

Within, I share a series of interdisciplinary stories that are indebted to anticolonial thought and black studies. *Dear Science* argues that black people have always used interdisciplinary methodologies to explain, explore, and story the world, because thinking and writing and imagining across a range of texts, disciplines, histories, and genres unsettles suffocating and dismal and insular racial logics. By employing interdisciplinary methodologies and living interdisciplinary worlds, black people bring together various sources and texts and narratives to challenge racism. Or, black people bring together various sources and texts and narratives not to capture something or someone, but to question the analytical work of capturing, and the desire to capture, something or someone. The stories think through how racism and other forms of oppression underpin the political economy of academic and nonacademic disciplinary thinking (the demand to gather and live with seemingly transparent data, in a range of sectors; living with data [policies, reports, cards and carding] that ostensibly prove that those communities living outside normalcy are verifiably outside normalcy; giving over the data in exchange for capital). Within black studies and anticolonial studies, one can observe an ongoing method of gathering multifariously textured tales, narratives, fictions, whispers, songs, grooves. The textures offer one way to challenge the primacy of evidentiary and insular normalcies, because they are allegedly incongruous. In assembling ideas that are seemingly disconnected and uneven (the seabird and the epilogue, the song and the soil, the punch clock and the ecosystem, the streetlight and the kick-on-beat), the logic of knowing-to-prove is unsustainable because incongruity appears to be offering atypical thinking. Yet curiosity thrives. The industry punch clock calibrates and recalibrates the ecosystem (water . . . rich in corrosive chemicals purged from the factories of its industrial past) and . . .⁷ She asks: What happens when our blood falls to the soil and seeps in? She wonders: What happens to our conception of land when it is an absorbent receptacle for black people's erythrocytes, leukocytes, thrombocytes? She answers: Strange fruit.⁸

7. Malini Ranganathan, "Thinking with Flint: Racial Liberalism and the Roots of an American Water Tragedy," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27, no. 3 (2016): 18.

8. Danyel Haughton, your question still sits with me. See also Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (November 2013): 1–15; Billie Holiday, "Strange Fruit," *Commodore*, 1939.

Agony. Also, assembling ideas that are seemingly connected (the weight and the measure, the cloth and the silk, the road and the vehicle) fuse and break apart how we know, because we seek out continuities and ruptures. And curiosity thrives. The weight (pull of gravity) and measure (calculation) are overlapping and different (uncommon weight/uncommon weight/new weight . . . water parts) and . . .⁹ What is meaningful, then, are the ways in which black people are interdisciplinary actors, continually entangling and disentangling varying narratives and tempos and hues that, together, invent and reinvent knowledge. This interdisciplinary innovation illuminates, to borrow from Mark V. Campbell, multiple skills and ways of knowing that privilege collaboration and bring into view unorthodox practices of belonging that discredit ethnic absolutism and its attendant geographic fictions.¹⁰

This is a way of living, and an analytical frame, that is curious and sustained by wonder (the desire to know). This is a method that demands openness and is unsatisfied with questions that result in descriptive-data-induced answers. Black studies and anticolonial thought offer methodological practices wherein we read, live, hear, groove, create, and write across a range of temporalities, places, texts, and ideas that build on existing liberatory practices and pursue ways of living the world that are uncomfortably generous and provisional and practical and, as well, imprecise and unrealized.¹¹ The method is rigorous, too. Wonder is study. Curiosity is attentive. Black method is therefore not continuously and absolutely undisciplined (invariably without precision, invariably undone).¹² Black method is precise, detailed, coded, long, and forever. The practice of bringing together multiple texts, stories, songs, and places involves the difficult work of thinking and learning across many sites, and thus coming to know, generously, varying and shifting worlds and ideas.

9. M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2008), 55–56, 59.

10. Mark V. Campbell, “Everything’s Connected: A Relationality Remix, a Praxis,” *C. L. R. James Journal* 20, no. 1 (2014): 97–114. See also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

11. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence,” in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (New York: Verson, 2017), 225–240; AbdouMalik Simone, *Improvised Lives* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2019).

12. To be totally undisciplined can perhaps undermine the intellectual labor of black people who rigorously and generously share and build and remember stories and lessons that we collectively utilize as we move through this world. We are not always undone. Our undoing is practiced, patient, focused.

