

Trans\*versal Animacies and the Mattering of Black Trans\* Political Life  
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***#blacktranslivesmatter***

On the night of February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, seventeen at the time, was fatally shot in Sanford, Florida. In the course of the investigation it was quickly discovered that Martin was unarmed when he was killed by George Zimmerman, a police-sanctioned neighborhood watch volunteer. Zimmerman's trial would eventually call into question the complexities of Florida's stand-your-ground laws as well as the broader racial climate of the United States. Outrage sparked by Martin's premature death conjured the intimacies of racism—the moment in which we learn we are black, the moment we understand that being black is wicked, and the constant reminders of precarious life. Unsurprisingly, the discursive thrust attending to racialized violence was met with oppositional support for Zimmerman who received an outpouring of compassion. The role of social and mainstream media after Martin's death exposed (for those not already aware) the underbelly of race relations in the United States in arguably, unprecedented ways. It allowed, on one hand, a viral community to erupt, arguing that the injustice of Martin's death was not new (rather, history was repeating itself), and on the other hand, the relegation of Martin to an animal in attempts to devalue his life. Supporters of Zimmerman argued that the shooting was not motivated by race, as Zimmerman himself is not white. The assumption within these sentiments illuminated the particulars of anti-black racism that is often ignored under the larger rubric of race and racism, and are underscored by the mobilization of the animal that freshen the wounds of slavery, segregation, and animacy hierarchies.

In July 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted of the second-degree murder charge. The initial protests that emerged after the failure to arrest Zimmerman in 2012 were reignited. The following week, hundreds of protests across the US were held demanding “Justice for Trayvon

Martin.” Protestors wore hooded sweatshirts, and held skittles and iced tea (in honor of Martin), perhaps in part suggesting, that in some way, we are *all* made vulnerable by these forms of injustice. Thus, the Black Lives Matter movement(s) emerged from all corners of the United States, refreshing discourses of violent capitalism, transnational militarism, targeted incarceration, and legacies of colonialism.<sup>1</sup> This eruption was particularly felt within the United States, however, viral contact picked up across the globe through internet support. Following Zimmerman’s controversial acquittal, a number of high-profile cases were ushered into media attention. Martin’s murder became a touchstone in strategic forms of political mobilization, but the subsequent premature deaths of Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Tamir Rice, Akai Gurley, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Eric Harris, Anthony Hill, Tony Terrell Robinson, Ezell Ford, and the murders at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, to name a few, were protested by the Black Lives Matter movement. Simultaneously, the virility of BLM, both through internet and street protests began to focus on broader discourses of racial inequality and violence in the United States. The founders of BLM asserted that “#BlackLivesMatter is working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”<sup>2</sup> BLM aimed to challenge not only anti-black racism within society, but also targeted “progressive” movements which considered themselves aligned with anti-racist politics through soft multicultural inclusion. Simultaneously, it was faced with the task of accounting for the legacies of the Civil Rights Movement and the critique that black death is not unique to black, heterosexual, men and boys, but that blackness itself has always been the target. The historical backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement is important in this moment, for, unlike the lag time of the early black liberation, the necessary task of attending to the murders of black women (which specifically included queer and trans\* women) was mobilized through #sayhername. In 2015, an

African American Policy Forum report was released insisting that it is crucial to attend to the deaths of women of color, historically, and in the contemporary moment of political outrage. A principal importance of #sayhername was to inspire an inclusive mobilization, holding BLM accountable to their mission of *all* black lives.

Until fairly recently, the octothorpe (#) designated a commonplace abbreviation for “number,” familiar to its users on telephones, computer keys, or by shorthand. Social media platforms have capitalized on the octothorpe’s metadata coding properties to provide quick connections between language, casual interest, and in this particular examples, social movements. Its gridded visual speaks to its functions. Like a grid, it scours the internet in search of identical matches, but in doing so, it discovers any number of landing points. For instance, in October of 2012, social media was flooded with images of Halloween costumes depicting Martin on the night of his death. People donned blackface and blood stains, wore hooded sweatshirt, held skittles and iced tea. These images were spread through #trayvonmartin, immediately intertwining them with memorial images of the black teenager. While many news outlets related Trayvon Martin’s murder to previous cases, particular attention was paid to the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmet Till, animating Martin’s death in unprecedented ways through viral use of social media. Zimmerman’s own racism, well documented through social media outlets and his public indictment of Martin in his own death, played a key component in dredging up sympathy as well as inciting rage.

