

**THE METHOD IS THE PORTAL:
AFROFUTURISM, SPECULATIVE CONSTRUCTION, AND BLACK
PSYCHOLOGICAL LIBERATION**

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Abstract

This thesis contends that psychology's foundational promise of understanding the human remains governed by colonial inheritances that delimit what can be recognized as mind, evidence, and possibility. Through a critical excavation of the figure of Man and the epistemic architectures of colonial modernity, the work theorizes space, time, and story as racialized coordinates that structure Black life's legibility within the discipline. Building on the legacy of Black Psychology as a counter-epistemic rupture, the thesis advances Afrofuturism as a liberatory framework that reconfigures psychological inquiry through speculative imagination, alternative temporalities, and creative world-building. Central to this intervention is the development of Speculative Construction – an original Afrofuturist methodology structured by the orientations of Drift (space), Echo (time), and Pulse (story) – which treats imagination as a legitimate site of psychological knowledge production. The thesis further proposes a spatiotemporal–narrative validation system to ensure methodological rigor and accountability. Ultimately, this work shifts the ground of psychological research from critique to creative construction, inviting ongoing collective development of methods and theories that center Black liberation and possibility.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

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USA V. DREXCIYA: (16th-20th Centuries)

A poem by Alyea Pierce (2022)

“When the whole point of throwing black bodies
off slave ships
and into sea
was so nobody would find them
there is a problem
when what they are trying
to commemorate
are people who were
deliberately
lost

It is not natural
and yet still
the sea knows my great-great-great-grandfather
more than I ever will
from the smell of his sweat
to the serenade of his steps
the water knows his every story
and I don't even know his real name

When anger is always
at what point is that all you are?

All humans share one thing in common
the need for water to survive
In the drowning
pregnant African women swallowed gallons of a new freedom

unborn babies breathed below and birthed themselves
making ocean floor *Home*

All humans share one thing in common
the need to survive

Blk folk always swam
Blk folk were burned while swimming
Blk folk were redlined not to swim
Blk folk doh like gettin their hair wet
Blk folk can swim-swim
Blk folk got choice
swim through trauma or drown”

Preamble 1 – But Why Afrofuturism...

When she began writing *The Gilda Stories* (1991) – a speculative novel tracing the life of a Black lesbian vampire from slavery to 2050 – Gomez recalls other Black writers questioning her choice – why write fantasy when there are more pressing Black matters at hand? “[B]lack people have too many horrible things to deal with in the present. Why would you go off speculating when we have so many things to worry about?” (Gomez, [2016](#), in an interview conducted by Rochelle Spencer). That same doubt has followed me, too.

Why pursue this Sci-Fi-Fantasy fiction art that is Afrofuturism in Psychology when Black people were (are still) getting murdered by police and vigilantes in the street (Edwards et al., [2019](#); Mapping Police Violence, [2025](#); Maynard, 2017/[2025](#)); being disproportionately incarcerated (OHRC, [2020](#); Statistics Canada, [2026](#); The Sentencing Project, [2024](#)); unnecessarily stopped and frisked (Wortley, [2019](#); Cole, 2015/[2022](#); Amnesty International, [2019](#)); insulted, ignored, and humiliated (Sue et al., [2007](#); Hoffman et al., [2016](#)); dying in childbirth at rates three to four times higher than our White counterparts (Howell, [2018](#)); dying while sleeping (e.g., Breonna Taylor, 1993-2020), jogging (Ahmaud Arbery, 1995-2020), simply being alive-and-Black (Brown, [2020](#))? Isn’t this just self-indulgent? Irrelevant? Worse – useless?

But the thoughts wouldn’t go away. I wanted to understand what I had seen happen over and over: What explains the sense of relief, joy, expansion that arises in Black people when they encounter Black speculative stories like Afrofuturism? What is it that Afrofuturism does to us – psychologically, emotionally, ontologically– and, if even a glimpse of these speculative and imaginary worlds can generate that kind of psychic shift, isn’t that worth studying, exploring? Isn’t that – isn’t joy – urgent?

The questions did not pull me away from the “real” issues of anti-Black violence. It pulled me toward something equally real that I had not yet the language for.

This investigation opened up a landscape of seemingly infinite Black intellectual works, of Black radical traditions, of Black art, and refusals, and celebrations, and opacities, and fugitivities, and fantasy, and history/ies. It felt at once unknown and deeply familiar. Like something in me was being reconnected. Re-wired. *Re-membered*.

bell hooks (2004) once wrote about the demand of the world for our sacrifice... to engage in “acts of psychic self-mutilation” (p.35). Although she was speaking specifically about what patriarchy asked of males, her analysis expands to us all.

“The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead, patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves. If an individual is not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power that will assault his self-esteem.” (p. 35)

I return to this quote often. I ask myself, this Black body with a mind formed in white schools: what kinds of psychic mutilation had I and other Black people and other Black women performed to survive a world built by and on white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchal, and imperial ideologies and violence? What was being stitched back together when I would engage these works?

Black psychologists like Wade Nobles and Kobi Kambon have written about the deep fractures caused by slavery and colonialism (e.g., Nobles, [2013b](#); Jamison, [2016](#)) – fractures of memory, orientation, and identities. Their work insists on repair through reconnection: cultural realignment, ancestral consciousness, spiritual recovery. And yet, I find something missing there too – not wrong, but perhaps incomplete. The violence is real – it is physical, psychic, epistemic and ontological. But it is not all there is. It is not the end. The abyss is not all we get to look at.

This is where Afrofuturism comes in – not as escape, but as intervention. A generative otherwise. A gaze beyond time and space. I wondered how fractured, disoriented, shattered people can create such rich, spectacularly imaginative worlds through poetry, music, film, photography, sculpture, literature, and speculate on so many im/possible futures with Black heroes and heroines and anti-heroes and anti-heroines, if all they are is broken, and in need of “restoration”? Of course, that is not what (or all that) Kambon, Nobles and others suggested. But I questioned the continuous thematic return of *trauma* and *restoration* that seem to call for a *return* to a type of normal or optimal (see Myers & Speight, 2010) state of Blackness or Africanness. I do agree on the necessity of re-connecting to or re-memembering what has been severed, but I also believe we must re/invent ourselves. Look back to look forward. Sankofa.

This paper certainly implicates me, as a Black/African woman, since it is about Black/African people. It implicates me in a way that feels necessary to name. I use personal reflections and anecdotes throughout this thesis to ground it not only in research, but in real-life locations – to humanize and render subject and human what is too often sanitized and rendered object and abject.

The journey has been disorienting. But also reorienting. Not linear. Not conclusive. Not clean. Rather spiral – recursive, layered, and haunted. That movement, I now understand, is also method.

What happens to the psyche when imagination is no longer a luxury but a practice of survival and refusal?

Preamble 2 – Vignette

A few years ago, I was part of a book club of friends and acquaintances, Black women from various backgrounds, all curious about and ready to engage with Afrofuturism – a genre we were not yet quite familiar with. We started with the work of Octavia Butler (1947-2006). As we progressed through our readings, I noticed something interesting: My friends and I were starting to exhibit a joy and expansiveness beyond the usual intellectual boost we would get from other sci-fi (and non-sci-fi) readings. We started talking differently about feminism as it relates to Black womanhood, about experiences with a world that felt limited and limiting, and generally what we came to see as a continuous *interruption* of possibilities and showing up fully in our lives. We started to want to imagine more. We started asking “what if” questions that went beyond the seemingly “possible” or plausible. We played around with our imagination, in that our “what ifs” in conversation with the world started to move beyond the limits we felt were imposed by our “identities”: gender, race, sexualities... I would reflect on this for months and could not help but wonder what psychological events were taking place. What was this change I was witnessing – in my friends and in myself?

Not too long after this, I came across a lecture by Ytasha Womack, an author, filmmaker and scholar of Afrofuturism. The lecture, posted online through the account “Sonic Acts”(2017) was called “Afrofuturism: Imagination and Humanity”. Early in her talk, Womack shares an experience that seemed to perhaps connect with what had happened with my friends. When her book, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (2013), came out, she had an

opportunity to talk about Afrofuturism to a group of 5th graders on the west side of Chicago, as part of their art class. All the students in that class were Black and Brown. After explaining the tenets of Afrofuturism, she asked the students to come up with some ideas about the future: “What are some things I would like to see in the future?”. The answers surprised her and broke my heart upon hearing them. We both, it seems, had expected stories about flying cars, saucers, aliens and space travel. Instead, the 5th graders talked about a future without gun violence in the world, about less violence in their neighborhoods, etc. Their imagination seemed to be stuck to the local realities of their existence. Womack then asked about what things they *wanted* to see, not just what they *did not*: “what does the world look like when there isn’t any violence?” [3:00]. The answers were not much broader: A world without violence meant they could play outside, and people would treat each other better. Womack reflected to her audience that there seemed to be a “barrier” that seemed to block these children’s ability to see beyond their immediate circumstances. As she started to explain to the students the history, characteristics and people involved in Afrofuturism, a student asked her about how Afrofuturism can be used “to end racism”. Womack talked to her about imagination and creativity. Something started to sink in for the 5th graders. New questions started to emerge, and their world seemed to expand. A little girl stated that she was going to create “alien music” and asked how to do that, while another asked clarification that what the author was suggesting was that they (the students) could create and even change the world, and indeed create the worlds they wanted, using their imaginations. To which Womack responded “Yes”.

In both situations, the works and ideas of Afrofuturism knocked on the barriers of our circumstances and started to tear it down. The Black women in the book club saw possibilities beyond the presumed limits of their prescribed gender and race. And 10-year-old Black and Brown students from a poor neighborhood in Chicago started to imagine, like any 10-year-old ought to be able to, worlds beyond their everyday life.

My personal search, reflected but unlikely to be resolved in this thesis, is to explore what those intellectual and imaginary barriers are, how they got there, what they protect and project, and more importantly what (can) exists behind/beyond them, once torn down. I fantasize about what *can* break those barriers down. What happens to the mind when it is no longer shackled by/to/with harmful normative ideas of the world and the self? I explore what movements driven

by the Black imaginary, such as Afrofuturism, can reveal about Black subjectivities, and how this may help us theorize blackness/the Black experience better, while avoiding the traps of essentializing. My own imagination has driven me to consider histories parallel to those we are taught by imagining them told from perspectives out of different/parallel timelines. For example, I think about how the *Enlightenment* era overlaps with (and overshadows) the *Maafa*. What does it look like to think of history from the viewpoint of the Maafa? What does the development of Psychology look like from the vantage and starting point of that other timeline? What is/becomes important, valuable, healthy, helpful in that parallel universe?

Afrofuturism is a multi-temporal, multiversal creative system which hops over the barriers, interruptions and distortion brought on by a history of colonialism, chattel slavery, anti-Black brutality, sexism and racism and arrives at other possibilities. To use physics and science fiction terms: I am talking about exploring parallel universes or differential yet simultaneous existential realms and their psychological manifestations. It is the exploration of these various (intellectual, material, existential) universes and their psychological realities that this thesis is ultimately interested in, and how Afrofuturism may provide the appropriate tools and framework.

It is from this place – of rupture and resonance – that this thesis begins. What follows is not only a theoretical inquiry, but a methodological one.

Introduction

“the Maafa, or African Holocaust, [is] the condition for the emergence of African being, just as grammar conditions the emergence of speech.” - Wilderson III, 2009

*“You start to realize that the stories told in science fiction are no stranger than what has actually happened in history when it comes to black experience, [...] you start to rethink what we think about how we tell stories about displacement, about alienation, of whole groups of people.” – (from *Galleries West*, 2017)*

“if the study of black people gets caught up in the disciplined projects of empire, black humanity is unthinkable”.(McKittrick, 2021, p.44)

This thesis begins from the viewpoint that Psychology’s promise of understanding the human has long been tethered to a particular image of the human – what Sylvia Wynter (2003) calls *Man*, the overrepresented figure of Western modernity who stands as both the subject and measure of knowledge. This figure, rational and self-contained, emerged through colonial and racial orders that defined who counted as human and what that looked, moved, and dreamed like. As a result, psychological science developed within epistemic architectures that normalized Eurocentric ways of understanding the world and human, while rendering others knowledge systems as deficient, deviant, pathological, or otherwise irrational or peripheral. This is particularly true in Psychology’s relationship with people racialized as Black (White, 1970; Auguste et al., 2023) or, in Deanne Bell’s formulation, *produced as Black* (Bell, 2025a). I further posit that the colonial story – the epistemological inheritance of “Man” – and the “stories” Psychology tells, are co-constituted with and enforced through temporal and spatial logics. I see space, time and story as colonial coordinates that do not stand uncontested and take them up as analytic anchors of this thesis, particularly through their disruption in Black artistic productions.

Expanding on my earlier work (Nkeramihigo, 2025), I demonstrate how **Afrofuturism** offers a framework that moves beyond critique to rethink Psychology’s inherited logics. As a framework, it extends the project initiated by Black Psychology using speculative re-imagining and making space, time, and story visible as co-constitutive analytics, as coordinates that enforce subjugation and therefore exist as potential sites of disruption and liberation. I theorize Afrofuturism’s most powerful disruptive force as emanating from its refiguring of those three coordinates, which colonialism and Psychology (as one of its disciplines) have naturalized,

I focus on *Space, Time, and Story* as both coordinates and analytics and formulate them as methodological anchors I name Drift (related to space), Echo (related to time), and Pulse (related to story), translating Afrofuturism's insights into a methodological vocabulary and grammar for Psychology .

An Afrofuturist framework brings speculative imagination, Black and Afrodiasporic temporality, space-making and creative production into conversation with psychological inquiry. Afrofuturism decenters whiteness as the epistemic norm, reframes psychological constructs through the Maafa – including the fractures, refusals and survival thrusts that in/form Black onto-epistemologies – and recognizes artistic and speculative practice as legitimate sites of knowledge. Yet as a theoretical orientation, Afrofuturism may open more questions than it resolves. The challenge – and opportunity – is to develop a methodological form that can operationalize its liberatory potential within the discipline.

The final part of this thesis thus develops **Speculative Construction** as a methodological intervention. Speculative Construction operationalizes Afrofuturism's commitments by treating imagination itself as a site of inquiry and method. It repositions psychological research as a creative and world-building practice and look for new forms of validation.

Purpose and Aims of the Study

Two primary aims guide the study:

1. **To solidify the theorization of Afrofuturism as a psychological framework** – one that interrogates how space, time, and story shape the discipline's understanding of the human, subjectivity, relation, and possibility.
2. **To develop Speculative Construction as a methodological intervention**, translating Afrofuturism's theoretical commitments into creative, interpretive, and speculative modes of inquiry.

From these aims emerge the following guiding research questions:

- How can Afrofuturism function as both a theoretical and methodological framework for reimagining Black psychological life beyond the inherited coordinates of colonial modernity (space, time, and story)?

- What does it mean to treat imagination, speculation, and world-building as psychological methods?
- How might a speculative methodology contribute to the psychological study and enactment of liberation for Black people?

In addressing these questions, the study moves beyond critique to creation. It proposes that psychological liberation is not only an epistemic or political task but also an ethical and creative one: a reconfiguration of the temporal, spatial, and narrative conditions that shape how Black lives and subjectivities are known/knownable, lived, possible, and made whole.

Theorizing the Black Subject: Postapocalyptic Subjectivity

This thesis requires clarity about what framework grounds my understanding of Blackness. I define Blackness through what I term *postapocalyptic subjectivity* (Nkeramihigo, 2025): a dynamic, collective *condition of being* forged in the ongoing aftermath of the Maafa – the catastrophic ensemble of slavery, colonialism, and systemic anti-Blackness. This framework recognizes Black people not through a biological or cultural essence, but as a heterogeneous collective connected through shared realities of catastrophe, survival, oppression, and the creative speculative, future-oriented responses that emerge from living in its wake.

Postapocalyptic subjectivity builds on key insights from decolonial scholarship. From Wynter (2003), I take the understanding that Blackness is sociogenically produced – manufactured through the descriptive statements of colonial modernity and the story it constructs to position Black people as the constitutive outside of "Man," a theme I undertake in the first section of this thesis. From Fanon (1952/2008), I draw on the social-psychic geography of the "zone of nonbeing," recognizing that Blackness is formed through fundamental ontological negation. From Sharpe (2016), I adopt the psychic and temporal framing of "the wake" – the understanding that Black life unfolds in the ongoing catastrophe of the Middle Passage, not in its alleged *conclusion*. Building on these and other scholars' attention to both constraint and emergence, my framework centers and holds collective memory and trauma along with communal survival, everyday resistance, and the radical reimagining of what it means to be human, both within and beyond white supremacist structures.

Furthermore, drawing from Black feminist and intersectional scholars, including Saidiya Hartman, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and Kimberly Crenshaw, I emphasize that *postapocalyptic subjectivity* is continually reconstituted through collective struggle, practices of care, and the navigation of interlocking oppressions. My framework acknowledges persistent structures of violence governing Black life and death while foregrounding Black agency, quotidian resistance, and insists on the undertheorized practices of speculative imagination as constitutive of how Blackness is lived and made. Black people are not simply subjects of violence; we create, dream, build, and imagine otherwise, even within zones designated for our non-being.

This understanding carries direct methodological implications. The Speculative Construction methodology developed later in this thesis corresponds directly to *postapocalyptic subjectivity*, with particular attention to the practice of imagination as fundamental to liberation, given that liberation is essential to mental wellbeing. To research Black psychological life is to engage the very coordinates that both organize subjugation and are continually reimagined through Black creative refusal and world-making. This thesis takes up that challenge.

Methodological and Theoretical Positioning

This thesis is situated within the Black intellectual and creative tradition, as well as waves of decolonial and critical psychologies. My approach is informed by the intellectual currents of Black Studies, decolonial thought, and Afrofuturist praxis. It begins from the premise that methods are never neutral: they are embedded in ideologies, epistemologies, worldviews, and values around what it means to know, to be human, and to imagine otherwise. Psychology's dominant empiricist paradigm has often demanded that knowledge be detached and depersonalized. This assumption has both produced and de/limited the field's sense of legitimacy. It has also obscured the creative, interpretive, relational, spiritual, and speculative dimensions of human life – dimensions that are central to Black survival and liberation.

In response, this project aligns itself with world-building and interpretive modes of inquiry that treat imagination as both method and site of knowledge. It refuses the empiricist demand for verification or falsification as the only path to truth, and instead privileges speculative thought, and creative (re)construction as means of producing psychological insight, while attending to what may be referred to as *spatiotemporal-narrative validity*, an extension of

Tuck & McKenzie's (2015) *relational validity* framework – an approach to validity in research that prioritizes accountability and ethical responsibility to people and place, emphasizing their interconnectedness, recognizing that research both reflects and influences these relationships. This orientation joins other forms of inquiry that seek to expand what is knowable in psychological research (e.g., decolonial, Indigenous, feminist, queer, etc., psychologies), and what psychological research can do by drawing from multiple epistemic traditions as forms of knowing and knowledge making that have long existed within marginalized systems.

The project is guided by the principle that knowledge is not merely discovered but constructed. Speculative Construction embodies this principle. It approaches research as an act of *making*, not simply reflecting or telling, where theory and method are co-constitutive and where *inquiry itself becomes a practice of liberation* – following bell hooks' suggestion of theory as liberatory practice (hooks, 1991)

By highlighting Afrofuturism and Speculative Construction, this thesis enacts what McKittrick (2021) calls a *rebellious method* – one that reimagines or invents ways of producing knowledge outside normative, often anti-black epistemic, methodological and disciplinary boundaries. It treats Black imagination as a legitimate site of theory-making, one capable of generating new psychological questions, methods, and worlds.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis traces a journey from critical excavation of Psychology's colonial inheritances to the creative development of Afrofuturist methodology. Each section builds on the previous, moving from the exposure of foundational constraints to the modeling of new, speculative possibilities for psychological research and liberation. Across the work, the core coordinates of **space, time, and story** serve as methodological and analytic anchors, guiding a transition from critique to construction.

I first undertake an excavation of Psychology's entanglement with colonial modernity, exposing how the discipline's categories of mind, self, and humanity have been shaped by racial and imperial logics. Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship, this excavation reveals how the figure of "Man" continues to structure psychological knowledge, and how space, time, and story

have been naturalized as neutral, rather than as sites of power and exclusion. This sets the conceptual ground for reimagining these coordinates as contested and open to transformation.

I then explore the emergence of Black Psychology as an intervention within and against mainstream paradigms. I analyze key frameworks – Identity and development models, theories of racism-related stress, and African-centered worldviews, – and highlight both their transformative contributions and some limitations. The section argues that, despite crucial advances, there remains an opening space for a more radical, speculative turn.

Next, Afrofuturism is developed as a liberatory theoretical and methodological orientation for Psychology . The section traces Afrofuturism’s lineage across Black Studies, literature, and creative practice, and argues for its power to unsettle Psychology’s inherited coordinates. By foregrounding imagination, speculative world-building, and alternative temporalities and geographies, Afrofuturism is positioned as a framework that enables new forms of inquiry into Black subjectivity, possibility, and liberation – moving beyond critique toward methodological invention.

Finally, I introduce **Speculative Construction**, the original methodological framework proposed by the thesis. It translates Afrofuturist insights into three interwoven orientations – **Echo** (time/temporality), **Drift** (space/geography), and **Pulse** (story/meaning-making) – which together operationalize a Psychology attuned to rupture, uncertainty, and world-building. This methodology treats imagination not as luxury, but as critical practice, and insists on the legitimacy of creative, interpretive, and relational forms of knowledge production.

1. Excavating the Hu/Man - Colonial Foundations

“how can people, produced as Black, experience ourselves as the humans we are?”
(Bell, 2025b, p. 1248).

Deanne Bell (2025b) reminds us that “The global system of coloniality has produced profound psychological consequences for the human.” (p.1257). She goes on to write that the “negation of the human, racialized as Black in modernity, affects multiple registers of psychological life,” explaining the impossibility of the category of Black to be fully human within this matrix, and suggesting that “precisely because the human exists as reality, with knowledge of itself as human, the lack of recognition experienced through the White gaze destroys the sense of self as human.” (p.1250)

This is significant for Psychology and this thesis, because to affirm Black humanity, Psychology must first confront the category of the human itself – not as a neutral descriptor, but as a site of exclusion, violence, and imposed order. This means returning to the ontological and epistemic (and temporal, and spatial) ruptures that mark Black life and consider what new possibilities emerge from this excavation. This first section consults various Black and Afrodiasporic thinkers that have provided us with analysis and language around the construction and (re)imagining of those coded as Black, of Blackness, and Black life. It grounds this thesis by tracing the rupture from human to Man in an intellectual, embodied, and creative/imaginative exercise of excavation which necessarily exceeds disciplinary boundaries. The section also demonstrates that inseparable from the colonial construction of Man are the constructions of space/geography and time, all of which are undertheorized in Psychology as necessary analytical parts.

The ground laid here forms the conceptual infrastructure for the rest of the thesis, culminating in the later development of a speculative, Afrofuturist methodology which seeks to destabilize these concepts enough to imagine otherwise. Drawing primarily on the works of Sylvia Wynter, Frantz Fanon, Christina Sharpe, Katherine McKittrick, Saidiya Hartman, and Kodwo Eshun, it excavates the epistemic, spatial, temporal, and narrative dimensions through which Black life has been distorted, disqualified, or foreclosed within dominant epistemic and disciplinary paradigms, a critique I extend to Psychology.

1.1 | Wynter and the Problem of the Man

Sylvia Wynter | Jamaica. Cuba. USA.

Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter's body of work offers a critical foundation for understanding how the category of the human is constructed, delimited, and weaponized within Western modernity and, by extension, we recognize that Psychology inherits this construction (see also Bell, [2025a](#), [2025b](#)). Wynter ([2003](#)) demonstrates that the category of the human itself has been produced through historically and geographically-specific descriptive statements of the human: culturally authored accounts of what counts as human, and therefore normal human development, enacted through governing and symbolic orders. In her analysis, colonialism is not an external context to this category; it is a condition of its emergence and consolidation. The human, in this sense, is not only a concept but a time and space-bound production – made and remade through successive redescrptions that install particular stories of what the human is.

Wynter ([2003](#)) traces a shift from a theocentric order (in which the human is anchored in Christian theological terms) to a secular, political order in which a new genre of the human takes shape. **Man1** (*homo politicus*) is Wynter's analytic name for this historically produced figure: the political subject of the modern state – rational, self-determining, and sovereign – emerging through a reorganization of power and knowledge that positions Europe as the locus of the human. The colonial implication of this re-description is that the binary inscription of rational/irrational distinction becomes a governing grammar through which colonized peoples are cast as lacking reason and therefore as less-than-fully human. In this grammar, the human is not a neutral descriptive category; it is a status distributed through racialized hierarchies of value.

