INTIMATE PEDAGOGY: VISUAL EXPLORATIONS OF RACE AND THE EROTIC

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Abstract

This project looks at what centering intimacy in learning can bring to racial justice and decolonial practices. The site of study is the shared colonial histories and knowledges between the Caribbean and Canada. It asks: can an intimate pedagogy help us transgress divisionary boundaries to produce transformative outcomes of accountability to ourselves, each other, and the planet? To explore this question, I draw on Caribbean and Black feminisms, with elements of queer theory beginning with the work of Ian Barnard (2004) and Sharon Patricia Holland (2012), and decolonial feminist scholarship, including Indigenous feminism and ecofeminist critique. Audre Lorde's (1984) theory of the erotic is a foundational pillar in defining what intimacy can do inside a pedagogical practice. Using visual methods, I look at the work of visual artists to study the intangible matters of intimacy that escape language in how we understand learning and knowledge. Through three case studies, that include interviews with three artists—Michèle Pearson Clarke (Toronto), Annalee Davis (Barbados), and Nadia Huggins (St. Vincent)—and autoethnographic narratives and photographs, I consider how theory, the visual and sensorial, and embodiments of knowledge impact how we learn together and create change. Through the work of Davis I explore how ghostly colonial matters held in the land can teach us about reparative learning in post/decolonial life. I then offer a queer Caribbean reading of the sea as a space of instability through the work of Huggins to find examples of transformative healing and learning. Finally, questioning my own body as a white researcher, I look at the potential learning offered through resistance and refusals of intimacy through the work of Clarke. I conclude with a summary of the forms of intimate learning that emerged through the research and an interrogation of the human/non-human divide to argue for a relational framing to social justice and race work. The principal contribution of this research is the introduction of the concept of *intimate pedagogy*. I define intimate pedagogy as the learning that happens with others in intimate moments, but also the learning that comes from the relationship we have with ourselves and the intimacy we create with knowledge. Intimate pedagogy prioritizes the understanding of relational life and opens sites for different transformative possibilities with others. It offers a tool to transcend hard disciplinary and interpersonal boundaries in studies of race and decoloniality.

Keywords: intimate, pedagogy, erotic, race, decolonial, feminism

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Dedication

To Mummy Penny. I wouldn't be on this planet if it were not for you.

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CHAPTER 1
The Flow Between: Knowledge as Movement, Exchange, Connection, and Creation

> This project is and always has been, by necessity, a shared one. Indeed, the making of new social bodies is not an epistemological problem but an ontological one. It is in the ontological unity of our human intra-actions that we can come into being what we already are: a species of humans, one, no less, that is intimately involved with all other life on our shared planet. (Sharma, 2015, p. 180)

> The DNA double helix is a molecular machine with about 100 billion parts called atoms. There are as many atoms in a single molecule of your DNA as there are stars in a typical galaxy. The same is true for dogs and bears and every living thing. We are, each of us, a little universe.… Science reveals that all life on Earth is one.… Accepting our kinship with all life on Earth is not only solid science, in my view, it's also a soaring spiritual experience. (deGrasse, as quoted in Pope, 2014)

> Crossings are never undertaken all at once, and never once and for all. (Alexander, 2005, p. 290)

Movement of Knowledge: Introduction of the Project

At the end of my field research in the Caribbean, on the flight back to Montreal from Barbados, I took two images: one as we took off, and the other in the stage of descent. Both images show the plane's wing and water hugging the island shorelines below. From the warm afternoon sea, gradients of cyan streaked with bands of sargassum seaweed and waves hitting the rocky south-east coast of Barbados, to the grey-blue evening light of late March; fragments of ice floating on the thawing surface of the dark St. Lawrence River with Montreal's lights in the distance. I posted both pictures (Figures 1 and 2) as a set on Instagram with the caption: "Sargassum seaweed to chunks of ice – from one island to another. I like to think of the water that travels between the two and all the changes and life in between #whoworeitbest" (Maule-O'Brien, 2018).

Figures 1 and 2

From Barbados to Montreal: Sargassum Seaweed to Chunks of Ice


Note: Instagram post by Skye Maule-O'Brien [@skyemo], March 30, 2018.

The hashtag, although an attempt at participating in social media cultural humour and an obvious statement in protest of the ice, draws a parallel between seemingly disparate islands to see the similarities and differences shared between these lands and waters, our relationships to them, and the knowledge they hold. This doctoral dissertation attempts to do just that; it asks us to think about the flow of ideas, intimate learnings, and shared histories between the Caribbean and Canada, and beyond. Drawing on creative feminist practices and theories, this qualitative research uses an anti-racist feminist methodology. It incorporates epistemological questioning, conversations with artists and organizers, ontological concerns, reflective autoethnographic narratives, and everyday photographs to look at the spaces of overlap of theory, the visual and sensorial, embodiments of knowledge, and community action. The research recognizes the multiple and ever-expanding connective realities that intertwine our lives, as sources of knowledge and learning that can be drawn upon to offer creative collaborative ways of coming together that resist divisionary tactics and celebrate the relational other.

At the onset of this project, I began with questioning the queer and erotic life of racism (Barnard, 2004; Holland, 2012; Lorde, 1984) with the hope of offering strategies to shift how we come together in daily life. I looked to discourses of Black and Caribbean feminisms, queer theory, and specifically the work of Ian Barnard (2004) and Sharon Patricia Holland (2012) in an attempt to better understand the complexities of race in the everyday. Both authors assert that our erotic and desiring lives can never be free of racist practice, suggesting that the quotidian—where moments of contradiction, learning, and pleasure reside—is an important site of inquiry that needs far more attention. In response to this assertion, my research concerns focused on the intersection between race and the intimate. As I attempted to think through the broader social and structural implications of race, I continually returned to the interpersonal relations, the intimate, and the micro changes I was witnessing in my teaching and daily life in connection with others. From here, the goal of the research became to clarify the shifts in thinking, learning, and behaviour around difficult subjects, like race and racism, that are produced when we use intimacy as a pedagogical tool.

As I grappled with articulating the complex and fluid nature of how race marks our bodies differently in different spaces, and with different subjects (others), I turned to visual art practices as a way to describe and constitute what I was witnessing and experiencing. The choice to use visual methodologies and engage in conversations with practicing artists stemmed from wanting to assist in making intimacy and the ways we learn with and through intimate connections legible. Incorporating art and creative strategies allowed me to simultaneously question and engage with theory, lived experiences, sensory knowledge, feeling, and representations of conceptual thought and social-political realities. During the data collection I invited three art practitioners, Michèle Pearson Clarke (Toronto), Annalee Davis (Barbados), and Nadia Huggins (St. Vincent), to participate in an interview each. I purposely selected artists who were already employing what I

recognized as intimate tactics to address difficult knowledge around issues of race, gender, and post/decolonial life. As a result of these conversations, the work expanded beyond questions of race and the intimate to further include feminist action-based decolonial practices and questions of transformative knowledge. This led to a need for the development of a pedagogical framework to name the learning possibilities and the potential for knowledge creation grounded in the intimate. From here emerged one of the principal contributions of this research, the formation of the theory *intimate pedagogy*. By discussing and naming intimate tactics in learning, the research works to showcase methods that support the making of intimate connections to ourselves, to those around us, and to the knowledge we are creating. By doing so it also illustrates the social ordering that impacts intimacy making, the boundaries and limits of intimate learning, and the refusals of intimacy.

The research uses examples of exchange and dialogue between Canada and parts of the English-speaking Caribbean to explore how our shared histories hold us in connection today. It questions how an awareness of such an implication can assist us in not only accepting our relationality, but in strategically using our connectivity to all life as a powerful instrument of collective change and healing. How can we encourage a purposeful turn toward the socio-historically constructed other—across the human and non-human divide—to promote and support both deeper-level learning and social change? Confronting difficult knowledge that implicates the self in relation to the other, with the possible outcome of transformative learning, is often painful as it shifts our view of the self, the world, and our relation to it (Boler, 1999; Britzman, 2000; Britzman & Pitt, 2003). Understanding that transformation requires a connective recognition that takes place deep within our bodies, this research explores what practices (theoretical, artistic, and pedagogical) use intimacy as a tool that can map out the concept of intimacy as method. Can we

envision a way to use intimate gestures of learning and changing together to create larger ripples of social transformation? What can moments of exchange that center intimacy and intimate potential, including intimate refusals, bring to coalition building and social organizing? Finally, can an intimate pedagogy help us transgress divisionary boundaries and resistance to change, to produce transformative outcomes of more radical accountability to ourselves, each other, and the planet?

Entering a dialogue around these questions with artists who are working in the Caribbean and in Canada meant spending a lot of time thinking about the role our relationships with others—both human and non-human—play in our learning about difficult history and knowledge, and how we help each other shift the ways we navigate the world. This project explores the ways that these three artists already are creating space for narratives of liberation and expressions of healing by using intimacy and vulnerability throughout their work. Intimate pedagogy, as a theory and method of collaborative knowledge formation, allows us to imagine an intimate future where decolonial healing takes place across bodies of people and landscapes, and where our differences are used as power to create a nurtured and nurturing world we want to live in together. I define intimate pedagogy as the learning that happens with others in intimate moments, but also the learning that comes from the relationship we have with ourselves and the intimacy we create with knowledge. Broken down, these types of knowledge are as follows:

- the learning that occurs or that is exchanged with others in intimate moments, such as with friends, family, and our environment; relational learning; listening to and hearing the other, including human and non-human;
- the learning that comes from the relationship we have with ourselves through reflection; learning of the self; reflexivity; and

- the learning and intimacy that are produced from engaging with knowledge; the intimacy we forge with knowledge we produce and hold; the process of embodiment; embodied knowledge.

Through the research, I propose a pedagogical tool that encourages processes of intimate knowledge making, learning, and listening to understand not only ourselves, but our social environments inside a politics of relation. In the shaping of intimate pedagogy, I employ anti-racist feminist pedagogical theories (see Alexander, 2005; Bannerji, 1995; Boler, 1999; Crenshaw, 1989; Dei, 1993, 1996; Dei & Johal, 2005; Dua, 1999; hooks, 1990, 1994, 2003; Maule-O'Brien, 2014) to think about "pedagogy" in its broadest sense to include how knowledge is created, shared, and attached to learning and education practices, both formally and informally. Here, pedagogy is not fixed to a particular tradition of academia, discipline, approach to teaching, or to curriculum strategies within schools. This is not to say that an intimate pedagogy cannot be used inside a classroom or institutional context. However, the idea is to widen learning strategies to include creative and passionate methods around the embodiment of knowledge in all areas of our lives where learning occurs and to challenge structures of power. It is to open up pedagogy as a theory and practice, making room to explore how we form knowledge in connection and relation to all life.

Similarly, this research does not limit the understanding of intimacy to the sensual or the erotic inside a sexualized experience, even though it draws on the theorizing of the erotic and the sensorial. Intimacy within an intimate pedagogy is perceived and interpreted as a space of infinite potential and connectivity that is "awaiting our recognition[;] we are bound intimately to others whether we realize or acknowledge such connection" (Holland, 2012, p. 104). It is the linkages, the sites of invisible, intangible affect and knowing that can be used as powerful learning tools. It

is our poetics of relation (Glissant, 2006). As Glissant (2006; Diawara, 2009) insists, we are multiple and always in exchange, and by attending to our relationality—our relatedness that courses through the subterranean—we do not lose our uniqueness. Aligning with this, to use intimacy as a pedagogical tool, is not to ask for a blending of bodies or the erasure of difference in an essentialist move. Rather, like Glissant (2006), it honours the reality that life—and with it, intimacy—is experienced differently, while realizing we have both the capability and capacity to create change within the fabric of relation. We live in connectivity but simultaneously are distinctive beings.

Now, at the end of this doctoral project, when candidates are often asked to narrow their analysis, I am presenting research that has opened itself wider, and my hope is that it will continue expanding long after this. Bringing together artist voices and uses of relational intimacy in combination with theories of critical feminism, creates openings in the research that organically expand to include the multiple and complex connectivity of our socially intimate lives. This line of inquiry results in the research broadening in scope. The following pages show that race can never truly be analyzed or understood as a singular identity marker. I highlight the need to embrace a fuller reading of how we embody knowledge intimately through multiplicity as we move across different places, experiencing the world in constant relation. This first chapter of the dissertation introduces the currents of knowledge that circulate and shape this research. I begin briefly pointing to the project's theoretical grounding and the sensory knowledge and visual methods used in the framing, implementation, and analysis of the research, all of which are taken up in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

Next, I discuss the reoccurring themes of knowledge and knowing that are present throughout the dissertation: knowledge from the erotic and sensory, haunting and ghostly matters,

knowledge as repeating and expanding, and the move toward the non-human. These consecutive sections contextualize the flow of scholarship and questions that have been exchanged between Canada and the Caribbean, laying out the creative practices and connections that are studied in the proceeding chapters. I link the historical, political, and social considerations with the needed turn to the non-human and nature as an important part of decolonial theorizing. As will become apparent, rumination on geographical place, space, land, water, and ecology becomes necessary in this project's reading of the relationality of intra-humanness and all life as part of a pedagogy of intimacy. I end the introductory chapter by mapping the underlying connective currents guiding the project and summarize the chapters to come.

Erotic as Knowledge: Grounding Theories

This research is framed by Caribbean and Black feminisms, with strong elements of Caribbean thought, Black studies, and queer theory, along with decolonial feminist scholarship that includes Indigenous feminism and ecofeminist critique. Within these overlapping discourses the emergence of a Lorde-ian framework of the erotic has been the most influential in the development of intimate pedagogy. Theories of the erotic facilitate a foraging of intimate connections—the seemingly small moments of mundane learning and vulnerability we experience daily—for their powerful possibilities of knowledge formation and societal transformation. In her influential text *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Audre Lorde (1984) first argued that the erotic functions as more than sex, and that by attending to its affect we can create profound connections to the self and others. Lorde (1984) writes that in learning to recognize our instinctively felt erotic selves we are respecting our non-rational body knowledge as a powerful source of information and creativity.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, in this project I draw from conversing fields of scholarship that theorize the erotic alongside race, decolonial/decolonizing movements, questions

of citizenship, agency, resistance, as well as what it means to be human, from mainly Canadian, American, and Caribbean thinkers (see Alexander, 2005; Gill, 2010, 2018; Holland, 2012; Lorde, 1984; Sheller, 2003, 2012; Wynter, 1992, 2003). Extending from Lorde's germinal theory, the erotic can be seen as a meeting place for our intuitively felt life-giving energy and our socio-political realities, creating a generative space to resist and revise objects of critical desire (Gill, 2010; Holland, 2012; Sheller, 2012). Since Lorde, the analytic framework of the erotic has been broadened to offer new ways of reading relationships between sexuality and politics, including "public spaces, aesthetic forms, and material cultures that are mobilized in the struggles between erotic subjugation and erotic knowledge" (Sheller, 2012, p. 243). Like scholars before me, I look to the erotic as a space of possibility and creativity, and I argue that the erotic, as a visceral and an aesthetic experience, is both a site of knowledge production and an object of knowledge to be studied and learned from. In the second chapter I expand on how Lorde's subject of the erotic opens up new theoretical terrain. I go deeper into the tenets, and theoretical and methodological offerings of intimate pedagogy, and take time to distinguish intimacy from the erotic.

Sensory as Knowledge: Research Methodologies

Our emotive lives are complicated with intuitive sensations, which are often overlooked or disregarded when evaluating how we learn or know, as knowledge grounded in the body is challenging to measure and qualify. In this research, I turn to the visual and creative to uncover layered sensory signs that are difficult to delineate and to record the resulting experiential learning that may escape language. To capture such affective and embodying experiences I explore the nuanced non-verbal aspects of learning that are produced in relation. By doing so I extend the visual beyond the eye toward a fuller understanding of the sensory and imaginary. In this study of intimate pedagogy I try to account for the affective knowledge that sensory experiences push to

the surface—the knowing that lays within us, conjured up, but that feels impossible at times to make into audible language—by focusing on creative practices that stretch visual methods of research to include more than just the visual. Here art acts as a source of knowledge to be studied and incorporated into how we think about the ways we hold and use what we learn. For this project it means situating the research in dialogue with contemporary visual artists and their practices, alongside theories of the erotic and unnarratable embodied knowledge.

As discussed further in Chapter 3, I incorporated the visual through image elicitation interviews with the three artists in order to capture artistic responses to the research's theoretical concerns. Grounded in their visual arts practices and processes, the questions I posed concentrated on the artists' uses of intimacy in their work and the ways they employ it to address social and political subjects. Our recorded conversations took place either in the artist's home or studio in a casual form but covered politicized, personal, and charged topics, such as racism, gender and sexual violence, (post)colonial social economies, environmental destruction, and normative structures that limit freedom. The purpose of looking at three artists and their work was not to conduct a comparative study; instead it brings forward three different perspectives of intimacy and puts them into dialogue. As will be detailed later in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the artists' use of relational connections in their practices is done through an invitation to forge intimacy with their audiences through their work, a conveying of their own embodied intimate knowledge through the visual, or the purposeful use of intimacy and vulnerability as an artistic strategy. Each artist uses the notion of intimacy in a different way to help us confront the other and to better understand not only how the colonial order shapes how we build relationships, but also how we may simultaneously erode its hold on our bodies and planet.

Alongside the information garnered from the interviews and analysis of key artworks, the chapters include autoethnographic narrative snippets, personal reflections, and multimedia field notes comprised of photographs taken on my mobile phone. The incorporation of photographs and reflective notes draws inspiration from the visual method of photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) in combination with both analytic and evocative autoethnographical approaches that involve presenting research with affect and aesthetic (Anderson, 2006; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography brings together the analysis of social phenomena and the position of the researcher while making room for the researcher's body to be used as an instrument of analysis (Anderson, 2006). Sensory perception and physical sensations experienced during the project are included and are read as part of the data. The research process then becomes a product, making decisions and biases more transparent. While this can put the researcher in a vulnerable position, autoethnography as a space to think through the ethical implications of the research matters for a project such as this, one that crosses boundaries of intimacy, countries, race, sexuality, and gender.

Haunting Knowledge: Following the Ghosts

Like many research projects, this one at times seemed to have a life force of its own. At the recommendation of advisors and colleagues I tried to follow where it was taking me as much as I tried to guide it while listening to what it was conveying. Ultimately this meant turning away from the United States as a site of research and a more complete turn toward the Caribbean, specifically Barbados, where I ended up living for eight months of the project. The research journeyed to five locations in four years: Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, Barbados, St. Vincent, and finally Rotterdam. Before setting out to interview artists, I had not spent much time in the Caribbean. The shortlist of artists to approach was formed with purpose, but the ways the interviews came about, who chose to participate, and where they ended up taking place unfolded organically through

various connections in a snowball effect. Similarly, the spaces where the research was to take place were loosely planned, but where it became rooted was not.

The narratives and information that formed the research's core required experiences and participation in an ongoing resistance to colonial orderings of relationships, capital gains, and competitive consumptive behaviours to make room for a different type of learning: an intimate pedagogy. This meant following the connections and voices of those whom the research "needed" to hear from. In moments, it felt like the project was possessed with an otherworldly energy that took over not only the direction of the thinking, but which haunted me. The ghostly matters that were reaching through the present into a future that I could just barely see, helped this project take form in ways that are still difficult to articulate, but which I hope can be felt in the following pages. As Avery F. Gordon (2008) shares:

> To be haunted and to write from that location, to take on the condition of what you study, is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindnesses. Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future. (p. 22)

The listening and learning, development of intimacy, the channeling and grappling with ghostly matters and difficult knowledge is all in dialogue with the research data to make apparent the transformative journey of the project. Made visible as snapshots in time but also in motion, the results presented in this dissertation elucidate examples of intimate pedagogy in action though

intimacy making and intimate resistance. The results reflect my movement as the writer, showing how the work unfolded and how challenges were met. Bringing us to the metaphorical shore, this dissertation welcomes a meditation on crossings (Alexander, 2005), our relationships to land and water, and our shared stories and linkages between the Caribbean and Canada.

Repeating Knowledge: The Caribbean and Canada in Dialogue

The Kanien'kehá:ka are recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters around the Montreal region. The island of Montreal, traditionally known as Tiohtiá:ke to the Haudenosaunee people and as Mooniyang to the Anishinaabe, is unceded territory and was historically a gathering place for the Haudenosauneega (St. Lawrence Iroquois), the Huron-Wendat, and the Kanien'kehá:ka and Mohawk First Nations who still have vibrant communities there (Indigenous Directions, 2017; Native Land Digital, 2018). Montreal is an island connected to other islands through a network of bridges; links forever crumbling and needing repair, in their physicality but also symbolically. A global metropolis with insular customs, the city is a contradictory mixture that permits a type of creative exploratory freedom unlike any other Canadian city, but whose political and linguistic histories have birthed dangerous nationalistic ideals. Located in the mouth of the St. Lawrence river, the entrance to most important commercial seaway in Canada, it first brought Europeans to Turtle Island, where the bustling cities and quaint towns that now pepper the shores attempt to hide the scars of the bloody settler colonial project that is still very much in motion.

Throughout the Americas, the arrival of Europeans led to expansive exploration and mass exploitation in production, trade, and consumption of bodies and resources that pushed Indigenous people from their traditional lands. In the Caribbean, Caribs (Kalinago) and Arawak (Taíno) Indigenous communities flourished throughout the islands, including Barbados and St. Vincent,

before the arrival of Columbus in 1492 that set into motion centuries of displacement and enslavement (see Beckles, 2006; Native Land Digital, 2018; Saunders, 2005; Sheller, 2003). Canada, like the soils, sands, and waters of the Caribbean, is soaked with the blood of this history that has created vast changes of various proportions: some extraordinarily horrific, others astonishingly creative, and many unremarkably mundane.

The widely cited Antonio Benítez-Rojo (1996) argues that the importance of the Caribbean basin as a space of interest in global study is housed in what he marks as "its fragmentation; its instability; its reciprocal isolation; its uprootedness; its cultural heterogeneity; its lack of historiography and historical continuity; its contingency and impermanence; its syncretism" (p. 1). Visually comparing the Caribbean to a spiral—the Milky Way galaxy with its unpredictable flux of transformative plasma—Benítez-Rojo (1996) paints the meta-archipelago with "the virtue of having neither a boundary nor a center" with its expansive flow outward, surpassing the limits of its own sea reaching far off shores and lands (p. 4); a forever stretching, repeating, bridge of islands connecting North and South America that pushes knowledge outward until it has globally touched our imaginaries.

> [W]ithin the sociocultural fluidity that the Caribbean archipelago presents, within its historiographic turbulence and its ethnological and linguistic clamor, within its generalized instability of vertigo and hurricane, one can sense the features of an island that "repeats" itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected designs. (Benítez-Rojo, 1996, p. 3)

This repeating language of sea, air, islands, and the tropics, with their inherent instability and unpredictability, is attached to the region as well as to the bodies that occupy the lands. These issues of racialization of space, place, production, and global consumption that are articulated from

a Caribbean standpoint are important to decolonial theorizing and action across the Americas. The lingering colonial hauntings are imperative to study and learn from as they speak to the ways we are implicated in the lives of others and belong to each other across borders. As a white Canadian, I am a touring body and a guest in dialogue with Caribbean feminist theory, and the creative and critical practices presented in the following pages. The project does not ignore or disengage with the thick historical research of Caribbean scholarship, but my research should not be read as belonging to such discourse, a study of the Caribbean, or a critique of any of its multiple regions. Instead, it respects the repeating entity of generations and complex meaning making as a production of knowledge that has travelled, influencing thought and creative production far from the region, including my own. The voices of the Caribbean artists heard in this research speak to their internationally connected lives and the social and political realties circulating between the Caribbean and Canada. This is where my project listens and responds to narratives swirling with intimate possibilities; a critical mixture of transferable knowledge on the mutability of identity and race through decolonial understandings.

As a Canadian scholar I have been influenced by Caribbean and American thought and their articulation of race, sexuality, gender, and the erotic, as well as decolonial thought, which have all been extensively explored through Black studies, Indigenous, Black and Caribbean feminist thought, queer theory, and ecofeminist critique. Theoretical and qualitative inquiries of race and racism, and the control and consumption of bodies and the planet, have not been limited to the US, but they are extended and influenced by cross-border dialogue between Canada and throughout the Caribbean. As is clear in Chapter 2, which details the project's theoretical framework, these disciplines are foundational to the research design, implementation, and the knowledge it presents. To engage in research about intimacy within a feminist framework in

collective ways requires dialogue with people who are already having these conversations, and who live and work in and across these geographical regions. The knowledge shared in the pages was gained through exchange; between bodies and locations, each of which enabled unique perspectives on how our shared history and (im/e)migration routes are impacting our present social and political climates.

Not only is the theoretical grounding connected to the social politics and ideas coming out of these areas, my academic training and my personal experiences have been informed and influenced by similar philosophical and pedagogical practices. Living in Montreal and Toronto for most of my adult life to date, I built work and family networks with artists, scholars, and cultural workers who work throughout these regions, who move knowledge and build communities and family across racial, identity, and state boundaries. My daily life is imbued with social interaction, WhatsApp conversations, political understandings, and academic theories coming from people with Caribbean and American cultural and economic understandings that are heavily mixed with Canadian urban experiences of diversity and left-wing socialist politics. Taking courses and being supervised by scholars and working with artists and academics who themselves move between similar spaces should be recognized as an important part of this project. This research reflects the community I move within and where much of my education, both formal and informal, has been developed. We do not learn in solitude, and like all our projects, the foundation of this doctoral project was developed through relational learning with and through those around me who have touched me physically, creatively, or philosophically through their art and writing. The inclusion of autoethnographic narratives is an attempt to make such "intellectual touchings" more transparent, but also to show how our social connections to each other also bind us ecologically beyond only considerations of the human to encompass the non-human other.

Expanding Knowledge: Social and Ecological Justice Connectivity

We are experiencing a particularly urgent moment where racial and sexual politics are taking up greater public space and debate through large-scale activist movements. At the beginning of this project Idle No More, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo were gaining traction centering the lives of Indigenous and Black women. More recently the anti-pipeline protests initiated by the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs saw far-reaching support from coast to coast in Canada and the US. A couple months later when COVID-19 was continuing to ravage communities of colour at much higher rates, and multiple instances of blatant acts of racism were caught on tape, the murder of George Floyd by police, which was read as a public lynching, became a tipping point. The resulting massive American protests that called for a defunding of the police in order to end police brutality against Black people and the use of militarized force spread and grew globally, taking up local issues with them. I witnessed an example in Barbados, where calls were reignited to have the statue of Lord Horatio Nelson removed from National Heroes Square in the capital, Bridgetown. The protests in the streets and on social media against the monument of the British admiral who upheld the slave trade resulted in an official toppling ceremony. Led by heads of state and accompanied by performances that addressed the pain and scars of colonial history, members of the public filled the downtown core to watch the event, which was also broadcast live on national media.

Initiated and led by Indigenous and Black, often queer and trans, women and elders, these social and ecological justice protests worked to also bring further attention to the lives of Black trans women and their leadership roles from the start. In direct confrontation with dehumanizing realities, these public protests have resulted in an increase in discussions in mainstream conversations and our visual fields of representation through media, art, and cultural production,

about the interlacing experiences of race, sex(uality), gender, class, and the battle against white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This can be most widely witnessed on social media streams through a rise in the sharing of articles, videos, and personal reflections along with the political organizing use of hashtags. This has also meant higher rates of listenership on podcasts dedicated to race and non-conforming representations of gender and sex(uality), as well as large entertainment networks and news agencies more frequently incorporating counter-narratives, alternative experiences, and otherwise silenced voices. All of these elements ultimately bring—at times more critically informed, but not always—dialogue on racism, whiteness, systemic oppression, and sexuality into our everyday interactions. For many people, this includes professional spaces of work, family life, online communities, and relationships with friends and lovers.

The observation that race, gender, and sexuality are "hot(ter)" topics in mainstream media is not meant to ignore that many of these conversations have been happening for generations inside various communities as a method of survival in our white supremacist patriarchal society. For example, contemporary demands around colonial and racial justice echo those that have been made ad infinitum over the past century and longer. Many of these demands have been ignored or trivialized by our education systems, the media, and governing institutions that are structured by fundamentally racist, misogynist laws and policies, and dominated by white male bodies and voices. We still see this playing out in the judicial systems of Canada and the US in how they handle cases of police brutality and the murders of unarmed Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. The failure to effectively prosecute these crimes is further compounded by the denial of historically rooted systemic racism that is imbedded in all facets of society, severely affecting policing and

incarceration. This lack of accountability and avoidance of difficult conversations about white supremacy condones and perpetuates violence against bodies of colour as normal and expected.

Such ignorant denial is also prevalent in how social and environmental racism is exercised through continued settler colonial practices veiled under the neoliberal capitalist economic developments of Canadian governments and corporations on Indigenous lands in Canada and abroad. This often has the most detrimental impacts on Indigenous people and communities living in remote areas or poor communities in urban areas that are affected by a gamut of issues from toxic waste, polluted water systems or lack of access to clean water, destroyed forests, in addition to limited access to health care, fresh food, and affordable housing. Systemic environmental racism gravely impacts different communities in different ways, but an overarching theme is that the problems of poor people and people of colour are deemed to be their own instead of a greater social responsibility, and far too often their bodies are coded as undeserving of dignity and humanity (Razack, 2002; Wynter, 1992).

Our current climate of racial and sexual violence is a remnant of slavery and the continuation of settler colonialism that perpetuates a particular racial and sexual order (Alexander, 2005; Davis, 1998; hooks, 1990; McGuire, 2010; Razack, 2002; Sheller, 2012). These histories and realities not only structure our socio-cultural experience and our institutions, but they permeate our intimate spaces and our relationship to the very land we live on. Though the settler colonial past and ongoing realities of contemporary neoliberal formations of empire differ between Canada and the Caribbean, many elements are also shared due to the transatlantic slave trade that brought millions of people, plants, animals, and diseases across the Atlantic Ocean to the many shores of the Caribbean, along the eastern seaboard of Turtle Island, up to what is now called Canada

(Benítez-Rojo, 1996; DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011; Glissant, 2006; Sharma, 2015; Sheller, 2003, 2012).

In Canada, as the recent reports from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) on the impacts of residential schools and the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) gain government recognition, national attention, and activist momentum, it is becoming harder to ignore the genocidal colonial violence still being exercised toward Indigenous communities and the erasure of cultures and languages. This slow process of exposure, and pushback against the denial of egregious colonial policies that continue to perpetuate mental and bodily harm to Indigenous peoples, making women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual) people particularly vulnerable (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), is bringing Indigenous healing practices and environmental protection to the forefront of national concerns. Without falling into utopic naivety thinking that these studies alone could produce the needed widespread changes, we must take note of the institutional changes and grassroots initiatives that are shifting behaviours locally. With this also comes a broader realization that Eurocentric views of the world as something to conquer have resulted in the destruction of vast amounts of life in Canada, the Caribbean, and around the globe. The ahistorical celebration of colonialist structures and economic growth must be completely overhauled if we are to value human rights and preserve life on the planet.

Nature as Knowledge: Human Consumption and the Non-human Other

Mimi Sheller (2003), writing about the Caribbean, directly confronts the ways the West—first Western Europe and now North America—has and continues to consume the earth's "natural environment, commodities, human bodies, and cultures," to show how "unintended consequences"

are continuously formed in fields of resistance when ideas, bodies, and materials move between these spaces (p. 3). In a similar vein, Benítez-Rojo (1996) reminds us the Americas are what they are today because of European movement across the Middle Passage. A new mixture of life and thought was created in crossing the Atlantic; heavily soaked with blood and salt water, it changed human imagination and nature so completely—to trace the chaos would be impossible (Benítez-Rojo, 1996). Nandita Sharma (2015) states that it is precisely *how* the new world was built and *how* we were brought together, which has opened up a unique opportunity of exchanges "to form new social relationships with one another based on our shared humanity" (p. 167). These ideas and unique moments that bring us together in sometimes traumatic ways, while often destructive, also offer us occasions to denounce exploitation and make new collective formations.

Using the writing of Sylvia Wynter, Sharma (2015) looks at how the horrors of colonization witnessed in the development of the new world also opened new routes of being together and forming knowledge. Wynter makes way for such thinking when she writes that Columbus arrived on waves of enormous change, bringing ruthless violence and massive destruction of personhood, communities, land, and environment, but this paradoxically led to a "'root expansion in thought' concerning ideas of self, other, and space" (Wynter, 1995, as cited in Sharma, 2015, p. 167). The world-altering moment initiated new ties between the continents and engendered, amongst its horrors, a new world that also "provided us with potential escape routes away from its devastating consequences" (Sharma, 2015, p. 167). Avoiding the binary trap of only reading victimhood and trauma in our history, Sharma (2015) writes that for this expansion of the self that reflects our connective reality to emerge, it requires our "acknowledgment that human beings are deeply interconnected with one another and with the environment of which we are a part" (p. 169). Quoting Wynter (1995), Sharma asks if "a new and ecumenically human view" can emerge; "one

that expands our sense of who 'we' are, one that will allow us to co-identify and coexist as interaltruistic co-humans," which she argues would reflect our already lived reality and connectivity more authentically (Wynter, 1995, as cited in Sharma, 2015, p. 166). I see this requiring an intimate recognition, beyond geographical borders and divisionary categories, and a move toward the seductive energy of the natural world as part of learning and healing. This is a project that requires reading our global expansion and diverse planet as more connected than ever before, and which understands that "our futures are also intimately related" across land, space, and place (Sharma, 2015, p. 170).

In Chapters 4 and 5 I explore such social, historical, and political facets of the human in connection to the non-human environment of land and water. Saturated with complicated human experiences, both the sea and land have long literary and theoretical histories as players in postcolonial thought, discourses of reparation, and a rhetoric of trauma and healing. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (2011) use the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism and postcolonial thought as bodies of scholarship to address the interconnectedness of nature and the empire in the analysis of imperialistic consumption, control, expropriation, and exploitation. They argue these already long histories—of nature and the empire—need to be read hand in hand or we risk dehistoricizing how nature has always been integral to the colonial project. Encouraging an envisioning of the environment in recovery, and seeing our imaginative projects and critical aesthetics as key to dislodging the hold of colonization, are necessary acts in our historical healing and future survival on the planet (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011). The authors, understanding the interconnectedness and ecological interdependencies of any given space, state: "place encodes time, suggesting that histories embedded in the land and sea have always provided vital and dynamic methodologies for understanding the transformative impact of the empire and the

anticolonial epistemologies it tried to suppress" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 4). Drawing on Guyanese author Wilson Harris, they put forth historicization as a tool of postcolonialism saying to do so requires entering a "profound dialogue with the landscape" (Harris, 1992, as cited in DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 4). To follow this model is to see the landscape and seascape as key participants in the historical process, but also as implicated actors; others. Like our ancestors that hold historical knowledge, "the environment stands as a nonhuman witness to the violent process of colonialism" and it makes this engagement with alterity "a constitutive aspect of postcoloniality" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 8).

Incorporating an aesthetic of the earth through artists and poets who themselves have turned to the lands and water "to recover the suppressed bodies of colonial violence" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 8), but also the pleasure and healing they offer, is to acknowledge that nature's multitude of life contains a density of experience and knowing. This is not to offer new ways to theorize the colonial legacies, ecologies, or land history that have been thoroughly explored by scholars of Indigenous studies, postcolonial thought, environmental justice, and ecofeminist philosophies. Instead I attempt to converse with these discourses to uncover new and existing moments of intimate learning that occur when we listen to each other and our environment. Incorporating the visual art of Clarke, Davis, and Huggins in the analysis centers lived histories and feminist practices, but also assists in privileging a non-linear embodied knowing as part of a decolonial resistance in research and creation. Exploring our relational existence works to undo the divisionary colonial project. Using the visual, sensory, and non-linear forms of the imaginary in conjunction with academic thought opens paths to knowledge that may not be easily articulated or that do not prescribe to traditional colonial learning models of logic. An attempt to listen and hear the land and water requires this of us. M. Jacqui Alexander (2005), in her book *Pedagogies*

of Crossing, helps us realize this journey is filled with continual crossings that act as learnings:

> *Pedagogies* [*of Crossing*] summons subordinated knowledges that are produced in the context of the practices of marginalization in order that we might destabilize existing practices of knowing and thus cross the active boundaries of exclusion and marginalization. This, then, is the existential message of the Crossing—to apprehend how it might instruct us in the urgent task of configuring new ways of being and knowing and to plot the different metaphysics that are needed to move away from living alterity premised in difference to living intersubjectivity premised in relationality and solidarity. (pp. 7–8)

Within our ecosystems this interconnectivity is an intimacy awaiting our recognition. Holland (2012) asserts, intimacy is already always there; forged through an intimate bond to others whether we realize the connection or not. This research does not ask whether we are intimately connected to the earth's waters and plants that feed us; the connection is understood as always already present. Instead the purpose is to be with these connections—our bodies next to other bodies—in a study of multisensorial learning and the erotic embodiment of knowledge. This embodied learning is a continual process of change we are all a part of even if we do not realize our participation; even in resistance there is knowledge creation and intimacy building. We belong to each other across biological categorization, territory lines of geography, and social organization.

Mapping Knowledge: The Dissertation Journey

This entire project is fueled by desire—the desire to connect, to touch, to build intimacy and community. At times our desires are informed by what is perceived to be lacking. My desires extend beyond the personal toward a collective yearning: a desire for change in the world I see around me, a desire to push and transgress boundaries that restrain and order in damaging ways, a desire for creative expression, a desire for dialogue, and a desire for transformations of ourselves

and social structures. This is the underlying energy of this whole dissertation: desire to share in recognition of our intimate connection to all life as a method with which to push for transformative healing and flourishment. I recognize, as a white Canadian settler, cisgender woman attracted to various manifestations of masculinity and sexual expression, that working within the outlined subjects is a never-ending process that requires open, critical, and active listening with a turn toward a space of vulnerability and the letting go of control. I am committed to a collaborative practice based in responsibility and accountability inside history and discourse. And my work is about acknowledging the shared desires for livelihood and what it means to be fully human[1] across different experiences and locations as we envision and work toward a hopefully better future.

The following interrelated chapters take the reader through the theory that brought me to the research, the methodological journey to collect data, the analysis of intimate learning through our connections to land and water metaphorically joined by the shore, and end at questions of resistance and what a collaborative future might hold. At moments throughout the writing I interject narrative reflections as a way to shift the pace of thought. I use stories, memories, and images to create a place of meeting, transition, and reflection, something like a literary or visual shore. The shore as a space of reflection is an edge; a place of potential risk that invites an entering or shift in perspective. I have stood where the land meets a body of water many times over this research, searching, playing, longing, thanking or just being still. The ebb and flow, and the give and take of exchange where boundaries are blurred, will be returned to often as an invitation to cross a threshold, to undertake a pedagogical crossing of sorts, one of transformative potential. It takes the reader from the land, to the shore, and then under the water's surface to explore different

[1] I am aware that the use of the words "fully human" may undermine my commitment to non-human lives and relies on dichotomous understanding of human vs. non-human. In Chapter 2, I discuss the context of this language through the work of Wynter and scholars who have taken up her theorizing.

geographies of feminist decolonial practices and the erotic power held within our bodies—including those of nature. These bodies absorb and transfer learning that shows the complexity of how knowledge is formed in relation.