The use of *matter* in #blacklivesmatter summons the immediacy and materiality of death, but also animates the long histories of anti-blackness in the United States, and indeed globally. For many activists, there has been an excitement in BLM—principally, it did not rely on a singular influence as was the case in previous movements. The historic leadership of the Civil

Rights Movement, often attributed to influential men such as Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois, and the guidance of Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr., suddenly became more capacious and accessible. BLM has followed the notion that the people, in all their power, will be more influential in a mass movement than in one that looks to a single leader. Thus, without casting assumptions regarding the advantages or challenges of the BLM's "leaderful" movement, we can say: while racialized violence is not new, nor is resistance to it, BLM demonstrates a different form of insurgence. Thus, it is not my intention to diminish the effectiveness or successes of the BLM movement. Rather, my concern lies in the ways in which these politics share a weedy history with prior movements and the ways in which they often leak from the inside.

This is exemplified in the ways that BLM almost immediately brought into question the mattering of other lives (the molar questioning of brown-lives, women's-lives, queer-lives, trans-lives, and the more controversial all-lives, white-lives, blue-lives) displaying the modes of capture that power wishes to flow through. BLM resisted these anti-black sentiments, suggesting "When we say Black Lives Matter, we are talking about the ways in which Black people are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity... And the fact is that the lives of Black people—not ALL people—exist within these conditions is consequence of state violence." Indeed, the proposed connections between 'all lives' and 'matter'—an argument that can be traced through the entirety of political debate, including debates leveraged through animals—ignores the historical misuse of the hashtag's intention.<sup>3</sup> The proposition of all-lives, at its most surface level, mobilizes anti-blackness, but also troubles the notion of collective signs, or the expression of identity through an individual or group. The correspondence of black-lives retains a specificity, or newly constituted regime, with which whiteness frequently attempts to coopt and

capture. This, of course, becomes exacerbated when considering the trans\*sectional impacts of gender, sexuality, and class, but what BLM has been able to achieve thus far is an attention to the precise ways in which blackness functions, highlighting racism more broadly, as an extraction from whiteness, as a terror of the flesh.

Specifically, the challenges to *mattering* have not gained as much traction, with the exception of black trans\* lives which have negotiated a clear alliance, particularly in attending to the murders of black trans\* women. The disproportionate murders of black trans\* women demanded a specification of “which black lives matter?” BLM has addressed this by stating that “there is a fundamental belief that when we say Black Lives Matter, we mean all black lives matter.” Here we have the question of materiality. The referent of black and trans\* materialities is a paradoxical point of connection and departure in the political case of #blacktranslivesmatter but, we do not need to deconstruct these identities into oblivion, rather we can attend to them and also, following Judith Butler’s provocation: “we may seek recourse to matter in order to ground or to verify a set of inquiries or violations only to find that *matter itself is founded through a set of violations*, ones which are unwittingly repeated in the contemporary invocation” (Butler 1999, emphasis in original).

In cases of black lives, black trans lives, and in their coalition, attention to the premature death of black and trans\* bodies has been faced with negative rhetorical justifications of animal-like behavior. The influential role of the internet in connecting the BLM movement is also saturated with a plethora of descriptions of murder victims as “niggers,” “slaves,” “apes,” and “porch monkeys” in attempts to withdraw humanness, while mainstream media depicts protestors of the murders as “thugs,” “animals,” and “criminals.” Thus, protests held under banners of black and trans\* embodiment, were promptly met with rhetorical deployment of

animality in hopes of rendering these subjects to subhuman behavior. This familiar slight-of-hand, or what Nicole Shukin calls the “double entendre of rendering,” calls attention to the significant biopolitical practices of capitalism in relation to the animal, conjuring both a sense of mimicry and boiling down, both which play key roles in modes of capitalist (re)production and the distilling of life categories (Shukin).