Wynter then identifies a later transformation in this ongoing narrative of the human: **Man2** (*homo oeconomicus*), is a biocentric and ostensibly scientific redefinition grounded in biological-evolutionary, as well as economic class logics. Here, the human is increasingly figured as organism, as measurable life, as a being whose value can be narrated through race science, Darwinian models, and the purported natural ordering of populations, but one subordinate “to a teleological economic script that governs our global well- being / ill- being” (McKittrick, [2015](#), p. 10). This shift does not replace Man1 so much as intensify and modernize it: the political subject of the state is re-secured by a biological ordering of the species and by

accounts of progress, development, and fitness that align easily with bourgeois interests and capitalist logics. What appears as neutral description becomes a powerful mechanism of differentiation.

Like Man1, Man2 is overrepresented as if it were the human itself. Wynter's term matters because it names more than ideology: it names an epistemic condition in which a particular ethnoclass genre of being (historically Western, White, bourgeois, secular, and 'rational') is projected as the human-as-such, while other genres of being are negatively marked as nongeneric or abnormal Others. In this overrepresentation, Blackness is positioned as a limit-case against which *the human* is secured. The category of the human becomes legible through a logic of negation: some people are recognizable as fully human, others are recognizable primarily as the not-quite-human, the not-yet-human, or the outside of the human.

What does this mean for Psychology? Wynter's account clarifies why logics of inclusion alone are inadequate. That is, adding more Black bodies (a biocentric logic) is not the same as engaging Black humanity. If the discipline proceeds as though the human it studies is universal – while quietly tethered to Man's descriptive statement – then adding Black life to existing frameworks risks re-inscribing the very genre of the human that made Blackness unintelligible or pathological in the first place. The problem is not simply empirical underrepresentation; it is conceptual capture. One can argue that Psychology provides the "metrics" for Man2. Put differently: if the field does not interrogate the genre of the human it presumes, it can only reproduce that presumption in new forms. The work of this thesis begins by refusing that closure.

Wynter's is a call for a fundamental restructuring of the epistemological grounds that underwrite knowledge, including the human sciences. This restructuring requires more than swapping one set of variables for another. It requires new understandings, methodologies, and frameworks for the recognition and psychological study of the human. Wynter's emphasis on the entanglement of the biological (bios) and the narrative-cultural (mythoi) dimensions of the human is especially consequential here: it points toward a Psychology that cannot reduce the human to biology, behavior, or decontextualized individual interiority, and must treat story and meaning-making as conditions of being. Psychology must also recognize the space and time dimensions of this construct and what spaces and temporalities are denied intellectual inclusion.

In this sense, Wynter's work does not only diagnose harm; it opens methodological possibilities, including interventions that begin elsewhere than Man's inherited coordinates.

Where Wynter shows how the human is constructed through negation, Frantz Fanon, whom she often cites, is discussed next, in his offering of a glimpse into what it *feels* like to inhabit that negation – and what might emerge from it.

1.2 | Fanon and Overdetermination

Frantz Omar Fanon | Martinique/France. Algeria

Frantz Fanon's work extends and deepens the ontological critique introduced in the previous section by articulating the psychic and affective consequences of being cast outside the category of the human. For him, the violence of colonialism is not only social or material but metaphysical as well. In the opening pages of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008), he writes of a “zone of nonbeing” from which “an authentic upheaval can be born” (pp. 1–2). It is in this space of negation and estrangement – not merely exclusion, but disassembly – that Fanon begins his diagnosis.

Fanon's concept of *overdetermination* (“*I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me but of my own appearance.*” p. 87) captures the condition of living as a subject whose body and meaning have already been defined by others. He describes this as being overdetermined from without and within. From without, the Black body is saturated with externally imposed meaning, constructed through colonial histories, racist fantasies and fantastical anecdotes, and projections not of the subject's choosing. From within, the internalization of these imposed meanings becomes part of the psychic structure – distortions, anxiety, etc. Fanon writes that the “black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (p. 83), and that “every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society” (p. 82). The violence, it would seem, is total. It is not simply a misrepresentation, but a foreclosure of metaphysical presence, of possibilities. Fanon further asserts that the Black person's metaphysics “were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him” (p. 83), what I refer to, elsewhere, as an imposed and normalized “alien thematic universe” (Nkeramihigo, 2025, p. 11).

Beyond mere diagnostic, the overdetermination Fanon speaks of has consequences for how Black people come to know and feel themselves, and how they move in the world. A desire and practice of self-exploration and coherent self-formation beyond these scripts is frequently interrupted by the white gaze (epistemologies, media, persons, etc.). Fanon offers another example: He recalled a particular “external stimulus” that came as one of many interruptions through an exclamation:

“Look, a Negro!” (p. 84).

Fanon knew that the white man “had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories”, and those stories were wrapped around this exclamation, and the body he walked around in.

“‘Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!’” (p. 84).

Fanon writes that “it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person” (2008, p. 84). His reflection revealed a hyperawareness, as well as a form of alienation and dis-location (physical, psychological, historical, ontological – metaphysical) produced by the White gaze. This moment recalls Du Bois’ account of double consciousness (Du Bois et al., 2004), extended to a triple personhood. To Du Bois’ analysis of “double consciousness”, Fanon adds another psychological concern, stating that “[i]n the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness” (p. 83). He added that the white man “had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” (p. 84), and that at every attempt at putting himself back together, he is interrupted by a white gaze once more. Du Bois's double consciousness and Fanon's third-person consciousness both describe a split Black identity under white supremacy, with Fanon emphasizing the embodied and the global colonial context. The incessant interruptions and (re)constructions Fanon refers to reappear in Black and African thoughts and reflections across continents and times, reflecting a particular condition of existence which lacks appropriate, sustained, and intentional presence in mainstream Psychology, at each of the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical levels.

Fanon wrote in the 1950’s and 60’s Africa and Europe, Du Bois in the late 19th through the mid-20th century America. Both were *made* Black by whiteness. Both experienced and

deliberated on the embodied strangeness and split-ness, the knowledge/hyperawareness/consciousness of being constructed and never truly free to simply be (as this process is continuously interrupted). Yet mainstream Psychology, even with its stated desire to repair its colonial and racist legacy, does not systematically engage with that strangeness – the state of non-being that envelops blackness, its psychological effects and manifestations, from the standpoint of that strangeness and alienness. Its embodied, temporal and spatial dimensions are also denied meaningful exploration. The awareness of one's body is particular and peculiar in those made Other by Man. This, it seems, can cause fracturing or multiplying of the self.

“In the train, it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person” (Fanon, p. 84)

The hyperawareness of one's body is supplemented by the hyperawareness of occupying space, of being out of place, of being in the wrong place, frozen, as it were, by the white gaze, as excessive to space, social – political, academic/epistemological and physical space. Nevertheless, this hyperawareness provides the oppressed with a certain knowledge, perhaps, in Baldwin's terms, 'terrifying advantage' (as cited in Peck & Baldwin, 2016) - knowledge of how anti-Black violence operates that becomes, as hooks (1989) observes, both burden and resource, making the margins 'a site of radical possibility' (p. 20). This knowledge of the world from the margins has historically not been adequately read, or has simply been denied space, legibility, and credibility/authority in mainstream Psychology, creating a state of subalternity that suggest that the oppressed is not a knower, but a recipient (or the object) of knowledge (see also Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2021)

The subject Fanon describes is not *broken* and in need of repair but *structured* through a system that fractures them and denies them full being. This cannot be corrected merely through inclusion or cultural sensitivity. It demands an epistemic and conceptual break. Mainstream Psychology, even as it acknowledges its colonial foundations (in theory more-so than in praxis—though there are meaningful attempts at the margins), remains ill-equipped to address this level of disruption.

Fanon's insistence on the impossibility of Black ontology under colonial conditions – and his refusal to frame the colonial subject as merely damaged – resonates with what I have termed

postapocalyptic subjectivity (Nkeramihigo, 2025). That is, a condition shaped by ontological rupture, historical violence, and the lingering effects of having been constructed through negation, and what Sharpe describes as “the wake” (Sharpe, 2016).

Fanon (1963/2021) called for a new humanity, one devised through struggle, imagination, and refusal. It is this imperative – not only to diagnose but to imagine otherwise – that links Fanon’s legacy to the speculative orientation of this thesis. It is also what sets the stage for the next section, which focuses on Christina Sharpe’s account of living in the wake – of inhabiting a present shaped by the unfinished past, where mourning, memory, and method become inextricable.

1.3 | Sharpe’s Wake Work

Christina Sharpe | US. Canada.

Christina Sharpe (2016) proposes an additional orientation of the ontological critiques laid out by Wynter and Fanon. Writing from a Black feminist standpoint grounded in the U.S. context, Sharpe insists that the afterlife of the slavery of African/Black people is not consigned to the past: it structures the present. She introduces a set of metaphors drawn from the transatlantic slave trade and its enduring logics. She uses a set of symbolic imageries: “the wake” (the trail left by slave ships and a state of perpetual mourning), “the ship” (the material remnants of the Middle Passage that continue to influence Black existence), “the hold” (the spatial and ontological containment and confinement of Black life, symbolized by the slave ships), and “the weather” (the structural, ambient, atmospheric nature of anti-Blackness). The weather, she writes, “is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is anti-Black” (Sharpe, 2016, p. 104). Beyond their metaphorical settings, these speak to how Black life is shaped by a persistent condition of negation, displacement, and state-sanctioned precarity. It is both remarkable (in its atrocity) and mundane (in its everydayness).

Sharpe’s concept of *wake work* is both a metaphor for mourning and a method of surviving, imagining, and building new ways of living, sensing, and resisting under conditions of Black death and the still-unfolding aftermath of slavery (the wake). Sharpe’s work engages physical death, social death, and symbolic death, naming the accumulation of forces that render Black life constantly grievable yet structurally ungrieved. Her effort in trying to find the language, to “occupy that grammar, the infinitive” for what it means to live in slavery’s

afterlives, a grammar that signifies that “[t]o be/in the wake is to occupy [...] time/space/place/construction” and to recognize “the ongoing locations of Black being: the wake, the ship, the hold, and the weather” (p.16) is not only descriptive: it is ethical, methodological, and speculative. My thesis similarly attempts to find and create language adequate to its inquiry and desire, and studies Sharpe and others as they do the work. I recognize Sharpe’s wake work as a way to inhabit the rupture, to attend to the traces and residues that dominant histories and Psychology erase, dismiss, or pathologize.

Each of the scholars discussed thus far diagnose a rupture and /in the condition in which the Black subject is produced through negation. As Fanon theorized what it means to be denied ontology, Sharpe demonstrates how that denial persists even in supposed freedom (“after” abolition). While Fanon (and Wynter) gestures toward futurity through the creation of a new human, Sharpe lingers in the debris of rupture. There are value, necessity, and information in lingering in the space of/for collective grief, loss, and unfinished memory, without the demand for resolution. The purpose of wake work is the active engagement in this space, a conscious and intentional effort to live, mourn, and imagine otherwise within a world that constantly consigns Black lives to death. It involves acts of care, creativity, and resistance that affirm Black humanity in the face of an episteme rooted in slavery’s logic.

Following Sharpe, this thesis is deeply interested in the information present in (staying in and leaning into) rupture. Some of the practices proposed by Sharpe include: Ethical reading practices that counter official narratives of violence by highlighting Black voices and interior lives; world building – i.e., creating liveable spaces and possibilities for life ; and an insistence on Black existence – an ongoing affirmation of Black life and being despite the “ontological negation” of Black people.

Psychology’s frameworks, by contrast, would tend to pathologize lingering inside rupture. Loss must be resolved. Mourning must be completed. Symptoms must be treated. The wake, in this paradigm, becomes a problem to be fixed, not a condition to be honored in the manner proposed by Sharpe’s wake work. Sharpe offers a methodology that does not aim to *resolve* in the normative sense, but instead to notice, to remember, and to remain with, and then to create, to build, to engage in ethical practices that honor Black livingness and knowledge. In this way, her work aligns with the aims of this thesis: to take seriously the psychic life of those

living under postapocalyptic conditions, to look at the sites of rupture not simply as aberrant, but as, also, epistemically and methodologically generative (see also Nkeramihigo, 2025).

We must also acknowledge the difficulty of method itself under these conditions. For those living in the wake, traditional methods can be inadequate. This thesis takes up that challenge by attempting to imagine a methodology that begins from rupture, memory, imagination, and Black speculative thought. Sharpe's insistence on attending to the wake without closure sets the stage for this project's speculative turn. If living in the wake is about recognition and refusal, then what kinds of method can grow from that terrain? What forms might emerge from ruptures? The aim is not to fall into *coherence*, but to trace new paths of being, knowing, and imagining otherwise.

So far we have seen how Wynter demonstrates how the category of the human has been overrepresented by the genre of Man, how Fanon reveals what it feels like to live outside of that category, and how Sharpe describes *wake work* in the wake of that negation. Together, they relate the ideological stories that have been assembled to build the world we live in through a construction of the human out of the imagination of a few, with real sociopolitical, ontological, epistemic, material, and embodied, lived, psychological effects. But they also gesture to other stories, directing our gaze beyond the structure that interrupt explorations of otherwise.

There is, in these accounts, also a specification of space. In Wynter, Europe is narrativized as the place from where knowledge emanates. In Fanon, colonial space is replete with violence and interruptions to Black freedom (of movement and of simply being). In Sharpe, space expands to weather and the banality of anti-Blackness in the air. To elaborate on space, we move next to its analysis in Black Geography through the thoughts of Katherine McKittrick – a former student and mentee of Wynter's.

1.4 | McKittrick: On Black geography and rebellious method.

Katherine McKittrick | Canada.

“I suggest that the negotiation of social, corporeal, and spatial human configurations, initiated by encounters with the unknown, created new spaces, specifically Man's geographies, which are overdetermined, normalized, and naturalized. The inventions of Man come to be reflected in spatial queries and arrangements. If Man is an overrepresentation of humanness,

Man's human geographies are an extension of this conception. The development and mapping of the uninhabitable and uneven archipelagos are two important ways Man's geographies are overrepresented." (McKittrick, 2006, p. 128)

The sense of place /displace(ment)/out-of-place present in Fanon's work finds expansion in the work of Canadian gender and Black studies scholar Katherine McKittrick.

So far, we have looked at how Wynter exposes the overrepresentation of "Man" as human, how Fanon explores what it *feels* like to be denied humanity, and how Sharpe traces how that denial structures the present (at least in North America/US). McKittrick pushes our excavation further into the domain of space and geography, turning our attention to the spatial logics that produce, discipline, and constrain Black life.

Geography, McKittrick argues, is a racial project. I contend that it is undertheorized as constitutive to life, and Black life and subjectivities in particular, within the Psydisciplines. While researchers may drop in and out of "urban" (read as Black spaces) to research "at-risk" youths, for example, they do not consistently theorize place as historically constructed colonial or racial enclosures, nor look at the manner in which Black people resist, reimagine, and reconstruct space.

McKittrick's work insists that the question of Black being is inseparable from questions of geography. Space is not neutral, nor is it merely a container for racial violence. Her work demonstrates that the category of the human and its ontological foreclosure include a spatial construct, enforced and materialized through the regulation of Black presence (or disappearance) and movements across geographic (and epistemic) terrains. In other words, she demonstrates how the making of Man— historical, ideological, epistemic — has always also been spatialized.

In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006), McKittrick challenges the idea that geography is objective and neutral. She demonstrates that space, like race and gender, is constructed and enforced through colonial and white supremacist logics. Modern geography, she argues, has historically functioned as a mode of inscription and domination, producing spatial orderings that displace, criminalize, and disappear Black people, particularly Black women, from the world's physical and conceptual maps, while simultaneously overdetermining where and how they are allowed to appear. This geographic violence is not

merely symbolic. It materially organizes who can live, move, speak, be seen or be heard (where and how). It structures the knowable. The erasure of Black life from official maps, the surveillance of Black bodies in space, the confinement of Black communities to marginal zones: these are not accidental, but structural. Geography helps determine who belongs, and that spatializing is deeply *felt* and *experienced*. These arrangements, again, which may be read uncritically as natural or neutral, reflect the spatial enforcement of Man's supremacy and the devaluation of those deemed outside of it. Geography, then, is deeply tied to knowledge and psychological life.

Central to McKittrick's project is the concept of *demonic grounds*: On one side, it names the oppressive, racialized, and sexualized spaces created through slavery, coloniality and white supremacy that try to dehumanize Black women (see also Spillers, [1987](#)), a term that names the spaces where Black women, particularly, have been made to dwell through forced displacement, carceral logics, and epistemic erasure. These are literal places, like the plantation, the ghetto, or the prison (see also McKittrick, [2011](#); [2013](#)), but also conceptual grounds: discursive and symbolic terrains in which Black life is imagined as out of place, excessive, or impossible, such as the archive (see Hartman, [2008](#); [2019](#)). But *demonic grounds* also names the alternative, resistant geographies Black women create within and against these spaces, using places like slave auction blocks, Harriet Jacobs' attics (Jacobs, 1861), and even their own bodies to assert humanity and challenge dominant spatial orders. It's a concept that blends and contrasts the literal oppressive locations (demonic) with the powerful, transformative ways Black women claim and remake space (grounds) for liberation. McKittrick thus insists that these grounds are not only sites of domination. They are also sites of resistance, where alternative spatial logics – what we may call *Black geographic knowledge* – can and do emerge.

Her reading of Harriet Jacobs and Marie-Joseph Angélique, for example, exemplify this. Angélique, a Black enslaved woman executed in 18th-century Montreal, appears in the colonial archive as criminal, monstrous, incendiary. Yet McKittrick does not treat the archive as final. Instead, she reads its spatial cues – rooftops, alleyways, footpaths – as traces of Angélique's spatial agency and refusal. In doing so, she models what she calls rebellious method (McKittrick, [2021](#)): an insurgent, interdisciplinary approach that refuses the empirical constraints of disciplines in order to attend to the full dimensions of Black life, including its spatial, creative,

and historical disruptions. Similarly, she writes about how Jacobs, while in hiding in her grandmother's attic for 7 years, writes letters to her master, Dr. Flint, postmarked from the North, to mislead him about her whereabouts. This act is a clever manipulation of both time and space, as Jacobs constructed a false narrative of her movements.

McKittrick thus resists any conclusion that Black spaces are purely sites of death. She insists instead that demonic grounds are also spaces of rebellion, imagination, and methodological disruption. Black life is not only knowable through the violence it endures. The very grounds that seek to erase Black presence are also where Black geographies are produced, lived, re-imagined, and (re)theorized.

What does this mean for Psychology? McKittrick's propositions have profound implications for Psychology. Mainstream Psychology does not meaningfully theorize or consider these ideas of geography in general and Black geography and placemaking, nor the tension between presence and disappearance, between being mapped, unmapped, and mapping otherwise. As McKittrick shows, Black life often navigates these tensions by producing alternative spatial logics – practices of being and knowing that disrupt imposed geographies (physical, archival, epistemic), exceed disciplinary constraints, and enact methodological possibilities that Psychology can and should study and incorporate.

As I discuss further in a section coming up, Psychology has historically abstracted the subject from space – where the psychological subject has generally been imagined as an individual mind or behavior, untethered from geography – or decontextualized space as a mere container of racial dynamics. When place is acknowledged, it has often been decontextualized as a backdrop or container to cognitive or affective functioning, rather than a constitutive dimension of being. This aspatial framing aligns closely with the figure of Man2: the liberal, autonomous subject whose capacities and dysfunctions are understood to emerge from his/her/their interiority, not from the terrain they inhabit.

Without attention to racial space-making, Psychology risks reproducing the spatial logics McKittrick critiques. It obscures the ways that Black subjectivity is shaped by violent geographies, histories of displacement, forced removal, carcerality and enclosure, invisibilization (as human) or hypervisibility (as excessive). It fails to theorize the psychic and ontological effects of being rendered out of place or hyper-visible within space. Psychology has also

historically participated in the very ordering of space it claims to observe – e.g., in its role in legitimizing the surveillance or overrepresentation of “deviant” or “at-risk” populations. Its categories of diagnosis and wellness may thereby be predicated on spatial norms it does not name.

Black geography demands that we refuse this erasure. It insists that the spatiality of Black life – its routes, roots, ruptures, refusals, as well as rebellious imagination, and moving/mapping otherwise – must be incorporated in any engagement with subjectivity, affect, or relationships. For Psychology, this means not only incorporating geography and space as a variable but questioning its own space-making, including as disciplinary boundaries and methods. What kinds of subjectivity are made illegible and what forms of knowledge are excluded when space is treated as irrelevant, pathologized, fixed or remain ahistorical and undertheorized?

McKittrick offers us a map (pun accidental) where geography is understood as a site of both discipline and dreaming, and Black livingness is understood as method (see also McKittrick, 2021). Her insights are vital for a psychological understanding of *postapocalyptic subjectivity* (Nkeramihigo, 2025). To engage Black subjectivity without engaging its spatial conditions is to remain in the orbit of Man. To attend to demonic grounds, by contrast, is to open up a field of possibility – one where imagination, and methodological rebellion become tools for psychic and collective survival and liberation.

This opens the way for a methodological shift this thesis undertakes, which is attentive to the speculative, spatial dimension of Black life and method.

1.4.2. McKittrick on Method

In *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021), McKittrick proposes that “Black methodologies are rebellious methodologies” (p. 11), in that they resist the codification of life into data, metrics, or pathological case studies. Her essays explore art, music, reading, listening, citation works, and storytelling as methodological and legitimate sites of knowledge and modes of analysis – especially when the object of study is Black life, which is often misread or rendered unintelligible by dominant frameworks. She proposes a commitment to experimentation, disciplinary disobedience, and shared knowledge-making. This aligns with the methodological

orientation of this thesis, which centers relational, fugitive and speculative practices as legitimate methodological tools of psychological inquiry.

The Black methodologies McKittrick identifies in her work do not conform to disciplinary demands for coherence, predictability, or extractable results. Instead, they unsettle and imagine otherwise, often moving outside the bounds of academic geography, through stories, sound, poetry, and relation. In one passage, McKittrick (2021) describes method as “unhinged from the stasis of noun, and thrown into the less predictable work of verb” (p. 44) – a methodological echo of the disoriented and reoriented time-space frameworks that inform and structure my proposed Afrofuturist theory and method

Wynter exposed the overrepresentation of Man as human; Fanon showed the experience of ontological negation; and Sharpe lingered in the atmospheric density of anti-Blackness. McKittrick thus turns our attention toward the generative possibilities of method. She is not naive about violence, but she too refuses to let Blackness be known only through death. “The point,” she writes, “is not to seek liberation in the future or the past, but to recognize that Black life already produces alternative spatial practices” (2021, p. 14). It is in this way that her work gestures toward possibility not as fantasy but as method. This thesis draws from McKittrick not only conceptually, but structurally: treating time, space/geography, story, and rebellion as method that respond to and emanate from Black livingness.

McKittrick offers a necessary reorientation of space/geography in relation to the Black body, as well as an introduction to Black livingness as method that rebels against normative positivist and disciplinary expectation. She, too, refuses the flattening of Black life into death and disappearance. Instead, she insists that Black livingness, Black geography, and Black imagination are not only present, but methodologically critical. Her work dislodges dominant epistemologies of space and being as relational and inextricable one from the other, offering a generative analytic for reading Black life as spatially surveilled and criminalized, but also insurgent, rebellious, fugitive, and conceptually disobedient. In this way, McKittrick extends the critique of humanism into terrain – literal and conceptual – while also adding to our charting of how we might study Black life otherwise.

Saidiya Hartman’s work, which we turn to next, similarly presses the limits of what can be known and imagined about Black life under conditions of erasure.

1.5 | Hartman: Critical Method in the Afterlife of Slavery.

Saidiya Hartman | USA

“What else is there to know? Hers is the same fate as every other Black Venus: no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said, or observed that she refused to say anything at all. Hers is an untimely story told by a failed witness. It would be centuries before she would be allowed to ‘try her tongue.’ ” (Hartman, 2008, p.2, quoting marks in original, in deference and reference to M. NourbeSe Philip, 1993)

Hartman underscores the limits of the (colonial) archive and the ethical weight of imagination. Like McKittrick, Hartman’s body of work is marked by a bold defiance of disciplinary and methodological boundaries. Her work blends history, literature, theory, and speculative narrative. Specifically, her “critical fabulation” method, which imaginatively reconstructs the lives of those erased or silenced by the archive, offers a model for psychological research that is attentive to absence, silence, and the limits of method and empirical data. This is especially relevant for Black Psychology, which continues to grapple with the inadequacy of mainstream psychological frameworks to capture Black experiences.

Hartman’s work explores the afterlife of slavery as a living structure. Similar to McKittrick, Sharpe and others, she exposes the persistence of the violence of slavery, not simply in its legacy, but in the forms of surveillance, captivity, gendered regulation, and social death that shape the present, but also in the story it tells and, as importantly, the story it does not. Both, especially as historical narrative (all there is to know about the past) anchor our understanding of the present and imagination of the future.

Hartman (2008) introduced *Critical Fabulation* as a method of re-narration that fuses rigorous historical research with imaginative reconstruction. Critical Fabulation is Hartman’s response to the silences, gaps, and violences of the historical archive – particularly those that obscure or erase the lives and interiorities of Black women. Rather than accepting the limits of what the archive provides, Hartman stitches together historical fact, archival fragments, and speculative narrative to reconstruct the inner lives and experiences of those rendered voiceless and historically insignificant by history. This approach is not about inventing facts, but about ethically and creatively filling in the absences left by dominant narratives, with an awareness of the risks and responsibilities involved.

