike epidemic that forms a speculation on speculations ... [T]his autonomization has resulted in ‘the cybernetic ‘revolution,’ the intensification of communications technology to the point at which capital transfers today abolishes space and time and can be virtually instantaneously effectuated from one national zone to another.⁷⁴

While this is a useful redaction of the tendencies particularly to financialization, I'm not as certain as Thacker is that cybernetics have “abolished” the contradictions embedded in the drive to annihilate space by time. In fact, what I have been concerned to detail in this section, is the dialectical relationship between the drive to annihilate space by time, and the production of very real and immiserating spatial conditions that accompany this drive. The geopolitics of this particular dialectical knot is the topic of my concern here.

The annihilation of space through revolutions in time must be understood, then, not only in terms of the “leap” of capital into finance, but also in relation to the intensification of forms of imperial violence. I'm not going to expand on the economics of this further here. In fact, my main point is straightforwardly political, and has to do with the ways in which the Middle East broadly, but Palestine in particular have come to bear a very particular weight in the globalization of finance capital and the securing of dollar hegemony through military means. As I indicated above, there is, simply put, a deepening of settler colonial dynamics as a key component of global finance capital. As Adam Hanieh explains, “During the 1950s, Israel's main external support had come from Britain and France.”⁷⁵ 1967 and then 1973 changed this decisively, as the US became the main backer of the Israeli state's settler colonial project of dispossession and “economic subjugation.”⁷⁶ “The key element to U.S. control” in the Middle East – and this

means not only the ability to produce lockdowns, but also the ability to produce profit-rendering chaos – is, as Hanieh has argued, the “embrace of Israel, which, with its origins as a settler-colonial state, was organically tied to external support for its continued viability” (*Capitalism and Class*, 213).

This is hardly an exhaustive review of the current dynamics of global finance and settler colonialism, but the point I wish to make is simply that there are multiple foundational ways in which financialization and settler colonialism are tied together.⁷⁷ The linkage that I hope to have made clear is this: the relationship between settler-forms and financialization describes a kind of primitive accumulation for the present. In much the same way that, for Marx, finance represents a crucial “lever” of primitive accumulation, I think we could say that finance and settler colonialism together constitute the levers of the present form of primitive accumulation. I say “primitive accumulation,” rather than simply “capital accumulation,” as a way of marking – along with Harvey, Luxemburg, and indeed Deleuze and Guattari—not only the ongoing violent character of capital’s self-perpetuation, but the kinds of transitions internal to the capitalist mode of production (in this case from an industrial capitalist system to one in which finance is predominant), and the narrative forms that accompany those transitions as well.⁷⁸ Following Marx, then, we might attempt a dual focus: on not only the specific forms of dispossession particular to primitive accumulation, but the origin narratives that mask those dispossessions.⁷⁹

c) Spatio-Temporality and Settler Colonialism

Before we close this section, I want to make note of the ways in which primitive accumulation has received a fair amount of attention within the Humanities following David Harvey’s update to Rosa Luxemburg in the articulation of capital accumulation as grounded in processes of “accumulation by dispossession.” There has been some debate within settler colonial studies about this updating of the concept of primitive accumulation. Glen Coulthard has recently urged a focus on the spatial logic of dispossession inherent in primitive accumulation, against what he argues is the traditional understanding of primitive accumulation as the putting into place of a temporal logic: the wage-form, with its exploitation of the worker’s time.⁸⁰ I want to think here about Coulthard’s intervention into political-economic accounts that occlude the spatial dynamics of settler dispossessions, and consider this work in relation to Brenna Bhandar’s recent investigations of the temporality of settler colonialism.⁸¹ For Bhandar, settler colonialism puts into place a property-logic that is significantly different from feudal use-based conceptions of land. In some contrast to pre-capitalist formations, settler colonialism constitutes the leading edge of capitalist forms of speculative possession. If at one point, property ownership was demonstrated in use (alternately, “occupation”), capitalist expropriation depends on “expectation of use.” Or, speculation: “Whereas possession and use once justified ownership, the commoditization of land witnessed a shift in the conceptual underpinnings of ownership itself. While Locke had reconceived of land ownership, as based not on hereditary titles and inheritance (birthright), but on labor, Jeremy Bentham emphasizes expectation and security as the key justifications for private property ownership. In the work of Bentham, we see an abstract notion of ownership not based on physical possession, occupation, or even use, but the concept of ownership as a relation, based on an expectation of being able to use the property as one wishes. Primary to the property relation is law, which secures the property relation, or guards and protects the expectation.”⁸²

Speculation – the expectation of use – requires the imposition of *terra nullius*, or what Bhandar describes as a “wasteland rationale”: the legal codification of land as unpopulated to justify the speculative possession that ensues. The force of Bhandar’s argument here is to show that forms of *speculative* possession legitimate not only settler expropriations, but the property form more broadly.

The dynamics of speculation are not confined to either financialization or the settler-form. Neither are the specifics of capitalist possession simply a bureaucratic carapace. Rather, they put in motion a range of affects (e.g., of expectation) that are inextricable from the property-form and from racialization more broadly. This feeling of expectation “comes to be materialized, or ... to have an actual life, in how we are constituted as subjects” (12). “Possession ... as a feeling ... become[s] the *sine qua non* of ownership” (12). “Emergent forms of property ownership,” Bhandar argues, along with the affective effects of property, “were constituted with racial ontologies of settler and native, master and slave. This is as evident in the burgeoning realm of finance capital and its relationship to the slave trade as it is with regard to transformations in how the ownership of land is conceptualized in the colonial settler context.”

Ontology itself, then, has a history. Its history is in many ways crystallized in the legal forms that remain with us still, and in the affective, economic, and political dimensions of racialization and settler colonialism. Put another way: “the relationship between being and having, or ontology and property ownership animates modern theories of citizenship and law” (3). Ontology cannot be thought outside of the spatial dispossessions to which Coulthard draws our attention. Nor can it be thought outside of the temporal character that Bhandar demonstrates as encoded in property relations. Bhandar and Coulthard together direct us toward an understanding of Marx’s annihilation of space by time as a racialized, spatial, settler expropriation that simultaneously deploys – indeed, weaponizes – temporality as a form of speculation. This spatio-temporal type of dispossession sets into place the property form and racial ontologies at once. It is at the heart of the “ontological illusions” that course through our social world, and it is at the heart, as well, of the forms of primitive accumulation that set in place the state-form and the ascriptions of citizenship. Thinking alongside Bhandar and Coulthard, we see more clearly now the ways in which “so-called primitive accumulation” – the narrative logics and conceptual forms that accompany transitional phases of capitalism – take the form of an origin-brink figuration: the removing, or wrenching of temporality from spatiality and from history.⁸³ This figural annihilation of

space by time, this origin narrative – one that gets reiterated in the ontological turn – brings together the temporal accelerations of financialization with the speculative settler-forms and speculation as a form of possession and racialized self-possession that together mark a contemporary moment of primitive accumulation.