Claire Jean Kim argues that “Impassioned disputes over the animal practices of racialized others open a window onto the synergistic workings of the taxonomies of race and species in the contemporary United States. Historically conjoined, the two logics continue to sustain and energize one another in the joint project of producing the human and the subhuman, not-human, less than human—with all of the entailments of moral considerability, physical vulnerability, and grievability that follow” (Kim 283). Kim offers an important reminder, arguing that the false choice implemented by capitalism and biopower is often presented as an obligatory allegiance between the interests of humans and animals. This article explores questions of transversality and molecular revolution alongside questions of black and trans\*. Specifically, I am concerned with the ways in which inanimacy is invoked—on the proverbial back of the animal—in order to justify violence. I am not suggesting that by taking the animal more “seriously” we will see why certain bodies are mistreated. Rather, as Kim does, I am suggesting that we must understand where political projects place themselves in relation to other political projects. In doing so, we can excite transversal connections between them and imagine a politics that works across scales, across intensities, and indeed, across species rather than hierarchical relations.

Thus, as two political movements emerging in the U.S. have been yoked together under the slogans of lives mattering, attention to the use of “black lives matter,” “trans lives matter,” and the combination of the two “#blacktranslivesmatter,” has reignited attachments between

blackness, animals, and deviance, demonstrating a biopolitical break in the population—where good and bad subjects emerge—which state power aims to direct itself through. I argue that it is critical to intervene in discourses that associate blackness with animality in ways that devalue black lives by forcefully withdrawing their humanness precisely because such a move both makes the human exceptional (placing the human above the animal and all else) and because it reinvests in animacy hierarchies that place both the human and animal in the fungible state of exception. The analytic of trans\*, which in some spaces has taken up animality as a point of disruption in these very devaluing and delegitimizing politics, must also recognize these moves as risky and be attendant to the ways in which blackness and the animal are choreographed. Thus, linking trans\* to animality is always already associated with blackness. Black and trans\* are not disparate categories when invoking animacy, but rather are inextricably linked.

It is easy to see that it is not, nor has it ever been, sufficient to simply say racism and transphobia are *wrong*. To do so facilitates a political imaginary, undergirded by progress narratives in which certain lives are brought into the grid of intelligibility under the rubric of the human, with its attendant democratic inclusion, rights, and essentialist visibility, and simultaneously renders others as disposable, often discursively relegated to the indeterminate category “it.” Race, gender, sex, or sexuality become cyclical practices of production and regulation in the classification and control of bodies. Such an imaginary of inclusion also necessarily eclipses micropolitical, revolutionary happenings, or identity as it is molecular rather than molar and further suppresses possibilities found in a more capacious understanding of the vitality of matter and the possibilities of dismantling animacy hierarchies. As the politically sympathetic heterosexual becomes ‘queer,’ as whiteness reaches through the cultural and becomes ‘transracial,’ and as the queer ideologically becomes ‘trans\*,’ we must wonder *how*

these slippery identities matter politically. Just as Cartesian philosophy has not resolved the dualisms of mind and body, the impulses of identity have not allowed us to move beyond our own experiences. Violence (affective, structural, physical) maintains particular biopolitical inactions of these identities, ensuring that we always resolve our own identity crises through language, community, compromise, and temporal notions of progress. The extension of community allows the state apparatus to inclusively shift, relying on our own sentiments drawn from the horrific experiences of the Other; the Other's death weighs heavily on our mind. Instead, when approaching the interwoven relations between blackness, trans\*ness, and animality, we must look *transversally* in order to shift the analytical focus from the bifurcated species, rhetorical justifications of violence, and forced inanimacy in order to seek new, perhaps liberating angles for approaching difference.

We must make this shift while understanding that these contemporary conditions of violence should not be marked by coincidence, accident, or ignorance. This violence makes up, constitutes, and subtends the United States, a nation built on the enslavement of black bodies, the fungibility of black labor, where black bodies continue to be lynched every day for America to *be*. A nation built by and upon slavery needs the afterlife of slavery to sure up its foundations, its logics, and its very *meaning*. Capitalism, the police, and power are always tethered to one another, always with the same banal, everyday goals. While this article examines these modes of power along the lines of black and trans\*, these are not the only constructed categories in need of attention. Indeed, the struggles of bodies targeted for modern servitude have been forced to turn to themselves for strategic alliance, but should those bodies relegated to the state of exception become too much for power to contend with they are easily exterminated. There is a need to shift away from this capitalism-police-power triad, and toward a political response that does not rely



on visibility (for instance, legal protections, media coverage, public discourse) and exposure to it. With a politics directed toward revolution, the present study assumes that while there is nothing “natural” about our current condition—it is nothing if not horrifyingly ordinary—the only viable option is to extinguish systems that rely on necropolitically charged complacency, decency, and respectability.