Sometimes this is awful because we are gathering dense texts and uncomfortable ideas that wear us out. Sometimes this is awful because we are aware we cannot know forever, yet we are committed to the everlasting effort of figuring out how we might, together, fashion liberation. We have no time. This rigor is animated by diasporic literacy, VèVè Clark's wonderfully useful reading practice that investigates and shows how we already do, or can, illuminate and connect existing and emerging diasporic codes and tempos and stories and narratives and themes. Clark shows how diasporic literacy is structured through "recognized references sharing a wealth of connotations."¹³ She theorizes Mayotte Capécia, Mahalia Jackson, Jomo Kenyatta, food, furnishings, and laughter as grammars, figures, and practices that are written into creative-intellectual texts as prompts.¹⁴ These literacies function to expand the text outside itself (the prompt opens a door). Kenyatta and laughter are not endlessly explained and unpacked; instead, they cue what does not need explanation but requires imagination and memory and study. Diasporic literacy signals ways of being and ways of living (memories, imaginations, mnemonics), that we know and share in order to collectively struggle against suffocating racial logics. Like sorrow songs. Like freedom dreams. Like erotic. Like flying cheek-bones.¹⁵

STORY

The ideas and curiosities gathered in *Dear Science* are bundled and presented as stories. Telling, sharing, listening to, and hearing stories are relational and interdisciplinary acts that are animated by all sorts of people, places, narrative devices, theoretical queries, plots. The process is sustained by invention and wonder. The story has no answers. The stories offer an aesthetic relationality that relies on the dynamics of creating-narrating-listening-hearing-reading-and-sometimes-unhearing. The sto-

13. VèVè Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon*," in *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 308–309.

14. Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy," 308–309.

15. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; rpt., New York: Vintage, 1990); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon, 2002); Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 53–59; M. NourbeSe Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (Charlottetown, Canada: Ragweed Press, 1989), 51–53.

ries do not offer lucid tales or answers; rather, they signal ways of living in a world that denies black humanity (or, more aptly, the stories signal ways of black livingness).¹⁶ The story-text itself, read aloud or quietly, is an imprint of black life and livingness that tells of the wreckage and the lists and the dance floors and the loss and the love and the rumors and the lessons and the heartbreak. It prompts. The story does not simply describe, it demands representation outside itself. Indeed, the story cannot tell itself without our willingness to imagine what it cannot tell. The story asks that we live with what cannot be explained and live with unexplained cues and diasporic literacies, rather than reams of positivist evidence. The story opens the door to curiosity; the reams of evidence dissipate as we tell the world differently, with a creative precision. The story asks that we live with the difficult and frustrating ways of knowing differentially. (And some things we can keep to ourselves. They cannot have everything. Stop her autopsy.) They cannot have everything.

I present *Dear Science* as a series of stories as a way to hold on to the rebellious methodological work of sharing ideas in an unkind world. Sharing can be uneasy and terrifying, but our stories of black worlds and black ways of being can, in part, breach the heavy weight of dispossession and loss. Our shared stories of black worlds and black ways of being breach the heavy weight of dispossession and loss because these narratives (songs, poems, conversations, theories, debates, memories, arts, prompts, curiosities) are embedded with all sorts of liberatory clues and resistances (PFUnk/F.U.N.K.).¹⁷ Sharing, therefore, is not understood as an act of disclosure but instead signals collaboration and collaborative ways to enact and engender struggle. As a collection of stories, too, *Dear Science* understands theory as a form of storytelling. Stories and storytelling signal the fictive work of theory. I hope this move, at least momentarily, exposes

16. Barbara Christian writes: “I am inclined to say that our theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking. How else have we managed to survive with such spiritedness the assault on our bodies, social institutions, countries, our very humanity?” Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 68. See also Saidiya Hartman on “critical fabulation,” in “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1–14. Hazel V. Carby’s *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (London: Verso, 2019) is, for me, a beautiful and creative work that offers a mode of storytelling that captures and bends disciplined-interdisciplinary genres.

17. Listen to Prince, “F.U.N.K.,” NPG Digital, 2007.

the intricacies of academic work where fact-finding, experimentation, analysis, study, are recognized as narrative, plot, tale, and incomplete inventions, rather than impartial treatises. As story, theory is cast as fictive knowledge and insists that the black imagination is necessary to analytical curiosity and study. Story is theoretical, dance, poem, sound, song, geography, affect, photograph, painting, sculpture, and more. Maybe the story is one way to express and fall in love with black life. Maybe the story disguises our fall.