For Psychology, Critical Fabulation offers a radical rethinking of what counts as evidence and how knowledge about marginalized lives can be produced. Traditional psychological research often privileges a certain empirical data and observable phenomena. This assumes a number of things: that the *observable* is all there is to see/know (and that the eyes of the observer can *see* all there is to see), that the questions are adequate, that the responses are complete enough, that the method and medium are trust-worthy, and that the interpretation is accurate (see Teo, 2010). Each of these can perpetuate the erasure and pathologization of Black experiences.

Black life has historically systematically been excluded from or distorted in official records, reports, and scientific inquiry, leading to Psychology's own incomplete archive. Hartman's approach challenges Psychology to recognize the limitations of its own methodologies and to consider alternative ways of knowing – ones that are attentive to absence, silence, refusals, and the afterlives of the Maafa (see also Bhatia, Long, Pickren & Rutherford, 2024).

Critical Fabulation thus emerged from the ethical problem of a colonial archive which does not merely document violence but reproduce it through silencing the life and interiority of the violated. Critical fabulation enacts a speculative form of historical narration that attends to the limits of the archive while refusing the erasure it imposes. In this methodological choice, Hartman challenges the evidentiary logics we find in both historical and psychological disciplines. She writes from and within what she calls “the space of loss,” where “narrative restraint and the imperative to respect black privacy and opacity dictate the limits of what can be said” (2008, p. 12). This position does not abandon truth, but relocates it – in fragments, affect, dissonance, refusal. It is, in this way, a methodology of relation and rupture, which stays with what cannot be resolved.

In *Venus in Two Acts* (2008), she describes her method as one that “wants to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling” (p. 11). Her approach is neither closure nor absence, but a form of care through research and historically-informed speculation: staying close to the traces, imagining without possessing, writing without claiming to restore. While Black lives have predominantly been narrated as trauma, as lack, or as evidence of progress (or perhaps stagnancy), Hartman's narratives, by contrast, dwell in the speculative lives

of young Black women and girls whose dreams, desires, and resistances exceed the logic of recovery (see also, Hartman, 2019).

This is where Hartman's work aligns most directly with speculative construction – not as fantasy, but as an ethical methodology that tends to the absences, hauntings, and pluralities that dominant modes of knowledge often erase.

Hartman's method resonates strongly with both Sharpe's wake work, McKittrick's rebellious method, and my proposition of Postapocalyptic subjectivities. While Sharpe attends to mourning, Hartman lingers on the act of narration itself. It further align with McKittrick's (2021) methodological propositions in that it attends to the ethics of what it means to tell Black stories without reproducing the violence that made them untellable. This is a methodological and ethical commitment that I endeavor to follow in the method development of this thesis. As this thesis moves toward a method rooted in speculative construction, Hartman's work offers a model of narrative as enactment – where the impossibility of complete knowledge becomes the ground for methodological invention, and toward an approach that does not seek recovery or redemption, but proximity, relation, possibility and ethical witnessing.

Kodwo Eshun, whom I discuss next, pushes us further into the speculative. His work invites us to not only tend to the archive of loss but to intervene in the grammars of futurity that preempt the present (time/temporalities) and structure what can be known. Where Hartman practices narrative restraint and speculative reconstruction in the face of historical violence and silence, Eshun practices a(nother) disruptive temporal and narrative method which works against the protocols that deny Black people a role in the future. Together, they form a methodological hinge: Hartman makes space for the *might have been*, while Eshun insists on the possibility of what is *yet to be/come*. Both disrupt their colonial coordinates.

1.6 | Eshun: Afrofuturism as Counter-Temporal Method

Kodwo Eshun | Ghana. UK.

“Afrofuturism has never been concerned with the recovery of the ‘authentic’ African past. Instead, it looks to the future, creating temporal complications, nonlinear recursions, and retroactive inscriptions” (Eshun, 2003, p. 289).

“It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West [...] if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of its Other” (Bevernage, 2016)

If Wynter shows how the human is redescribed through shifting genres of Man, McKittrick describes its spatial positioning, And Hartman describe its organisation of the past through the archive, Eshun sharpens a related claim: modern power does not govern only by curating the past. It governs by producing and distributing futures. In his 2003 article, he asks the reader to imagine the future as a hostile terrain, frames futurity itself as contested.

In his speculative staging device, Eshun (2003) describes future archaeologists scrolling through fragile archives and operating from a premise that “the future is a chronopolitical terrain, a terrain as hostile and as treacherous as the past” (p. 289). The point is not literary flourish but an analytic claim: that the future is not a neutral horizon we simply arrive at. It is a site where power acts.

Eshun argues that, in the present, power functions through prediction as much as through memory: “It is clear that power now operates predictively as much as retrospectively,” he writes, no longer merely occupied with “the dissimulation of the imperial archive”, it functions through “the envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures” (Eshun, 2003, p. 289). This is an important temporal extension from Hartman’s analysis and troubling of the archive: Eshun identifies the future as another site where violence is engineered, underscoring that the power to describe the future increasingly determines what is possible in the present.

His formulation makes temporal disorientation legible as a structural condition. If the future is a resource that can be distributed, withheld, or monopolized, then temporal experience is uneven by design. Eshun names this unevenness directly: “The powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past. The present moment is stretching, slipping for some into yesterday, reaching for others into tomorrow” (Eshun, 2003, p. 289). The “past” here is not nostalgia. It is imposed belatedness. It is an evacuation of futurity from certain lives and populations, paired with the saturation of forecasts that justify austerity, policing, abandonment, and containment.

Man is not only a racialized order; Man is also a temporal regime. This construct is reinforced through this regime such that some subjects are consistently aligned with progress, innovation, and the right to become, while others are positioned as excess, exception, or delay.

Eshun provides a vocabulary for how this temporal regime is made through a reading of science fiction. He argues that science fiction can no longer be treated as entertainment or as a harmless genre of imagination, because it is entangled with what he calls the futures industry. He notes that it “is now a research and development department within a futures industry that dreams of the prediction and control of tomorrow” (Eshun, 2003, p. 291). This matters because it reframes futurity as institutional infrastructure. Futures are manufactured across intersecting sites: corporate scenario planning, economic projection, risk modeling, technoscientific forecasting, media narrative, and the cultural habits that train populations to accept certain outcomes as normal, even inevitable.

In this account, science fiction becomes less about prediction and more about temporal engineering. Citing the idea that science fiction can “preprogram the present,” Eshun argues that the genre’s operation is often to produce “feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present” (Eshun, 2003, p. 290). His claim lands as a methodological invitation for this thesis: to study not only what we/people remember (and what is *worth* remembering), but what we have been trained to anticipate.

Eshun’s chronopolitical analysis becomes especially sharp when he turns to how Africa is projected within global futurisms. Here his language is direct: “Africa increasingly exists as the object of futurist projection,” and African social reality becomes “overdetermined” by “doomsday economic projections, weather predictions, medical reports,” and other forecasts that are presented as neutral expertise (Eshun, 2003, p. 291). The issue is not only that crises are fabricated. It is that the future is repeatedly narrated as catastrophe in ways that function politically: as certainty, as demoralization, as justification. Eshun describes these projections as “developmental futurisms” commissioned by multinationals and NGOs, which “function as the other side of the corporate utopias that make the future safe for industry” (Eshun, 2003, p. 292). Their affective force matters. He writes: “These powerful descriptions of the future demoralize us; they command us to bury our heads in our hands, to groan with sadness” (Eshun, 2003, p. 292). Demoralization is not framed as individual weakness. It is produced by authoritative

projections that deliver the future as threat and deny communities the right to imagine otherwise without being labeled unrealistic.

Here, temporal disorientation is not simply the experience of being severed from a past. It is also the experience of being flooded by hostile forecasts – of living inside futures that arrive as intimidation. Eshun names this explicitly as “market dystopia,” a discourse that “aspires to unchallengeable certainty” (Eshun, 2003, p. 292). Certainty is the point: if the future is certain, then political imagination becomes foolish; alternative projects become irresponsible; refusal becomes irrational.

This is another way Man secures itself as world-order: by monopolizing not only the genre of the human, but the legitimacy of futurity.

The point, then, is not to contrast past and future as separate temporal directions, as though racialized time governance were organized along a single line. The temporal order that secures Man is multipronged and multidirectional: it manufactures the past (through archives, official histories, and evidentiary regimes) and manufactures the future (through forecasts, risk narratives, scenarios, and the production of *reliable futures*), and these prongs operate together to preempt the present – what can be recognized as real, what can be anticipated as inevitable, and what can be imagined as possible. Eshun’s intervention is valuable here because it names predictive power as a decisive component of this apparatus: power, he argues, operates “predictively as much as retrospectively,” and those with institutional authority draw power from the futures they endorse.

What does this mean for Psychology? Eshun’s analysis sits uncomfortably close to some of Psychology’s most normalized temporal habits. The discipline often treats time as a neutral axis: developmental stages, life-course trajectories, prediction models, risk forecasts, resilience narratives, and therapeutic timelines of recovery. Even when Psychology names racism as cumulative, it frequently does so inside a temporal grammar that remains committed to prediction and management – identifying risk, forecasting outcomes, correcting trajectories. That grammar can be useful. Eshun’s work asks what it costs when prediction becomes the dominant imagination of time.

Where McKittrick disrupts the spatial containment of Black life, Fanon names the psychic and ontological dislocation of being, and Sharpe traces the atmospheric conditions of anti-Blackness that structure the present, Eshun clarifies how futurity itself becomes a site of governance – how time is organized through prediction, scenario, and the unequal distribution of what counts as possible. Taken together, these thinkers show that Man is assembled and secured through interlocking coordinates: space, time, and story are not neutral backdrops, but conditions that organize knowledge, subjectivity, and being. I read this body of work not only as critique of what colonial modernity makes knowable, but as an opening onto other ways of sensing, living, and making meaning – precisely through disrupting and reworking these coordinates. The section that follows brings this insight into Psychology, examining how its theories and methods inherit and often reproduce colonial spatiotemporal and narrative arrangements.

2. Time, Space and Story in Psychology

Having excavated the premise of the human as Man and its spatiotemporal and storied elements through specific works, I treat the condition of Blackness as a postapocalyptic condition – a term I devise elsewhere (Nkeramihigo, 2025). Here I use the postapocalyptic as a shorthand for the terrain on which questions of space, time, and story must be rethought. If the *human* that Psychology inherited is bound to the logics of Man, then the project ahead is not to integrate Black people into this conception of the human (that is not possible), but to interrogate and unsettle the coordinates through which this genre has been imagined.

In this section, I examine how colonial modernity organized space, time, and story as tools of racial hierarchy, and trace how Psychology inherits these coordinates in its theories and methods. Recognizing these coordinates as historically produced, rather than universal or neutral, is a necessary step toward imagining alternative psychological frameworks. This analysis lays the groundwork for the later turn to Afrofuturism by clarifying what in Psychology's spatiotemporal and narrative logics must be unsettled as I develop the methodological framework of the sections that follow.

2.1 | Time

There are 2 ways that I wish to discuss time/temporality: 1) as a definitional colonial coordinate reproduced in Psychology and 2) as a restricted, organized, differentially *allocated*

and *lived/felt* resource. I begin with time as an epistemic coordinate (how modernity and Psychology narrate development and progress). I then turn to time as a lived and unevenly distributed resource (how temporal control is felt, metabolized, and enforced).

Time as a Colonial Coordinate

“Time is a dimension that structures all facets of human existence. Since both the notion and the experience of time are socially constructed and, hence, historically and culturally variable, time constitutes a privileged focus for analyzing processes of domination and emancipation, of intersubjectivity and intercultural contact.” (Reichardt, 2000, p. 465)

Euromodernity, as a colonial project, reorganized the world temporally. It established evolutionary, developmental, and civilizational timelines through which humanity itself is sorted. Through this architecture, time became an axis along which “the human” was differentiated, ranked, and distributed. The forms of temporal ordering developed – linear development, “progress”, historical ascent – became not neutral descriptors of human variation but ideological projects that secured Europe’s self-designation as the apex of humanity. Reichardt (2000) argued that Enlightenment models of time produce *chronocentrism* – the idea that European modes of living, thinking, and organizing time represent the universal measure of human progress.

Anthropology (the scientific study of humanity across time and space, itself entangled with colonial affairs) may have played a central role in producing these distinctions. Fabian’s (2014) analysis of what he called “denial of coevalness” – succinctly defined by Schep & Paul (2021) as “a refusal to accept certain voices into the present on the ground that they are not sufficiently ‘up to date’” (p.786) – shows how ethnographic knowledge placed non-European peoples in a different time, never contemporaneous with the West. “Put more concretely,” Fabian (2014) writes “to belong to the past, to be not yet what We are, is what makes Them the object of our ‘explanations’ and ‘generalizations.’” (p.198, capitalization and quotes in original) The anthropological subject, thus, was written as living in Europe’s past – as an earlier stage of human evolution. In other words, ethnographic representation itself depends on temporal distancing, portraying the Other as existing in a time *before* Europe’s present, suggesting colonial temporal constructions were a fundamental condition of anthropology. In this sense, scientific discourse and colonial fantasy have been mutually constitutive; anthropology did not merely discover peoples outside time but produced them as such through its writing practices.

Read together with Wynter's (2003) genealogy of Man— which itself reveals the quiet but persistent grammar of colonial temporality, — modernity's human is a genre whose criteria are defined *narratively* and *temporally*: to be fully human is to embody a particular trajectory of progress, rationality, and modern development. Peoples racialized and produced as Black were placed outside this formation — not simply as *different*, but as occupying a different stage in the developmental arc that culminates in Man. Under this schema, Blackness becomes a position of temporal displacement and nullification.

Burman's (2016) analysis of developmental Psychology reveals this logic as it is enacted in Psychology, wherein peoples outside Europe were cast as belated, primitive, or “not yet” fully developed — *out of sync* with the tempo of modernity. The genealogical method in Burman's *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (2016) provides a useful illustration for tracing how time functions as one of Psychology's epistemic coordinates. Temporal distancing becomes developmental staging; staging becomes measurement; measurement becomes deficit narration. Burman demonstrates that developmental Psychology organized its theories of growth through colonial logics of progress, positioning a temporal ladder that mirrored the supposed evolution of “civilization.” *Temporality* here was not abstract but materialized through both *geography* and *narrative*. Specifically, developmental Psychology organized time as a racialized and gendered hierarchy, a temporal ordering that also echoes Wynter's (2003) analysis of “Man”. Intelligence testing, for example, quantified “mental age,” and positioned racialized and marginalized children as deficient when measured against Eurocentric norms (see also Guthrie, 2004). Development became the moral *story* of Western civilization told through psychological temporal measure. The technologies of observation and testing (method) transformed time into a disciplinary instrument. This was also a gendered project: As Burman notes, mothers were cast as too emotional (irrational) or too close to the child to observe children properly, feminizing delay and masculinizing progress (Burman, 2016, p. 18).¹

Developmental sequences, normative timelines, age-graded expectations, and linear models of development and adjustment rely on the assumption that human life unfolds according

¹ Missing from this analysis are what developmental Psychology says, if anything, at the many intersections of mothering while Black. But this is a thought for another project.

to a singular, measurable, progressive timeline, from a child/primitive state to a full-fledged (hu)Man. Burman's analysis thus highlights a persistent temporal logic in developmental Psychology : the idea that some people are "behind," "delayed," or "at risk" reproduces earlier distinctions between civilized and primitive, advanced and backward or not-yet. In other words, Psychology inherits the chronocentrism and chronopolitics (Eshun, 2003; Esposito & Becker, 2023) of colonial modernity, treating time as settled and universal rather than as a historically produced socio-political and racial ordering system².

It is important to note, however, that *even within* Psychology's developmental/cultural evolution conversations, there is explicit critique of universality, Western centrality, deficit framings, and method equivalency (e.g., Kline et al., 2018).

Finally, time functions in modernity not only as a classificatory system but also as a technology of control within a white supremacist, imperialist, cisheteropatriarchal capitalist society. Temporal regimes regulate labor, reproduction, family life, aging, property, and mobility, among other things. They determine maturity, production, healing, grieving, and "moving on" according to normative schedules. Racial capitalism, particularly, organizes temporal access itself – who has/gets time, whose time is extracted, whose time is criminalized or surveilled, and whose time is deemed without value. Lawyer and community activist Rasheedah Phillips (2022a, 2022b, 2025) analyses Black temporal experience and demonstrates how Black time is stolen, controlled, and manipulated, often through legal and economic systems. History similarly demonstrates how chronopolitics have shaped Black life: Curfews "sundown" ordinances (i.e., sundown towns), for example, imposed racial-temporal borders on mobility and futurity. Redlining and segregation continued this tradition by restricting, controlling and surveilling access to space, both physical and temporal (Phillips 2022a, 2022b). Chronopolitics are concerned with control of time, including the future and the past (e.g., exercised through control and surveillance of history, curriculum, and the archive), and restriction on Black people's full participation in the present. Phillips extends her analysis of time to how wage systems, commutes, and surveillance schedules order racialized labor into industrial clock-time, to how the pejorative "colored people's time" (CPT) re-coded structural

exclusion as cultural deficiency. Such examples show that racialization operates both through *temporal* and *narrative* governance.

Recognizing time as a racial colonial coordinate and understanding its function as a disciplinary and ordering mechanism with profound lived, psychological effects is an important step toward fully *seeing* Black life.

I have shown that modern time is a colonial axis along which a racialized (though also gendered, classed, sexualized, dis/abled, etc.) humanity is organized, and that Psychology inherits this structure through developmental, evolutionary, and normative assumptions of progress.

Psychological manifestation of racialized time organization

“What is it you want me to reconcile myself to? You always told me it takes time. It has taken my father’s time, my mother’s time, my uncle’s time, my brothers’ and my sisters’ time, my nieces’ and my nephews’ time. How much time do you want...for your progress?” – James Baldwin (in Angelou et al., 1990)

The psychological and physiological effects of racialized temporalities are documented through life course effects (Gee et al., 2019) and the weathering hypothesis (Geronimus, 1992; 2006). Gee et al.’s (2019) research tracks racism as (a) age-patterned risk, (b) cumulative exposure, and (c) unequal access to time as a resource (time scarcity, time penalties, constrained agency). Geronimus’ (1992; 2006) *weathering* hypothesis (accelerated biological aging) formalizes one of the core temporal claims in the literature, demonstrating that accelerated health deterioration emerges early in adulthood under cumulative disadvantage, such as those incurred through anti-Blackness. She operationalized this through age-patterned disparities in *allostatic* load (2006) – the “wear and tear” on the body from chronic stress. Forrester et al. (2019) extend this by examining racial differences in weathering and argue that psychosocial stress correlates may differentially “cost” Black participants biologically. Simons et al.’s (2018) longitudinal studies looked at related physiological effect and concluded that race-related stressors predicted adult inflammation more powerfully than traditional health risk factors like diet or exercise.

This body of work demonstrate that time is neither experienced nor distributed evenly across racial (and gendered, etc.) lines.

Schmitt et al. (2021) demonstrate that material and psychological colonization of both time and space has been central to the process of coloniality – the persistence of colonial ways of thinking and organizing the world, even after formal colonialism has ended. They argue that Western and industrialized nations have imposed their own standards for organizing time and space globally, especially through capitalism and colonization. The authors use the concept of time-space distancing (TSD) – attributed to Anthony Giddens – to describe how time and space have become both abstracted and separated, each treated as quantifiable and commodifiable. They further posit that the ways in which Psychology understands and studies time and space are deeply shaped by colonial and capitalist histories. These histories have led to the dominance of Western, abstract, and commodified notions of time and space, which are often treated as universal in psychological science. Temporal hierarchies are thus inseparable from the spatial practices that materialize those hierarchies.

The next subsection turns to space with the understanding that racialized temporality cannot be separated from racialized geographies, and that the spatial ordering of Black life reinforces and naturalizes the temporal hierarchies described above.

2.2 | Space

Colonialism and racial capitalism have physically reorganized space (e.g., through borderlands, property laws, urban planning) just as they have standardized time (e.g., time zones, clocks, calendars, historical timestamps of evolution). As McKittrick (2011) and others have argued, the ship, the plantation, the prison, the ghetto, and settler territories, as well as the school and the workplace, are not merely locations, but rather racial-colonial infrastructures through which Black life has been and continues to be constrained, surveilled, and relocated. These infrastructures are also continually resisted, refused, and reshaped and reimagined.

To understand the psychological significance of space is to confront how racialized geographies shape the possibilities of livingness, subjectivity, relation, meaning and futurity.

Space as a Colonial Coordinate

Colonial modernity reordered space in the service of conquest. As McCurdy (2022) argues, European colonialism reshaped land not only as physical territory but as an “ontological space of

relationship,” refashioned according to extractive logics (p.566). From the theft of African peoples from their land, to slavery, settlement and the violent transformation of Indigenous homelands, colonial geographies produced an ordered world in which Black and Indigenous peoples were positioned as sources of labor, obstacles to settlement, or bodies “out of place.” Within this spatial order, the slave ship and plantation have been theorized as central nodes of the colonial project with contemporary effects (McCurdy, [2022](#); McKittrick, [2011](#), [2013](#)). In this sense, colonial geography was/is both world-making and world-destroying: it created the spatial conditions of European freedom, prosperity and future by violently restricting the movement, presence, and belonging of those it enslaved or displaced.

Drawing on McKittrick, McCurdy ([2022](#)) observed that colonial infrastructures have historically rendered Black subjects “ungeographic,” hidden behind boundaries, color lines, and “proper” places that define where Black bodies may appear. Black geographies do not simply “add” Black people to existing maps; they analyze how space itself is racialized and how Black spatial practices – movement, gathering, refusal, care – contest these racial-colonial arrangements.

McKittrick’s scholarship is illuminating and highly cited as she provides a crucial framework for understanding this. In “On plantations, prisons, and a Black sense of place,” ([2011](#)) she demonstrates that Black geographies are shaped both by colonialism, transatlantic slavery, and contemporary racism, but also by collective acts of resistance, writing that “that which ‘structures’ a black sense of place are the knotted diasporic tenets of coloniality, dehumanization, and resistance; this is a sense of place wherein the violence of displacement and bondage, produced within a plantation economy³, extends and is given a geographic future” (p. 949). She explains that a *Black sense of place* does not deny the violence of racial geographies, but she refuses to treat that violence as totalizing. For McKittrick, the plantation is a “very

³ In Black studies and Black geography, a “plantation economy” is defined not merely as a historical agricultural system but as an enduring logic of racial capitalism and domination that structures social, economic, and geographic relations, past and present. This framework emphasizes the forced labor of enslaved Africans as foundational to global economic development and the persistence of racial hierarchies long after formal abolition. (see McKittrick, [2013](#)). It is not a 1-1 logic, but, as McKittrick ([2011](#)) herself positions plantation, it is a “very meaningful geographic prototype that not only housed and normalized (vis-a’-vis enforced placelessness) racial violence in the Americas but also naturalized a plantation logic that anticipated (but did not twin) the empirical decay and death of a very complex black sense of place” (p. 951)

meaningful geographic prototype” (2011, p. 951). It normalizes forms of racial violence, surveillance, and spatial restriction that continue to reverberate in the contemporary through prisons, impoverished neighborhoods, and other controlled spaces. McKittrick, herself drawing on prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore and the plantation-prison relation, shows that contemporary prisons echo but do not replicate the plantation’s arrangement of racial domination. Both institutions rely on racial punishment, codified servitude, forced labor, and spatialized logics of who lives and who dies. Justice, if it is to be meaningful, must also be spatial. Space becomes the medium through which power differentiates populations. Geography is therefore not backdrop but the terrain through which anti-Blackness – and resistance to it – is enacted.⁴

Frederick Douglass’s autobiographical narrative makes this racial-spatial order intimately relational, vivid and felt. Douglass (1845/2022) described being separated from his mother in infancy – a common custom designed to fracture kinship, redistribute labor, and reorganize Black familial relations according to plantation demands. He recalled how she would sneak out at night to see him, “travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day’s work,” (p. 24) knowing she must return before sunrise or face whipping. The geography of the plantation was thus a geography of interrupted intimacy. Here, again, spatial restriction is inseparable from temporal regulation – the plantation determined not only where Black bodies may be, but also when. Time and space operated together to discipline movement, enforce labor, and constrain relationships. Yet, as Douglass’s mother (and Harriet Jacobs, and Harriet Tubman, and others unnamed) demonstrated, both time and space restrictions were defied, repeatedly, despite the risks involved. As counter-cartographies, Black geographies open up how Black people have historically and continue to create, navigate, and (re)imagine space in the face of systemic spatiotemporal, psychological, and material oppression.

