

*GHOSTS OF DIASPORA: Hauntology, Hip-Hop and Diasporic Memory
in the Colonial Anthropocene*

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[Link to The Migrant Report LP by Cheko7even](#)

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“This essay explores the political imagination of the post-war hinge generation of the Salvadorian diasporic subjectivity. Through the ethnographic narrative of hip-hop recording artist Cheko7even and the creation of a hauntological project entitled “The Migrant Report” and the adaptation screenplay entitled, Adrift, the Salvador Alvarenga Story, we explore hegemonic power over memory and the role of our transmissions in identity formation in the diaspora. By extracting themes from the lyrical narrative of the album, the essay explores the rhizome-like assemblages of our diasporic imagination through the modalities of hauntology, political ecology, social work and hip-hop. The essay attempts to creatively thread personal story and global counter-currents to argue for the benefits of diasporic subjectivities to in creating emancipatory narratives that bridge the West-South divide, as well argue for the use of experimental modalities of cultural production to produce counter-subjectivities from the diasporic political imagination.”

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Dedication

Dedicated to all the women in my family, for taking the time to weave the chaos of displacement into an ethic of love, service and resistance.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge God first and God last. My Family, for being my source of love and strength. For being my witnesses. My mother for her devotion to service. My father for his commitment to education. My brother for his keen work ethic. Thank you for being my heart where my home is.

I acknowledge my grandmother and my family in El Salvador. Thank you for always saving me a seat since I left. Thank you for fighting forgetting beside me.

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An Author's Decolonial Manifesto

I write in the spirit of epistemic liberation which acknowledges the historical wounds caused by the enclosure of knowledge and the relegation of ancient, traditional and embodied ways of knowing.

I write in recognition of the marginalized, banned, exiled and fugitive martyrs of knowledge whose ideas, diatribes, proses and poetics were hidden from us during the archival and universalizing process of modernization.

I write about the disappearances, absences, vacancies and spectres that inhabit and animate us with or without our conscious awareness. May they be revealed and illuminated through these words.

I write with urgency and patience in response to the slow and intolerant violence of forgetting that is rewarded in the assimilation and nationalist projects of settler colonial states.

I want to write creatively, courageously, theoretically, scientifically, poetically, curiously and mysteriously.

I write in recognition that the end of the world has already happened over and over again, in places where we've inherited the aftermath of a greed and avarice that characterized the colonies that formed the foundation of modernity.

I write in dissidence and in dissonance of the established and accepted powers of common sense and professional reasoning which locks our imaginations into prisons of normalcy, complacency and apathy.

I write to make visible the off-staging and depoliticization of our climate crisis and the re-inscription of colonial logics through the practices of technocratic green-grabbing, white-washing, black-balling and yellow-taping.

I write in order to re-imagine our relationship to ourselves, each other and the more-than-human life around us in the spirit of 'acompañamiento', which means to accompany and *walk with, walk to follow* and *walk to learn from*, rather than to *walk to lead* and *walking to get ahead*.

I write with spiritual, mystical and religious conviction in response to the world-destroying metaphysical spirit of capitalism that seeks mechanize, exploit and commodify the forces of mystery, magic, miracles and known-unknowns.

I write about physical, psychological and ecological destruction framed as damage and attempt to reframe it as a place of desire, justice and liberation.

I write from a place of love for El Pueblo Salvadoreño, who always punch above their weight and create technologies of survival and resistance out of conditions of misery and injustice.

FOREWORD

This Master's portfolio, which includes a 13-track hip-hop album entitled "The Migrant Report, a screenplay for "Adrift: An Adaptation of the Salvador Alvarenga Story" and accompanying production ethnography, is dedicated and written for all the Salvadorians displaced outside of their homeland during or after the Civil War. Those who are working to stitch the pieces of *home* back together from a fragmented history. Our past is full of dark and violent moments that has left our sense of self fragment and disjointed. Our future(s), in the hands of a *beast* that is too large to see all at once, leaving us with a feeling that can't be translated with words alone. If you are the door to a new way of being that is liberated from the clutches of *the beast*, I am *the hinge* to facilitate your travel back and forth between the past and the future, so you can continue with a richer, fuller and more emotive view of your heritage. In poetic terms, I want you to map how *the beast* was coronated in our minds and on our territories, so that we can live to reverse its sorcery and choose otherwise. My hope is that this study will contribute to creating diverse avenues to access the past and to enliven emancipatory and creative energy around what the future looks like. My motive as *the hinge* comes from a desire to communicate alternative transmissions of a diasporic history that are liberated from the power that benefits from a monopoly on memory and our forgetfulness. Our transmissions will determine the health of our historical memory as a diaspora and it is in these stories where we may find medicine to help us heal and transcend our historical and collective trauma.

This movement of intention has been germinating ever since I was extracted from a place you would never have wanted to leave until it became what Warsan Shire called, *the mouth of a shark*. Since that moment of rupture, I have resisted the slow violence of forgetting; whether by the taxidermic tendencies of modern nostalgia; the pressures of assimilation within

Canada's colonial settler state; or the psychological colonization by the commodity form due to global capitalism's domination. I believe, as Nayyira Waheed stated, that *memory is the cure for apathy*.

Our displacement from *homeland* threatens to make us feel like we are no longer a part of our heritage simply because we no longer walk on its territory. It is a force that says, in order to be a complete person in the West, you must learn to forget and forget to become. It is this force that I choose to resist and this instruction which I aspire to disobey. Behind the narratives of war, gangbangers, migration caravans, scarcity and dictatorships, is an inheritance brimming with love and care, knowledge and wealth, resistance and resilience. We are an extension of our people's history into the future. We do not have to forget, even if we don't remember, and we don't have to become, because we already are.

PROLOGUE: WEAVING THE CHAOS

*“No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well”
- Warsan Shire – “Home”*

In this paper I study the diasporic political imagination through an ethnographic and artistic exploration of my own Salvadorian subjectivity through the modalities of Hip-Hop, Hauntology, Political Ecology and Social Work. I argue that when trying to understand the imprint of historical memory on the political imagination of a diaspora, linguistic technologies like Hip Hop Lyricism can become a tool for healing, remembrance and preservation. Such lyricism can help illuminate marginalized subjectivities within the fragmented memories of war and migration. I want to capture a glimpse of the growing harmony of echoes and reverbs emerging from the silences of the diasporic psyche to discover precious insight into the political possibilities of the future.

This portfolio centers around the creation of the Migrant Report LP and *Adrift: A.S.A.S.* It is organized in 4 primary sections¹. The Introduction draws from existing literature to present two major theoretical frameworks; The hinge as function of a diasporic identity and hauntology as diasporic experience. The introduction also explores the role of memory in the production of the diasporic imagination. This section sets theoretical pillars that will help with analysis of the narratives found in the portfolio and the identification of the *haunting*.

As I will discuss in the section Pre-Extractive Hauntings, my memories of my childhood and my family’s history in El Salvador have had a massive influence over the formation of my subjectivity in my 30 years living in the diaspora. Grappling with them shaped my MES master’s program to feel like a frustrating duel in which I have attempted to untie a chaotic mass of

¹ Although the screenplay, *Adrift* is included in my portfolio, it is not explicitly talked about in this essay, though much of the theoretical work was designed for its performance ethnography.

spectral entanglements and temporal assemblages. It is important to remember that these short stories depend on larger histories of articulation (Ahmed, 1999). These stories are the anchors which drive my investigation, reveal themselves in my work and influence (and probably complicate) my ethnographic process.

The Ethnography consists of an introduction to my methodology and the use of hip hop aesthetics in the process, before diving into the four samples taken from the narrative structures of the LP. These cover a wide range of issues revealed in selected passages of the album and aims to join them with my personal history, revolutionary historical narratives and currents of theory learned during my time completing my masters. I conclude with weaving back to the hinge as a site of transference that can be best understood by cultural production, as per the aesthetics of a hauntological culture like hip hop. The essay is threaded with passages from previous songs or songs from the Migrant Report LP to weave between scholarship, theory making and cultural production.

The Seamstress

*“The look in my granny’s eyes the stories of my beginning
It feels like my separation from origin never-ending
I smile, at the same time that I cry, is it fair?
That the biggest source of joy is embroiled in despair”*

- “El Sol” - Cheko7even – *The Migrant Report LP (2023)*-

This analysis was written in my grandmother’s living room, surrounded by sewing machines, images of the Virgen De Guadalupe and Jesus, family portraits from the 90’s and a mountain of her *tanates*, a Salvadorian caliche word roughly translating to, ‘a bunch of random things’, mostly sewing tools and bags of scrap material. My grandmother is as stoic as she is warm, as distant as she is utterly inherent.