Kevin Young offers a rich analysis of black stories, storying, storytelling, and story-making. He outlines how black stories can be acts of keeping something or someone or somewhere hidden (desire, love, half of the story, where it's at, kin). He also addresses how the practice of twisting stories and narratives (lying, counterfeiting, remapping, recoding, forging) subverts, refuses, and resists racism.¹⁸ Thus, the work of telling and the story itself enmesh, to offer not a descriptive tale but a strategic lesson in and for black life. With this in mind: the content of the story is a lesson (you, we, recode and forge and invent, this is how we live, I will keep your secret); the act of teaching and telling the story is collaborative (I will share this with you, coauthor this with you, and live this life with you, I will tell you my secret); the contents of the story are multifarious and interdisciplinary (characters, plots, twists, metaphors, unexplained codes, places, secrets, connotations, structure the lesson and telling). The lesson, the telling, the contents, are ways of life (ways of being). The story, too, Dina Georgis writes, has the capacity to affectively move us and, at the same time, incite a listening practice that is "neither disengaged nor wanting to master what it sees and hears."¹⁹ If the function of the story is to invite the reader-viewer-interlocutor-listener to feel, respond, and be moved, it also, Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us, establishes powerful alignments (provisional and not) that are put to work with and for loved ones.²⁰ Gilmore shows how utilizing various narrative devices and reading across materials (photocopies, pamphlets, newsletters, scripture, statistics, drawings, announcements, charts, legal documents and cases, theories) engenders practices of solidarity and collaboration that

18. Kevin Young, *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness* (Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2012).

19. Dina Georgis, *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 1, 18.

20. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

work within existing, and imagine new, geographies of liberation.²¹ The story, as interdisciplinary method, is thus tasked with immense and hopeful possibilities. The story is the practice of black life. With and for love. In this way, and as an interdisciplinary methodology, the story—theoretical, creative, groovy, skilled, action-based, secreted, shared—is a verb-activity that invites engagement, curiosity, collaboration.

SIMULTANEITY

Sylvia Wynter writes that we are a “storytelling species,” while also observing that our stories—especially our origin stories—have an impact on our neurobiological and physiological behaviors.²² Her observations draw attention to the natural sciences as well as interdisciplinarity, emphasizing a dynamic connection between narrative and biology (stories have the capacity to move us). In addition to contesting a teleological-biocentric genre of the human, the dynamism between biology and narrative affirms the black methodologies noted above: science and story are not discrete; rather, we know, read, create, and feel science and story simultaneously.²³ Or, we tell and feel stories (in our hearts), and this telling-feeling tells-feels the empirics of black life. Reading across our curiosities, the story and imagination are testimonies grounded in the material expression of black life. The story has physiological components. And stories make place.²⁴ This means the metaphoric, allegorical, symbolic, and other devices that shape stories also move us and make place. These narrative devices, so thick and complicated in black studies, demand thinking about the interdisciplinary underpinnings of black studies beyond an additive model.²⁵ Conceptualizing stories and attendant narrative de-

21. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 182, 212–248.

22. Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be ‘Black,’” in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, ed. Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30–66.

23. “I burst apart.” Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109.

24. “I hurried back to Eatonville because I knew the town was full of material and that I could get it without hurt, harm or danger.” Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935; rpt., New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 2.

25. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1299; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990; rpt., New York: Routledge, 2000), 18.

FOOTNOTES (BOOKS AND PAPERS SCATTERED ABOUT THE FLOOR)