⁴ Notably, within her descriptions of the horrors of anti-Blackness through geographic analytics, McKittrick’s continuous returns to underscoring that Black life has always exceeded and challenged the structures designed to contain it is vitally important practice I consider vitally necessary as praxis for scholarship/scholars engaging Blackness, not just for balance but for truthfulness. Abjection and trauma are not all that form Black life. Resistance, joy, waywardness, are always present.

A similar insight emerges in bell hooks' writings, particularly her account of *homeplace* as a site where Black people built spaces of love, resistance, and psychic restoration within violently segregated geographies. For hooks (2014), Black homeplace is a site of resistance, often consciously created by Black women in particular, to restore the dignity denied under white supremacist spatial domination. Her work reframes marginality not only as deprivation but as a critical spatial position she herself has experienced. Her reflections on desegregation show how newly integrated school spaces became sites of psychic assault, where Black children encountered hostility, surveillance, and devaluation (hooks, 1994), an account that counters exclusively celebratory accounts of the desegregation period as allowing Black people in spaces previously denied them. Her critical analysis of space demonstrates the complexity of this dynamic. Taken together, both McKittrick and hooks' analyses demonstrate that Black spatial experience encompasses both trauma and world-making, reinforcing the central claim of Black geographies: that space is not neutral but a racial, political, contested, and psychological formation.

Psychological Manifestations of Racialized Spatial Organization

Mainstream Psychology has often operationalized space as an “environmental” variable – controlled in laboratory settings or statistically adjusted for through measures such as neighborhood indices or socioeconomic status – rather than theorizing space as a constitutive dimension of being, racialization and subjectivity. In developmental and clinical research, racialized and economically marginalized areas may be constructed as “at-risk,” a deficit label that decontextualizes and frames communities through damage, unmindful of structural analysis and agency (see Fine, 1995). This discourse aligns with what Tuck (2009) calls damage-centered research (marking communities as broken and in need of external intervention), and with Fine and Ruglis's (2009) critique of neoliberal frameworks that locate risk in people and places rather than in the racialized geographies that produce inequity. Through this framing, Psychology often reproduces stigma by treating some spaces as pathological, abject, or in need of rescue, rather than agential and colonially and racial-historically contextual.

That is not to say that Psychology does not discuss space as racial. Contemporary psychological research does register that space is racially organized and psychologically

consequential, particularly in studies related to predominantly white institutions (see for e.g., Pickren, [2011](#)), such as work and educational places, as well as through public encounters, including encounters with police and surveillance in public space (streets, transit, retail stores), alongside other settings such as the clinic or at the bank. Across this work, space appears less as neutral backdrop as its racialized nature is noted through the psychological outcome it produces: anticipatory stress, hypervigilance, identity management, overpreparation, and the quest for “safe spaces” within violent ones – patterns that reflect the everyday labor of navigating environments structured by racial threat, surveillance, and differential belonging.

Let me illustrate this with an anecdote: “This is neither the time nor space.”

Though I do not remember the exact conversation, some time ago, in a predominantly white setting, I introduced a racial component into a discussion that had not named it. The response I received was: “this is neither the time nor space.” At the time, I did not have a framework to identify what had happened, to explain it to myself nor anyone else. And so, I stayed quiet, embarrassed – ashamed. The retort suggested that race could be introduced at a different time and in a different space, as if it were an object that could be moved around, detached from the situation. It also demanded a decorum that treated the present moment as neutral and cast my intervention as improper within it.

Read through a spatiotemporal narrative lens, “this is neither the time nor space” can be recognized as spatiotemporal governance; it does more than disagree: it polices when and where race becomes appropriate to name, reinstalling the present setting as unmarked (i.e., white=neutral) while relegating race to an elsewhere/later. This is precisely how “white space” maintains itself as ordinary and neutral: Black bodies are permitted, but Black naming is treated as a disruption of the space’s presumed order (Anderson, [2015](#); Embrick & Moore, [2020](#)) – so that I enter as a Black body “out of time,” on a timeline that is not recognized as legitimate. Psychology can readily code this interaction through grammars of *invalidation* or *microaggression* and track its affective sequelae (e.g., Sue et al. [2007](#); Smith et al., [2007](#)), but the spatiotemporal frame clarifies how the affect is being produced through the governance of space-time itself, a dynamic that accumulates across institutional and everyday life.

The existing literature thus tends to operationalize space as setting for exposure and coping (microaggressions, incivility, code-switching, preparation for bias), rather than theorizing space

as historically produced racial-colonial infrastructure that organizes relation, subjectivity, and possibility. Thus, neighborhoods, schools, or border zones become sites of exposure in which racism happens, rather than as racial-colonial infrastructures with racial-spatial coordinates. By failing to theorize space, Psychology risks reproducing or missing the very spatial orders that shape Black confinement. Black geographies – and the spatial histories we read through narratives such as Douglass’, Harriet Jacobs’, Hush Arbors, Maroonage, the Underground Railroad, or Black parents teaching their children how to move through public space to avoid surveillance or harm – show instead that space is deeply racial and psychological, particularly for those who are denied it. It structures fear and safety, attachment and separation, belonging and alienation, possibility and constraint, and is deeply relational. Recognizing this is essential for rethinking Psychology’s own spatial assumptions and for imagining approaches that take seriously the spatial dimensions of Black life.

Across these and other accounts – historical/archival, geographical, theoretical-epistemic – space appears as a central dimension of racialization. It has been consequential to where and how Black people live, move, gather, learn, love, play, and dream. It has shaped possibilities (especially White/Western expansion) and foreclosures (especially Black and Indigenous futures). But space and geography, as we have discussed, is also contested. Black geographies⁵ document how Black communities carve out alternative spaces, make place through care and gathering, and resist the geographic logics that seek to erase them. For Psychology, this means treating space not as backdrop or covariate, but as a constitutive dimension of racialization that organizes subjectivity, relation, and what can be imagined as possible.

⁵ Black Geography –an interdisciplinary field examining the spatial experiences, practices, and imaginaries of Black people– emerged recently as an analytic precisely because dominant geographies work to erase or naturalize this violence. Du (2025) traces the “geographic engagement with race in the U.S.” to the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, noting that “thinkers such as Gwendolyn Warren, Walter Rodney, Cedric Robinson, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Sylvia Wynter.... have long advanced spatial logics grounded in Black resistance and world-making” (pp. 1-2).

2.3 | Story

*“it would not be far-fetched to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will ever receive” (Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts*, 2008, p. 4)*

Colonial grammar uses linguistic and conceptual frameworks that shape and legitimize colonial imaginaries and desires. It also ties together, legitimizes and is co-constitutive of colonial spatiotemporal coordinates. The story – e.g., the content (epistemes) and the form (method) –delimits the knowable. Counterstorying is where that tie is untangled. In an anti-Black colonial world, we must attend to where, when, and how the human is narrated; where, when, and how categories are fixed; where, when, and how worlds are made il/legible or im/possible. This includes theory and method. Story is at once cosmology, technology, archive, myth and method. As discussed earlier, particularly in the case of developmental Psychology, Psychology’s theories and practices are deeply shaped by the narrative architectures inherited from colonial modernity. In this section, I briefly explore some ways *story* has functioned as a racial (though also gendered, abled, sexed, classed, etc) colonial coordinate, one that anchors the overrepresentation and universalizing of a genre of human, and its organization through knowledge and evidence logics hostile to the Other, and how this may shape how psychological life becomes thinkable. I argue that story, in the context of Euromodernity, is a site of epistemic closure and control, and that reopening/destabilizing its current construction (a sort of epistemic disobedience; Mignolo, 2010) is a necessary practice for a Psychology concerned with Black life and reworlding toward freedom.

Story as Colonial Coordinate: Archive, Evidence, and Closure

In previous sections, I reviewed the racialization of time and space and hinted to story as a third worldmaking coordinate, inseparable from the other two. I discussed Burman’s (2016) genealogy of developmental Psychology, and its colonial-temporal inheritance. I add here that the temporal regimes Burman exposed were not produced by a disinterested international scientific community but by a self-referential network of European thinkers, writers, and scientists who repeatedly cited, critique, and reinforced each other’s claims. Of additional important note is that these ideas were concurrent with the fiction literature of the times: Burman (2016) notes that early developmental Psychology emerged alongside Victorian fiction, imperial adventure narratives, travel writing, and evolutionary speculation. These genres collectively

imagined childhood, “primitive” life, and non-European peoples through shared narrative templates of innocence, savagery, backwardness, and the need or burden for guidance or governance. In short, scientific theories of development did not precede fictional stories but developed from and with them. Thus, temporal hierarchies were not only diagnostic but narrative-cultural fictions (and fantasies) that encouraged or reinforced scientific *truths*.

As a world-making technology, story is onto-epistemic. Ontologically, story narrates what is there – what is knowable. As an epistemology, it extends this “there, there” into expertise and create rules that determines what can be considered evidence of truth. In colonial modernity, narrative authority has been monopolized by western institutions, including the archive, academia, and the scientific report. Hartman (2008) observes that the archive does not simply record truth but *produces* it through narrative practices that render certain lives hypervisible as objects of scrutiny and invisible as creators of knowledge, aligning with earlier critiques of Anthropology. McKittrick (2021), for her part, emphasizes scientific and disciplinary methods as story-driven, stating that they enact a genre of explanation that privileges clarity, coherence, and linearity, often at the expense of Black complexity. Her concept of “Black methods” and/as “rebellious method” (2021; 2022) foreground the need to disrupt dominant narrative frameworks, recognizing that methodologies are never neutral.

Colonial story and storyforms thus create both knowledge and epistemic closures (and, as colonial geography, are both world-making and world-destroying), inscribing what is legible, remembered, or *can* be imagined. In other words, they regulate epistemic possibility by predetermining narrative arcs, making certain groups illegible as full ontological beings. This epistemic ordering is central to how Psychology has historically understood human life. It necessarily asks the question: What stories has Psychology told about Black people, Black children, Black women, and Black men?

For a long time, the story of the Black individual as told through Psychology was one of inferiority, belatedness, and failure – an account produced through overt scientific racism, through seemingly neutral research programs through which comparisons and interpretations helped naturalize racial hierarchy. Historically, Euro-American Psychology’s entanglement with intelligence testing, eugenic logics, and race-difference claims supplied a narrative infrastructure for explaining social inequality as if it were rooted in Black minds or bodies rather than in racist

institutions and political economies (Winston, [2020](#)). Even when empirical results are ambiguous, interpretive moves can convert difference into deficiency, presenting contingent readings as authoritative knowledge – an instance of what Teo ([2008](#); [2010](#)) names *epistemological violence*: interpretive practices that construct the Other as inferior or problematic when equally viable alternatives exist. These narrative practices matter psychologically because they shape what is thinkable about Black personhood, while also legitimating material arrangements that produce harm. Contemporary critiques (e.g., Auguste et al., [2023](#)) show that Psychology’s anti-Blackness is not only historical but can persist through exclusionary research practices, deficit-framed questions, and interpretive norms that continue to other Black subjects even within “race” scholarship. In clinical domains, the narrative stakes become especially clear when diagnostic frameworks and professional imaginaries racialize symptom meaning – such as the historical association of Blackness with aggression and the pathologizing of protest through schizophrenia diagnosis, which Metzl ([2023](#)) traces to shifting psychiatric and political contexts that made racialized fear clinically legible (see also Porter-Cash, [2024](#)).

At the same time, story is not only what disciplines say about Black people; it is also a mechanism through which Black people make sense of selves under constraint, reconstruct pasts, and assert futures. This may be identified as counter-storying. From a critical race methodological standpoint, the practice of counterstorying names a deliberate practice of generating knowledge through narratives that challenge deficit storytelling and re-center marginalized experience as theory-bearing (Solórzano & Yosso, [2002](#)). In this sense, story becomes a third coordinate alongside space and time: a narrative technology that can either reproduce limits on Black being or support psychic and social re-worlding by reorganizing meaning, possibility, and futurity within (and against) oppressive spatiotemporal conditions.

This thesis advances from the premise that racism and colonialism operate through interlocking spatial orders, temporal hierarchies, and narrative regimes that shape psychological life, and that dominant psychological knowledge-making has often treated these Euromodern terms of the human as universal. Black geographies, critical race and decolonial scholarship, and Black Studies show how these regimes are organized through space, time, and story; this thesis traces how those regimes become psychological, and how method might refuse adjustment to them while taking Black life and Black imaginaries as sites of theory and world-making

Story, Trauma, and the Afterlife of Slavery

“The black is a black man; that is; as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated.” Fanon, 2008, p. 10

The universe Fanon speaks of is the universe that constructs a person as Black, decoupling that person from their humanness/personhood, constructing a whole new *thing*, through myths, fantasies, stories, imposing an ontological construct atop another.

Hartman’s (2008) provocation about story as compensation/reparations emerges from her struggle with an archive that renders enslaved Black life as data of property, crime, or spectacle rather than as fully human. As discussed earlier, *critical fabulation* develops from her 2008 work, “Venus in Two Acts,” (2008), perhaps as an attempt to extricate the subject (e.g., Venus) from the universe (the archive) that constructs her in absence or disregard. Critical fabulation is thus a practice of writing *with and against* the archive, using deep research and constrained imagination to sketch possible lives, desires, and resistances of those who appear only as bare traces in the record. Her intention was “to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done” (p.11). Story, here, is not beautification, as it does not overlook violence and terror, but rather expands to tell stories, mundane and extraordinary, of the possible.

I wanted to make visible the production of disposable lives (in the Atlantic slave trade and, as well, in the discipline of history), to describe “the resistance of the object,” if only by first imagining it, and to listen for the mutters and oaths and cries of the commodity.” (p.11)

Story, here, is a reparative practice in the wake of structural and archival violence: a way of attending to loss without pretending that the loss can be undone.

Across Black feminist and Black Studies traditions, storyforms such as poetics, oral history, and memoir are treated as method – refusing disciplinary demands for linearity, closure, and detachment. Christina Sharpe’s (2016) language of “the wake” extends this insight. Her concept of *Wake work* designates a conscious and intentional practice of addressing the ongoing reality of Black life in the afterlife of slavery. For Sharpe, this includes practices of reading, archiving, and storytelling that hold together violence, survival, and the mundane continuities of anti-Blackness and Black life, lingering in the rupture, and refusing the forms of forgetting that

would restore the fiction of a resolved past. It is a deliberate practice of living with this complex inheritance. Both critical fabulation and wake work stand as ethical orientations and methods of reading, studying, thinking, and being that resists the erasure of Black suffering while simultaneously insisting on the richness and creativity of Black life beyond the frame of victimhood.

Psychology has its own investments in story: case histories, diagnostic narratives, developmental life stories, and research accounts of “the Other.” Yet, much of this narrative apparatus has historically participated in epistemological violence (Teo, 2008, 2010): a process which is not simply about biased content (the logics of the questions and the method), but one that critiques the interpretive practices that convert historically situated assumptions into authorized explanations (and therefore construction) of the Other, especially when alternative interpretations are possible. Beyond misinterpretation of observed data, however, even as this observation remains subjective, is the missing data which itself is data – let’s say ‘X’ data, the either *invisible* or *inapprehensible* data, whether for lack of conceptual frame, ignorance, or refusal to see, or even *opaque* data, from a subject that refuses to speak, either way creating the unknown X that is not or may not be solved for.

When the discipline’s story and form presume Man as measure, Black life is repeatedly forced into interpretive templates primed to read difference as deficit or risk – often without needing explicitly racist claims to achieve racist effects. Put differently, story is one of the infrastructures through which *conceptual incarceration* (Nobles, 2013b; Myers & Speight, 2010) operates. Nobles (2013b) describes *conceptual incarceration* as the condition in which the knower is handed predetermined concepts and definitions – drawn from Eurocentric (or “alien” intellectual worlds – to organize what can be known, thereby limiting African and diasporic realities (including self-understanding) to “alien” terms. The available concepts do not simply limit what can be said but constrain what can be *thought* and therefore what can be recognized as possible.

However, just like Black geographies critique, disrupt, and transform colonial geographies, so does Black counterstory and methods curtail colonial and anti-Black narrative and methodological logics. Storytelling is a practice of critique, theory, survival, and world-making.

It reopens the field by refusing inherited narrative authority and by inventing other modes of witnessing and knowing.

From a psychological standpoint, the stakes of story are clearest when we turn to subjectivity. Fanon's (1952/2008) work already shows how colonial narratives of Black inferiority work their way into psychic life, producing what he describes as a "zone of nonbeing" in which Black subjects struggle for recognition as fully human. The "story" of Blackness as lack, danger, or pathology is not merely discursive, but generative. It underwrites the lived experience of shame, alienation, and internalized racism that Fanon analyzes. However, it fails to be totalizing, particularly in the presence of counter-stories. When Bell (2025) noted that "precisely because the human exists as reality, with knowledge of itself as human, the lack of recognition experienced through the White gaze destroys the sense of self as human" (p.1250), she raises the paradoxical complexity of this issue. Holding two seemingly contradictory knowledge within one body, or one community.

Similarly, McKittrick's (2006) account of Black women's geographies demonstrates how stories about space and place are central to how Black women's lives are organized and constrained. Her analysis of geography as socially produced reveals how marginalization, (in)visibility, and boundary-making are narrative as well as spatial processes. Story, in this sense, is infrastructural: it organizes where and how Black life appears, and which lives register as intelligible or grievable. The consequences are psychologically pertinent.

Contemporary Psychology has named the affective and embodied experiences of racism as *racial trauma* – race-based stress rooted in ongoing exposure to racial discrimination, threats, humiliation, and witnessing harm to others (Carter, 2007; Cénat, 2023; Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Comas-Díaz and colleagues (2019) highlight that racial trauma is not a discrete, past event but a continuous, collective injury that accumulates over time and across generations. Yet, in much racial trauma scholarship, the stories through which trauma is narrated often remain tethered to diagnostic (e.g., PTSD, complex trauma, race-based traumatic stress, etc) or individualizing frames. They may name harm, even offer therapeutic interventions to the specific diagnosis, but they do not always reconfigure the larger story of Black life beyond injury. There are exceptions, of course, as some racial trauma frameworks explicitly connect to abolition, decolonization, and community self-determination, which demonstrates a movement toward trying to reconfigure the

larger story (Comas-Díaz et al. (2019) and others, have framed racial trauma as collective, historical, and linked to resistance, not just individual disorder).

My framework of *postapocalyptic subjectivity* (Nkeramihigo, 2025) speaks to this further: in postapocalyptic contexts, subjectivity includes the ongoing negotiation of position, recognition, and relational legibility under conditions shaped by both historical and ongoing catastrophe and creative resistance. In the wake of the Maafa and its afterlives, Black subjects are already living after an “end of the world” that is unevenly acknowledged. Within this configuration, the power of story is not simply in its ability to be a medium through which trauma is expressed; it is in its power to be generatively constitutive. The repeated circulation of deficit narratives, criminalizing scripts, and developmental stories that position Black children and communities as perpetually failing or “behind”, or as agentially powerless (“at risk”), at the expense of seeing the complexity, creativity, knowledge making and fullness of their beingness, is itself a form of psychological injury that reproduces itself, both in psychological reports and in the available framework for self-definition for Black people (i.e., conceptual incarceration). At the same time, counterstories – Afrofuturist, Black feminist, diasporic, etc. – offer alternative coordinates for self-recognition, kinship, humanity, and desire. They are both interruptions and ruptures, as well as demonstrations of alternative worlds. Black Psychology, which we engage next, emerged as one such early ruptures from and counter-epistemic to the oppressive and anti-Black grammars of mainstream Psychology .

3. Black Psychology and the Unfinished Project

Black Psychology emerged as a counter-epistemic decolonial force in the late 1960s, breaking from mainstream Psychology and taking institutional root in 1968, amidst the broader momentum of the Black civil rights movements, the Black Power movement, and on the heels of the assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 (Cokley and Garba, 2018). Its institution followed much turmoil between Black Psychologists and the mainstream institution of Psychology, and named what the latter refused to confront: that Psychology was built on Eurocentric, ahistorical, racist and pathologizing frameworks that rendered Black life either deviant or invisible (Obasi et al., 2012; Williams, 2008). The foundation of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi, 1968) formed a critical turning point in the effort to decolonize psychological knowledge.

However, Black Psychology was never merely a reaction to white supremacy, nor is it a homogeneous discipline. As Cokley and Garba (2018) notes, it sought to be both corrective and restorative. It aimed to build new paradigms grounded in the lived experiences and philosophical traditions of people of African descent. It is an amalgam of diverse conceptual frameworks rooted in the historical, social, and political conditions affecting people of African descent (see also Tyrell et al, 2023). It would be impossible to name them all here and do justice to their impacts and heterogeneity, or emphasize enough the complexity of the damage caused by their marginal or lack of sustained inclusion in mainstream psychological discourses, especially given almost six decades of sustained critical scholarship since the official establishment of the subfield, the many works by Black scholars that preceded its establishment – whether within or peripheral to the discipline – that continue to name, frame, build and support theories toward Black psychological liberation. A unified, central theme in Black Psychological literature is that traditional psychological theories are often insufficient to understand the unique experiences of Black people, necessitating the development of frameworks that reflect their realities. Black Psychology is also most forcefully embedded in the mission statement of ABPsi: “the liberation of the African Mind, empowerment of the African Character, and enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit.” (ABPsi, n.d.)

This section reviews some contributions of this tradition, specifically in the domains of identity and worldview.

The Project of Restoration: Repairing the Self.

One of the primary tasks of Black Psychology’s work was to heal the fractures brought on by anti-Black ideologies within the mainstream that assaulted the Black mind and distorted understandings of Black people and Black life, and to create frameworks for self-defined mental health, wellbeing, and identity. Below, I categorize the work broadly into two projects: the repair of *identity* (racial identity research that re-theorize how we see, value, and understand ourselves as racialized peoples/within a racialized world) and the recovery of *worldview* (how we see the universe, and ourselves within it).

3.1 | Identity as Repair

Racially-conscious development frameworks such as Cross's Nigrescence Theory (Worrell et al., 2023), Sellers' Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI, Sellers et al., 1998), and Margaret Beale Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST, Cunningham et al., 2023) offered not merely diagnostic frameworks, but self-definitional maps outside of the *conceptual incarceration* (Nobles, 2013b) which distorted or failed to recognize Black life outside of deficit frames. If the colonial project was designed to fracture the Black psyche, the primary task of Black Psychology's early institutional phase was to heal the fracture of anti-Black ideologies on the Black mind.

Theories of racial identity development in Black Psychology were critical in moving the field beyond harmful comparative views. One of the most prominent theories in this lineage is William Cross's Nigrescence Theory, which theorized identity transformations in relation to racialized experience. Its early iteration (Original Nigrescence Theory (ONT), 1971) proposed a conversion experience that occurred or were experienced by Black individual across five stages: *preencounter*, (characterized by Eurocentric and anti-Black worldviews), *encounter* (characterized by an encounter which forces one to revisit these views and initiates the conversion process), *immersion-emersion* (during which the change begins), *internalization* (characterized by a secure Black identity and positive attitudes toward self and other Black people), and *internalization-commitment* (characterized by positive attitudes toward Blackness and the uplift of Black communities) (see Worrell et al., 2023, pp. 391-392). ONT was later revised in response to critiques and new research, leading to the revised (NT-R) and then the expanded (NT-E) models, culminating into a multidimensional attitudinal framework rather than a strict, stage-based linear one (Worrell et al., 2023). The theory now accounts for how racial identity can operate across a person's entire life span and how individuals might "recycle" through identity in response to new experiences. It uses person-centered approaches to identify different "racial identity profiles" or clusters of attitudes, measurable through the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS).

Sellers' **Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity** (MMRI, Sellers et al., 1998) built on Cross' Nigrescence model, drawing from its developmental insights. The MMRI conceptualizes racial identity through the significance and qualitative meaning of race within self-concept,

distinguishing situationally-based **racial salience** – “the extent to which one's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation (p. 24) – from more stable dimensions: **centrality** – “the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with regard to race” (p. 25) –, **regard** (referring to “a person's affective and evaluative judgment of her or his race in terms of positive-negative valence (p. 26)” –, and **ideology** – “the individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that the members of the race should act” (p. 27).

In a psychological landscape on Black identity research that preceded Nigrescence and the MMRI, which was often organized around the problem of self-hatred (e.g., interpretations drawn from the doll studies), Cross reframed identity development as a transformation with emancipatory stakes, shifting psychological attention from deficit traits to identity as functional, lived practice under racialized conditions, changing both the narrative (story) and psychological research. Sellers et al. provided further nuance to the research. However, the question remains as to whether we can accurately capture the nuances of racial identity and attitudes, and Black life in general, through standardized quantitative scales developed within or akin to Western psychological frameworks, potentially imposing a foreign structure on the lived experience of Black people and identities, and potentially missing nuances that qualitative or indigenous methodologies might capture. I further note the lack of engagement with imagination and speculative future-making/dreaming within these frameworks.