An intrepid woman, she left the forgotten mountains of San Fernando, Morazán, to make a life in the seismic city of San Salvador. San Fernando forms part of Morazán’s historical

territories that first organized a formidable rural resistance against American economic imperialism in the mid 1970's. In turn, it has also been the site of some of the worst counterinsurgency measures, including *El Mozote Massacre* where the American-trained Atlacatl battalion slaughtered 1000 which included 552 children on the 11th of December, 1981 (Amaya et al., 1996). The American and Salvadorian government so vehemently denied this occurrence that, to this day, some people believe it is a myth. In the small town of Perquín you will find the Museum of the Revolution displaying artifacts of the war including the studio of Radio Venceremos and part of a gunned down helicopter that killed Domingo Monterossa, commander of the Atlacatl battalion during El Mozote (Gould, 2019). Morazán is a mystical place of vitality and death, of intense beauty and relentless defiance. A place where people are like the great *roble* trees, known for their strong, durable and workable wood.

On my mother's side, Mama Mercedes is the needle that strings everyone's lives together into what we call a family and our gateway to a past before us. Her life is a pillar of commitment that exemplifies the process I wish to invoke in this theoretical testimony. She practices weaving purposeful technologies of care from the chaotic and suffocating *stuff of life*. Mama Mercedes sews meaning into the fabric of the day through her discipline as a seamstress, while threading a family culture together through the maddening ruptures of trauma and the grinding stretches of time. Born in 1939, she was raised alongside the fastest acceleration of techno-industrial time in our recorded history. She had two daughters, one, a brilliant human rights defender and former *guerrillera*, the other, a committed social worker, my mother. Mama Mercedes has raised 4 generations in her home and is the matriarchal source of prestige, strength and wisdom in our family. She is the *first sound*. It is in her tradition from which I take my first theoretical step.

The seamstress exists in a world of chaos but lives an existence of order and repetition. It is the will of her hands as instruments that stitch together sources of clothing, shelter and protection. Our narrative has come together through her stories and daily practices that glue together a greater sense of purpose within our family. The seamstress is never fearful and always cautious, her doors are open but her gate is locked. She is a door to a legacy and a passage for intergenerational exchange. Her machines go forward and backwards through the

materials in a variety of different patterns. She creates by producing dual realities of what is meant to be seen, and meant to be hidden. She arranges the frayed ends of life's material into a tapestry of belonging, so that we may lay in its familiarity and find security in its protection.

In this tradition, I want to find fragments of voices from a diasporic haunting and weave them into a coherent voice of a ghost² through the technologies of hip hop and this ethnographic essay. I recognize that the collective imagination of El Salvador, of which I am a part of and seek to investigate, is also a world embroiled in chaos. A labyrinth of loss and disappearances, erasures and agricultures, dictators and resistance, massacres and earthquakes, gang territories and water dystopias. It would take a shrewd sartor to mend the ruptures of such a splintered history. The task is only made more difficult by the temporal distortion that is the diasporic experience when facing an enormous cultural, temporal, political and geographical divide with your own sense of *home*. The task was to write the way my grandmother sews. I will circle back to my raps and wrap these words around them, back and forth like a sewing machine. The method aims to create something unique, some vivid colors and alluring patterns, something someone would want to wear.

*"I'd give anything just to feel the sunshine
You know I smile
As a tear rolls down my eye"*

"El Sol" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

In deciding to incorporate ethnography, hip-hop, hauntology, political ecology and social work into my analysis, I am attempting to employ instruments that allow me to weave the entanglements of personal histories and global processes into a purposeful contribution to the search and pronouncement of the Diasporic Salvadorian Political Imagination. May these words be a pinch as productive as my grandmother's hands.

² ghost: used in this essay as a hauntological euphemism for the diasporic spectre that actualizes in political imagination.

Live From El Regimen

Part of this essay was written in El Salvador, 16 months into the Regimen De Exception, or the State of Exception (similar to the Emergencies Act in Canada). No constitutional rights are afforded there at this moment in time. *El Regimen* has seen over 71,000 detained and put in prisons by a massive counter-terrorism campaign that has brought gang activity in the country to a historic standstill (Bullock, 2023). This is yet another defining moment in the recent history of El Salvador and the relief that has come with a drop in crime and violence is as palpable in the country as it is within communities of the diaspora, which I refer to as *el Pueblo Lejano*. The prolific take-down of the gang territories in most of the country has been bundled with the return to life under military authoritarianism. Despite the drop in criminal or gang violence, we have also experienced a re-traumatization as we return to a heightened fear of state violence and repression. Our safety has come at a price that all Salvadorians should be wary of paying.

The populism of president Nayib Bukele marks a political earthquake in the political imagination of Salvadorians. This rupture was helped in part by the popular disillusionment of the post-war democratic era, which was symbolized by the emergence and evolution of the youth-gang phenomenon that began in the mid-nineties. These are the same gangs that, despite their a-political origins, have been highly politicized since their inception. As a result of U.S. deportation policies, post-war disillusionment and rife poverty in forgotten corners of the country, the gangs exploded in Salvadorian society and brought post war insecurity to a boiling point. In the near 30-year episode with the gangs, only once was negotiations towards a gang truce made public, a period that last only a few months and ended in break-downs in communication due to partisan sabotage. The gangs in fact, are more than a social phenomenon born from the politics of abandonment inherent in neoliberalism. They are also a displaced sign of trauma of the failed promise of peace and a powerful political source of an internal enemy. Despite the present moment in history appearing to bring an end life under gang governance in El Salvador, it is a surreal return to state-sanctioned repression. Like all earthquakes, they are the result of tensions building for a very long time.

The popularity of Bukeles government was furthered by the declining and defamed legacies of the two previous leading parties, ARENA and FMLN, in part by their own comportment, in part by a shift in Salvadorian society towards social media consumption and transmission that has weakened the traditional means of communication. In the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections, the FMLN was reduced to a lowly four seats and Arena to fourteen while Nuevas Ideas, a party founded in 2017 and ran by Nayib's younger brother Xavier, amassed a record 56 seats giving Nuevas Ideas near unfettered power to apply their policies, mostly, if not wholly, determined by president Bukele himself (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, 2021). We find more of a pattern of opportunity than a trace of any restorative or revolutionary politics. The Covid-19 Pandemic was used as a means to accelerate power grabs through the delivery of vaccines and provisions as well as the promise of security and enforcement of law and order. In March of 2022, the secret negotiations between the government and gangs broke down leading to a weekend where 87 people lost their lives (O. Martinez & Reyes, 2023). The deadliest day since the end of the war was used as a shoe horn to enact *El Regimen* and its consolidation of political power.

This particular moment in Salvadorian history deserves further study and is profoundly significant given its implications for how post-war societies shift back to authoritarianism, in this case after a 30-year period of a makeshift democracy. The popular sense of relief and anxiety fills the air when the very rights that government claims to protect are suspended in the name of security. Given our history with military authoritarian regimes and their relation to the original causes of the civil war, this popular return to authoritarian governance is both obvious and confusing and I suggest, is evidence of a social haunting full of fatal repetitions and complicity in our own oppression. Why would we want to return to a mode of governance that has historically been challenged through the violent cycles of our country's history?

El Regimen and the new political subject that has transcended the national fault lines of the past, is in line with the neoliberal trend of right-wing populism appropriating revolutionary and anti-Western discourse to bolster sovereignty while simultaneously becoming more Westernized. This regime appropriates anti-Western discourse yet perpetuates neoliberal practices such as defunding civil society (Human Rights Watch, 2021), implementing fiscal

incentives for foreign investment (Olivia, 2020), and beefing-up security industries through increased spending on mega-prisons and security apparatus (C. Martinez, 2023). The security industry is no exception as it feeds on the bodies of the detained, who in addition to gang members include human rights activists, water defenders, minors, people who have served their sentences, women accused as murderers after aborting high-risk pregnancies and others who are being implicated in the gang system due to forced extortion. As much as neoliberalism is about the flow of capital and the installment of new technologies and infrastructures, it is also about the churning out of undesired subjectivities, particularly those who stand in the way of capitalist logics.