Alexander (2005) reminds us that the exchanges of crossings are never taken by a singular entity or moment, but are retaken, revisited, and reoccurring like the flow of water and the pull of the tides. Crossings are "meant to evoke/invoke the crossroads, the space convergence and endless possibility; the place where we put down and discard the unnecessary in order to pick up that which is necessary" (Alexander, 2005, p. 8). The sections of this dissertation unfold, carrying what was said before, to offer an expanded exploration of the theoretical conversations that shape and support the project, while giving a detailed account of what was undertaken, peering into the at times challenging realm of the intimate. This includes what came up and out of—often held within my own body as the researcher—the moments of resistance, the difficult knowledge, the pleasant surprises, and intense changes. This research experienced an intimate life of its own as it travelled from Canada, to the US, back to Canada, to the Caribbean, and ending in the Netherlands. It shifted and undertook crossings at its own pace, taking me with it and often waiting for me to catch up. This project stretched what it meant to embody knowledge, to feel particular knowings, and it let through the ghostly matters that demanded attention; at times inhospitable, while at other times welcoming and loving.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, paints a more complete picture of the theoretical grounding of the research. Divided into three thematics of scholarship, it looks at how issues of race intertwine with intimacy and the erotic. The theories this work proceeds from act both as an interpretive framework and a way to participate in the ongoing discussions about the intimate faculties of identity and knowledge formation. First, I begin with Barnard and Holland and an analysis of their

shared ideas and departures. By starting here I position the early stages of my project, which came about as a response to their work. I continue this path of inquiry through race and erotics toward a deeper reading of how theories of the erotic shape an intimate pedagogy. Second, I lay out the key tenets of Black and Caribbean feminisms and discuss the necessity of using a Lorde-ian framework of the erotic, drawing on critical race theory, queer theory, and decolonial feminist movements. I argue the scholarship that examines the interlaced nature of race, gender, and the erotic is imperative for a project that asks us to take up intimacy as a transformative pedagogical tool. To do so I look at how early theories of the erotic have been employed in recent scholarship in connection to sensation, aesthetics, the sacred, embodiment, healing, and political agency in the everyday. Third, I expand on the connection these theories have with the development of intimate pedagogy to further explain its theoretical and interpretative possibilities and place within this project.

Following the theoretical framing, in Chapter 3 I outline the methodologies that were used to develop the research as an attempt to participate in the current articulations of identity politics, social justice organizing, and educational projects. Through visual explorations that speak directly to an intimate pedagogical theory, the purpose is to intervene through an offering of ways to come together differently. I define the research parameters of autoethnography, image elicitation interviews, and visual methodologies to detail the research process and field work that took place. Finally, Chapter 3 covers the framework of analysis that was applied to articulate the findings, some of which escape language.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 spend time exploring questions of intimacy in relation to various forms of "others" through the work and words of the three artists: Annalee Davis, Nadia Huggins, and Michèle Pearson Clarke. Incorporating historical and theoretical discussions on how the movement

of bodies, objects of consumption, and ideas have crossed, circulated, and merged between Canada and the Caribbean, the chapters look to multiple moments of exchange as counter-knowledge production on issues of intimate belonging and identity. These chapters work toward connecting our shared colonial histories to question how our relationships are shaped by the lands we live on and the waters between us, while bringing forward diverse and collective strategies of intimate resistance and healing.

The first of these chapters, Chapter 4, using the artwork of Davis and the sensory language of land communicated in her practice, explores how we may build an intimacy with the lands beneath our feet to help facilitate reparative learning (Davis, 2016b). Guided by in-person conversations between Davis, a white creole Barbadian, and myself, a white Canadian settler, on our shared colonial pasts and presents, the chapter provides an opportunity to integrate a listening, to each other and the lands upon which we live, to uncover tactics of decolonial resistances and new ways of coming together in charged locations.

Linked by a field research photo narrative of my trip from Barbados to St. Vincent to interview Huggins, Chapter 5 moves from the land into the waters represented in Huggins' photography and video work. Huggins' central subject of water, often used as a metaphor to articulate her own queer Caribbean experience, intertwines questions of identity, desire, race, gender, and our larger shared relationship with the natural environment. Present within her practice is an invitation of desire, an oceanic affect; a desire to connect with ourselves, each other, and the water that links us across temporalities. The chapter looks at how visually entering spaces of instability with the non-human other can offer protection, healing, and transformative possibilities. To do so Chapter 5 proposes an imaginative, sensorial experiment that involves transgressing

social and geographical boundaries to challenge hierarchical systems of oppression and categories of identity in an effort to learn from experiences of intimate knowledge embodiment.

Chapter 6 moves from examples of intimacy and learning with the non-human others of the land and water, and returns to questions of what it means to witness and support each other in our full humanity. Using the work of Clarke, the chapter complicates the practice of intimate pedagogy. By doing so it delves further into what different, more challenging, conditions of intimacy may mean to the proposal of learning and changing together. Taking into consideration the historical events that shape our relationality as discussed through Huggins and Davis, the chapter interrogates what leads us to presume particular intimacies will be available to us. Intimacy making, for many people, has included entering a space of danger or oppression; it works to confront entitlement and the assumption we will always find comfortable forms of intimacy. From here I look at the possible learning tools and healing practices that manifest in intimate refusal or "disintimacy." I end the chapter with discussing the promises and limits of using vulnerability and intimacy as pedagogical strategies.

In the concluding Chapter 7, I pay homage to the erotic as the conduit for the articulation of an intimate pedagogy and the initial envisioning of an intimate practice; one that could produce transformative learning. I revisit the conceptual frameworks and the main analytical offerings from each chapter, touching on the multiple ideas and understandings of intimate learning that have emerged over the duration of the project. I weave autoethnographical narratives of visitations and generational resolving with non-linear examples of intimate pedagogy in motion. The reader is invited to witness and imagine how an intimate pedagogical practice may resonate in their/our future; a future of working in relation. In doing so, I address the contradictory nature of questioning what it means to be human while also calling for a leaning into the inseparability of life, the living,

and the lived. In closing, I produce an opening to look forward to our collective role in the creation of a relational present that is bound to healthy future imagining.

CHAPTER 2
Race and the Erotic: Theoretical Framing of Intimate Pedagogy

> It is quotidian intimacy that forces us to realize the other as someone with whom we interact and have an impact upon; our acknowledgment of this connection represents the touch and its fruition. We do not create intimacy; it is there awaiting our recognition…. [W]e are bound intimately to others whether we realize or acknowledge such connection. The touch is the sign without a language to make it legible to "others." (Holland, 2012, p. 104)

> [R]ace is always already sexualized as sexuality is always-already raced. (Barnard, 2004, p. 2)

Invited Imaginings

In an experimental introduction into visual research methods, I conducted an autoethnographic photovoice project in 2015 called *The Touch Project.* In an effort to visually examine how race functions intimately in my life, for two weeks I textually and visually recorded every instance of touch I encountered. Staying present in how I used my body in contact with others, I kept a journal of my experiences of touch ranging from people on the bus squished up next to me, to hands brushing mine in noticeable ways, to full body hugs, and even desires of touch. I counted touching 31 individuals, some of whom I touched many times. Included were non-humans I also came into contact with, such as my plants and two cats. On top of the 31 individuals there were 5 instances where I wanted to touch people but could not due to various reasons or restrictions. Of these 36, I was able to photograph 13.

Touch and intimacy are full of sensorial, political and emotional information (Sedgwick, 2003). Touch is complicated; encompassing both violence and empathy at once, it "carries a message about the immediate present, the possible future, and the problematic past … [as it] crosses boundaries, in fact and imagination" (Holland, 2012, p. 100). The images I took, and my experiences of them, conveyed how touch and race both work as multisensorial experiences in the

body, layered with memories and belief systems. The photos, with their high contrast and absence of colour, allowed me to infuse them with imagination, emotive responses, and memory, as I projected my socially influenced desires of intimate sharing onto them. While these images provided an opportunity for escapism, they also pushed into relief pieces of constructed and embodied knowledge, to critically reflect on through the photo object.

Though initially the purpose of the project was to confront the whiteness of my body in relation to others and to explore the presence of race in our intimate lives, the photographs began to make race less clear. It could be a result of privilege that I am permitted the erasure of race with a focus on the pleasures of my relations. My whiteness and agency in relationships are certainly not afforded to everyone, and neither is a feeling of comfort and trust in one's own body. Nonetheless, even with this awareness, as the project progressed in visual form it became more difficult to observe race clearly. The narrow framing on hands or sections of the body blur racial lines and do not allow for a clear categorization that we regularly reference (Figures 3, 4, and 5). Here we begin to see evidence of how the broader structural rules of racial ordering can fail to hold firm in intimate encounters, especially if parties involved choose to actively challenge these rules. Race and racism impact our lives materially in every interaction, but they also rely on us to trust in difference and disconnect (Holland, 2012). On an intimate level this can shift and take on alternate formations. *The Touch Project* provides a moment to look at how systemic ideas move in, impact, and are changed by our private interactions with the human and non-human other. The project shows how I began to develop my thinking on the site of the intimate as space for transformative learning. It is also where the notion of the intimate relationship started extending beyond a traditional definition of intimacy between people to include intimacy building with ideas

and non-human beings we come into contact with in complex and even conflictual ways, but which are always informing our understandings of intimacy and belonging.

Figures 3, 4, and 5

The Touch Project

Note: This is a selection of 3 of the 13 images that make up *The Touch Project, 2015*.

I share the example of *The Touch Project* as a preliminary conceptual response to this research project's theoretical concerns and use of visual methods. *The Touch Project* and the initial formation of the research concerns of this dissertation were guided by Audre Lorde's writing on the erotic, and Black and Caribbean feminisms' theorizing of daily life in relation to race and the erotic. More specifically, I was informed by and worked in response to Ian Barnard's (2004) *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in Racial Politics of Queer Theory* and the aforementioned *The Erotic Life of Racism* by Sharon Patricia Holland (2012). Both authors call for a coming together of race and queer theory to better understand the complexities of race in the everyday. As stated in the introduction, I began with their assertion that our erotic and desiring lives can never be free of racist practice and that the quotidian is an important site of inquiry. To illuminate how race and racism order our intimate lives the research broadly proposed to explore: what appears from the complex workings of race, including the painfully denied and beautifully celebrated, when we

purposefully seek to represent its presence through the visual? Where is racism challenged intimately in the everyday, and how do these moments reproduce or intervene in racist practices and patterns? However, as witnessed in *The Touch Project*, in my turn toward the intimate and the quotidian as sites to question the intimate workings of race, it became more challenging to isolate racial embodiments in a singular fashion. The racial entanglement of our identities and experiences forced the discussion and theoretical ponderings to broaden. So, while questioning how race works intimately was central to the proposed research's interventions, intimacy as a tool for learning and transformation around how we understand and untangle racism and, with it, race, became the principal offering of this project.

Building on the aforementioned trajectory of thinking, this research project attempts to create openings for the nuanced non-verbal aspects of learning in connection to the other to think about how, in research, we record intimacy and sensory experiences that may escape language. Situated in conversation with contemporary visual artists and discussions of identity, intimacy, resistance, and racial politics, and the merging ideas of erotic theory and feminist pedagogy, the project introduces a new theoretical term: *intimate pedagogy*. As already discussed in the introduction, intimate pedagogy looks to our everyday experiences of intimacy as rich spaces of knowledge and learning. Drawing on the ideas coming out of mainly the Caribbean, Canada, and the US, the project emerges from the conversing fields of Black and Caribbean feminisms, Black studies, queer of colour critique, and queer theory. These discourses of thought frame this project and allow me to bring the social and intimate into closer proximity to question how we create counter-knowledge together. Grouping these scholarships also permits a recognizing of the mundaneness of racism while describing how the erotic is always present in our everyday negotiations with others.

The following sections outline the fields of thought that form the theoretical framework for my research and highlight the work this project is in conversation with. I begin this chapter by looking at some of Holland's (2012) and Barnard's (2004) writing on queer race and erotic life. By doing so I position my project as a response to and a continuation of inquiry on race through the intimate lens of the erotic. I then move to the foundational ideas of Black feminist thought and Black studies that are predominant in Holland's and Barnard's works. I end on the emergence of attention to erotic theory, sensation, and intimacy in connection to emancipatory politics and decolonial thought in Caribbean and Black feminist scholarship to situate intimate pedagogy more clearly.

Queer Race and Erotic Life

The books by Barnard (2004) and Holland (2012) help delineate the theoretical trajectory of this project and the mapping of my own thinking. Though their works do not directly speak to one another, it is helpful to bring Barnard and Holland into dialogue to reveal different readings of the ubiquity of race and its shifting impact on our lives. These books have assisted me in unravelling a more complex set of questions with which to explore racism's banality and to look for curative moments inside our intimate formations. The different social positions of Holland, a Black woman, and Barnard, a white man, provide complementing queer lenses to think about race and the erotic. Focusing on key sections of the texts, I use commonalities in their work to begin grounding this research in a theoretical framing that prioritizes intimate encounters, sensation, and the erotic as areas of inquiry to gain a better understanding of race and our relational lives.

This pair of texts succeeds at complicating our understanding of the intimacies of race and the erotic through the insistence that race, sex, and desire are integral to the others' formations and maintenance. Barnard and Holland ground their books in queer studies and theories of race for

different purposes but share an awareness of the failings of queer theory and its historical turn away from feminism and its disavowal of race in the analysis of sex, sexuality, and desire. In their introductions, both authors define their understandings and uses of the term queer, making explicit that it has little to do with the sexual acts associated with the term; instead, the term queer is more so concerned about the positioning of bodies and desires in relation to hegemonic norms. By doing so the authors broaden the analytical scope of queer and dislodge it from a singular sexual meaning always read in binary opposition (e.g., gay/straight) and show us that race is always present in our discourses of desire. Queerness can and does include non-reproductive sex or sexual desires, and alternative family structures inside our heteronormative institutions that continually privilege the nuclear family unit. Yet, with a racial analysis attached, Barnard (2004) illustrates how Blackness is regularly marked by queerness and difference by our white supremacist society.

Holland (2012) dedicates a large portion of her book to advocating for a merging of queer studies and critical race theory to better explore what racist practice is doing inside our erotic lives. She invokes the phrase "queer place," stating that "to think about desire is to arrive at a queer place" (Holland, 2012, p. 9). Nevertheless, she sets out to revise queer theory's strict associations to desire only informed by sex, to include an understanding of the erotic that oversteps such boundaries to ask about racist practice in this queer place. To do so, Holland argues for the need of a theoretical fusing of queer theory with critical race to allow for the possible collective restoration of the "black.female.queer" of Black feminism. She envisions what it would be like for queer theory to take a needed turn in discourse to fully answer to race and its forever companion racism. However, fully aware of the continued erasure of the black.female.queer, Holland wonders if this turn is even possible considering the failings of queer histories and epistemologies in relation to the "race problem." Queer theory has spent too much energy avoiding the messy terrain of lived

experiences, a life in which the black.female.queer and Black feminism are based. Theory void of the lived experience has continually failed the black.female.queer, so to break a pattern of inquiry that binds the black.female.queer to purely historical production, Holland asks us to enter a discourse of erotics that includes our current intimate relationships to race. Meaningful to this project, her argument shows that the erasure of the lived experience in theorizing makes calls for tangible action just that much more difficult. This research takes up Black feminism's use of the lived experience as a primary source of both theoretical questioning and resistive action to learn from.

Barnard (2004) spends time exploring queer theory's history of avoiding race as well, but in a different move offers ways to dislodge the colluding attachment of gayness and whiteness. From this standpoint they situate their theoretical project as intervening in queer theory's failure to recognize race as always already inscribed: "sexuality is always racially marked, as every racial marking is always imbued with a specific sexuality (gender, class, and other classificatory inscriptions are equally determined and determining)" (Barnard, 2004, p. 2). To avoid restrictions of queer as white and in binary opposition to straight, Barnard (2004) offers the theory "queer race" to introduce the signification of race as much as sexuality. To better account for the realities of a society structured around race and racism at every level, Barnard (2004) writes:

> "Queer Race" means the ways in which particular racializations are and can be queer, the ways in which queerness is variously racialized and can be racialized differently, a queer race theory, and the enigmatic intersections of these possibilities where race itself becomes/is queer. (p. 18)

Barnard (2004) dedicates a chapter to the principles of Chicana cultural theorist and queer feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, whose work has been influential throughout feminist disciplines including Black feminism. They argue her work prefigured and enabled an anti-racist critique of

the dominant homogenous lesbian and gay community. Connecting it to the articulation of queer race, Barnard employs Anzaldúa's framework to displace a single meaning from one particular identification marker to open up the multiplicity of queerness to include race, while making the point that "queer" cannot be completely unmoored from LGBT identities and activisms (Barnard, 2004). Borrowing this expansion of thinking, this research makes space for the untidy aspects of our lives that do not match neat categories of identity along with the multiplicity that human experiences promise. Conversations around identity politics can fall into delineated boundaries of difference, but in intimate moments where these lines are crossed, alternative forms of coalition often appear. The invisible and visible ways we transgress these boundaries are ever changing, affecting how our bodies are read, molded, and consumed by others. Barnard's queer race allows for a fluidity in theorizing around how we create intimate knowledge, and Holland's use of Black feminist theories to read the erotic as a generative space and the subjectivity of black.female.queer as a meeting of the political and personal, signals our intimate life as a site to explore race in the quotidian.

Quotidian Intimacy and Racism

A main assertion presented by Holland and Barnard, and probably most important to this project, is that race is always present in the ways we negotiate our relationships with others and ourselves. Even when race privilege can blind some or permit avoidance for others, race is always influencing how we read and relate to one another in both overt and clandestine ways. Barnard takes on ways to contend with our desires to foster a type of dialogical political reconciliation, one where we may create, for ourselves and others, moments to learn from when our desires fail our political convictions. For Holland, it is the quotidian practice of racism and the power it wields in ordering our intimate lives, that makes our recognition of its presence important in articulating how our

everyday decisions are imbued with racist feelings. Both authors push their readers to see the self intimately in relation to the other in order to break patterns of erasure and refusal. In doing so they call for a shared responsibility to the other to dismantle the psyche of racism that so firmly holds nations that share a history of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and anti-Black racism.

While Holland and Barnard are based in the US, their analyses of intimate racial workings are useful in a transnational understanding of how anti-Black racism is exported and how whiteness—and with it, capitalism—shapes societies and cultures globally. Barnard, originally from South Africa, looks at what happens to whiteness in proximity to fetishized and stereotyped Blackness in their evaluation of neocolonial fantasies represented in gay South African pornography films produced for American consumption. These videos are part of a long history of erasure of Black South Africans, and they can be used by American audiences to project "their own racism onto a utopic bygone South Africa under classical apartheid" (Barnard, 2004, p. 25) making South Africa the "convenient demon" (p. 26). Barnard (2004) makes visible the ways sexual fantasies and gay aesthetics are used in the arenas of international cultural consumption to push racist and imperialist economies, and they show how queerness and race are integral to each other's formation. I see this also working from a Canadian location, a country that points fingers at the US or South Africa with accusations of enslavement and segregation in an effort to forget Canada's complicity in slavery or the system of apartheid that was developed with the purpose of both the erasure of Indigenous culture and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The dehumanizing remnants of this system are still present today, as is clearly laid out in the recent Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), which specifically names the confluence of gendered, sexual, and racial violence toward Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people as a contemporary social justice issue.

Returning to Holland and Barnard, both authors make clear arguments that shared imperial and colonial histories of racism have not been resolved, especially in the intimate realm where race and racism can be difficult to demarcate. Holland makes this most apparent in her parsing of emotional stirrings that racism creates within the body. Attention to these affects makes palpable the erotic life of racism and can stimulate a fuller inquiry of how we come to understand our relationship to the history that has brought us together. She reminds us that it is the very process of racialization that allows us to trust in difference and disconnect because racism emotionally shapes race. It is here the reader gets more acquainted with her term "blood strangers." Holland uses the phrase to illustrate the simultaneous importance and absurdity of race, and to show how race's dependency on racism creates divisions where solidarity could and should be formed. The material functions of racism rely on an idea of what Holland (2012) terms "false differences"; arguing this "lie of difference between us" (p. 88) moves responsibility and action off whiteness, keeping the construction of whiteness abstract and thus seen as something intangible. These abstract differences shape our daily interactions, but what Holland wants us to realize is that we belong to one another despite our denials. Holland reiterates that no matter the lies that racism tells, these are the very barriers that can be and are broken daily when our lives touch the real province of emotion and racial feeling. It is this idea I take up in my fourth chapter through the work of Annalee Davis: we enter a shared colonial history that defines all of us, thus making it imperative for decolonial action to bring bodies together in new ways.

Black Feminist Thought and Expanding Conversations

In my discussion of Holland and Barnard I have already begun to clarify the foundational framings of this research as one that is indebted to the theorizing offered by the far-reaching scholarship of

Black and Caribbean feminisms. Together, Holland's and Barnard's texts lay a foundation of an interpretive theoretical structure of the queer and erotic life of race to point readers to question the intimate maneuvers of race and the learning we may find there. I take up these theoretical tools in combination with Black and Caribbean feminisms' theories of the erotic to anchor this research and theorize dimensions of intimate life to advance the idea that intimacy is a site and tool of learning, transformation, and action. Barnard and Holland rely heavily on the work of women of colour, Caribbean, Chicana, and Black feminisms in their philosophical developments and critique of queer theory. Likewise, a project such as this that looks at the intimate blurring of identity markers in our lived experiences and the knowledge created there, requires Black and Caribbean feminist thought and its history of critical social theorizing and understanding of the erotic as its framework.

Developed by and for Black women primarily in the US, with substantial contributions from Caribbean thinkers and history through familial and community connections, the main tenets of Black feminism speak about Black women's epistemologies and intellectual production (Collins, 2000). Foundational thinkers of the movement include: the Combahee River Collective, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and Kimberlé Crenshaw. From the movement's early formation, these thinkers and writers challenged second-wave feminism's narrow definition of "woman" and its almost exclusive attention to white, middle class women's dissatisfactions and desires for equal access to the social and political life afforded to white men. Black feminist thought is built on a "dialectic of oppression and activism" (Collins, 2000, p. 3). It is a tradition that is fundamentally embedded in a political context that has challenged its very right to exist, giving it an advantage to offer a critical social theory that addresses the systemic structures of oppression and segregation of not only bodies, but thought (Collins, 2000). Their positioning,

or standpoint, allows Black women—as well as other people who have intersecting social locations away from the centered dominant norm—to generate specialized knowledge about structures that work to disadvantage some and privilege others.

The Combahee River Collective came together in 1974 and in 1977 wrote their manifesto, *A Black Feminist Statement*, as a reclaiming of the Black feminist intellectual tradition in direct protest to dominant feminist framings of womanhood that so clearly did not include women of colour, poor women, lesbian women, and so many others. They, like other Black women at the time, were loudly calling for a feminism aware of interconnections among systems of oppression that understood experiences as shaped not only through gender, but through race, sexuality, and socio-economic status as well (Collins, 2000). Out of these expressions of critique came the lens of intersectionality and standpoint theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Standpoint theory recognizes that those with differing positionalities within society, such as women of colour, will view the world differently and offer a more complete understanding of the ways white supremacy, racism and gendered violence impacts those whose lives have been most detrimentally affected by them. This is a fundamental building block of the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins 2000). Intersectionality was first used by critical race, law, and Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to express the ways systems of oppression and identity markers—such as race, class, sex, gender, age, ability, health, and more—intersect to create multiple sites of discrimination and/or privilege in our lives. As a framework, intersectionality allows us to see how social positioning and one's identity categories deeply impact what we have access to, and the ways we are and are not able to move within society, but also how one reads the world around them. Collins (2000), discussing Crenshaw and intersectionality's impact on Black feminism, writes,

"intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (p. 18).

At its core, Black feminist thought has revolutionary aims and supports the destruction of systems of oppression. bell hooks (2000) defines feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression and to eradicate politics of domination in our society that are structured by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. By implicating all humans in the fight, Black feminist intellectual production has been highly influential in countless disciplines, creating ripple effects across activist organizing efforts, artistic creation, cultural production, and political movements, such as Black Lives Matter and Idle No More. Black feminism's development of intersectional critical theory can be revered for pushing the second wave of feminism into its third and changing the course of feminist and queer theories. This has also meant critical engagement that has challenged and stretched the analytical potential of intersectional and standpoint theory to further interrogate how the body is always political. This is seen above with Holland and Barnard asking us to consider what it means when our desires do not neatly align with our political convictions, or what the categorical lines that demarcate identity do for us when they are so readily obscured in the intimate sphere.

Black feminism as a theoretical framework for this project is fundamental for its centering of lived experience and emotional embodied knowledge. Beyond the early emergence of the discipline, equally important to this project is scholarship that developed alongside and in conversation with Black feminist thought as a challenge to the western canon. The closely linked Black radical tradition and Black studies, like Black feminism, have a rich history of theorizing resistance and what it means to be Black in a society built upon the destruction of the Black body, but also what it means to be human and to exercise a full humanity (McKittrick, 2015; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter 1990, 2003;). When I use the broad statement, "what it means to be human," I am

calling first on the philosophies of Sylvia Wynter. Wynter's interdisciplinary multi-field philosophical project is often positioned within the Black radical tradition, Black or Caribbean studies, or Black feminism but takes from broad arenas of thought that merge hard science with social theorizing. Born and raised in the Caribbean, Wynter also studied and worked in the UK and the US where she still lives. Her work, like much knowledge coming out of the Caribbean drawn on in this research, has had impacts far beyond the archipelago, influencing many thinkers and creators globally. Wynter's dense ontological philosophizing has informed branches of Black studies that take up the anticolonial project, posthumanism, and biopolitics, as well as new directions of Black feminist thought (Austin, 2013; Holland, 2012; T. King, 2013; McKittrick, 2015; Sharma, 2015; Sheller, 2012; Walcott, 2015; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 2003).

Wynter's theoretical work pushes for an epistemic shift to unsettle colonial understandings of being human and ideas around who is most deserving of life. Her active propositions in her writing offer, but also act to produce, new structures of knowledge that rearticulate pathways of relationality and interhuman narratives (McKittrick, 2015). Wynter scholar Katherine McKittrick (2015) positions Wynter as an anticolonial figure whose "creative-intellectual project [is one] of reimagining what it means to be human and thus rearticulating who / what we are" (p. 2). Wynter invites a rethinking of entire knowledge structures and systems that have formed the standardization of western thought's definition of the European enlightened "Man" as human. She states that the overrepresentation of the western "Man" as white, heterosexual, and wealthy has come to stand for the basis of liberal humanism and the distinction of human/subhuman. She sees the maintenance of such "Man"-as-human having been executed globally through slavery and genocides, colonialism, and the growing global economic imperialism. These narratives have infiltrated our understanding of humanity—literally to the point of defining who is most deserving

of life—and have fueled dehumanizing practices on what she calls the "narratively condemned" (Wynter, 1992, 2003).

Wynter's work tears apart the colonial categorizations of the "race construct" to uncover the dehumanizing effects of western thought as a whole. Less interested in the intersectional method of analysis, Wynter rejects the idea of universal identities or experiences. Her work acts as a warning against the study of human activity through identity groupings as it works to maintain hierarchical terms of living and being human (McKittrick, 2015; Sharma, 2015). Wynter is instead committed to thinking of the human as a project in itself, beginning with the body, that recognizes the ways western science and world views have marked bodies and life differently. Here McKittrick (2015) reads the "question-problem-place of blackness" as a crucial site through which modernity and all of its unmet promises are made visible, but where new possibilities of being human through relational praxis can be created (p. 2).

> This is to say that human life is marked by a racial economy of knowledge that conceals—but does not necessarily expunge—relational possibilities and the New World views of those who construct a reality that is produced outside, or pushing against, the laws of captivity. It follows, according to Wynter, that we would do well to reanimate and thus more fully realize the co-relational poetics-aesthetics of our scientific selves. (McKittrick, 2015, p. 8)

Bringing back Sharma (2015) and her engagement with Wynter as discussed in the introduction chapter, I read Wynter and the words of McKittrick and Sharma in conversation, as a method of being and creating with others, injected with hope for a different future. McKittrick (2015) sees Wynter's project as one that speaks of the human as a verb, where being human is a praxis of living that invites us to expand our understanding of a co-humanity that remains incomplete (McKittrick, 2015; Sharma, 2015). Wynter's words speak "to the interrelatedness of

our contemporary situation and our embattled histories of conflicting and intimate relationalities" (McKittrick, 2015, p. 3). To this, Sharma (2015) writes of the possibilities of realigning our subjectivity and modifying our symbolic representations upon which we build relationships, as opportunities afforded to all of us. Instead of relying on the current narrow hierarchical value of human life, the choice of a "social reality of interconnectivity is ours, if we want it" (Sharma, 2015, p. 170).

Living in Proximity: Indigenous Influences

> Though touching a person may seem simple, it is anything but. Both physical and psychic, touch is an act that can embody multiple, conflicting agendas. It can be both a troubled and troublesome component in the relationship between intimates … or, alternatively, the touch mediates relations between friends and strangers. In fact, the touch can alter the very idea as well as the actuality of relationships, morphing friends into enemies and strangers into intimates. For touch can encompass empathy as well as violation, passivity as well as active aggression. It can be safely dangerous, or dangerously safe. It also carries a message about the immediate present, the possible future, and the problematic past. Finally, touch crosses boundaries, in fact and imagination. (Holland, 2012, p. 100)

Living in proximity, even within controlled unequal structures of enslavement or segregating systems of apartheid, bodies are/were touching, communicating, exchanging, and changing others. Intimate knowledge is created through such relational touching, even when those spaces of exchange are doused in dehumanizing violence (Holland, 2012). While it is important to discern that many traditions, rituals, languages, and knowledge throughout history were not shared as methods of resistance and preservation, if we solely focus on what was withheld, stolen, or destroyed, we risk missing the assemblages that led to counter-knowledge; shifts that resulted in bodies and ideas coming together differently, producing new intimacies, which are only coming into being now, or are yet to come. The past pains and pleasures of history are memories held in

the present that tell of a time to come; their hauntings audible in the stories shared over generations, or visible in the scars on the land. This project makes effort to perceive the ghostly matter left behind and carried into the present as a method to learn from life in proximity (Gordon, 2008).

Colonization changed everything and everyone in its path. The landscape, oceans, and bodies forever altered, and with them understandings of the world. The changes so vast, there is no original, no authenticity, no before colonization that can ever be returned (Benítez-Rojo, 1996; DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011; Hill, 2016; Otto, 2017; Sharma, 2015; Sheller, 2003). This has only been compounded exponentially as trade increases, labour patterns shift, and technology connects more people. Richard William Hill (2016) understands the difficulties of letting go of the ideas of authenticity around Indigenous knowing or theory, but also the impossibility of preserving such knowledge within our historical contexts. Hill (2016), like Sharma (2015) and Sheller (2003, 2012), discusses the global influences of movement, migration, and the human impact on life and how this is mirrored in our cultural and creative practices. He accepts that while there may be no true Indigenous body of knowledge to return to, in the reverse, we cannot deny that Indigenous beliefs and knowledge systems shaped dominant ideologies on both local and global scales. As Hill (2016) points out, Indigenous thinkers, authors, and creators have always been here; it is impossible to draw a line between or untangle the parts of knowledge that have merged to create new knowledge. There are always forms of attachment forged between people and places—physical and emotional—and these changes are never experienced linearly or in one direction. Intimacy and knowledge are created through this relationality, even in moments of refusal and struggle, something I discuss at length in Chapter 6.

Hill (2016) asks, "why do we sometimes talk about Indigenous cultures as something we can neatly bracket off from other cultural influences" (para. 16)? Answering his own question, Hill

(2016) argues that the attempt to neatly confine Indigenous knowledge is a colonial trap "that is sprung at the intersection of salvage anthropology and certain strains of Indigenous nationalism" (para. 16). It prays on the trauma and the continuing anxieties of those who have borne the brutality of colonization, and the grief of knowing that somehow there is a lack of traditional authenticity that comes with it (Hill, 2016). It is understandable that a reclaiming of ancestral knowledge that was severed, erased, and/or stolen be prioritized in a journey of reconciliation and decolonization. To this, Hill (2016) says that drawing on multiple forms of critical thought in our research and methodological approaches is in fact a way to claim agency in the development of scholarship and creativity that "can inhibit us from deploying ideas from our intellectual heritage into new contexts where they might live with more vitality" (para. 17).

In our postcolonial and settler colonial contexts, the ways we speak about the movement of bodies and ideas is commonly framed within a binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Sharma (2015) warns that this route of reading Indigeneity and movement produces a thought constraint on who is responsible, or to blame, for the destructive and dehumanizing consequences of economically motivated colonial expansion. She reminds her reader that movement and exchange are not new, nor are they always the problem. Instead the issues lie in the reasons behind the movement, and its historical causes produced by colonization and its continuing fallout. The mixture and movement of life has created connective links and flows between places beyond destructive or ruling intentions, resulting in multiple unintended consequences in the vast expansion and exchange of thought (Sharma, 2015; Sheller, 2003). When thinking about the linkages between Canada and the Caribbean as this research does, I return to Benítez-Rojo (1996) who writes that while the Americas are what they are today because of European movement across the Middle Passage, our roots and routes cannot be traced back completely. Human imagination,

nature, chaos, and creativity have mixed together in countless unmeasurable ways to make new relations that continue unfolding (Benítez-Rojo, 1996; Sharma, 2015; Walcott, 2015; Wynter, 2003, 2015). Likewise, Walcott (2015) sees the Caribbean as a region that refuses a unified articulation of sameness "where the constant negotiation of particularities—extending outward from colonial brutalities—produces an ethics of being 'yet to come'" (McKittrick, 2015, p. 6).

These scholars help us rethink how we view migration and the results of bodies coming together by removing an essentialist colonial understanding, one that can be tempting to adopt when critiquing the impact of imperialism, colonization, and enslaved and indentured labour that built our current capitalist systems. This research attempts to ponder what we can do with and for the other outside of the colonized/colonizer dichotomy while also acknowledging the dehumanizing economic motives and historical traumas that keep us apart. As Holland (2012) cautions, this is not a call to move beyond, as there still is unfinished work to be done collectively on the way symbolic differences, such as race, impact our lives materially. However, I also do not want to stop here at a space of division; instead I want to use this as a site of learning and intimate knowledge making about our future. This meeting place has and will act as a clearing of sorts; unfamiliar ground to stand on together to generate emerging, revolutionary, and collaborative strategies (brown, 2017). This boundless way of looking at how knowledge travels and shifts inspires new possibilities of creation and resistance. Thus, it is an invitation to take advantage of unintended consequences to imagine healthier ways of being together that redefine what it means to be human apart from neoliberal western perimeters of life (Wynter, 2015).

In Chapters 4 and 5 I explore the ideas of exchange between Canada and the Caribbean further by looking at the ways land and water hold stories of remembering and regeneration. By considering how nature has dealt with colonial devastation I incorporate an ecological reciprocity

between human and non-human life in a rethinking of relational existence and intimate learning. The research incorporates a mixture of theoretical, relational, and corporeal experiences to capture how unintended consequences of living in proximity have created counter-knowledges and alternative imaginaries. Answering to Sheller's (2012) insistence, it is imperative we incorporate the subtle, non-verbal ways spatial practices are shaped by embodied practices and inter-bodily relations in our study of political and erotic agency:

> Beneath the dominant discursive regimes, there are subaltern projects of counter-claim, counter-gaze, and counter-performance, including the performance of alternative moral orders, alternative masculinities, alternative sexualities, alternative spiritualities, alternative spatialities of everyday life, and alternative identifications beyond and beneath the nation, tunneling under its borders and escaping its governance. (Sheller, 2012, p. 247)

The intimate regions of our lives provide glimpses into what a pedagogical practice of the intimate could be as part of a process of a reimagining, rearticulating, and remaking in proximity. To help better inform the ideas of intimate learning within the theory of intimate pedagogy, I now turn to Audre Lorde and her writing around bodily knowing and theories of the erotic. I then highlight some of the ways Black feminism and its extending scholarship have used the erotic to think about relational life, aesthetic practices, and social-political change, all which engendered intimate pedagogy.

Audre Lorde and the Lorde-ian Framework of the Erotic

> *I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears.* Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices. (Lorde, 1984, p. 113, emphasis in original)

Crucial to my project and the understanding of theories of the erotic is Audre Lorde's defining work on the subject, the elaboration of which has been picked up by many thinkers, artists, and activists since her publishing of *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* in her book *Sister Outsider* (1984). This powerful and widely referenced collection of speeches and essays, at its core is a deeply passionate and critical call for the celebration of differences across humanity. Lorde, the self-defined Black, feminist, lesbian, mother, warrior, and poet, was born in New York to Caribbean parents and later lived and worked in St. Croix with her partner, Caribbean scholar and activist Dr. Gloria Joseph. Writing from her own life experiences, Lorde's theorizing has become central in Black and Caribbean feminist and queer scholarship. As a foundational text, *Sister Outsider* weaves together three major themes: (a) uses of the knowledge brought to us through our bodies and emotions; (b) intersectional feminist analysis accounting for race, sex(uality), gender, ability, and class simultaneously; and (c) the fight against divisive fears of difference, making the book an action call for social justice and societal transformation. Working with feminism, anticolonial, anti-racist, anti-homophobic groundings, Lorde writes that as part of the current capitalist competitive and consumptive society, we have been "programmed" to equate difference with fear. From this space of fear, difference is dealt with in three ways: "ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate" (Lorde, 1984, p. 115). She signals that by approaching difference as something to destroy, we are only furthering our "historical amnesia" and creating rifts across generations; instead, difference is vital for knowledge of past struggles to circulate in order to fight against dehumanizing oppressions. Until we can celebrate those real differences and use them as a unifying force against racist patriarchy, we will maintain the system that it is built upon.

Not shying away from difficult or even accusatory language, Lorde interrogates the systemic and institutional racism that infects life, particularly drawing on her experiences inside and outside of academia with white feminists and their theories. Drawing on her own frustrations and emotional responses to white supremacy and the colonial capitalist project, Lorde (1984) asserts that discussions of racism must always include the recognition of anger and uses of the erotic, because "anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 127). Such arguments reveal the book's manifesto: differences must be recognized and respected for solidarity and coalition building, and not avoided in the service of utopic delusions of unity or because of our fear and guilt.

Seeing the erotic as a powerful tool held by each of us, Lorde defines the erotic as the potential for transformative action deep within all of us that can break down difference and work against structural oppression. Our capitalist patriarchal society disavows this power, which Lorde reads as feminine, and in response we have learned to suppress such feelings and knowledge. This suppression is falsely sold to us as a strength, when in fact it is a male-centered construct of our anti-erotic society that further vilifies the female erotic. Lorde illustrates that the erotic is a life force of creative and empowered energy that holds a political knowledge within us: it can be received as dangerous, but it also forges profound connections to the self and others while possibly lessening the threat of difference. Lorde argues that we must risk answering to our erotic power, our non-rational body knowledge, and use it as the source of power and information that it is. In the next section, I continue the discussion of the erotic as it has been picked up and extended in more recent scholarship in dialogue with Lorde.