Finally, Black psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) offers another important theory within Black Psychology and the broader field of human development. PVEST integrates ecological systems theory with a phenomenological account of meaning-making to model identity development under conditions of structural inequality and racism. It tracks a recursive process linking *net vulnerability* (the balance of risk and protective factors) and *net stress* (the balance of contextual challenges and supports) to self-appraisal, coping, emergent identities, and life-stage outcomes. As summarized by Cunningham et al. (2023), PVEST scholarship consistently foregrounds context and intersectional social-status positioning – e.g., race and gender – as central to how vulnerability and resilience are produced, interpreted, and lived. Spencer developed PVEST in explicit response to recurring flaws in dominant developmental theorizing about marginalized

youth – especially approaches that treated context as incidental and undertheorized racism, producing stigmatizing explanations of Black development (Cunningham et al., 2023). PVEST therefore shifted the explanatory center of gravity from presumed individual or cultural deficits to a recursive account of how structural conditions are interpreted, coped with, and consolidated into identity and life-stage outcomes.

Spatiotemporality in Identity-as-Repair

Read through the spatiotemporal-narrative analytic discussed above, Nigrescence theorizes identity change through recursive rupture, reorientation, and consolidation over time; MMRI makes identity situational by specifying how racial meaning becomes psychologically active in particular moments and settings; and PVEST most explicitly binds environment and development, tracing how patterned exposures to vulnerability and stress are metabolized through meaning-making and coping into emergent identities and life-stage outcomes. At the same time, these models can still be received within familiar developmental common sense: identity change becomes “maturation” rather than struggle over racialized temporality, and “context” can be read as ecology-in-general rather than racialized space as governance. This is not a failure of the frameworks so much as an acknowledgement of the limit produced by methodological legibility: when identity is operationalized primarily through stages, traits, or bounded variables, the spatiotemporal-narrative architecture of racial power risks being marginalized, rather than engaged as the condition that organizes identity.

3.2 | Worldview as Ontological Grounding

The identity frameworks above made a decisive intervention: they refused deficit logics by theorizing Black self-understanding as shaped through racialized conditions rather than as evidence of individual failure. Yet identity repair, on its own, cannot fully resolve the deeper problem a spatio-temporal and narrative analytic has exposed – namely, that Psychology’s dominant coordinates do not simply misdescribe Black people, but organize what can count as personhood, evidence, and wellness in the first place. Put differently, identity models can clarify how Black subjects come to understand themselves within hostile conditions, but they do not always unsettle the metatheoretical ground that makes those conditions appear. This is where Black Psychology’s Afrocentric worldview traditions become crucial: they shift the question from how the self develops under racial domination to putting into question the ontological and

philosophical grounds that define the human, reality, what counts as knowledge, and the logics of relationality. The next subsection turns to these worldview frameworks as ontological grounding for Black psychological inquiry through the selective works of two Black psychologists: Dr. Wade Nobles, and Dr. Linda James Myers.

Key thinkers such as Wade Nobles and Linda James Myers helped define the radical contours of the field (Jamison, [2008](#); [2017](#); [2024](#)). These scholars rejected the idea that Black people should or could be studied using models created for White, Western populations. Instead, they advanced frameworks rooted in African philosophies, advancing communal ethics and spiritual wholeness. Their effort laid the groundwork for a culturally grounded Psychology committed to liberation, not assimilation.

Wade Nobles, a founding member of the Association of Black Psychologists, has long emphasized the need to build theoretical framework and analyses from Black-African worldviews, instead of merely correcting Eurocentric bias, stating that a people's frame of reference serves as the lens through which we experience the world (Nobles, [1978](#)). He further emphasizes the imperative for the restoration of collective memory and ancestral consciousness disrupted by the Maafa (the African holocaust of enslavement and colonization). Through concepts such as *Sakhu/ Skh Djr* (the illumination of the soul) and *Serudja Ta* (reciprocal rebirthing), he developed a spiritually and relationally grounded framework of healing and liberation (Nobles, [2015](#); Nobles et al., [2016](#)). In his usage, *Spirit* names an ontological claim that reality is living force/energy – *Ntu/UbuNtu* – without a strict separation between spirit and matter (Nobles, [2015](#), p. 408), explicitly positioning these concepts and understandings as corrective to Eurocentric psychology and as resources for building African-centered knowledge systems.

Nobles grounded much of his scholarship in African cosmologies and philosophies, such as the BaNtu-Kongo philosophical vocabulary, making the worldview shift legible at the level of both language and category. He argued that the *Western Grand Narrative*, rooted in ideologies that promote elitism and racism, must be challenged by an *African Grand Narrative* that reflects the authentic experiences and philosophies of African people, and has called for a Pan-African Psychology beyond the bounds of the American continent (Nobles [2015](#); Nobles et al., [2016](#)).

Similarly, Linda James Myers emphasizes the necessity of an emic cultural paradigm, one that centers internal cultural meanings rather than applying external (etic) frameworks, as a foundation for psychological science (Myers et al., 2022).

Drawing from classical African understandings of the self as spiritual, interdependent, and cosmologically situated, she develops Optimal Conceptual Theory (OCT, Myers et al., 2018) as a metatheory of human development rooted in ancient African wisdom traditions. OCT distinguishes “optimal” (healthy) vs “suboptimal” (unhealthy) ways of conceptualizing human functioning and reality. She explains that a suboptimal worldview leads to a fragmented life where individuals are isolated from their internal spirit. OCT posits that this mindset is unworkable because it fosters oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, classism), competition, and a constant need for external validation. Calling OCT a “liberation psychology”, she specifies that it emphasizes “recognizing and overcoming the conceptual incarceration, mental bondage, and metaphysical alienation created by the epistemic violence of intellectual and cultural imperialism and the resultant mentacidal oppression preventing the achievement of true mental health and sustainable well-being among all people, the oppressed and oppressors” (Myers et al., 2018, p. 751). The shift in consciousness from a fragmented, materialistic worldview (suboptimal) to a holistic, spiritual, and interconnected one (optimal) is necessary for sustainable well-being. Myers argued that many modern Western assumptions normalize fragmentation, separation, and distorted valuation of life. She grounds optimal functioning or worldview in ancient African wisdom arguing that it emphasizes harmony, balance, and interconnectedness.

Optimal Psychology is presented as a coherent African-centered worldview with implications for identity, wellness, and knowledge production. Myers’ work offers a metatheoretical grounding for research and practice that treats worldview as foundational to what a person can become and how healing is defined. The *Belief System Analysis* (BSA) is OCT’s therapeutic rendering: As a therapeutic process, it helps individuals (particularly those from oppressed groups) identify and unlearn suboptimal beliefs they may have internalized due to systemic racism, and facilitates a transformation of consciousness toward an optimal conceptual worldview. Myer’s work contributes to Black Psychology a system-level conceptual language (ontology/epistemology/values) for critiquing mainstream Psychology without making the critique the endpoint.

Through re-membering (a double meaning that links memory recovery to the recovering of severed limb toward wholeness; see Jamison, 2018), these works offer not merely an act of looking back in nostalgia, but as one of disobedience (to the narrative impositions of the status quo) and *ontological recovery*.

Black Psychologists have created a significant and transformative body of work, beaten odds, broken walls, laid critical and even decolonial foundations for Psychology, and advanced critical work to reclaim Black pride and African-centered conceptions of personhood, relationality, and wellness. These contributions remain essential to the field and the philosophical conceptualization of the human generally.

Despite these critical contributions, Afrocentric frameworks have faced marginalization even within the field (Cokley et al., 2014; Jamison & Carroll, 2014). One possible explanation is the dominance of Western empirical methodologies, expectations, and publishing bias (Strauss et al., 2023; Roberts & Mortenson, 2023; Buchanan, 2019). This tension reflects what Carruthers (as cited in Jamison, 2018) describes as the predicament of African-centered social scientists, who find themselves "caught between the philosophy of liberation and the methodology of oppression" (Jamison, 2018, p. 190).

3.3 | The Limits of Recovery in the Apocalypse

While racial identity scholarships within Black Psychology have provided useful frameworks for understanding the Black subject (particularly in the US), the African-centered worldview tradition has provided indispensable ontological grounding for Black Psychology. Nobles' insistence on Sakhu and the restoration of collective memory disrupted by the Maafa, and Myers' s Optimal Conceptual Theory, with its grounding in African cosmologies, are frameworks that refuse Eurocentric psychology's mechanistic reductions and restore dignity, ancestral connection, and philosophical foundations for understanding personhood, relationality, and wellness. They establish values, spirit, and definitional orientations toward what it means to be human. This work remains essential, and this thesis builds on it.

African-centered frameworks face a particular challenge when confronted with the "futures industry" (Eshun, 2003) – the domain of temporal imagination that includes forecast speculation and science fiction, and that has been monopolized by Western, predominantly white

imaginaries. As I have argued throughout this thesis and elsewhere (Nkeramihigo, [2025](#)), the Maafa was not merely cultural interruption but ontological rupture, creating what I term a postapocalyptic condition – a state of being forged in and through catastrophe, where the catastrophe itself continues to structure the conditions of possibility for Black life.

The subject who emerges from the Middle Passage, the plantation, the colony, and the contemporary manifestations of anti-Black violence is not simply an African needing to "re-member" Africanness or recover pre-colonial wholeness. Ancestral connection and cosmological restoration remain crucial. But the postapocalyptic subject is also forged through rupture itself, forming hybrid people whose collective memories, traumas, dreams, creative refusals, and speculative practices cannot be separated when conceptualizing Black life and being. As Fanon (1952/2008) insisted, the colonial rupture fundamentally altered the terrain of being. The "zone of nonbeing" that he mapped is not just a place to escape from or a condition to overcome through rehabilitation; it is the ground upon which modern Blackness was forged and continues to be reconstituted.

This recognition has methodological implications. Black Psychology's African-centered worldview frameworks emphasize restoration, ancestral connection, and the recovery of cosmological knowledge disrupted by the Maafa. This work provides essential ontological grounding and refuses the fragmentation of Western psychology. The frameworks function as counter-grounding, interrupting the onto-epistemic coordinates imposed by Psychology's default assumptions about Black people and the human.

At the same time, the postapocalyptic realities of Black life – where catastrophe is ongoing rather than concluded, where futures must be imagined in hostile present conditions, where rupture operates as continuous state – require working from within rupture itself. This demands frameworks that attend to what catastrophe produces: the hybrid subjectivities, diasporic epistemologies, and speculative futures generated in the wake. The postapocalyptic subject is not only harmed by rupture but also constituted through it, improvising and creating from what emerges in ongoing catastrophe. This is not a linear movement from restoration to creation, but a simultaneous engagement – grounding in ancestral and ongoing African cosmologies and knowledge while theorizing the generative possibilities born of living in the wreckage.

Within Psychology's dominant methodological economy, these coordinates become difficult to read or study as method. The discipline's investment in prediction, control, and measurable outcomes struggles to account for practices that refuse linearity, that work through speculation and world-making, that treat imagination as survival technology rather than distraction from empirical rigor. African-centered frameworks interrupt this economy, but their disruption calls for methodological practices capable of engaging what they reveal: non-linear temporalities, contested spatial arrangements, narrative refusals that reorganize what counts as knowledge.

This is where Afrofuturism becomes necessary. Where African-centered psychologies provide ontological grounding (the roots), Afrofuturism provides navigational practices (the routes) attuned to and critically resistant to contemporary conditions where the "human" is constantly redefined by algorithms, capital, militarized borders, and state violence. These forces operate through spatiotemporal and narrative logics that remain under-examined in psychological research. Afrofuturism aligns with the disruptive re-grounding that African-centered frameworks enact while foregrounding practices of imagination, speculation, and engagement with non-linear temporalities, Black placemaking, and counterstorying as ongoing creative survival and livingness in and through catastrophe.

The present thesis thus extends Black Psychology's foundational work by insisting that alongside the indispensable ontological grounding that African-centered scholars have undertaken, another methodological demand becomes clear: frameworks capable of working from within rupture rather than only against it, engaging non-linearity as condition rather than problem, and treating speculative possibility as resource for psychological inquiry rather than distraction from it.

From here, this thesis moves toward Afrofuturism as a theoretical framework for Psychology – one that aligns with what has been termed Black methodologies (McKittrick, [2021](#), [2022](#); Williamson, [2024](#)). Afrofuturism does not replace African-centered worldview; it translates the disruption these frameworks enact into methodological practice by foregrounding space, time, and story as contested coordinates that both organize subjugation and are continually reimagined through Black creative refusal and world-making. The question becomes not how to study Black people more accurately within existing frameworks, but how to reorganize inquiry

itself to correspond with the postapocalyptic realities through which Black people navigate, survive, and create.

4. Afrofuturism as Framework: Reconfiguring Space, Time, and Story

There are various ways to extend many of the theories developed through Black Psychology discussed above through an afrofuturist lens – which the next section will help imagine better. For example, Nigrescence theory could be extended by naming and exploring the speculative dimension of Black identity development: what happens when we pay attention to Black dreams? What role does imagination play in the development of self for Black children, adolescents, adults and elders? What happens when that imagination is directed or controlled and produced through colonial imaginaries, dehumanizing images and idea, versus when they are prompted, held, supported, accompanied, specifically and intentionally with and through love – or more precisely through what hooks (2000; 1994) calls a *love ethic*⁶– and anchored in *Black Historical Knowledge* (BHK, Chapman-Hilliard & Adams-Bass, 2016), for example? The metatheory of worldview research could be extended by using imagination as tool and method to envision worlds beyond return toward invention, beyond the foreclosures of the “plausible”, to surface unrestricted desires, including those that may be held in protective opacity even within stated liberatory imaginaries.

Racial identity and consciousness development models could also be extended through the theory of space/time/story as constitutive coordinates of racialized subjectivity, thereby engaging the realities of and effects of the accumulation of chronotopic disjuncture, providing language and structure for – and advancing the relevance and visibility to – these events. Racial identity is not only what one believes about being Black (e.g., ideology/regard/centrality), or even how salient race is right now (e.g., MMRI). It is also shaped by recurring spatiotemporal-narrative conditions: how institutions distribute belonging (space), legitimacy (time), and credibility (story).

⁶ hooks conceptualizes a love ethic as a radical, action-oriented framework for social change. She defines love as a verb, not just a feeling, built on principles like care, commitment, trust, respect, responsibility, and knowledge, and used to challenge systems of domination and foster connection, justice, and collective well-being. An afrofuturist accompaniment through hooks’ *love ethic* means making a *conscious choice* to nurture spiritual growth and extend compassion, and requires critical awareness of power structures and a commitment to transforming inequality through deliberate, ethical practice.

4.1 | Why Afrofuturism?

A reasonable critique of this project might ask whether Afrofuturism is an unnecessary addition to an already crowded conceptual landscape – Black Psychology, Black Studies, and decolonial theories already offer robust frameworks for re-theorizing Black livingness and liberation. Many of the thinkers I draw on, including Christina Sharpe, Katherine McKittrick, and Sylvia Wynter, do not identify as Afrofuturists – although I strongly believe their works have an Afrofuturist orientation. I place their collective interventions within a lineage that includes Afrofuturism, and what, together, they make possible for Psychology .

Afrofuturism is not simply another synonym for Black Studies or Black Psychology . Although this is not the only way to demonstrate this, I propose that what distinguishes Afrofuturism is its method: its specific use of imagination and speculation to disrupt simultaneously spatiality, temporality, and narrative, and demonstrate them as co-constitutive coordinates. I view it as an invitation to explore these coordinates as interlocked sites of struggle and liberation. For example, while Sharpe's *wake work* and McKittrick's *Black geographies* interrogate how Black life unfolds within and against the architectures of time and space, I use Afrofuturism to render these insights methodologically actionable for research and theory-building in Psychology . In this sense, Afrofuturism acts as a conceptual through-line, drawing together what these thinkers do and translating that into Psychology's methodological vocabulary. In other words, rather than an excess term or frame, Afrofuturism functions as a methodological hinge: it synthesizes the spatial, temporal, and narrative critiques of Black Psychology and Black Studies (and/or other critical and decolonial theories) and makes explicit their shared speculative orientation. Where those fields critique and reframe the conditions of knowledge and being, Afrofuturism foregrounds their futural, imaginative, and world-building impulses, transforming them into a methodological architecture for Psychology .

Afrofuturism, as a framework for Psychology, draws from and encompasses insights developed across Black intellectual and radical traditions, including Black feminism's intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989), the Black radical's emphasis on fugitivity, marronage, and alternative world-making (Robinson, 1983; Kelley, 2022), and CRT's counter-storytelling (Bell, 2023).

This work is also situated in an emerging scholarly lineage that brings Afrofuturism into psychological research. For example, Tynes et al. (2023) articulate an *Afrofuturist Developmental Theory*, proposing a comprehensive framework that integrates Afrofuturism with developmental science to center Black youths' thriving, creativity, and technological ingenuity, outlining ten core principles for designing equitable systems and interventions that foster liberated Black futures across educational and social contexts.

Hill-Jarrett et al. (2025) further expand the field through "Radical Imagination," a creative aging program for older Black women in the San Francisco Bay Area that uses Afrofuturism, radical healing, and the arts to support brain health, wellness, and community-building among Black elders. Her work demonstrates that Afrofuturism can be mobilized as a praxis for health justice, collective hope, and the affirmation of Black women's lived experiences and future visions. Hill-Jarrett (2023) also conceptualizes the *Black radical imagination* as a neurocognitive and social process essential to envisioning alternative Black futures and promoting healing justice, positioning Afrofuturism as a framework for both psychological and community liberation. My own work (Nkeramihigo, 2025) apply similar insights into theoretical Psychology by introducing Afrofuturism as a transformative analytic for theorizing Black subjectivities, proposing the concept of "Postapocalyptic people" to describe those shaped by historical and ongoing apocalypse, and arguing for Afrofuturist methodologies that center Black radical imagination, creativity, and self-authorship as pathways to psychological liberation and new frameworks for research and intervention.

Together, these interventions affirm that Afrofuturism is not merely aesthetic or thematic, but is an analytic, method, and praxis, a framework that enables Psychology to engage imagination as a site of liberation and possibility.

Below, I discuss Afrofuturism's genealogical emergence and demonstrate it as a way of thinking and feeling otherwise. I further propose it as a "laboratory of experimentation" toward conceptual liberation, in that it uses artistic and speculative imagination as experimentation to confront how Black people have been produced as out of place and out of time, and to craft worlds in which Black futures are possible. It names a dispersed yet consistent orientation toward Black being, futurity, fugitivity, and possibility, one that has circulated across music, literature, visual culture, political organizing, speculative theory, and everyday practices of

survival and in(ter)vention. In this sense, Afrofuturism is not simply a genre or aesthetic; it is a way of thinking the world otherwise.

The possibilities⁷ generated through Afrofuturist practice are not merely utopian fantasies or escapist dreams, nor are they direct blueprints for material implementation. Rather, they function as conceptual and imaginative openings: they make thinkable what dominant frameworks render impossible, reveal the contingency of current arrangements, and create experiential and affective knowledge of alternatives. These speculative possibilities serve epistemic and political functions—they challenge what is recognized as 'realistic' and expand the horizon of what can be collectively envisioned and pursued.

4.2 | Genealogy: From term to trajectory.

Afrofuturism did not emerge as a stable category, discipline, or tradition but as a set of converging practices – artistic, intellectual, political – that sought to reimagine Black life beyond the constraints of racial capitalism, colonial spatiotemporalities and archives, and the empiricist boundaries of Western thought.

The term *Afrofuturism* was first coined by Mark Dery in the early 1990s in his now foundational interview essay “Black to the Future,” where he defined it in part as “Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture.” (Dery, 1994, p. 180). He also asked: “Why do so few African-Americans write science fiction, a genre whose close encounters with the Other—the stranger in a strange land—would seem uniquely suited to the concerns of African-American novelists?” (pp. 179-180). His question implicitly casted Afrofuturism as a niche, literary form, narrowing Afrofuturism to written speculative fiction, and framed Black engagement with technology and futurity as a kind of absence, which subsequent scholarship correct (e.g., Nelson, 2002; Eshun, 2003; Womack, 2013). It also centered U.S. contexts, and overlooked longstanding Black technocultural practices, mystical futurities, and diasporic world-making that existed long before the term. What matters for this genealogy is not Dery’s coinage, but also how Black

⁷ Possibility here encompasses multiple registers: imaginative (what can be conceived), speculative (what could be if conditions changed), affective (what can be felt/desired), and material (what can be enacted). These overlap rather than exist as discrete categories.

scholars, artists, and thinkers took up, reshaped, and expanded the term into a political and epistemic formation.

Alondra Nelson played a crucial role in that expansion. In the late 1990s, she created an Afrofuturism email listserv, which convened artists, cultural critics, musicians, and scholars to discuss race, technology, science fiction, and Black futures across disciplines and geographies (Nelson, 2002; El-Hadi, 2020). This helped cultivate the first intellectual home for Afrofuturism as a field of inquiry. The listserv was an early digital community of Black scholars, cultural critics, fans and artists thinking collaboratively about race, technology, diaspora, temporality, and the future (Nelson, 2002; El-Hadi, 2020), a community that treated Afrofuturism as a serious intellectual and cultural project. This marked Afrofuturism as a site of analysis and interdisciplinary debate – linking science fiction to histories of Black technoculture, diaspora, and resistance. Nelson later edited a special issue of *Social Text* titled *Afrofuturism* (2002), one of the first comprehensive scholarly efforts to define and theorize Afrofuturism as a framework for understanding how Black cultural production engages technoscience, futurity, and speculative imagination. This work challenged narratives of Black technophobia by foregrounding Black technocultural creativity and futurist visions.

Similarly, Kodwo Eshun (2003) critiques how traditional Western historiographies of science fiction exclude Black cultural production, asserting that Afrofuturism operates as a counter-futurism that rewrites the archive. Eshun's contribution further reoriented Afrofuturism from a descriptive label to a set of conceptual and temporal interventions. Eshun (2003) argued that Afrofuturism should not be understood solely as a label for Black Sci-Fi but as an anticipatory, world-building practice that actively produces counter-memories of the future (critical, alternative ways of remembering the past to challenge dominant narratives and shape a different future – i.e., the past we are taught allows certain forms of futures to be normatively envisioned/envisionable, while disallowing or making other futures apparently impossible or unimaginable). Eshun's notion of *chronopolitics* – the struggle over temporal control, predictive models, and the distribution of futures – frames Afrofuturism as a challenge to the colonial allocation of past, present, and future, which suggests Afrofuturism as a methodology. His insistence that Afrofuturism preempts the present and disrupts the colonial dominance of the temporal field provides a critical foundation for this thesis. In other words, Afrofuturism is not

merely about depicting Black people in the future; it is about theorizing and interrupting the very mechanisms through which futures are allocated, denied, or foreclosed.

Ytasha Womack's (2013) offered the first widely accessible synthesis of Afrofuturism as a cultural movement, political orientation, and imaginative practice that centers the voices and practices of Black communities themselves. Womack traces Afrofuturism across literature, film, music, fashion, spirituality, digital culture, and activism, describes it as "an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation" (p. 13), and emphasizes that it is both an aesthetic and a way of life – a means by which Black people reimagine themselves and their worlds in the face of ongoing racial violence, craft alternative worlds, and create technologies – spiritual, material, or artistic – for survival and liberation. She, too, underscored that Afrofuturism is not escapist fantasy, but is in fact grounded in historical memory, cultural tradition, and political struggle.

Womack (2013) emphasizes Afrofuturism's capacity to merge imagination with liberation, calling it a way of looking at the future and alternate realities through a Black cultural lens, and noting that "Afrofuturists are constantly recontextualizing the past in a way that changes the present and the future." (p. 116)

Afrofuturism's visibility has grown as it has recently pierced through popular and institutional spaces. The global success of *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018) is credited with propelling Afrofuturism into mainstream awareness, even as critics highlight its neocolonial and capitalist coatings (Asante & Pindi, 2020). Exhibitions like the Smithsonian's *Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures* (n.d) and the Met's *Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room* (n.d.), and even Google Arts & Culture (n.d.) have further legitimated Afrofuturism as an important site of contemporary Black cultural production. Design collectives and community organizers have developed Afrofuturist toolkits – such as the *Building Black Utopia* deck – that use speculative design to help communities imagine and co-create futures centered on those most marginalized. Creators of the Afrofuturist tabletop role-playing games like *Into the Motherlands* invite players into worlds where Black life unfolds outside slavery and colonialism, using collaborative storytelling as a vehicle for community-building and political imagination (Hall, 2021). Together, they signal Afrofuturism's location within the contemporary cultural zeitgeist.

Scholarship has grown within this expansion. Beyond cultural and literary studies, Afrofuturism now appears in pedagogy, design, and qualitative research (e.g., Acuff, [2020](#); Grue, [2019](#); Eseonu & Okoye, [2023](#)). Toliver's work on *Reading Black Futures*, in particular, provide a useful review of how Afrofuturism has been taken up in academic and public spaces and argues for its use as both aesthetic and practice in literacy education (Toliver, [n.d.](#)). She confirms that Afrofuturism has been traced back to speculative writings by W.E.B. Du Bois and the activism of Frederick Douglass, as well as to the sonic and visual innovations of artists like Sun Ra. Her own academic work has been exploring the intersection of Afrofuturism, critical literacy and the cultivation of liberatory imagination through speculative imaginings (e.g., Toliver [2023](#), [2021a](#), [2021b](#)).