A prime example of how state repression is tied to unfettered extraction is the recent arrest of 5 prominent water defenders and leaders of the historic and successful campaign that led to the metal mining ban in 2017, on charges of a murder committed 30 years ago during the civil war (Cavanaugh et al., 2023). This coincided with Bukele's government appearing to make preparations to establish a new agency to restart extractive projects in order to di-lodge millions in capital stalled by the national moratorium and international regulatory bodies (Radwin, 2023). Neoliberal politics shape unfettered extraction for global markets and the weakening of civil society groups, obliterating journalistic integrity and free speech, and executing a form of development that has historically increased poverty and insecurity. This recycling of the internal enemy by the security industry is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it represents a kind of fatal habit arising from our appetite for collective trauma; it demands more bodies, all in the name of capital expansion and accumulation of wealth.

El Regimen has given Salvadorians a historic relief with the return of *Mano Dura* policies. It is important to note that I think a sense of security is deserved. I can see how relief from gang violence is a relevant and powerful incentive as well as a site of re-traumatization. We must remember that the promise of peace, was what motivated the left-wing FMLN to compromise some of their ideals and accept neoliberalism's terms as they participated in its democratic theatre. The return of the acceptance of authoritarian regimes is a form of haunting because it is predicated on two things; the unfulfilled desire of safety and security; and the embodied

ghosts of the war possessing the bodies of the youth, who act as the necessary internal enemy in the stage play of neoliberalism.

During my visit, El Salvador was hosting the 2023 Central American and Caribbean Sports Games, of which I attended 4 events. On one of my visits to the Polideportivo Polvorin, a multi-sports complex, I was put on to the fact that some of the workers wearing yellow shirts with large black letters reading “Plan Cero Ocio” (Plan Zero Leisure), were all low to mid-level prisoners from the Centro Penal La Esperanza, known as La Mariona. This is part of a government program to reinsert prisoners into society. Before those detained under the regimen receive answers about the possibility of due process, they are made to work on national projects that bolster the legitimacy of its increasingly authoritarian shape and strengthen the political claim that El Salvador is the safest country in Latin America. It should be noted that Bukele’s neoliberal policies have been open armed to international finance and many of the new facilities were built was in partnership with the Chinese government, who manage the project and even provide most of its labor. One of these projects in is the historical downtown centre of San Salvador which has been recently revamped for modernization and under high levels of patrol. The brand-new mega-library, which follows the construction of Latin-America’s largest mega-prison, is being built directly in front of *La Cathedral*. The space between them is where fifty people perished at the massacre at Monseñor Romero’s funeral on March 30th, 1980. Military soldiers had him assassinated the previous week while giving mass, presumably due to his condemnation of the ritual violence in the country. It is also where his tomb rests until today. I imagine him in the crypt, solemnly glaring across the park wondering what type of books do dictators read 43 years later?

*I am a shepherd who with his people has begun to learn a beautiful and difficult truth;
our faith requires that we immerse ourselves in the world.
I believe economic injustice is the root cause of our problems;
from it stems all the violence.*

“Sermon in Aguilares – Monseñor Romero”

It should be noted that before my recent return to El Salvador as a representative of York on an investigative team looking into resilience³, I had to create a safety plan. The Canadian government's travel advisory itself instructs us to, "Exercise a high degree of caution in El Salvador due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws and violent crime" (Government of Canada Website). I scrubbed my social media, received letters that validated my existence as a Canadian citizen and student of York University and was told on repeated occasions to carry my passport, not my Salvadorian National Identity Card (DUI) and talk in as much English as possible. Overall, there was an air of surveillance and secrecy in the day-to-day discourse of the people I encountered. The fear was not only of being confused with someone else by an officer, but also for being targeted due to involvement in human rights work around feminism and environmentalism, which the president has villainized as part of an international encroachment on national sovereignty by international human rights groups with malicious intentions.

In particular, I read the case of Nelson Vladimir Hernández Tobar, a 28-year-old Salvadorian with U.S. citizenship, a rapper without any priors or affiliations to gangs. He was arrested on the 11th of January, 2023 for acting 'nervous' upon being interrogated and promoting violence between gangs by mentioning names of neighborhoods in the songs on his Youtube channel (Lemus, 2023). At the time of writing, he remains in prison. As a rapper of 20 years, I can say I've developed a radar for *performative aggression and affiliation* from other rappers, it is after all, part of the motif. However, after watching about four of N-Real's music videos, I knew that he was not once claiming affiliation to any of the actual gangs nor promoting actual violence. I have songs you can find on Youtube that say things like, "*more shots at the state, they're out pushing weight, state of mind full of violence and hate, where's the change that were dying to make?*" or "*land back, we've been bangin' since contact, flashbacks of some hand-to-hand combat*". Reading his case made me nervous about performing my music while I was in El Salvador and is likely influencing how I am writing this essay today as a Salvadorian rapper with Canadian citizenship myself.

³ 1-innovating in Resilience Programming for Fostering Women's Post-pandemic recovery in El Salvador, Central America. 2- Fostering LatinX resilience to trauma between El Salvador, Canada and the United States.

What are the responsibilities of a political theorist embroiled in his own personal bout with his intergenerational history? What was it about my own music that made me think twice about transmitting it loudly over a speaker? In this moment I felt the privilege of holding Canadian citizenship, despite it not protecting me if a policeman deemed my music worthy of such prestigious arrest. The right to free speech without fear of prosecution is a vital freedom if we want to learn from each other to become better. It is why I treat writing from the diaspora about a *homeland* with urgency, because I've seen how swiftly the right can be taken from me.

INTRODUCTION

*"I'm stuck in a room
With all of these tombs of dead people's desires
They want me to riot and start setting up fires
The only way I'll meet a lady that I admire
The only time I recognize is down to the wire"*

"Get Up" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

Informed by diaspora and environmental studies, this ethnographic and narrative portfolio and essay offer a node of connection between the *end* and *beginning* of two storylines. Our storytelling serves as an inter-generational *hinge* in historical time between two living generations who depend on each other to survive, in memory and in life. I am of a generation who must grapple with the transmissions of the post-war era and on through migration. We must decide what to do with the haunting of what is *no longer* as well as what is *not yet*. The stakes of passing on historical memory about the past through our families are heightened in the context of a diaspora as we select sites of remembrance and forgetting through the ways we transmit memory to each other. So much of the diasporic experience is about dealing with something that exists without presence, shattering the metaphysics of being and forcing us to dance with a reality that we only hear about through the transmissions of the

generation before us, or like me, through the memories of my youth.

The Migrant report album was inspired by a 1992 CBC Radio interview with my family unit about the right to return after the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords. My father had pulled out the cassette tape twenty-eight years after it was recorded. In the opening sequence of the recording, the reporter states, “For the past year and half, Salvadorian refugees have been watching the Peace process and asking, will it last? Now that the county is heading into elections in March, many Salvadorans are torn between their family friends and careers in Central America and the security that exists here in Canada, Steve Hunt reports, it’s a difficult decision for many in the Salvadorian community”. The inspiration to make an album based around the recordings inspired an act of mapping the slow processes of diasporic change over time and their impressions on the physical and psychic body. Building text around the interview meant grappling with the presence of a past condition in the recording and having to answer the interview questions again, in the present moment. As the original answers brought us to the present moment, perhaps something can be revealed about a future moment through their re-engagement in the present.

The interview recorded on the cassette tape gives the album a nostalgic materiality because it is tethered to the recording of our voices, 28 years before the moment of creation began. It meant thinking about what had and had not been said in all that time. It meant reflecting on the silences and eruptions that have marked our lives as a family in the diaspora. It became deeply *haunting* work, however, my responsibilities as a rapper differ from those as a social scientist. As rapper, I am trained to face the rupture and find the voice with *energy* and *urgency*, not be afraid of *first sound*, to create from *ritual* and perform with *reciprocity*, speak to the *invisible* and do it with *style* and *magic*. As a rapper trained in the political tradition of the culture, I have a responsibility to the person next to me to keep the cypher going and apply the principle of “*each one teach one*”, an expression in Hip Hop meaning we must pass on the knowledge that we each carry. The impetus for creating the Migrant Report is to embrace the *haunting* in service of finding a more just purposeful way to transmit historical memory as part of the *hinge* generation. It is a project that is very much self-aware of responsibilities to leave messages for future generations as 1st generation ‘arrivals’ to a new territory. Future

generations may one day have to answer who your people were, how did we get here and why did we arrive. Ice-T once referred to the political resistance albums of Public Enemy as “*time capsule music*”.