### ***Proposing Trans\*versality***

Despite recent media tracking of the murders of black and trans\* people in the United States, we are not undergoing a crisis in its infancy but rather restructured violence organized by the mutation of new market demands which enact animacy hierarchies to justify supremacy, normativity, and necropolitical regimes of power. As long as we have conceptualized such normative categories there has been an enforcement to adhere to normative protocols and a consequence for failing to fulfill to such constructions. The practice of minimizing communication—between humans, animals, matter, institutions, and politics—is key in allowing state sanctioned violence to proliferate, multiply, leech, and repress. Such a practice leads us to believe that *power is much more than it is*; our fear births its legitimacy, recalibrates it, and allows it to disappear from the surface of things. All the while it becomes encrypted, drowning beneath the surface of demands for fairness, squirming in chaos. The struggles of minorities know this chaos. Productive critiques of liberation efforts (civil rights struggles, feminist waves, LGBTQ efforts, revolutionary politics) often take place from within—questioning bias and exclusion as a central tenet of political mobilization—but these critiques rarely lead to the mass murders of those who have strategic disagreements. Thus, in instances of targeted execution, we know that power names itself as the authority, the unwavering, yet “impartial” arbiter and animator of what is just, and relies on cooperation between subjects even if that cooperation is done under the rubric of dissatisfaction.

From this initial commitment, the second task at hand is to move away from the human as the object that passes through the world, in order to understand that the world passes through the human in ways that are always in symbiosis with the animal. Such a perspective offers a route for conceptualizing the breakdown of human relations, and taking it seriously can provide warnings and inspirations for revolution. This means taking into account our milieus in a more expansive way, in a way that maximizes communication between entities, and in a way that recognizes that human behavior is not monolithic, predictive, or logical, even if there is a deep imperative to repeat behaviors, politics, and ideologies previously available to the social body. To begin such a task, I look to trans\*ness and blackness as two analytics that have been continually excluded from the body politic, while simultaneously *making* the body politic, in ways that have at once left them vulnerable to extraordinary violence, but also have positioned them with the radical possibility of transversality.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural theorist Félix Guattari posits that the global scale of political intervention has become inseparable from molecular level, arguing that “We don’t need to build ‘ecological niches’ or ‘islands of fresh air’ alongside large social collectivities, but, rather, to aim these molecular revolutions...towards the construction of new social war machines, which will themselves forge their own support creating a new kind of social praxis” (*Soft Subversions* 29). For Guattari, earlier forms of revolution were reliant on particular ideological Programs and easily captured forms of protest, but are disrupted by the spasmodic mutation of molecular revolution. Ultimately these transversal mutations will not about purity, but instead work against the co-optation of marginalized experiences and by engaging these long-term molecular revolutions, attempts to co-opt or violate begin to slide past one another without the ability to bind to social reality (*Molecular Revolution* 60). In his terms: “We should permit nothing to

distract us from discovering the ways and means for irreversible social transformation, without which we will enter into an escalations of fear and despair on a whole new scale” (*Soft Subversions* 93). Putting transversality to the task of molecular revolution has been a crucial task for Guattari. Following this, the functioning of Guattari’s understanding of transversality invites an investigation to the work of prefix of trans\* in relation to the molecular.

The prefixal “trans-”, in the sense of “across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another” (Oxford English Dictionary) provides some insight Guattari’s fashioning of ‘versality.’ In most narrow sense, trans\* (as it has become associated with the body) allows for an understanding that there is more than either/or. A broader understanding of trans\* as a pollination, or mummer, provides a useful addition particularly in the framework of animality. Implementing the asterisk (trans\*versality) offers a way of thinking about the molecular possibilities, in politics and across species, not mediated strictly through normative protocols, capitalism, or the corpus.<sup>5</sup> The rejection of revolution often operates through a refusal of its existence, or its impossibility. Attending to revolution has put particular marginal strains on the potentials of thinking trans\* and black trans\*versally. In both cases, we could certainly dismiss these occurrences as exceptions to the rule, or, we can hypothesize the molecular revolutions already taking place.