This genealogy also includes Afrofuturist cultural production itself, from Sun Ra's mytho-scientific cosmologies to the sonic world-building of Parliament-Funkadelic, from Octavia Butler's time-folding novels to Nnedi Okorafor's Africanfuturist re-centering of the continent. Their works are not just illustrative of the movement but enactments of Afrofuturism.

Afrofuturism's cross-pollination with other critical paradigms – especially Black feminism, queer theory, and decolonial thought – has deepened its analytical and transformative potential. Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2015), for instance, reclaims the speculative as a site of epistemic sovereignty, rather than escapism. In “Evidence” (2015), her entry in the collection of stories “Octavia's Brood : Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements” (Brown & Imarisha, 2015), Gumbs shares messages from the future to her/our time – what her story calls “the Twenty-First Century B S B [Before Silence Broke] Era”. A message from 12-year-old Alandrix (in the future) to Alexis (Alandrix' ancestor/in the past) speaks back to us as chronopolitic disrupting feedback:

“Letter from Alandrix, age twelve, sent via skytablet during dream upload, third cycle of the facing moon, receipt unknown:

Ancestor Alexis,

I've heard about you. I've even read some of your writing. Everyone says I have an old soul, and I'm really

interested in what it was like back when you lived. It seems like people were afraid a lot. Maybe every day? It's hard to imagine, but it seems that way from the writing. I have to remember that no one knew that things would get better, and that even people who were working to make it happen had to live with oppression every day. I read your writing and the writing of your other comrades from that time and I feel grateful. It seems like maybe you knew about us. It feels like you loved us already. Thank you for being brave [...].

I'm 12 and last year I did a project for our community about your time, the time of silence breaking[...]. People broke a lot of things other than silence during your lifetime. And people learned how to grow new things and in new ways. Now we are very good at growing new things and in new ways. Now we are very good at growing. I'm growing a lot right now and everyone is supportive of growing time, which includes daydreams, deep breaths, and quiet walks [...]. It was great to learn about you and a time when whole communities decided to grow past silence."

4.3 | Afrofuturism as Aesthetic, Epistemology, and Praxis

It is clear that Afrofuturism does not lend itself to a single, neat, authoritative definition. For the purposes of this thesis, it is useful to distinguish three overlapping dimensions:

1. Afrofuturism as Aesthetic Form.

At the level of form, Afrofuturism refers to cultural works that combine speculative imagination with Black histories, lifeworlds, cosmologies, and futuristic technologies. It includes science fiction, fantasy, cybernetic imaginaries, cosmic philosophy, and artistic experiments that place Black life at the center of possible worlds. Classic examples include the cosmic jazz and myth-science of Sun Ra, the Mothership narratives of Parliament–Funkadelic, the time-folding and world-bending fictions of Octavia Butler, and the Africanfuturist narratives of Nnedi Okorafor (Womack, 2013; Okorafor, 2019). Films like Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018, 2022)

construct worlds in which Black and African futures are technologically sophisticated, spiritually rich, aesthetically magnificent, and self-defining. They contest the assumption that Blackness belongs only to past suffering or present crisis by staging Black presence in spectacular worlds that call in “memories” of a different, speculative timeline –what could have been.

2. Afrofuturism as Epistemology.

Afrofuturism also names a set of epistemic practices: ways of knowing that challenge colonial archives, linear historiography, and the separation of observable facts from speculative possibility. Here, it overlaps with and extends the work of scholars like Hartman, Sharpe, and McKittrick, whose methods – critical fabulation, wake work, undisciplinarity, Black geographies, rebellious Black methods – reassemble histories and imaginaries that exceed and disobey archives and disciplinary boundaries. Afrofuturist epistemologies interrogate who gets to define reality and the boundaries of knowledge, whose and how memories are preserved, and how time itself shapes what counts as knowledge. Black Quantum Futurism (BQF, a theory, practice, as well as a collective; Ayewa & Phillips, n.d.; Phillips, 2025), for example, theorizes Black temporal autonomy by treating time as something that can be collectively mapped, bent, and reclaimed; Black Quantum Futurism’s workshops on housing displacement and memory invite participants to narrate and reconfigure their temporal conditions as part of community organizing (see Community Futures lab, 2020; see also Phillips, 2025; McDermott, 2021). In education research, Toliver’s (2021a) use of Afrofuturism and *Endarkened Storywork* uses Black speculative fiction as a method for eliciting, honoring, and theorizing Black students’ stories, positioning speculation as a legitimate mode of inquiry rather than a diversion from “real” data. Toliver explores Afrofuturist literacy methods by examining how Black girls use speculative fiction and fantasy writing to resist domination and create liberatory imaginative spaces, and by developing *Endarkened storywork* – a qualitative methodology drawing from Dillard’s (2000/2010) *endarkened feminist epistemology*, itself rooted in Black storytelling traditions and Afrofuturist aesthetics – to honor Black girls’ voices and dreams as central to research and educational practice. As an intellectual tool, Afrofuturism rearranges the conditions under which knowledge becomes possible.

3. Afrofuturism as Praxis.

Finally, as a praxis, Afrofuturism names a set of liberatory practices: survival tactics,

community-based imaginative work, political organizing, spiritual technologies, and creative world-building. It manifests in workshops, games, curricula, design tools, and community projects that use speculative methods to imagine and enact different futures. For example, the *Building Utopia toolkit* offers cards and prompts that help participants collaboratively design worlds structured by Black liberation and care. *Into the Motherlands*, an Afrofuturist tabletop role-playing game, invites players to inhabit a world unmarked by transatlantic slavery or colonial conquest, making collective storytelling a practice of rehearsing alternative social orders (Hall, 2021). Finally, community-based projects like the Community Futures Lab, the Afrofuturist center in North Philly, fights gentrification by empowering residents to envision and document alternative futures through workshops, storytelling, and oral histories, alongside projects like the Black Women Temporal Portal, which uses media to center Black women's timelines, fostering temporal liberation and cultural preservation through art, zines, music, and interactive installations that challenge linear time and oppressive systems (Community Futures lab, 2020; Prendes, 2021). These practices show that Afrofuturism is a practice of rehearsing other worlds in ways that have material, psychological, and political bearings.

As a large volume of Afrofuturist texts provide the background and entry points to Afrofuturist worlds, it may be useful to name a few of these works and demonstrate how they function as laboratories for the work we undertake.

4.4 | Theoretical Laboratories: Signals from the Speculative Archive

Below, I offer signals of how Afrofuturism, as a framework, functions analytically. It is an invitation to read Afrofuturist works not merely as entertaining fictions but as theoretical laboratories through which Black life, being, relations, and possibility are reconfigured. To operationalize Afrofuturism for Psychology, we must learn to read these texts for their *signals* – specific insights into such themes as memory, embodiment, and rupture that traditional psychological metrics miss. The following analyses examine recurring Afrofuturist themes – distributed memory, temporal rupture, and archival control – across a curated list of afrofuturist works, demonstrating how they offer conceptual tools for the methodology developed in the next chapter.

4.4.1: *The Deep*, 2019 (*Theorizing Distributed Memory*).

Rivers Solomon's Afrofuturist-fantasy novella *The Deep* (Solomon et al., 2019) was inspired by, and is a literary adaptation of, the Detroit techno duo Drexciya's mythos, which conceived of Drexciyan society as "an underwater country populated by the unborn children of pregnant African women thrown off of slave ships during the middle passage who had learned to breathe underwater in their mother's wombs" (Gaskins, 2016, p. 68). Solomon takes up and expands this sonic origin story, transposing Drexciya's speculative genealogy into a richly textured narrative world of the Wajinru as the hybrid water-breathing species descended from pregnant African women thrown overboard during the Middle Passage; their existence is the impossible afterlife of a genocidal event (e.g., the Zong massacre⁸). In the Wajinru society, the crushing weight of the historical trauma that gave birth to them is not shared collectively; it is concentrated into a single vessel: the Historian. The protagonist, Yetu, serves as this vessel, holding the somatic and emotional memory of centuries of violence so that the rest of the community can live in blissful ignorance. When memory is held this way, the distribution of knowing is itself an ethical problem. DeLoughrey (2023), Calvo-Pascual (2024), and Colebrook (2025) all highlight how *The Deep* dramatizes the uneven assignment of the work of remembering – a dynamic that resonates with real-world distributions of racialized memory and emotional labour. The Wajinru's social arrangement allows most of the community to live in relative oblivion, while Yetu is slowly destroyed by the task of holding (and thus re-experiencing) an entire people's terrifying history.

A defining feature of the novella is its treatment of the ocean itself as an epistemic body – a watery archive. In much Black Atlantic thought, the Middle Passage ocean has been read as a kind of "womb-abyss," a term linked to Édouard Glissant's theorization of the hold and the sea as sites of simultaneous annihilation and genesis: spaces of death that paradoxically birth new forms of Black being. DeLoughrey (2023) uses the term "womb-abyss" as site of death that nevertheless yields new forms of life, memory, and kinship, and shows how *The Deep* submerges readers into that abyssal kinship (see also Xausa, 2025). Calvo-Pascual (2024) emphasizes that

⁸In 1781, the crew of the British slave ship *Zong* threw more than 130 enslaved Africans overboard so the owners could claim insurance on "lost cargo," a mass killing adjudicated in London as an insurance dispute rather than as murder (see London Museum's Zong Massacre Trial, 1781, n.d; Volle, 2025).

the Wajinru emerge from the entangled intra-action between the unborn children of enslaved women and the ocean that holds them, such that species, history, and environment are co-constituted. Colebrook (2025) further reads the work as refusing the Freudian “oceanic feeling” of undifferentiated plenitude; instead, *The Deep* offers a counter-oedipal, counter-oceanic politics in which the sea is neither pure serenity nor pure annihilation, but a site where difference, archive, and futurity are intensified.

In this framework, the Wajinru are born of the dead not merely as metaphor but as a Black ontology shaped by catastrophe. The ocean is both womb and grave – gestational, necropolitical, and regenerative. The Wajinru’s continued existence signals that a violence as monstrous as chattel slavery transforms a people forever, and that this transformation includes both damage and possibility. The sea holds the dead, remembers the violence, and makes new, altered forms of life and relation out of loss.

In the Wajinru society, the crushing weight of this historical trauma is not shared collectively; it is concentrated into a single vessel: the Historian, embodied by the protagonist, Yetu, who serves as this vessel, holding the somatic and emotional memory of centuries of violence so that the rest of the community can live in blissful ignorance.

- **The Psychological Signal:** This narrative structure critiques the burden placed on Black subjects to be the sole carriers of racial knowledge. It theorizes memory not as an individual cognitive retrieval process, but as an *ecology*.
- **The Shift:** In its final movement, *The Deep* refuses the logic of the sacrificial memory-holder. Instead of relying on Yetu as the emotional infrastructure of a people, the Wajinru commit to remembering together. This reorganization of memory, as burden shared rather than burden extracted, models a psychological ethic relevant beyond the text. It resonates with community-based practices of healing justice, abolitionist care, and mutual aid in Black life: futures can be built only when the costs of painful knowing are distributed, witnessed, and held collectively, rather than left to those already overburdened.

The resolution of the text – where the community agrees to share the memories rather than destroying the Historian – provides a model for distributed memory. For Psychology, this signals a move away from individual resilience (how much can *one* person withstand?) toward collective

holding (how do we distribute the weight of the Wake?). It suggests that the ethical engagement with postapocalyptic trauma is not forgetting, but the communalization of the archive.

Lastly, I wish to add that reading *The Deep* alongside both the Zong massacre and the contemporary ongoing catastrophe of refugees in the Mediterranean makes clear that the oceanic womb-abyss is not only historical metaphor but contemporary condition. Today, many Black and Brown migrants continue to die or disappear in the Mediterranean as European and national authorities prioritize border control and deterrence over rescue. The image of Black and Brown bodies being brutalized at sea because they are economically, politically, or legally excessive underscores what *The Deep* makes viscerally felt. Instead of killable/dieable bodies, Solomon and other Afrofuturists make unburied, forgotten, discarded dark bodies extraordinary, mythical, undieable.

4.4.2: The Comet, 1920 (Theorizing Temporal Rupture).

W.E.B. Du Bois's short story *The Comet* was first published in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), a collection otherwise filled with essays on race, mysticism, democracy, and spiritual struggle rather than speculative fiction. Yet scholars have increasingly recognized the story as one of the earliest examples of Black speculative futurity – what Elia (2016) called proto-Afrofuturism – where catastrophe becomes the lens through which Black life, humanity, and possibility are re-examined (see also, Womack, 2013). In this narrative, a comet passes through New York City, leaving behind toxic gases that ostensibly kill the entire population of New York, leaving only two survivors: Jim, a Black bank messenger, and Julia, a wealthy white woman. The premise is stark: the end of the world briefly makes a Black man's humanity possible.

For a fleeting interval, the hierarchies structuring Jim's existence collapse. He moves freely through an emptied city, occupying elite white spaces previously barred to him. He eats in restaurants he would have been excluded from, drives luxury vehicles, and – most radically – becomes an equal and potential partner to Julia. In this suspended time, categories of race and class loosen, and a new world flickers into view, one in which Blackness is not positioned outside humanity but at its center. Yet the return of white survivors reasserts the racial order immediately and without resistance. Jim becomes, again, the messenger. Julia forgets – not the events, but the epistemic shift that allowed her, momentarily, to see him fully. The text is

devastating in its economy: the new world existed, but only in the blink between catastrophe and restoration.

The comet gives us a very early speculative example of what it means for Black humanity to be thinkable only after the world ends – and how fast that recognition is revoked when the old world reasserts itself. For a brief interval, Jim was both “last man” and “first man,” recast at the center of an origin story that had historically excluded Black people (Elia, 2016).

In Du Bois’s analogy, racial imbalances are so entrenched that only a world-shattering event can even begin to level them, making *The Comet* an early instance of the Afrofuturist impulse to imagine otherwise by breaking the temporal and social coordinates of the present (Elia, 2016; Womack, 2013).

W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Comet* (1920) functions as a proto-Afrofuturist experiment in sociology and ontology.

- **The Psychological Signal:** Du Bois uses the apocalypse as a variable manipulation. He demonstrates that Black dehumanization is maintained by the *social order*, not by any internal deficit.
- **The Warning:** The moment the other White survivors return, the “human” status is revoked, and Jim is returned to his position as a racialized object. This signals the fragility of recognition in an anti-Black world. It teaches us that “rupture” (the apocalypse) creates a temporary opening for new subjectivities to emerge, but warns that without structural change, the old world will re-colonize the new one immediately. This informs a temporal orientation of this thesis: we must study the *intervals* of freedom found in rupture.

Read through a postapocalyptic/Maafa lens, the apocalyptic event of *The Comet* is not Jim’s first catastrophe. For white New Yorkers, the comet is the end of the world. It is the end of their world. The end of theirs make possible the new beginning for Jim. The comet produces a second, inverted apocalypse for him – a world in which the racial order dissolves and he is liberated, temporarily, from being “the Black man” in a Fanonian sense, returned instead to being simply a person. The interval between destruction and restoration thus becomes a kind of post-human moment: not because humanity disappears, but because the inherited category of “the

human” (racialized, ranked, white-centered) is suspended, and what matters instead is the actual human before and beyond that construct. But this moment is brief – a glimpse.

4.4.3: *The Memory Librarian, 2022 (Theorizing the Archive).*

A contemporary of *The Deep*, Janelle Monáe’s *The Memory Librarian and Other Stories of Dirty Computer* (Monáe et al., 2022) offers a different but related configuration of memory as contested technology. In this multi-authored collection, linked to Monáe’s *Dirty Computer* “emotion picture,” (2018) the totalitarian regime *New Dawn* polices subjectivity by “cleaning” (i.e., erasing) so-called dirty memories – e.g., queer desire, non-normative embodiment, dissent, and other unruly traces – from the archive of personal and collective experience. Lawton (2021) reads *Dirty Computer* as producing countermemories (and counter New Dawn utopia) that write Black, queer, and out-of-place bodies back into technocultural visions of utopia, arguing that Monáe’s work disrupts fantasies of a “placeless, raceless, bodiless” digital future. Lawton notes that “effacing difference is only accessible to those who do not need to be effaced to begin with” (p.2). Fourqurean (2024) extends this analysis to *The Memory Librarian*, framing the project as a form of literary activism in which collaborative Afrofuturist storytelling becomes a practice of communal memory and political genealogy: multiple authors collectively build a world where remembering forbidden histories and identities is the condition of freedom rather than its obstacle. This provides another important signal for building an Afrofuturist method.

Janelle Monáe’s *The Memory Librarian* (2022) depicts a totalitarian future where the state polices subjectivity by “cleaning” (erasing) memories deemed “dirty”.

- **The Psychological Signal:** Here, memory is treated as a technology of control. The struggle is not over *what* happened, but curating the self.
- **The Methodological Implication:** This text validates the need for “Pulse” (story/narrative) as a method of resistance. The characters resist not by fighting physically, but by becoming *keepers* of their own “dirty” memories. For Psychology, this suggests that non-normative or “deviant” narratives are not pathologies; they are counter-archives essential for survival.

The Deep asks what happens when a people outsource their painful history to one body. *The Memory Librarian* imagines a world in which the state claims the right to edit, erase, and

sanitize memory at scale. In both, memory is central to identity, and the struggle is not over *whether* to remember but over *who controls* remembering, how it is organized, and at what psychic and social cost. Where Yetu's eventual refusal forces the Wajinru to redistribute the burden of history, Monáe's characters resist New Dawn by reclaiming "dirty" memories – those marked as unfit for the official archive – and by sharing them in community.

These works, taken together, offer a conceptual toolkit for Psychology: they show memory as embodied, relational, and infrastructural, bound up with questions of burden, technology, and power. They also signal toward the methodological orientations that structure this thesis: Pulse (concerned with Story) as remembrance and re-storying, Drift (concerned with space) as spatial and ecological entanglement (the oceanic archive; the surveilled city), and Echo (concerned with time) as temporal recursion and return (histories that refuse to stay buried or deleted). Additionally, any methodology that invites re-membering or engenders "re-membering" (whether in the body, or as ancestral whispers, as haunting) must build structures of collective holding, care, and diffusion. The methodology I develop in this thesis – Speculative Construction – therefore carries not only theoretical promise but ethical responsibility: to distribute remembrance and epistemic weight, and not reproduce the burden of the solitary archive.

The texts discussed in this section do not simply tell stories; they perform theory. *The Deep* theorizes the ecology of memory; *The Comet* theorizes the contingency of the human; *The Memory Librarian* theorizes the politics of the archive. Together, they justify the methodological orientations of Space (Drift), Time (Echo), and Story (Pulse) that anchor the method developed in an upcoming section of this thesis. Regardless of the moving definitional target of Afrofuturism, across the definitions and descriptions of praxis, theory, and Afrofuturist works as those discussed above, several themes remain constant: **Time is reconfigured** – from linear progress to folded, simultaneous, or counter-temporal relations; **Space is reorganized** – from plantation geographies and colonial-racial boundaries to diasporic, underwater, cosmic, subterranean, intergalactic or interdimensional worlds; and **Story is reclaimed** – from colonial archives to the interplay of the speculative, critical fabulations, ancestral memory, and futurist narrative re-mappings. Afrofuturism is evidenced here as a laboratory that experiments with

freedoms. It does not merely depict alternative futures; it examines how Black futures (and pasts) have been historically denied, policed, or constrained, and intervenes in those constraints.

For Psychology, this is a profound challenge. Afrofuturism names a set of fugitive practices that reconfigures the knowable and thinkable, naming and cutting across and beyond the organization that continues to engender catastrophe. It is not about repair within the given world, but about composing worlds that are not beholden to its logics, particularly as those logics contain within them the poisoned pill that repeats anti-Blackness and compose it in negation. Psychology is accustomed to working inside the existing order: measuring injuries, tracking adaptation to its demands, or documenting resilience within its constraints. Afrofuturism asks something different. It asks what it would mean to build methods and concepts from within rupture. It asks how psychological inquiry might be accountable to the ways Black people are already imagining, dreaming, and practicing otherwise, even when those practices do not look like “coping,” “adjustment,” or “recovery” in disciplinary terms.

Community-facing Afrofuturist methods already function as interventions. For example, Stephanie Toliver (2021) develops Afrofuturist pedagogy, using Black speculative fiction to drive young people’s imagination toward liberatory futures and cultivate critical literacies. Brendesha Tynes et al. (2023) advance *Afrofuturist Development Theory*, integrating historical knowledge, radical imagination, and design-based praxis to create educational and technological environments that affirm Black futures. Recent work by neuropsychologist Tanisha Hill-Jarrett, explicitly engages “radical imagination” and Afrofuturism to theorize hope, collective courage, and future-oriented well-being (Hill-Jarrett, 2023; Hill-Jarrett et al., 2025), bringing Afrofuturism into clinical and community health contexts and demonstrating how future-oriented imagination can serve as a cultural resource for resilience and healing, particularly in the context of older Black women’s wellness. Together, these interventions show that Afrofuturism exceeds disciplinary confinement and has already begun to be operationalized in various areas, including mental health. However, these interventions are unified, not by discipline, but by their desire to strengthen belonging, narrate continuity beyond terminal plots, and cultivate collective agency in the face of dispossession or abandonment.

4.5 | Recap and orientation toward an Afrofuturist method

This thesis began by excavating Psychology's colonial inheritances: the discipline's foundational assumptions and the ways they have repeatedly rendered Black life either illegible or available only through pathologizing frames. Across the preceding sections, I argued that Psychology's dominant account of the human is anchored in a particular genre of being – what Wynter theorizes as “Man” – and that this genre is sustained through epistemic architectures that regulate whose subjectivity can be recognized, what forms of experience are eligible, what counts as *real* (recognized ontologies) and knowledge (recognized epistemologies), and which futures can be imagined.

From this diagnosis, the thesis traced Black Psychology as an early rupture within the discipline: a field that contested Psychology's imposed universality and insisted on the necessity of Black/Afro-centered frameworks for understanding Black life. At the same time, I suggested that rupture cannot remain only a critical position. If Psychology's coordinates of legitimacy have been organized through colonial modernity, then reconfiguring the discipline requires more than critique – it requires methodological invention.

Section 3 developed Afrofuturism as a resource for this invention. Rather than treating Afrofuturism as aesthetic or concerned with futurity alone, I theorized it as a liberatory, methodological, and epistemological practice: one that reorients how space, time, and story can be engaged as sites of power and as sites of possibility. Afrofuturist work, as I argued, does not simply imagine new worlds; I identified it as a laboratory that performs conceptual and methodological labor by staging alternative geographies, temporalities, and narrative forms through which Black life becomes thinkable otherwise.

This brings the thesis to its methodological offering. If dominant psychological inquiry has quietly relied on racialized spatiotemporal and narrative coordinates, then a reconfigured Psychology must be able to work through those coordinates consciously and differently – treating Black spatiality, temporality, and creative production not as themes to be “included,” but as methodological grounds from which research questions, practices, and criteria of rigor can be rebuilt. The sections that follow therefore shift from diagnostic critique to methodological proposal. Section 4 introduces Speculative Construction: An Afrofuturist methodology for

psychological inquiry designed to operationalize this shift through the interwoven orientations of Drift, Echo, and Pulse.

5. Speculative Construction: Outline of an Afrofuturist Methodology for Psychological Research

5.1 | Theory of method

Within Psychology, method has conventionally been treated as a technical matter: a set of procedures used to collect and analyze data in order to produce valid knowledge, with methodological techniques presumed to be theory-neutral (Danziger, 1985). This framing makes method appear neutral, largely independent of the political and historical conditions under which knowledge is produced. Yet the preceding sections have argued that the discipline's assumptions about the human, the mind, and the world are not neutral inheritances, but historically produced, institutionally reinforced, and materially and psychologically consequential. In that context, method cannot be treated as a neutral. To theorize method, in the sense used here, is to insist that method is a site of decision-making about what is real and knowable, or irrelevant and dismissible. In that way, it participates in world-making. Method participates in determining what can count as evidence, and which forms of experience can be recognized as psychologically relevant. It also structures the relationship between researcher and participant, including whose interpretations matter, what kinds of participation are possible, and what validity and accountability looks like.

Speculative Construction enters at this level. It is not a single technique added onto an existing methodological toolkit. It is a proposal to reorganize how psychological inquiry is imagined and valued when the object of concern is Black life under conditions shaped by anti-Blackness and colonial modernity, and when the goal is not inclusion within inherited categories, but the re-imagining of what inquiry can be.

Speculative Construction's methodological commitments flow directly from ontological premises established in Sections 1-4: that Black life is organized through racialized coordinates of space, time, and story (as governing mechanisms, not neutral context); that these coordinates structure what becomes legible, possible, and imaginable; and that conventional psychological methods, insofar as they treat these coordinates as background rather than infrastructure, cannot

adequately engage the worlds they organize. From these premises, the methodological implications follow: if space, time, and story govern recognition and possibility, then inquiry must treat them as active sites of power; if they operate as interlocking coordinates, then analysis must attend to their co-constitution; and if they are contested through Black creative practice, then research must engage those practices as knowledge-making rather than mere expression. Researchers who reject these ontological premises may find Speculative Construction incommensurable with their frameworks. Researchers who accept them but prefer different methods (e.g., quantitative mapping of spatial governance) should articulate why their approach better serves the ontological insights.