In closing this section, I want to return to the question of wasteland rationale to make a somewhat speculative suggestion of my own: that we understand the discourse of molecularization as a kind of abstract dispossession – or making-waste of the body – that is the condition of a fantasized speculative self-possession. In both Thacker and Preciado's citations throughout, that is to say, we see a two-fold movement: the assertion of the body as the new ground of resource extraction and laying-waste of capitalism; *and* a speculative re-possession of that body (the hailing of the molecular as the future of political agency) on the condition of that body's dispossession. What I have described as the ancestral future-casting of molecular agency, in other words, follows the abstract logic of the property form Bhandar lays out: when the social, historical contexts are elided from our understanding of what embodiment is – of what molecules “are” or appear to be – then those molecules become the occasion for an anticipation, an affect of possession and agency that recalls the abstractions (and, indeed, the racial ontologies) at the heart of the property-form.⁸⁴

8. Autonomous Ontologies and Queer Purities

Let me now attempt to bring this all together with my claims about autonomization. Recent framings of the object as simultaneously ancestral and heralding a looming post-humanity seek to describe a world that does or could – or did – exist outside of history, and perhaps more specifically outside of the logic of our financialized present. But, rather than denaturalizing the logic of finance capital, such claims produce a kind of temporal abstraction that takes its shape from the suspension of the “C” phase of capital accumulation: what appears to be a future coming into being as a molecular palette of forces shorn of the social world, is in fact the *bearing in the now* of the particular character of financialization's fantastical “leap” into time as a sovereign realm. More than this, the molecular abstraction, in generating particulate matter as an exemplary form of autonomous agency, and in conceptualizing a temporality of the ancestral brink, excises the question of the present – and thus of the political (alternately: of collective transformation, of the fanatical) – from the field of view. The ontological turn is an origin narrative that occludes – by positing the object-world as “ancestral” and cryptically “to-come” – the present as an open field of political action.

The ontological turn's relationship to time becomes clearer now not only as a primitive/brink logic, but also as a set of fantasies around production – fantasies that become particularly legible in terms of the political economy of primitive accumulation. Here, we find the collusion of primitivism and productivism lodged in the molecular. Consider Claire Colebrook's description of how the Deleuze and Guattarian concept of deterritorialization has transformed of late. This is a periodization that centers on the rise of bioeconomic particulate matter:

Territorialization can now refer not just to human bodies and political groupings and assemblages, but to chemical processes and genetic processes ... Molecules territorialize and deterritorialize by creating ever-new groupings (territories) and then branching off into other possibilities (deterritorialization).

We ought to compare Colebrook's assertions about the molecular with Deleuze and Guattari's own:

For desiring-machines are precisely that: the microphysics of the unconscious ... But as such they never exist independently of the historical molar aggregates, of the macroscopic social formations that they constitute ... In this sense, there is only desire and the social.

Colebrook's ontology of various molecular autonomies recalls Morton's claims about the aleatory productiveness of “queer” molecular biologies. This autonomization of the molecule as sheerly productive brings together a periodizing claim about biocapital with a Deleuze and Guattarian conception of desiring-production.⁸⁵ And yet, for Deleuze and Guattari, desiring-machines “never exist independently” of the social field. If for Deleuze and Guattari, “there is only desire and the social,” for today's ontological turn, there is only the micro-object and its particular temporalities of newness sedimented in/confirmed by the commoditization of bioeconomic data (“Territorialization can now refer ...”).

If territorialization appears to be able to “now refer,” I would suggest that this is less a reflection of something inherent to the queerness of molecular life, and has more to do with the transition I marked above: the specific shifts in the weighting of the phases of capital accumulation towards financialization or money-capital or “sheer” productivity. It has also to do, we should note, with the shifts undergone by reproduction in the period commonly marked as “financialization,” “neoliberalism,” the “long 1970s,” “now,” and so on.⁸⁶ As Kathi Weeks explains, capitalism continually runs up against a contradiction between “capital accumulation and social reproduction” – the necessity, that is to say, of “forms of social co-operation upon which accumulation depends,” and the attempt of capital to “harness” those forms – “the rest of life beyond work.”⁸⁷ Under conditions of austerity, forms of social reproduction take on what Weeks calls a “mopping-up function”: forms of affective sustenance are put under greater duress to paper over the ever-greater gulfs between widespread increased pauperization and the massive accumulation of profits in the hands of a very few.⁸⁸ Accordingly, “the family” becomes an even dearer site of affective and ideological investment just at the moment when its capacities to perform the kinds of sustaining support formerly given by the state (and retracted under austerity conditions) are taxed to the utmost – indeed, are nigh on sheer fantasy. More than this, reproduction and production themselves, as forms of labor, become harder to distinguish. Weeks again: “[t]he interpenetration of production and reproduction has deepened as domestically produced goods and services continue to be replaced with commodified forms, and as many modes of service and caring labor are transformed into waged forms of employment” (140). Reproductive labor, in other words, has

become woven into the time of production in ways that tend to obscure the differential forms and types of labor that are taking place simultaneously, either within the domestic sphere or outside of it.

The empowerment of finance, along with the blurring of production and reproduction – as well as the overburdening of reproductive capacities under austerity conditions – has been metabolized by the Humanities in a number of surprising ways, particularly those areas of Humanistic thought concerned with questions of gender and sexuality traditionally addressed in terms of reproduction and those “other forms” of social life – as Stuart Hall et al put it in *Policing the Crisis* – that are “necessary, outside the sphere of production proper, to ensure the ‘circuit of capital’ – the relations of market, exchange and circulation; the spheres of the family ... the state ... and so on.”⁸⁹ As production and that which is outside its explicit sphere become structurally less distinct, the tendency – perhaps the response – for some work in the Humanities has been to relocate the field of struggle and of the political (which is to say, the question of fanaticism, of transformation) away from the socius, and the array of reproductive practices, broadly speaking, and towards taxonomies of particulate matter.

We are returned here to the question of the relationship between the turn to object-life and what I described above, via a reading of Morton, as the valence of the aleatory for the ontological turn. I had argued earlier that what Freeman describes as the “chance element” of capital gets reconfigured in the ontological turn as an essentially resistant matter that is coded as ontologically “queer.” I want to bring together my claims there regarding primitivism and sexuality with the extrapolations on finance and re/production we’ve now entered into. It may be, in fact, that Freeman’s “chance element” registers with uncanny force the ways in which the object of queer studies has not only multiplied and abstracted – that is, become “subject-less” – but also transformed its attention in a critical way. Indeed, if sexuality studies once tuned itself to sex as an element constitutive of the arena of reproduction (we can think of Gayle Rubin’s field-defining “Traffic in Women,” for example), at present, sexuality now often appears as itself a kind of “production,” or, perhaps better put, productivity: “[w]ithin the lost time of official history,” Freeman argues, “queer time *generates* a discontinuous history of its own” (x, emphasis added). I do not wish to dispute Freeman’s claims, but rather to contextualize these arguments as marking the beginning of a shift away from the queer social subject to the abstraction of the queer object. Or, the ontologization of queerness more broadly. It was in this sense perhaps that queer theory began to register a shift in the Humanities’ methodological attention from forms of social reproduction to fields of sheer productivity. Or, more properly put, the integration or overlay of the two.