The central purpose of transversality is to create linkages between previously unexplored singularities in a field, and then to create connections in other conceptual topographies at different levels of discursivity. This varied from the Deleuzoguattarian formulation of assemblages (*agencements*) that operate as an example of a singularity that can *function* transversally, brining intensities into contact at different levels (*Psychoanalysis and Transversality* 130-133). In my extension of Guattari’s theorization of transversality, I ask how

the work of the prefix “trans\*” can itself become a methodology. While insights certainly draw on embodied psycho-social experience of people minoritized as trans\*, the critical *potential* of trans\* theorizing exceeds the milieu in which is often articulated. We see this in other arenas, such as feminist or critical race theory, animals or disability studies, where the minoritized embodiment becomes a key analytic, at times leaving behind the potential to think about different biopolitical power relations. Within trans\* studies, this discussion has come to revolve around the use of the asterisk to visually indicate the potential for prefixing trans to any number of suffixes, including but not limited to gender, and to signal the possibility of expansive capacities harbored within existing assemblages of terms and concepts.

The theories of assemblage, becoming, plateaus and flight often attributed to the collective work of Guattari and Gilles Deleuze elucidate this in a number of useful ways, but Guattari’s transversality in particular lends itself to a political imputation that makes revolutionary work already possible, so that revolution might be drawn closer to the arsenal. For Guattari, along with many French intellectuals, the events of May ’68 were of principle importance in the formation of political concepts.<sup>6</sup> It is in the residue of May ’68 that Guattari considered the possibilities for intervention through the functioning of transversality in new ways. He questioned the role of teachers, mental health professionals, and social workers upon the landscape of emergent discourses of general theory, but also “minor” theory, which began to chart affects operating at the level of everyday interactions and the relationships between politics and space. From this vantage, the central focus of transversal functions is rearticulated, and for Guattari, the concern with how to force communication at different levels of discourse and life became critical (*Soft Subversions* 44-45). Guattari’s purpose in questioning the “foundation of things” parallels Deleuze’s critique of representation and rejection of *objet des hauteurs*.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, transversality relies on a principle of continuity-discontinuity that resists taking historical record as the ultimate roadmap for forward-thinking politics.

Just as May '68 spawns certain kinds of new social movements, and just as the ethnic nationalist, black liberation, and feminist gay movements of the 60s and 70s engaged with the biopolitics of identity, so too does the contemporary #blacktranslivesmatter both enact and inspire new potentials for revolutionary transformation—through trans\*versal and trans\*molecular practices. It is a new kind of decentralized social entity/body, but its movement borrows from previous social movement strategies, including identity politics, environmental justice, liberation movements, even Occupy—but shifts them away from the molar scale (which remains important) toward molecular potentials. Documenting how the new practices work, and how they are transversally connected to previous practices calls into sharp relief our schemas for understanding life itself and the politics of hierarchizing life according to animacy hierarchies.

Mel Chen examines these animacy hierarchies in the slippery linkage between the perceived binary of human and animal, arguing that we are situated within animacy hierarchies that inform our political actions. Chen argues that biopolitics offers a language for analyzing the terrain of animate hierarchies, and argues that attention to *interstitial affective dimensions* make salient the ways in which affect carries us in new directions, rhizomatically and virally, and further, how alternate mappings of race and sexuality might offer flexible zones of analysis when extended beyond embodiment.<sup>8</sup> Thinking alongside Chen, we might first say that materiality is vital and worthy of political consideration and then, given this, it is possible to show how the ontologically false imputation of inanimacy serves as a powerful technique for construction hierarchies of bodily difference in ways that are not productive for the animal, nor the human. Dinesh Wadiwel has argued that the biopolitical violence between humans and between humans

and animals share intertwined histories, but despite the ways in which they converge, they also display independent regimes of violence in their organization. Principally, the enactment of particular modes of governmentality and control place the human and animal in complex fields of control in which the war against animals is distinctly biopolitical and shuttles the thin line between life and death (Wadiwel 100). Wadiwel approaches the relationship between humans and animals from through the vantage point of war, pointing to the ways in which we continuously and systematically enforce the suffering of the animal, categorized as bare life, to the benefit of the human consumption. Through these biopolitical techniques and technologies, the animal becomes inanimate. The same process can be seen between humans, lending itself to the ways that politics is constructed along lines of hierarchy and instituted through capitalism, industry, law, and social behavior. Thus, it is not the rhetorical use of the animal, per se, that justifies analogous placement of the black or trans\* human and animal on the auction block, but rather (in both cases) it is their forced *inanimacy* that renders them available for sale and slaughter. We might, with caution, even go as far as to say that black and trans\* have much more in common with the animal than the human.