Our transmissions to each other constitute the foundation of how diasporic identities are formed. I will present certain theories that will help us understand how inter-generational transmissions in post-war societies can transmit trauma and desire through the acts of nostalgia and silence. This will help us understand how the aesthetics of hip-hop ethos and practice can help give voice to the silences and breathe life in the nostalgia. This *re-emergence* of myself as Cheko7even, the artist, gives rise to the possibilities of past subjectivities to carry on their knowledge into their previously absent future(s) as well as to allow future possibilities to dig into the absences within ourselves in the present. Methodologically speaking, the inter-weaving of rap lyrics found in this essay is to demonstrate the effectiveness to explore a political imagination through the use of mythical fantastic-ism in hip-hop in the context of the diaspora because hip-hop is inherently, a hauntological cultural tool. However, before we can begin to touch on the issue of how we can imagine the future outside the body-pulverizing force of capitalism, we must understand exactly where and how capitalism leaves its impression on us, and that includes our discourse and transmissions. If we understand that as human beings, forces can be accumulated and transmitted on the body through generations, then we must pre-occupy ourselves with the question of transmissions and their qualities and consequences.

In this essay I will use trauma and desire very close with one another. I use desire here as an interruptive tool to the habit of discussing trauma through the documentation of failure. In Eve Tuck’s open letter to her community, she considers the impact of damage centered research informed by an incomplete theory of change, which reproduce notions of people as depleted, ruined or hopeless, to which she responds by calling us to think ourselves open and offering a countertheory from a desire-based research framework (Tuck, 2009). The goal of capturing desire is to counteract the poison of frameworks that establish harm or injury for reparations and pathologize our pain and loss. Rather, desire speaks to despair as loss but also as hope, vision and the wisdom of individuals and communities (Tuck, 2009). This clarification of desire and the call to suspend damage seeks to remind the reader that in this essay, desire is treated

beyond a simple binary with trauma. Desire is many pieces of something and cannot be constructed only in relation to lack, loss, or a wanting, but can be seen as something with agency, as informed seeking (Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, 1983). It is not the condition of trauma and desire I wish to inform with this interruption, rather the condition of the researcher and the reader to see beyond the binary of trauma and desire as opposites and see the complex personhood that is working to construct something larger.

These considerations can have a big influence in shaping our transmissions regarding historical memory and even determine the breadth and tone of the information being passed down. Hence, I hold that mapping the political imaginations of the diaspora and interrogating the ways we transmit memory is crucial to understanding diasporic identity formation. This is particularly urgent within the context of massive cultural changes in society under a capitalist system that depends on expansion for its survival. Mark Fishers presents the term *capitalist realism*, to refer to a global society overwhelmed by the view that there is no workable alternative to capitalism, a view that hinders political imagination and the possibilities for different futures to be articulated (Fisher, 2014). It controls possibilities by limiting the subjectivities accepted as normal in society while promoting socio-ecological practices that produce bodies as vehicles of consumption and capital. To counter these narratives of reality, I employ theories related to decolonial discourses from within and outside of academia. We understand that the global techno-industrial capitalist project we call modernity exists as the direct descendant of colonialization. It has to do with asking how the universality of colonial knowledge obscures the context of any given situation. It means acknowledging that on the territory I am from and where I live, people lost power over time through invasion, attempted genocide, starvation, land theft, forced labour and systemic changes restricted resources fundamental to cultural integrity.

The popular theorist Anibal Quijano's concept of the colonial matrix of power identifies what maintains the colonial logic of domination in circulation; that is control over; economics, gender and sex; authority and law and subjectivity and knowledge (Quijano, 2000). Cusicanqui claims that these mechanisms of control are embedded in social institutions, practices and discourses that maintain hierarchies that privilege elite groups while marginalizing the

historically oppressed (Cusicanqui, 2010). Foucault focused on how language becomes realized through a series of statements and practices within institutions to set the rules of truth and untruth within a discourse (Foucault, 1980). Edward Said argued that colonial discourse is a system of signs and practices that organize our social existence and practice and what we call the truth (Said, 1978). In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai interrogates the western concept of authenticity as the belief that indigenous cultures cannot change or recreate themselves and how this practice is re-inscribed within research methodologies in institutions of knowledge production (Tuhiwai Smith, 2002). All these theories, including the method I will employ, deal with the question of how to dismantle the structures that underpin colonization and rupture the epistemic chokehold by altering the rules of knowledge production. If we understand how coloniality works as a process that shapes contemporary society, we can begin to map hegemonic power on memory and encourage more transformative and restorative transmission of remembrance.

Surrendering control over our own stories means we give up the authority to deem what is important to remember and what is ok to forget. We lose grip on the power to determine our futures and must accept that someone or something else, with less honorable intentions will be scripting the stories for us. The understanding and application of the *hinge* and the *haunting* is what this ethnographic analysis is based upon. They are the theoretical tools that will allow us to deconstruct the threads that are presented through the source material. The *hinge* because of the vital role of transmissions of historical memory to identity formation for future generations. The *haunting* because it is important that as subjects of a diaspora, we understand the spectral and fragmented nature of our inheritance.

THE HINGE

*“How could you teach what you never knew
You make your best and then pass it down
Deep surrender to Master plan even though
We know they gon’ pat you down
Don’t speak much, he’s at the crib
But the few things he said he did*

*How to love? How to live?
To have you teach me I'd give my ribs"*

"My Wrath is Sacred" – Cheko7even – Thirst Trap Mixtape

Writing about the children of the Holocaust survivors, Hoffman argues that "the generation after the atrocity is the hinge generation – the point at which the past is transmuted into history or myth" (Hoffman, 2004. pp.198)

. The study sought to answer the question of how societies make transition to peace and democracy after a large political conflict. A further study done by Frankish and Bradbury employs the *hinge* as a central metaphor of trauma and intergenerational transmission in the South African Post-Apartheid context. They draw on trauma theory, psycho-analytics and narrative-based approaches to explore how women participants integrated their experiences with apartheid and represented them within family histories. Both these approaches to the *hinge* hold that knowledge passes primarily through family and argue that traumatic memory can be transmitted through the silence of what is not said (Hoffman, 2004, pp.3). Both studies centre how silences indicate "the ways in which violence and its psychological legacy cannot be articulated"(Frankish & Bradbury, 2012, pp.7).

In families, parents often seek to protect children from the trauma of their history by silencing those transmissions. In turn, those children may become complicit in this silencing for fear of causing distress to their primary caregiver, forming what Hoffman calls a cocoon of silence. This may be especially true for societies where there "existed a prohibition on open disclosure, on touching through speech on painful or shameful matters", in particular in contexts where silence was necessary for survival (Hoffman, 2004, pp.67). As I shall explain further, Salvadorian society has been marked by a series of historical silences brought upon by waves of repression and the cyclical conjuring of an internal enemy. However, Frankish and Bradbury also argue that silence is not always a defensive absence or an unconscious denial but an act of resistance for an oppressed subjectivity from the invasive gaze of those who hold power to

interpret speech and silences of “the Other” (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012). It is important to discern when silences are instrumentalized for protection or resistance.

Influenced by this insight, I am interested in how we mold nostalgic versions of the past as a way to overcome the violations of the traumatic events of armed conflict and forced migration, and how those transmissions become fragmented by silences and absences. By using the artistic modality of Hip-Hip storytelling as source material, I am opening the scale of the investigation to include historical and personal narratives over a long period of time. I focus on the possibilities of transmission when we use experimental modalities of storytelling and apply their intersectional natures to our cultural production. What do these modalities allow us to discover about our narratives, particularly the ones labeled antagonistic against larger forces of hegemonic memory?

Accordingly, I cover some theoretical considerations regarding diaspora and the role of memory. Diaspora, generally refers to the lived experiences of people who have been displaced from their original homelands. According to Honor Ford-Smith, diaspora is both the physical movement as well as a psychological and cultural experience which influences one’s sense of identity and belonging (Ford-Smith, 2011). Diaspora can be marked by loss, dislocation and trauma, as well as create an opportunity to create new communities and forms of resistance (Ford-Smith, 2011). Similarly, Stuart Hall argues that because cultural identity is never fixed but negotiated, the condition of diaspora is that of hybridity and always in response to changing social and historical contexts, creating new identities and affiliations which constantly change over time (Hall, 1990).