Consider Sara Ahmed’s “queering” of Marx’s infamous dancing table. Here, sexuality moves from being an object of knowledge specific to the sphere of reproduction to being a *knowledge-project* that recasts all objects as queer within a field of production: “We could approach the dancing table quite differently,” argues Ahmed, “if we see that the life of the table is ‘given’ through this intimacy with other lives... A table acquires a life ... through what it comes into contact with, and the work that it allows us to do... The dancing table would be for sure a rather queer object: a queerness that does not reside ‘within’ the table but registers how the table can impress upon us, and what we too can borrow from the contingency of its life.”⁹⁰

Marx’s table is queer (for Marx) because it occludes the relations of production that compose it, and appears to be valuable – vital and alive – of its own accord. This is the classic description of the fetish-objects with which the capitalist world is choked. For Marx, queerness was a way to describe the relationship between the “hidden abode” of production – a closeted realm, if you like, in which labor congeals within objects, but erases all sign of itself in doing so – and the realm of circulation. Queerness, in other words, is for Marx a way to describe the fetish-object’s dialectical reliance on and occlusion of the production-processes that generate it. “Queerness” straddles the realms of production and reproduction.

For Ahmed, in some contrast, “a table acquires life...through what it comes in contact with.” Here, the difference between production and reproduction is dissolved, and the realm of reproduction (the uses to which a table is put: work, eating, leaning, etc.) becomes, itself, productive. Productive, that is to say, of the “life” of the table. Ahmed substitutes Marx’s *congealing* (for her, queerness “does not reside ‘within’ the table”) with a “queer” productivity that transpires through *contact*. This contact – what we would classically describe as practices that transpire within the realm of reproduction – is recoded as, itself, productive.⁹¹ I want to offer here that the shift from questions of reproduction to productivity *allegorizes as queer* some of the material transformations attending neoliberal capitalism – transformations I described at the outset as having to do with the blurring of productive and reproductive labor. This is to say that the shift, in queer studies, from a focus on the arena of reproduction to an assertion of the “productivity” of queerness, echoes in some uncanny ways finance’s suspension of the “C” phase of accumulation, as well as the general logic of neoliberal austerity which requires a similar occlusion of the specificity of reproductive labor: both processes forcing into view the fiction of a constant productivity.⁹²

But queer studies – in large part by dint of its historical and continuing relationship to forms of oppositional politics – manages this shift to productivity within the larger context of an attention to contradiction, or what Ferguson described above as the double valence of queerness: that it “antagonize[s] and/or conspire[s].” This, I think, is part of what gives queer studies its vitality and acuity. The same may not be true, however, for other theoretical tendencies. One wants to consider here the ways in which the ontological turn proposes a whole host of autonomizations that appear to operate outside of the social field and of subjectivity entirely. To what extent does the molecular reiterate a widespread logic of financialization? Indeed, not only does the molecule appear autonomous, but, through it, time itself seems to wrench free of the social world.

Here, again, Colebrook’s work encapsulates some of these tendencies with precision. In what follows, she argues that we turn from subjectivity as a social mediation of historical forces, to time, affect, and molecular matter as the direct impress of vital

forces and, moreover, of value itself:

Against a critical reading which would look at the ways in which art or literature queers the pitch of the normal, Deleuze offers a positive reading in which temporality *in its pure state* can be intuited and given form as queer, as a power to create relations, to make a difference, to repeat a power beyond its actual and already constituted forms.⁹³

What is “pure” about this temporality? Time here is presented as generative and “queer.” “Queer,” moreover, is removed from the realm of reproduction and relocated solely within the realm of a purely speculative production process, one uncannily resonant of the subtracted time of financialization itself.

We can see that the ontological turn is looking for a line of flight – for a way *out* of capitalist logics and repetitions. We might wish to take this flight without asking questions, but can we? No-one wants to be the messenger – to be the one to say that queerness itself, *in itself*, isn't generative, doesn't create things, cannot break us out of this present and into a different future.

But autonomization comes at a cost. This is because autonomization is only one facet of a larger dynamic that goes by another name: the dialectic of accumulation and immiseration – capitalism's tendency to generate vast stores of wealth at one end of the social order on the back of the impoverishment and dispossession of the other.⁹⁴ Productivity never exists without pauperization; temporality never achieves a “pure” state. There is always a cost. Time may appear to free itself from space – profits may appear to be rendered in split seconds on a ticker in Manhattan – but only at the cost of superexploiting labor in the global (or, indeed, domestic) south. Matter may appear to free itself from the subject and drive towards unpredictable, aleatory *newness*, but we celebrate this only at the cost of participating in the “attack” on the social about which Moten and Harney sound the alarm.

Indeed, one concrete example of what might be lost in the autonomization of the cellular – one that we cannot take up at length here, but that comes out of gender, sexuality, and transgender studies – has to do with the extent to which it affirms some of the medicalizing discourses around sex/gender that have recently produced the “transgender subject” as legally legible. As Dean Spade has explained, “the law defines us through medical norms by requiring evidence of our gender at every turn.”⁹⁵ Or, as Toby Beauchamp points out, these ascriptions around gender and visibility serve to prop up and intensify the prerogatives of the surveillance state, post 9/11:

While surveillance measures ... may appear to primarily target transgender individuals as suspicious, the bodies being policed for gender deviance are not necessarily trans-identified, but rather demonstrate non-compliance with gender norms that may have as much to do with race, religion, class and sexuality as with transgender identity.⁹⁶

The “cellular,” one could argue, is a legal-political category, not an ontological one. Such a collapse of ontologies and the “stuff” of the body is an impulse, the political implications of which have long been clear to queer of color critique and queer diasporic critique – methodologies for which the abstractions of the citizen-subject have always mediated the question of ontology and the ascriptions of being under racial capitalism.¹

Spade and Beauchamp's work directs us away from asocial ontologies, and towards asking the necessary question of the present: mustn't there be another way? Mustn't there be a “fanatical approach”? This is an approach that openly admits to and embraces its interests, its commitments: for this is an approach that, as Olson has argued, attempts “to transform relations of power by inspiring collective action” (14). Now seems as good a time as any to revive our relationship not only to, as Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin have recently urged, “changing the terms of debate,” but also to staking or “reformulating positions, taking the longer view, making a leap.”⁹⁷

This is a basic point, but it helps explain why there is such talk of the autonomous force of molecules, of desiring, of queerness immanent to matter; and there is very little talk that risks asking *why* we desire what we desire. Aren't we still in so many ways chained to the strictures of the bourgeois family? Whether we seek a line of escape from the family or pursue a new, “queer,” iteration of the family bound by property and contract, the question we need to ask – the fanatical question – should be: what are the conjunctural conditions that generate, foster, support these desires. And how can we change them?⁹⁸

Contemporary ontological work has, we might say, leapt upon the “subjectless turn,” and hastened to deterritorialize sexuality from the realm of the subject. This move has the tendency to turn both to ancestralness and apocalypse at once. I have sought in this essay to demonstrate the material reasons why these seemingly opposite orientations are linked in a particularly intensive way at present. To explain why it is that, rather than understanding sexuality within the porous realm of the social, much recent ontological work has reterritorialized desire within the molecular as if the molecular itself constitutes a kind of productive, autonomous realm – a “purity” of time symbolic of a “new era” and of the generative capacities of queerness itself.