In 2015, I began scrolling images at my public talks. The image slides are on a continuous loop. The images are of ideas (in text, song, visual art, maps and places, objects, people) that have shaped my thinking. I started doing this because I was finding it difficult to track, within the context of a public talk, how I know what I know, where I know from, who I know from, and what I cannot possibly know. I try to make a new slideshow or film for each public talk, so I remember to revisit ideas before I give a presentation and think about them in a new context. I include these images because while I feel I know my research fields intimately, how I came to know these fields is fading, so I revisit and recontextualize. At the same time, this history, my memory, is overlaid by newer research questions, texts, images, events, places, people. Confidently and in my own specific and scattered way—to give an obvious example—I know well the tensions between modernity and race and gender and blackness. I found my way to this confidence by reading and rereading those who have studied and written about race, capitalism, and modernity. I found my way by sharing, talking, and writing about writers, scholars, and cultural producers I love to teach, read, reread, and read again. I found my way by reading and rereading work I do not agree with and by making my way through books and ideas I dislike. I sometimes show texts, such as images of music (scores, album cover art, musicians), because I adore music and it structures my life and work, but these ideas are not represented satisfactorily in my research. *The nonwordness of sounds.*¹

The subtitle of this story, “Books and Papers Scattered about the Floor,” is from Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (New York: Penguin, 1928), 13.

1. Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 101.

I show the images because I have increasingly noticed that some labor—specifically the exertion that lies within studying and writing and making and grooving—somehow seems to disappear after issuance. The exertion disappears.² The images are on a loop, and I add to this loop frequently. The images are not intended to carry clear meaning. They are looped, and the loop represents what I and what we cannot say or hear or see or remember just as it establishes a repetitive, circuitous, and circular but also inaccurate representation of coming to know. The loop is not intended to be meaning-making; the loop can only show fragments and moments of knowing. *Shadows: the interstices of the invisible and visible/residual elements may be articulated by and within new social practices, in effect, as a “new” emergent formation.*³ I show the images because I want to be as honest as I can about my intellectual history while also recognizing my dishonest memory. I show the images because I want to be honest about where my ideas come from while recognizing that this is also a process of forgetting. *My sadness sits around me.*⁴ So I read in-and-with black studies to honor those who have shared their intellectual and political energy with me—their effort—in myriad infrastructures, feelings, texts, stories, exchanges.⁵

This short story is about citations, endnotes, footnotes, notes, references, bibliographies, texts, narratives, parentheses, sources, and pages. It is a story, one of many, about what we do with books and ideas. It is a story about how we arrange and effectuate the ideas that make ideas. By observing how arranging, rearranging, and collecting ideas outside ourselves are processes that make our ideas our *own*, I think about how our ideas are bound up in stories, research, inquiries, that we do not (or should not claim we) own. This leads me to work through the ways black studies and academic research and writing—when we are doing our very best work—acknowledges the shared and collaborative intellectual praxis that

2. I have thought about this, often. The exertion she puts into her intellectual projects is ineffable. Her intellectual work cannot be tracked on the page. What she does to get there requires tremendous physiological and intellectual effort.

3. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 24; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 19.

4. June Jordan, “My Sadness Sits around Me,” in *The Black Poets*, ed. Dudley Randall (New York: Bantam, 1971), 248.

5. I do not know everywhere. My privilege is gaping. My geographic bias is obvious and objectionable. I will do better. I add slides weekly, monthly. I keep reading. I am ashamed. Adding more slides is shameful. Vulgar. This note, all notes, are vulgar.

makes our research what it is. This is, for me, especially important because our ideas, on the page or in the presentation, might suggest otherwise; sometimes our ideas imply that we arrived there, in that page or presentation, on our own, as the sole owners of our own ideas. *A property interest*.⁶

Risking the sovereignty of our own stories.⁷ What if the practice of referencing, sourcing, and crediting is always bursting with intellectual life and takes us outside ourselves? What if we read outside ourselves not *for* ourselves but to actively unknow ourselves, to unhinge, and thus come to know each other, intellectually, inside and outside the academy, as collaborators of collective and generous and capacious stories?⁸ Unknowing ourselves. The unhinging opens up a different conversation about why we do what we do, here, in this place, that despises us—not focusing on reparation of the self, alone, but instead sharing information and stories and resources to build the capacity for social change.⁹ *Alternative outcomes*.¹⁰ The unhinging, unknowing ourselves, opens up learning processes that are uninterested in a self that is economized by citations. And still, displacing the self, unknowing who we are, is awful: it is indeterminate and unpredictable and lonely. Togetherness can be difficult and lonely, too.¹¹

6. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1715.