As a diasporic subject, I consider myself outside of my original homeland through the experience of forced migration and perceive that the concept of diaspora is contingent on a personal sense of loss, and the possibilities within a mix of cultures to nurture a sense of identity based on that shared sense of loss. While the work helping define the word diaspora has been done and is beyond the scope of this essay, I think it is important to describe my experience with the word, as it was not always as comfortable. I make this statement in acknowledgement of the many absent contributions to my thinking from cultures and influences from all over the colonized world. Again, a possibility for further work in the future.

With regards to diasporic memory, Elizabeth Jelin explores the way collective memory is experienced in the aftermath of state violence and repression by those forced to leave their homes due to political persecution. For Jelin, memory is often fragmented within the struggle to heal from trauma and is shaped by factors such as the historical context in which the repression occurred, the nature of the violence and the specific experiences of individuals and communities (Jelin, 2003). This shapes the possible formation of mnemonic communities who share a common memory of a singular traumatic event or response to state repression; here storytelling can recall and create new meanings for those events. These meanings can lead, according to Jelin, to a collective mourning, a strengthening of resistance and healing from past traumas (Jelin, 2003).

In Anh Hua's analysis of being home and away, she argues that memory does not revive the past but reconstructs it, it is distorted by needs, desires, interests and is rather emotional, conceptual, contextual and constantly under revision (Hua, 2005). For the diaspora, this ties in with Sarah Ahmed's idea of home being the lived experience of locality, where diasporic space is broken into two sections, the mythical place of desire and the lived experience like sounds smells and tastes (Ahmed, 1999). Ahmed conceptualizes the relationship between a sense of home and away more akin to the skin, where permeability of self and the other, of home as self, as self as parts of home, can inhabit and leak into each other (Ahmed, 1999). In doing research through an ethnographic artistic process of rupture, such as the one found in Hip Hop cultural production, I am attempting to avoid the pitfalls of universalizing the migrant experience while attempting to find improved ways of analyzing memory that more clearly reveal the psychic state of a post-colonial diaspora (Hua, 2005). A key aim in my research is to capture desire, fantasy, repression, denial, fear, trauma, identification, repulsion or abjection, in order to question hegemonic authority and power over memory (Hua, 2005). The importance of memory is supported by Foucault's claim that one who controls memory controls one's allegiances and desires, and therefore the re-interpretation of old memories (Foucault, 1975). In other words, the power to determine the narratives of a specific diasporic history can determine how those memories shape ideas of home in the future.

Engaging with risks, pitfalls and critiques of academic thinking through diaspora, Sarah Ahmed's work on diasporic narratives warns us of representations and metaphors of 'home' and 'away' that internalize the categories of migrants, risking the fetishization of identity by detaching them from the particularity of the places and processes that allow for their formation (Ahmed, 1999). Ahmed refers to the violence of humanism or universalization where the migrant becomes a figure that erases the determination of experience, a process that involves a kind of second 'dislocation'. Rather than sentimentalizing ideas of 'home' and 'away' through movements of 'arriving' and 'leaving', being at home is a matter of how one feels or how one might fail to feel, making home closer to the experience of a locality that intrudes into oneself. What is important here is that migration is a process of estrangement where subject and space inhabit and leak into each other whether through sensations or generational acts of storytelling. As Ahmed states, "the experience of leaving home in migration is hence always about a failure of memory to fully make sense of the place one comes to inhabit, a failure which is experience in the discomfort of inhabiting a migration body which feels out of place, uncomfortable in this place" (Ahmed, 1999. pp.343). Estrangement conceptualizes a void or a lack, rather than an identity. The very failure of memory is compensated for by a collective memory that can cultivate a writing of a history of a nation in which the subject can allow themselves to fit in by being assigned a place in a forgotten past. Ahmed states, "it is in the discussion of what was all lost that the subject moves from an I to a WE, where the story becomes writeable as a story of a shared past that has already been lost" (Ahmed, 1999. pp.330). Bell Hooks had already argued that memory, or remembrance, is not passive nostalgic learning or a passive reflection, rather it's a way of knowing and leaning from the past, a type of retrospection to gain vision of the future, or what she refers to as a catalyst for self-recovery that can liberate us from the confines of the past (Hooks, 1989).

These theories highlight the dangers of sentimentalizing, essentializing, fetishizing or metaphorizing my own subjectivity in order to give the illusion of 'being seen.' I hope that this can inform my ethnographic analysis so that I am alert to how searching for meaning through one's own life experience may distort perceptions, conflate observations and lead to the re-inscribing of the same subjective narratives I was attempting to deconstruct.

Narrative Theory

*“Abandon me, let me be
Fears gon’ dry up like leaves of tea
Let it steep now I’m in too deep
Let it fill my cup now I’ll never sleep
You love so you see the lie in me and
The hate that’s strengthened by pride in me
Relied on me then I roll my eyes
Crawl away and suffer in privacy”*

“My Wrath is Sacred” – Cheko7even – Thirst Trap Mixtape

It is important to learn a bit about narrative theory to help us understand how an ethnography of rap lyrics can prove to be a meaningful source of material for an analysis on how the *hinge* generation transmits historical memory. Narrative theory is not a homogenous practice but it generally encourages research as an introspective act. Narrative allows us to investigate how stories are constructed and the ways they work around who produces them and by what means they are consumed, silenced, contested and accepted (Andres et al., 2008). Reissman advocates for narrative research as a means of adopting a “middle of the continuum position in narrative”, situated between the extremes of strict sociolinguistic extraction and open ended social historical and social anthropological positioning (Reissman, 2011.pp.7). Reissman’s approach to narrative theory encourages us to look for what emerges out of the ‘chorus of voices’ that construct a narrative that is never purely ethnographic, but is rather framed in and through its interactions. It also encourages us to reflect on the power relations that determine the transmission of memory through art and how the *baggage*, or what I call our *inheritance*, is reconstructed within the diaspora.

In this study of the diasporic political imagination, both the armed conflict and the act of migration and resettlement for the Salvadorian are possible sites of trauma and desire. Trauma is defined in trauma theory as “events that overwhelm individual’s coping resources (Hamber & Lewis, 1997) and shatter people’s ordinary sense of themselves (Van Der Merwe & Godobo-

Madikizela, 2008). In working with my own diasporic imagination, it is important to note the link between trauma and nostalgia. Legg writes, “trauma and nostalgia are theoretically and practically linked...while nostalgia denotes a positive attachment to a past real or imaginary home, trauma denotes the negative inability to deal effectively with a past event. While both conditions represent problematic engagements with the past, nostalgia often focuses on a time and place before or beyond the traumatic incident” (Legg, 2004.pp.103).

The question for the researcher then becomes how to avoid the pathologizing of my own trauma when I am using my own cultural production as the source material for an ethnographic essay? For this consideration I invoke Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of anti-Oedipus from their book “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” and its use of schizophrenia’s refusal to conform to western subjectivity, normal narrative structure and the fragmentation of identity constituted a resistance against the norms of capitalism (Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, 1983). Its critique of the Oedipus structure in western psychoanalytic frameworks offers a different way to understand desire and power in capitalist societies. While western psychoanalysis work under the hierarchal and linear framework of the Oedipus emblem, Deleuze and Guattari uplift the non-linear and inter-connected thinking of a schizophrenic as a better model to understand how desire works in a capitalist society (Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, 1983). Their concept of rhizomatic thinking is very similar to the process of how rap songs are scripted. A rhizome is a biological term for rootstocks, a type of plant stem characterized its nodes and shoots that grow in all directions and build networks of roots in bizarre ways. They can also be separated and produce a new plant.

I do some of my best memorization of rhymes when I am walking and can often be seen whispering or uttering inflections to myself as I work out the next line or go through a fit of repetition. This form of narrative building is very similar to an anti-hierarchal structure that serves to welcome a multiplicity of voices as well as decenter the ego, or the hero, in the narrative, by being able to find feelings and thoughts of various characters and interweave them into one chorus.