But there will be nothing truly “productive” unless it is conducted collectively. At the risk of asking what might seem an outmoded question: what are the forms our thought, our argumentation must take in order to speak to the collectivity? No matter how much ontological work may posit the unenclosing of sexuality from the realm of the subject as the liberation of sheer desire from the burden of identity, from the *socius*, and from a considered, confrontational relationship to power, do we truly want to be unleashed into pure aleatoriness? Surely there is an air of defeat even in our exhilarated insistence that this is indeed what we want. If queerness is nothing but the productive force of matter, then why continue to call it queer? And if we are still calling it queer, then we have to ask: what is the specificity, the valence of this term? There is something here, something pulling back from the surrender of the future to sheer contingency. That something is not the subject per se, or “the human,” but the collective,

which waits for us, and waits to be rediscovered in our theories of materialism, of the socius, of the ontological strangeness of life under capitalism. Surely the collective *is* that aleatory togetherness of which the ontological turn dreams – except this togetherness is one in which, at the end, we are not extinct but transformed.

Towards the conclusion of *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders*, Eric Jeffers – now an old man of 79 – revisits a boathouse on the island on which he lives, one of many spots of collective sex he had visited in his youth and middle age. “Was there anyone who knew how much urine had once spilled in that corner, drenching those boards in starlight? Or even smelled them the next day and wondered,” he asks to himself. So many of us have turned to Delany to theorize the ravages of gentrification, the enclosures of public spaces of shared queer sex.⁹⁹ This scene might be a nostalgic paean to these long-dispossessed, once-collectively cultivated and treasured spaces. And it might also be an invocation of – a dream of – the restitution of space to time – the congealing of time (as Butler once said) as our corporeality: here, the beloved stink of urine qualifies the otherwise sheer ghostliness, the vapor of lightyears. The queer bodily collective as a drag on the pure productivity capitalism so wants us to be.

For, there is no production without reproduction – without the “C” phase, the moments in which we constitute and reconstitute ourselves. There is no production without reproduction because that is the time capitalism steals from us for its profit, and it is where we steal ourselves back from it as well. There is no production without reproduction: this is the capitalist totality in all its contradictoriness, and this – incidentally – is why almost not a single page of *Through the Valley* goes by without the characters cooking and eating. Nearly every page of an 800-page novel about filthy collective queer sex returns again and again to the question of reproduction, and of survival. There are too many citations to gather in support of this claim, so I am forced to the realm of statistics: a search in *Through the Valley* for “potato” turns up 25 results; “dinner” 78; “corn” 100; “kitchen” 100; “chili” 49; “cook” 78; “onion” 31; “bathroom” 59. There is no production without reproduction. And it is why, moreover, when Eric reads the *Ethics*, which he does countless times in the novel, he travels back to his late mother’s long-abandoned home. He sits in her yard, and reads it. *Deus seu concatenatio*. As Ferguson makes so clear, reaching back to women of color feminism, queer studies is inextricable from the question of reproduction – and of the desires that are forged in the spaces between pure productivity and the something else they take from us – the surplus they take from us that we take back for ourselves.¹⁰⁰

The period we currently inhabit has seen an incredible intensification of the dialectic of accumulation and immiseration. Concomitantly, there has been a return, with urgency, to questions that had been to some extent sidelined within the Humanities – questions that have to do with specifying the conjuncture, re-engaging problems of praxis, as well as our comportment towards futurity. Are we to abandon this moment to an ontology that wrenches matter free of the social, of mediation, of relation? Are we to do this in the name of “Deleuze” when it was Deleuze who argued so passionately that our desires can and do become recoded; not in “themselves” – not as autonomous forces – but in the throes of history?¹⁰¹ This is the fanatical Deleuze – and indeed, the fanatical Spinozist materialist tradition. To realize this fanaticism in the present requires us to re-embed ourselves, our theories, and our praxis within the social world, not to take flight from it.

In *Through the Valley*, the word “chili” – not to mention “bathroom,” “kitchen,” “corn” and “dinner” – appears more frequently than does the word “dream” (31 times). But when Eric dreams, it is never the ethereal dreams capitalism dreams for itself – its dreams of productivity and time sped into nothingness. Eric dreams fanatical dreams – dreams of trash and friends; of the plumbing of the world – its reproduction – and its collectives:

Eric dreamed about looking over a cliff ... to see a city, flickering with green fire, along all its alleys and avenues, luminous and putrescent ... He was walking through streets not yet finished, coursing with black water, dropping suddenly onto lower shelves, over whose edges he could look down and see urban offal, pulsing, weaving, changing, as if on a great machine. All of the refuse was churned and braided into walls and bridges and pipes and electric wires and antennas ... Sometimes someone held his hand, but if it was Dynamite or Mike or Shit—or even Mex—he wasn’t sure.¹⁰²

All the variables of a so-called primitive accumulation are here. And all the variables of an onto-primitivism too. They are here, but crucially, vitally upended.

A city at once rotting and incandescently-becoming. And yet this is not the origin-brink logic we have been tracking. This is the science-fictional imagination at full swerve from the disaster-porn apocalyptic aphrodisiacs of new materialisms and object-ontologies. This is the sci-fi imaginary at its most gloriously excremental negation of those flat lit futures for which technology and temporality keep each other’s pace down to the nanosecond. Delany’s is History known only through uneven development: or, *speculative putrescence*. There are no fantasies of self-possession here, but quite a few dreams of speculative, collective reproduction. For it is through our urine – no, *someone’s* urine – only that we see the starlight in the floorboards, the saturation of our world (down to the molecule? Oh, what does it matter) with a time crystallized in space, a space and time restored to each other only through the mediation of our offal. Urine as decryption. Would it be so terrible to be utopian?¹⁰³ To imagine not the endless sheer productivity of our bodies, but rather that someday the reproduction of ourselves will be the production of use rather than exchange? A city at once rotting and incandescently-becoming. A glorious glowing city of shit. Let it never be said of us that our consciousness was sheerly molecular, that we truly believed that all the baleful historical foreclosures of capitalism were ontologically true – that the split between the object and the subject was utter, irreversible. No. We lived in relation; *someone held his hand*.