Following this, we must also question the role of black and trans\* (and indeed all others) as political points of departure. Connections between blackness and animality are curiously ushered in through recent theories utilized through trans\* analytics. Negative gestures between blackness and animals have been reordered through (though still indexed by) the emerging interest in discursively linking nonhuman species, trans\*embodiment, and trans\*theory. Racist ideologies that have linked animals and blackness did so under the understanding that both can occupy a place of inanimacy (through violence, technology, biopolitical surveillance, etc.). Thus,

in an almost mirrored move, trans\* theory has emerged from another direction, finding affinity with the animal in attempts to undo the common understanding of a human-centered world.

*Year Zero: Molecularization*

Deleuze and Guattari remind us that masks do not make the head a face, rather they ensure that the head belongs to the body (Deleuze and Guattari 176). Thinking politically, and considering sentiments that the revolution always seems to be dissolved at the stage of the riot, we must consider our closed understanding of possession. If the desire for social transformation takes *difference* beyond the human seriously, it cannot be reducible to it, nor possess it. While the viewpoint of revolution opens possibilities for other strategic politics to emerge, it must do so in an overwhelming molecular fashion, or it risks Humanist repetition and capture. The presupposition here is that molar and molecular segmentarities are enacted simultaneously, which leads us to a mutually informed and dependently unfolding macropolitics (molar) and micropolitics (molecular).<sup>9</sup> Molar and molecular politics operate simultaneously, often imperceptibly, as a kind of photosynthetic feedback loop. How then, might they answer to disparities between race, class, gender, sexuality and the power that shuttles between majoritarian and minoritarian embodiment? How can this be done in connection to the animal, rather than through shared inanimacy? If we consider these categories are already emergent in a molecular assemblages it is not the binary totality (human/animal; man/woman; black/white; cis/trans\*) that binds them, rather, infinite multiplicities. As Alphonso Lingis says:

Let us liberate ourselves from the notion that our body is constituted by the form that makes it an objective for the observation and manipulation of an outside observer. Let us dissolve the conceptual crust that takes hold of it as a subsistent substance. Let us turn away from the anatomical and physiological mirrors that project it before us as a set of organs and a set of biological or pragmatic functions (Lingis 58).

To turn away from the narrow-minded notion that our form is what makes us individual, that our identity is the principle form of this individuation, and that our individuality taken as a substance is an inherent exclusion of other substances, gestures us toward a much more open formulation of expressive possibilities amidst our milieus. Lingis contends that any species is always already in symbiosis with others; they are symphony composed by and through “wheat, and corn fields, with berry thickets and vegetable patches, and also with the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil that their rootlets enter into symbiosis with in order to grow and feed the stalk, leaves, and seeds or fruit...in symbiosis with other mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish” (Lingis 57). These entities cannot be flippantly relegated to an inanimate, subaltern or trivial status; rather it is their vital intensity brings about their material force, a force that would if directed, overwhelm normative power. Their intensities cannot be hastily fastened to tactical capitalist suppositions, nor is there a traceable point of origin in which movement is cast. This is a particularly enticing standpoint from which to graft the work of black trans\* and animacy together. For Lingis, pulses, rhythms, intensities, passions, stimulate movements, and “the differentials of speed and slowness liberated from our bodies do not block or hold those movements...our movements compose their differentials, directions, and speeds with those movements in the environment” (Lingis 59). These molecular connections do not only extend out, they swell virally with forceful intensity. In this way, movements have no prior programmed goal to abide by, and no fantasy of achieving a finalized state affixed to the human. Rather, they are transversal, and open up routes in which capitalist power tactics might otherwise subsume. When trans\* prefixes animacy, it does so by highlighting the false assumption that the category of animal falls lower on the tree of life (as categorized by Charles Darwin), and further troubles the very notion of ontology that reduces *élan vital* through its required structuring and enabling of identity. Thus, it is the sorcery of



animals—the ebbs, flows, and lascivious prying of movement—that finds characterization in the sex, sexuality, and lust of bestial relations, is precisely the seduction found in trans\*, for it presents a moment of crisis in the false understanding that logics of embodiment are given and unchanging. Understanding the inextricable link between trans\*, black, and animality allows for a theorizing that does not devalue identity, but rather puts it in concert with the possibility of transversality.