Diasporic cultural producers may employ nostalgic tendencies that reflect our desire to protect future generations from the moment of trauma often transmitting the unspeakable aspects of that trauma through silence. These two movements of intergenerational legacies call me to respond in finding decolonial and emotive ways of transmission that amplify the silences it takes to articulate a historical memory as a *hinge*. I argue that technologies of language such as rap within Hip Hop offers a chance engage deeper with ourselves and each other beyond the binary of talk and silence. It is the stitching back together of a memory as a way to listen to its mese innerworkings in a digestible manner. Rap is a way to unlock the forbidden doors to conversations we otherwise might've not ever had access to. Rap invites you to be competitive, aggressive and disobedient in the way you relay your message. It is a world where you can play whoever you want to play and give them as much power as you can imagine and paint them as complicated and flawed as you want. The technology of rap is a chance to find deeper connection to the fugitive within ourselves. Those parts that we wouldn't let ourselves be in the real world. A voice coming from beyond the binary of talking and silence, of past and future, or of you and I. I honor this tendency in Hip Hop because it has allowed me to avoid a romantic nostalgia that avoids conversations about the trauma that directly impacts the way we live and love in the present.

Audrey Lorde famously states, "Your silence will not protect you". What happens when you come from a place where silence was what protected you? How do we make the warning of this sentence work in both the context of *home and away*? I engage the responsibility of *the hinge* and examine the silences and absences that make up the totality of the Salvadorian Political imagination through the processing of my own oral vocation of Hip Hop. The *hinge* means that I must engage my *haunting* in order to encourage the diasporic imagination to break from its tradition of silence as protection in contexts where our survival depends on what we remember and transmit.

This study is the beginning and a part of a much larger exploration into the nature of diasporic socio-ecological and political imagination in the post-war generations and their role

and affect over the formation of new subjectivities. For this study I interweave between theory making, cultural production and scholarship to attempt to answer a set of guiding questions: *How does the political imagination of post-conflict societies evolve through the spectrality of diasporic inter-generational storytelling? How do we transmit these legacies of the past to future generations, and what are the forces influencing what we tell them? Where do we find hegemonic power over our memory, and how does that influence our sense of inheritance and the direction of our futures? How does the practice of hauntological rap grapple with the spectral idea of 'homeland' and make sense of the bifurcation, or a haunting that characterizes the experience of diaspora? What is it we can learn from hip hop music and its production when it comes to alternative/fugitive subjectivities within the diaspora?*

Some of these questions I answer directly and others are set up to be answered in continuing work. The purpose of this ethnographic exploration is to allow the rhythm of my *The Migrant Report* album to be the source material to braiding a set of answers, and probably more questions, that can possibly hint to an improved strategy towards understanding the future of a diasporic subject in the context of a colonial Anthropocene.

THE HAUNTING:

*“Don’t know my destination but enjoy the journey
Destroying all the parts of me that never served me
I’m a work in progress
It hurts to be honest on the search for conquest
I mean, surrender in the search for content
Should I hit the club or go enjoin the convent
Speak the Word of God or justify my nonsense
I can’t stand up!
Fell under the weight of a planet of police
Tell ya Put you hands up
See the bottom of the cup
I Know I’m talking to you I don’t understand much”*

“Convalescence” – Cheko7even – Thirst Trap Mixtape (2018)

It is from the tradition of Hip Hop culture that we take our hauntings as fertile zones of creation (Jordan, 2015) and re-invention of inheritance as a way to make a path for the ancestral ghosts to return in relation. It is here I hope to find the paths to remembering “out of a will to heal and a concern for justice” (Gordon, 2008a). The *hinge* and the *haunting* are central keys in my portfolio analysis, allowing me to consider what is being transmitted and in what way it is being transmitted. In thinking through my ethnographic process, I borrow from Gordon’s driving questions to what are the issues of invisibility, marginality exclusion that objective accounts of diasporic life often minimize or are unable to recognize? How do the fictitious parts of how we relay our stories as the *hinge*, constitute a horizon of error of what is exiled and ordained to be the authority of a memory? How do we listen to the choir of voices that may come from our pre-extractive trauma and desires, or in other words, how do we give voice to a *Ghost* that refuses to speak unless it is killing you?

Hauntology challenges a metaphysics of existence that claims that for something to exist, it must be present in a state of being. It is an experimental modality that gives agency to what can be abstract or virtual, or *no longer* or *not yet*. A term attributed to French philosopher Jacques Derrida, it has been extended into many intersectional disciplines to explore the force and meaning of modern forms of dispossession, exploitation, repression and its consequences (Gordon, 2008b), or the slow cancellation of time by brought by the technologies created by capitalism (Fisher, 2014). It is a way to give structure to a feeling of an experience through transformative recognition, rather than the knowledge of presence (Gordon, 2008a). The important thing here is that figure of the spectre, or *ghost*, cannot be present but marks a relation that deals with what is either *no longer* or *not yet*. Derrida scholar, Martin Hägglund distinguishes two directions of hauntology, firstly, the move towards that which is *no longer* but remains affective (Ie; the traumatic compulsion to repeat) and secondly, towards what is not yet but is already affective in the virtual present (Ie; an anticipation shaping current behaviour) (Hägglund, 2008). It is a way to create strategies of deconstruction to tackle the cultural traditions that proliferate capitalist social logics. Gordon’s three characteristics of haunting are; a strangeness into space with unsettling propriety and property; a symptom of what is missing

large enough to notice itself; a ghost that is alive and demands attention for a hospitable memory out of a concern for justice (Gordon, 2008a).

Thinking through diaspora using the concept of hauntology brings to my attention to how the binary linguistic tradition of Western thought including the way its signs and signifiers relate to each other, drastically limit the complex personhood that is beneath biopolitical subjectivity. Hauntology is a deconstructive methodology that can challenge the assemblages of power and its linguistic features to dismantle systems of forgetting, erasure or absence. Derrida scholar Caputo states, “the idea behind deconstruction is to deconstruct the workings of strong nation-states with powerful immigration policies, to deconstruct the rhetoric of nationalism, the politics of place, the metaphysics of native land and native tongue...the idea is to disarm the bombs...of identity that nation-states build to defend themselves against the stranger” (Caputo, 1996.pp.29). In the Canadian context of diaspora, grammars of immigration discourse reveal how nation-state policy seeks to control memory and subjectivity.

Within the practice of this study, hauntology can highlight the disarticulated knowledge hidden in the underbelly of official knowledge, and all that it represses. Anna Gordon’s work focuses on how sociology in the modern capitalist context does not allow for a ‘complex personhood’, rather has the tendency to flatten subjectivities in the name of putting everything in view (another colonial logic). Hauntology allows us to place into our understanding a ‘double articulation’, that is the history of individuals upon the unconscious of a culture, and the historicity of these cultures in shaping the unconscious of these individuals’ (Gordon, 2008a). It is a poignant critique of the separation between psyche and society in a modern capitalist society where “unity resides in not being unified” (Gordon, 2008a) and especially relevant when taking into consideration the *hinge* function of the 1st or 2nd generations of the diaspora.

Honor Ford-Smith states that hauntology is more than a useful theoretical concept but also a lived reality for many in the diaspora still living the effects of colonialism and slavery. One of Ford-Smith’s students extends the idea of hauntology via transforming the ‘what is’ in Gordon’s analysis to ‘what if’, claiming hauntology offers more “possibility, imagination and

creation of art and agency which are all central to the way we move, understand and craft ourselves in within this world” (Jordan, 2015. Pp.37). Jordan posits that both the haunted and the haunting have agency, insisting that the haunted seek to be respected as an entity and desire to be engaged in creative work with the haunting, both a site of trauma and ancestry; that the presence of the ghost does not obliterate the agency of the memory keeper or vice versa; that what haunts us may not be a retrievable memory but rather a possibility of a future reoccurrence; and that the haunting’s scale of impact ranges from individual to entire group societies (Jordan, 2015) . For Jordan, rather than a haunting being a cause for fear or victimhood, it is a sacred site of creation often characterized by a hybrid liminal space where transformation, (in)visibility and the haunting can all be true.