7. Dina Georgis, *A Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 73.

8. Here we can also reference referencing in black musics: See, for example, Betty Davis's "They Say I'm Different," from *They Say I'm Different* (Seattle: Light in the Attic Records, 1974): "I'm talkin' bout Big Momma Thornton / Lightning Hopkins / Howling Wolf / Albert King / Chuck Berry / Chuck Berry / Chuck Berry." See also Stevie Wonder, "Sir Duke," from *Songs in the Key of Life* (Detroit: Tamla, 1976). On referencing place, see Murray Forman, "'Represent': Race, Space and Place in Rap Music," in *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2011), 247–269. On referencing place, see Mark V. Campbell, "Connect the T. Dots—Remix Multiculturalism: After Caribbean-Canadian, Social Possibilities for Living Difference," in *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada*, ed. Charmaine Nelson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 254–276. On referencing, sampling, and mentions in hip-hop (thank you Mark Campbell for sharing this article), see Justin A. Williams, "Theoretical Approaches to Quotation in Hip-Hop Recordings," *Contemporary Music Review* 33, no. 2 (2014): 188–209.

9. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28–29.

10. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

11. "If she wants to meet me that's fine if she doesn't / that is also fine." Jackie Kay, "Chapter Five: The Tweed Hat Dream," in *The Adoption Papers* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), 19.

The awfulness, though, opens up a conversation about why we do what we do and offers methods for living, here, in this place, that despises us. The unknowing brings together unexpected intellectual conversations that, together, resist dehumanization. The unknowing risks reading what we cannot bear and what we love too much. Unknowing ourselves.¹² Unknowing does not seek or provide answers: the steady focus is, instead, on working out how to share ideas relationally. Perhaps the function of communication, referencing, citation, is not to master knowing and centralize our knowingness, but to share *how we know*, and share how we came to know imperfect and sometimes unintelligible but always hopeful and practical ways to live this world as black.¹³ *The text passes from a dreamed-of transparency to the opacity produced in words.*¹⁴ The parentheses enfold and convey, the notes buttress, and they leave shadows.¹⁵ Citing is not easy. Referencing is hard.¹⁶

12. "In a way, the ethics and methodologies of encounters, anecdotes, conversations and storytelling I am invoking through radical vulnerability, strive to achieve in the realm of research praxis, a politics of indeterminacy, or a politics without guarantees." Richa Nagar, *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 13.

13. "Mastery is never complete. . . . We are always living in excess of what we know about our motives, our actions, and what we say we value." Dina Georgis, *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 106. "The different subjectivities and material conditions of those who produce and exchange knowledge continue to be erased under the sign of mastery. Yet these different conditions have everything to do with what knowledge is produced and how it is handled." Cindi Katz, "Towards Minor Theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (August 1996): 497.

14. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (1990; rpt., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 115.

15. See also Kobena Mercer, "Decolonization and Disappointment: Reading Fanon's Sexual Politics," in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 114–130.

16. In childhood development studies, referencing signals social engagement; it is a specific developmental milestone (typically achieved by neurotypical children when they are between eight and fourteen months old). The interaction is between a child and a parent/adult and an object (e.g., a ball): the parent shows interest in the ball and encourages the child to observe and to do the same; the reference is the child's nonverbal look to the adult, who is talking about, pointing to, providing information about the ball; the nonverbal look (the reference, which shows shared interest in the ball) and other cues (referencing the ball by following the finger that is pointing to the ball, or perhaps referencing by mimicking and also pointing to the ball) indicates that the child is watching and learning about the world. The adult will perhaps reinforce the interaction and referencing by narrating the activity ("Look! a ball!"). The child is referencing the adult/parent and learning

This is a story, one of many, about how we know, how we come to knowing, and how we share what we know. I am interested in how references, citations, and bibliographies are central to the project of black studies. I am also curious about effectuated and effectuating ideas and learning and knowing. I believe that bibliographies and endnotes and references and sources are alternative stories that can, in the most generous sense, centralize the practice of sharing ideas about liberation and resistance and writing against racial and sexual violence. *Alternative outcomes.*