The architecture presented here is a methodological blueprint rather than a tested protocol. While specified in detail to demonstrate how commitments translate into practice, Speculative Construction requires implementation, adaptation, and revision through actual use. The process architecture (Section 5.3), analytic strategies (Section 5.4), and validation framework (Section 5.5) are proposed as starting orientations that will necessarily evolve through collaborative enactment and community engagement.

5.1.1 Definition and scope of Speculative Construction

Speculative Construction is developed to operationalize this thesis' central claim and is offered as an Afrofuturist methodology for psychological inquiry. Methodologically, Speculative Construction treats the coordinates of space, time, and story (formative coordinates through which Black subjectivity is organized, constrained, and made possible) as the grounds from which research questions, designs, practices, and criteria of *validity* can be reimagined.

Four commitments define its scope:

- 1. Recursivity.** Speculative Construction is not linear. It expects return/revisions: return to concepts, to sites, to interpretive frames, and to relational commitments as the work unfolds. Recursion is an enactment of methodological accountability – especially when working within Black communities and histories of fractured temporality, dislocated place, and disrupted narrative continuity. Linear method imposes temporal coherence on histories that refuse linearity; it demands spatial boundedness where place is relationally dispersed; it requires narrative closure where stories remain open, recursive, haunted. A

method that structurally embeds return does not demand that Black life conform to linear temporal logic as condition of recognition (see also Section 5.3.5.)

2. **Co-design and relational accountability.** Following established participatory principles (e.g., Fine et al., 2021), Speculative Construction is designed to be shaped with (and ultimately accountable to) participants and communities rather than imposed upon them. This means that this early iteration is preliminary and unfinished. This is both a participatory ethic but also an epistemic commitment. The method assumes that if Black worlds have been misrecognized within dominant regimes of knowledge, then research must be organized to prevent re-inscribing that misrecognition (see also, Tuhiwai Smith, 2021).
3. **Imagination and world-building as epistemic practice.** Speculative Construction treats imaginative labor – storying, fabulating, mapping, remixing, speculative design, archival reworking, and other world-building practices – not as decoration but as a serious mode of psychological inquiry. In this framework, imagination is not positioned as a private cognitive function alone. It is treated as socially organized, historically constrained, and politically charged – capable of revealing how life is governed and of generating alternative configurations of being, relation, and possibility. Imagination is treated as epistemically productive not because all imaginings are equally valuable, but because imaginative practice can reveal: (1) internalized constraints on futurity, selfhood, and possibility; (2) alternative configurations of space, time, and relation that dominant frames render unthinkable; (3) affective and narrative investments that structure what feels possible or impossible; and (4) collective desires and refusals that emerge through speculative engagement. The method remains open to emergence—what counts as insight will be determined through process—but orients toward imagination that surfaces governance, generates alternatives, and shifts what participants can feel, say, or envision.
4. **Historical and community grounding.** Speculative Construction requires that researchers develop and demonstrate adequate grounding in Black histories and community knowledge relevant to the inquiry. This is not an optional context appended to a design, but part of the method’s epistemic accountability, grounded in a love ethic. Without this grounding, research risks reproducing the very misrecognitions the thesis critiques.

These commitments are operationalized through three interwoven methodological orientations introduced in Section 3 and elaborated here: **Drift (space), Echo (time), and Pulse (story)**. These are not stages of a protocol but overlapping and co-constitutive orientations that shape what the research can notice, how it can interpret, what it can hold as evidence, and what it treats as ethical or methodological mis/alignment. Put differently, Speculative Construction is a spatiotemporal and narrative orientation: it treats space, time, and story as sites of power – as coordinates through which Black life is governed, constrained, and made intelligible, and as coordinates through which liberation can be practiced, imagined, and enacted.

5.1.2 What Speculative Construction does and does not do

Because Speculative Construction takes imagination seriously, it risks being misread as a free-for-all aesthetic experimentation, futurist enthusiasm, or a loosely defined arts-based approach. This section draws some boundaries necessary for “rigor”.

Speculative Construction does:

- position Black spatiotemporal and narrative life as methodological ground, treating space, time, and story as coordinates of governance and possibility rather than neutral context;
- require and cultivate Black historical, epistemic, and community grounding as a condition of responsible interpretation, not an optional supplement;
- treat methodological rupture as necessary when inherited methods reproduce colonial assumptions about the human and the universe/world;
- recognize and work through world-building practices as legitimate and existing sites of psychological knowledge production;
- commit to recursion and return as a feature of accountable inquiry rather than something to correct for to fit into linearity;
- foreground ethical and epistemic accountability, including attention to risks of misrecognition, extraction, and forced legibility.

Speculative Construction does not:

- reduce to existing participatory action research (PAR), critical qualitative research, or arts-based inquiry, but does draw from and enter in dialogue with these traditions;
- operate as an aesthetic overlay applied to conventional research designs while leaving their epistemic assumptions intact;
- guarantee liberation as an automatic outcome of imagination, storytelling, or speculation;
- treat Black life as raw material for speculative play, nor treat participants as instruments for a researcher's conceptual agenda;
- demand coherence, continuity, or legibility (particularly withing existing dominant frames) as prerequisites for what counts as knowledge;⁹
- assume that a researcher can interpret Black imaginative practice without adequate historical and community knowledge, or that positionality statements can substitute for such grounding.

Adequate grounding is not determined by credential or identity alone, but through demonstrated historical knowledge, community relationships, and familiarity with Black intellectual traditions relevant to the inquiry. Following Indigenous research protocols that require researchers to establish legitimacy with communities before proceeding (Smith, [2021](#)), Speculative Construction positions adequacy as relationally determined: communities and Black scholars collaboratively assess whether a researcher has sufficient grounding to interpret responsibly. This is not exclusionary gatekeeping but protective practice—recognizing that research with communities harmed by extraction requires demonstrated accountability before access.

What these boundaries clarify is the section's core claim: Speculative Construction is a disciplined proposal for reorganizing inquiry around commitments that previous sections argued Afrofuturism helps make thinkable and available for practice and rehearsal, and that Black psychological liberation makes necessary.

⁹ A note on coherence: The distinction must be made between *imposed colonial coherence* (linear, closed, individually authored, resolved) and *emergent forms of coherence* that honor different logics. Speculative Construction asks researchers to recognize and work with these alternative coherences rather than translating them into familiar narrative forms as condition of legitimacy

5.2 | Methodological orientations: Drift, Echo, Pulse (DEP)

Speculative Construction is organized through three interwoven methodological coordinates: **Drift**, **Echo**, and **Pulse** (sometimes referred to here through the acronym “DEP”). These orientations are not thematic categories, nor sequential steps. They are analytic and practical coordinates that guide what research attends to, how it generates and interprets material, and how it evaluates alignment and rigor. Each coordinate names a site of power and treats these not as neutral containers for experience but as interlocked and co-constitutive, historically instituted coordinates through which Black life is governed and through which possibility (e.g., through disobedience and undisciplinarity) is practiced.

Across the discipline, space is often treated as setting, time as linear background, and story as subjective content to be coded. Speculative Construction begins from a different premise: that space, time, and story are themselves mechanisms that organize psychological life – structuring recognition, legibility, harm, survival, and the horizons of imagination. Drift, Echo, and Pulse therefore function as a research grammar: they shape what counts as evidence, how questions are asked, and what forms of understanding become possible.

5.2.1 Drift: Black relational geography

Drift names the thesis’s spatial orientation. It begins from the premise that space is not a passive backdrop but a produced and contested coordinate – organized through colonial geographies, property regimes, borders, policing, enclosure, and differential mobility rules and behaviors. Drift treats place as psychologically consequential not only because environments “influence” people, but because space determines what kinds of life are supported, surveilled, punished, or made un/thinkable.

Drift thus guards against methodological flattening. Without spatial attention, Psychology can mistakenly treat the effects of containment, dispossession, or institutional geography as individual deficits. Drift requires researchers to engage with the historical and community knowledge necessary to co-interpret place and the attached psychological effects: what a site has been used for, what it represents locally, what histories are held there, what forms of violence or care have structured its meaning, and what kinds of feelings, thoughts, meanings, fears, joys, speculation and desires attach to them. This will allow for better preparation in both re-

interpreting and re-imagining of space, grounded in history and community desires and possibilities.

Drift reorients inquiry toward relational geography and spatial power – how place, movement, and enclosure condition psychological life. It also invites experimentation with spatial speculation, reimagining and reorganization.

5.2.2 Echo: Non-linear temporalities

Echo names the thesis's temporal orientation. It begins from the premise that time is not simply a chronological measure through which events unfold, but a socially organized and politically governed coordinate. For Black life, temporal experience is shaped by racial capitalism, colonial historiography, and institutional regimes that structure waiting, pacing, urgency, delay, extraction, and disposability. Echo therefore treats temporality as layered: the past is not past, the present is not self-contained, and the future is not an open horizon equally available to all.

Echo does not require researchers to resolve temporal contradiction into a coherent timeline. Speculative Construction allows for contradiction, recursion, and temporal drift as part of the knowledge-making process. The analytic task is to understand what those temporal forms reveal about power, survival, desires, self, and the horizons of possibility.

Echo reorients inquiry toward temporal governance and layered time – how pasts, presents, and futures are unevenly distributed and lived/experienced, and invite temporal experimentation.

5.2.3 Pulse: Story, rhythm, affect

Pulse names the thesis's narrative orientation. It begins from the premise that story is not only a way of describing experience, but a social technology that organizes recognition, legitimacy, identity, and belonging. It is attentive to the ontological and epistemic stories, their affordances and foreclosures, what governs the sayable, and how narrative shapes memory and the possibility. Pulse is also attentive to form and choice. It treats narrative, rhythm, and affect as constitutive of psychological life, as historically conditioned and politically charged rather than merely expressive. Speculative Construction is oriented by pulse as the heartbeat of what unfolds both through narrative in forms and rhythms, but also through the analytic work that observes and interprets both the expression and the contexts that allow or hinder it.

Pulse also treats imagination as a psychologically contested capacity rather than a private fantasy. It is central to Speculative Construction's insistence that imagination is not outside of nor antithetical to reality. Imagination instead is treated as a practice through which reality takes shape, is interpreted, contested, and remade – and through which Black life can be rendered thinkable otherwise. Pulse therefore asks how imaginative constraint is formed and sustained, and how speculative storytelling – reading and making – can surface, disrupt, and reconfigure internalized limits on futurity, belonging, and self-conception.

Pulse reorients inquiry toward narrative authority, form, and affect – how story organizes legibility, belonging, and possibility. It also invites experimentation with different truths, invention, mythmaking, and speculative storytelling that reinvent and reconnect Black spatiotemporal life beyond existing scripts, archives, and futures.

5.2.4 Drift–Echo–Pulse as overlapping coordinates

Drift, Echo, and Pulse do not appear in isolation. In practice, temporal governance is spatially distributed; spatial constraint shapes narrative and affect; narrative forms shape how time is understood and how place becomes meaningful. Speculative Construction treats the orientations as overlapping coordinates that can be emphasized differently depending on the inquiry, site, and participants.

These overlapping orientations also yield practical guiding questions for Speculative Construction in action. A few examples of the kind of questions that may emerge:

- What are the psychological, temporal, and spatial barriers that constrain Black imagination and consciousness, and how does collective engagement with Afrofuturist speculative storytelling reveal, disrupt, and transform these barriers?
- How do these barriers manifest in participants' sense of future (temporal), self, or be/longing (spatial, epistemic, ontological-historical)?
- What psychological and affective shifts occur through speculative engagement, including reading and making?

Working with the orientations together also serves a practical function: it helps prevent methodological drift into abstraction. Together, they provide a disciplined way to keep research

accountable to Black spatiotemporal and narrative conditions and to the creative practices through which Black worlds are made thinkable and sustained.

In the next section, I move from orientation to process: how Speculative Construction translates these commitments into a recursive research architecture, including how questions are co-designed, how material is generated and interpreted, and how accountability is practiced across the life of a project.

5.3 | Process architecture: Applying Speculative Construction in practice

Drift–Echo–Pulse (DEP) as coordinates clarify what Speculative Construction tunes inquiry toward. This section clarifies how that orientation becomes a process architecture – how research is organized, enacted, and revised in practice. Because Speculative Construction treats method as a site of ethical and epistemic decision-making/world-building, its process is designed to remain responsive to what emerges and accountable to the worlds it engages and makes thinkable. The point is not to replace one rigid protocol with another, but to specify a disciplined structure through which world-building inquiry can proceed without collapsing into extraction.

Speculative Construction therefore runs as a recursive cycle. It begins with orientation and attunement; moves through co-design, enactment, interpretation, and return; and then loops back – revising questions, practices, and analytic frames as needed. Each stage remains guided by Drift, Echo, and Pulse, and each is documented as part of the method.

5.3.1 Orientation and attunement before research design

Speculative Construction begins before the conventional “design” moment. Orientation is not merely a positionality statement placed at the front of a proposal; it is a situated reckoning with purpose, stakes, and implication. Because the thesis has argued that Psychology’s inherited methods are shaped by colonial assumptions about what counts as evidence and whose worlds are legible, Speculative Construction requires that the researcher explicitly reflect on what they are trying to make possible – and what forms of harm the work must avoid reproducing.

Orientation includes, at minimum, three commitments.

First, the researcher clarifies the liberatory stakes of the inquiry: what conditions of constraint, misrecognition, or foreclosure the project addresses, and what forms of possibility it

seeks to support. Second, the researcher clarifies the historical and community grounding required to do this responsibly. In Speculative Construction, historical and community knowledge is not context but rather a methodological requirement that shapes interpretation, ethics, and what might be unintelligible without local frameworks. Third, the researcher clarifies what Drift, Echo, and Pulse demand in this particular project – where temporal governance, spatial constraint, and narrative authority are likely to structure the field of inquiry.

This orientation may need to be revisited throughout the project as a methodological return: when tensions emerge, when interpretation feels uncertain, or when the work risks drifting into forced legibility, the researcher returns to these commitments and revises the design accordingly.

5.3.2 Co-designing questions, roles, and protocols

Speculative Construction is built to be shaped with participants and communities rather than merely applied to them. Co-design is therefore a part of how the method guards against extraction and misrecognition. If Black life has been repeatedly made available for study under terms not of its choosing, then methodological accountability requires that the research process – questions, roles, procedures, boundaries – be collaboratively negotiated (e.g., Collins et al., 2018).

Co-design operates at several levels.

At the level of questions, Speculative Construction treats research questions as revisable and co-owned. The point is not simply to translate community concerns into academic language, but to develop questions that remain answerable within community frames of meaning and that do not demand harmful forms of disclosure. At the level of roles, the method clarifies who leads which parts of the work, how interpretation will be handled, what expertise is recognized, and what forms of refusal are protected. At the level of protocols, co-design clarifies the practical conditions of participation: how sessions are structured, how materials are stored or circulated, what counts as private or sacred, and what cannot be used or distributed.

Co-design in Speculative Construction also involves establishing a shared **orientation** before any formal elicitation begins. This includes collective engagement with selected Afrofuturist and speculative works – not merely as background reading/viewing, but as a method

of grounding participants in otherwise worlds and cultivating a shared analytic vocabulary for Drift, Echo, and Pulse. The purpose is to temporarily loosen the default terms of the everyday world – its dominant temporalities, geographies, and narrative demands – so that participants can enter the inquiry from within Black imaginative worlds and interpret experience through alternative coordinates of possibility.

Because Speculative Construction treats space, time, and story as sites of power, co-design also includes explicit attention to those coordinates. It asks, for example: What temporal demands does the research impose? What spaces does it require participants to enter, and what risks attach to those spaces? What narrative forms are invited, and which are refused or protected? These questions keep the design aligned with DEP from the outset.

This collaborative analytic process acknowledges persistent power asymmetries that co-design cannot erase. Following Fine and Torre's (2008) concept of 'participatory contact zones,' Speculative Construction treats disagreement and contested interpretation not as methodological failure but as sites where power must be explicitly negotiated. The method also draws on Lather's (1986) notion of catalytic validity, asking whether the research process itself generates new capacity for action and interpretation among participants. When researcher and participant interpretations conflict, the method prioritizes: (1) participant authority over their personal narratives and their circulation; (2) collaborative adjudication of collective/public interpretations; (3) transparency about which interpretation(s) appears in final products and why; (4) participants' right to refuse or contest researcher interpretations without being excluded from the project.

5.3.3 Enactment: making, encountering, eliciting

In Speculative Construction, data collection is better understood as *enactment* – the set of practices through which a research world is made and through which participants engage that world. In other words, the way we collect data is itself a performed, designed encounter that produces the data – i.e., the data is not “found,” it is generated through the enacted research situation. Research does not simply extract information from participants; it stages a structured encounter through which space, time, and story are activated, negotiated, and made materially observable, and the resulting products and conditions of that encounter constitute the data. I use “data” reluctantly, as a shorthand for the traces of a relational encounter (stories, maps, creative

artifacts, reflections, refusals, and fieldnotes) that are co-produced through accountable practice – not extracted as raw material from participants.

Using Speculative Construction, enactment can involve story circles, speculative storytelling, collaborative mapping, walking interviews, archival encounter, remix and collages, speculative design prompts, speculative memoir, or other world-building practices. The specific form depends on the site and the co-designed commitments of the project, but the methodological aim remains consistent: to generate material that can hold Black spatiotemporal and narrative complexity without reducing it to already-legible categories.

DEP function here as facilitative and analytic guides. Echo shapes how enactment holds layered time: what histories are invoked, what futures are invited, and what temporal ruptures or recursions are allowed to remain unresolved. Drift shapes how enactment attends to place: how spatial governance is mapped or traced, how movement and enclosure are felt, and how participants locate themselves in relation to institutional geographies and community worlds. Pulse shapes how enactment attends to narrative authority and affect: what story forms are permitted, how rhythm and silence are treated, and how creative production becomes a mode of psychological knowing rather than a supplement to “real data.”

Enactment is also where documentation becomes crucial. Speculative Construction requires documenting not only what is produced, but the conditions of production: who set the terms, what was withheld, what shifted in the room, what felt misaligned, and what demanded revision. This documentation becomes part of the method’s transparency and accountability.

5.3.4 Interpretation as ongoing co-production

In Speculative Construction, interpretation is not reserved for a final analytic stage conducted by the primary researcher. It is an ongoing, collaborative practice that unfolds throughout the research process as participants and researchers share notes, poems, artifacts, images, memories, affective responses, and emerging questions, collectively revisiting what these materials make possible and what they refuse. While primary researchers may carry more time and institutional responsibility for synthesis and writing (and therefore also more ethical responsibility), interpretation is treated as co-produced: analysis happens in the room, across

sessions, and through returns that allow participants to contest, deepen, or redirect emergent meanings.

This collaborative analytic process requires capacity-building. As in Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) traditions (e.g., Torre et al., 2012), Speculative Construction assumes that shared interpretation depends on explicit preparation: clarifying analytic aims, developing shared language, and collectively establishing what counts as evidence, what must remain protected, and what forms of disagreement are expected and generative.

What differentiates Speculative Construction is the analytic and imaginative grounding through Drift, Echo, and Pulse, and the use of speculative and Afrofuturist works as shared orientation. These texts and practices do not function merely as illustrative content; they help establish a method-space in which participants can collectively inhabit otherwise worlds – counter-temporalities, counter-geographies, and counter-stories – and interpret experiences from within those conditions rather than defaulting to the everyday terms that often govern legibility. This does not eliminate constraint, but it can make room for moments of disentanglement, re-seeing, and re-naming, with direct consequences for what can be recognized and what can be imagined as possible.

5.3.5 Recursion, revision, and methodological return

Recursion is the defining feature of this process architecture. Speculative Construction expects that as research unfolds, the initial question will not remain unchanged; the design will require adjustment; and interpretation will be challenged by what emerges. Rather than treating these shifts as methodological instability, Speculative Construction treats them as a sign that inquiry is responsive to the field it has entered. When recursion concludes is determined collaboratively rather than by predetermined timeline. This may involve: explicit agreements about project duration and return points; recognition when further engagement becomes extractive or exhausting; moments when participants signal completion or closure. This is negotiated within other practical constraints (e.g., funding, availability) that require conclusion. The aim is to resist both endless deferral and premature foreclosure, allowing the work to find its own temporal rhythm through relationship.

Methodological return can be triggered by a range of events: for example, when a prompt produces harm, when a space becomes unsafe, when participants contest an interpretation, or when the work begins to drift toward the very forms of governance the thesis critiques. In such moments, the method may require returning to orientation, revisiting co-design commitments, and revising enactment practices or analytic strategies.

This recursion is also how Speculative Construction maintains rigor without rigid protocol. Rigor emerges through accountable revision, documenting why decisions were made, how the orientations guided those decisions, and what changes were enacted in response to ethical or epistemic demands. In other words, the method's coherence is not produced by linear procedure, but by traceable commitments and a documented practice of return.

The next section turns to how this process architecture reshapes questions of evidence and analysis more directly: what Speculative Construction can hold as material, how analytic moves remain aligned with Drift, Echo, and Pulse, and how documentation functions as part of methodological transparency.

5.4 | What counts as evidence and how analysis proceeds

In Speculative Construction, evidence is not limited to what can be easily transcribed, coded, or quantified. Evidence includes the traces of relational encounters and world-building practices, co-produced under shared terms. Depending on the project, these traces may include fieldnotes and sensory descriptions; moments of refusal or withholding; and embodied responses that participants name as meaningful (including shifts in affect, attention, or place-feeling across time). It also may include spoken or written narratives; poems and speculative stories; annotated texts; maps and spatial traces; movement; photographs and other visual artifacts; collage, remix, or design prototypes.

Speculative Construction is compatible with PAR/CPAR (e.g., Fine et al., [2021](#); Torre et al., [2012](#)), and inherits its commitments to co-design and accountability, but it differs in that it shift the terms of interpretation through its organization around Drift, Echo, and Pulse and its use of Afrofuturist speculative grounding – treating space, time, and story as sites of power and as methodological grounds for reconstructing what Psychology can recognize as evidence, experience, and possibility. For example, in terms of use of art, where PAR may use arts-based

tools, it may be in service of communication. Through Speculative construction, engagement with Afrofuturist/speculative works is a shared orientation practice: it helps participants collectively inhabit *otherwise worlds* as an analytic vantage point. That is not just “creative method”, per se; it is a methodological condition for disentangling from the everyday world’s terms (even briefly), so interpretation doesn’t default back to dominant legibility. The creation of artifacts (drawings, collages, etc.) function as imaginative restorying and speculative experimentation toward creating new worlds.

Because evidence is co-produced, Speculative Construction also treats the conditions of production as evidentiary: what prompts were used, what spaces were involved, what temporal demands were imposed, what forms of narration were invited or foreclosed, what emotions surfaced, what was refused, and what shifted through collective engagement with speculative or Afrofuturist works. In other words, evidence includes not only what is made, but what the research situation makes possible.

5.4.1 Analytic strategies aligned with DEP

Analysis in Speculative Construction is interpretive, collaborative, and recursive. It asks what the materials reveal about the governance of space, time, and story, and what alternative coordinates and worlds become visible through speculative practice. Questions that may appear in the analysis portion of the research may look like:

- How did story elements bend or refuse dominant tropes of identity, healing, development, and “success”?
- How did temporal and spatial reconfigurations reframe Black relationality, constraint, and possibility?
- What affects and tones surfaced, intensified, or changed as storytelling unfolds – and what conditions enabled or blocked those shifts?
- What becomes possible to feel, say, or imagine here that was not possible before?

DEP provide analytic bearings, guiding what is traced, what is mapped, and what forms of meaning are most significant. Of particular interest is the psychological/affective implications and events throughout the research process.

Although the coordinates of space-time-story co-occur, it may be possible to generally tease them out as well in order to focus on their particular or unique occurrences:

Drift-oriented analysis attends to spatial relation and spatial governance. It treats place as active, and traces how it is navigated and produced. Analytically, Drift may involve mapping movements and thresholds, reading artifacts for spatial positioning (who is centered, who is pushed out, what is enclosed), and identifying how institutional geographies shape what becomes thinkable. Drift also holds open the question of spatial creation: where participants reconfigure space (e.g., into relational spaces, refuge, sanctuary, rehearsal, or archive).

Echo-oriented analysis attends to temporality as structure. It traces temporal layering, return, interruption, projection, emergence/revival, and recurrence across the materials: which pasts insist, how futurity is constrained or opened, and how participants locate themselves within racialized temporal regimes. Analytically, this may involve following repeated temporal motifs, documenting moments where timelines fracture or loop, and identifying where the future appears managed, deferred, or reclaimed. Echo asks not only what participants say about time, but how time is performed – through pacing, urgency, waiting, projection, repetition, and contradiction – and what that performance reveals about power and possibility.