Tracing black, trans\*, and the animal in the current political landscape is a clear, yet complex, route. To approach these questions transversally encourages a disruption of boundaries and an unauthorized puncture of corporeal and ideological false positives. If it is to hold any weight through the prefixal relationship to animality, it must be attendant to the historical abuse of the term. Thus, tempering trans\*animality does not work in a linear fashion, rather it opens new ways of thinking the animal transversally, showing as Lingis did, that species shift, and are stirred by agitations in composition with an infinite number of possibilities. We can see the ways in which trans\* theorizing may find inspiration in the animal, and that a responsible theorizing will necessarily discuss the impacts of theorizations of race. Thus emerges the question of insurrection in the #blacktranslivesmatter movement. The reordering of blackness, trans\*ness, and the animal will be faced with capture and we must decide if this is the point in which it fizzles out. Trans\*ness and blackness can render humanness perilous, directed toward inanimate death, or place the body in precarious relation to the nonhuman, subhuman, or inhuman. It may also offer new routes might be taken through the linking of trans\*, black, and animacy, that if fully explored beyond the body, might serve to rearrange the human. The role of speciation provokes a theorization of the processes by which animal hierarchies become enmeshed with particular bodies in more salient ways than others, and in turn allows for a kind of transversal

relation, or alternate politics, to work in the refrain of silence previously thought to be a space of death. Transimacies offer a transversal link between the affective dimensions of the animal and the provocation of the pollenating of trans\*. If we accept this understanding of the human and the animal, where is the end? Revolutionarily speaking, there must not be one.

The use of “black trans lives matter” is not a conscious attempt to quell the revolution, and we must resist the impulse to label the movement as passing or momentary, but the capturable nature of identity stresses the importance of continually reinventing practices that otherwise risk infinite and dismal repetition and dangerous sedimentation. Reconditioning identities, without performative reinvention, subdues creativity and anchors subjectivity to the static past, rather than the possibility of new futures. These new possibilities will necessarily come to understand the animal and human in new ways. The conceptual work of trans\* can bring about new articulations of animacy, but doing so requires a great responsibility to the legacies of inanimacy that forcibly strip mattering. Mainstream anxiety provoked by the insistence black and trans\* lives *matter* is often articulated through attributions of animalistic, not-quite human, behavior. Rethinking the question of *matter* itself offers a rethinking of the political impulse of inclusion. Trans\*ing animality displaces the notion that one must “count” to “matter,” instead it highlights how our matter endlessly animates our worlds. This disruption deterritorializes, at times imperceptibly so, in ways that open transversal routes for species to lean, shift, and agitate together.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The founding of #blacklivesmatter as an organization is attributed to Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, however the influence can be traced in a number of directions and is disputed in its origins. Most poignantly, because of the diffusion of BLM, it is in many ways impossible to say it began in any one place, or was “founded” by any group of people. In July 2013, Alicia Garza posted a public Facebook in which she stated “black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter”, which began, in part, the questions of mattering. In 2014, BLM, (which had already been organizing) gained wider public attention after the fatal shooting of Mike Brown by Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson.

<sup>2</sup> Quote taken from the website (Black Lives Matter).