Black and Caribbean Feminisms' Theories of the Erotic

> Erotic agency here encompasses not just sexuality but all forms of self-determination of one's own bodily relation to time, space, movement, labor, knowledge, kinship, and divinity.… Erotic power returns us to the very forms of embodied freedom that those "emancipated" from slavery were struggling for, and that so often remain unfulfilled today, especially in the current conditions for millions.… Pulsing beneath our consciousness, moving our feet, welling up from below, erotic agency works our bodies towards an expansive engagement with life, implying a more holistic locus of citizenship that reaches far beyond the state and its strictures of erotic subjugation in exchange for recognition as a citizen. (Sheller, 2012, p. 279)

The erotic—the complex body knowledge and sensation that is informed by a multitude of factors such as experiences, expectations, desires, dreams, anxiety, expressions, transgressions, passion, and more—is always raced and gendered, just as race, desire, gender, and sex are always implicated by the erotic. I share this quote to ground this section in an understanding of the images, feelings, and desires erotic agency conjures up inside us, but also to help us envision what the erotic does and can do politically. Sheller (2012) here is theorizing erotic agency from inside the Caribbean, but also in a global conversation of nationhood, citizenship, and decolonization. Like her, other scholars have looked to the Caribbean for its long history of art and activism that utilizes the erotic politically through the body, space, and sound. In these traditions, music, dance, and sexual expressions are intimately connected to a claiming of public space and voice. Theorizing uses of the erotic in liberation movements, Claudia Jones, a key Caribbean theorist and activist of the Black Radical Tradition, writes extensively in favour of carnival as a needed form of celebration *and protest* in the Caribbean and its diaspora (Boyce Davies, 2007). Sheller (2012) similarly writes of "bass culture"—sound as protest—in connection to a history of "spatio-political affront against the ruling classes" and colonization (Mahabir, 2003, as cited in Sheller, 2012, p. 266). For example, dancehall reggae as part of this cultural history—influenced by a history of slavery, indentureship,

class struggles, colonial rule, and the effects of global trade and markets—uses the erotic as both an expression of bodily passion and political revolt (Alexander, 1994, 2007; Cooper, 1994, 2007; Kempadoo, 2004; Noble, 2008; Sheller, 2012; Stanislas, 2014). Now a global industry, dancehall was born out of a local movement of critical expression and sexual agency; it maneuvers, negotiates, and exchanges while illustrating that we cannot remove the erotic from broader socio-political structures that inform our bodies and creative output (Cooper, 1994, 2007; Sheller, 2012). Looking to the resistive tactics, interruptions, and exaggerations within dancehall music and culture provides us with an example of how expressions of the erotic can work to foster embodied agency publicly while producing pedagogy through moments of transgression.

Although Lorde understood the erotic as both intimate and political knowledge with profound connection to the sacred, her focus on the erotic as individualized "female" energy has been accused of being essentialist and limiting in its acceptance of sexual pleasures and practices (Gill, 2010, 2018; Holland, 2012; Sheller, 2012; Stalling, 2015). Using Lorde's theoretical grounding as a starting point to expand the erotic, Alexander (2007), Holland (2012), Sheller (2012), Gill (2010, 2018), and Stalling (2015) share a similar agreement that the erotic cannot be understood as purely self-empowerment or autonomy, even if it is useful in defining what it means to be human in relation and connection to others. The erotic and erotic agency are connected to personal empowerment and social transformation but always function within economic structures, nationhood, and cultural history (Alexander, 2007; Sheller 2012).

In her work on sexual politics, constructs of the nation, and meditations on the "Sacred," Alexander (2007) defines embodiment as where the erotic meets the political in what she calls a *bodily praxis*. She connects the erotic to the Sacred and states that this link is found across humanity in various forms and mysticisms. Alexander (2007) writes, the Sacred is "the terrain of

the everyday as part of the continuous existential fabric of being … to be found in the meeting ground of the erotic, the imaginative, and the creative" (p. 322). She further states that the Sacred, and inside it the erotic, are inconceivable without an aesthetic, as they are integral to one another and human expressions of beauty and emotion. The foundation of erotic autonomy is the body reclaimed as a site of pleasure and power. Such sexualized and erotic expressions take space and demand public attention to push for something that is both transgressive and disruptive, but possibly also redemptive (Alexander, 2007; Noble, 2000; Sheller, 2012). Bodily praxis is witnessed in everyday activities, as well as in performative release such as art and dance, and it is this type of embodiment that is a pathway to knowledge and resistance (Alexander, 2007). In this research, understanding creative production as knowledge making directly informs the choice to use visual methodologies and art practices as a form of knowledge.

Lyndon Gill (2010, 2018) fleshes out the theoretical term "erotic subjectivity" by using the sensual as a bridge between the political and the spiritual introduced by Lorde and Alexander. He states that erotic subjectivity functions as a theoretical triad of the political-sensual-spiritual that proposes a new conceptualization of the erotic. Gill (2010) writes of his new perspectival trinity as beginning with Lorde's ideas, but pushes its interpretative possibilities of research on sexuality and citizenship further:

> Stretching the erotic so that it might include the sensual alongside the political and the spiritual allows it to approach the deeper resonance—not altogether foreclosed by essentialist slippages—that Lorde brings into view. Both as way of *reading* and a way of *being* in the world, erotic subjectivity lays claim to a broadened notion of the erotic—encouraged by Lorde's imaginative proposition—in order to propose an interpretive perspective that is at once a mode of consciousness. (Gill, 2010, p. 305)

Taking up sections of Gill's reading of erotic subjectivity as a method of being and understanding, Sheller (2012) sees the connection to erotic agency as deeply intertwined with politics of liberation. She argues that sexual politics as "a politics of the body and of sexual citizenship must be central to any liberation movement and to any theory of freedom" (Sheller, 2012, p. 241). Sheller grounds sexual citizenship in the embodied corporeality of everyday practices that work to question power in forms of resistance to national and transnational governance and law. She views inter-bodily relations and aesthetic forms of expression as key in transgressive politics of sexuality that push up against boundaries of control to create what she calls transient zones of freedom. Broader structures of institutional and state power forever impact our sexual and erotic agency. Yet, Sheller sees these restrictive elements as producers of resistance, where room is regularly being made for emancipatory action and performance to reclaim the body as a site of politicized pleasure. It is here where the body is attached to sexual politics as an instrument of sacred praxis and erotic agency.

L. H. Stallings (2015) references both Alexander's reading of the Sacred and Lorde's erotic, and sees them as intertwined with her own philosophy of funk and the erotic. Stallings (2015) states that expressions of the erotic, funk, and the Sacred work to blur the lines between life and death, while giving breadth to otherly human or non-human beliefs of the supernatural and afterlife, thus shaping the quotidian. She reads Black funk as an intersectional epistemology of knowledge, embodiment, aesthetic, sensory experience, and labour, which owes tribute to the erotic as power theorized by Lorde:

> an introductory document that induces paralysis with the enormity of its expectations and goals and inspires awe with its discursive touch to symbolize the very thing that it speaks about: the erotic. It is a beautiful and delicious essay and

> tastes, for lack of a better parallel, like a lover well on the way to a climax. (Stallings, 2015, p. 9)

She continues, that to fully grasp the erotic as power one needs to also understand the role that funk has always played in its life. Stallings understands Lorde's writing as using the mood of funk, in rearticulating and re-envisioning eros away from western science and medicine, and the sexually pornographic, toward an embodied source of power. Stallings points out that at the time Lorde was writing her essay she was fighting cancer and undergoing powerful shifts in her relationship to and use of her body as knowledge and power.

Even with the knowledge and recognition of some of the circumstances shaping Lorde's life while writing *Uses of the Erotic*, it is still important to state departures in agreement. I have made it clear that a Lorde-ian framing of the erotic is elemental to a research project that attempts to participate with active thinkers and creators who have and continue to re-envision uses of the erotic. My engagement with Lorde's work is highly celebratory in nature, and I will be the first to admit, it is at times easy to get caught up in her infectious passion that pushes readers to be fearless in their capacities for both joy and political action. Nevertheless, her anti-pornography stance that equates the medium with "the abused, and the absurd" (Lorde, 1984, p. 59), as well as her female-centric and cisgender understanding of the erotic, should be challenged while we imagine new applications of the erotic.

This project borrows the assumptions that the erotic, along with the sensual and the sacred, are integral to embodied liberation, political agency, and decolonial resistance as is contended by the scholars discussed above. The erotic is both housed inside and alongside of multiple social and institutional factors (society, family, schools, governments), and to push against those very defining structures that often attempt to squash our imaginative, material and non-material forms of learning and resistance, is to exercise erotic subjectivity and agency; not from outside our communities, but

from within them. Lorde (1984) proclaims that "the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing" (p. 54). Each of the authors in this section call attention to sensation and feeling while treating the body's sensorium as a knowledge system that does not require privileging one sense over the others. They suggest the necessity of including the invisible and intangible information of the body and aesthetics in our research, pedagogical, and political projects. Our imagination and bodily praxis are necessary to think through the complexity of our sensory and embodied learning, and it is this theorizing of the erotic that led to my development of the term intimate pedagogy. I understand moments of intimacy making and learning as always informed by the erotic and the bodies that hold erotic power and knowing. Such bodies, both human and non-human, are always impacted by the social and political worlds we operate within. I expand below.

The Erotic, Sensation, and the Quotidian Intimacy of Intimate Pedagogy

An intrinsic part of an intimate pedagogy is empowering and naming the learning that occurs when we answer to the erotic in its multiplicity; its disruptive creativity, transgressive and resistive power, imaginative subjectivity, and ability to widen our access to sacred realms and stir up emancipatory bodily energy and agency. It is this embodied sensorial knowledge—which roots our political bodies in the present—that I understand as the erotic. Its non-linear affective energy that Lorde speaks of comes from within us but is influenced by an infinite number of social encounters. The erotic can be a confident passion, or a painful release felt in our bellies. It can be the energy of repulsion or the intensity of love and longing. It can be a wave of anxiety warning of something to come. However clouded it may feel with the multitude of other information we are processing, the bodily knowing is intuitively present in our quotidian actions. The erotic as a foundational component of intimate pedagogy is learning how to hear what the body—its intuitive

erotic energy—is attempting to convey in our daily interactions. This is where intimate pedagogy is always infused with the erotic and body politics.

The knowledge we create with others is always in conversation with the knowledge we hold within ourselves. The private and social, public and personal, or sacred and profane, are not separate trajectories of information; instead they are forever folding into one another as we make sense of the world around and inside of us, alongside others. To use the erotic as a theoretical framework to define and explore the possibilities of intimate learning is to confront the construction of the self in relation to others. It is to engage with difficult moments of miscommunication, and to challenge pedagogical projects that limit our relationship building. An intimate pedagogy asks us to reflect on how the erotic makes its presence known, within ourselves, as well as within others: human and non-human, of the earth and otherworldly. Learning through the intimate pushes us to turn toward our self and back toward the other in a continually reflective process of transformation that is never complete (Ahmed, 2004). The level at which we remain present or silent in our accountability to ourselves is a choice, often difficult, that is ours to make.

Respecting that our individual stories are made in relation to systemic narratives (Cavarero, 2000; Butler, 2005; Glissant, 2006; Holland, 2012), this project deepens a reflection and understanding of knowledge based in the body—both physical and emotional. Our lives come into contact with people daily in physical and metaphorical ways that create intimacy; our relational existence guarantees this. Intimacy is always present through a plurality of relationships such as family, lovers, friends, and colleagues whose lives touch reciprocally (Holland, 2012; Reynolds 2010). This intimate fusion with the other brings with it a multitude of outcomes that are intertwined with racism and white supremacy, which insert themselves into any and all areas of our lives; but because all learning has the potential for rupture and transgression—where patterns

of thought and behaviour can be shifted or shattered—everyday unspectacular moments of intimacy need to be considered when thinking about how and who we learn with.

Our existence is always relational (Glissant, 2006). This process of learning and listening is integral to how we understand not only ourselves, but our social environments and relational politics (Glissant, 2006). We are never static; to be human is to contemplate desire, conflict, and discomfort in the face of difficulty and pleasure. It is from such a premise I ask how can we aid ourselves in having the courage to turn toward the other to bear witness and see them as fully human? There undoubtedly are moments when bearing witness will leave us feeling further disconnected—as conflict also involves intimacy—but connections involve this risk. Inside this project, intimate pedagogy is used to support the risk taking and mitigate the barriers getting in the way of meaningful connections. This project uses intimate pedagogy to look at what can happen at such junctures when we create openings to know the other.

This research understands the intimate as connected to the desires, institutions, and ideologies that organize people's worlds (Berlant, 2000; Plummer, 2003). As a conceptual framing, intimate pedagogy attempts to make use of information gathered in our intimate spheres not only to push it into public discussion, but to embrace what Paul Reynolds (2010) sees as intimate citizenship: an ensemble of relations and connections that are themselves politicized subjects of discourse and self-reflectivity. He explains:

> Where the intimate is distinctive is in its bringing into these relationships the sensory, the emotional and the affective—those embodied and phenomenological qualities often "written out" of rationalist constructions of public life, or subjugated and ordered by public institutions.… It follows that the power of an idea of intimate citizenship is its redrawing of what it means to be a subject of, and within, a civic context. The intimate is "written into" public discourse and

> provides a critical agenda for flourishing both within the subject and the wider public milieu. (Reynolds, 2010, p. 35)

Ara Wilson (2012) sees the term intimacy as a concept that facilitates the recognition of social patterns and ideological norms maintained and extended through our relationships, including "the interior and the personal; sexual and romantic relations; 'local,' microlevel, or proximate relations; 'private life'; embodied life; or psychological dimensions" (p. 46). Reading the intimate through a queer feminist lens, Wilson (2012) insists that the intimate is not confined to the private sphere. Using the global and intimate as a critical pairing to examine power, Wilson (2012) suggests that a rubric of intimacy can address the profound impacts political economies of inclusion and exclusion have on our personal lives and human relationships. While norms that frame intimacy are bound to social and identity hierarchies such as race, gender, nation, and sexuality, Wilson (2012) sees the emergence of critical intimacy scholarship as a response to the dissatisfaction with the current, limiting, terms used to describe identity and relationality. The use of intimacy as an analytical tool aims to avoid replicating problems of social life and "offers another way to signify relations of power, a way that subsumes, or differs from, available critical concepts like gender or sexuality" (Wilson, 2012, p. 46). The turn to intimacy for its ability to capture broad and flexible modes of relatedness is seen as a strength of the term. Instead of closing off our examination of identity and power, or limiting our imaginings of possible relationality, the concept of intimacy clears room for different ways of coming together that break from the confines of capitalist domination. Wilson (2012) writes:

> [T]he term's very lack of fixity is part of its appeal. It allows scholars to produce descriptions of the world order that do not re-create but rather scrutinize concepts that have often unwittingly perpetuated inequality produced by governments and capital. By not building on the inherited associations of concepts associated with

> intimacy—concepts like family—the rubric facilitates a nondeterministic, nonreductive exploration of structures of feeling [Williams, 1977], public feelings [Cvetkovich & Pellegrini, 2003], and biopolitics in relations to globalizing contexts. (p. 32)

When we try to tightly contain or splice up our interwoven multiple threads that shape our identity and experiences, we can forget that our body is one of permanent relation. In an attempt to avoid a narrow vision of the intimate potential of all life, this research opens itself beyond the human to welcome information from both human and non-human life. This blurring of lines between this world and beyond, in many ways is more reflective to the structures of our lived experiences that bring together the sacred, imagined, digital, and social. This, however, does pose difficulties to the linear and ordered logic so prevalent and praised in academic research. To use intimate pedagogy conceptually, analytically, and methodologically is to collect non-linear knowledge that folds together snippets of memory, affect, and premonition from here and seemingly somewhere else. To ground this in the framework of the erotic is to welcome information from the multiplicity of experiential life—the untidy, the surprises, the uncomfortable, and the unknowable—which is not easily transferred to written form. This project's production of knowledge emerges from this struggle to find the words to articulate my sensorial responses, learning, and the reflective processes that took place over the research. I am attached to theories of the erotic because they speak to a quiver of life, the sacred, the essence of living, a knowing, through the body (Glissant 2006; Diawara, 2009). The erotic is a language I understand. Learning through the intimate is how I create knowledge. I look for connections and patterns as an opportunistic strategy to build relational knowledge and to share it.

From Intimate Theory to Intimate Methodology

To summarize, theories of and on Blackness have worked to generate discourses of race that position humanity as an object of knowledge (Weheliye, 2014). Black feminism comes from women of colour writing from their bodies and subjectivities, but the continued silencing of these voices often results in these foundational works being relegated to ethnography and denied the status of philosophy or theory (Weheliye, 2014). In direct opposition to this, I ground this research in Black and Caribbean feminist thought with Lorde's theoretical framework of the erotic as central to the development of intimate pedagogy. And while many of the theories I draw on come out of a North American perspective, this project is careful to not get stuck on one particular racialized subject of inquiry (i.e., Blackness or whiteness), or in a binary analysis of white and Black, gay and straight, or the public and private as distinct spheres. Instead I consider the ways that knowledge, action, dialogue, and behaviour move in our lives and across spaces in a multitude of ways and moments. I also recognize the long racial history of white supremacy and its reliance on dehumanizing tactics that Black bodies bore and bear the brunt of, which is still very much visible in our contemporary moment. Here the project looks at how differently racialized bodies touch and learn together through an intimate inquiry.

I have highlighted some of the turns and uses of erotic theorizing, with attention to how aesthetic, sensory, and embodied knowledge are taken up as integrative tactics of change. The theoretical framework shows how my project of intimate pedagogy has been informed by theories of the erotic and other aligned discourses. The purpose was to trace my thinking around intimacy and its role in how we learn and create knowledge as social bodies. My personal experiences with people, words, and theories have brought me to this current place in my work. The fields of thought discussed above help me question intimate moments as sites of promise for transformative learning

and action. Responding to the insistence to view our intimate lives as sites of inquiry, I move away from a solely theoretical discussion in the next chapter to look at how intimacy can work as a method of learning, and how I have used my own intimate learning and moments witnessed as a framework of analysis in my research.

As narrated in the first paragraphs of this chapter, the visuality of intimacy is an essential tool in this research as a way to bring forth sensory knowledge and "hear" through images and artistic practices. Inside the quotidian lies potential for a transformative future, as there is much learning to garner from our shared emotional spaces (Muñoz, 2009). The theoretical scaffolding outlined here greatly informed the choice to add qualitative components of interviews and autoethnography to provide everyday representations and conversations of intimacy in motion. Moving the theory out of a peripheral feeling or thought and into relief—an intimate proximity—the project continues the conversations of these texts through visual articulations to: (a) make visible how intimacy is used as a learning tool; (b) explore the intimate as a location of knowledge creation and resistance; and (c) move the theory into practice, where varied real-life examples of intimacy can elucidate the theory. The purpose of shifting the research's core outside of the academy through the incorporation of artists and visual practices, is to enrich the complexity of the theory and data analysis. Part of the difficulty with this project—which is also important to its design process and outcome—is discovering ways to convey palpable emotions and physical experiences that we struggle to find appropriate language to describe. Fusing text and visual forms to think through—along with the fleshiness and fluidity of the body as a site of research—is a method to answer to the project's challenges of articulating affective knowledge. The upcoming section turns its attention to the methodological commitments of the research. It connects the grounding theories discussed above to the methodology and chosen methods of visual analysis,

image elicitation interviews, and autoethnography, while detailing the research perimeters, approach, and analysis.

CHAPTER 3
Intimate Pedagogy as Methodology and Sensory Research Method

Conversation as Research, Research as Conversation | Art as Research, Research as Art

> I remember that […] teachers do not always come in human form. I make friends with all manner of life. For the sake of my work and my health I imitate the boldness of blooming trees. The force of the rushing rivers. The sweet sounds of nature's new season. (Nicholas, 2017, para. 3)

While ironing out the details of my research proposal and with the hopes of making connections with potential artists to interview, I seized the opportunity to deepen my theoretical knowledge of the growing discourses circulating embodiment and race in the US at the guidance of my committee member, Ian Barnard. In early 2017, I rented a room in a large house overlooking Echo Park, Los Angeles. During my two-month stay I navigated the sprawling city and discovered the West Hollywood outdoor pool and library right next door, where I spent many days swimming and staring out the library's floor-to-ceiling windows. It was here, while struggling through an intense block in my writing, that my work began to turn away from the US-centric ways of looking at race and turned toward sensation and intimate learning with the other. Surrounded by the unfamiliar (to me) desert landscape that was experiencing a superbloom after years of drought, this was also where my notion of other grew to include the non-human in more critical ways. Reading Nicholas' (2017) words during a time when I was paying closer attention to the environment, land politics, and urban design allowed me to turn to the non-human as a holder of information to learn from. The photos below (Figure 6)—all taken in LA and shared on my Instagram account with the accompanying hashtag #librarylife—show the environments where my body was present as I navigated the difficulties in my design process and act as an important visual marker of a transformative period for the research and the change in direction. They point to my embodied experiences and how the persistent guilt about my lack of productivity did not prevent

me from seeing the beauty in my frustration; instead I turned to the greenery for the slower pace that allowed a deeper reflection to emerge. I felt wonderfully privileged to be in an urban space flooded with plant life that provided inspiration for growth and repair, something the cold winter of Montreal that I am far too familiar with would have not afforded.

Figure 6

#LibraryLife Collage of Photos

Note: All photos were posted on Instagram by Skye Maule-O'Brien [@skyemo] between February 1 and March 26, 2017.

I have not returned to the US since. This has not been completely intentional. While in LA and afterwards during my data collection, I attempted to make connections with US artists and scholars. After a year of reaching out online and in person, I still had no tangible reciprocal interest from anyone I made contact with. This coincided with a shift in my own concerns about the dominant voice of US-centric scholarship on ways of understanding and responding to issues of race and the larger social justice. Diverting from my original proposal, I decided to move the research forward without the input of a US artist. This of course does not mean the US is not an integral part of the conversation, as is already clear; much of the theoretical and analytical framework includes a heavy dose of US scholarship. However, it does seem important to point out that on my first trip to the Caribbean, in the seven weeks allotted for my stay I was busy beyond what my time allowed, and the generosity received in knowledge sharing was unexpected.

The above narrative, photographs, and autoethnographic reflection, like the others woven through the dissertation, attempt to demystify research as a practice while providing both clarity and transparency around the decisions taken. This chapter maps the methodological choices and the processes of the research while also keeping the body of the research present to remind readers that all projects possess their own challenges, conflicts, pleasures, and deeper meaning-making connections. I hope that showing (some of the) moments where the project got stuck, and the ways it got unstuck, gives the work life. Social and political events, changes happening in the world and to the people involved in the research (participants and researcher), impacted the pace and path of the project, and it is important to read this work as embedded in relational life. The knowledge was created through living, speaking, imagining, laughing, and a bit of crying. This is intimacy making as a method of research: intimacy making with theory; intimacy making with my own creativity, criticality, and reflective processes; intimacy making with the ideas and knowledge shared and

formed in relation to the artist participants; intimacy making with the resistance and difficulties; and intimacy making as analysis and knowledge production.

To engage intimately with the other, or to practice intimate learning, inherently incorporates risk, discomfort, and uncertainty, and this was apparent in all stages of the research: design, implementation, and analysis. To assist with assessing and supporting such intimate risks, while also reaching the aspired depth of the research objectives, I turned to artistic and activist expressions that were already supporting the strategic use of intimacy as transformative learning. As Sheller (2012) suggests, the body is inseparable from the public and private realms it moves within and to study how our knowledge is mobilized politically is to look at multiple arenas. We must pay attention to the "intimate inter-bodily relations that are the fundamental basis for human dignity and freedom," including the aesthetic forms and collective processes (Sheller, 2012, p. 243). As a method to explore research grounded in intimate learning, I interviewed three visual artists: Michèle Pearson Clarke (Toronto), Nadia Huggins (St. Vincent), and Annalee Davis (Barbados). Each of the artists chosen incorporates lived sensory experiences through highly developed conceptual methods that are understood to be rich, critical research practices in themselves. They all implement reflective strategies to address issues of relationality and to question our politicized relationships, such as our connections to the land (Davis), water (Huggins), and the human (Clarke). Centering the artists as knowledge producers—their process of creation as a site of knowledge production and dissemination to be learned from—offers unique opportunities to think through intimacy with the use of aesthetics to speak about the unspeakable.

The qualitative research itself was a creative act that grew into a practice of intimate pedagogy as I worked to define the theoretical parameters and methodological possibilities. The research became a form of creative output that offered new knowledge as a thesis is meant to do,

but it also developed a creative practice—a praxis of theory and method, one informing the other in a reflective back and forth. The goal was not to resolve questions circulating the intricacies of race and intimacy, but to produce moments of rupture and unfamiliarity in the repetitious ways we often see such discussions academically framed. The inclusion of artists' voices and the examples extrapolated from their creative practices helped produce richer and more complex understandings, with varied viewpoints on questions of intimacy and how it can be used in addressing challenging subjects and difficult knowledge. The use of layered accounts enabled a dialogical data collection approach and analysis that brought together the interviews, artwork, field notes and accompanying photographs, and autoethnographic reflexivity in the writing.

In the project's methodological approach and design, I incorporated an anti-racist feminist lens with the input of data collection from multiple points of contact. Below I outline anti-racist feminism as a research methodology, the commitment to autoethnography, and the benefits of visual research methodologies. I then introduce the artists who participated and discuss what occurred during the field research, interviews, and data collection. I end the chapter with a thinking through intimacy and intimate pedagogy as a method of analysis and knowledge creation. Intimate pedagogy provides a lens to read the following chapters, which delve into intimacy making and learning through the artistic practices of the artists, as well as the relationships I developed with the artists and their work over the course of the research. This chapter continues the articulation of the potential of intimacy and an intimate pedagogy as a theory and practice, and what it holds as part of the larger anti-racist and anticolonial/decolonial feminist pedagogical project.

Anti-racist Feminist Methodology

The design and analytical plans of this research were created with an anti-racist feminist lens. This means a strong focus on understanding and highlighting persistent inequities in our communities

and relationships that are maintained through racism, misogyny, and other systemic oppressions. Anti-racist feminism, to which Canadian scholarship has made invaluable contributions, provides pertinent ways to expose the dynamics of racism and power through an action-oriented strategy (Dei, 2005). Sharing theoretical concerns and conceptual underpinnings with the American framework, Critical Race Theory (CRT), as well as the Black Radical Tradition and Black feminism, anti-racist feminism draws on critical theory to expose the historical, cultural, and social structures of power and domination that work to define and maintain racism as a normal part of life (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Similar to how US scholars have used CRT's concerns of historical and legal implications of slavery in conjunction with Black feminist theory, anti-racist feminist thinkers have developed a rigorous and still flourishing field of study and research framework that is applied throughout social studies and humanities.

Viewing racism as endemic, anti-racist feminism directly confronts systemic racism, recognizing that knowledge building is "riddled with power dynamics at every level" (Dlamini, 2002, p. 54). Paying particular attention to the ways we represent, speak and think about race in daily interactions, this project utilizes relational experiences to include communities in the production of knowledge (Dei, 1993, 1996, 2005; Dua, 1999; Nash, 2008). As George J. Sefa Dei (2005) outlines, anti-racist research must problematize colonial practices as there is a deep connection between racial identity and knowledge production. This also includes the conceptual level where it is crucial to question notions of power to understand social politics and how they help to construct and constrain our identities (Dei, 2005). Self-knowing and transformation will always invoke community (Alexander, 2005); therefore, race must be analyzed within the fluid, interwoven forces that impact how identity is constructed (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks 1994; Lorde, 1984).

Using anti-racist feminism, as with any analytical lens, means that the research is guided and framed by its grounding principles. Yet, the theory informing anti-racist feminism is not static, and the way we may use it to think critically about race and racism is continually being questioned and expanded. In this project, anti-racist feminism is put into conversation with artists who are engaging with post/decolonial theory and activism, as well as the discourses that have built the theoretical framework. In the previous chapter I discuss Holland's (2012) argument that racism's forever partner is race. Racist structures and actions rely on the construction of race; a visual but non-biological identity marker that stands no ground scientifically, but which impacts our lives in very real material and psychological ways. A highly nuanced, embodied, and forever-shifting knowing that makes racism real, it cannot function without our collective understanding of race that is defined through systemic white supremacy. The definition of anti-racism is to be opposed to racism and to strive for the eradication of its detrimental effects in society. With the logic that race and racism are forever partners, to be anti-racist also invokes the meaning of anti-race. I want to flag that to use a methodology that defines itself as anti-racist brings with it a need to question the underlying meaning or assumption that to fully be anti-racist could necessitate the call for anti-race. I believe this call would provoke different responses, as race and our attachment to it, or should I say its attachment to us and all that it brings—the privilege, joy, torment and pain, creativity and resistance—is deeply tied to our self-knowing and community building. In the research implementation and data analysis, space is given to complicate such ideas and the utopic fantasies and failures of an anti-race/ism goal.

This research is also careful not to stop at the moment of declaration that is often witnessed in work that confronts issues of race, particularly those undertaken by white activists and/or scholars. Sara Ahmed (2004) discusses how a shift in anti-racist practices toward a politic of

declaration may circumvent accountability in race work. She writes that "putting whiteness into speech, as an object to be spoken about, however critically, is not an anti-racist action … declaring one's whiteness, even as part of a project of social critique, can reproduce white privilege in ways that are 'unforeseen'" (Ahmed, 2004, para. 12). By seeking out multi-voiced counter-narratives this project produces sensorial knowledge through the visual, the affective, the theoretical, and dialogue. This research is not about naming whiteness or racial categories. Instead, it is about the ways race moves and shapes identities within structures of power that influence our relational lives. An anti-racist feminist decolonial practice requires sitting with the other's complex experiences—to hear them and feel them resonate within yourself—instead of making tokenizing gestures to relinquish power or thwart responsibility. It is a recognition of the ordered world in the most personal ways. This requires a need to be silent, the risk of being silenced, and an obligation to break silences. To listen and hear from others (as our narrative relies on them) is to quiet the ego, but with it brings emotional and material risks not everyone is willing to take, nor has the ability or resources to undertake. Such pondering opens further questions around how we may better equip and support people to do the difficult work this requires, as the humanity of others requires it.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is an approach that was developed in the fields of anthropology and sociology born out of the call to make visible not only the research and data collection processes but the positionality of researchers themselves. Autoethnographical objectives treat the learning and experiences of the author as key elements of the data in the research. It combines autobiography, accounts of individual experience and of a culture's relational practices, ethnography, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences to involve the researcher's subjectivity in a vulnerable,

self-reflective form of writing (Ellis et al., 2011). Now used across various academic disciplines, autoethnography as a method seeks to describe and systematically analyze experience in order to understand cultural entanglements while challenging canonical ways of doing research and representing others (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography moves away from falsely positioning the researcher as an unbiased observer above or apart from the culture in which they are embedded. Autoethnographic researchers make the political choice to continually reflect on their biases and decisions to make their standpoint transparent in the process, and because of this the approach is viewed as both a process and product (Ellis et al., 2011).

There are two common streams of autoethnographic practice: analytic autoethnography and evocative autoethnography. This project incorporates elements from both drawing on the researcher's narrative and emotional responses highlighted in the evocative style, and some of the more structured tenets of the analytical. Leon Anderson (2006) lays out key aspects of analytic autoethnography as: (a) membership in the community, group, or setting that is the site of research; (b) analytic reflexivity and dialogue with informants beyond the self; (c) narrative visibility of the researcher; and (d) commitment "to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (p. 375). Anderson (2006) argues that analytic autoethnographic research differentiates itself by moving away from the more fluid or abstract storytelling of the evocative approach by following the above components. However, as Ellis and her co-authors (2011)—who ascribe to the evocative camp—state, the objectives of autoethnography are to disrupt the binary of science and art through research that is "rigorous, theoretical, and analytical *and* emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena" that values "the need to write and represent research in evocative, aesthetic ways" (Ellis et al., 2011, para. 39).

Considering both autoethnographic streams, this project prioritizes the demand for the continual critical analysis of the self in relation to the other and social phenomena while in conversation with a comprehensive visual inquiry and healthy theoretical engagement. As an active research method, autoethnography can blur the boundaries between the author and participants, making the researcher a key participant in the process. To maintain this transparency involves continued analytic reflexivity where the self is in dialogue with the self, participants, and larger research objectives and outcomes. A thorough reflexive practice is attentive to reciprocal influence and entails self-introspection guided by a desire to better understand one's actions and perceptions in reference to those of others, inside a particular social context (Anderson, 2006). To this, there also needs to be awareness of instances where keeping the researcher's process central may risk a fall toward navel-gazing, thus hindering the benefits to a fuller inquiry. However, for a project that is intending to garner answers from the knowledge created by embodied experiences and sensations, while exploring how intimate (micro) moments inform how we understand and act in our social worlds (macro), having a dialogical and reflexive perspective to the design, implementation, and analysis, makes autoethnography a compelling approach.

To move beyond mere self-reflection and balance alternative voices, the research addresses intimate learning and identity politics on a path of uncertainty through transparency and accountability using an anti-racist feminist lens (Dei, 2005; Sholock, 2012). Adale Sholock (2012) signals for such accountability when she lays out a methodology of the privileged to account for what she calls "epistemic blank spots" from which white feminists suffer when it comes to recognizing their systemic ignorance of race and racism (Bailey, 2007, as cited in Sholock, 2012, p. 703). Instead of attempting to eradicate this ignorance she states that white race scholars must grapple with "how to deal effectively with the epistemic uncertainty, self-doubt, and cognitive

anxiety" that is brought about through knowing that you do not know something (Sholock, 2012, p. 705). Using epistemic uncertainty as a point of action made visible through autoethnography is foregrounded in the self-reflexivity of this work. In research that attempts to build political coalitions across difference and uses difference as its power (Lorde, 1984), this means that uncertainty and discomfort are important indications of effectiveness rather than of failure (Sholock, 2012). These points are specifically addressed in Chapter 6 through the reflection of my researcher experience during the interview with Clarke and the subsequent transcription and analysis.

Autoethnography as a method helps narrate how the conversations, ideas, and theories are all connected across both time and space throughout the research. Layered accounts are often used in autoethnographic research to incorporate the "author's experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature," and as a research method it celebrates the interdisciplinarity of data through the use of "vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection" (Ellis et al., 2011, para. 20). By taking on a lived experience of writing, in many ways, the use of autoethnography acts as a form of portraiture of the researcher. I, as a white cisgender woman, feel it necessary to incorporate a number of voices to broaden the inquiry and evidence on the subjects. Sharing data based in a dialogical approach makes room for critical questions, reflection, and response. Situating the research within communities I already navigate allowed me to act in collaboration as a learner to contribute to the construction of knowledge through lived experiences, answering analytical autoethnography's requirement of member researcher status. Having multiple voices also makes room for dissent and disagreement, moving away from a singular point of view or homogenous opinion. The autoethnographic component to the project works in unison with

photographs taken during the project, the interview data, and theory to prevent assumptions about how intimacy is experienced in multiple ways.

Visual Methods

> I do not think that exploring how images are "seen" necessarily or exclusively means investigating how they are "interpreted" or "understood" … images are encountered through a number of registers that far exceed the discursive: the bodily, the sensory, the psychic and the emotional. Clearly, these are shorthand terms, but I deploy them to indicate that in this paper, I am trying to use "seen" rather more literally, and corporeally. I am interested in how particular spectators, as embodied subjects, experience their viewing through a range of sensory and affective registers. (Rose, 2004, p. 551)

Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory process combining photography and corresponding text. Developed by Carolyn Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997), it came out of the tradition of community action-based research inspired by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and activism (Rose, 2012). Photovoice commonly has been used to engage members of communities in ongoing and cumulative projects often with the specific goals of social change (Rose, 2012). Wang and Burris (1997) identify photovoice as having three main components: (a) to allow people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns; (b) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge; and (c) to create structural and systemic transformation. Traditionally, photovoice has been used to "give voice" to particular communities as a method to address social concerns—such as women's health, as seen in the research conducted by Wang and Burris—in order to promote awareness and changes with policymakers. Since photovoice's early development the method has been used in a wide range of workshops and research studies taking various formations (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014; Luttrell, 2010; Riessman, 2008; Rose, 2012).

For this project, research possibilities of photovoice were borrowed and applied as an autoethnographic tool to make visible the research process and offer a more porous relationship between the researcher and researched. The purposes of using photovoice do not stray far from the original goals first laid out by Wang and Burris, but they do incorporate flexibility with the aim of bringing new relationship dynamics to the method. Photovoice can be used in autoethnographic ways to make connections between our relationships and systemic structures, and show us how our daily lives mirror the nuances of larger social issues. Image making is an important site to question creative and critical processes, as taking photos often produces more questions instead of answering the initial inquiries. This provides a critical departure to look at the social context in which the images become meaningful. The visual is not only material. Images can create fractures between the visible and our perceived reality, as reality cannot always necessarily be observed clearly (Pink, 2013). Images are part of our interior worlds of affective knowledge, imaginations, and fantasies.

The use of images to aid in the articulation of sensory learning is also tied to the framework of analysis. Over the course of the project I took photos and wrote reflections on the research process, answering the many questions the listening, reflecting, feeling, and thinking brought forward. My experiences and photographs as a researcher-participant were in constant conversation with the other data being collected simultaneously. This provided me the ability to build and reflect on a continuing dialogue at various junctures over the course of the project. Embodying a collaborative autoethnographic practice meant I was not a silent observer, and this is witnessed in the following chapters where I share my own perspectives beside the artists' voices and theoretical references. Presenting the analysis alongside the process brings the intimacy of the research to the forefront and strips back the façade of research as always being ordered and controlled. It makes visible the researcher and the moments of vulnerability and intimacy exchanged with the

participants, their art, and the knowledge created in relation. As a method, visually supported autoethnography was key to the experimental nature of the research and provided a way to test both the capabilities and limits of intimate pedagogy.

Image Elicitation Interviews

Photo elicitation is a short-term act of including photographs, either taken by the participant or borrowed from elsewhere, in research interviews (Rose, 2012). Using images in the interview can open up a different register that is more ineffable, giving different insights into social phenomena that cannot be accessed when using purely oral or written data (Rose, 2012). Sharing elements with interactive and in-depth interviewing methods often used in qualitative research, image elicitation can provide a stage for collaborative conversations between researchers and participants to build intimate understandings of the topic at hand together (Ellis et al., 2011). Irving Seidman (2013), writing on qualitative research, says that "stories are a way of knowing" (p. 7), and it is through interviews that we may gain access to narration of how complicated social structures impact the inner meanings of life. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is to understand how people make sense of their lived experiences; for most people this is heavily reliant on language (Seidman, 2013). This is where the inclusion of visual material provides the opportunity to pull out more nuanced meanings and push the boundaries of narrative and visual analysis (Riessman, 2008). As Rose (2012) states, photo elicitation also is useful in levelling the relationship between the researcher and interviewee by using a visual focal point. Creating greater trust in an interview setting better allows the discussion to probe emotionally charged territory in sensitive ways that welcome personal stories to be shared with more ease (Ellis et al., 2011).

Because image elicitation interviewing as a method is used in a range of social science disciplines, how the photos are produced is dependent on the research project (Rose, 2012). For

this project I chose to ground the interview discussion in photo documentation of specific art projects or pieces created by the artist that I intended to write about in the analysis. Besides the multimodal uses and various entry points brought about through the use of visual materials in interviews, using the images as a springboard meant that the interviews often took surprising departures far beyond what was being depicted in the art projects we looked at together. I expand on this below when I detail the participant selection, interview experiences, and transcription process.