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Notes

1. Delany, Samuel R. (2012–03–26). *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* (Kindle Locations 11733–11734). Magnus Books. Kindle Edition.
2. On Spinozist *potentia*, Jeffers's friend Caleb says, "that's what everybody's arguin' about in philosophy departments, now, like 'difference,' about forty or fifty years ago." *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* (Kindle Locations 17877–17878). On the paraliterary, see Samuel Delany, *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts and the Politics of the Paraliterary* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).
3. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 74.
4. The bibliography here is too massive to cite in any representative manner. For recent work grounded in a Spinozist account of materiality see, for example, Levi Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2008), and "The Ontic Principle: Outline of an Object-Oriented Ontology," in *The Speculative Turn*, John Protevi, "Ontology, History, and Biology of Affect," in *The Speculative Turn*.
5. While I recognize that these tendencies differ from one another in a great many ways, this is not the place to parse each tendency and the field of differences between them in detail. Rather, as will become clear – even belabored – I seek to limn the contours of a general conceptual turn toward ontological thought.
6. Joel Olson, Chapter 1, *Fanatical Approach*, p. 13.
7. The bibliography here is long. Some representative texts include Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2003); Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); John Mee *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
8. One might profitably argue, moreover, that the ontological turn represents its own species of fanaticism. If so, part of understanding current ontologies means asking what has happened to the erstwhile political referent of fanaticism. Indeed, the ontological turn, some have argued, functions as a kind of enthusiasm without commitment – or what Alexander Galloway describes as an "unaligned politics." If the ontological turn shifts focus from more explicitly counterhegemonic inquiry rooted in some relation to forms of extant radicalism or political organizing, to the zone of the object or the molecular itself as a kind of wandering but contentless political affect, I believe now would be an appropriate time to ask what might seem an outmoded question: Why? See Alexander Galloway, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism," *Critical Inquiry* 39 (Winter 2013).
9. David Berry, "The Uses of Object-Oriented Ontology," <http://stunlaw.blogspot.com/2012/05/uses-of-object-oriented-ontology.html>.
10. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1977).
11. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).
12. For example, a recent and fascinating engagement with Speculative Realism, see Tavia Nyong'o, "Back to the Garden: Queer Ecology in Samuel Delany's *Heavenly Breakfast*," *American Literary History*, Winter 2012, 24 (4): 747–767. I would also cite Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (re.press: New York, 2008) as a deeply generative engagement with ontology and objects that escapes – and perhaps shatters – the kinds of limitations of the ontological turn in general. This is because *Cyclonopedia* is structured around a key historical problem mediated in the difference between the war machine and desert-nomadism, or: the relationship between "jungle militarism" (i.e. Vietnam and its attendant forms of guerilla resistance) and "desert-militarism" (the War on Terror and its attendant forms of resistance). When *Cyclonopedia* engages the movement from the war machine of the 70s to the desert-militarism of the present – or, the shift in focus of US imperial force, post-1973, onto the Middle East—it presents this shift in terms of two central transformations: 1) the rise of petropolitics, and 2) the role of monotheistic enthusiasms in the constitution of the war machine/forms of resistance. For *Cyclonopedia*, this latter forces a torque to Deleuze/Guattari's conception of the war machine; "The contemporary war machine (the grasping of war as a machine) does not correspond easily to the Deleuze-Guattarian model because a) it includes Abrahamic or monotheistic escalation and monotheism as stimulating components; 2) it has war as an object, or – more exactly – a product; 3)it consummates the technocapitalist ocumenon through synthesis with Islamic monotheistic enthusiasm (subtracting the supposed potential for 'secularization' as an Abrahamic teleology)" (16).
13. Sandro Mezzadra, "The Topicality of Pre-History: A New Reading of Marx's Analysis of 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation,'" *Rethinking Marxism* 23:3, 302–321.
14. See David Harvey, "Reading Marx's *Capital*, volume 2," <http://davidharvey.org/2012/01/reading-marxs-capital-vol-2-class-01/>
15. Alexander Galloway opens the question of allegory and contemporary theory in inimitably provocative ways in *The Interface Effect* (New York: Polity, 2012).
16. Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ* 16: 1–2 (47).
17. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of*

Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

18. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner. "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?" *PMLA* 110.2 (1995): 343–349.
19. Readers will note that even the refusal of objects as objects of study affirms this generalization of "the object." See, for example, Robyn Wiegman's assertion in the Introduction to *Object Lessons*, that this work "is not a new theory. It offers no new objects..." (35). I will extrapolate further on this definition of "newness" as attached to the arrival new objects – or, more properly, of the object as itself signifying newness, as the argument proceeds.
20. Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
21. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), xi.
22. "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?", eds. David Eng, Judith Halberstam, Jose Estabén Muñoz, *Social Text* 84–5 (2005).
23. Smith's framing and deployment of Butler's critique of the fantasy of "prediscursive" bodies as a critique of the kinds of "origin stories" crucial to settler projects is also relevant here, although I do not have the space to pursue this line in greater detail in this essay.
24. See Scott Morgenson, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
25. Timothy Morton, "Queer Ecology," *PMLA* 125, no. 2, March 2010 (275–6).
26. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), xi.
27. It would be interesting to pursue the psychoanalytic dimensions of this untimeliness further, of course, but I am not in a position to do that within this essay.
28. Morgenson, *Spaces Between Us*, 21.
29. Delany, *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* (Kindle Locations 11733–11734).
30. Casarino, in Dimitris Vardoulakis. *Spinoza Now* (Kindle Locations 2451–2453). Kindle Edition.
31. Please note I am not concatenating the Spinozist materialisms with the object-oriented ontologists. My interest is in the molecular as an abstraction that finds purchase across methodological orientations.
32. Jane Bennett, "A Vitalist Stopover on the Way to a New Materialism," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, Politics*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 59.
33. Preciado, Beatriz (2013–09-23). *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (Kindle Locations 974–976). The Feminist Press at CUNY. Kindle Edition.
34. Preciado, (Kindle Locations 340–341).
35. Kaushik Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (Kindle Locations 254–256). Duke University Press. Kindle Edition.
36. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 259–261.
37. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 239–240.
38. For a historicist, nuanced account of the uneven dynamics of transgender technologies, see, for example, Aren Aizura, "The Romance of the Amazing Scalpel: 'Race', labour and affect in Thai gender reassignment clinics." In Peter A. Jackson (ed), *Queer Bangkok*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011. See, as well, Ethan Blue's phenomenal historical work on the experimentations with testosterone performed at San Quentin on incarcerated prisoners (using testicular grafts from executed inmates, largely African-American): "The Strange Career of Leo Stanley: Remaking Medicine and Manhood at San Quentin State Penitentiary, 1913–1951," *Pacific Historical Review*, 78, no. 2, May 2009.
39. Eugene Thacker. *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture* (Kindle Location 2808). Kindle Edition.
40. Nadia Abu El-Haj, *The Genealogical Science: The Search for Jewish Origins and the Politics of Epistemology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012) Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: New Press, 2012); Kim Tallbear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
41. Mezzadra, "[e]xamples of the contemporary conditions of primitive accumulation are abundant, including enclosures of heterogeneous 'commons,' from land to knowledge, from water to the abstract code of life (DNA)" (*Border as Method*, 303–4). See also Bruce Braun, "Biopolitics and the Molecularization of Life," *Cultural Geographies*, Jan 2007, vol. 14, no. 1; Nikolas Rose, *Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Neil Smith, "Nature as Accumulation Strategy," *Socialist Register*, 2007, vol. 43.
42. Consider the voluntarism haunting Preciado's claim that "hormonal self-experimentation" can function as a "technique for de-installing gender." See Preciado, "The Pharmaco-Pornographic Regime: Sex, Gender, and Subjectivity in the Age of Punk Capitalism," in Aren Aizura and Susan Stryker, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
43. To the sunderings of the social from the sexual that tend to be promoted by such molecularizations, I ultimately prefer *Through the Valley's* presentation of sexuality in terms of a Spinozan interconnectedness – the binding together of a heterogeneous natural world in one tessellated erotic tremor that, far from the primitivist ontologies shorn of a relation to the social world, is instead manifestly fanatical – which is to say, deeply social.
44. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin, 1993), 206. For Marx, "labor" is the pre-eminent example of a concrete abstraction. A brief explication is warranted. In the hands of the bourgeois economists, labor appears as a "simple" transhistorical abstraction. For Marx, however, labor is a "concrete abstraction"; it is the synthesis of the multiple historical determinations – as well as the singular types of useful labor – that constitute capitalist production. Labor is an abstraction because it creates value within a system of production in which a variety of useful labors are made equivalent to and exchangeable for one another – a system in which all labors can be rendered in terms of the money-form. This rendering-equivalent is dependent on a