Another key hauntological scholar influencing the use of *haunting* is the contribution of Paul Lofeodo, whose work is an important *hinge* in linking diaspora and hauntology together. Paul claims the diasporic experience is best characterized by a ‘haunting’ that is like a ventriloquizing of one’s inheritance through a feeling that one is a conduit for a ‘bifurcated continuity’, that is, carrying not only our own unconscious, but the unconscious of another which speaks for us as well (Lofeodo, 2019). He argues that the starting point for diaspora is not homeland but the bifurcation of the original extraction which causes spectrality to arise. The inheritor in the diaspora is ‘laden with a coded inheritance’ because in addition to being themselves they become a crypt or a cemetery for pre-extractive ghosts (Lofeodo, 2019). Theorizing the diasporic experience through hauntology builds on Derrida’s idea that all questions about being, are questions of inheritance, and that inheritance is never a given but always a task. Through the great ‘mourning’ of our would-be futures as 1st generation immigrants alongside the great ‘churning’ of subjectivities in modern capitalism, the diasporic subject experiences a coded inheritance (Hall, 1990), ‘third space’ {Bhabha, 1994}, ‘Nepantla’ (Anzaldúa, 1999) or ‘double consciousness’ (Fanon, 2008) or ‘bifurcated inheritance’ (Derrida, 2012) in which we are ‘haunted’ by the unconscious of another. The bifurcation is what makes the experience of homeland so spectral, and is only amplified by the need the *hinge* has to pass on historical memory and imagination. Spectrality arises, something dies and is reborn as

another spectre which lives inside the unconsciousness of the diasporic person, breathing, talking, even rapping on their behalf.

The liminality in Hip Hop practice and the conquering of *first sound* and its apocalyptic sense of urgency and aesthetics all resonate with the traumatic pauses and fugitive desires of the *hinge* and the hauntology of performative memory. Unpacking this music allows me to engage the often- unconscious narratives and histories implicit to the identities of the post war *hinge* generation. Those things that animate us while we sleep and speak for us when we can't find the words. They transform us with their absences alone. I thus proceed here to discuss some of these histories.

PRE-EXTRACTIVE HAUNTINGS

This project is incubated in the darkest part of the bloody 12-year Salvadorian Civil War, another gushing wound on a bruised and battered collective body that has endured 499 years of total extraction since first contact with the New World. In our political history we find a rhythmic tapestry of uprisings and repressions tethered to other traumatic events happening somewhere else on the planet. These events mark the psyche of a collective as well as individuals. Local transformations linked to global economic conditions have drastic, at times devastating consequences for the public body's ability to empathize with one another. Like most Salvadorians, I was born into a process of slow violence characterized by dispossession, genocide and manipulations of our collective memory. Our collective imaginary is marked by these sudden ruptures as much as they are shaped by the slow retelling of nostalgic memory.

It is within these disorienting and displacing realities of historical violence and the need to heal those wounds, that the will and impetus of this study was forged. Our long history within the development of the modern world makes Salvadoran territory both a great source of information about how this global condition came to be, and a space of embodied historical trauma. As we approach 500 years since the first Spanish expeditions arrived and terraformed our socio-natures, it becomes ever more important to understand how contemporary Latin America sites in the afterlives of the very first colonies and how coloniality continues to be the

mode of operation in society. Coloniality implies that those logics that were created to legitimize the barbarity of colonialism extend through today_ (Mignolo, 2011). With renewed outbursts of violence and repression, the rise of right-wing fundamentalist governments, increasingly sophisticated technologies of violence, discipline and surveillance as well as the depoliticization of environmental issues, we are yet again threatened with another Great Forgetting that risks us further spiraling back down into disparity and violence.

The bifurcation of extraction has marked the entirety of my life. Even before extraction, we lived in fear of one from all the disappearances that had marked time already. The haunting qualities of diaspora only amplifies the need to understand the silences and mythologies behind what we believe our memory to be. The difficulty of this task is only increased with the acceleration of time through the techno-capitalist project of modernity and its continuous transformations, appropriations and expansions into every facet of human and non-human life. The degradation of our societal meta programming's ability to sustain human life with dignity has made it more necessary to map how colonial logics become reinscribed within the discourses of modernity by altering our sense of time, space, place and memory. The intent of the global force that is capitalism, a descendant of the colony, is to ensure that everything changes so that nothing has to change at all. My lived pre-extractive experiences as well as the historical inheritance I have claimed as a member of the diaspora are examples of how the personal is intimately tied with the political and how haunting is a site of creation and invitation to solve unfinished business.

I would like to present a set of pre-extractive stories of what I remember before migration. These memories have different meanings depending on when and to whom they are told. These are the reverbs and *echoes* that have filled up my life when all we had was silence. Deep into exile, long after extraction. These memories are foundational and part of the stories I continue to unravel with every nostalgic story or abrupt silence. They hold the keys to the doors of my *could've been me's* and *what would've happened* ifs, if any happened besides that *guerra maldita*.

I am no expert on the social psychology of war, but what I do know is war distorts time, displaces bodies, obliterates personhood and brings the worst out of everyone. Most of what I understand of the Salvadorian Civil War (of which I did live through) is through the stories, books and testimonies I've been able to absorb. Despite most of my knowledge being not from direct presence, there are several moments that mark the start of a set of stories that I am still unraveling to this day. These are memories I've told myself and others many times over. They form the basis of the personal testimony of my lived experience. What is important to note is how they've lived within me through the years following my extraction and how they've propelled a willingness to learn and deepen my understanding of historical memory, including the original causes of these ruptures and slow grindings so that we can heal from the trauma so many of us have been unable to resolve. My formative years in El Salvador were a mixed bag massive presence, haunting absences and traumatic ruptures.

First Sound: Earthquakes, Devils and Enchanted Flowers

*"The earthquake in 86 probably did it
Not to mention civil-war bidding
Babysitting was the U.S.
Nothing new to us you know they do us dirty
You're just in denial 'cuz you tired and it's 5:30"*

"Colony Collapse" – Cheko7even (2023)

My earliest memory is the paralyzing moment of the 1986 earthquake, whose epicenter was a shallow fault beneath the city of San Salvador. It occurred at 11:50 AM, right before lunch, when I would be picking up fresh tortillas next-door for lunch. The memory is more like a still photograph of the moment two pillars that held up the house fell and crossed each other, leaving my cousin Alma and I in the middle.

The following memory is a moment in the aftermath. Our family home was destroyed and we were forced to take shelter under a sprawling Amate tree beside the house for one

week. The great Amate tree sits lonely and overarching in the park at the fork in the road. You could not mistake it for another tree, you knew where you were in the world when you saw it.

In Mesoamerican folklore the Amate tree is enchanted. Its bulbous white flower is said to be rarely seen and only blooms at midnight. It's flower is said to bring fortune to anyone who can capture its magic. To make the flower appear in the bosom of its large twisted trunk, one must fast the entire day and pray at the foot of the tree at midnight. If one were lucky enough to see the flower fall, one must pick it up gently with a white handkerchief and fold the petals over themselves in the shape of a cross to capture its power, otherwise it disappears. Before you receive its gifts, one must duel with the devil and risk him stealing your soul forever.

It should be noted that only mutes and children can always see the mysterious flower. Is it because they will both live silently through the forgetting of life's threads? At the time of the 1986 Salvadorian earthquake, I was two years old, known for my worried face and disgruntled dancing.

The Break: In The Shadow of Giants

*"Got the Mayan blood inside I sacrifice to the sun
With the AK-47 that's how they got it done
Only way to break the cycle of imperial drums
The scenarios on the run
The American funds that imported aerial tonnes
Make you run out the house
I was nascent with the rebels and my Tia could vouch
Loaded Colt 1911 in the sleeve of the couch
Knew the code of silence way before I learned how to count"*

"Bottom Dollar" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report (2023)

I lived the first 6 years of my life in Barrio San Jacinto, an old district located a short and risky walk from the city centre. It was risky because there are no sidewalks on the roads to cross the Acelhuate river. You'd pass the Presidential Palace if you took the 15-minute walk to the San Salvador Zoo, which was the only way to spend a Sunday. Our home had two entrances; one for

Mama Mercedes' side, the other was our immediate family entrance. My grandmother lived with my two older cousins, Natalia and Alma. The two homes united in the middle courtyard and shared a kitchen, which meant although we would enter through different doors, we were essentially entering the same house.

Home life was marked by my relationship with my two cousins and grandmother, *Mama Mercedes*, who I discussed at the outset worked as a seamstress. At the time I knew their mother was Tia Morena, but I didn't know the reason of why we barely saw her. Perhaps I perceived secrets or tensions, stress and anxiety in certain moments when her name came up. When I was closer to five, my third cousin, Laura, whom I had never met, arrived to stay with us from a place called Cuba. Laura's arrival came with a brief visit from my Tia, who soon disappeared into the night smoking a cigarette and love and revolution with her curls.