The Visual as Sensation and Sensory Knowledge

Remembering that narratives do not always take on purely verbal or written forms, this research combined the creation and sharing of visual narratives, including art interpretation, autoethnographic photovoice, and image elicitation interviews. Photovoice and photo elicitation—with their rich histories of feminist, queer and arts-based ethnographies that confront and intervene in difficult social subjects—proved to be strong critical methods to draw inspiration from for the representation of sensory and embodied knowledge (Brushwood Rose, 2009; Hussey, 2006; Rose, 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997). Employing visual methods of data collection enabled non-verbal features of the social and emotional that are often difficult to articulate in words alone (Pink, 2009, 2013). Visual and sensory ethnography scholar Sarah Pink (2009, 2013) suggests we are not only "collecting data" when producing visual research, we are creating knowledge through participatory visual ethnography. Visual representations in research may offer richer understandings of complex realities and social structures (Pink, 2013). To turn to the visual is to explore the non-representational and non-verbal aspects of the social (Pink, 2009, 2013). Gillian Rose (2012) concurs: "the visual is central to cultural construction of social life" (p. 2) and images are never innocent or transparent; instead, they offer particular interpretations of the world. Wendy

Luttrell (2010) reflects that image making is useful "for thinking about how we read our social worlds, construct our selves in relation to others, and express matters of the heart" as images work as a "means to both rouse and reframe conversations" (p. 225).

Images can take a quiet form. To see and hear an image takes time. Visual tactics as a method can help make visible the invisible and bring forth communication that lies in the silences. Visual imagery may capture the unsettled nature of an issue while also providing a slow release of meaning and aiding in the transformation of feelings into thinking, questioning, and knowledge. In a type of emotional bleed, the information of the sensual takes form as it comes up from within the body; passion and pain fueled from the erotic core become part of our tactile flesh. Visually rendering such knowledge processing opens up possibilities of engagement with our types of embodied understanding. "To render, to give, to present, to perform, to become—offers for action, the opportunity for living inquiry. Research that breathes. Research that listens" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 899). By uncovering how knowledge is brought forth relationally, the project not only accounts for observable and recordable realities but also "the immaterial, the invisible and the sensory nature of human experience and knowledge" (Pink, 2013, p. 35). Pink stresses that the field of visual culture encompasses the relation between all the senses and describes the visual as entailing "meditations on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked; also on deafness and the visible language of gesture; it also compels attention to the tactile" (Mitchell, 2002, as cited in Pink, 2013, p. 30).

The motivation of this qualitative research was to make space to articulate and learn from the emotional and intuitive (the erotic) aspects of our sensory bodies and to question how we answer to and use our embodied knowledge. It offers visually framed experiences and analysis for reflection on "the embodied, sensory and affective experiences, and the negotiations and

intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced" (Pink, 2013, p. 35). Understanding the strength of visual material in combination with written and verbal accounts, this project made a distinct choice to look at artistic practices in conjunction with autoethnography as the site of inquiry. I made a conscious turn to the visual, creative, and imaginative elements to question the ways intimacy is used to address social issues and how we are already intimately learning. Partnering autoethnographic text and images with a reading of the artists' projects and their voices was to support an analysis through sensory ways of knowing and learning. By keeping the data elements in continuous interaction meant at times navigating complicated "processes of creation and self-representation" where complex and contradictory meanings and experiences were revealed (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 30). But, doing so allowed for the unspoken aspects to enter into the understanding of how we learn with the other. I have already argued that this requires us to look to the quotidian aspects of life as pedagogical sites, the spectacular moments and potential tiny social revolutions in even the most seemingly banal exchanges.

The visual is a site of rich information, imaginings, and theory, as it frames interpretations of the world. Theory is always already embedded in the image, and the image is always interpretive, as renderings provide theoretical spaces to explore creative ways of knowing (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014; Riessman, 2008; Springgay et al., 2005). Visual practices can act as an intervention on their own, offering a site of resistance and rupture (Rose, 2012). The images function "as routes to knowledge and tools through which we can encounter and imagine other people's worlds" (Pink, 2013, p. 39). Using the visual along with emotional experiences contributed another entry point into the intimate sphere to search for narrative markers of how we learn in ways that are less easy to observe. As mentioned previously, the ways racial practice shapes our identity and spreads throughout our lives can be difficult to elucidate. This is the same for naming the ways our learning

is fused with the intimate and is always relational. In bringing together artwork, photographs, interviews, and text in the data collection and analysis, the research was able to be attentive to the ways our bodies hold and use sensorial knowledge in critical and resistive means.

Data Collection

All the methods in this study were chosen for their ability to center the creative and imaginative, or the cultivation of the visual and sensory as the site of research. All share promise in attempting to answer difficult questions about our bodily knowledge that may escape traditional research methods. Choosing these methods helped the research assess the broader implications of intimacy in nuanced ways through artistic practices. Instead of asking people to divulge details of their personal lives, the methods opened a site of entry through the artists' rendering to analyze both the personal and political implications being addressed in their practices. The three artists I spoke with for this research all incorporate visual representations of the self in their work. The use of their bodies or representations of embodiment are framed as an affirmation of the self and work to implicate their own bodies in the questions and propositions their work is making. These artists where specifically approached because their work spoke to the research questions and touched me on an aesthetic level, instilling a desire to know more about the work and the artists as producers. In speaking with the artists, I grew a deeper understanding of their work and conceptual commitments, while also signalling a fuller reflection on my own embodiment and relationality. This created a more critical intimate knowing that could later be reflected and written on.

This project situated itself alongside and inside ongoing conversations of anticolonial/decolonial practices and feminist anti-racist theory in the arts and in research. The work reached across disciplines of art, public intellectualism, academia, and pedagogy to make unusual and unique connections of thought around intimate learning in the everyday as a tool in

social practice. In this section, I outline the field research and data collection period, and how speaking with people and meeting the artists shifted the boundaries of the early theoretical work to bring the project to where it ended up. As was discussed in the introduction chapter, the field research and interviews produced a more complicated reading of race and a deeper focus on intimacy as a pedagogical tool. In the following paragraphs I give a detailing of how the data was collected and organized. I begin with the process of choosing the artists through purposive sampling, briefly introduce each artist participant, and then detail the field research and image elicitation interviews. I end with an explanation about my method of transcription before I move to the framework of analysis.

Choosing the Artists: Purposive Sampling

The project began with the goal of securing the participation of three practicing visual artists whose work *already* explicitly engages with questions of the body, race, sexuality, and what I read as intimate methods of creation and dissemination. The initial plan was to have an artist from the three geographical regions this project is in conversation with: Canada, the US, and the Caribbean. The purpose of looking at artists located in different countries and political environments was not to compare perspectives, but to bring these spaces of thought, experiences, and creation into dialogue to enrich the contemplative potential of the research. However, as was mentioned above and will be explained further below, I did not interview a US artist or artist based in the US. In the beginning this was circumstantial due to the lack of response from artists approached, but as the project matured it became a purposeful decision to stop pursing US voices.

A key feature of this qualitative research is that the artists were not approached at random. Instead, employing purposive sampling (Palys, 2008), I extended invitations to specific active cultural producers whose work shares affinities with the theoretical landscape of the project.

Purposive sampling, as defined by Ted Palys (2008), signifies that the researcher "sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research" as a means to working with people who provide the "largest potential for advancing your understanding" (p. 697–698). Purposive sampling tightly ties the participant(s) and theoretical objective together (Palys, 2008), and in this case assures a number of benefits. Firstly, to be able to tackle such emotionally charged work requires a willingness to engage with ideas and feelings that at times may feel unsafe. I purposefully sought individuals who had already made it apparent that they were willing to explore challenging ideas not everyone may be ready or comfortable with.

Secondly, the intentional curation of purposive sampling allows for a particular depth in the data collection. Having experience in the face of difficult knowledge brings with it an honesty and wisdom needed in such research. Dialogue around race/racism and colonial histories, as numerous scholars have noted, can bring about discomfort, resistance, guilt, and defensiveness, particularly in white people who have been afforded the privilege of denial or colour blindness (Aveling, 2006; Boler, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1992; Sue, 2010). For people of colour this could mean being forced to revisit trauma, the terror of whiteness, and anger (Combahee River Collective, 2002; hooks, 1992; Lorde, 1984). These feelings are important steps and tools in the transformative learning and justice process that can move us toward deliberate social action and change. However, in my own experience with transformative social justice–based learning (both teaching and personal work) I am aware that this takes time and each person will work at a different pace of change. The design of this research took this into account by employing participation from people who are familiar with the stifling patterns of "race talk" that are often constrained by the narrow readings of identity politics that I discuss in Chapter 2. A deliberate

maneuver to access a more intimate sharing of knowledge and a deeper level of analysis was required to challenge understandings of relationality, identity, and political resistance.

Finally, to practice accountability as a researcher, I was sensitive to the fact that the collaboration I was asking of the artists could have been demanding on a personal level. The questions asked could have been triggering topics and were of an intimate nature, hence the utmost care and respect needed to be applied. The work required participants to occupy a particular fearlessness, or at least willingness, to confront vulnerability, and an ability to sit with what may have been difficult feelings. There were certainly moments of resistance both from the participants and myself, but this is an important aspect of emotionally challenging work. In Chapter 6 I write at length about learning with and through resistance by allowing space for vulnerability to enter alongside pain and discomfort in productive, and possibly even healing, ways. Before entering into collaboration with the artists, I attempted to take into account that not all forms of deep reflection can be responsibly asked of someone who does not have previous experience with such weighty work, or the tools to gain from the affective knowledge. Participants were informed of this risk before entering the agreement to be interviewed through ethical regulations of consent and negotiation, which allowed them to end their relationship to the project at any time. Purposive sampling allowed me to responsibly ask others to examine the vulnerable spaces of tension where theory and reality intimately meet.

Artist Participants

The data collection phase began by developing a list of people who identified as cultural producers or artists and who were *already* committed to exploring the subjects of race and intimacy. I had organized the artists according to the locations they were based in at the time (US, Canada, and the Caribbean) and ranked them in order of most appropriate for the research. Every artist on the

list actively resisted colonial frameworks to understanding the body and offered counter-imaginings to forge different forms of thinking and learning through their practice. On top of this, I also took into account how their art "spoke to me" on an aesthetic and affective level. Artists with conceptual and visual practices that I found held greater interest, or I felt connected to, were closer to the top of the list. This did not mean their work was easier or more palatable, but it did provide another layer of intimacy to explore. Of the possible artists, some I already knew personally or had a professional relationship with, whereas others I contacted for the first time.

Once ethics approval was obtained, I began emailing artists with information about the project that was formulated through ethical standards set out by York University that included the research goals, a timeline, and an accompanying consent form with my contact information. I contacted a number of possible participants, some of whom never responded, even after a follow-up email. Others replied but displayed hesitation or resistance by saying they were too busy or deflected by offering their ideas of other people I should contact. Another was originally enthusiastic, and we met in person twice, but ultimately consent was not given to use our conversation in the study. Over three months of data collection I conducted four interviews, one in each location: Toronto, Montreal, Barbados, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the end, three artists, data from their interviews, and discussions of their selected projects are included in the dissertation. The three artists are all women between the ages of 30 and 55, and all are originally from English-speaking Caribbean islands. Two identify as queer or lesbian. One is Black and two are mixed race, but one is read as white in a Caribbean context. These artist participants are:

Michèle Pearson Clarke (b. 1973, Trinidad and Tobago) is a Trinidadian artist and filmmaker, based in Toronto, Canada, who works in photography, film, video, and installation. Clarke draws on her personal experiences and inner emotive life to explore personal implications and political

possibilities of vulnerability, loss, grief, desire, and healing. Her work is often collaborative and speaks directly to and about queer Black life. Along with a long list of exhibitions, publications, talks, and teaching appointments, Clarke is the Photo Laureate for the City of Toronto from 2019 to 2021.

Artworks discussed: *It's Good to Be Needed* (2013); *All That Is Left Unsaid* (2014); *Parade of Champions* (2015); *Suck Teeth Compositions (After Rashaad Newsome)* (2018).

Annalee Davis (b. 1963, Barbados) is the director of the Fresh Milk Art Platform and is active in organizing residencies and international and Caribbean initiatives, such as Tilting Axis and Caribbean Linked, that look at visual practices and creative cultures in the Caribbean in a global dialogue. Having written about her commitment to life in a small place, her home and studio are located on the grounds of an operating dairy farm, once a sugarcane plantation, in Barbados. Her multimedia artistic practice combines writing, drawing, painting, performance, sculpture, and installation to address dark and difficult elements of Caribbean histories and the residues experienced in post-plantation/postcolonial society. As a white Barbadian woman who is a descendant of plantation owners, she regularly uses her own body alongside local histories, speaking directly to the land as a holder of stories and sacred practices.

Artworks discussed: *The Rooted Series, The Wild Plants Series and other drawings on Plantation Ledger Pages* (2015); *F is for Frances* (2015–2016); *(bush) Tea Services* (2016); *Sweeping the Fields* (2016).

Nadia Huggins (b. 1984, Trinidad and Tobago) has lived and worked throughout the Caribbean participating in a number of creative initiatives promoting creative cultures across the region and beyond. She is co-founding member of the pan-Caribbean publication and social platform *ARC*

Magazine. Currently, Huggins lives outside of Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where she spent much of her childhood. Working mainly in photography, video, and film, her work has been shown internationally. Huggins' central subject is water and the human body in relation to it. Often using her own body, she plays with constructions of identity while questioning gender representation, sexuality and desire, belonging and claiming space, and our shifting relationships and tensions with each other and the natural environment.

Artworks discussed: *Circa no future* (2014–present); *Fighting the Currents* (2015–present), a three-part series that encompasses: *Transformations* (2014), *I won't hold my breath* (2015), and *Every horizon looks the same* (2015–present).

The first artist to confirm their participation was Michèle Pearson Clarke. I travelled to Toronto in January 2018 and interviewed Clarke in her home. Later in the month I conducted a second interview in Montreal with another artist; however, as mentioned, this person did not return the consent form afterwards and they never conveyed why they made this choice. In February I travelled to Barbados for seven weeks. During this time, I continued networking with artists and scholars. In early March I travelled to St. Vincent to interview Nadia Huggins. At this stage I had already emailed Barbadian artist Annalee Davis but had not heard back from her yet. Huggins, knowing Davis, offered to send her an email on my behalf to ask if she would be interested in sitting for an interview. Within a day of Huggins connecting us, Davis replied and welcomed me to her studio to have a preliminary meeting to discuss the project. A week after this first meeting, I returned to conduct the formal interview.

As the connections began to grow in the Caribbean, I struggled with the concern that I was not including a wide enough selection of perspectives on the questions I was attempting to explore. This was also around the same time I was having difficulties securing an American-based artist.

At the advice of my supervisor I followed the research and let the artwork speak first, letting go of constrained feelings being informed by the various identity markers of the artists. This guidance lifted a weight and allowed me to better answer to the intuition of the project. After returning to Montreal from the Caribbean I decided to begin the transcription of the three interviews and stop pursuing artists in the US. As I discussed above, this decision was partly circumstantial due to the lack of interest, but it was also influenced by a pattern I was witnessing in the interviews. Each of the artists interviewed, separately and unprompted, shared their critical opinions about the volume at which voices coming out of the US are heard. Each felt that this often resulted in understandings around social issues, race, gender, and sexuality being spoken about or presented in essentialist ways, or created dangerous assumptions about shared experiences of race that did not fully account for global differences. One even accused Black studies from the US of falling into the trap of representing the African American experience in supremacist manners similar to the ways whiteness has been and is understood and presented. I do not pick up these issues specifically in the following chapters, but I believe it is important to share here because in some ways their words helped validate my decision to ultimately not include an American participant.

Interviews

The interviews were approached as a relationship to be nurtured (Seidman, 2013) and were framed with trust and respect to allow for as much frankness and honesty as possible. To gain the most from affective knowledge, the individual photo elicitation interviews each took place at the artist's home or studio. Each official interview lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours, though our informal discussions extended over food and drinks. I recorded the sound of the official interviews, took photos before, during, or after the meetings, and made detailed reflective notes in the hours

and days following. The photos taken during and around the interviews became important elements of the field notes and aided my sensory memory, acting as recordings of sensations, feelings, and thoughts that held unnarratable elements and waves of stress, unease, anxiety, pleasure, and more. These images and corresponding notes that were stored in my smart phone were regularly revisited and added to as I worked on the transcription, analysis, and writing of the chapters.

Before the interviews I developed tailored sets of questions with a specific focus on where I saw intimacy being used as a part of a creative strategy or process in the artists' projects. Questions ranged from broad ideas to specific outcomes, educational possibilities, political strategies, and surprises experienced. Building the questions and conversations around their existing art practices provided points of departure to articulate the unobservable or invisible processes through a dialogical method, but also gave us a place to return when the conversation stalled. The projects and/or artwork that the questions referenced were shown on my laptop computer screen that we could both see. The interviews began formally, but over time became more relaxed, taking on a looser structure that made room for personal thoughts and an uncovering of details not apparent in the artwork.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a fuller understanding of the artists' conceptual frameworks, research practices, and the theoretical projects that ground their creative work. Though our discussions strayed from the questions, the interviews overall brought the research places that could not have been reached without the shared input from the artists. The dialogue with the artists and their art formed sites of intimate learning. Each brought an openness to the project to discuss their own experiences and processes with nuanced, complex, and intimate readings of their work. Using the images of their work as an elicitation interview technique at times aided in furthering and expanding verbal explanation. However, it was not always useful,

and at times may have hindered the discussion from moving beyond the art project represented in the image. This was most felt during an instance when my interpretation of an artist's work and desire to question specificities of an image did not align with the artist's intentions in creating it. These moments of resistance and refusal, where information was withheld and disharmony was felt, were difficult at the time, but also lead to fuller reflective processing around perception and meaning that circulate research and theoretical practices (Tuck & Yang, 2014b). I expand on the experiences of dealing with resistance in research and the critical learning outcomes in Chapter 6.

Transcription

I approached the transcription as a key step in the project and as form of practice to listen for the unsaid. A study that uses images, written text, and verbal communication in combination requires a close reading of each element with simultaneous contemplation on the unspoken subtlety. Meaning, the inquiry needs to pay attention not only to the visible and audible, but also to the invisible and unnarratable elements communicated (Rose, 2012, p. 315). The process of transcribing needed to include the difficult moments and nuanced behaviour that transpired. Transcribing became an act of listening back to hear the shared moments, the banal and unsaid, or even denied, intimacy found in the quotidian.

In the transcription document, the finer details of speech were less important than the overall themes and topics being broached, and there was care practiced capturing non-verbal or non-intelligible meanings. This meant that my method of transcription fell somewhere between the naturalized and denaturalized transcription approaches, leaning slightly more toward denaturalism (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Naturalized transcription focuses on every utterance, breath, and pause, recording as much detail as possible. The denaturalized application is more concerned with the informational content of speech and the substance of the interview, that is, "the meanings

and perceptions created and shared during a conversation," which is favoured in critical disciplines that aim to uncover maneuverings of power (Oliver et al., 2005, p. 4).

In this project the interview transcriptions set out to record both what was said as well as the affective renderings of the discussions. Traditional protective measures to obscure the identity of the participant were not necessary for this study. My method of transcription did not aim to catch every word that was said or the cadence. However, during sections of the interviews that were more relevant to the analysis or comprehension of the study, speech was transcribed verbatim along with notes on the humour shared or references made. Throughout sections of the interviews I also made notes in a designated column of my own internal dialogue that occurred during the conversations and other reflections. I organized my transcription into three columns. The largest column housed the transcribed text alternating between speakers in rows, like you would see in a magazine interview. Here I also made note in parentheses of the interruptions experienced, such as loud background sounds (e.g., passing sirens and a church choir singing Boy George), as well as interactions with other subjects (e.g., a partner entering the room and a cat joining the conversation twice). This was done with the purpose of maintaining the feel of daily life in the discussion. We were talking inside private spaces where the relational surroundings impacted the flow and focus of the interview. The middle column was for recording descriptive, sensory, and emotional corresponding details, such as a visual description of the room, how I was feeling, or how I was interpreting what we are talking about. Here, I also included a few small thumbnail images I collected that were relevant to the conversations. This section was important for expanding and drawing links between the interviews and the autoethnographical portion of the analysis. In the final column, I noted the overall themes pulled from the conversations, highlighted new topics and

questions that surfaced, and drew connections between the interviews and the theoretical fields of thought.

Framework of Analysis: The Body, the Visual, Verbal, Textual, and Unspoken

This research project took a unique approach in both its methodology and framework of analysis by prioritizing the sensing, holistic body. The project started with the assumption that aesthetic expression and sensory information can shape boundaries of knowing and knowledge differently than purely theoretical work. To this end, I implemented my own body as a sensing instrument to develop a clearer formula of intimate pedagogy by exploring and analyzing how sensory information contributes to our intimate knowledge formation. The analytic process this research took was holistic, dynamic, and relational in approach, resisting a singular reading. A project such as this, which included non-linear narratives, abstractness of affect, intuition, and bodily information, had to be attentive to representation and performative qualities, as well as absences in order to find affective patterns (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014; Sedgwick, 2003). There were three main overlapping considerations I brought to the analysis: (a) symbolic, looking at what was being represented; (b) aesthetic, including affect and sensation; and (c) narrative, what was being conveyed through speech and alternative communication, including the unnarratable.

As discussed by Luttrell and Chalfen (2010) and later by Brushwood Rose and Low (2014), the central questions for analyzing visual data are the following: What is the relationship between the visual and voice or written? What does the visual do to the written, and what does the visual offer us that words cannot? The images and interview data collected were not easily categorized, controlled, or even explainable in purely written form. The messiness and complexity of aesthetic experiences needed to be highlighted to incorporate the layered bodily workings of identity and racial understandings into the data analysis. Like Brushwood Rose and Low (2014), I understand

aesthetics to include the "emotional or affective dimensions of representation which are cultivated through an attention to how a particular image or expression communicates experiences of beauty, harmony, dissonance, ambivalence and so on" (p. 31). As expected, the data produced in this project included challenges, resistance, pain, pleasure, and intimacy making. Inside of this, the erotic itself—having a powerful aesthetic and affective hold on our lives—became an intrinsic element of the data inquiry. I not only sought to answer to my own erotic knowledge, but I also looked to the erotic knowledge being conveyed by the artwork and the intimate possibilities held within the art practices in question.

The visual analysis of the artists' work was done in conversation with the image elicitation interviews and my personal autoethnographic accounts. Interpreting these components together while inquiring into the narrative and aesthetic qualities was a continual negotiation. I used the narratives shared in the interviews to think about the visual elements incorporated into our discussions as a story of experience and critique, but also a rethinking or reimagining of the self and the world we navigate daily. I actively "read" the art and interviews like I engage with scholarly material. Drawing connections with other texts, I holistically reflected on how the ideas, the artists' words, and the theoretical questions all spoke to me and the research as a whole, parsing the layered information to piece together what I heard, saw, felt, said, smelled, touched, sensed, and even dreamed about. The creative practices of the artists, combined with the autoethnography, provided space to witness ways of learning that resisted simplicity and singular notions of understanding of the intimate. Using intimate pedagogy as a theory and method—learning to hear the erotic and intimate knowledge and to put it into words—meant relinquishing the controlled and clearly defined set of findings or simplified answers, for the creative expansion of thought, questioning,

and learning that circulates a theory and practice. All of this contributed to the extension and imagining of what an intimate pedagogy is and could be.

By attempting to answer to the multiplicity of intimacies this project refused to adhere to silos of thought or methods, and instead it borrowed and blended, bouncing between scales of perception, intuition, and imagination in order to arrive at something new. While centering the researcher's body as a tool of analysis would certainly pose limitations and problems for other researchers, I believe here it brought forth something that could not be found otherwise. While uncomfortable in moments with its experimental nature, mysterious in its intricacies, and feeling impossible to convey at times, it was also surprising and rewarding in its complexity, and I maintain unprecedented in pushing a theory of imitate pedagogy to also work methodologically. The next three chapters map out the data thematically by looking at each of the artists individually. The strategy of examination was not only on the content of the artwork but also the historical and conceptual framings. The rich theory discussed in the fields of thought in the previous chapter, along with the interview conversations and aesthetic qualities encountered, all came together to shape the critical anti-racist feminist lens and analysis, with adherence to decolonial learning and action. The artwork and theoretical concepts are presented with attention to both regional and political affinities and differences. I consider what is at stake in making transnational linkages, with the awareness that our shared histories impact our experiences in vastly different ways inside the current neoliberal context. Using the artwork as visual points of departure, linkages and conversations between the different practices are encouraged around uses of intimacy, vulnerability, and listening to the erotic.

CHAPTER 4
Intimate Learning from the Ghostly Matters of Land: Slow Uprisings in the Artwork of Annalee Davis

> The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (Gordon, 2008, p. 8)

> Inspired by the resurgent diversity of this emerging botanical archive asserting itself against a historically imperial landscape, *Sweeping the Fields* is not meant to conceal the dark secrets of the colonial era. Rather, the goal is to engage with the past through this particular site in interdisciplinary ways; reckon with the weight of a collective, traumatic past and act in ways which move against the grain of history while imagining the possibility of a healthier post-plantation reality and considering what that might look like or mean for contemporary society. (Davis, 2016c)

> Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other. (Glissant, 2006, p. 11)

Before ever visiting Barbados, I picked up a tourist brochure to peruse while drinking sorrel with Mount Gay rum at *Taste of the Caribbean*, a food and rum festival in Montreal's Old Port. Sitting with my partner, G[2], at the edge of the St. Lawrence river on the summer solstice, the sun casting golden shadows late into the evening, we watched brave kayakers struggle against the strong current while I flipped through page after page of calm turquoise sea, palm trees, and hotels. The pleasures of passively taking in tropical pictorial tropes was halted when I came across the

[2] I call my partner "G" in daily life and use this nickname throughout the photovoice narratives in Chapters 4, 5, and 7 to preserve a level anonymity and privacy. G was born in Montreal and spent his childhood in Barbados. He returned to Montreal for university and lived there for over 20 years. We moved back to Barbados together and then to Rotterdam.

unsettling, hauntingly beautiful image of a burned-out ruin overgrown with vivid greens (Figure 7).

The aerial shot of the Grenade Hall plantation house—the royal palms towering above the old coral limestone structure and the tropical landscape reclaiming the interior; a shell of what once was—made me gasp and sent a sublime mixture of emotions through me. The ruins that now sit in Farley Hill National Park, also referred to as the Farley Hill Great House, like the many plantations that once dominated throughout the Caribbean, are visual remnants that speak to the complex histories and layered narratives of the landscape; a landscape that seemed distant from Montreal, yet somehow eerily close at the same time, implicating me in ways that I could not articulate in the moment of visual rapture.

Figure 7

Aerial Photograph of Farley Hill National Park

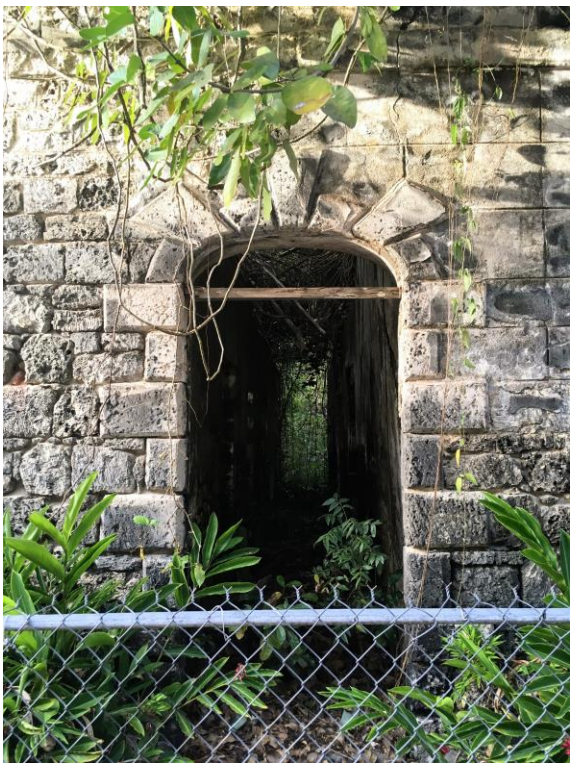
Note: This photograph of Farley Hill National Park and the Grenade Hall plantation was taken by David Lewis of Caribbean Aerial Photography, 2021. The image discussed above from Barbados Tourism

Marketing Inc. (BTMI) had to be removed due to copyright restrictions. When it became clear that I would not be able to obtain copyright permission from BTMI, Lewis offered to take a similar photo for this publication. While it is not the original photo, this replacement image is visually similar and illustrates a cultivated relationship with Barbados that emerged over the course of the research.

Less than a year later I stood with G in front of the skeletal frame at Farley Hill in person (Figure 8). We arrived late in the day as the sun was low in the sky, beams of light cutting through the tops of the trees, casting long silhouettes across the grass into the darkening forest just beyond. From this high vantage point in the north of Barbados I could see both the east and west coasts glimmering in the distance. The fading light was strong enough for me to see the outside of the plantation house in the center of the park, but past the hollowed-out windows was a mass of verdure, thick with shadows.

Figures 8 and 9

The Grenade Hall Plantation House in Farley Hill National Park



Note: Both photos were taken on March 24, 2018 at Farley Hill National Park, Barbados.

We stood close together, squinting with apprehension through the hanging vines that dripped along the length of the building's narrow hallways; not daring to stare too long, fearing what might appear from within the overgrowth (Figure 9). Unlike the initial brochure image of the abandoned great house—lush and dystopian in feel, seemingly isolated and void of human life—standing in the park was a different experience that brought a more layered reading of the place. The house—surrounded by chain-link fence ever since cracks in the walls were noticed after an earthquake in 2007—in person seemed less majestic and more dejected, as though the plants had been permitted to devour it. Behind us, we heard families enjoying picnics and children laughing and playing; a reminder that scars of history do not live on alone (Figure 10). Knowing that the impressive beauty of the park, with its expansive views, diverse flora, and crumbling plantation, is regularly injected with the sounds of joy from visitors and multiple annual music festivals made

the present moment feel full of potential for intimate healing. The pleasures experienced in this place felt important to hold while reflecting on the site's complicated history: from the sweat and bloodshed on the grounds of the plantation, to the Hollywood (fifteen minutes of) fame in the 1957 film *Island in the Sun*, to the devastating fire of 1965, and finally its reclamation and transformation into a national park in 1966, the year of Barbadian independence. As I walked through the park, the knowledge of the horrors of the past clashed with the intimate familial acts of delight I was witnessing in the present. Beside the gutted remains—the physical and visual reminder of the plantocracy that once dominated the Caribbean but which crumbled—autonomous acts of living seemed like moments of intimate revolution; gestures of liberation that disallowed the darkness of historical trauma to dominate or live alone within the bodies of Barbadians or their landscapes.

Figure 10

Picnic in Farley Hill National Park

Note: I took this photo of families picnicking on March 24, 2018, at Farley Hill National Park, because I was drawn to their laughter.

These mundane acts, such as plants reclaiming past colonial structures or people walking and playing in former plantation fields like those at Farley Hill, are treated with ancestral importance and care by Barbadian artist Annalee Davis. The rejuvenating patterns of plants and the purposeful healing in which people partake, all of which are at times quieted in our collective memories, are topics of interest and inspiration in Davis' interdisciplinary multimodal visual art practice. Working against an erasure of the past, Davis leans toward the difficult memories held within the land as a method of healing and learning; bringing forward conversations of what it means to live and create in post-plantation society. In Davis' work I witness the call for a collective responsibility towards remembering, repair work, and healing, and see purposefully created spaces of intimacy and vulnerability being used as feminist decolonial action. Drawing on my interview with Davis that took place in her studio on March 15, 2018, in Barbados, I look at unfolding feminist decolonial patterns across her body of work. Specifically, what she refers to as an attempt to reckon with the landscapes of a post-plantation society of Barbados and the larger Caribbean. To engage with Davis' work requires looking to the land to recognize the colonial scars that shape our lives in the present. Important to this project are the ways Davis' practice extends the decolonial discussion beyond the Caribbean to implicate others (people and states) in historical relation and the acknowledgement that our lives are deeply connected because of it. Davis gives voice to the ways intimacy is already being used as a method to address painful histories of segregation and separation, while offering new possibilities of coming together to confront the lingering damages of colonial racial ordering. This chapter is an exercise of listening to and learning from Davis as a decolonial method of intimate knowledge building.

I spend time in this chapter theorizing and historicizing the Caribbean in relation to the colonization that was and still is being experienced across North America. With the help of

Caribbean, US, and Canadian scholars, I think through our shared responsibilities to one another while looking at Davis' local actions and global reach. I believe this to be important in aiding an understanding of how we are not only connected to the lands we live on, but to each other across geographical regions. Secondly, doing justice to the analysis of Davis' art practice requires a layered approach, one that takes into account the historical, visual, spiritual, gendered, and racial influences contained in her work. Her own methods of creation are greatly informed by extensive historical research on Barbados and the connected international social and economic realities; how they have impacted the island nation, but also how Barbados has influenced other places with which it has had relationships. This, combined with personal and emotional responses to such histories and a desire to collectively heal, sees the projects Davis undertakes as being "like […] palimpsests; these layered substrates that have this inherent history that rides through them" (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

I begin this chapter by theorizing the ghostly matters and colonial presences held by the land that echo whispers from the past and what it means for contemporary creative practices to forge new knowledge and questioning of landscapes in flux. I then attempt to listen to the hauntings, or tongueless whispers (Gordon, 2008; Otto, 2017), present in Davis' practice, concentrating on what Davis calls "botanical uprisings" or the quiet revolutions taking place in former sugarcane fields. I focus the discussion in this chapter on two main works of Davis, but in moments reference other interlinked projects that address issues of the post-plantation society of Barbados and the settler colonial state of Canada. First, using Davis' documented performance, *Sweeping the Fields* (2016), and scholarly works produced in conjunction and in conversation with it, I ask what role small-scale botanical revolutions have in aiding an intimate listening to and learning from the land and the erotic energy it holds. After, I turn to Davis' relational aesthetic

sculptural piece, *(bush) Tea Services* (2016), to further explore how traditions, consumption, and knowledge formation are connected to a shared history of colonization and slavery that shapes how we live on either side of the Atlantic. In discussing relationships to land and the inseparable colonial histories and economies of consumption (Sheller, 2003), I also pursue an uncovering of the quieter Indigenous knowledges that are steeped into our knowledge systems, but which often escape recognition or the language to name them. Ultimately this chapter argues that anticolonial/decolonial methods require listening to our colonial spectres and conversing with the land to understand its role as a witness of history, a holder of Indigenous knowledge, and an intimate teacher.

Ghostly Matters and Tongueless Whispers

Avery F. Gordon (2008) reads past colonial structures of dominance and the systems of power that built them as ghostly matters that continue to haunt our lives at every turn. Analyzing the violent US histories of slavery and settler colonialism, Gordon (2008) understands hauntings as intertwined "organized forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us," when in fact their impacts are "felt in everyday life in a way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds the social separations themselves" (p. 19). The skeletal remains held within our landscapes, that enter our visual field, remind us of something supposedly long over and done with, but which lingers without resolve; a social violence that is impossible to separate from our current relational experiences (Gordon, 2008). Looking to the "sense of the ghostly and its social and political effects," she draws parallels between the affect of a haunting and the social "phantoms of modernity's violence" (Gordon, 2008, p. 19). She attempts to explain ghostly matters as links between our social institutions and the individual by deliberately evoking a structure of feeling in how "hauntings are transmitted and received" (Gordon, 2008, p. 18). Hauntings, in their

transformative power, can make us lose our bearings, with the familiar becoming unfamiliar, and bring alive what was thought of as over-and-done-with. Ghosts haunt with purpose, demanding "something to be done" and attention to what is due; a notifying of what has been concealed but which is still "very much alive and present" (Gordon, 2008, p. xvi).

As highlighted in the above epigraph, Gordon (2008) alludes that to be haunted is to be drawn in affectively and not necessarily with ease. It is this discomfort within the magical that she reads as a structure of feeling, and which I understand as holding erotic energy and information: a knowledge of transformative possibilities. It is a recognition that is not always linear or based in hard facts, but affectively experienced, where time collapses along with socio-political factors into our embodied ways of learning and knowing. Gordon (2008) speaks of hauntings often being frightful in nature, coming from a past domain of trouble and turmoil; a disturbing feeling that cannot be put away in the present. Encouraging her readers to see ghostly matters as subversive tactics and forced confrontations to push for both recognition and action, it is here I extend the reading of being haunted to the receiving of erotic information. Ghostly matters are teachers, and hauntings render moments of learning through an intimate psychic touching that reaches back and across linear notions of time. In pulling attention toward "what is elusive, fantastic, contingent, and often barely there," they are demanding an unlearning and relearning, an undoing and redoing (Gordon, 2008, p. 26). Being sensitive to ghosts and their matters is to welcome a difficult learning and to practice an intimate pedagogical method that is at once vulnerable and uncomfortable, risky and even scary in its critical openness.

In Melanie Otto's (2017) analysis of how the historical implications of the plantation landscapes of Barbados are communicated through what Guyanese poet Martin Carter calls the "tongueless whispers," she explores the art practices of both Davis and poet Kamau Brathwaite,

stating that “the Caribbean earth continues to speak to those who have made it their task to listen, decipher, and interpret it” (p. 24). Otto (2017) speaks of landscapes as living languages, like texts, which may be read if one is willing to kneel down and listen for the utterances embedded in the soil. Through her multidisciplinary projects, Davis engages the land and plants as participants in a healing and reimagining of our social, physical, and physic landscapes. She reads the ground she lives on—a repeating and continuous process—to uncover the layered and complex histories that have been erased but not completely silenced, and to allow alternative narratives to be imagined and to survive.

Working from a studio located on the site of a former 17th-century sugarcane plantation, Davis has devoted her practice to creating new ways of engaging with others on historically loaded sites. Her interest in pedagogical offerings extends to her role as the founding director of the Fresh Milk Art Platform where she has worked at forging a cultural hub dedicated to supporting the visual arts and strengthening regional and diasporic Caribbean links. In all her endeavours, Davis attempts to shift how we relate to people and places and creates opportunities for something else to happen; for new relationships and new ideas to grow in a place where people were historically not expected to come together to think creatively and critically together (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). In an effort to respond to the ghostly requests for something to be done, Davis honestly acknowledges the hauntings present in her ancestral past that are intertwined with those who lived very different experiences on the shared soil where enslaved and indentured people laboured. Listening to the hauntings present within the Barbadian landscape and attempting to decipher what needs to be heard often means entering junctures where boundaries between worlds seem to thin. Davis makes space to hold the pain, disgust, and shame of the post-plantation as a contested site with a long history of violence while making room for the spiritual

presences, narratives of resistance, beauty, and creativity that are also always there, ready to emerge. By working against a single dominant white male settler colonial narrative, Davis contends with the unfinished business of what postcoloniality signifies for people, the land, and place; she advances different kinds of intimacy that can be exercised through creating, thinking, engaging, speaking, and communing (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

Otto (2017) understands Davis' work as exercising decolonial ecology theory and a "hybrid archival method" to not only search for historical clues and personal meaning, but also to gain knowledge and understanding of the multiple narratives and violent disruptions recorded in the environment itself (p. 36). There are inherent difficulties in recording such voices, many of which have been smothered, but which the land has heard nonetheless. So, while many experiences on the land have been erased and the tongueless are not always easily understood (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011), the ground beneath Davis' feet still holds scars and is an "archive that demands to be read as the layers of the past are excavated, either deliberately or accidentally, and interpreted" (Otto, 2017, p. 25). Otto's conclusion, that grappling with the difficulty or even impossibility of translating such voices speaks to the fragmentary nature of Davis' process and creation of counter-knowledge. Agreeing with Otto (2017), I recognize the inherent risks of miscommunication and the challenges, even impossibility, of conversing with ghostly voices that speak from different racial and historical positions, in an art practice that works to decipher and answer back. However, Davis does not shy away from the limitations and instead forms tangible ways to recover and archive the lives lived on the Barbadian landscape through multiple healing and redemptive creative endeavours in the presence of a violent past (Otto, 2017).