number of other factors, specifically: "colonialism," "circulation," the "credit system," the "unproductive classes" (the reserve pool of labor, the unemployed), "export and import," "state debt," and so on. Labor is an abstraction, finally, because it synthesizes – at a number of different scales – this composition of historical factors, forces and dependencies. And this is a synthesis that works syncretically. We cannot decompose the abstraction of labour into its component parts without simultaneously recognizing those parts as constituting a broader field.

45. And here, Preciado's history of the production of synthetic hormones post-WWII becomes quite useful, although as one can anticipate, I do not agree with her conception of "adding" value in what follows: "what if, in reality, the insatiable bodies of the multitude—their cocks, clitorises, anuses, hormones, and neurosexual synapses – what if sexuality, seduction, and the pleasure of the multitude were all the mainsprings of the creation of value added to the contemporary economy? Preciado, *Testo Junkie* (Kindle Locations 385–386). In much the same way that Silvia Federici argued that the body – specifically its "vivisection" into "useful" and "unuseful" capacities was the "first machine produced under capitalism" – Preciado points us to the ways in which sexuality and sexual difference continue to be an engine for the reproduction of capitalism. However, where Federici is concerned with the mediating sphere of reproduction, and its myriad labors, Preciado turns to the body as a kind of self-mediating factory of "value. This "socialization" of production – I use Alberto Toscano's term here – tends to occlude two "hidden abodes": both the labor of production itself along with that of the reproductive spheres.

46. Eugene Thacker. *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture* (Kindle Locations 2386–2387).

47. See Dana Luciano, "Nostalgia for an Age Yet to Come: *Velvet Goldmine's* Queer Archive," in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tukhanen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011); Jasbir K. Puar. "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Becoming-*Intersectional* in Assemblage Theory." *philoSOPHIA* 2.1 (2012): 49–66. Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). Mel Chen explains the problems with new materialisms further: "I detail an animacy that is in indirect conversation with historical vitalisms as well as Bennett's "vital materiality. Yet this book focuses critically on an interest in the animal that hides in animacy, particularly in the interest of its attachment to things like sex, race, class, and dirt. That is, my purpose is not to reinvest certain materialities with life, but to remap live and dead zones away from those very terms, leveraging animacy toward a consideration of affect in its queered and raced formations. Throughout the book, my core sense of "queer" refers, as might be expected, to exceptions to the conventional ordering of sex, reproduction, and intimacy, though it at times also refers to animacy's veering-away from dominant ontologies and the normativities they promulgate. That is, I suggest that queering is immanent to animate transgressions, violating proper intimacies (including between humans and nonhuman things)." Mel Y. Chen. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012; Kindle Location 206).

48. Alberto Toscano, "Abstract Life: The Biopolitical Logic of Capitalism and Empire." Although I don't have the space to pursue this line of thought, it is worth considering that what appears to be the separation of objects from subjects (or objects from the *socius*) might be an epistemological formation that is part of a longstanding Enlightenment tradition of empiricist inquiry – that which Michael McKeon describes as the "disembedding" of the object of knowledge from "the matrix of experience it seeks to explain." For McKeon, beginning in the late seventeenth century, "modern knowledge is defined. ... by its explanatory ambition to separate itself from its object of knowledge sufficiently to fulfill the epistemological demand that what is known must be divided from the processes by which it is known." In this essay follows, we could say that I am focusing on one particular form of epistemological "disembedding" proper to our contemporary moment: the disembedding of sexuality from a field of experience. See Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3.

49. Timothy Morton, "Here Comes Everything: The Promise of Object-Oriented Ontology," *Qui Parle* 19.2 (Spring–Summer, 2011), 163–190.

50. Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 24.

51. <http://andandand.org/>

52. It is worth noting here that Morton (and, incidentally, Meillassoux as well) have returned to Heideggerian paradigms of "withdrawal" while somehow excising what was one of the most important interventions in Heideggerian thought: that of Tran Duc Thao. In *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, Thao argues that the "objectivity" of the world constitutes the "infrastructure" of "life," human or otherwise. Why Morton et al have chosen to return to Heidegger as if Thao's historical-materialist account of objectivity was not formative, is curious to me.

53. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013).

54. Moten's proposal here resonates with Olson's "fanatical approach" – both are political philosophies tuned to the transformative relations inhering in the social field. And these transformative potentials are made clear, I want to offer, by emphasizing the complexly-mediated nature of the social and the object worlds, rather than by dwelling in the seemingly "withdrawn" character of objects.

55. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 110.

56. George Ciccariello-Maher, "Jumpstarting the Decolonial Engine: Symbolic Violence from Fanon to Chavez," *Theory and Event* 13(1), 2010.