Pulse-oriented analysis attends to story as power: narrative form, narrative authority, rhythm, affect, and silence. Pulse treats not only content but form as meaningful: cadence, repetition, fragmentation, metaphor, genre, withholding, refusal, and the emotional textures through which legibility is negotiated. Analytically, Pulse asks what stories do – how they distribute agency, manage responsibility, authorize certain realities, and foreclose others. It also asks where dominant narrative demands appear (coherence, closure, redemption), and how participants resist, rework, or refuse those demands, including through Black imaginative practice.

5.4.2 Documentation and reflexive record-keeping

Because Speculative Construction relies on co-production, possible recursivity, and negotiated evidence, documentation is an auditable trail of how the research world was made, how interpretations shifted, and how accountability was practiced – especially when decisions

were made to protect participants, revise prompts, restrict circulation, or return and repair misrecognition.

At minimum, documentation tracks: how the researcher's assumptions, questions, and commitments changed over time, including what prompted those changes; what prompts, texts, or practices were used; what was altered or abandoned, and why; how roles, responsibilities, and interpretive authority were negotiated; how disagreements were handled; and what forms of refusal were protected; what materials were deemed shareable, restricted, anonymized, or excluded, and under what terms; emergent concepts, recurring patterns (temporal, spatial, narrative), moments of resonance or tension, and points where Echo/Drift/Pulse clarified or complicated interpretation; where forced legibility, extraction, or interpretive flattening threatened to re-enter, and what corrective actions were taken.

Reflexive record-keeping here is a practice of accountability: making visible how interpretive decisions were made, what the method required in response to ethical or epistemic demands, and how the work remained oriented toward Black spatiotemporal and narrative life.

5.5 | Validation in Speculative Construction: Beyond Relational Validity

Validity in Speculative Construction names a basic methodological question: does the research, in its design and interpretation, remain aligned with the worlds and commitments it claims to hold?

I approach validity with caution. In research with populations rendered vulnerable through racial and other violence and institutional power, validity can function as an institutional demand that legitimizes more violence, including extraction – turning people, relations, and community knowledge into objects to be measured, archived, and consumed. In this thesis, validation is not a claim to neutrality or a defensive appeal to disciplinary legitimacy. It is a practice of accountability: to people and relationships, to place, and to the spatiotemporal and narrative conditions through which Black life is governed or made possible. Relationality matters here not only between researcher and participant, but also between participants and one another, between people and place, and, where relevant, to ancestral, spiritual, and more-than-human dimensions of lived worlds.

5.5.1 Relational validity as a baseline

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) propose **relational validity** as a framework that centers ethical accountability, place, and relationships, critiquing extractive and individualist research logics. Relational validity is useful to Speculative Construction because it understands validity as ongoing and context-responsive rather than a fixed endpoint, and because it foregrounds responsibility to people, land, and community.

Relational validity is foundational for this project, but it does not fully capture what is at stake in an Afrofuturist methodology for Psychology as I am proposing it. Speculative Construction is explicitly oriented toward complex temporalities, contested and fugitive geographies, and narrative/affective sovereignty – and toward the methodological role of speculative practice in shifting the terms of interpretation. A project can be participatory and relationally accountable while still reproducing dominant spatiotemporal and narrative demands at the level of analysis (for example, collapsing rupture into linear time, treating place as background, or treating story as content that must be made coherent to count). For that reason, Speculative Construction requires a more tailored validation framework – one that *includes* relational validity but extends it through Drift, Echo, and Pulse.

5.5.2 Spatiotemporal–narrative validity

I propose **spatiotemporal–narrative validity** as a validation framework for Speculative Construction. It assesses research quality through whether the inquiry remains accountable to the method’s three orientations – **Drift**, **Echo**, and **Pulse** – and to the Afrofuturist wager that otherwise worlds can reconfigure what Psychology can recognize as evidence, experience, and possibility.

Spatiotemporal–narrative validity extends relational validity by explicitly treating space, time, and story as co-constituted sites of power. It asks whether the research has meaningfully engaged:

- **Drift (relational geographies):** whether place is treated as historically produced and politically organized; whether spatial constraint, displacement, enclosure, and differential mobility are legible in the inquiry; and whether space is approached as contested and co-produced rather than neutral setting.

- **Echo (layered temporalities):** whether the inquiry attends to non-linear, generational, recursive, and interrupted time; whether it recognizes how history remains active; and whether futurity is approached as managed, constrained, or reclaimed rather than presumed open and universal.
- **Pulse (narrative and affective accountability):** whether story, rhythm, affect, silence, refusal, and creative production are treated as legitimate knowledge; whether narrative authority is shared and protected; and whether the inquiry resists forcing legibility through coherence, confession, or closure.

Validity here is recursive and open to emergence. It is practiced through revision and shared interpretation, including attention to uncertainty, limits, and what must remain protected.

It may be worth underscoring that spatiotemporal-narrative validity assesses alignment with Speculative Construction's theoretical commitments rather than adjudicating between competing ontologies. A study that rejects the premise that space, time, and story function as coordinates of governance would not meet this framework's validity criteria – not because it is poorly conducted, but because it operates from different ontological assumptions.

5.5.3 Key features of spatiotemporal–narrative validity

Spatiotemporal–narrative validity is enacted through several interlocking commitments:

- **Community story sovereignty and narrative genealogy:** participants retain meaningful authority over how stories and artifacts circulate, what is withheld, and what genealogies of meaning are recognized.
- **Rhythmic accountability to community temporalities:** the inquiry is paced and structured in ways that do not simply reproduce institutional time, and that can register community rhythms, interruptions, and returns.
- **Dialogic validation:** validation is ongoing and participatory, occurring throughout the project through shared reflection, co-interpretation, and iterative return.
- **Protection against cooptation:** the framework should be designed to detect and interrupt interpretive collapse back into dominant psychological frames (including pathologizing translations, forced legibility, and decontextualized extraction).

5.5.4 Implementation and documentation

Because Speculative Construction treats interpretation as collaborative and continuous, validation is practiced across the life of the research project. Participants and researchers collectively reflect on materials as they emerge and revisit earlier understandings as the inquiry develops. Again, the primary researcher(s) may hold more time and institutional responsibility for synthesis and writing, but the interpretive ground is co-produced.

Shared interpretation requires capacity-building. This preparation therefore includes Drift/Echo/Pulse literacy and collective engagement with Afrofuturist and speculative works as orientation. It also requires historical engagement, such as Black historical knowledge (Chapman-Hilliard & Adams-Bass, 2016; Tynes et al., 2023).

In short, spatiotemporal–narrative validity incorporates relational validity while extending it through the method’s specific commitments to Drift-Echo-Pulse, and through the Afrofuturist grounding that supports interpretive disentanglement and otherwise-world orientation. The following micro-example illustrates how these validity commitments can function in practice.

5.5.5 The Earthseed Library Project as micro-example:

The Earthseed Library Project is an idea I have thought up – which is still in formation – that reimagines the library, not as a neutral space of knowledge, but as a contested, racialized, and speculative site. Inspired by Octavia Butler’s Earthseed series (Parable of the Sower, 1993; Parable of the Talents; 1998) and grounded in Afrofuturism, Black Psychology, and spatial justice, this example of an intervention proposes an examination (and reimagining) of the Rita Cox Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection at the Parkdale Library in Toronto through the lens of psychological liberation, cultural memory, and speculative futures.

Butler’s Earthseed principles – particularly the ideas of change and adaptability – provide ontological grounding. The project asks: What if libraries, instead of simply archiving what has been, became portals to what could have been and what could become? This design idea arose from an environmental observation assignment I participated in, in early 2025, that revealed how even Black-centered collections can be constrained by colonial logics – e.g., through the Dewey Decimal system, fixed spatial hierarchies, and affective coldness. The Earthseed Library Project

thus emerges as an idea of an intervention that treats the library as a living archive capable of transformation and inviting participation in re-imagining, rather than a static object of study.

Framed through the validity illustration below, this modeled intervention clarifies what spatiotemporal–narrative validity may require in practice: that interpretation remains accountable to space, time, and story as sites of power, and that speculative engagement does not collapse back into dominant forms of legibility.

Drift validity checks (relational geography): The inquiry treats cataloguing systems, spatial arrangement, and institutional atmosphere as technologies of governance rather than neutral infrastructure. The prompted redesign and re-mapping practices make visible how spatial hierarchy, surveillance, accessibility, and affective temperature shape what can be felt and imagined in the library. Participants’ spatial memories and place-knowledge are treated as analytic authority in naming what the space does – and what it could do otherwise.

Echo validity checks (layered temporality): The inquiry treats the library as a palimpsest – layered with histories, omissions, and unrealized possibilities – rather than as a stable container of the past. Interpretations remain attentive to how archival linearity and institutional time govern what becomes findable, relevant, or futurably imaginable within the collection. Participants are invited to work with return, rupture, and recursion without being pushed into linear testimony or tidy chronological narrative and reconstructions.

Pulse validity checks (narrative and affective sovereignty): The inquiry treats the library’s organization as a narrative technology – asking what stories are told through classification, adjacency, separation, and discoverability (for example, what it means when Black queer fiction is displaced from the overall Black collection and interfiled elsewhere). The intervention protects narrative sovereignty by allowing fragmentation, silence, refusal, and affective intensity without translating these into deficit or “missing data”. Stories, spatial rearrangements, and creative artifacts are interpreted collaboratively, with participants shaping both meanings and the terms of circulation and representation. The analytic process resists forcing closure and coherence as the price of intelligibility.

Across all three coordinates, validity is enacted through co-interpretation, return, and boundary practices. The point is not to stabilize meaning once and for all, but to keep inquiry aligned with its commitments as meanings emerge, shift, and are negotiated.

Some potential psychological inquiries, guided by DEP, may include:

- How do colonial spatiotemporal and narrative systems of knowledge organization (e.g., the Dewey Decimal system) constrain Black imagination, geographies, temporalities, storytelling, and epistemic legibility?
- What new forms of psychological and spatial reorientation emerge through speculative, participatory, rebellious redesign of spaces of a public library?
- How might spaces like libraries function (or be transformed) as “future archives” that bridge cultural memory and liberatory imagination?
- How do community members’ lived experiences and memories shape the redesign of spaces like the library?

Speculative Construction has been introduced here as methodology and method, but most specifically as a theory of method: an Afrofuturist reorientation of psychological inquiry that engage space, time and story through the methodological anchors Drift, Echo, and Pulse . These are interwoven coordinates rather than separate analytic add-ons, though each carry important focal points. Speculative Construction shifts the problem of method from procedure to accountability: accountability to Black histories and community knowledge as primary pillar toward psychological research with Black people and communities, to the spatiotemporal and narrative conditions through which Black life is governed and resist governance and disappearance, and to the ethical risks of translating Black experience back into dominant regimes of legibility. The spatiotemporal–narrative validity framework names how this accountability can be practiced across a project through co-interpretation, return, boundary-setting, and protection against cooptation.

6. Reflections, Limits, and New Directions

6.1 | Synthesis and Commitments

This thesis began with a problem: the recognition that Psychology's promise of understanding the human remains governed by colonial inheritances – by a genre of Man, by racialized coordinates of space, time, and story, and by the epistemic architectures that constrain what Black life can be, know, and imagine. I have traced how these constraints are exposed, resisted, and reimagined in Black thought, Black creative practice, and Black psychological theorizing. I have theorized space, time, and story as interlocking, co-constitutive coordinates through which colonial governance operates, and demonstrated that Psychology may treat these as background or context, and even when it engages them as consequential elements, does not treat them as operating coordinates that govern legibility, recognition, and possibility. Space is reduced to context, a variable, or a container. Time appears as neutral chronology or developmental progression. Story becomes either anecdote (to be managed) or narrative data (to be extracted), often under the pressure of coherence, closure, and evidence norms that are not always interrogated as political. They become domains to be measured, interpreted, or narrated within the existing order, rather than as historically produced coordinates that actively govern possibility. In other words, the issue is not absence but insufficient recognition of how these coordinates function as infrastructure in the way I argue here. This thesis reframed space, time, and story as racialized coordinates that structure recognition itself – and therefore as methodological ground rather than incidental context.

Section 1 established this excavation by tracing the figure of Man and the epistemic order that makes him appear universal. Wynter clarified how Man comes to stand in for the human as a genre, and how this overrepresentation forms the ground on which disciplines define what is real, rational, and worthy of study. Fanon sharpened the stakes by showing how the Black subject is forced to encounter the human through an imposed structure of recognition, where Black personhood is repeatedly overdetermined. Sharpe insisted that anti-Blackness is not an event but an atmosphere – a weathered condition that saturates the present and organizes what can be lived and known. McKittrick demanded that geography not be treated as backdrop but as method: a site where racial ordering is built and where Black life nonetheless produces alternative spatial practices. Hartman pressed the ethical limits of evidence, archive, and narration, clarifying how

absence, silence, and refusal are not simply missing data but historical evidence of violence and dispossession. Eshun then made explicit what the earlier thinkers were already pointing toward: that time is not neutral and that counter-temporal moves are not aesthetic flourishes but method, a way of prying open the chronopolitical regimes that constrain Black possibility.

Section 2 turned to Black Psychology as an early rupture within the discipline: a field that refused Eurocentric universality and insisted that Black life cannot be approached as deviation from a White norm. The thesis treated identity and worldview as reparative and ontological projects – efforts to restore what colonialism and racial capitalism have severed, distorted, or rendered unrecognizable. At the same time, the section argued that the postapocalyptic condition demands a complementary move toward imagination and methodological resources capable of working with discontinuity without forcing premature coherence. This is the point at which Afrofuturism becomes more than a thematic interest, but a necessary resource.

Section 3 developed Afrofuturism as such a resource, and as a framework for Psychology with methodological consequences. It is discussed as a multi-temporal polyvocal world-making practice that disrupts imposed chronologies, reorganizes spatial possibility, and expands what can be conceived as human and knowable without requiring Black legibility on colonial terms. I emphasize it as a creative laboratory of experimentation through which other worlds are imagined and practiced.

Section 4 then introduced Speculative Construction as this thesis's methodological intervention, operationalized through three interwoven orientations – Drift, Echo, and Pulse – as methodological presentations of space, time, and story, and oriented toward inquiry that can engage rupture while guarding against extraction, interpretive capture, and closure as the default endpoint. Speculative Construction was not presented as creativity without structure, but as an architecture for how inquiry runs: beginning with orientation and attunement before design, moving through co-designed questions and roles, proceeding through enactment, interpretation as co-production, and finally recursion and methodological return. In other words, this thesis does not only call for more imaginative research. It proposes an accountable way to conduct it.

From this arc, the central claim of the thesis can be stated thus: Psychology's dominant understanding of the human remains governed by colonial spatiotemporal and narrative coordinates that constrain Black legibility and possibility, and Afrofuturism, operationalized

through Speculative Construction, provides a framework and method for reconfiguring inquiry by treating space, time, and story as sites of power, rupture, and world-making.

The significance of this claim is disciplinary. It shifts method from a technical concern to an ontological and ethical site: what conceptions of the human inquiry reproduces, and what forms of experience, personhood, and relation become un/intelligible within its evidentiary regimes. Accordingly, this thesis contributes by (1) naming space, time, and story as methodological ground; (2) developing Afrofuturism as a framework with methodological consequences for Psychology; (3) introducing Speculative Construction as an original methodological architecture; and (4) reframing rigor through spatiotemporal-narrative accountability rather than defaulting to conventional evidentiary norms.

The project does not make claims haphazardly. It does not claim that imagination is inherently liberatory; it refuses the idea that method is neutral; and it refuses demands for Black coherence and legibility as only achievable within Psychology's dominant interpretive frames, and the demand or expectation that Black life be fully transparent within those frames. Finally, this thesis implicates the researcher. This is not a project that stands at a safe distance from its subject. It is written from within the condition it theorizes, and it therefore treats accountability not as a standard ethics paragraph but as an ongoing reflexive and methodological demand: to remain grounded in real locations, real histories, and real communities; to avoid turning Black suffering into a disciplinary resource; and to treat any future implementations of Speculative Construction as relational projects that require consent, collaboration, and revision.

The work of this thesis is to open a methodological passage – a portal – through which psychological inquiry can be reoriented toward Black life not as a problem to be solved inside inherited coordinates, but as a site of theory, world-making, methodological invention, and liberatory struggle.

6.2 | Limits and Constraints

This thesis is admittedly ambitious in what it attempts to reconfigure, and it is necessarily limited in what it can fully develop within the scope of a master's project but also enact in practice. The limits discussed below clarify what Speculative Construction can and cannot responsibly claim at this stage.

First, this work is selective by necessity. It builds its argument through a particular constellation of thinkers, traditions, and examples, and it cannot offer an exhaustive account of Black diasporic intellectual traditions, African cosmological architectures, Speculative works, or the range of Black psychological scholarship that would deepen and complicate the method. The focus has been to develop a coherent methodological architecture rather than a comprehensive survey. It has also focused on Black American literature and life, and even there, in a general manner that does not specify the heterogeneity of its makeup (gender, sexuality, ability, citizenship status, etc.). There is much work to be done to explore its themes' applicability across the board.

Second, this is a thesis that asks readers to move across disciplinary terrains and to treat method as ontological and ethical infrastructure. That complexity has costs. Some arguments could be expanded with more sustained case comparison, more extended engagement with counterarguments, and additional examples that illustrate how spatiotemporal and narrative governance shows up in everyday psychological research practice. At points, concision competes with clarity.

Anticipated implementation constraints.

The constraints relevant here concern what may become difficult when Speculative Construction is enacted responsibly. Because the method is relational, iterative, and ethically demanding, implementation will likely require conditions that are not easily available in many research settings. For example, the method's insistence on co-design and return may demand long-term relationship-building, shared decision-making, and forms of accountability that exceed standard project timelines. Its use of speculative, world-building practices may also require facilitation skills and methodological literacy that are uncommon within conventional psychology training, as well as careful preparation to prevent interpretive capture, extraction, or premature narrative closure.

In addition, the method's openness to refusal, opacity, and non-coherence as meaningful – rather than as problems to correct – may introduce practical tensions: how to document process without turning participants into data sources; how to protect what should not be made legible; how to negotiate ownership and circulation of created materials; and how to determine what counts as an outcome without defaulting to familiar evaluative logics.

Finally, implementation will likely face logistical and institutional friction: ethics review processes that expect stable protocols, predefined measures, and conventional consent models; institutional demands for efficiency and deliverables; and the material requirements of doing participatory speculative work well (time, space, compensation, accessibility supports, and infrastructures for care). These are not incidental barriers but part of what it means to treat method as accountable practice rather than as technique.

Evaluation constraints and disciplinary legibility (reflection).

I also recognize that the method proposed here may encounter difficulty in acceptance, comprehension, or uptake. Speculative Construction asks readers/researchers/other psychologists to suspend certain normative habits of psychological reasoning – for example, the expectation that inquiry must move toward coherence, closure, and stable evidentiary forms, or that method is primarily a neutral procedure rather than an ontological site of power and world-making decisions. The terrain upon which this proposal lands is also shaped by established standards of rigor and methodological expectation – standards I critique throughout the thesis, and that the method necessarily pressures and reorients. For that reason, it is possible that the intervention will be met with skepticism, resistance, or dismissal, not because the project lacks seriousness, but because it may not be easily recognized through familiar evaluative lenses. The work will require careful articulation, exemplification, and accountable practice in order to be understood on its own terms without being translated back into the logics it seeks to disrupt.

These limits are not reasons to retreat from the intervention; they are reasons to name what must be built around it for the work to proceed with integrity.

6.3 | Potential Disciplinary and Institutional Responses

Because Speculative Construction proposes a methodological reorientation – rather than a modification of existing techniques – it is likely to meet a range of responses. These responses may reflect whether readers, reviewers, and institutions can recognize and tolerate the kinds of epistemic and ethical shifts the method requires: suspension of familiar assumptions about evidence and coherence, willingness to treat imagination as epistemic labor, and comfort with forms of inquiry that are iterative, relational, and not fully capturable through standard research templates. Naming these possible responses is not prediction; it is part of accountability, because

it clarifies the pressures the method may face as it moves from theoretical proposal toward practice.

Possibilities for uptake and resonance.

One possible response is that the proposal is understood as offering Psychology a disciplined way to engage work that many researchers already feel drawn to but struggle to justify: inquiry that takes lived time-feeling, place-feeling, and narrative life seriously as constitutive of subjectivity, and that treats speculative practice as legitimate site of knowledge-making rather than as illustrative or decorative. In this sense, Speculative Construction may resonate with scholars and practitioners working in narrative and qualitative traditions, community-based and participatory approaches, Black Studies-influenced methodologies, arts-based inquiry, and critical and decolonial psychology – especially those who have experienced the limits of conventional method language for describing what their work is actually doing. It may also find uptake as a pedagogical resource: a way to train students and researchers to notice how space, time, and story operate as coordinates of governance and to design inquiry with greater ethical and interpretive care.

Skepticism, misunderstanding, and dismissal.

A second possible response is skepticism – particularly where speculative inquiry is conflated with aesthetic expression, where imagination is misread as a departure from rigor, or where the method's refusal of premature coherence is interpreted as a lack of clarity. Some readers may struggle to conceptualize what counts as evidence or outcome when the method is oriented toward rupture, recursion, and world-making rather than toward stable explanatory closure. Others may treat the proposal as conceptually interesting but methodologically “impractical” because it requires forms of training, time, and relational infrastructure that are not readily supported by typical research timelines or institutional norms. The method asks for a shift not only in content but in the terms through which research is recognized as legitimate.

Pressures toward translation into familiar forms.

A third response may be less overtly resistant but equally consequential: pressures to translate Speculative Construction into existing methodological templates in order to make it legible. This might take the form of narrowing speculation into a prompt for conventional

interviews, turning world-building into a tool for generating narratable “themes,” or forcing the method into an evaluative frame that privileges coherence, measurability, or predetermined outcomes. Such translations can appear practical or even supportive, but they risk neutralizing the method’s core intervention by pulling it back into the very logics it is designed to contest – particularly the logics that treat space, time, and story as content within an unchanged epistemic order rather than as coordinates that govern recognition and possibility.

Risks of cooptation and aesthetic capture.

Finally, as decolonial language and novel methods gain institutional currency, there is a risk that speculative practice is adopted as style without the commitments that make it accountable. Speculative aesthetics can be attractive while the ethical requirements of co-design, return, refusal, and interpretive restraint are sidelined. In such cases, the method could be used to produce compelling artifacts or narratives while reproducing extractive dynamics – especially if communities are treated as sources of creativity rather than as co-theorists and co-authors of knowledge.

Together, these potential responses clarify why the work ahead must be both methodological and infrastructural. For Speculative Construction to be enacted with integrity, it will require careful articulation, collaborative development, and protections against translation, extraction, and flattening – so that the method remains grounded in its commitments rather than merely absorbed as a novelty within dominant paradigms.

6.4 | Future directions

A first future direction is the continued, collective development of both the theory of spatiotemporal and narrative coordinates, as well as that of Speculative Construction, in conversation and collaboration with Black scholars and allies, artists, practitioners, and communities. This means not only refining and operationalizing the method in new contexts, but also remaining accountable to critique, to refusal, and to the evolving needs, dreams, and struggles of Black people. Speculative Construction is offered here as a living methodology – one that must be revised through practice, dialogue, and even disagreement.

A second direction is the eventual application of the method proposed. Implementation will clarify what the method makes possible and what tensions it introduces – logistically, ethically,

interpretively and otherwise. Each will demand adaptation and will reveal where the orientations of Drift, Echo, and Pulse require further specification, new practices, or stronger safeguards.

A third direction concerns potential resonances beyond Black contexts. While this thesis is rooted in Black experience and Black liberation – particularly within an American-centered archive – the analytic of space, time, and story as colonial coordinates resonates beyond Black communities alone. Speculative Construction may offer resources for Indigenous, diasporic, queer, and other oppressed groups who are also grappling with catastrophe, dispossession, and constrained futurity. Yet these resonances cannot be assumed. Future work should explore them only through careful, respectful engagement, collaboration, and attention to the specificity of histories, struggles, and desires – so that translation does not collapse difference or appropriate struggle. Finally, future development must explicitly guard against cooptation. There is always the risk that liberatory-oriented theories and method commitments are neutralized – especially if forced to conform to dominant paradigms of evaluation, extractive knowledge practices, or premature demands for procedural standardization. Future development must therefore include explicit protections: practices of accountability, revision, refusal, and interpretive restraint that keep the method grounded in its liberatory aims.

Taken together, these directions underscore that the work ahead is complex and collective: This thesis is not an endpoint, but an invitation to build, revise, and protect, to walk through the portal it opens.

6.5 | In Closing

The method is the portal. The task now is to step through, into the unknown. Afrofuturism and Speculative Construction are proposed as laboratories and disciplined passage into new theoretical and methodological possibilities, deliberately attuned to world-building and to experimentation and rehearsal of liberation and other worlds.

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