A key part of Davis' practice is to make visible white, specifically white creole, responsibility in this reparation while complicating what it means to be white in the Caribbean.

Otto (2017) sees Davis' work developing from the basis of the racial category of whiteness, which challenges and "engages with the fragmented nature of Caribbean culture in both theme and form" (p. 34). In her own words:

> People don't necessarily want to embrace being white in the Caribbean. It's connected to a very problematic history of course. But I felt very often when I was growing up, what I was reading or seeing weren't reflections of how I saw myself or how I felt as an individual. So I think making the work is an attempt to try to shape … a rendering of how I see and feel things. (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018)

Davis identifies herself as a white creole—an identity formation particular to the Caribbean that worked to differentiate the European white elites from those born in the Caribbean whose cultural and language formation, and often racial lineage, had been influenced by the hybridity, mixing, and creolization of the region—and she grapples with the contested definitions and discourses circulating around creolization.[3] In Barbados whiteness, and with it white creoleness, has a long, complicated, and troubled relationship to the land and the Black majority. With whites maintaining a distant and oppressive presence throughout most of the islands, Robinson (1983) reminds us that "whites marked the landscape, and in a way, the boundaries of Black life, their lives, their habits, their very appearance and the testament and detail of a cruel and unyielding order of social and spiritual regulation" (p. 182). This regulation of labour and space, while meant to maintain white supremacist economic and cultural imperialism, also resulted in a type of pathology of privilege;

[3] Davis was invited to read an early draft of this chapter and added the following footnote that references her own writing on the subject: "I arrived into this world as a member of a small ethnic minority, with its inherent privileges, and often felt uneasiness having been born into a skin where the interior space didn't quite fit the narrow definitions of its epidermis. Assumptions were made about me based on what I looked like rather than who I was.… Out of this context, I became concerned with how shared historical suffering reveals itself communally today. How individuals and nations manage trauma and the desire for self-fulfillment in small places where social life and kinship are predominantly lived in separate social spheres (Davis, 2019, p. 167-168)."

like a sickness it kept communities apart through dehumanizing hierarchical ordering. Grounded in anti-Black racism and upheld through systemic white supremacy, the exercising of unjust dominance and inhuman treatment robbed many of their ability to exercise a full(er) humanity. This is not to be insensitive to the absolute horror of slavery, but instead recognizes that the use of brutality against life creates damaging ripples across all bodies, identities, cultures, institutions, and societies.

Davis acknowledges the complexity of her own relationship to the post-plantation society as a white body, and understands both the gravity of the generational suffering inflicted on the labouring bodies and the disease-like conditions perpetrated on the land and people exposed to the plantation monopoly. The fallout of such systems—I would add, both in and outside the Caribbean—has not yet healed from the deep divisions; contemporary community building and family life still feel the experiences of such trauma and isolation. Davis directly addresses this separation of life witnessed through racial ordering that perpetuates dehumanizing views of the other, and the ways power and privilege limit intimate possibilities of healing across differences. Sharing her own feelings of exclusion from a young age as a part of the white minority in Barbados, Davis attempts to challenge the conflictual or defensive discourse and awkwardness around the prickly topic of whiteness in the Caribbean. Davis turns toward the unpredictable messiness of creolized spaces to challenge the homogeneity of how whiteness is read. In our conversation, she spoke of the difficulty in thinking about shared affinities and intimacies with the historical context of Barbados due to race, and because of this, questions of belonging to such a place are fundamental to her practice.

> I see myself as a white creole. So as a white creole—as a white minority—how do I belong? Because I've been raised on a particular landscape, I feel very connected to land. It's what I've grown up with, it's what I've seen, it's what I'm

> comfortable with, and it's what I'm interested in. I'm very much read as a white Barbadian artist, and I think that the work is read from the perspective of that, but hopefully it challenges some of the more problematic readings of what it means to be white in the Caribbean, and it's trying to move beyond that. I think vulnerability and empathy and reflection are hopefully traits that come through the work.… In one [sense], it's an attempt to reckon with history and race and privilege, and trying to do something with that. (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018)

Incorporating issues of alienation, mental health, loneliness, and the exclusionary divisions drawn by such history, Davis asks how we may soothe such social and psychological wounds to reconcile the violence that remains. Layering questions of whiteness and the effects of post-slavery and postcolonialism with actions of uncovering, foraging, sweeping, walking, and listening, her work is tightly knit with her very being. It is at once an illustration of her own identity and her relationship to Barbados and the Caribbean, but it also shows how those living in colonial states are also linked to this history. She begins from the notion that many human narratives are inseparable; ancestor lineages are interwoven by far more than just blood, figuratively, literally, spiritually, and physically. Forming various points of entry for her viewers by evoking both corporeal and emotional responses of belonging and unbelonging (Cheddie, 2016), Davis initiates conversations with our darkest and most difficult histories. Making contact with what was supposedly buried and dead, she illuminates what seeps from interstices in the earth to show there is no single decolonizing effort. We all have a role to play, and even in our vast differences of experience and pain, it is made vivid that our words, plants, bodies, and the soil all hold knowledge of connectivity, and it is our responsibility to recognize this in the human and non-human other.

Laying the Ground(work)

Mimi Sheller's (2012) chapter "Arboreal Landscapes of Power and Resistance*"* develops a spatial methodology for tracking citizenship on the land through the communicating root structures of trees and plants that reach across and underneath gardens, plots, plantations, and history. Sheller reads plant life as participating in the production of national belonging and as a marker of sites of struggle and dissent in post-slavery societies. Sheller (2012) asks for a rethinking of the silences in historical records and attention to life burrowed "beneath human interactions to encompass interactions with natural and sacred places, non-human spirits and entities" (Sheller, 2012). Drawing on Amar Wahab (2010), who writes of the two-way transformative process of transculturation and the powerful effects the tropical environment has on those who enter it— simply, we shape nature and nature shapes us— Sheller (2012) incorporates the study of plants and trees and their place in history and knowledge systems. As "vernacular meanings of nature," botanical life is fundamental to understanding relations between bodies and landscapes (Sheller, 2012, p. 14). Our inter-bodily encounters and relations extend outwards, impacting surrounding environments, creating living landscapes in the exchange between life. In the Caribbean, Sheller (2012) argues, this has meant that the lived materiality of freedom is embedded "in small localities and expands into a transitional critique of European land possessions and communal dispossessions across the African diaspora and its subsequent Caribbean offspring" (p. 14).

Sheller (2012) further suggests that claims to power and land (both elite and subaltern), as well as politics of freedom and control connected to spatial formations, must include the plurality of competing economic activities and ventures, as nature is composed of sites of conflict and contested space. Wahab (2010), using theories of the Caribbean philosopher Édouard Glissant, sees the powerful potential in recognizing the darker, subaltern histories held within the soils, and

the reading of the landscape's "underside" as a site of multiple and contested histories. Though we need to be aware of the possibilities of reinscribing past colonial problematics, the opportunities to uncover alternative, subversive histories that may unsettle fixed colonial discourses of a region are necessary to expose counter-narratives and hidden representations (Wahab, 2010). For example, even during slavery and while maintaining the overall order of the plantation and its economic structure, both enslaved and emancipated peoples were using the land in ways that preserved their very humanity and freedom (Sheller, 2012). Landscapes are always textured with living histories that speak back with particular agency; living landscapes are representations of memories of "another dimension of history from below, which moves beyond the written archive to encompass alternative modalities for the performance of citizenship, national belonging, and embodied freedom" (Sheller, 2012, p. 187).

It is here that Davis seems to directly answer Sheller's (2012) question, "if we follow the logic of citizenship from below down into the ground beneath our feet, are alternative identities and subjectivities pressing up through the soil, identities related to place and nation in different ways" (p. 201)? In much of her work, Davis looks to the ground beneath her feet—to the plants sprouting up on rab lands,[4] the soil plotted into furrowed fields, the trees that have rooted, and the social-political struggles that have spilled on them over the centuries—to communicate historical "claims to belonging, self-determination, and collective identity" and to accesses the "subaltern histories of freedom that lie in the land beneath the well-turned earth" (Sheller, 2012, p. 201). This is specifically visible in Davis' documented 2016 performance, *Sweeping the Fields* (Figure 11),

[4] Rab lands is a late-16th-century term that refers to stony or gravelly soil, lands that were subpar and often given to the enslaved, who were then expected to eke out a living on this ground. As well, in Barbados rab lands are fields that were formerly used for sugarcane cultivation that are now deemed unsuitable for agricultural production and have been left to grow wild plants (Bynoe, 2016; A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018; Pearce, 2016).

which addresses the underside of the Barbadian landscape and the role of plants in a reclamation and redefining of historically rooted knowledge.

Botanical Uprisings and the Unearthed Voices of *Sweeping the Fields*

Figure 11

Sweeping the Fields

Note: Annalee Davis, *Sweeping the Fields*, Photographic triptych, 2016. Photos by Helen Cammock. Used with permission.

With their generative power, plants have a natural militancy that can conquer territory with expansive and explosive growth; this power of the root and body has been continuously harnessed for physical and medicinal properties, as well as physiological and spiritual practices (Sheller, 2012). Regionally plants play important roles beyond just providing sustenance and medicinal care; they are connected to the preservation of Indigenous cultures, languages, and knowledges.

To protect the plants and land is to protect the people and life, as well as the traditional links to the land. In our conversation Davis tells me that before slavery and the total plantation economy, Barbados was a diverse space, botanically speaking. However, that diversity was eradicated through the foul swoop of mass farming and the monocrop of sugarcane. The unsustainability of the monolithic agricultural practice leeched nutrients, thinned the topsoil, and made the industry susceptible to decline in the diversifying world market, ultimately resulting in the collapse of the sugar industry, which resulted in plantations and their fields being abandoned across the island (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). Walking the property of the dairy farm around her home almost daily, Davis says she was struck with surprise when she began noticing more and more wild plants sprouting up in former sugarcane fields and rab lands that were thought to be unable to sustain crops. The plants that were thought to be wiped out by the monocrop were reappearing, replenishing the soil, and blurring the boundary delineations. Feeling as if the fields were speaking back as witnesses to a particular history, and as though the plants were reasserting their presence on the land where they were once forcibly removed, Davis was moved by the potential their quiet botanical revolutions offered materially and spiritually.

As key members of the decolonial fight, plants battle from the margins in subaltern ways, spreading and recuperating, becoming vehicles of knowledge if one is receptive to such learning. Davis explains that much of her hybrid art practice is inspired by the "scientific process called phytoremediation, which speaks to the capacity that some plants have to remove toxins through their root structure" (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). She sees her work as a type of "cultural plant" that intervenes into the site of a former sugar plantation. Like the plant, her art conceptually has the capacity to practice phytoremediation and create more critically potent spaces where cultural practitioners can come together to think and forge community, as well as

new understandings and knowledge. In line with this epistemology, Davis' piece *Sweeping the Fields* answers to the land as a healer and holder of knowledge, and it highlights the important role that the natural world plays in pushing up against the boundaries of colonial structures. *Sweeping the Fields* is a series of gestures where Davis moves through the fields on Walkers Dairy Farm while wearing a handmade dress of Queen Anne's lace and carrying a cocoyea broom. The broom, which is used not only to clean but cleanse, is often present in Afro-Caribbean syncretic religious practices and speaks to the sacred elements and historical spiritual connections that travelled across the Atlantic (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

In her own words, Davis describes *Sweeping the Fields* as "an act of remembering and of cleansing; a contemporary gesture to history's groan which acknowledge [*sic*] the possibility of an emerging post-plantation apothecary" (Davis, 2016c, para. 2). Davis encourages us to listen for the voices we can barely hear; the indentured and enslaved whose lives were not recorded outside of their labour, and the difficulty that the reality of not fully knowing these histories brings up from the soil. The sweeping is not meant to push things under a metaphorical rug; "it is about sweeping as a way to cleanse in a respectful way to acknowledge that there is a virtual slaughterhouse that sits beneath all of these fields" (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). Holly Bynoe (2016), curator of *This Ground Beneath My Feet – A Chorus of Bush in Rab Lands*, sees Davis' wandering as studying wild plants and being attentive to "how the legacies of slavery, colonization, and ancestral trauma have scarred and exhausted the landscape" (para. 4). In the rab lands, wild florae are resilient and fragile, ambiguous and lucid, coming alive in fields and emerging from the belly of history within which stories have been silenced (Bynoe, 2016).

Grappling with the past as a way to help heal the present, Davis purposefully produces moments of slow reflection for herself and audiences. Her walking and sweeping create a pace

where the layered non-verbal aspects of knowing can be communicated. The documented images of *Sweeping the Fields* seem to quiet the sounds of the tropics and spark the imaginary to feel time move just a little slower, allowing glimpses of information to seep through and new details to be noticed. We see Davis listening—not with her ears, but with the whole of her body—to the erotic life force of the plants and the land as she pieces together fragments found in the earth, its gaps, and its silences. Responding to her own gendered and racialized body on the charged landscape, *Sweeping the Fields* renders Davis' body in motion, while she participates in an erotic and sacred practice of cross-temporal dialogue with the spirit of the plants as a way to build intimacy and historical knowledge to address the contemporary moment. The intimacy documented in the images exhibits sensory acknowledgment, decolonial action, and embodied learning though a ritualized process of respect and care.

Trees and plants have always lived in both political and spiritual dimensions, being used in reparation, resistance, and counter-knowledge production. Sheller (2012) understands the forces of landscapes and plants to have "an erotic force that transcends the scale of human lives and disrupts the ordering projects of states" (p. 193). The stories people tell about plants hold social memories and important historical dimensions of citizenship that are weaved throughout the public and private spheres of life. Davis' performance of sweeping, like planting and gardening, is an act of place making and intimacy building with a space. This produces a potential source of healing and conjures up ghostly matters, ethical questioning, and erotic knowledge that intertwines the performance, and not always with comfort or ease (Savory, 2011; Sheller, 2012). In her engagement with the land and its difficult history, we can read Davis' purposeful use of pace and vulnerability as both a curative and political move that aids the potential of intimacy making as meaning making. Through an embodied incorporation of erotic information gained from the fields,

Davis performs the creation of intimacy as a method of learning to welcome an alternative knowing of her post-plantation home.

Following the logic of what Sheller (2012) refers to as counter-publics and citizenship practices from below as a method of recovering past stories, we can understand nature as offering alternative forms of being and learning. It is a multiplicity of moments of learning from such alterity—a being with and absorbing as a production of knowledge—that has decolonial abilities to shift our relationship to the land and others. Such shifts in understanding—the (un)learning required—is important for all people who live, work, and move between settled lands that bear the scars of colonization, which desperately require our attention in mending. The quest of reconciliation and regeneration of the earth, our bodies, and politics needs to make room for what DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) call a "postcolonial poetics [that] attends to the fragmented conditions of colonial displacement or diaspora without either idealizing fragmentation or yearning nostalgically for wholeness" (p. 29). To forge new epistemologies that respect the traumatic reverberations that have travelled for generations, along with the gaps and cracks in collective cultural memory, we need to work toward imagining new relations. Davis offers her viewers a decolonial imagining that dislodges the land from the hold of colonization (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011), where the never-ending process of healing celebrates the subtle and mundane moments—such as walking and sweeping—as cumulative acts of decolonization with transformative possibilities. In the next section I continue with the idea of the quotidian as a critical space of collective reflection through another work by Davis: *(bush) Tea Services* (2016). Here the ritual of making and drinking tea is complicated, bringing Canada, the US, and the UK into a transnational dialogue with the Caribbean landscape as an ever-present witness to the ongoing colonial processes.

Collective Connectivity in *(bush) Tea Services*

Even our most ubiquitous of activities, such as drinking tea, enjoyed by many as a ritual of nourishment and care, implicate us within colonial structures. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1991) reminds us, the Caribbean has been symbolically and materially embedded into the lives of Britons for centuries through sugar. The blood and sweat of working bodies are tasted, swallowed, and consumed in the sweetened tea (Hall, 1991; Sheller, 2003). Sugar and its multiple by-products link many colonies across the globe through the intimacy of consumption. For example, sugarcane and other traded goods from the Caribbean are deeply rooted in what we think of as traditional foods in Canada, particularly the Maritime provinces. My father was born and raised in Newfoundland, a very different Atlantic island; as a child he had no running water in the house, but rum (locally called screech), molasses, and salt fish were abundant. I have heard different versions of stories of his grandfather sailing to the Caribbean to trade fish and rum, whether legally or as a rum runner I am not entirely sure. The ways our bodies came and still come into contact with one another extends beyond our labour and trade, to the knowledge that travelled alongside it, shaping our behaviours, cultures, worldviews, and the ways we live on the land. From something as seemingly banal as drinking tea or rum, to the ways we fish and harvest plants for medicine and food, our knowledges have been passed along and shared in countless moments—often stolen or appropriated, and not from a place of generosity—continuously mixing with other ways of knowing.

Davis' piece *(bush) Tea Services* requests a sitting and conversing with others we share history with to witness the junctures of knowledge in our lives individually and collectively. Originally commissioned by *The Empire Remains Shop* in London, a pop-up exhibition that "speculates on the possibility and implications of selling back the remains of the British Empire"

(The Empire Remains Shop, 2019, para. 1), *(bush) Tea Services* is an intervention into past colonial gestures that seeks to enter a dialogue with audiences around "the deep entanglements of land, land production and the politics of the soil—as a source of subjection, inequality and disruption" (Cheddie, 2016, p. 5).

A discursive and immersive piece, it invited dialogue around the drinking of an unsweetened bush tea made from a mixture of West Indian bay leaf, cerasee bush, blue vervain, and lemongrass collected from the lands around Davis' home. The performance was staged in a colonial drawing room in the street-facing window of a former bank on Baker Street in London. Davis, dressed again in a gown of Queen Anne's lace, was acknowledging interwoven histories, pointing to her body's ancestorial connection to the gendered craft and to the ideals of respectability and race-class privilege. She served her audience from a tea set made in collaboration with local Barbadian master potter Hamilton Wiltshire, who used red clay from the Scotland District on the east side of the island, implanted with 18th- and 19th-century porcelain and clay shards Davis found in former sugarcane fields from which the wild botanicals were also harvested (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). The clay was glazed in pastel colours that gestured to the colour of the lines on the ledger pages the tea set was placed on top of in the installation (Figures 12, 13, and 14). Davis pointed out that this was not a recreation of a domestic space, and the use of the ledger page provided a specific reference to the plantation economy.

Figures 12, 13, and 14

(bush) Tea Services

Note: Annalee Davis, *(bush) Tea Services*, Barbadian clay, 17th and 18th shards, 1970s ledger pages, 2016. In Collaboration with master potter Hamilton Wiltshire. Figures 12 and 13: Photos by Mark Doroba. Figure 14: Photo by Tim Bowditch. Used with permission.

(bush) Tea Services literally and figuratively incorporated a digging to uncover shared histories encased in the Caribbean landscape. The tea set was intentionally designed with spaces and gaps that were created in the clay before their first firing and embedded with the found shards after the second firing. Creating incomplete vessels to hold the tea called to the fragmentation of

memory and the imperfections in the processes of piecing historical information back together. Pouring participants tea that seeped from cracks acted as a reminder of the messy, untidy past of drinking a blood-sweetened beverage—tea grown in the east and sweetened with sugar from the West Indies. Forcing an attention to the act of consumption grounded in a historical relationship, participants were asked to sip from cups that dripped tea on their laps as they lifted the cups to their lips. However, Davis here instead removed the sugar and offered a tea made of herbs known to have healing properties while engaging in genuine conversation with her London participants as an act of reparation offered from Barbados (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

For Davis, the foraging, steeping, and serving of bush tea is also understood as a nurturing decolonial act and a way to relate to each other and the post-plantation landscape. Davis explains that the plants for the tea were collected from the rab lands that were left ravished by single-crop sugarcane, the same rab lands where she has begun to witness a botanical uprising of local plants that are reclaiming and simultaneously replenishing the soil. Honouring the healing properties of herbal remedies and bush baths that would have been used by the enslaved, and possibly some enslavers, Davis respects the apothecary value of the plants that now are reasserting themselves, understanding that they served and still serve a role in medicine, healing rituals, but that they also hold strong spiritual elements.

Locally grounded but international in scope, the goal of *(bush) Tea Services* was to make space and time for a decolonial dialogue with those on both sides of the Atlantic and to recognize that our current realities are as connected today as our ancestor's histories were during the transatlantic slave and goods trade. By making the foraging process, tea service, and act of drinking highly visible, Davis allowed the silent traces of the past that are hidden in our contemporary

traditions to be recognized as part of a critical remembering and decolonial learning for our shared futures. She let the past speak through a slow uprising voice, both botanical and human, to complicate our roots of knowledge. The fragments of clay embedded within the tea set created fissures that allowed hauntings to leak out, fragrant with stories from the earth and of a shared humanity. Attempting to embody a learning from a troubled history required an empathy across difference; by sitting together over tea Davis directed attention to the shared affinities and "to the ways that the intangible heritage practices of 'bush teas' have often transgressed the boundaries of race, religion, skin colour and class" (Cheddie, 2016, p. 5).

In her own writing on post-plantation life, Davis (2016c) asks: "centuries later, what does repair work—healing, renovation, restoration, rejuvenation—look like in post-plantation economies of the Caribbean, and how might one shift from seeing nature as a commodity, to instead considering the landscape as a site of genesis and regeneration" (para. 7)? Reflecting on the exhibition, tea service performances, and artist talks, Davis shares with me that she was surprised by how many people she encountered were either misinformed or held little knowledge about the UK's historical relationship to the Caribbean. While sitting in a window on a main street in London, inviting passersby to join her, she was struck by a lack of awareness: "I've known you for 300 years, how do you not recognize me" (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018)?[5]

The ritual of drinking tea, shrouded in idealized narratives of civility, can be understood as an act of denial and forgetting. The ease of obtaining the leaves and the sweetener maintains a division between labour and consumption, something still prevalent in much of western purchasing

[5] The description of the installation and performance of *(bush) Tea Services* was informed by three pieces of writing about the project, as well as my personal communication with Davis (2018). For more information on the exhibition please see: Cheddie, 2016; Davis, 2016a; Otto, 2017.

and consumption behaviour. Davis' work reminds us that the social and economic impacts that began with Columbus are still woven into the fabric of our everyday behaviours and consumption habits today (Sheller, 2003). Showing how our contemporary cultures are directly connected not only to a history of wealth generated through slavery but through the continuing inequalities between the so-called modern west and the Caribbean, *(bush) Tea Services* ask us to question the ways the west (western Europe and North America) has and continues to consume the Caribbean's "natural environment, commodities, human bodies, and cultures" (Sheller, 2003, p. 3). As Sheller (2003) argues, those who live in nations who benefited and were involved in slavery, and I would add projects of colonization, have a moral responsibility to recognize the benefits gained and an ethical obligation toward those who have suffered and those who are still suffering from its lingering violence.

Davis offers a moment of intimate sharing and historical learning through a performance of posh mimicry that works to undermine the British tradition through a sincere gesture of healing. The interactive immersive environment directly intervenes through a participatory performance that counteracts the historical amnesia and Britain's erasure of its violent past and their blood-covered hands. The tea service allows such a recognition of the other to enter the bodies of the audience members through the drink. A custom of care, the tea mixed with medicinal properties, African and Indigenous knowledges, and creole identity, implicates and moves participants toward the other through a relational act of intimacy. I understand *(bush) Tea Services,* as an implementation of intimate pedagogy as it makes room (physically and temporally) for vulnerable discussions on difficult historical and contemporary realities to encourage new ways of coming together and understanding the other. Davis shows us not only how she is connected to Barbados and the history of the Caribbean, but how she is connected to Britain and its past and present

colonies. *(bush) Tea Services* invites a recognition of intimacy that many of us are also connected to Davis through this difficult history in different ways. These intimate connections, and with them the imaginative possibilities, are important to cultivate within the complexity and chaos of decolonial work, all the while holding one another in care and accountability as *(bush) Tea Services* does.

Learning with and between Lands: Canada and the Caribbean

As I have shown, historical connections between the Caribbean and the west, including the people, plants, and Indigenous knowledges of these lands, are fundamental to Davis' decolonial cultural and visual arts practices. Davis centers relationality to histories, not to homogenize but to make space for differences to come together, share and learn, and to create something new. In illuminating the small botanical revolutions happening daily, she aids our collective fight against the further erasure of such knowledge; to know the land and plants is to know ourselves, and this is integral to a reparative future. I conclude by considering scholarship and examples from Canada, to look at how colonization has shaped ways of knowing and living in different regions to further shine a light on our human connectedness as a decolonial learning method, and as key to intimate pedagogy. To do so I look at how care and critical reflection exercised toward Indigenous knowledges of the land can address colonial trauma in the Caribbean and in Canada.

Writing on the Caribbean, but ringing true for all of the colonized Americas, Sheller (2003) asserts Europeans moved through the region and altered the landscape completely, making it impossible to find an "original" Caribbean today. Plants, animals, and people from every part of the world have moved through its islands making "the contemporary Caribbean […] an assemblage" (Sheller, 2003, p. 3). In Canada, European setters came to steal, trade, control, and erase Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Killing and pillaging of bodies and land swept across

much of the Americas; however, Indigenous traditional customs and knowledges where never fully erased, and neither were the phytoremediator plants and their capacities to clean the air, water, and soil. With a similar focus and care as Davis to decolonial tactics and the removing of colonialism's toxic effects on our environment, economies, and psyche, Canadian video artist, self-identified witch and Pagan chaplain Jamie Ross (2019b), in collaboration with Gesig Isaac, a Mi'gmaq multidisciplinary artist, debuted their video and song piece *Roam* (2019) at Connexion Artist-Run Centre on Wolastoqiyik territory (Fredericton, New Brunswick). Highlighting land-based knowledges, the artists work with phytoremediation as metaphor and active principle as a way to transform and heal the colonial wounds left by the railway baron, William Cornelius Van Horne, scars that stretch across the Canadian landscape from one coast to the other (Ross, 2019a). Focusing on the violet, a flower that Ross refers to as "a tireless hyper-phytoremediator," the piece investigates how plants on Qonasqamqi Monihkuk (Minister's Island) are clearing the terrible toxic legacy left by Van Horne, a megalomaniacal man who participated in vast colonial projects and transformed Canada into a white supremacist tourist colony that spread into the Caribbean by way of Cuba (Ross, 2019a, 2019b).

Like the Caribbean, Canadian landscapes and cityscapes witnessed centuries of attempted erasure, appropriation, and the claiming of land and knowledge for economic prosperity. While much Indigenous knowledge, including that of plants and the land, is still not highly valued, discussed in dominant narratives, or taught in most formal education systems, there is more Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledge embedded in the bodies of those who live in so-called Canada than many realize. It is widely recognized that any settler who arrived on ships to Turtle Island and the Caribbean were only able to survive due to knowledge held by the communities that they encountered. This knowledge was not necessarily openly shared, and most probably obtained

through trade, or the capture and enslavement of Indigenous peoples (Bastien, 2004; Sharma, 2015; Sheller, 2003). These strategies of survival on new territories mixed with European understandings, as well as African knowledge systems that were carried in the bodies of the enslaved. Despite the ways the knowledge was formed or obtained, the fact remains that our understandings of the lands of the Americas is heavily indebted to Indigenous and African knowledge systems, sacred traditions, culture, and land (Bastien, 2004; A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018; Sheller, 2003).

While forcing assimilation, prohibiting language and cultural practices, and appropriating when it best suited them, settlers across the Caribbean, the US, and Canada were infused with Indigenous life on both macro and micro scales. This extends past methods of hunting and gathering plants for food and medicine, as well as building shelter suited for the climate, but to all forms of creativity and ways of being together over countless generation. Bodies that are products of colonization would not be here, on this land, any other way. Bloodlines that do not originate from the Americas carried ancestral knowledges within them, but also absorbed the knowledge from the new landscapes they found themselves on. So, while the land does not belong to the settlers, parts of their bodies were still shaped by the land even within cruel histories of segregation, fragmentation, and loss. This can be witnessed in much of Davis' work; while the violent markings of the plantation have always framed her relationship to her home, her body knows the land and belongs to the island of Barbados nonetheless.

Even when our bodies are someplace due to violence, and colonial racial ordering works hard to keep bodies apart, relationships are still forged both with other bodies and land. Our histories are layered with relational intimacies that connect our labouring and consuming bodies and actions that have merged ideas in countless ways, creating new forms of knowledge. This

includes tactics of refusal and resistance. The unintended consequences, which Sheller (2003) refers to, means that while history will always be fraught with horrid human behaviour, these violent actions are never the only history. Our bodily and ancestral roots never quite tell us the whole story; the invisible mixing, merging, healing and creativity that take place throughout our lives is impossible to trace. However, only looking to the damages of colonization removes the methods of survival and creative practices all born out of the connections made globally through the movement of bodies and goods (Bastien, 2004; Hill, 2016; Sharma, 2015). Intimate learning here is learning to continually challenge the colonial knowledge systems that we have been subjected to, in order to change the ways we build intimacy and knowledge with ourselves, others, the planet, and the ways we share and create.

It is this relationality that fuels Davis' desire for change and collaborative approaches to bring people together in meaningful ways. Aware of the challenges this poses, she reflects on the difficulty of approaching vulnerability as a method of healing in the Caribbean:

> I think the issue of vulnerability is not something that we think a lot about in the Caribbean. It's not a soft space. It's a really hard space; being vulnerable takes a lot of courage. Vulnerability is a difficult thing to talk about. I mean I've thought a lot about this within the context of how love is spoken about in the Caribbean and whether or not we deserve love in the Caribbean. Do we deserve beauty? Do we deserve spaces in which we can be vulnerable? Because it very often feels like there is this very harsh and traumatic history and colonial legacy, and it's really more about trying to protect yourself.… I think there's sometimes these separate groups of people that live parallel lives next to each other which is unfortunate because I think our lives are much poorer for that. If we were willing to become vulnerable and allow ourselves to cross these various borders, then our lives would be much richer for it. (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018)

Davis deliberately challenges the dehumanizing narratives of division that strip creativity, moments of powerful resistance, and counter-action that are possible in daily life. Like Glissant (2006), Davis' work reminds us "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (p. 11). The plants, like us, share this relationality. As the plants begin to reclaim the soil, their roots of knowledge sprout up in different places, spreading their stories across the divided landscape and borders. This rhizomatic thought, like our earth's underground mycelium network, binds us together through systems that reach across our lands and under the seabed. These "entangled roots that appear across a range of [Davis'] work are indicative of a visual 'poetics of relation' that works against a racially divided society inherited from the plantation era" (Otto, 2017, p. 39). The dress made of Queen Anne's lace that reappears throughout Davis' practice is a reference to her family's position in history but also to our interconnections and a representation of a poetics of relation. The lace speaks to the gaps of knowledge, the void of unknown or unknowable, and the spaces in between the self and other, but also the openings offered (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). Davis actively fills these spaces of unknown with potentiality and creativity to make room for more complex understandings of the ghostly matters that appear. By inviting an engagement that moves away from a single reading, Davis opens up spaces where different kinds of pedagogy can enter the work (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018). Davis' cross-platform practice of growing new relationships resembles Glissant's (2006) concept of "submarine roots" and rhizomatic patterns of thought. The Caribbean's history is "floating free, not fixed," extending in the world through networks and branches, and Davis traces both our routes and roots of history and knowledge (Sheller, 2012, p. 193). Looking at our relational existence works to bridge the colonial pasts and presents while

destabilizing a linearity of history and making room for multiple narratives of intimate resistance to grow.

Non-human and Non-linear Ghostly Intimacies

On my second visit to Fresh Milk, I sat in Davis' studio waiting to interview her while taking in the art hanging on the walls and the shelves of books in the adjoined Colleen Lewis Reading Room. Outside, birds were singing and trees swayed in the warm breeze, when a rat ran across the top beam of the doorway in front of me. As I watched it scurry away I did not have any inklings of fear or disgust; instead I felt the need to pause and reflect on the place where I was sitting and why I was there. Fresh Milk and Davis' studio, as discussed, are housed on an active dairy farm that was once a plantation; cows roamed in the grass just outside the studio windows on fields that used to grow sugarcane, fields laboured by the enslaved. During our interview, Davis reminded us the fields are stained with sweat and blood. The island's idyllic lush flora and turquoise waters made it easy to push to the back of mind what had brought me there. But with seductive beauty and the abundance of life, death is always there right at the surface. The traces left by interlinked lives and journeys over generations fill our places with ghostly matters, some felt more strongly than others.

Once Davis entered the studio, I told her about the rat. She said that she was sorry I had to see that, but that it was a farm after all. In my body I felt that the rat, though a fairly mundane experience of life there, had acted as a reminder for me to be aware of the difficulties that could come up during the interview that we were about to begin. I was cognizant of my desire to turn away from the hauntings and to not fully see the ghostly matters that exist as part of the realm of the counter-public (Gordon, 2008; Sheller, 2012). Not just subaltern, but subdimensional, subsisting alongside us formulating intimacy and knowledge with the environment and those of us

who can turn towards the disturbances. Near the end of our conversation Davis shared a story with me:

> I remember being in the studio late one night, around 11 or 12, and I was reading a will from 1815 that was written by Thomas Applewhaite. He was the owner of Walkers at that time, and he made reference to his favourite girl slave. Her name was Frances. Then he mentioned five other enslaved women who he was willing to his granddaughters. But I was very struck by Frances because he referred to her as his favourite girl slave. Which I thought was an oxymoron. How could you have a favourite slave? I wondered … there were gaps in knowledge there. What was the relationship, was she an outside child, was she a concubine? He offered her manumission five years after his death, the church would pay ten pounds a year and she would be taken care of by his grandchildren until her manumission. Of course I know the history, but there was something striking about reading her name in that will about this land. There was a line that was drawn from her to me. As two women, living on this same landscape under very different circumstances. So I did this series of seven drawings called *F is for Frances*, spelling out each letter of her name with the shards found in the soil on ledger pages. (A. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2018)

Davis views her own body and its history as intertwined with those who lived on the land before her, even if her settler colonial ancestral history is not easy or pleasant. Her work teaches us that the gaps and spaces in our stories speak to what we do not know, but that to acknowledge the presences of others—such as Frances, her traces and fragments—helps us hear the voices that speak against a public discourse that continually silences rich counter-narratives that are necessary to decolonization and healing. In their editorial, the co-editors of *MICE Magazine's* Ghost Intimacies issue, Ronald Rose-Antoinette and Sophie Le-Phat Ho (2017), speak of caring for hauntings as "an attempt at materializing the feeling of ghost intimacies or a knowledge of another kind, [and] thriving in non-linear time" as a form of decolonial methodology (para. 6). This task

includes disrupting the "inherited logics of servitude and individuation that continue to protect the institution of white supremacy" and identifying "the many ways in which systems of oppression survive and haunt the lives of queer, Indigenous, and people of colour" (Rose-Antoinette & Le-Phat Ho, 2017, para. 2).

Like a ripple effect of the past through the present into the future, hauntings seem to live on; a complex intangible personhood that works to collapse time. Producing a textured crossroad that "fork[s] the future and the past—a meeting point to look for a method of knowledge production to represent the damage and historical alternatives" (Gordon, 2008, p. xviii). By linking our identity to those who came before us is to approach hauntings with care, to build ghostly intimacies as a channel where we may learn the subjugated and fugitive knowledge from below and outside the institution (Gordon, 2008). In her article "How to Burn Paper for the Dead," Annie Wong (2017) writes about her relationship to Chinese practices of ancestral worship and illuminates the failures of western frameworks' preoccupation with progress narratives and deferred salvation for understanding the dead, stating that ghosts become othered when they are removed from our daily lives and banal spaces. Wong (2017) states, "in a conflation of the domestic and the supernatural, ancestral worship involves a quotidian intimacy with the dead in a heaven that approximates the earthly" (para. 9). Such an intimacy makes visible the oppressive regimes of linearity while summoning "alternative approaches to haunting, in ways that seek to overthrow the politics of disappearance, forgetfulness, and even hostility toward the dead, performed by racial capitalism" (Rose-Antoinette & Le-Phat Ho, 2017, para. 4).

By actively looking at past colonial hauntings that are still very present in our collective knowing, Davis' practice removes the powerful hold that fear, debilitating trauma, or denial have over our bodies, in order to make room for intimate connections with the ghosts, locally called

duppies, of Barbados and the Caribbean. She invites her viewers to do the same, while providing us tools of bravery to use vulnerability as a way to address our unique but connected ghostly matters. It is here, in the banality of daily life, as we move through our environments bumping up against one another, where intimate possibilities reside. To question our body's relationship to the land we traverse daily and to those we share the land with is to see ourselves in relation to others. It is a recognition of the rhizomatic connections and the transformative intimate potential, all of which Davis so beautifully illustrates.

Eight months after my conversation with Davis, while going through photos from my field research, I realized I had taken a picture of a plaque just below the beam where the rat crossed that day in her studio (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Plaque of Lorna Goodison's Poem at Fresh Milk

Note: Lorna Goodison, *I Shall Light a Candle to[sic] Understanding*. Barbados. March 15, 2018.

The plaque reads:

> *By the illumination of that candle*
> *exit, death and fear and doubt*
> *here love and possibility*
> *within a lit heart, shining out.*
> *Lorna Goodison, I Shall Light a Candle to[sic] Understanding.*

If the rat had not come in that day, I may have never read Goodison's words or made the connection between them and my struggles with the ghostly knowledge channeled in Davis' work. Plants and other non-human entities aid in a healing of our bodies and land. Whether on a farm on an island at the edge of the Atlantic, or surrounded by forest on the mountain in the middle of Montreal, remembering that the present lives alongside the ancestors of a place, and that history is never only about victimhood, allows us to look to our connected pasts for creativity and pleasure as a method of decolonial healing and resistance. The hauntings, pleasure, power, and vulnerability of charged spaces connect us to each other and the places we live. Our environments are holders of memories and stories to be listened to and learned from. Their howlings from below, that push us from the past to the futures and back to the present in thought and feeling, are housed in the realm of the erotic and bodily praxis. We need to listen to understand these ghosts as intimate matters of the sacred and the erotic. We need to turn toward the hauntings and their transformative offerings in order to see them as an inheritance of intimate learning and knowledge grounded in our shared intimacy. Having listened to the stories of land afforded by Davis, the next chapter moves to the shore to feel the winds and ocean currents that flow across the North Atlantic Gyre toward the Caribbean, swirl in the Sargasso Sea, travelling northward to circle back once again carrying with them stories of release, recovery, opposition, revival, and rejuvenation. Going from

land to the water, we continue the conversation of intimate life with the non-human environment as a method of learning about the self and other.