57. As Jasbir Puar and Julie Livingston make clear, claims about the split between humanism and object-oriented ontologies are never free of the ascriptions of race: "Foucault's formulation of racism as 'caesuras within the biological continuum' is his preemptive critique of a posthumanism that does not acknowledge race as a critical threshold of demarcation," Puar and Livingston, "Interspecies," *Social Text*, 2011, vol. 29, no. 1, p. 8.

58. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 873.

59. The different moments of primitive accumulation distribute themselves now, more or less in chronological order, particularly over Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and England. In England at the end of the 17th century, they arrive at a systematical combination, embracing the colonies, the national debt, the modern mode of taxation, and the protectionist system. These methods depend in part on brute force, e.g., the colonial system. But, they all employ the power of the State, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power," Marx, *Capital*, vol 1, 915. For a recent account, see Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013).

60. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 919. For Deleuze and Guattari, as we know, primitive accumulation is the originary deterritorialization, and sets in motion the capitalist axiomatic at large: "At the heart of *Capital*, Marx points to the encounter of two 'principal' elements: on one side, the deterritorialized worker who has become fee and naked, having to sell his labor capacity; and on the other, decoded money that has become capital and is capable of buying it...For the free worker: the deterritorialization of the soil through privatization; the decoding of the instruments of production through appropriation; the loss of the means of consumption through the dissolution of the family and the corporation; and finally, the decoding of the worker in favor of the work itself or of the

machine. And for capital: the deterritorialization of wealth through monetary abstraction..." Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*. (New York: Penguin, 2009), 225.

61. But primitive accumulation is more, still, than this tripartite system. Here it is appropriate to recall the convergence of epochs and embodiment that inhere in Thacker's claims about the body being a "wet factory." I would not be the first person to object that bodies have long been wet factories. The quickest way to issue this objection is simply to cite Silvia Federici's argument that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scientific discourses produced "a true vivisection of the body, whereby it was decided which of its properties could live and which, instead, had to die. It was a social alchemy that did not turn base metals into gold, but bodily powers into work-powers," Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 139. See also Kevin Floyd's analysis of Fordism as involving a "gradual shift from a physiological to a psychoanalytic regime of sexual knowledge, from an epistemology of body classification to one of body partitioning" (55).

62. I do not have the space here to review Marx's conception of primitive accumulation at greater length. For some recent secondary reflections on primitive accumulation from outside the field of political economy proper, see, for example Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, Jason Read, "Primitive Accumulation: the Aleatory Foundation of Capitalism," *Rethinking Marxism* 14 (2), 2002; Jordana Rosenberg, *Critical Enthusiasm: Capital Accumulation and the Transformation of Religious Passion* (New York: Oxford, 2011), and, "Monstrously Unpositable: Primitive Accumulation and the Aesthetic Arc of *Capital*," *J19* 2015 (3:1).

63. Omar Dahi, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5296/capitalism-and-class-in-the-gulf-arab-states>

64. Ibid. Neither the Sinai War nor the oil embargo were the cause of the recession. Giovanni Arrighi, Ben Fine, and Chris Harman represent just a few of the scholars who have shown that the recession of the 1970s was the result of a far larger complex of historical forces, which include the birth of derivatives markets, the movements for decolonization that produced a retreat from formal, direct colonization by the U.S. almost everywhere except in the Middle East, defeat in Vietnam, the end of Bretton Woods, and the deindustrialization of the domestic sphere. Certainly increases in oil pricing hurt the average consumer, but not as much as stagnant wages, deindustrialization, and the offshoring of labor did.

65. Dahi, *Jadaliyya*

66. The literature on the development of the global economy and in particular of Gulf capital is too long to cite. See, for example, Adam Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States* (London: Palgrave, 2011); Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York: Norton, 2010); Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshom Bichler, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (London: Pluto, 2002).

67. Financialization, in other words, is supported by forms of direct state violence that are often occluded in the narrativization of the rise of finance, which tends to focus on the birth of derivatives markets as an event autonomous from the political world stage. And yet, financial speculation is inextricably bound up with what Richard Godden calls the state's accompanying "violent regulatory" arm: "[N]eoliberal regimes, the political face of fictitious capital, deregulate financial markets to ensure the deterritorialized flows of abstracted monies, while simultaneously regulating, with increasing violence, the underpaid, the underemployed, and the unemployable at national and international levels. What might be called derivative capitalism (abstract) depends on a tightly controlled, tightly tortured labor force again at levels both national and international (concrete)." The interplay between the seemingly abstract world of financialization and the violence of imperialist and domestic dispossession, militarization, and incarceration constitute the contradictory suture of the abstract and concrete iterations of neoliberal capital. See, Richard Godden, "Labor, Language, and Finance Capital," *PMLA*, vol. 126, no. 2, March 2011, p. 420.

68. Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol III* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 379.

69. See David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital, Volume Two* (London: Verso, 2013).

70. See, for example, Kara Keeling's extraordinary *The Witch's Flight* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007).

71. "[C]irculation time also 'forms a limit' to the realization of value, as Harvey argues in *A Companion* (168).

72. Joshua Clover, "Autumn of the System: Poetry and Finance Capital," *The Journal of Narrative Theory*, 41 (1), 2011, 39.

73. Ibid.

74. Eugene Thacker. *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture* (Kindle Locations 2588–2589).

75. Adam Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East* (London: Haymarket, 2013).

76. Ibid.

77. I am very grateful to Wendy Brown for her provocation to specify these linkages.

78. "For it would be a great error to think that exports from the periphery originate primarily in traditional sectors or archaic territorialities: on the contrary, they come from modern industries and plantations that generate an immense surplus value, to a point where it is no longer the developed countries that supply the underdeveloped countries with capital, but quite the opposite. So true is it that primitive accumulation is not produced just once at the dawn of capitalism, but is continually reproducing itself. Capitalism exports filiative capital," Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 231.

79. Elsewhere, I have described how the narrative of Jewish origins in Palestine is bound closely to the onset of neoliberal forms of financialization (Rosenberg and Rusert, "Framing Finance"). I do not have the space to review that argument here, but what I wish to suggest is simply that origin narratives themselves take on a geopolitically hyperpotent valence during periods of intensified primitive accumulation, and that – as I indicated at the outset – we might consider molecular ontologies along these lines.

80. Glen Coulthard, "Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism," *Affinities*, vol 4, no. 2 (2010).

81. For a fuller discussion of these questions in historical context, see Jordana Rosenberg and Chi-ming Yang, "The Dispossessed Eighteenth Century," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (special issue eds., Rosenberg and Yang), August 2014.