about the world by showing an interest in what the adult/parent is interested in; the interaction is joined. The focus is not on the child, per se, but on the child receiving social and emotional attention from the interaction and learning from that attention (such as the adult's voice of encouragement or facial expressions); referencing is acknowledging the ball-as-a-shared-site-of-interest and, at the same time, recognizing that the social relationship (the connection between the parent and child) is meaningful and garners social and emotional attention. When a child does not reference, the assumption is that they are slower at developing social skills and/or are not "information seeking." Neuroatypical children—who do not reference in the same way as neurotypical children—may find normative referencing very difficult. This does not mean, in my view, that these children are not adept at information seeking; rather, it means that they are seeking information (normative and nonnormative information) differently! The level of social engagement referencing demands is high; it takes some neuroatypical children outside of themselves, requiring they step onto a normative path (a path they may consider nonnormative), which is laborious. Some working in the field that studies autism spectrum disorders might say, then: referencing does *not* come *naturally* to neuroatypical kids . . . in the way it comes *so naturally* to normal kids. This developmental-milestone-skill perspective on referencing, for me, opens up an important challenge: what does it mean, and to whom are we signaling, when referencing (citation practices) comes *easy*? I am not, to be sure, conflating (neurotypical-neuroatypical) social referencing with academic citation practices; rather, I am underscoring how the term "referencing" carries in it the clinical normalization of referencing practices (developmental milestones, which are tracked biological, psychological, and emotional changes in children) that can provide a way for us to notice that, for some people inhabiting our worlds, referencing is tough and awfully hard. If we rotate the script, and understand the hardness not as unusual but as a way of living and a way of being and navigating our messed-up world that rewards all kinds of normativities, then we can learn that engaging with the materials we read to show *how we know* can be (ideally, I would argue) a painful undoing of who we think we are and, as well, how we come to share what we know differently. The neurotypical are *not*, throughout the referencing process, *becoming* neuroatypical or autistic of course; rather this example gives us a way to notice and engender conditions of relation wherein we refuse normative authenticating processes. Lauren Cornew, Karen R. Dobkins, Natacha Akshoomoff, Joseph P. McCleery, and Leslie J. Carver, "Atypical Social Referencing in Infant Siblings of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 42, no. 12 (December 2012): 2611–2621; Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Jonathan Alderson, *Challenging the Myths of Autism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2011).

I am indebted to the endnotes and footnotes prepared by the motley crew Richard Iton, Lisa Lowe, Sylvia Wynter, Vladimir Nabokov, and David Foster Wallace.¹⁷ The notes these authors include in their works, like many others, not only show the labor and effort that underpins research and writing; they also signal stories of other stories that direct you to a story and place connected to, but not of, the story you began. *Pale Fire*.

This is not, explicitly, a story about the metrics of citation practices or impact factors. I am, as I note below, cognizant of this important critique of white and patriarchal citation practices and how they can “justify ongoing forms of domination.”¹⁸ I am more interested in how referencing works in black studies and how this referencing uncovers a lesson that cannot be contained within the main text.¹⁹ What if citations offer advice? What if citations are suggestions for living differently?²⁰ What if some citations counsel how to refuse what they think we are?

17. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (New York: Vintage, 1989); David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest: A Novel* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); on Sylvia Wynter, see n. 25 in this story. See also Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

18. Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne, “Citation Matters: Mobilizing the Politics of Citation toward a Practice of ‘Conscientious Engagement,’” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 24, no. 7 (2017): 954–973; Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 40–41.

19. “In this respect, it is always interesting to carefully read Fanon’s footnotes. To begin with, *Black Skin, White Masks* contains more footnotes than any of Fanon’s later texts. Some of those footnotes run two or three pages. In *Black Skin, White Masks*’s footnotes, Fanon often engages himself in a conversation with an imagined opponent or appeals to personal memories and thus reveals more about his thoughts than he does in the text. Fanon’s footnotes are like the repressed, unconscious foundations of his text. Or, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, they are the marginalia of Fanon’s texts, his way of separating his public from his private self.” Françoise Vergès, “Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 582–583.

20. Worn Down (Fall 2017). NourbeSe Philip’s long-cycle-poem *Zong!* (2011) swirled in my head. I was alerted to the award-winning art installation by Rana Hamadeh (*The Ten Murders of Josephine and On Proxy Bodies: A Script in Progress*, Rotterdam, 2017), a piece that attends to the *Zong* massacre—specifically the *Gregson v. Gilbert* case—and ongoing (historically present) racial violences. I was curious about the ways in which the work of Philip was, for the most part, not present in the images, ideas, and theories Hamadeh used in her work (those I could access from afar, to be clear). From what I understand, Philip’s *Zong!* is given a nod within the exhibition (as “phonic substance”) and is also noted to be an “inspiration.” Reviewing the exhibition from afar, I wondered about how the intellectual effort of a

Sara Ahmed makes the very smart observation that citation practices are gendered and racialized. Citation decisions are a political project for Ahmed because, she argues, absenting white men (from our bibliographies, references, footnotes) reorganizes our feminist knowledge worlds. By excluding white men from her (our) bibliographies she (we) can gen-

black woman poet undergirds *The Ten Murders* yet is also, for the most part, removed from the visual and textual work that is presented. What is the work of citation here? And uncitation?