CHAPTER 5
Intimate Currents: The Fluidity of Identity and Erotic Knowledge in the Artwork of Nadia Huggins

> "I am a body of water…." Bodies of water puddle and pool. They seek confluence. They flow into one another in life-giving ways, but also in unwelcome, or unstoppable, incursions. Even in an obstinate stagnancy they slowly seep and leak. We owe our own bodies of water to others, in both dribbles and deluges. Theses bodies are different—in their physical properties and hybridizations, as well as in political, cultural, and historical terms—but their differing from one another, their differentiation, is a collective worlding. (Neimanis, 2017, p. 29)

> [T]hick with suffering at the bottom of the river's floor. The bloody river took the story to the Sea, the Wide Sargasso Sea, which absorbed the grief, folding it into its turquoise jade until it assumed the color of angered sorrow. It spun into a vortex, a current in the Caribbean. The Trade Winds.… The bloodied vortex of angered sorrow plotting its way.... All the time announcing, spitting, grieving, as it washed on different shores. The dead do not like to be forgotten. Sentience soaks all things. Caresses all things. Enlivens all things. Water overflows with memory. Emotional Memory. Bodily Memory. Sacred Memory. Crossings are never undertaken all at once, and never once and for all. (Alexander, 2005, p. 290)

> The water work has been interesting because there is a universality to it, but the thing that fascinates me is that so many people are terrified of the water. They connect to the peacefulness in my images but most people when they go to the sea feel fear and panic. So, whenever people approach me and say that they feel connected somehow to that peacefulness it always confuses me as to what it is they are actually really connecting to. It can't be the physicality of being in the water because most people don't feel comfortable in that space.… So there's something else there. Maybe it's desire. A desire to be something else I think and that's what it opens up in people. (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

From Shore, to Shore, to Shore: Barbados to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Back in Three Days

Set up beside each other on her couch, the fan was pointed at us on high. Nadia Huggins told me she wasn't feeling completely comfortable in her new apartment yet and had not been sleeping

that well. The roof was galvanized and was loud when it rains. I sensed her uneasiness in living alone. When we opened the metal gates that covered the patio doors, she told me that was the first time she had opened them since moving in. At that time, she had been spending most of her time on the private island of Mustique, one of the Grenadines, with her partner and dog. She was born in Trinidad but grew up in St. Vincent, where I had flown to from Barbados to meet her. Kingstown, the capital of St. Vincent, is small, and Huggins is both well known and easily recognizable: because of alopecia, her head is bald, something she's embraced with a large tattoo. When we were on our way to her apartment, she was driving too slowly for the likes of the man driving a van behind us. He honked his horn and screamed her name. I was surprised, but it only made her laugh. As we drove she shared snippets of information about places we were passing and of the people who lived or worked along the steep winding roads. In only knowing her for a few hours, I sensed she carried and shared knowledge with respect and tenderness. I felt both thankful and nervous with the vulnerability and intimacy that she had already welcomed with my visit. During the interview, the sharing of stories and knowledge, along with the strong coffee she made me, increased my heart rate. I got sweatier and my eyes became glassy with excitement.

After the interview, she took G[6] and I up into the thick mountainsides to her friend's Bush Bar where we drank Bitter Lemon. We all had to put on coconut oil mixed with citronella because the mosquitoes were violent. I didn't know if it was because I had been sweating all day, but the oil just sat on top of my skin. The film was so thick, my hair was plastered to my neck, but I found comfort in knowing I would be able to shower before bed. On the way down from the damp hills, we passed men with machetes smoking weed with their friends and family, children playing on the sides of the road, and babies being held. Huggins said the men had come from the bush where

[6] G travelled with me from Barbados to St. Vincent.

they climb to hidden locations to harvest marijuana crops grown in secrecy. Tourism is what the government says the country's main resource is, but locals know otherwise.

The next day, G and I took a boat taxi to Young Island, the first and the smallest of the Grenadines. The island was so close you could swim, but I don't think many people do. The water was dark and felt deep between the shores. Young Island was a strange place that is completely occupied by a resort, which we soon found out we weren't allowed to explore unless we were paying guests. We had made reservations for the Sunday buffet lunch, which gave us access to a portion of the island's beach for the afternoon. It was hotter than the previous day; sweat dripped down my back as I waited in the food line holding my big plate, dressed in a knee-length pencil skirt because we had been warned over the phone about a dress code. The staff were both skeptical and polite as they continued to gate-keep the posh façade that was quietly performed. We ate surrounded by geckos who stole dropped crumbs. A tourist couple beside us were in their bathing suits, eating over fits of arguing and silence. Tinges of repulsion coursed through me, mixed with feelings of not belonging and not wanting to belong. I thought of the anger I had heard from locals about access to these islands being dictated by the wealthy white tourism industry.

We spent the rest of the afternoon on the quiet beach looking back at the low-lying clouds that hung on the hills of St. Vincent. The sand there was mixed with black volcanic rock and ash (Figure 16). Once in the water my feet sank deep into the loose sand. We only had one pair of goggles to share, but I was scared to look over the edge a few feet from the shore where the water turned dark. G did it first and yelled back that I had to look. There was an underwater city full of life; the corals and urchins all familiar because of Huggins' photograph series *Transformations*. As we packed up, a local family was setting up for a sunset wedding ceremony on the sand behind us; their elegantly dressed guests arrived on the same boat taxi we took back.

Figure 16

Galaxy Sands

Note: My hands pushed against a thick layer of incrusted sand, shells, and volcanic dust from Young Island, to feel my muscles and the flesh of my thighs just below the surface; my skin and tattoos were barely visible. The sand was like a mask of a thousand tiny life forms. I find the tactility of this image almost sublime, as if offering a window into another dimension; I have a similar experience when I look at images of far-off galaxies and nebulas taken by the Hubble telescope. In a moment of reflective embodiment produced by the sand, it brings a contemplation on the ways we absorb and produce knowledge when visiting new places. I'm reminded of Benítez-Rojo's (1996) metaphorical visualization of the Caribbean as a spiral galaxy with its unpredictable flux of transformative plasma. I imagine the trail of islands as seen from space with large spiral hurricanes in the waters to the east. I look for the rhythmic patterns and information that appear in the chaotic unpredictability "that coexists with us in our everyday world" (Benítez-Rojo, 1996, p. 3) to learn within the complexity of life housed here and to recognize the larger impacts the region continues to have globally. However, my desires to be open to such knowledge at times brings discomfort in the multiplicity and the unknown.

Once back on the island of St. Vincent, masculinity seemed to drip off the surface of the busy dock where shirtless bodies gathered. The scent of Sunset Very Strong Rum hung thick in

the evening air. We walked along the beach back to our guest house and passed by groups of people who had been liming on the beach all afternoon; families played with children, young boys fronted, older men made comments, sex was negotiated. My presence was read as foreign, because it was. I was a visitor who had never walked this stretch of land before that day. From the beach we climbed the steep road. At the top of the hill there was a beautiful view; I tried to take photos of Indian Bay, where Huggins grew up playing in the water (Figure 17). I could see the island with the white cross where she photographed her project *Circa no future*. A group of teenagers was there, some jumped off the rocks into the water below, others flirted and kissed. A boy climbed the cross and stood yelling with his arms outstretched. With the setting sun, we could only see their silhouettes, but their laughter echoed across the bay.

Figure 17

Indian Bay

Note: Huggins grew up swimming and playing in this bay. Now, as an adult, her art practice still often engages with this water and the people living in the area. To me, this photo produces questions around the story of the bay. How did it come to be named Indian Bay? How has colonization shaped the visuality of the bay, but also the lives of those who lived here previously? The tiny silhouettes of the teenagers

channeling an infectious joy on top of the large white cross seemed to speak to the larger act of reclamation of the islands; a slow, at times difficult, ongoing process which will always require pleasure and play. Slavery, colonization, capitalism, and tourism with all their exploitation and destruction, have not succeeded in smothering the erotic energy within us or the planet, yet.

After dark, we walked to dinner. The stars were bright. I took a picture of a type of palm whose name I didn't yet know (Figure 18). We heard a screech that made us freeze. We looked up to see an owl with large, dark eyes looking down at us. It stared with such intensity that all we could do was look back in silence. It took flight, with its expansive white wings contrasted by the dark trees and sky above. I had to travel to the Caribbean to see my first owl.

Figure 18

Traveller's Palm (Ravenala madagascariensis)

Note: After taking this photo I noticed many more of these trees in Barbados. They are not members of the palm tree family, but a flowering plant that originated in Madagascar. They tend to grow on an east-west plane that can act as a compass and produce what is thought to be nature's only blue seed (Wikipedia, 2018). Moments after I took this picture the owl appeared. Visiting from Canada, where owls supposedly live in abundance and hold special meaning as messengers, I have wondered why it was that I had to travel

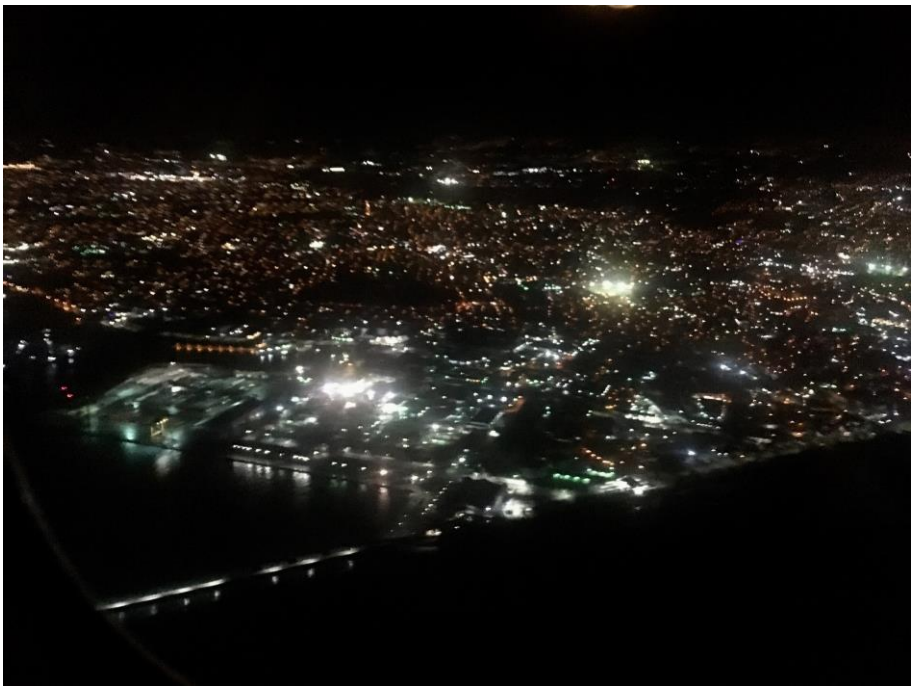
to St. Vincent to see one. The night was quiet, and the owl was so loud we had no choice but to listen. I was a guest there to learn from Huggins and the island. It was as if I was being asked to remember the complex history that brought us together, and to take particular care with the knowledge I was being gifted.

On our final day, we went into Kingstown to visit the group art exhibit about ocean garbage and conservation that Huggins was curating and installing. We took a van there and back. The subculture of vans is a mix of colourful decals, fast driving, and deep bass. The conductor took our dollar and squished everyone in. I survived the heat and stomach-churning turns by having a window seat. The dancehall was blasting so loud it filled out my body and helped me care less about the driver's aggressive road tactics. It felt like a miracle when I got a window seat on the way back too.

That night we flew back to Barbados through what felt like an eternity of turbulence. The sea below was black so we couldn't see the long patches of sargassum seaweed floating between the islands along the currents. The darkness broke after 45 minutes when the flat, illuminated island came into view (Figure 19). The blinking lights of Bridgetown on the shores of Carlisle Bay, and the south coast's lively St. Lawrence Gap and Oistins, brought a surprising wave of relief. As G drove us in his dad's car from the airport back to our apartment, he said he now saw Barbados differently.

Figure 19

Bright Barbados



Note: This is the shoreline I didn't realize I had a connection to until I left and came back. Through G and his family, I've been able not only to learn about the island and its history, but I've also been given the opportunity to develop my own relationship with the water, land, and people that I may not have had otherwise. I'm thankful that it welcomes me back and pushes me to learn in ways other places cannot.

Moving from Land to Water

I wrote the above photovoice narrative as a way to process my own body moving and learning within the Caribbean and as a way to highlight some of the aspects of daily life Huggins shared with me and the social realities which have shaped how she navigates public life and her creative practice. The photos and energy of St. Vincent also permit a reflection on the differences and similarities between it and its neighbouring island, Barbados. While the two islands are physically close—they are only 190 kilometres apart—there are stark geographical, social, economic, and political difference that I felt when travelling from shore to shore. From the outside the Caribbean is too often painted with a simplifying and homogenous tropical paradise tourist brush stroke. The

current use of the tropics and their imaginary being sold as a place of escape and consumption for the western touring body is not something I have room to delve into here; however, Caribbean artists, writers, and scholars have critiqued and continue to critique the impacts and fallouts of the tourism industry as the new plantocracy. The western footprint in St. Vincent and Barbados has caused immense loss and changes that continue to gravely effect the regions' environment and people. These issues are taken up by both Annalee Davis and Nadia Huggins in different ways that reflect the nuances these artists experience in their daily lives as they navigate small island nations as women. Both artists use their bodies in relation to the non-human to address their human social realities in critical and powerful ways. While I will bring the previous chapter into conversation with this one in different places, the purpose is not to fall into a comparative analysis. Drawing on both the differences and affinities shared in the life experiences and identity formations reflected in the two artists' practices, I attempt to reflect on how colonization, race, and other identity markers impact different bodies in distinct ways in different places. As a guest in the Caribbean I stand at the shore, a border or an edge of a nation, a culture, an ideology, and a way of life, to listen and learn from the intimate currents that connect people across differences, but without erasing the importance these differences hold.

This chapter turns from the land toward water to see it as a holder of stories, a protector, a giver and taker of life. This at times feels simultaneously terrifying and reparative. Stretching our imaginations, it provides the opportunity for us to see its encompassing nature and our ancestral and historical connection to all it touches. Huggins' artwork centers the sea, the activity around it, and the life living above and beneath its surface. Regularly using her own body as a point of reference and reflection within the waves, her work pulls us from our comfort on dry land under the surface to confront the immensity of what the water holds for each of us. The Atlantic and the

Caribbean Sea carry different relational stories; multiple histories of migration, movement, the lingering stench of the transatlantic slave trade, the Middle Passage, and all the changes brought on waves tell tales of death, resistance, resilience, and survival. As Alexander (2005) calls us to remember, narratives within the waves swirl like a bloodied vortex, thick with sorrow and suffering, overflowing with memory that should not be forgotten when thinking of how our bodies have come to these shores by different routes.

I sat down with Huggins on March 3, 2018, at her apartment to discuss what continually brings her back to the sea, not far from where she spent much of her childhood in Indian Bay, just outside of Kingstown, St. Vincent. Our conversation went from technical questions on how to photograph one's own body in the unpredictable conditions of the water, to accounts of intimacy shared with the sea, to moments of vulnerability and transformation. Starting from prepared questions as a guide, we traversed the complex and layered themes for which her work is known: identity, race, gender, sexuality, desire, intimacy, and belonging. Though the conversation covered several of her projects, this chapter focuses on her personal experiences of artistic creation, while looking at her large-scale three-part series *Fighting the Currents* (2015–present) that encompasses: (a) *Surge,* which includes the video self-portrait *I won't hold my breath* (2015); (b) *Transformations* (2014), a diptych photo series that positions Huggins' body in juxtaposition to various reef dwellers; and (c) *Every horizon looks the same* (2015–present), an ongoing participatory project where the public is invited to submit their own images of horizons from around the globe.

Visual and conceptual analyses of the above listed projects and Huggins' own voice are intertwined throughout this chapter to better understand how identity markers, such as race, gender, and sexuality, are fluid constructs perpetually mixing in their attachment to one another

and our bodies (R. S. King, 2014). Through the artwork, the chapter explores a series of metaphorical and concrete questions that require the reader to employ their imagination and listen to the sensorial utterances of their body. What happens when we imagine our identity markers in a liquid form? Could the oppressive imprint potentially be washed away along with its restrictive ordering, if only momentarily? What does entering the aquatic environment to peer under the breaking waves of Huggins' images tell us about identity, embodiment, and intimacy? When submerged, how does our sensorial understanding of ourselves and our world shift? We can recognize the raw power of the water and the knowledge it holds, but can we hear what its erotic energy is giving over to us? How can we use the escape it offers to challenge the hierarchical systems of dominance that hold our lives? Can the weight of our struggles be lightened in this atmosphere where the sensations of physical and social gravity are altered? Do we see people and our interconnected lives differently when looking through the fractal light of water? Is our vision of the shore and horizon altered? I ask these questions to open up an oceanic space of wonder as a way to approach the following pages with a critical imagining of what intimate currents of relationality mean to a project of shared, intimate learning.

Huggins' work explores many of the above questions as she fights the social currents that shape how her body is read, while making new intimate ripples to imagine a different world and the bodies that inhabit it. Entering the sea visually by way of Huggins helps our thinking about how bodily knowledge is held by the water, pushed ashore, dragged out to sea, protected, transformed, and rinsed to emerge anew. Maintaining the research's focus on intimate learning and its possibilities, this chapter looks to the tactics of vulnerable resistance in Huggins' images to address the ways limited identity frameworks, formed through colonization, impede a deeper exploration of being fully human with others, both human and non-human. Through the relational

representation of her body in the seascape, Huggins opens what can be read as a portal into another world within our world; one that simultaneously rides the line between familiarity and the unease of the unfamiliar. Honouring the role the sea has played as a storyteller, a container of history and our pain, but also a protector and healer, I attempt to answer Huggins' invitation to break the surface of our worldview, to envision another realm of possibilities, one where the strict social codes that prohibit our bodies to be fully free are diluted (R. S. King, 2014; Nixon & R. S. King, 2013). I begin with a discussion of *Fighting the Currents* as a project of movement, transgression, exploration, and discovery. I then think through what it means for Huggins to employ the water as a site of protection, absent from social constraints that she experiences on land. I end by looking at how the embodied erotic knowledge of the water represented in Huggins' work articulates how vulnerability can be practiced as a durational process and a method of social-political resistance and intimate learning.

Resisting Currents and Transgressing Boundaries

The ocean and the sea demand our attention through the sound of crashing waves, the scent of seaweed and marine life, the multiple textures of the sand and the water on the skin, the vast openness of its visual field, the saltiness on the lips, and the shift in gravity when floating, if we can surrender to its hold. However, below the surface, the water can disorient and obscure the senses we rely on while on land. The project *Fighting the Currents* encompasses an overarching narrative that links each of its interlinked pieces using "the sea as a metaphor for the stages of loss, grief and acceptance" (Huggins, 2018a, para. 1). Huggins tells of a journey beginning in struggle, where she is dragged from shore by a strong current and submerged against her will deep in the sea. In being stranded she finds a place of acceptance and discovery within the unexpected, only

to then resurface and feel disoriented within a new space, where every horizon looks the same. It is in this loss where she reaches for comfort in the universality of such feelings by asking others to share their own images of the horizon. Huggins sees each component as connected through a process of accepting her own fate. By entering the water she discovers "what it means to be pulled out in a metaphorical way by this current and not to fight it necessarily, but to go with the flow and see what can happen along that process" (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). During our conversation she tells me that she finds the underwater work difficult to articulate due to it being part of something larger still happening. Explaining each component of the conceptual *Fighting the Currents* project, she says:

> The work is really to me more about that process than anything.… That movement from being on shore and slowly finding my way out further and further into the water, submerging, going through that whole motion. *I won't hold my breath* is part of that moment of that struggle, of trying to fight something that's obviously meant to happen. The *Transformations* series is that moment of acceptance and finding something special in that place where you didn't expect to be. And *Every horizon looks the same* is that moment of disorientation when I resurface and everything looks similar because I'm out in the open and there's no land. How do I find my way back to wherever I was before? (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

Fighting the Currents represents movement, change, and transient moments of discovery where Huggins considers her "own identity, the environment and […] subconscious through each stage of the experience" with the intention of making images that "create a lasting breath that defies human limitation" (Huggins, 2018b, para. 6). Even when her body is not visible in a photograph, we are aware of her presence and the intimate sensibility that she shares with the sea. Using the light that breaks through the water above, Huggins gently invites a form of transgression;

a crossing of boundaries to develop an intimacy with the unknown, with ourselves, and the water. In striving to comprehend the immense power, erotic energy, breadth, and depth of the knowledge contained in the waves, her practice shows us how water can be a teacher, a healer, but also a potentially unforgiving life force. We are drawn into the water through her images; the life that the water sustains and the shorelines she depicts are easily infused with the viewer's own memories and longing. The calm, quiet intensity of the surface, smooth and glassy, reaches deep within us through the aesthetic language of the erotic. Angelique V. Nixon (2017) writes of the sea in Huggins' images as "both healing and dangerous, comforting and mysterious, constantly changing yet ever present" (p. 105).

Figure 20

I won't hold my breath

Note: Video screen capture of Nadia Huggins, *I won't hold my breath*, 2015. Used with permission.

Highlighting the transformative power of the water, Huggins asks us to enter her work with a care and humility for the sea, reminding us that it can steal breath. The video piece *I won't hold my breath* shows a tight shot of Huggins' face and bare shoulders cropped just above the chest,

under the water breathing air bubbles for over three minutes (Figure 20). Suppressing the induced panic, you become aware of your breath, breathing, and body, as you realize the video is shown in reverse, making it seem as though Huggins is inhaling the air from the water; something your body knows is impossible. Her body moves in slow motion, coming up from below toward the surface but never reaching it. You are left feeling suffocated and unsure whether she is dead or alive. She says, "it's about that uncomfortable moment of wanting to resurface but you can't" and using that moment as a way to pose questions of belonging in a transient state of buoyancy (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). By drawing attention to our embodied instincts we have in relation to water, the clip shifts our reliance on the visual to include our other senses, forming an altered sensorium to question how we have learned with and from the water, the knowledge held in the swells, and the fears deep within us. How may we further build an intimate trust with the water and the history that shapes our relationships to it and others?

Aware that many people fear the water, Huggins' photographs of the corals, urchins, and the filtered light are one of the few ways for viewers to see what is living just off the shore, a space they do not feel comfortable venturing into physically. The work becomes an invitation, a warning, and a tool of possibility. By encouraging her viewers to take a leap and to build an intimate trust with such a power, Huggins actively creates moments that require release, where one must practice a purposeful vulnerability. Huggins' practice not only asks her audiences to explore such depths but has also required her to test her own boundaries of comfort. Looking for what can be discovered in the wake, she continually moves her body further from the shore to overcome thresholds of trepidation and vulnerability as an artistic method. While in conversation, Huggins spoke of the water as an environment that permits an exploration of vulnerability that has facilitated an authentic expression of her personhood that the land could not provide her. Finding this form of

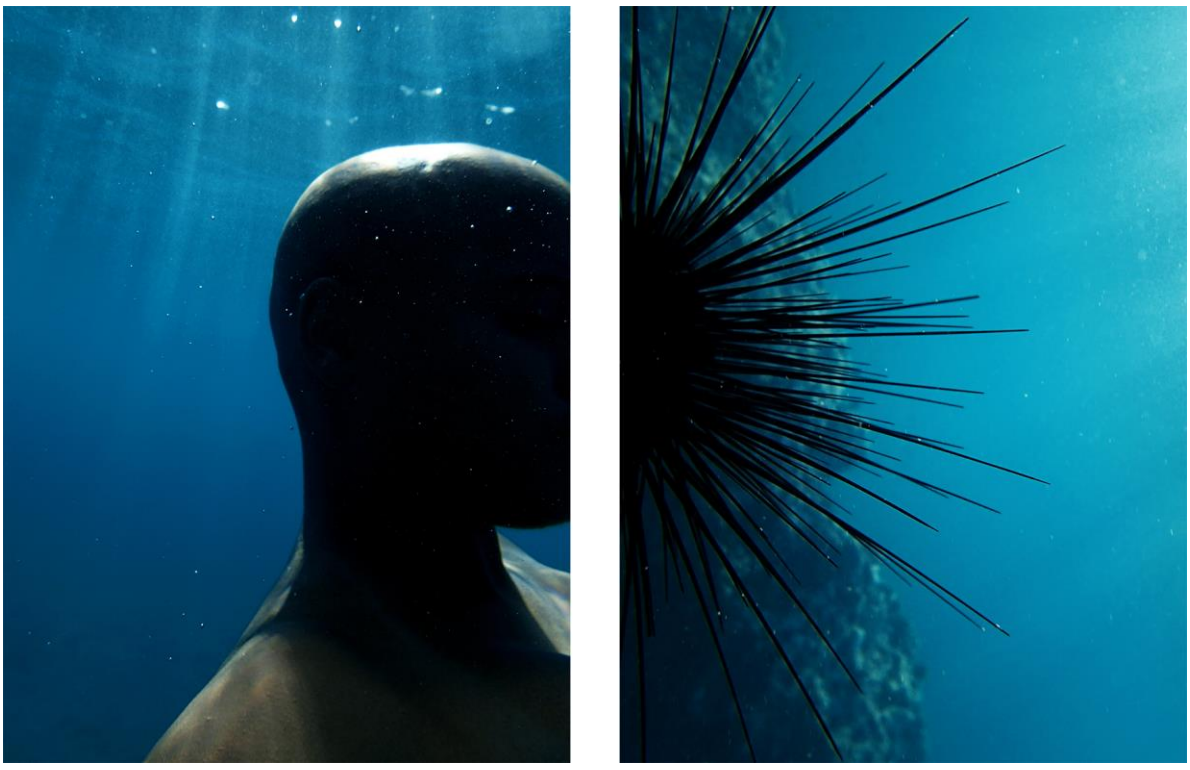
sanctuary in the water did not necessarily come with ease. In the following paragraphs I discuss the social factors that impacted Huggins' turn to the sea, and the freedom and creative processes that came about from this shift.

The Erasure of the Social

> In the sea, as a woman who identifies as other, my body becomes displaced from my everyday experiences. Gender, race, and class are dissolved because there are no social and political constructs to restrain and dictate my identity. These constructs have no place or value in that environment. This idea creates the foundation for these portraits. (Huggins, 2018b, para. 3)

Figure 21

Transformations (1)



Note: Nadia Huggins, *Transformations* (1), 2014. Used with permission.

Coursing through many of Huggins' images is a sense of hope in the possibility of lifting the social bondage that weighs down many people. The photographs of her body in her series,

Transformations (2014), buoyant in the lucid shades of blues, are both somber and playful at once in their exploration of human life in relation to marine life (Figures 21 and 22). The images inspire thoughts of potentiality within transformation and change, but also bring with them a sense of longing; an unutterable desire for something other. *Transformations*, like most of her underwater projects, allows us to see the human figure immersed in a sparse viridian surrounding—in weightless freedom—which disorients the ways we prescribe social categories of identity on bodies. The diptychs juxtapose images of Huggins alongside different forms of marine life, creating a tension in how we view her body, where gender and race are difficult to define through the gradient light that darkens with depth. Within the unease of witnessing her body transform and meld with beings that are unfamiliar to most, the social boundaries that we rely on heavily seem challenging to grasp. How the body is held in the water creates slippages in our sensory fields, obscuring our worldview, but seemingly offering us an alternate promise.

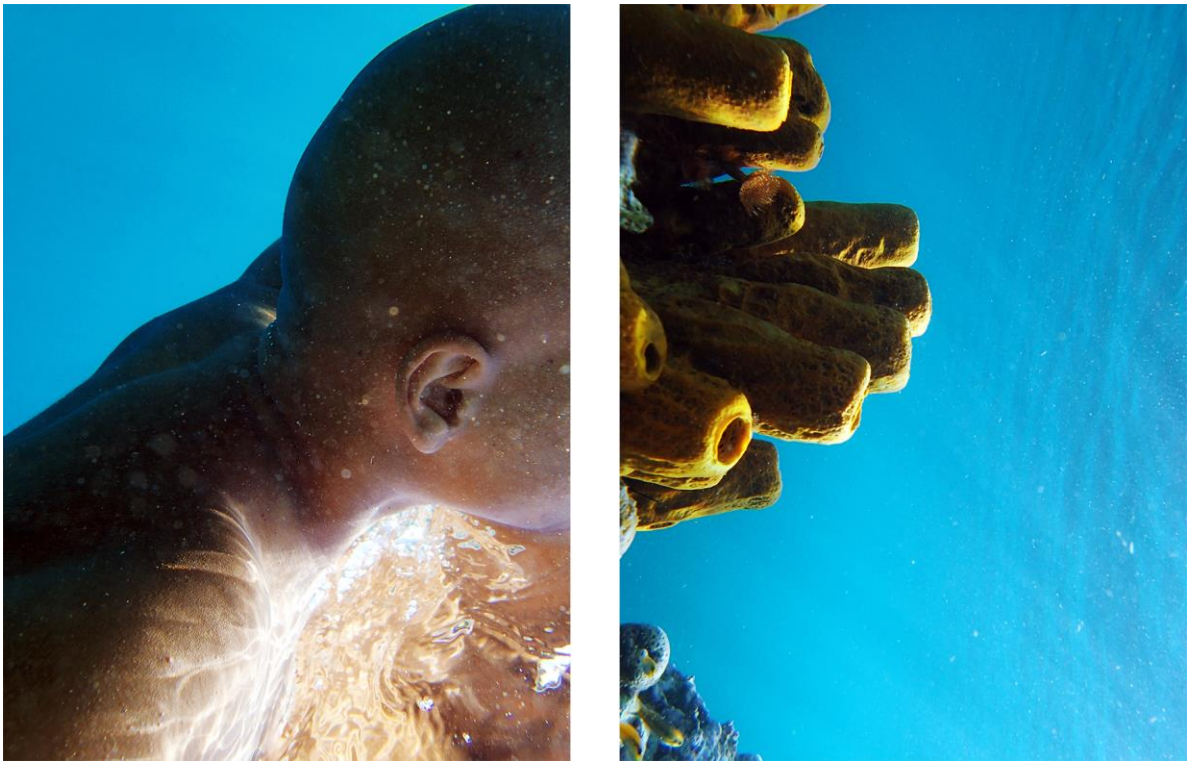
One of the most illuminating things Huggins shared during our conversation was how much of her creative practices are informed by resistive tactics she has learned to employ daily as a lighter-skinned bald woman. Her body is read as other and queer in the Caribbean and, arguably, many places in the world. The water to Huggins has acted and continues to act as a protective element and site of exploration against forms of aggressive heteronormative masculinity that take up much public space in St. Vincent. The way I viewed her images and my understanding of her artistic processes radically shifted when learning of the long relationship she has developed with the sea as a space of refuge—an intimate other. Expanding on her thoughts on *Transformations*, Huggins (2018) elucidates on the agency granted to her when she is immersed in the water:

> I'm out there alone. Nobody is looking at me, or nobody can see what's happening beneath the surface. There's this kind of freedom in that; where you just, you can do anything … in a vulnerable way because you feel that freedom to do it. And I

> think that's why the images come across that way, because it's literally the safest place on this island for me. Without a doubt.… There's a peacefulness there that I can't quite explain. Especially as a woman, you don't have the freedom to be at a beach alone and to be alone here and feel safe. For me to break through that fear and to be so far out because I know nobody's going to come out there and bother me; that has been the most exhilarating thing for me with this project. And I think it comes through in the work, because I'm comfortable. (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

Figure 22

Transformations (8)



Note: Nadia Huggins, *Transformations* (8), 2014. Used with permission.

Seeking out a place of security in the waves has pushed Huggins to confront her fears of the unknown under the surface. Overcoming her doubts and weighing the dangers that await her on shore with those out in the sea, she is inspired by the desire to rid her body of the social codes that suffocate her. She enters the water blurring essentialist categories to reveal authentic pieces

of herself that have always been present. Our shared humanity is often forgotten in the colonialist and capitalist societies in which we are forced to navigate and compete. The alternative expressions and gendered representation of the body present in Huggins' images invite us to question our own attachments to how we not only define our own bodies, but also how we police others. Here the water offers Huggins—and us, vicariously through the artist—a liberty that would be difficult to imagine on land within the confines of contemporary life. The work permits her to investigate the use of her body and movement in ways that she could not do elsewhere. As she states:

> I don't feel self-conscious there. It's about being removed from those constructs that you experience on land. I'm bald, I have alopecia, I'm always very aware of myself and how I move through land with people and how they are seeing me constantly, so if I were to photograph myself in that situation it will [*sic*] come across very differently. I would be very guarded. I would find a way to mask that vulnerability.… Walls are up because people are around, I feel like I'm being judged in some way. I don't feel that in the water, again because the invisible point below the surface, nobody can see me. (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

Huggins' continual turn to the sea—its added cloak of both power and invisibility—for escape and protection in her daily resistive actions against misogyny, strict gender codes, and prescriptions of desire, is layered with how her racial identity is perceived due to her racially mixed background. Challenging the failings of visual identity markers and assumptions that operate because of them, Huggins' images concurrently work with erasure and healing. In an act of disavowal, she directly calls out the shallow meanings of binary identity roles through an art practice that uses vulnerability and a queering of space in search of liberatory moments. Her refusal of a simplified reading of her body complicates presumptions and understandings of the Caribbean experience and the multiple identities she must negotiate. She depicts her body free of clothing or

swimming gear. Aware she is read as masculine, she queers how her body is understood and with it the environment where she floats. Thinking through how Huggins' art portrays a queerness of gender and sexuality while offering counter-methods of aesthetic expression in the Caribbean, Nixon (2017) writes about *Transformations* as a series of movement and metaphor that challenges gender norms:

> [R]epresentations of an ambiguous body and marine organisms, in paired vertical compositions, creating the illusion of the subjects merging into a new (human) being. Gender presentation and expression are deliberately troubled in this series, as is evident in the series title, which evokes not only the more obvious change in the human body but also change in the sea—perhaps the sea as necessary healing and transformative conduit of the human. (p. 105)

In Nixon's analysis of the ways Huggins troubles our reading of the human through the queering of place and body, she sees Huggins' use of her gender-fluid and racially equivocal body as a symbol of transformative possibility within the Caribbean, as it "push[es] against normative representations of being human" (Nixon, 2017, p. 106). With her body distorted in the waves, the water allows Huggins, if only momentarily, freedom from societal policing and a space to explore being otherwise. Such rendering of her body produces forms of expression and being that do not adhere to prescribed colonial essentialist categories of identity or humanness (Mohammed, 2010, 1998; Nixon, 2017). Instead, as Nixon (2017) argues, Huggins queers our reading of the Caribbean, allowing us to think beyond social markers, furthering our ridged definitions of what queer is and means in the Caribbean and, I would suggest, elsewhere too. Huggins participates in a conversation on how queerness and identity are communicated globally, while being embedded in local experiences with tensions between human and non-human entities. The overarching project, *Fighting the Currents,* which *Transformations* sits within, is a sight of struggle against such local

realities and norms, but it is also about discovery and learning within a frictional state. Specifically speaking of *Transformations*, Huggins says,

> it's about that tension, and trying to stay there somehow. Stay in that state of not feeling as though who I should be is being dictated. That's […] why I've put these spaces between the images; to create that tension where you're trying to become part of this world, but you're not really allowed to. So, it's like when you're in the water, and you're somewhat buoyant, that suspended state of trying to submerge and resurface at the same time. I like how the images are juxtaposed and it creates that buoyancy. That to me is what I see when I look at them. There is a kind of buoyancy […] of staying or going into that state. (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

Centering both her embodied knowledge and the fluid relationality with the water, Huggins permits us to see the water as a space of potentiality; a queering of water that highlights its role in liberation politics that flows far beyond the region. To think of Huggins' practice and non-normative aesthetic choices as Nixon (2017) suggests—ones which trouble the "term queer through a defiant perspective on space, place, and futures" to open up "future-oriented and other-worldly visioning of Caribbean land- and seascapes" (p. 106)—is to question how these transformative conceptions of the self and the other can extend to our intimate learning everywhere. Like Nixon (2017), I understand Huggins' practice as transcending space and place, in a dialogue that is shaping how we understand race and gender in decolonial ways; her practice lays outside of the traditional ways we speak about identity, connection, and relation. As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, the Caribbean, in its bringing together of cultures and ideas, has allowed multiple seeds of criticality and creativity to emerge and spread. It is here, with works such as Huggins' and in conversation with Caribbean feminism and queer thought, that we can

think more broadly about what transferable and transformative possibilities are afforded when we incorporate theories of intimate freedom and relationality in our global decolonial work.

As initially visited in the discussion of erotic theory and agency in Chapter 2, vulnerable resistance and aesthetic forms of expression are key to liberation and transgressive politics because they work to create what Sheller (2012) refers to as transient zones of freedom. Huggins exploits the permissible limits of her body specifically as an emancipatory tactic—one that forefronts her own pleasure and erotic subjectivity—through an embodied agency that highlights the erotic power of both bodies of water and the human body (Gill, 2018; Sheller, 2012). Fully aware of the ways the broader structures impact gender expression and agency, she generates spaces of release and relief, through the aid of the water. By exercising her bodily autonomy through subversive performative actions that are visually recorded and shared, Huggins produces "arenas for self-definition, self-empowerment, and alternative performances of the self" (Sheller, 2012, p. 261). She is not creating this work outside of normative social understandings of life; instead Huggins finds ways to engage with audiences through shared feelings and desires triggered by her water images. It is inside quotidian life, and with it hegemonic discourses, that Huggins finds moments of hope and utopian dreamings for us to occupy (Ellis, 2011; Muñoz, 2009). From within these renderings of peace and calm, one may find a space of permission to be vulnerable and intimate, and possibly transformative.

Nadia Ellis (2011), looking at the ways alternative forms of masculinity and queerness are performed in Jamaican dancehall culture, writes that non-normative expressions are not only found in periphery locations, but are often found "resisting from the very center" (p. 19). Ellis (2011) argues that queer life should be read as creating openings within dominant traditions and nationhood, permitting moments where queerness can survive and thrive. In Huggins' practice,

queer includes alternative forms of remembering, healing, and a reimagining of intimacy. In Huggins' photographs, our memories and desires for *something else* meet those shared by others across an experience of being human. Huggins helps us navigate the difficult social terrains and subjects we confront; identity and belonging shift, allowing for something completely new to resurface within the erotic life force of the water. Below, I further explore the erotic and intimate energies present in the *Fighting the Currents* series and the durational learning Huggins identifies as integral to her practice, which I understand as intrinsic to an intimate pedagogical praxis.

The Duration of Intimacy and Learning

Huggins' work is a durational practice; it is a lifetime of knowledge creation through a queering of space and place, and the use of erotic agency, both her own and that of the water. The erotic life force of the sea in her images carries with it a recognition of our shared histories and humanity, where the passages across the Atlantic brought us together, transferring knowledge, and creating possibilities of connectivity that challenge the divisionary ordering of colonial life (Sharma, 2015). The sea shielded and encouraged a creative growth in Huggins as she built an intimate life with it, living close to the shores on an island. The visual representations of this relational intimacy encompass both awe and vulnerability, but also requests us to look deeper into issues that keep us apart. In daily life our relationships to others are continually being shaped and pushed by multiple factors. Through her curiosity to see what is beneath our surfaces and to transgress divisionary boundaries, Huggins reminds her viewers of a shared responsibility to ourselves, others, and the environments to which we live in relation.