82. Brenna Bhandar, "Property, Law and Race: Modes of Abstraction," forthcoming in *UC Irvine Law Review*, 9–10 (I have received permission to cite this forthcoming article). See also Hanieh's explication of the spatio-temporal dynamics of neoliberalism in Palestine: "This fragmentation [of the West Bank and Gaza] has been made possible by military power. Israel forcibly prevents Palestinian refugees from returning to their land, divides the West Bank and Gaza Strip from one another, places administrative restrictions on the movement of Palestinian citizens of Israel into the occupied territories,

and completely controls movement in the West Bank itself. At the same time – and this is a crucial point that often goes unstated – dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians from their land continues in a slow-motion manner ... [F]ragmentation is not solely a spatial process: it necessarily rests upon a temporal disruption. The assault on history itself becomes an integral feature of how colonization functions" (120)

83. On this topic see also Nicholas A. Brown's excellent, "The Logic of Settler Accumulation in a Landscape of Perpetual Vanishing," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2014, Vol. 4, No. 1.

84. In "Framing Finance," Britt Rusert and I discuss the narrative dimensions of these processes in more detail. We also, in that piece, connect the global economy of neoliberalism to the intensification of the dispossession and incarceration of people of color in the U.S. from the 1970s to the present. See Rosenberg and Rusert, "Framing Finance: Rebellion, Dispossession, and the Geopolitics of Enclosure in Samuel Delany's *Neveryon Series*," (*Radical History Review* 118, Winter 2014).

85. See also Tim Dean's deployment of Hardt and Negri's conception of the multitude to envision a "molecular" structure of resistance to biopower: Dean: "Speaking in terms of the multitude of the body (rather than a multitude of bodies) represents my effort to refocus attention on the struggle of power relations at every level, including the molecular, and the effects of pleasure that accompany them." Tim Dean, "The Biopolitics of Pleasure," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Summer 2012 (492).

86. Britt Rusert and I offer a longer analysis of the hermeneutics of the long 1970s in "Framing Finance."

87. Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, AntiWork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 27–29.

88. One might say that affect – the "mopping up" or papering-over function – plays the role vis-à-vis reproduction that finance plays vis-à-vis spatial expansion: it serves as a compensation for a dialectical movement necessary to capital accumulation, and/although inexorably driven to crisis.

89. Stuart Hall, et al, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (New York: MacMillan, 2nd ed., 2012), 359.

90. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 164.

91. The rejection of reproduction takes form, as well, in the "antisocial thesis" in queer studies, and has to do with a set of debates around Lee Edelman's *No Future*, and its rejection of "reproductive futurism." These debates have been discussed at length in the field, and may not require review here. While the rejection or embrace of reproduction and futurity has been thoroughly addressed, the shift in emphasis within queer studies to questions of production has been less so. See, for example, Robert Caserio, Tim Dean, Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, and José Muñoz, "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," *PMLA* 121.3 (May 2006).

92. We might think here as well of J. Jack Halberstam's argument that "queerness...open[s] up ...alternative relations to time and space" within what I would understand as a "productivist" turn in queer studies. See J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).

93. *Understanding Deleuze*, 22. One line of thought that I don't have the space to pursue here might be to return Berlant and Warner's contextualization of queer studies' objects to Colebrook's recent assertions that queer theory has exceeded the question of objects. Colebrook argues, "Queer studies is no longer an issue of sexual orientation, object-choices, lacking desires and gender combinations, one dares to think body and (homo)sexuality essentially: that is, by defining their being through their capacity for becoming, in terms of a productive desire...and in relation to their 'powers or potentials, (their) capacities for striving and becoming, that are not yet realized in knowledge, and that can have a force to disrupt or produce knowledges'" (6). The reader will note that there is a synchronicity between Berlant/Warner and Colebrook, at least in a collective attention to queer studies' productive deformations of "knowledges" and "frame[works]." And yet, what had been a historical or contextualizing claim about queer theory's relation to its object in "What Can Queer Theory Teach Us About X?" has become interiorized as an immanent capacity of queerness itself ("one dares") to exceed the particularities of queer objects *tout court*. A similar tendency can be seen in Michael O'Rourke's redaction of David Ruffolo's *Post-Queer Politics* – that "queer is a process...not an object," or in his expansion of Berlant and Warner's paradigm: "If we refuse to spell out a programmatic content for speculative thought then it will always retain the power to wrench frames..." Michael O'Rourke, "Girls Welcome! Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory." *Speculations* (II): 275–312 (2011). I think it is important to insist that "the power to wrench frames" was first and foremost a claim about the disciplinary relationship queer studies bore to university administrations, activist work, and to the nation-state. Ontological claims about what queer "is" can tend to replace history with intention (even an intention to "refuse" intention), opening all objects to a potential queerness. Such a despecification of queer objects, while potentially opening up to fascinating conjunctural analyses, can also intersect in problematic ways with the general theoretical tendency I am describing above: a theoretical primitivism or fantasized indigenization of the object and of relations to objects.

94. This process – recently given lengthy treatment in Jameson's *Representing Capital* – names the only seemingly-impossible cohabitation of the deepening "reserve pool of labor" (the unemployed) with the deepening profits of the wealthy. This baleful dialectic is yet another way of describing the theory of primitive accumulation. In brief: in its drive to revolutionize the technologies of production, capitalism constantly makes its labor more productive; in so doing, a greater mass of the laboring population becomes consigned to what Marx terms "pauperism." The unemployed surplus population grows in size in direct relation to the growth of labor's productivity and to the production of massive profits for the wealthy. This dialectical relationship is what Marx terms the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation." It is also what Mezzadra describes as the "reemergence of formal subsumption" that characterizes the present of financialization – a moment in which "labor can no longer be taken for granted," but rather is produced through forms of explicit violence.

95. Dean Spade, "Medicaid Policy and Gender-Confirming Healthcare for Trans People: An Interview with Advocates," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, p. 497.

96. Toby Beauchamp, "Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and U.S. State Surveillance After 9/11), in *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 54.

97. Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey, Michael Rustin, "The Kilburn manifesto: Our Challenge to the Neoliberal Victory," <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/24/kilburn-manifesto-challenge-neoliberal-victory>

98. Work on racial capitalism has done tremendous labor to elucidate how queerness has become bound up with normative projects. This essay is not a critique of that work. I'm concerned, instead, to interrogate the consequences of certain recent reterritorializations of the political valence of desire within the molecule as divorced from the social world.

99. See, for example, Madhu Dubey, *Signs and Cities: Black Literary Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Theory* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Robert Reid-Pharr, "Clean: Death and Desire in Samuel R. Delany's *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*," *American Literature* 2011, vol 83, no. 2.

100. See, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 3rd ed., 2007); Cherrie Moraga, "La Guera," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1984); Erlene Stetson, "Studying Slavery: Some Literary and Pedagogical Considerations on the Black Female Slave," in *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith (New York: The Feminist Press, repr. 1993); Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984).

101. The "breaking down of the barriers," argues Jameson, "between the subjective – narrow concepts of desire and libido, even of sexuality – and the allegedly objective – the social, the political and the economic – is one of Deleuze's most important achievements" (403).

102. Delany, *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders* (Kindle Locations 4568–4572).

103. See Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

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