A scanning of an exhibition review, along with an interview, would lead one to think that perhaps the legal archives from the *Zong* massacre were sought out, reviewed, and studied by Hamadeh and then visually built into her installation. However, a trip to the archives is not required. *Gregson v. Gilbert* can be found within Philip's *Zong!* itself: it serves as the narrative through which her poetics emerges; the case is also reproduced within the book and is retold in the "Notanda." The legal case anchors Philip's 2008 long-cycle-poem and is intensified by the creative work she did with and to those legal narratives to produce *Zong!* in order to poetically express her political obligation to the black-unnamed who were murdered. In *Zong!* the fragments of the legal archive are reworded to reconceptualize the weight of unre-membered loss. In *Zong!* the unnamed and the forgotten are named in trace. In *Zong!* poetics are the analytics of black life. With *Zong!* we learn to unread and reread unspeakability.

In 2017, just six weeks before the exhibition was launched, Hamadeh contacted Philip and requested permission and blessings to use *Zong!* in her installation. In addition to detailing how *Zong!* would be presented and archived in the exhibition, Hamadeh wrote to Philip explaining that the book, long in her hands, was "a daily ritual that grew slowly throughout my working process into becoming an important theoretical and affective scaffolding within the work." The artist intended to use Philip's work and ideas in the exhibition (and perhaps the work and ideas were already integrated before permission was requested, given that Philip was contacted only six weeks before the launch . . . of course, tracking time is always unhelpfully awful).

Philip did not provide permission. She did not agree with the conditions under which her work would be used and, as well, made clear that she was also very busy and worn out. Her sister was dying and needed care.

Without permission and sweeping aside Philip's care-work and mourning, it seems Hamadeh reimagined the work of *Zong* with scraps of *Zong!* The nod to Philip within the exhibition itself is coupled to the kind of documents many, in theory, have access to (e.g., the legal archives from the original case, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, available in *Zong!* as noted above). But in some ways this coupling—the nod and the archive that is already there—establishes a kind of alibi for rewriting and forgetting the creative-intellectual work Philip expresses in *Zong!* In one interview Hamadeh presents her engagement with the *Zong* massacre as her own intellectual work and theoretical intervention—Philip is not mentioned. Instead, she explains: "This archive of horror shall not be understood as the trace of the massacre, but rather as the fragmentary, unspoken, and unspeakable phonic materiality that is captured and trapped within the trace—that subsists *because of* and *despite of* that trace" and "I treat the *Gregson vs. Gilbert* document in the exhibition as a primary document that defines the notion of documentality as a whole." Hamadeh also includes her own poetics in her exhibition:

erate new ideas and chip away at, and possibly break down, the walls of patriarchy that have excluded and refuse feminist ways of knowing.²¹ Decentering the citations, and thus the experiences, of white men unmakes a scholarly system that champions and normalizes white patriarchal scholarly traditions. I struggle with the outcome of this citation project. I wonder

For, thought is made in the mouth. / Let's talk about the voice / of the record / as the record / Not of the captured, but of capture / Not of weight, but the modality of measure / The voice of the killer

The records, the mouth, the weights and measures, the voice. Bad made measure. Curious. It seems to me—from afar—that Hamadeh is, at least in part, working with and reworking the long-cycle-poem (not necessarily the original archival documents): scratching it out and scraping it up and remaking it into something else. In the process of rewriting, the creative labor of Philip—the intellectual effort of her monumental rehumanizing black studies project, *Zong!*—wears down.