Huggins treats the sea as a carrier of knowledge and narratives between lands and people; a connector, a healer, and a transformer. The water has worked to change the ways she knows herself. Beneath the surface is an environment full of history and knowledge that when touched

creates shifts. It not only provides protection and holds Huggins' stories, but in many ways carries the whole Caribbean region; hugging the island nations, the people, plants, languages, customs, traditions, and ideas that live on them, while carrying them between communities and beyond, allowing for exchange. Huggins encourages this broadening in how we come to know places and one another through an assertion of the fluidity of identity and knowledge. She addresses the importance of looking to experiences both inside and outside of ourselves as a method of questioning the expansiveness of being and belonging (Nixon, 2017). Nixon (2017) writes of Huggins work: "we are reflections of our experiences, yet we can determine and transform the world we live in and the spaces, communities, and societies we come from and are a part of that are in desperate need of transformation, rebuilding, and healing" (p. 112).

The healing and cleansing potential housed in Huggins' art allows the water to encompass and communicate spiritual and sacred facets within social-political agency. In our daily lives most of us rarely think of the water or the land as part of our body; instead, we understand ourselves as separate, existing in individual entities. However, as an essential element of life, we can benefit from seeing the water as a transformative healing power and our own bodies as a body of water connected to all bodies of water (Neimanis, 2017). Huggins' displays of connectivity and transcendental transformation visually wash us to blur the lines drawn between life, enabling spiritual elements to enter the equation, thus merging the political and the sacred in her practice. Actively resisting what Alexander (2005) calls archaeologies of dominance that divide and separate, I see Huggins as investing in reciprocity with the water to help us "cross over into a metaphysics of interdependence" (p. 6). As an extension of this, Huggins' practice represents a transnational decolonial feminism that incorporates what Alexander (2005) would define as pedagogies of the Sacred. Inside pedagogies of the Sacred lives the erotic and aesthetic expressions

that make the intangible tangible (Alexander, 2005). I understand this as a process of knowledge formation committed to the duration of intimate understanding. Like Alexander (2005) who sees "the Sacred as an ever-changing yet permanent condition of the universe" where "pedagogies in this universe of the Sacred are ongoing" (pp. 15–16), I uphold that the recognition of the poetics of (intimate) relations are integral to this universe, where it takes time for such connections to be revealed.

Like knowledge, intimacy is built through experience, duration, and repetition to expose something anew. Huggins' practice demonstrates that purposely seeking intimacy allows for a fuller form of expansive learning, one that connects us to all life, which in turn can permeate divisionary social boundaries. Like in the previous chapter that looked at the use of pace in Annalee Davis' work in conversation with the land, the sense of time and duration in connection with the water in Huggins' work has comparable impact. Davis' projects participate with the slow botanical uprising to uncover the histories held in the soil and to confront post-plantation realities. She purposefully creates moments of slow reflection in intimate settings through layered gestures that force a pause, such as drinking bush tea and sweeping to cleanse. Using the intimacy she has developed with the land as a vehicle of invitation, Davis brings people, who may or may not know her and the history, together to discover what the artwork exposes for them and to create something new. Huggins' similarly uses elements of time and intimate outcomes of a durational practice, but by moving us into the marine environment, highlights a different form of pace, process, and social questioning.

Spending her life by the sea and turning to it for protection and reflection, Huggins has done the durational intimate work with the water that permits her conceptual and visual practices to take shape. Huggins (2018) sees this journey as a process of repetition over time. In conversation

she shares that it is important for her "to try and understand how to build meaningful relationships" with the water, other humans, and processes (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). Learning how to spend time with something and someone has been central to her practice. To do so she must occupy certain levels of discomfort, and it is here where she sees repetition as most important: "then you start to break through it little by little" (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). Making visible her movement from the shore out into deeper realms, she presents an embodied process of relationship making in flux. Her art practice relies on her repeated crossings of thresholds to produce critical reflections on social conditions and the effects on her own body and the sea. As if floating in pause with her, *Fighting the Currents* presents a collection of work that questions relational intimacy and vulnerability between the self and the other. Through processes of listening to the erotic knowledge of the sea, Huggins shows the transformative possibilities that engaging with the water as other can have on our bodies. I understand these durational patterns, uses of vulnerability, and echoes of discomfort that course through her work as essentials to intimate pedagogy and a decolonial practice. I revisit this idea of process and patient uncovering in the next chapter to further the theory of intimate learning and to think through what happens when we come up against boundaries that are not meant to be crossed, or when transgression is refused in our work on reparation and healing.

Imaginative Fluidity of Freedom

> Even with seeing it's never just enough. You always need more. I think the images are just the gateway to pull people in, and then you open up a conversation from there. (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018)

Huggins' images act as visual poetry about a relationship of love with the sea and the freedom it can afford. Weaving in stories of familial connection, resistance, escape, and agency, her work speaks a language spoken by the sea, communicating depth and sparking desires within many who

engage with her photographs and videos. She collects and visually translates stories of seductive longing, pulling our attention to our relational experiences and connections beyond the purely physical, allowing the erotic and the sacred to seep through. I close with Huggins' participatory project, *Every horizon looks the same*, to imply that there are shared experiences that may be easier to see when the reflective surface of the water is extending out in front of us (Figure 23). Not only do horizons share a visual aesthetic globally, but they also connect us through a fascination of what lies beyond the distant line that stretches with infinite possibility.

Figure 23

Every horizon looks the same

Note: Nadia Huggins, *Every horizon looks the same*, 2016. Used with permission.

Huggins says that she started inviting people to participate in *Every horizon looks the same* due to her curiosity about what the cliché of the horizon photograph speaks to and why we gravitate toward such human affinity (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). As the title

implies, horizons from the shores of oceans and seas around the world are similar in their disorienting uniformity of water and sky, but they are also visual fields that expand our sights into an unknown; an imagined alternate present or future to come. Horizons are a plain of convergence, a place where the sky and sea touch. Here, like with the other projects in *Fighting the Currents*, Huggins uses this space to open up conversations and possible learning to see what new relationships, connections, and worldviews may appear (N. Huggins, personal communication, March 3, 2018). She knows from experience that the differences that hold us apart on land can lose strength and meaning when we can see our shared humanity beneath the surface of the waves or just over the horizon.

I began this chapter with this set of questions to bring the reader to a metaphorical shore of creative reflection; a place of continual change where we may see ourselves standing on shifting ground—a mixing of water and land—to recognize our interconnectivity and to push the imaginary of what an intimate relationship with water can do. In doing so the chapter draws attention to the ways Huggins challenges the lingering authoritative colonial discourses that define our identities and the ways entering an intimate learning with others—both non-human and human—can assist in shifting divisionary boundaries and create space for exercising a fuller humanity that respects difference. Huggins guides us to view ourselves alongside and in relation to the immense power of the sea. The water in her work is the intimate other. Pulsing with erotic energy and memory, it is an educator of difficult knowledge and a conduit of transformation. Water is of this world and an opening to the otherworldly; a liquid ghostly matter. Water is an offering of what could be and an imagined otherwise. While looking at the hues of blue and turquoise enveloping Huggins' body, a wave of empathetic transfer draws us in further. The multisensorial embodied experience of being suspended in saltwater, the rhythmic breathing, and the meditative presence of water

touching skin become palpable. Huggins' work brings the human body into relief within the sea, merging with other organisms, pointing to the integration of all life. She visually articulates a practiced intimate pedagogy and the vulnerability and ethical commitment required for such a practice. She shows us we belong to each other and the sea, and that to learn intimately is to practice a fluid repetitive turn of critique, reflection, and questioning as a process of descent and dissent.

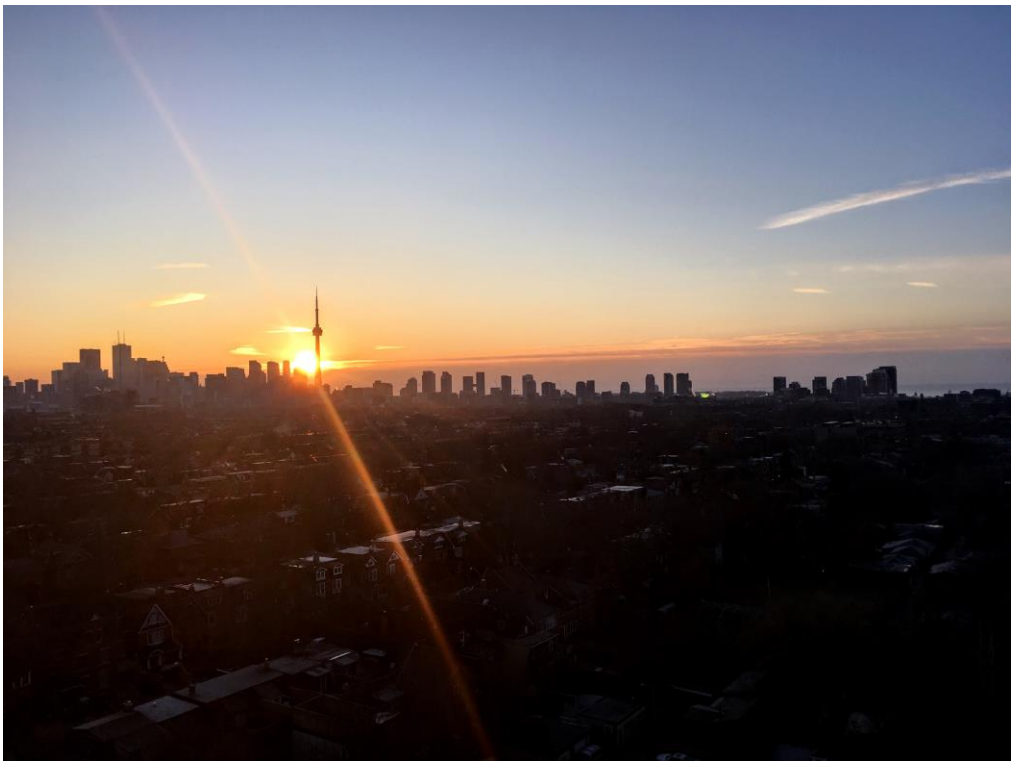
CHAPTER 6
Intimate Refusal: Strategic Uses of Resistance and Vulnerability in the Artwork of Michèle Pearson Clarke

> Refusal is a generative stance, not just a "no," but a starting place for other qualitative analyses and interpretations of data. (Tuck & Yang, 2014b, p. 812)
>
> Healing is equal parts personal and communal responsibility.… (Nicholas, 2019)
>
> All I've ever known is strength and abundance and connection from vulnerability. (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018)

In the nights leading up to my interview with Michèle Pearson Clarke, I was struck with a bought of insomnia. The thin windows of the studio apartment I had booked rattled from the cold January wind, which kept me tossing and turning. I watched the sun rise over downtown Toronto from this 17th-floor apartment twice that weekend (Figure 24). This was my first organized interview with an artist for this project, and I was clearly anxious. Clarke had invited me to her home to do the interview and to have brunch with both her and her partner afterwards. I didn't take the generosity of her gesture lightly; I was aware that her week was extremely busy because of the opening of her video instillation, *Suck Teeth Compositions (After Rashaad Newsome)*, part of the exhibit *Here We Are Here: Black Canadian Contemporary Art* at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).

Figure 24

Sunrise Over Toronto Skyline



Note: I took this photo in the early morning of January 28, 2018, the day after interviewing Clarke, having been awake much of the night with lingering feelings of restlessness.

Clarke, born in Trinidad, is based in Toronto, Canada, where she is the city's appointed Photo Laureate from 2019 to 2021. Clarke's artwork uses photography, video, film, and instillation; she often creates immersive environments or multisensorial experiences for both her subjects and audiences to enter and participate in. Her visual work extends through her writing, teaching, interviews, and speaking engagements that accompany her practice or which she undertakes alongside her creative projects. I first met Clarke at an art opening in 2013 through mutual friends in Toronto. We stayed in contact casually and I followed her work on social media and in person, attending her local exhibits and hearing her speak on various occasions. I was most impacted by her direct confrontation of death, dying, and grief, subjects that she continually revisits in much of her work, as I was processing the loss of family members around the time we

met. My appreciation deepened as I learned more about her work and conceptual practice. I became particularly drawn to her use of intimacy and representations of human vulnerability; her approach is one of respect and dignity but which also highlights unapologetically queer and Black experiences with political conviction. This refreshing practice is not always easy; her representations of relational life are at times heart wrenching and warming, tender and critical, playful and confrontational. The work often asks audiences to witness human vulnerability and to see themselves in the stories shared to challenge essentialist ways of reading groups of people, such as queer women and/or queer people of colour.

I had not spoken with Clarke for some time when I wrote her requesting participation in my research. However, her response was quick and welcoming, and she stated that she would of course be open to an interview. Before our meeting, I prepared by reading articles written by and about Clarke, as well as reviews and interviews. One that stood out and stayed with me long after is Tracy Tidgwell's (2013) interview with Clarke on her portrait photography project, *It's Good to Be Needed* (2013). Tidgwell (2013) introduces the conversation between her and Clarke with the words of Audre Lorde (1984); "that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength" (p. 1). Tidgwell uses Lorde's words to bring us into a space where we can think about and understand vulnerability as power; the vulnerability produced when we make ourselves visible to others, though a risk, holds room for deeper connections and can produce the largest transformations. Tidgwell sees this power visually articulated in Clarke's photography project *It's Good to Be Needed*, where vulnerability is used as a method to intimately confront the human condition of separation and loss. In the portrait series, each photo shows two women, who were once partners, standing side-by-side holding hands (see Figures 26, 27, 28, and 29 below where the project is discussed further). It shows simultaneously a gesture of intimate

sharing but also a performance of intimacy as an invitation to confront loss and the unresolved. Centering queerness in a shared experience of grief and healing, this project, and much of Clarke's work, "explores the powerful possibilities created through opening up to vulnerability and performing intimacy" (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 1).

This is the same vulnerability and intimate potential I read in Clarke's work and what brought me to request her participation in this research. But intimacy has many faces, takes different shapes, and offers knowledge that is not always easy to confront. The forms of intimacy that circulate within Clarke's work, the texts written about her practice, her words in dialogue with Tidgwell, and our conversation together, in addition to my own affective experiences with the rest of my project, all mixed and mingled within my body over the course of the research. While Clarke's was the first interview I conducted and transcribed, this is the last chapter I wrote. This is partially because I felt that it should follow the other chapters thematically. But also because, when I sat down to write this chapter I was continuously met with resistance and writing blocks. I spent a great deal of time anxiously writing in an attempt to approach the data productively. After trying to scrap the chapter completely, but being advised against it by my doctoral supervisor, Chloë Brushwood Rose, I turned to my friend, the artist Michelle Lacombe, to discuss the Tidgwell interview. My discussions with Lacombe and Brushwood Rose's (2019) guidance, in addition to her writing on coming up against resistance within research, allowed me to take the negative thought patterns I was stuck in and use them as part of the data to be analyzed.

I share this process of looking for learning within my resistive feelings as a way to highlight the power dynamic inherent in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. I began this project not to produce a study of the artists, but to learn from them. As challenging as it is to share, the difficulty and intimate resistances I experienced are part of this learning. The intimacy

I imagined I would form through the face-to-face interviews did not manifest as anticipated, but instead brought me something or somewhere I did not quite expect. It seems most fitting to discuss my personal struggles in a chapter about an artist who is not only a trained counsellor, but who openly applies therapeutic methods within her practice. Clarke's artwork (unwittingly in this instance) asks us to tease out blockages we all face. I think back now to those sleepless anxiety-filled nights before my interview with Clarke, and it was as if my body already knew that for this chapter on vulnerability, difficulty lay ahead.

In the following pages I take up resistance as an affect within the research process; I think through the possible outcomes and openings provided when intimacy is resisted and traditional forms of research are refused. Instead of discarding the difficulty in the data, I attempt to use the parts where intimacy struggled to form, where it was resisted or experienced as a form of disintimacy, and a turning away. Highlighting certain moments in the interview and the difficulties the analysis came up against afterwards, I ponder what it means to mimic or perform intimacy—possibly to not ever fully arrive at it. Is there still learning and productive potential housed within intimate resistance or refusal? Can this still be called intimate pedagogy? Clarke, in her own work, often uses the power of performance and repetition to trigger an emotive response in her viewers. What possibilities are rendered in repetition? What happens when participation is resisted, or when the artist refuses to enter the space of vulnerability that the work has created for another? These instances of withholding or gestures of resistance may create ruptures in presumed intimacy but can advance a reflection on the ways we impact the other and our relational accountability. What are the possible benefits of a setting up a framed vulnerability to produce a type of false intimacy, one that can be performed and reflected upon? This performed intimacy may act as a boundary—a protection against colonial knowledge structures or a shield against re-traumatization—but can

the performance of intimacy still produce a type of intimate learning? Reflecting on my own experience in the struggle with this chapter, I argue that it can.

I have spent much of the last few chapters pushing for a disengagement with divisive behaviours embedded in our racist capitalist societies through discussions of land and water. I now turn toward the human other to enter a different kind of intimate and charged dialogue, while holding the relational awareness of the non-human articulated previously. This, for me, is sometimes the most difficult of turns because as humans we promise failure. It is often easier, in an act of escapist avoidance, to look to the otherworldly and non-human for hope and project human desires on their vast expansive reach. However, without a turn back to the human, this project that proposes intimacy building as a tool for transformative pedagogy would be incomplete; it would stop short of doing the very thing it is asking. When we avoid the difficult work—resist the difficult knowledge of witnessing the other—we continue to fail ourselves, as we are the ones who need to change our destructive, self-sabotaging trajectory, not the waters and lands.

In the previous two chapters, we walked through the shifting and regenerating former plantations fields of Barbados with Annalee Davis to recognize our decolonial responsibilities to each other and the land. Then, through the work of Nadia Huggins, we waded in the sea to question how currents of erotic knowledge that shape our identities and relationships with others are intimately connected across history and vast distances. Both chapters listen to the hauntings of the past that influence our understandings of ourselves in relation to others in contemporary life. These chapters draw on the sensorial, intangible relations that connect all life as a method of decolonial thinking, one that turns toward our shared future of seeing non-human life with care and dignity, and recognizes our intimacies and the role we play in global reparation. Davis' and Huggins' ecologically rooted practices aided this envisioning. Now Clarke helps us return more fully to the

human and moves us toward seeing intimacy less as purely an erotic essence and more as a tool that listens to the erotic knowledge within and between us. This includes embracing the learning refusal brings; by answering to what opens up in resistance, I continue expanding and defining uses of intimacy as learning.

Below I revisit my conversation with Clarke to discuss some of the failures of my interview. In doing so I do not close off its capacities but think about intimacy less as an ephemeral intangible affect, and more as something that may be harnessed as a strategy and a tool of transformative healing and learning. While I may not have found the type of intimacy I expected that morning sitting in Clarke's living room, I did find something. I trace this journey through an analysis of Clarke's practice, and purposefully enter a space of vulnerability and failure to expose the difficult knowledge and subsequent intimacy found. While my challenges with the material contain elements of refusal and avoidance, the interview nevertheless informed the others that came afterwards and steered the research in a direction I only began to recognize two years later. The chapter ends with connecting a richer understanding of why intimacy building needs refusal and conflict and how intimate performativity and repetition moves us closer to each other even with resistance.

An Uncomfortable Start: Resistance in Conversation

Before I started the interview with Clarke, I asked if I could take her photo. She sat across from me backlit by the large bay window in her living room, one of her cats perched on the arm of the chair beside her. When I began recording I made nervous small talk, stalling before I opened my laptop to show her the first image that would frame the initial questions of the image elicitation interview. At the time, the photo appeared on the front page of her website (Figure 25). In the photo, Clarke stands in her backyard staring straight ahead without smiling, her left hand extended

to the side as though holding someone's hand, but no one is there. I asked her if the photo was part of her series *It's Good to Be Needed.* She said it was not; instead, the image was initially taken to be used on the website she built for the project. The website acted as a networking tool and informed potential participants about the specifications of the project, something Clarke does as part of her artistic process to maintain transparency and to clearly layout the concepts shaping her project, why she is doing it, with whom, and where the images will be exhibited. During this early part of the interview Clarke articulated how her artistic practice is shaped by her life experiences and background in social work and psychology, and her commitment to informed consent and ethical considerations in all stages of her work. She told me about how she left a doctoral program she was in to shift her career away from academia to social work: "I thought social work would be a better political framework for me to be a counsellor" (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018). But while doing her program's internships she discovered she didn't enjoy counselling, which then led her into sexual health promotion and education.

Figure 25

Screenshot of michelepearsonclarke.com

Note: Accessed April 13, 2018.

As Clarke spoke about her career path, I became filled with a nervous energy that fogged my brain, making it difficult to relax and focus on what she was saying. When listening back to the recording I can tell I was not fully present. I was distracted, thinking about the rest of the questions I needed to ask, and I was concerned about the relevancy of our current discussion. While it was all important information to understand Clarke's practice, and I appreciated her sharing it, there was a discomfort on my part in our inability to speak to the topics I was attempting to get at or to find a shared connection to the material. At one point she shared that she understood that the image in question had become closely associated with her as an artist:

> [The image] became so evocative of me and my practice, that it is an image I use very often in presentations. And the first time *It's Good to Be Needed* was shown, Elisha Lim curated the Gay Pride Show at the Gladstone, and they actually used it as the exhibition promotional image for the postcard, even though the image wasn't even in the show. (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018)

Here I missed the opportunity she had provided to move on. Instead I kept the conversation attached to the photos and probed further: "Was it a specific choice not to include the self-portrait in the final project? You're reaching out but nobody's holding your hand. It seems like something is purposefully erased or missing. I just wonder what that choice was?" Clarke said she didn't see the image that way and reiterated its purpose was for participants to see her and what the project would look like. My inability to put away the image and the visual representation of her body became unproductive. At that point my questions created a further closure instead of an opening, resulting in a felt tension. Clarke refused my narrow attention on her body in a static image to be consumed. She circled the conversation back to the details and challenges she came up against in recruiting participants and executing the portraits. By refocusing her answers on her biographical

narrative and artistic processes she was able to create a distance; one that did not close off our conversation, but which redirected it and set up an unspoken boundary of consent. She gently mentioned certain assumptions that people had about the project. Here in the recording, I seemed to realize my line of questioning had trapped the discussion. I offered a more open reading of the image in hopes that it would shift our energy:

> Maule-O'Brien: I think also, for [sic] somebody who doesn't know you could also read it as something welcoming. Welcoming them…
> Clarke: Come and hold my hand?
> Maule-O'Brien: No, ya that's exactly what I could read it as. Like, "I'm inviting you to participate with me in this project." It could be read in both ways.
> Clarke: Ultimately that's the way I came to see it, in terms of using the image because I'm not a therapist anymore, but there is a therapeutic approach often in what I'm doing. I feel that I am very mindful of my boundaries as an artist but I definitely feel that my background gives me the skills and the confidence, and just the comfort level to hold space for people's difficult emotions as we make this work together. With *It's Good to Be Needed*, I was this in between. Between two people who have a history of pain with each other. To hold space for them, I was very much like "come and do this thing with me." I held their hands to get through the pain to where we could take the photograph. (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018)

Here our conversation began to feel unstuck. I seemed to catch up with her and started to understand that the intimacy I was searching for was not there, but that something else was there in its place; something I was not fully equipped to see that morning. Clarke, in her delicate and generous resistance, moved my attention off her body and onto a process of intimacy making and resistance on a community scale. This reframing of our dialogue is a skill Clarke uses throughout her practice and it is what makes her work so powerful. She offers a structured space to process difficult topics and the emotions that arise in controlled ways that implicate the individual within

relation to others. It is her ability to provoke a form of healing—not to return to a previous state, but to move into a new space of transformative learning—that encourages her subjects and audiences to embody a productive vulnerability. As someone trained in clinical psychology and social work, Clarke is fully aware of impediments to vulnerability, but also knows how to use it strategically as an invitation. It was this form of vulnerability—one that can at times feel destabilizing—that I was not expecting to inhabit as the researcher. I was not prepared for Clarke's refusal and the kinds of vulnerability and intimacy it invited of me.

The interview continued with Clarke sharing the smaller details that shaped the route of the project, extending it beyond Toronto to Montreal, the multiple people involved in community outreach, the dialogues that occurred, and the resistance experienced. She told me that her participants, often creatives themselves, understood the impact and value of such a project for documenting queer life, but also in producing gestures of repair, healing, and a seemingly impossible moment to reflect on. However, in the end, after being in conversation with about forty possible participants, but due to various reasons such as one person in the pair not being willing, location, and the parameters of privacy and consent around her project, only four photographs were made. Going into the project she knew that it would be a challenging action for people to participate in, but admitted that she was surprised at how few people were willing to stand hand in hand with their ex: "I wasn't expecting hordes of dykes, but I wasn't expecting it to be as difficult to recruit people" (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018). Nevertheless, while Clarke produced fewer physical photographs than she expected and had to navigate resistance and refusals, she recognized the importance of such a project for opening up dialogue and imaginings across groups of people. In her words, the project "caused a huge surge of conversation in the community" (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018).

> [T]he photograph became this possibility, like this model of possibility, like it's even possible for two women in our community to do that. It was very powerful for so many people.… One person told me that they were at a dinner party one night and they went around the table saying "Ok, who would you do it with and why?" It was this topic of conversation, which is great because ultimately the project is inviting reconciliation. It's inviting people to imagine: who have I lost touch with, not because of abuse but because of the human emotions of pain and guilt and shame? Shame is a big one. And this culture doesn't teach us how to breach when that happens. And more time passes, and more time passes, and suddenly there's this person that you feel awkward seeing. It's difficult to just pick up the phone. So, what does it mean to invent a ritual to shift that? (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018)

Figures 26, 27, 28, and 29

It's Good to Be Needed

Note: Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Sara and Lisa* (Figure 26), *MJ and Louise* (Figure 27), *Val and Martika*

(Figure 28), *Reese and Eli* (Figure 29), 2013, C- print, 20 x 30 inch, from the series *It's Good To Be Needed*. Used with permission.

It's Good to Be Needed, like many of Clarke's projects, uses linkages that may have been damaged to create opportunities of repair. This piece offers a ritualized moment for people to come together and shift in personal and collective ways. For Clarke, it is in part the difficulty and resistance the project brought with it that made the work such an important contribution and resource for so many people. Clarke says, "ultimately the project is an attempt to shift things in a healing direction. And even simply having these conversations or imagining the process may be part of this shift" (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 3). The number of photographs produced does not properly represent the actual number of people who participated in the conversations. Clarke's advocating for the importance of the process itself shows that resistance and refusal are not end points, but instead windows onto something new that we may not have been able to see previously. Clarke's reflections on the hidden challenges helped me recognize the significance of my own challenges and learning within my research and the interviews. Even though the site of resistance was different—and as a research project it produced different outcomes—the acceptance of resistance and refusal as key parts of a process were still present and resulted in learning.

Intimate Refusal: The Unresolved and Unsaid

The difficulty I experienced in the interview with Clarke was not in what was said; it was in what was unsaid. Clarke's resistance to my initial line of questioning created a shift and a felt boundary. We were able to move forward together in productive conversation through the remainder of the interview, but it left me with lingering questions about what happened between us. What were the blockages telling me? In our meeting, we performed a type of intimacy, but did we connect? What did the failure of an expected form of intimacy bring to my analysis? And could I recognize the

learning it brought and accept that some ideas and people, even parts of myself, will remain opaque, unseeable, and unknowable (Glissant, 2006)? It is this idea of opacity in opposition to a Eurocentric desire for transparency and all knowing that is essential to research and relationships that are committed to decoloniality (Glissant, 2006).

In Glissant's (2006) call for respect of mutual forms of opacity, he argues that the right to difference must include the right to opacity. Accepting another's right to remaining shadowed allows for refusals to be viewed as generative moments of relational learning. It is this lack of transparency that is foundational to his theory of "relation." He clarifies that opacity does not act as an impenetrable enclosure, but like resistance, brings with it a freedom in accepting that we cannot know everything and everyone, including even parts of ourselves. He says, "it does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me … human behaviours are fractal in nature" (Glissant, 2006, p. 192–193). Was the resonance of dissonance I felt in my conversation with Clarke a result of my inability to accept another's right to opacity? Can intimacy form where there is opacity? Glissant (2006) states that opacity is a prerequisite to an anticolonial, antiethnocentric stance that acts without the necessity to become the other or without the demand to make others in our image. If an intimate pedagogy is to be defined within these terms then it must make room for the unknowable and for learning without mastery. Intimacy must be allowed to flourish without transparency, as building solidarity with others does not require us to grasp the other (Glissant, 2006). Forging an intimacy in relation with others needs to include the commitment to a cultivation of feelings of acceptance and confidence in an unstable position of not fully understanding, where control of the other is not the aim.

The disharmony I felt at the start of my interview with Clarke could have been a result of countless things, even something as simple fatigue. However, in any interview there are multiple

social factors at play. As a white researcher, asking questions about intimacy, vulnerability, and race of a queer Black artist will be a charged conversation irrelevant of how long we have known each other before sitting down together. And while I may not have felt any power in my nervous delivery of my questions that day, the historical reality brings a systemic hierarchy of the researcher and the researched that is drenched in racial dynamics that perpetuate white authority. To assume that these structures of power can magically be left at the door when we desire to form different types of relationships is exactly the type of behaviour that leaves white supremacy and racial order invisible and intact. While I was, and am aware of these facts, my desire to build an intimate connection across difference impeded my own criticality toward my body's presences in Clarke's space. I sensed mild frustration in her initial responses to my early questions, which triggered my own insecurities around being a white researcher asking racially charged questions. I entered her space with an expectation of intimacy. When thinking back to the start the interview, Clarke's refusal challenged my consumption of her Black body, it troubled the presumptions that were inherent in the research design, but also illuminated how easily we can slip back into systemic dynamics of power. I was drawn to the image of her, and my desire was that she would be knowable. She resisted this impulse for transparency that Glissant warns against, and this impulse for an intimate connection on the site of her body. This bumped up against my own eagerness for a specific type of connection, forcing me to reflect on both the limits of the research and what I was bringing as the researcher (Brushwood Rose, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014a, 2014b). Ultimately the experience uncovered assumptions around intimacy that I was uncritically attached to, dislodging them and redirecting the project to explore questions of intimate refusal and what happens when resolutions are not immediate or possible.

Brushwood Rose (2019) proposes that instead of turning away from resistance experienced in research, we should instead conceptualize it as a form of participation. By using resistive moments or ruptures in flow, we come up against our own limits and those of the project; "the failures, disruptions and interruptions posed by the difficulties of doing research are potentially generative, not of 'better methods', but of a complex rethinking of our methodological foundations" (Brushwood Rose, 2019, p. 2). Drawing on her experience with a specific participant of a digital storytelling workshop, Brushwood Rose (2019) speaks of how there is often someone or something in research that does not quite fit in with the parameters of what we thought the project would be, but like Tuck and Yang (2014a, 2014b), she sees refusal as a starting point or a way to shift the focus of the research while making visible the structures and processes of power at work. Brushwood Rose (2019) also argues that resistance interrupts the homogenizing effects of the desire that we all just get along. Resistance instead insists on social difference (difference from the other) and on the presence of oppression in every relation.

Tuck and Yang (2014a) interpret refusals in research as challenges to the settler colonial logic of assumed self-defined ethics and the right to know. In similar vein to Glissant's call for our right to opacity, they see a refusal as a critical intervention against premises of the felt entitlement to transgress boundaries: "Refusal, and stances of refusal in research, are attempts to place limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, what is not up for grabs or discussion, what is sacred, and what can't be known" (Tuck & Yang, 2014a, p. 225). Drawing on the research practices of Audra Simpson, Tuck and Yang (2014a) argue that setting limits, rather than being a subtractive or prohibitory move, can be an expansive and theoretically generative one that redirects us to confront the "otherwise unacknowledged or unquestioned" (p. 239). Thinking of refusal as both a theory and a method, they outline ways a framework of refusal

can be used to turn the gaze back onto colonial powers and "modalities of knowing" (Tuck & Yang, 2014a, p. 241). In this paradigm, resistance becomes meaningful as a "critique of settler colonialism, its construction of Whiteness, and its regimes of representation" (Tuck & Yang, 2014a, p. 241–242).

Incorporating such analyses of refusal and resistance is crucial in a research project that set out to interrogate the intimate ways race works within our lives. When we understand that our lives are imbedded with colonial structures, making power visible through a method of refusal can deepen a project that is asking how we can come together intimately in different ways. My body as a white Canadian settler must be complicated in the work, just as resistance to it should be included in the theorizing of intimacy and intimate pedagogy. The resistance I experienced from others and from within myself brought unexpected layers to the project, enriching the complexity of intimacy as a concept and practice. The areas of opaqueness presented different degrees of intimacy and allowed new comprehensions to emerge. Like Tuck and Yang (2014a) understand refusals as dynamic, multiple, and "always grounded in historical analysis and present conditions" (p. 243), intimacy making and learning must follow suit as a process and strategy of relation that embraces multiple affects.

Clarke and I may have failed to connect fully in a way that I desired that day, but there was still sharing and learning. Clarke troubled my colonial gaze; a gaze I try hard to not embody, but still fell into. The hold that colonization and white supremacy have on our bodies is not easily removed. To disempower their ongoing control is to employ resistance and refusal, not with a foreseeable endpoint, but as a journey. It is a continuous endeavour to challenge the colonial order and push toward a practice of decoloniality that requires an unlearning of the cycles of degradation. Reflection, relearning, and change require a constant effort and commitment to transformation

with the other, along with the discomfort it produces. This also includes avoiding burdening people of colour with white insecurities and fragility. Hopefully by making my reflective process visible above, it assists in putting more of the responsibility on the people who inhabit whiteness to interrogate the colonial patterns of behaviours and research to which they are attached. Below, through another of Clarke's projects, I continue to think through how strategically using and summoning vulnerability can assist in further challenging white supremacist and heteronormative ideals that impede decolonial healing.

The Promise and Limits of Vulnerability

Returning to Clarke and her implementation of vulnerability in her practice, I witness her addressing collective and personal themes of grief, healing, processing, and trauma, while being careful not to fall into divisive tactics that individualize systemic problems. Understanding her own approach as attempting to offer "structured process[es] that might lead to healing" (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 4), Clarke repeatedly uses the act of witnessing another's experiences as a way to address difficult knowledge and to expose oppressive patterns. While apparent in many of her projects, *Parade of Champions* (2015) stands out. As part of Clarke's own grieving process of her mother's death and her reflection on the public and political life of grief, she conceived of *Parade of Champions* to explore the experiences of others at the triangulation of "social exclusion, failure, and ongoing grief" (Clarke, 2017, p. 97). As a project about both grief and profound love, Clarke's desire was to address the universality and collective experiences of grief, loss, and longing, but also to make room for representations of Black queers who are "continually deprived of an existence" (Clarke, 2017, p. 94).

Figure 30

Parade of Champions

Note: Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Parade of Champions*, 2015, Ryerson Image Centre. Photo by Eugen Sakhnenko, 2015. Used with permission.

Parade of Champions was exhibited at the Ryerson Image Centre in the summer of 2015 as a three-channel video and viewable in a private room as an immersive installation (Figure 30). The artwork weaves together recorded interviews Clarke conducted with three Black queer people about their experiences of grief surrounding the death of their own mothers. Clarke (2017) writes of the exhibition:

> In conceptualizing the form of this work, I was seeking to create an immersive environment, both literally and figuratively, in which I would ask the viewer to sit in the gallery and serve as witness to black queer grief. The installation is thus composed of three large images projected perpendicularly and in close proximity to each other, accompanied by an audio documentary soundtrack transmitted into

> the gallery space. The digital video images consist of still video portraits of Chy Ryan Spain, Jelani Ade Douglas, and Simone Dalton; they are seated in their homes, almost filling the frame and appearing slightly larger than life size. The participants sit calmly and unspeaking, and looking directly into the camera. Over the ambient sound of the gallery, the soundtrack plays in surround sound, their three voices operating as a single, nonlinear narrative. Throughout the 24 minutes of the audio documentary, the participants talk openly and honestly, sharing with the viewer the experience of their mothers' deaths, their grief reactions, the insights they have gained, and the ways in which blackness and queerness have shaped their grief and mourning. (p. 92)

Parade of Champions presents a space for people to grieve differently but also together. The immersive setting is built to hold the audience members who in turn can then hold each other. By incorporating Black queer voices into a method of healing, *Parade of Champions* becomes a public demand "to de-pathologize grief and reflect on the possibilities it affords for communal activism" (Clarke, 2017, p. 98). Like *It's Good to Be Needed, Parade of Champions* points to new possibilities while challenging the dehumanizing stereotypes and behaviours that circulate around queerness and bodies of colour. They both simultaneously center healing and spaces of dialogue that connect people across shared human experiences. This widens the reach and resonance of her work as it generates linkages between human commonalities to trigger empathy and validate difference. Vulnerability here becomes a bridge of sort; a shared ground between life experiences upon which we can stand and learn together. Thus, intimacy is formed through these spaces of resonance. For those who are interested in exploring the dynamics of the unresolved, *Parade of Champions,* like *It's Good to Be Needed,* offers people "a way to explore risk, vulnerability and letting go" (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 4). When asked by Tidgwell (2013) if she could say more about

how vulnerability acts as a source of inspiration in her practice, Clarke replies, "vulnerability is such a thread for me. I'm very comfortable with it" (p. 5). Clarke continues:

> I have experienced nothing but strength when I have allowed myself to embrace vulnerability. My project is an attempt to do that. It's not about asking people to go to a place of vulnerability to re-experience shame or pain; it's about risking vulnerability and hopefully coming out of it with strength. (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 6)

In my interview with Clarke she spoke openly and directly in more detail about her personal relationship with vulnerability in her life and work with an understanding that access to such comfort and confidence is not shared by everyone:

> I have always been comfortable with vulnerability, and myself being vulnerable, so I'm not a good judge of other people's line in the sand when it comes to how vulnerable they are willing to be.… [A]ll I've ever known is strength and abundance and connection from vulnerability. Most people would like to have that but are not able to do it. Being in therapy, being a social worker, being in a workshop, whatever, you have this role of trying to facilitate this experience to bring people closer to that, so they can have their own strength, power, healing, connection. That's what I'm doing as an artist. So for a population of people who don't get to have that, particularly for Black women—you know the tropes to be strong—I have the ability to do that so why wouldn't I spend the rest of my life doing [it]? Artwork is to create opportunities for people to experience that in their own lives and shifting things. (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018)

While Clarke is transparent about the fact that much of her work reflects what she is processing in her life, this does not stop her from exercising collective healing. Clarke's artistic practice weaves together highly intimate, personal subjects, but also subjects of "public feeling" that are socially shaped and shared (Cvetkovich, 2012). By employing creative therapeutic

methods, she expands healing beyond the individual, to communities and institutions on a socio-cultural scale. Her videos and images capture private moments of intimacy to be displayed publicly as a site that can be returned to. Both *Parade of Champions* and *It's Good to Be Needed* seem to ask, how do you get people who have difficulty exercising vulnerability to meet you when trauma prevents it? Clarke recognizes how socialization and systemic factors impact how one may or may not be able to enter a space of vulnerability. "Race, class, all of those things inform the comfort level, like the price that you pay for exhibiting vulnerability, and the cost to you, the risks, all of those things obviously are heavily impacted" (M. P. Clarke, personal communication, January 27, 2018). Space is made to meet people where they are at in their own emotional process and to call attention to the complex realties that produce trauma in people's lives in different ways. Using the power of performance and repetition, Clarke's projects work to tease out the toxic patterns of trauma she witnesses, purposefully moving her viewers and herself away from reproducing suffering and toward healing, dialogue, and connection (Sedgwick, 2003). By doing so she humanizes the entanglement of these markers of pain to push for forms of healing that do not act as closure, but which open us further (brown, 2017).