<sup>3</sup> BLM has seen success in online networking, national conference planning, the establishment of 38 registered chapters, and a constant presence in the mainstream US media. As of 2017 official chapters have locations in Amherst, MA, Boston, MA, Cambridge, MA, Springfield, MA, Worcester, MA, Rutgers, NJ, New York, NY, Rochester, NY, Philadelphia, PA, Washington, DC, Bay Area, CA, Inland Empire, CA, Long Beach, CA, Los Angeles, CA, Pasadena, CA, Sacramento, CA, Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, Denver, CO, Champaign-Urbana, IL, Chicago, IL, Gary, IN, Detroit, MI, Grand Rapids, MI, Kalamazoo, MI, Lansing, MI, Minneapolis, MN, Cleveland, OH, Birmingham, AL, Tampa Bay, FL, Atlanta, GA, Durham, NC, Columbia/Orangeburg, SC, Knoxville, TN, Memphis, TN, Nashville, TN, Austin, TX, and Toronto, Canada (Black Lives Matter).

<sup>4</sup> From the outset, it is important to note that while Guattari and Deleuze maintain metaphors throughout their work, it is not without salient political commitments that indeed have practical ethical and political implications. They say: “Of course, we realize the dangers of citing scientific propositions outside their own sphere. It is the danger of arbitrary metaphor or of forced application. But perhaps these dangers are averted if we restrict ourselves to taking from scientific operators a particular conceptualizable character which itself refers to non-scientific areas, and converges with science without applying it or making it a metaphor” (Deleuze 134). In this article, I argue that the relationship between human and animal works in a similar fashion.

<sup>5</sup> Hayward and Weinstien’s provocation that the asterisk, when attached to trans signals a series of philosophical points. They say: “If the asterisk starfishes trans, literally making trans a radiated reach—a reach through yet another reach; a fold within a fold—it also speaks to how trans\* is animated, vestibulated, speciated, and profligated. The asterisk makes many philosophical points; it is a sensuous node, a composite of affects and percepts that reminds us that speciation is always a cultivated response” (Hayward and Weinstien 196). Further, they recognize the asterisk as a pollen that follows trans\* and attaches it to something else. The asterisk, then, offers a vegetal philosophy capable of approaching political questions in exciting new ways. Despite the difference in character assignment, a similar argument is made by Stryker, Currah, and Moore for the use of the hyphen when extending trans out. They say: “A little hyphen is perhaps too flimsy a thing to carry as much conceptual freight as we intend for it bear, but we think the hyphen matters a great deal, precisely because it marks the difference between the implied nominalism of ‘trans’ and the explicit relationality of ‘trans-,’ which remains open-ended and resists premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix” (Stryker, Currah and Moore 11).

<sup>6</sup> The events of May ‘68 in France are largely categorized by tensions between university authorities and outraged students as well as workers and state authorities that came to breaking point and ideological differences moved to camp occupations, barricaded streets, and violent protest. As barricades were erected in the heart of the city, riots that began in early May gained momentum in subsequent outbreaks as activist protests grew in numbers and violence. Limited financial resources and difficult living conditions framed student/worker occupations in France and elsewhere compounded with the growing viral radio coverage and events took a sensational turn on May 10<sup>th</sup> of 68, with violent riots raging until the dawn. Incomplete visual and written accounts have long since carried on and the near half of century of distance has produced a myriad of theories, metaphors, manifestos, questions and politics.

<sup>7</sup> Translated as “lofty objects.”

<sup>8</sup> Chen notes that this idea of animacy, while fundamental, is constantly pushed forward for its relevance across languages and modes of signifying. Its relevance to the posthuman project, and perhaps in general, is that it encapsulates a slippage *between* the material realities of alive and dead. Chen is concerned with the ways that this conceptual geography (between things alive and dead) is persistently being worked out and forms the basis of many of today’s pressing political questions and the troubling of the flexing category of “human”. Zakiyyah Jackson argues posthumanist theory has “demonstrated the constructed and often spurious conceptual foundation of Enlightenment humanism. However, its critics maintained that the acuity of posthumanism’s intervention was undercut when its scholars effectively sidestepped the analytical challenges posed by the categories of race,

colonialism, and slavery” (Jackson 671). Jackson, in part, critiques Chen’s centering of a queer analytics precisely because while feminist and queer critique has begun to take animal studies and emergent new materialisms seriously in search of different routes for challenging biopolitical practices and the divide between the human and the animal, in some spaces, it has done so by sidestepping the impacts of race and colonialism embedded within the human project.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “molecular” appears repeatedly in their collaborations, often in tension with (and tethered to) the molar: “Every society, and every individual, are...plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other *molecular*. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms or the same relations...If they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other” (Deleuze and Guattari 213).

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