I will not reproduce all of *Zong!* in order to provide textual proof of Hamadeh's rewording and revising of Philip's long-cycle-poem. I view this from afar. How Hamadeh understands and writes the *Zong* massacre is on her shoulders, as is Philip's clear, exhausted, unwillingness to be a part of the project. I ask, though, that we dwell on the politics of permission. I ask that we dwell on the politics of permission in relation to black women. And, I want to underscore and centralize and illuminate the effort Philip put into the long-cycle-poem. I was told to cite black women. We are told to cite black women. Sometimes the words and ideas of black women, when cited, become something else. Sometimes the ideas of black women wear out and wear down even though these narratives provide the clues and instructions to imagine the world anew. Often the words and ideas and brilliance of black women remain unread. The words and ideas of black women go uncited. The intellectual effort is unnoticed and stepped over and swept aside. Worn down, sometimes the intellectual work of black women is unmentionable. We must continue to cite their words and ideas well. We must read them well. I cite and site *Zong!* and NourbeSe Philip as brilliant intellectual effort. I want to engage this text as labor. It is not a nod, gesture, signal, or inspiration. It is poetic infrastructure—black women's work—that radically repoliticizes black life.

I viewed images of the exhibition that were shared by a colleague who saw it in Rotterdam in 2017. See <https://frieze.com/article/rana-hamadeh> and <http://mousse magazine.it/rana-hamadeh-carolina-rito-2017>. Other quotations are from an email correspondence between Philip and Hamadeh (emphasis in the original and permission granted by Philip) and my personal email communication with Philip (permission granted); "Bad made measure" is from M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2008), 5. See also Katherine McKittrick, "Diachronic Loops/Deadweight Tonnage/Bad Made Measure," *Cultural Geographies* (December 2015): 1–16.

21. Sara Ahmed, "White Men," *Feminist Killjoys* (blog), November 4, 2014, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men/>. In the above blog post, Ahmed is thoughtful about her citation practices before *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), noting her referential relationships with scholars such as Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

how it inadvertently turns on impossible foreclosures: What does it mean to read Jacques Derrida and abandon Derrida and retain Derrida's spirit (or specter!)? Do we unlearn whom we do not cite? And what of our teaching practice? Do we teach refusal? Can we not teach our students to engage with various authors and narratives, critically, while also asking them to raise up the work of black women and other scholars, writers, artists, interviewees, teachers, who go unrecognized? How do we teach each other to read (disapprove, evaluate, critique, use, forget, abandon, remember) "white men" or other powerful scholars? Or is the critique (uncitation) to enact erasure? The project of erasure, too, often unfolds as an affirmation of racial privilege: here I recall (mostly white) feminists sparkingly shouting with a kind of breathy desperation that they, too, have been overciting and venerating white male scholarship, and that Ahmed has discovered a brand-new way to recognize and credit and legitimize the ideas of the marginalized; this leads these breathy speakers to hail the work of—mostly nonblack, mostly white feminist, mostly academic—privileged scholars!²² That aside, Ahmed's citation project matters to me because it asks that we think about the epistemological grounds through which we theorize and imagine and name liberation in our referencing practices.

Citation points to method and how we come to write what we know. Citation is important because it frames and supports (legitimizes) our

22. Where and when do we cut those purveyors of dreadful feminism? When do we refuse to cite the bourgeois feminists, or the left-leaning feminists, or the Western feminists who write about Third World "culture" or who adore a two-sex system or who despise and abuse their black administrative assistants or who fail their black students or who publicly humiliate and threaten nonwhite women and men? How do we cite those who stole and steal our work, our ideas? When do we refuse to engage those feminist scholars who despise those who clean their homes and tend their gardens and care for their children? When do we refuse to cite or read or talk about dreadful awful brutal feminism? How do we cite the feminists who call other feminists "terrorists"? Where and when do we stop citing the nonwhite, including black, patriarchal scholars who, heckle, cut down, plagiarize, kick about, ignore, talk over, interrupt, demote, demean black women? (Suddenly, the unraveling: out with the nonwhite capitalists who smartly write of ecofeminism, out with the boring female identified white liberals who write of political theory and the saccharine promises of equality, be gone nonradical nonqueer nonanarchist nonfeminist women who write of community gardens.) "Dominant forms of feminism that fail to address the rapacious qualities of corporate capital or 'predatory capitalism' can be legitimately criticized for ideological limitations that render some feminisms complicit in dehumanizing systems and in mystifying the convergence of corporate wealth and repressive state policies." Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 182.