Employing what I understand to be strategic intimacy, Clarke's projects use deliberate and controlled vulnerability as a type of medium. Clarke sets up delineated spaces to enter and to confront the avoidance of intimacy through documenting and exhibiting "traces of former intimacy" (Tidgwell, 2013, p. 4). She invites, even gently coaxes, us to be present and embody an element of the work. For example, *It's Good to Be Needed* displays a recorded moment of touch (holding hands) to symbolize some sort of resolve, or step toward something new, whereas *Parade of Champions* offers a simultaneous normalization and queering of grief through a multisensorial experience. By framing vulnerability as something that can be entered with measured risk, she

offers us multiple ways to inhabit the artwork and to take away what intimacy we need in that moment.

Resolutions and Repetition Toward Intimacy

If we are to talk about vulnerability and intimacy alongside resistance and refusal, then we must recognize the damaging patterns we often find ourselves navigating alongside others. This includes thinking through the ways feminist anti-racist informed research, academic spaces, and social organizing at times remain at a loss for conflict resolution and healing strategies, or how they fall into punitive tactics that draw upon and uphold the very colonial structures they are attempting to challenge. Activist and academic Sarah Schulman (2016) reminds us that resistance, and the conflicts it sparks, cannot be avoided in our work and organizing. Instead using conflict resolution as a tool is necessary for social repair and building meaningful relationships. Conflict allows the other to be seen and for us to bare witness to the issues that have shaped a person's or community's trauma. It provides us an opportunity to understand the other through recognition and validation that can hopefully diminish violence (Schulman, 2016). Exercising our full humanity with its contradictions and frictions means resistance and conflict are integral parts of an intimate life. This is both on a personal level and a collective scale, as we learn to adapt and shift the ways we come together. Since change brings discomfort and difficulty with it, preparing collectively to support conflict and resistance as part of transformative knowledge is necessary, as is the interruption of mischaracterizing them as threats or abuse (Cheng Thom, 2019; Schulman, 2016).

In Clarke's practice we have seen the benefits and challenges of repeatedly occupying a space of vulnerably to confront conflict and move toward healing. Her work shows us that when we witness or perform vulnerability, or a measured intimate act, it can have reparative effects for many. When going through the motions to create intimacy, even when there is a disinterest,

disengagement, or refusal, change will still occur and learning can still be produced. Through the act of performing vulnerability, even imagined, change will seep in. adrienne maree brown (2017) proposes a strategy of emergence to intentionally change and grow our collective and collaborative capacities to create the just and liberated world we long for. In her thinking about learning to embrace interdependence and decentralization, brown (2017) states that being interdependent requires "a series of small repetitive motions" (p. 93) toward generosity and vulnerability. For her this means being seen and releasing protective guards, acceptance and adaptability around mistakes, allowing oneself to exist with contradiction and multitudes, and moving toward making our needs known to others. This repetitive practice of opening oneself to see vulnerability in ourselves and others facilitates connectivity. Tiny, micro-moments of intimacy with the self and others can accumulate and build, emerging as learning and change.

When looking at Clarke's practice, and reflecting back on my own experience with her work and the feelings of resistance in the interview, I can recognize the emergent intimate learning that occurred within myself afterwards, creating a transformative perspective of the experience. So while witnessing or performing intimacy does not guarantee an instant intimate connection with the other, information that holds potential for intimate learning is nonetheless shared in each interaction, each performance, each moment of coming together, no matter how banal or seemingly void of intimacy. Knowledge is always emerging, even in refusal, and awaiting our recognition of its relational existence (Holland, 2012; Glissant, 2006). By choosing to explore the promises of vulnerability and relationship building we can produce intimate learning and change. As brown (2017) speaks of her own emergent learning, "transformation doesn't happen in a linear way, at least not one we can always trace. It happens in cycles, convergences, explosions. If we release the framework of failure, we can realize that we are in interative [*sic*] cycles, and we can keep

asking ourselves—how do I learn from this" (p. 105)? An intimate pedagogy must recognize relationality with refusals and failures, and critically challenge the false pretense that transparency is required to act in relation and with dignity.

In the concluding chapter of this dissertation that follows, I bring attention back to where the human and non-human, worldly and otherworldly, come together in this project. I connect intimacy, resistance, ghostly decolonial matters, and learning between humans and our environment across the work of Clarke, Davis, and Huggins. To do this I revisit the ideas of emergence, pace, and exposure, and I extend the conversation with brown's work in *Emergent Strategy* that I have touched on here. As Clarke has shown us, vulnerability is hard and resistance is bound to happen. We will come up against refusal and conflict, but to work in solidarity to process difficult knowledge with others is to know we are not alone as we work through the messiness of transformation. To build intimate knowledge of oneself and our relational being is to be in flux with resistance, growth, learning, reflection, failure, adaptation, forgiveness, and healing to create something unknown and hopefully even exciting.

CHAPTER 7
Intimate Futures: The Emergence of Intimate Knowledge

> These visitations are hauntings, as fugitive outsiders, I explore the residue horror that colonialism creates and I cannot forget. I am sometimes outsider and always fugitive, I have family, I belong to people and to places, to traditions. Visitations reinforce connections, create new ones, disrupt expectations. Visitations are not settling, they are not colonial exploration. Visitation rites. Visitation rights. Visitation writes. (Morrill et al., 2016, p. 17)

> You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. I do not have to be you to recognize that our wars are the same. What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness. (Lorde, 1984, p. 142)

> Sometimes, by taking up the problems of the Other, it is possible to find oneself.… That is very much the image of the rhizome, prompting the knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation. (Glissant, 2006, p. 18)

> Emergence emphasizes critical connections over critical mass, building authentic relationships, listening with all the senses of the body and the mind.… Emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies. Emergence is our inheritance as a part of this universe; it is how we change. (brown, 2017, p. 3)

Noticing the Strange Cracks within the Research

In this concluding chapter, I stretch the creative methods of writing combined with visual and theoretical discourses a little further than what has already been explored in the previous chapters. Taking risks with more confidence than when I started this dissertation, I'm inspired by the ghostly and at times possessed writing of Morrill, Tuck, and the Super Futures Haunt Qollective's *Before Dispossession, or Surviving It* (2016). In similar fashion to their collective piece, in my review of this project's several awakenings and transformations, and what its culmination has allowed to be

sensed and become known, I make room to ponder the gaps that remain, the thoughts that have yet to take shape, the unfinished questioning, and unresolved answers. I leave the door open for the visitors who have yet to visit and the voices that have yet to emerge.

In these final paragraphs I return to the guiding concept of the erotic and theoretical frameworks of Black feminism and Caribbean thought that buttress this research. I revisit the artists and the use of visual methods that gave form to and articulated intimate pedagogy, and I connect the analytical offerings. I draw non-linear linkages between and across diverse themes, theories, voices, and ghostly matters; each thought, representation, and output is connected to the other in some way. I turn to you, my reader, and attempt to show what has and is unfolding and continues to unfold past these pages, and what has been made apparent or legible through the practice of writing and intimacy making with difficult knowledge. This closing is an opening that answers back and calls forward to all those who have participated and contributed to the thinking and feeling laid out in these chapters and what echoes within me. To do so I take the commanding words of Raoni Saleh and Joy Mariama Smith's manifesto, *To all those mad about studying*, to heart*:*

> Observe the importance of what happens while Doing.… Shift all of your attention to the thing that starts to appear.… Notice the complex web of meaning making, of becoming and unbecoming. Our own meaning is not defined on its own…. Become possessed by beings other-than-human.… Study is already always emergent and is not white.... Studie is niet wit. Together our affected body studies. (Saleh & Smith, 2018, para. 1)

Each of Us Are a Body of Water

July 2, 2020, it was just past the summer solstice and twilight was stretching past 11 p.m. A few days earlier I had moved to a new apartment and was feeling excited about the rising summer

temperature and the dropping COVID-19 numbers in Rotterdam. But that evening, as I made my way across the Maas River on the open-air commuter ferry with my bike to join the Ghost Study Group[7] on the south shore, there also lingered an unease inside me. An agitation. A rage. A fear.

This was the first Ghost meeting in many months. Before the pandemic, the group regularly convened at the Tender Center (a feminist community collective in Rotterdam) to collaboratively read aloud and discuss sections of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (2006) in connection with the work of local artists and thinkers. On this evening, artist-scholar Isabel Marcos led the discussion of Glissant's work alongside Neimanis' *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (2017), accompanied by a strong fresh wind and shifting clouds that created a dramatic skyline behind us (Figures 31 and 32). I posted the following text and photos on Instagram afterwards:

> Ghost study group on reading and floating at the edge of the water. So great to hear from Isabel Marcos on her practice that looks at unstable architecture and "floatability". Reading and discussing the embodiment of water and ideas circulating unfixed identities and islands while sitting together at the edge of the windy Maas river made thinking about wetness as a lived materiality just that much more WET. Thank you Isa & Ghost! (Maule-O'Brien, 2020)

[7] Ghost is a facilitative platform that "seeks to create and maintain relations, expanding and entangling notions of family, friendship, work relations and art making" (Ghost, 2020).

Figures 31 and 32

Ghost Study Group at the Edge of the Maas River


Note: Instagram post by Skye Maule-O'Brien [@intimate_pedagogy], July 3, 2020.

Later that night in the early hours of July 3, I experienced my first instance of extreme metrorrhagia[8]. This led to the need to undergo a total abdominal hysterectomy the following month during a global pandemic and separated from my family by the Atlantic Ocean.

Each of us are a body of water, connected to other bodies of water. Powerful, mutable, dynamic, sometimes calm and sometimes uncontrollable. "Every body of water begins in another body, which flows from other bodies before that" (Neimanis, 2020).

Dark Island Visitations

> K[9]: Your ancestors are trying to communicate with you to ease your stress.
> Maule-O'Brien: Oh no they were stressing me the fuck out. I don't even know if it was really them. It was my grandmother and her sister who both died young from cancer. They grabbed my legs to pull me down but I fought them off and said NO!!!!
> K: Oh! I got goosebumps reading this. Light a candle Skye. Tell them their journey is not yours. Your dream is also your subconscious. So scrub that right out of your head ASAP! (Personal communication, WhatsApp conversation, July 7, 2020)

[8] Metrorrhagia: abnormal uterine bleeding that occurs outside of the period of menstruation.
[9] My friendship with K has always included open conversations about visitations, dreams, complicated ancestry, and learning from beyond the human. Our WhatsApp conversations are used with consent.

This research has always been entangled and complicated by lived experiences of theorizing and learning in intimate reciprocity. Throughout the dissertation I used autoethnographical photovoice narratives, infused with photographs and art to welcome visual imaginings and reflections. The benefits of using malleable visual methods alongside interviews has been that the research bends and breathes with a life of its own, forming gaps and cracks to let in new understandings. However, this also has resulted in some questions and outcomes being blurred further instead of offering clearly defined boundaries of the project. Meaning has seeped in but also slipped through, as attending to affect, the visual, and the unspeakable has at times been like trying to grab and hold the unholdable.

I did as K recommended and lit a candle. It wasn't my grandmother in my dream. It was embodied fears, passed down through generations, that wrapped me from the waist down in black rope as I tried to run up the basement stairs of my grandparents' home. I was able to escape by using all my strength to peel off the knotted cloth that constricted my thighs and hips like a tightening vice grip. Once I reached the top of the stairs, I leaned against the wall to catch my breath, but I couldn't bring myself to look back down at the darkness left behind.

My mother's mother is the "Gran" who sang to me until her death when I was seven years old. The songs were about the dark islands she left years earlier but still longed for, where the Hebrides archipelago houses the island I am named after: the Isle of Skye. Songs of the sea and stories of crossing were part of the fabric of my childhood from both sides of my family. Hearing family narratives of love and leaving, as well as superstition and hauntings shaped my understanding of the Atlantic and the waterways that feed it, and what lays beyond. Its vastness divided my grandmother and my mother from their family in Scotland, while it also held dear the memories of my father who grew up just feet from the shores of the Humber Arm, in

Newfoundland, a mix of fresh and salt water that flows into the Bay of Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence at the mouth of the Atlantic. Their longing, nostalgia, and knowing was something that I did not fully understand, but which fueled my own desires to be near and with water. Their stories informed my imaginary and spoke to me of something greater: of loss and the hopes of freedom, escape, pleasure, beauty, healing, but also fear and respect for a powerful force that pulses through all life.

> *The Dark Island*
> Away to the west's where I'm longing to be,
> Where the beauties of heaven unfold by the sea,
> Where the sweet purple heather blooms fragrant and free,
> On a hilltop high above the Dark Island.
> Oh, isle of my childhood, I'm dreaming of thee,
> As the steamer leaves Oban and passes Tiree,
> Soon I'll capture the magic that lingers for me,
> When I'm back once more upon the Dark Island.
> So gentle the sea breeze that ripples the bay,
> Where the stream joins the ocean, and young children play;
> On the strand of pure silver, I'll welcome each day,
> And I'll roam for ever more the Dark Island.
> True gem of the Hebrides, bathed in the light
> Of the midsummer dawning that follows the night
> How I yearn for the cries of the seagulls in flight.
> As they circle high above the Dark Island
> (Silver, 1963)

The Intimate Shape of the Erotic | The Erotic Shape of the Intimate

I began the doctoral program struggling to give words to the shape of learning I hold within my body: a desire to give voice and share what my body—my erotic life force—tells me about

listening to and creating deeply felt knowledge, including the difficult processes of reflection and the slow, at times painful, pace of transformative learning. It started and continues with social justice and race work, but like learning, intimacy making is expansive and emergent in nature. This project defined and tested what intimate pedagogy can and could be as a theory and method. In doing so, instead of generating a transparent prescribed formula of an intimate pedagogical practice, this project turned to "notic[ing] the strange cracks, holes and layers of relational learning" (Saleh & Smith, 2018) that were created by the research—the schisms that stretch beyond and continue to live alongside and outside of the parameters of the research. My writing, one of the many intimate layers, evolved into an aesthetic practice in itself, one of measured observation where the words, meanings, and ideas became sensorial (Arteaga, 2020). Writing, as theorizing and imagining, brought with it affect, visitations, knowledge, and relationships, and it emerges as an expression of existing and learning in relation with the world and otherworldly.

The theorizing of intimate pedagogy first asked: what knowledge is recognized and formed when we answer to the erotic, and how are we using that knowledge? It expanded to include what it means to be human, living in relation to all expansive forms of life (known and unknown), and creating intimate knowledge with decolonial purpose. Black feminism's commitment to making space for the unpredictable in research and the understanding of the erotic as a space of learning and knowledge production framed this project (covered in Chapter 2). Instead of erasing traces of lived experiences from the research, the project required learning from the messy uncontrollable aspects of life and noticing connections that bring us places we do not expect. Intimate pedagogy as a practice is deeply enmeshed with the quotidian, the politically conflictual and nuanced experiences that complicate our lives and challenge us to transform, but which also bring us pleasure and excitement.

The project remains deeply indebted and attached to theories of the erotic that were initiated by Lorde and furthered by Black and Caribbean feminisms and their multiple influencing fields that stretch well beyond the humanities and the arts that are looked at here. The erotic is the quiver of life Glissant speaks of that connects us all (Diawara, 2015); it is an essence of life. The erotic is a language that the body speaks and is a conduit to form intimacy. It resonates sensorial information. As Indigenous feminist scholar Tracy Bear (2016) writes, the erotic is "a space encouraging holistic knowledges, to embody the sensations of our everyday lives whether it be the sexual or the spiritual or a combination, it is truly practicing the collectivity of our capacities within ourselves" (p. vii). This holistic collective capacity of the erotic enabled me to imagine the empowered body as an agent of change connected to other life and systems participating in daily micro moments, tiny revolutions, and intimate revolts (Kristeva, 2003). The accumulation of these small changes has the ability to ripple outwards into multiple waves of larger social transformation.

The erotic is constant but not consistent with how and what information it brings. And, as has been made clear with this research, the erotic includes far more than sensual pleasures. Inside intimate pedagogy, erotic theory's opening nature facilitated the incorporation of how we may use our own embodied knowledge and experiences in the continual and continuing process of decoloniality and its ghostly matters. Intimate pedagogy emerged from the body of erotic theory, and the erotic is the life force—the blood—pulsing through intimate pedagogy.

Haunting from an Intimate Future

> Haunting … is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation. Haunting is both acute and general; individuals are haunted, but so are societies.… Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien (to settlers) and generative for (ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving. For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved. Haunting aims to wrong the wrongs,

> a confrontation that settler horror hopes to evade.… Social life, settler colonialism, and haunting are inextricably bound; each ensures there are always more ghosts to return. (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 642)

In the weeks leading up to my surgery—the same surgery my mother underwent for the same condition 23 years earlier—I had multiple dreams of water and swimming in the ocean alone at night. Feelings of dread and hope washed over me interchangeably as my physical and mental health fluctuated. Ghostly matters seeped from my body while tongueless whispers whispered in my ears of the unresolved reconciliation I had yet to address. My flesh, entangled with grief and fear, was boiling over, speaking of narratives beyond my years and of the material world. Visitations from elsewhere reached across time collapsing it, warning of what was to come and what still needed tending.

While I was reading over my final edits of this dissertation during this same period, my own words became my future ghost. Through the art practices of Annalee Davis, Nadia Huggins, and Michèle Pearson Clarke, I had written of how histories live on through the land, water, and our bodies, holding us all in rhizomatic connection. The project challenged notions of temporality, asking my readers to expand their perceptions of space and time to imagine how the future, past, and present are alive within us simultaneously. I called for exercises of deep listening and recognition of the ghostly matters left by colonial violence. Using consciousness-raising efforts I implored for a turn toward the other to form relationships across differences. I urged my readers to respond to their erotic bodily knowing as the intimate teacher it is, and to open themselves to the uncomfortable vulnerability required for witnessing difficult knowledge. I asked for you, my reader, to be brave enough to look at your own hauntings, because I was scared to look at my own by myself.

This research—which took me on a journey of its own, and now I share that journey with you—walked through the shifting and healing former plantation fields of Barbados with Davis to recognize our intimate connections and responsibilities to the land and each other. Davis' methods of turning to the soil and plants for botanical inspiration cleared the ground for us to kneel down and listen not only to sedimentary knowledge and lingering hauntings, but to notice the emergence of life and processes of healing occurring all around us. Thinking through and with Davis' work and her words in Chapter 4 brought an awakening of our geographical connectivity with others who have lived on the land before us and with those we currently share space and place with. As an example of intimate pedagogical practice, the chapter demonstrated critical dialogue with colonial scars on landscapes and bodies to ask how historical acknowledgments can be transformed into embodied knowledge and incorporated into our daily lives as part of larger scale decolonial reparations.

From the fields we made our way to the shore to think about transitional spaces and practices of reflexivity as moments of intimate knowledge making. Beginning with my own body, and moving to Huggins in Chapter 5, I explored the different ways our bodies are marked, read, and understood by race, gender, and sexuality, shaping how we create knowledge *of* and *with* ourselves and others. When we left the shore to join Huggins in the waters off St. Vincent, it was revealed that the fluid understanding and intimate learning of the body does not stop at the edge of our skin. Our body is like a shore: a mutable surface of exchange with a shifting boundary of interior and exterior, here and not yet arrived. The intimate currents, surreal effects, and affect produced by Huggins bringing her body into play with the unfamiliar showed us how to inhabit a space of instability and risk—to look beneath our surface understandings of identity, queerness, and desire. In her persistent return to the sea and exploration of the self within the aquatic

environment, Huggins empowered a reflexive practice reliant on an emergent process. She allowed us to challenge the social and physical limitations placed on the body to imagine a state of alterity with the other. And it was through her own exposure that we better understood the necessity of durational learning as a component of decoloniality, intimate unlearning, and relearning.

Arriving at Chapter 6, I felt ready to return, or double turn, to the human and to bring you with me as witness. The intimate learning I had explored through the practices of Davis and Huggins, with the land and sea, uncovered a different materiality of space, place, and time allowing me to face the human; the self (myself) in relation to the other with (re)newed empathy and cognizance. I could not have arrived at the intimate questioning with the human without the non-human (I speak more to this in the section below). Clarke's use of vulnerability worked as an invitation, helping me to question my own relationship with and limits to intimacy. Clarke brought the act of witnessing and performing vulnerability into dialogue with resistance and conflict—creating friction, yes, but also affording an opportunity to explore the productive potential of intimate refusals. Such considerations led to a better understanding of intimacy not always as an ephemeral giving entity, but as a strategy of transformation, healing, and reparation—none of which are linear, smooth, or easy to participate in, but all hold importance for critical regenerative intimate learning practices.

Once I reached the conclusion, a release was imminent. Is that not the nature of a conclusion? I needed to relinquish control over this body, the body of work, to give it to you. I thought I was finished with the difficult transformative process of embodying knowledge and dealing with the ghostly matters of this project. But, as I should have known, the work of intimate decolonial learning does not neatly offer closure or resolution, so it was not to be for me, nor can I offer it to you.

"Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop" (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 642).

I had scrubbed my own ancestral stories from the dissertation, justifying the decision as part of the professional editing process. While the research interrogated the ongoing settler colonial project in Canada, as well as the production and consumption of knowledge, bodies, and goods across landscapes and seascapes, intimately implicating the west within the Caribbean today, I had kept the darker matters that tether my settler body to these histories obscured. Leaving my history unwritten was a form of (un)conscious investment in innocence, which made the "relentless remembering and reminding" haunting necessary (Tuck, 2018; Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 642). The ghostly matters that were left unheard worked to unsettle me—the settler. I was forced to inhabit a period of uncertainty and instability—left squirming and flailing in the discomfort of realization, recognition, and reconsideration—as the hereditary material that I had left to fester commanded an intimate awareness through reconciliatory resolving. To release this research required a bloodletting of my own settler body and the ghostly matters it tows.

"[R]efusal to stop is its own form of resolving.… [T]he haunting is the resolving" (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 642).

I could not have faced the (re)visitations that came up at the end of this project without first having defined intimate pedagogy. This project offered me, and now you, theory and tools to intimately face my/our colonial spectres. Alive within intimate pedagogy are ghostly teachers and haunting as a theory of change; one of reluctance, resistance, and resolve(ing) (Tuck, 2018). Without an endpoint or goal, intimate learning is an unfolding process of layers and waves. It ripples with erotic information and energy across time, teaching us in the present to understand what came before while revealing an emergent future.

"I have said before that I am a future ghost" (Morrill et al., 2016, p. 7).

Emergent Intimacy: The (Infinite) Double Turn

> Together we must move like the waves. Have you observed the ocean? The waves are not the same over and over—each one is unique and responsive. The goal is not to repeat each other's motion, but to respond in whatever way feels right in *your* body. The waves we create are both continuous and a one-time occurrence. We must notice what it takes to respond well. How it feels to be in a body, in a whole—separate, aligned, cohesive. Critically connected. (brown, 2017, p. 16)

Waves are like memory, a simultaneous forgetting and remembering, a repetition that brings something new each time. I visited the North Sea in mid-July. Standing at the shore of the Netherlands facing Great Britain, I thought of my grandmother—who was deathly afraid of the water but still enjoyed the beach—making the journey across the Atlantic with her 6-year-old daughter, my mother, to join her husband in Ottawa, Canada, where he had found odd jobs; at least he was out of the dangerous and filthy Scottish coal mines. I imagined the same water that was washing over my feet travelling thousands of kilometres, giving and touching life along the way, to later lap at the edges of Montreal or to transform into the warm waters off Barbados. Water that I longed to be with as much as any family member I couldn't see. The water acted as a connective tissue, intimately binding me to a history, an unfinished present, and an emergent intimate future that I could hear but not yet clearly see.

> K: [A]sk the sea to heal you. It's magical and vast so tell her you need her wisdom and healing powers. Even if you can only stand in the water
> Maule-O'Brien: Oh that is 100% my plan! (Personal communication, WhatsApp conversation, July 18, 2020)

Figure 33

North Sea

Note: This photo was taken on July 18, 2020, at the shore of the North Sea in The Hague.

The idea of an emergent intimacy inside the project of intimate pedagogy follows the proponents of what brown (2017) defines as an emergent strategy. brown (2017) understands emergence as a process and a strategy, writing "emergence emphasizes critical connections over critical mass, building authentic relationships, listening with all the senses of the body and the mind" (p. 3). Practicing what she calls "science fictional behavior," brown (2017, p. 16) aligns her work with the concern and commitment to imagined futures and how our actions today shape those futures. Grounded in the promise of change, emergent strategy proposes to shape change intentionally to grow our capacity to co-create a future while working for each other. From this perspective, emergence is a practice of deep systemic change that starts with shaping the smallest patterns of our daily lives. In brown's (2017) words, "emergent strategy is how we intentionally

change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for" (p. 3). Emergence is a process of uncovering, of knowing, and of learning that draws on all sensory information available to us all at once. Small actions and connections create complex systems, and patterns emerge from these complex systems. brown (2017) sees this as creating ripples of radical change across the connective tissue that binds all of us.

To weave the idea of emergence, patient uncovering and exposure with race work, I want to return to a point that I brought up in Chapter 3, where I spoke to the possible troubles of using an anti-racist feminism methodology; one of its issues is that it can require a de-intimacy or unattachment with how race and racial mattering is held in and on our bodies. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, race and racism are historically produced through labour and economy, continually shaping our lives in enduring connection to other ordering essentialist identity categories. Sheller (2003), drawing on Ahmed's (2000) postcolonial feminist lens of ethical encounters, states that her work on how western societies consume the Caribbean, like any other project that calls for accountability and action around problematic systemic structures, must implicate an articulation of ethics that includes an intimate responsibility to the other.

For my own project, I turned to Ahmed's (2000, 2004) thinking around the role of pace and exposure in decolonial, anti-racist feminist learning and action. Ahmed (2004), addressing the non-performative aspects of race work, writes that when we think about getting over or doing away with race in a racist society it supports the "illusion that social hierarchies are undone once we have 'seen through them'" (Ahmed, 2004, para. 48). As an issue with all forms of dominance and oppression that we operate within, I understand this goal of "getting past" as an impediment in much of justice work. Similarly to how Holland (2012) critiques a rhetoric of "beyond" as denying the ways the past is always informing how we come together in the present to build our futures,

Ahmed (2004) argues that it is much harder to move away from only repeating anti-racist rhetoric "as it requires working with racism as an ongoing reality in the present" and "consider[ing] the intimacy between privilege and the work we do, even in the work we do on privilege" (para. 55). This "intimacy between" takes time and patience, and is integral to not only race work, but for all social shifts. The work of exposure, like an emergent strategy, cannot be rushed. It requires us to inhabit critique, with its lengthy duration and ghostly matters, and to remain in what Ahmed (2004) calls an *unfinished present* [emphasis added]. We cannot do this work under a false pretense that there is an obtainable end goal, but instead we need to welcome altruistic leanings that extend far beyond the self.

The infinite nature of such work falsely allows us to put it off too easily; however, there is a clear urgency to encourage humanizing exposure in our life. To actively change systems means not to transcend them, but to produce transformations within them (Ahmed, 2004). To decolonize our bodies' attachment to the very things we desire to destroy is a political act of humanity. We must be able to critique and work against the things that are intimately embedded into our very being, race just being one example for many in the Americas and the Caribbean, even if it is invisible to many white people. Ahmed (2004) proposes that for white people to participate in race work requires facing the responsibility and accountability of reparative work, in a type of "double turn." She says this double turn is first turning towards the critique of whiteness and its implications, but to then turn again toward the other is to face their intimate responsibility. She admits the double turn will not be enough, but she sees its potential in clearing some ground for another kind of work to emerge, a space where our efforts to expose systems of dominance and our task of recognizing ourselves and the other can unfold.

Intimate pedagogy encompasses the learning we intimately engage in with ourselves, others, and the knowledge we share and create. It requires a reflexivity and a curiosity of knowing the self in dialogue and reciprocity. I understand the double turn as a moment to exercise purposeful and deliberate vulnerability to evoke an intimate learning—an intimate transformation through the knowledge we gain during exposure. A space to return to continually, repeating the double turn towards our self and then the other, and back again, and again. Each time something new unearthed, sensed, embodied. To turn toward this unknown other requires a trust and confidence in one's own ability to learn in discomfort and vulnerability, and to allow for the intimate connections that already exist to be recognized and acted upon indefinitely.

Become Possessed by Beings Other-than-human: The Human and Non-human Limitation

> This issue is an affirmation of and a leaning into nonseparable life. It's about being able to respond to modes of life that do not necessarily conform to the ocularcentrism and linearity of whiteness; being able to feel the presence of alternative temporalities in the flesh, to become vulnerable to the complexity of life and breath. This is a demanding task, for it asks of us to upset certain habits. The journey of decolonization can take many shapes, comprising acts of unlearning, mourning, and healing. These processes agitate what is normally understood as "intimate," "personal," "social" or "political"—categories that have been subsumed by the individualist regime of neoliberalism—and destabilize mechanisms passed on by institutions such as art or the academy. (Rose-Antoinette & Le-Phat Ho, 2017, paras. 12–13)

Listening to the Wind

I began thinking more seriously about the wind as a holder of power, history, and memory when writing about the land and water while living in Barbados, where the trade winds blow strong and steady. Now in the Netherlands, where the presence of the wind is also difficult to ignore, my attention to its capacities of communication has only increased. You can't tell from this photograph (Figure 34), but on the night of July 27, 2020, high warm winds swept over South Holland carrying

with them an unsettling feeling of more visitations to come. While out searching for a glimpse of the comet NEOWISE, I swallowed the anxiety that rose up inside me with every gust. I didn't spot the comet, but I saw the moon. In the days that followed my health dipped back down, moving forward my surgery date, and instigating moments of recurring resolve during multiple conversations with my mother on our history, trauma, health, and healing.

"Visitation rites. Visitation rights. Visitation writes." (Morrill et al., 2016, p. 17)

Figure 34

Searching for Comet NEOWISE

Note: This photo was taken on a bike ride with a friend on the outskirts of Rotterdam as we tried to get a better view of the horizon.

Before this period of heath challenges and haunting bodily experiences, I operated fairly detached from my ancestry. My critique of colonial blood quantum laws that still define boundaries of belonging, permitted a resistance that translated to mild disinterest in my Scottish heritage. However, to close this project of intimate learning meant not only addressing my trepidations of looking closer at my own settler colonial footprints, but it also required an increase in my intimate understanding of the implications in the present, along with a disruption and redirection of my path. As Rose-Antoinette and Le-Phat Ho (2017) remind us above, a journey of decolonization requires a repeating unlearning and learning to clear blockages and permit divergent understandings at junctures along the way. To me this does not mean knowing all the details of our ancestry—for many this has been made impossible to trace by the colonial project—but instead it means reading the disturbances and fragments of information we receive from earthly beings and the ethereal. To at times "become possessed by beings other-than-human" (Saleh & Mariama Smith, 2018) is to form intimate knowledge of the self in relation to the process. This expansive strategy of learning celebrates the indistinguishable boundaries of separation between the self and other sentient beings. Such intangible cohering forces may remain opaque to us but are still always in exchange when generating knowledge.

Leaning into Non-separable Life

> How can we, future ancestors, align ourselves with the most resilient practices of emergence as a species? (brown, 2017, p. 14)

As I close, I want to bring attention to where the human and non-human reside together in this project. As I said above, I could not have arrived at the human without first exploring my relationship and connection to what I refer to as the non-human, the ghostly matters, and the otherworldly. As Glissant (2006) says in one of the opening quotes of this chapter, it is by looking

outside of ourselves that can prompt a comprehension of oneself in rhizomatic Relation. For me this meant addressing my still-emerging and still-resolving deep-seated feelings of disillusionment, disappointment, shame, and rage, to offer a transformative and healing learning tool that challenges disavowal and disconnection through sharing and intimacy. This thought exercise was arguably restricted by the binary language that pins the human against the non-human, and falsely defines all life against the measure of the human in hierarchical ordering. And it possibly impeded thinking about communication, knowledge, and learning beyond human concepts of language. That said, to talk about race and relationality in hopes of finding new ways of being together, I wrote in the language available in the theoretical framework and methodology that informed my thinking.

To uncover socially transformative possibilities of decolonial action I regularly used the work of Wynter and the scholars who have taken up her theoretical project that questions what it means to be human as a relational praxis and looks at the possibilities of the root expansion of thought (Austin, 2013; McKittrick, 2015; Sharma, 2015; Walcott, 2015; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 1995, 2003). Understanding that western concepts of "Man" are rooted in history that shape how we move within life, this scholarship permitted me to keep close the reality that western thought has defined some bodies as more deserving of life than others, while imagining an alternate future. This was a useful foundation for this project, as questions of what it means to be human remain relevant for the fact that, for many, it is a matter of life and death. Nevertheless, a reworking of how we use dichotomous language that perpetuates a view of human life as separate and categorical is required.

An example of such potential can be seen in how brown (2017, 2019) speaks to the formation of knowledge, within and between multiple bodies, that travels, stretches, and mingles

in symbiotic ways between forms of life. brown (2017) stresses that looking to nature's emerging patterns inside its massive cooperating ecosystems can help us build healthier relationships to ourselves, each other, and the planet while creating movements of transformative healing. In acts of biomimicry we can look to behaviours witnessed in communities of bees, fungi, or fractal ferns to see the benefits of small-scale solutions that then impact whole environments (brown, 2017). Organizing for social justice relies on micro interactions, "from how we relate to the thoughts in our own heads, to how we show up in our relationships, to how we exist as local communities" (Forte, 2018, para. 10), that inform a practice of intentional adaptation and healing. brown's theory shares affinities, complimentary forces, and collective strategies with the theory of intimate pedagogy and with the artists' practices I have looked at throughout this dissertation. brown's ideas help us think about the ways we can shape a future, one we have never seen, by prioritizing our existing connectivity to adapt and respond to conflict and resistance through exchange and change.

The overarching movement of this entire dissertation was to turn away from the human, toward the other-than-human, and back to the self as human in relation to all life. It was an exploration for something more than identity categories and politics that rely on difference, and a turn toward connection, relation, accountability, and responsibility. In my desire to animate the larger entanglement of life, the data collected and knowledge cultivated came as much from the land, water, wind, and my explorations with embodied erotic information, as it did from the interviews with Clarke, Davis, and Huggins. But decentering the human and human-centric ways of seeing and understanding the world might just be an impossible task for a human to do. Here, the failing(s) of an intimate pedagogical project that strives for (possibly naively utopic) ways of living based on the purposeful recognition of relationality, may become most apparent. However,

like how we understand the failings of intersectionality—we do not actually experience life through the separation of gender and race, they are always in influence—it is still useful to think about the complexity of differences using intersectional theory to complicate our understandings of lived experiences. I invite a similar thought exercise on the division between life, the living, and the lived. We know all life on the planet is made from the same biological material and to be human is to live in constant flux and relation in a shared environment, even if the ways we define life are different. This project extends Lorde's (1984) statement "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own" (p. 132–133), beyond the defined limits of gender and human. It does not ask for particular life to be prioritized over another, it simply asks for a leaning into the inseparability of life, as all of our livelihoods depend on it.

An Intimate Future, Now / Always Already

> Crossings are never undertaken all at once, and never once and for all.
> (Alexander, 2005, p. 290)

I end this dissertation where I began. A return to the words of Alexander and a place; a crossing (re)taken; a turn from the self to the other; a turn back to the self in relation to the other; an intimate (re)visit(ation) of relation.

On October 30, 2020, we got the news that G's father had died that morning. Within the week we were on a plane to Barbados with negative PCR COVID-19 test results in hand. This image (Figure 35) shows the moment G and I stepped onto the sand of Dover Beach on November 10, 2020, moments after receiving confirmation from the Ministry of Health and Wellness Barbados that we could safely leave quarantine. With my feet in the Caribbean Sea, I was filled with both sadness and gratitude. I knew that if G's father had passed away even a week earlier, I

most likely could not have physically, post-operation, made the trip to send him off and I would have not been able to float my still-healing body in the sea.

Figure 35

Dover Beach at Night

Note: Look into the darkness at the center of the photo to see the whitecaps of the breaking waves.

At this closing/opening juncture I ask what this research means for us now. I reflect on the waters, lands, erotic energy forces, and ghostly relations and sacred visitations that have emerged intimately and have become embodied over the course of the research. Similar to how Clarke's chapter on intimate refusal probed and formed cracks in the ideas within the previous chapters of Davis and Huggins, the conclusion further scraped at the film of whiteness that coated the project and unsettled the foundation that I as the researcher stand on. Instead of going back to edit the blind spots, I chose to leave the critical failings of whiteness, settler colonialism, and entitlements to intimacy apparent in these pages as a record of the transformative intimate learning process and

the reorientations produced. Intimate pedagogy is full of hope within the difficulty of making something new. It is not an easy method of learning; it is an exhausting task to look at and listen to things that challenge us. But intimate pedagogy places bets on our collective expansive imaginary and creative possibilities. I invite communities committed to social and transformative justice, feminist anti/decolonial ecocriticism, community activism and/or artistic practices to pick up the parts of intimate pedagogy that speak to them—as a theory of practice or a method of analysis, but also as other forms I cannot imagine alone. I welcome an embodied decolonial praxis for building a shared future that prioritizes human and ecological healing, as I truly believe we require it.

The dissertation offers an accumulation of relations and knowledge that have moved me, moved within me, and moved with me across borders and oceans, to come and stand on different but connected lands. These final thoughts take these intimate threads and tie together the multitude of connections, theoretical groundings and formations, unearthed ideas and feelings, and intimate learnings that were covered within. The incorporation of creative practices and artistic imaginings permitted this work to flow with an erotic energy of its own. To trace this knowledge is to follow an obscure, at times opaque, trail of oceanic intimacy. This project is a collective imprint of all those who have touched the research physically and psychically; the lives and communities that continue to shape both me and the ways these words will be read. None of this is mine alone, nor is it finished.

Dover Beach was the first place I visited on my initial field research trip to the Caribbean (Figure 36). On this fourth return, after having crossed the Atlantic, it brought something new: a resolving and an opening; another place to begin. Crossings remain a “space [of] convergence and endless possibility” (Alexander, 2005, p. 8). Crossings, like the double turn, allow us to put down

what is no longer needed, to uncover something different and pick up new understandings to carry forward with those we share company with (Alexander, 2005).

Figure 36

Dover Beach the Next Morning

Note: On November 11, 2020, fully entering the Caribbean Sea, after 15 difficult months apart, felt like a powerful and sacred saltwater gift.

This research changed me and it continues to do so; I hope it also changes you. Intimate pedagogy expanded over this project, bringing together a myriad of intimacies and related understandings. Within this, ghosts and their haunting intimate teaching never ask for a return to an impossible past. They are always informing us of how to make quotidian changes to build for a different future. I thank the multitude of interconnected happenings that brought me here, and I thank the visitations with their gifts of promise for continued healing and learning beyond these pages. A future as intimate and intimacy as the future.

Intimacy as the erotic.

Intimacy as resonance; as rhizomatic.

Intimacy as oceanic. Intimacy as emergent.

Intimacy as knowledge; embodied knowing.

Intimacy as resistance and refusal. Intimacy as vulnerability.

Intimacy as haunting, as unsettling, as decolonial action.

Intimacy as method and making.

Intimacy as duration; exposure; transformative learning.

Intimacy as a theory of change.

Intimacy as a practice of relation. Intimacy is relationality.

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