I remember the sound of her voice, her face and her stern yet smooth manner of being. It wasn't until after we fled the civil war that I learned who my aunt really was in those years. *Mama Mercedes* speaks on how she was 1st place in her class from 3rd grade all the way through university. She was brilliant in school, making a prime candidate for any up-and-coming employers looking to attract workers. So many bright and brilliant minds were used to strive for an objective. Was this the resentment my cousin carried around? It would explain how any uncles I was introduced to and how I never saw or heard of some of them again. Tia Morena had four daughters with different partners. Her first child's father was a young recruit like herself, killed by gunfire while driving his motorcycle, four months before Natalia was born. Her second child's father, killed by gunfire at a youth march about 6 months before Alma was born. Her third child's father, a commander of a hardened brigade, was killed by her side in the 1989 Final Offensive after a bullet struck an artery on his thigh. Her fourth child's father did not perish but was far short of being a dependable partner, in a sense, another type of social death.

There is something about my Tia's story that carved a deep trench within my personhood. She filled many of my reflections through the years of migration regarding how someone so normal and real to me, could also do a surreal thing like raise arms against imperialism. What was it like to go to war for the agonizing need to provide food, clothing and

shelter for your family? I thought about how it would be to love in the midst of war, the difficulties, the sheer necessity to have it. In those stories that revealed themselves over the years, I romanticized the guerrilla revolutionary movement in El Salvador and at times, convinced myself I would've followed her footsteps. The truth is it didn't matter because that choice wasn't mine to make. It was perhaps more about the mythology around the war and our history in general. History formed a part of my imaginary universe, as they were the heroes that looked like me, talked like me and probably knew my grandma.

As a child grappling with the memory of my homeland and forging a coherent identity in the Canadian context, I grew to favor the counter-narratives, counter-cultures and subversive clandestine identities buried beneath popular narratives of history. Hip-Hop in particular provided me a certain proclivity to counter-subjectivity. This was helped by an organic intermingling with peers from other cultures which provided a strengthened sense of belonging out of a shared sense of loss. Together through Hip Hop we found a safe arena to express our outrage in a fraternity of rappers. Revolution became a source of stories and secrets, of global forces being resisted by small actions. For many years, war, its reasons, internal workings and its aftermaths became the basis of what I aspired to learn about.

My Tia did not slow down after the war. She went on to become a world-renowned feminist, scholar and woman's rights activist. She was co-founder of Las Dignas, an organization dedicated to woman's rights in the post-war era and is president of the Citizen's Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion in El Salvador. In 2016 she was named one of BBC's 100 Women to watch as change-makers. You can find her, cigarette in hand, close to a microphone being exceptionally outspoken. In some circles she is larger than life. I consider it a privilege to be her nephew and understand that the height of her achievements are matched only by the depth of her shadows. I find traces of it on the resentment my cousin carries, the responsibility that shifted on to my grandmother's shoulders, and the life-long road to reconcile her immense absence in those early years of my life.

(in)visible: Toños Disappearance

*“My ol’ Pop never had his Pops
Another seed that the sun(son) forgot
Only twelve had to blow the spot
So the style of love is unorthodox
We the flame that the martyr spark
Migrate from all-out assault
May the layers of this man-made chalk
Chip away and fall from this broken heart”*

“My Wrath Is Sacred” – Cheko7even

I don’t think my father ever got over Tio Toños disappearance, or maybe I haven’t gotten over it. My Great Uncle, *Tio Toño*, was the youngest of eleven children raised on a coffee hacienda of which my great Grandfather Rafael was head administrator. My grandfather, Efrain was the eldest child. Efrain had an outstanding 28 children, of which my father was the 4th. Efrain’s lifestyle as a prolific philanderer meant my father grew up without his present in stark poverty in the outskirts of Sonsonate. At the age of 10, my father was separated from his family and sent to an orphanage when his mother, *mama Tita*, could not afford to feed four children equally. After the orphanage my father tried to work on a coffee farm, then on the railroad, which he explains he did not feel he was fit for. Years later at the age of 16, he would be taken in by my grandfather’s sister and extended family, who promised to give him a place to stay in San Salvador so long as he went to school and took up a profession. He chose social work (where he would go on to meet my mother as the only man in the cohort of 50 women) and moved in with my grandfather’s family in an area known as *La Rabida*, where they owned 3 properties on opposing corners, ran a small restaurant and formed an active part of a Catholic community in the area. He shared a room with his Tio Toño, the youngest of his fathers’ siblings who was just a few years older than him.

What I know about Toño is primarily what my father told me. The only picture I ever saw of him showed him shirtless wearing a single tie around his neck holding a guitar. His facial

expression was one of joy as he was captured in mid song. My father described him as an exuberant, eccentric and generous uncle who treated him more like his younger brother than his nephew. In a way, Tio Toño was the balm for my father's abandonment wounds after Efrain did little to be present in my father's life. This made his disappearance a difficult thing to process for him and had a profound effect on him.

In 1982, two years before I was born, Toño unexpectedly disappeared. Disappearances had grown common since the 70's when counter-insurgency actions by the state ramped up in the global impetus to destroy communism. It was thought that he was targeted as a robbery since his job was to distribute wages to certain communities, but the truth is no one ever found out what happened to him. My mother speaks of my father looking for him for almost a year to no avail. She spoke about the depression that followed and the grief that was difficult for my father to process. I only know about Tio Toño from his absence in my father's life, a vacancy that would never be filled, a sadness buried under a history of abandonment. This time however, unlike the explanation that his father would give in the twilight of his life for his absence, there would be no explanation as to why his youngest uncle, the one that made him feel most at home with his family, more than his own father ever did, would disappear. Although my father rarely spoke about it, his absence was palpable in moments when I tried to get information about my father's feelings. As I would tell him many times throughout the years, no one cared about his emotional well-being more than his son. According to me, there was no one more attuned to the grief my father carries from Toño's disappearance, and no one who wanted him to heal from that absence more than me. It was a gaping vacancy that I could never penetrate, but somehow, it was always present in the way my father loved, lived and spoke about his past.

Disappearances are not deaths. That person lives through the very absence of an answer to the question of why they were gone. Disappearances are forever, and the victims of it never get the proper resting place they deserve so long as there are people who forever want to know the truth about what happened.

urgency: 1989: The Final Offensive

*“The year was 1989, cold rugged at five
Rebels woke up in the city had to run in and hide
Black helicopters pepper the sky
Bombs drop Jaws lock, Life is Jekyll and Hyde
The city shook as the war changed the essence of time
Wasn’t old enough to fight but had the presence of mind
To know that violence a response to dejected designs
Built to strip away our dignity get us to resign”*

Cheko7even – “Ancestors” – The Migrant Report LP

The majority of the fighting during the war took place in the mountains, but in 1989 after ten years of war, the FMLN launched an urban operation which they called *la Ofensiva final*, “*Hasta el Tope*”, which translates into *Until the End*. On the morning of November 11th, two days after the fall of the Berlin wall, the FMLN took several strategic positions in the city, it brought everything to a halt for a month. It was the largest singular confrontation during the war accounting for seventeen percent of total casualties in the war. During this time the Salvadorian Army murdered 6 Jesuit Priest teaching and living at the Central American University (UCA) along with the caretaker’s wife and their daughter. Their bodies were laid out on their lawn by their killers and shown on television.

I remember the burning buses at the end of the street, people scrambling to unload their luggage from the top. Helicopters from the courtyard dropped bombs not too far from where I stood. Large graffiti written on the walls across the street read, “Yankee, Go Home”. Several days we woke up to bullet holes appearing somewhere on the street. The prayers were done in a low and solemn tone inside a dark room with a one single candle in the middle. The sounds of war draped the soundscape around us. I remember my grandmother leaving to find her sister, then her sister and daughter along with two dogs and a parakeet showed up at our door before my mother left to find my grandmother, before my grandmother returned and left us waiting for my mother to return. That battle was a rupture. It was the closest I had been to war and a catalyst towards our family deciding to move to Canada. I never forgot those moments, they have reverbed into the silences of migration, all those cold hours in the late night, repeating the same questions in your head.

It is hard to say with academic assertion what percentage of these memories come from a preserved audio-visual somatic memory and how much of it comes from a re-casting of these moments based on the stories I've been told over the years. As I discussed at the outset of this paper, the grappling with personal history central to this MES portfolio impelled me to identify a pluralistic approach to ethnographic study.

*“Are you the reason for someone to say goodbye to their home
Give up the person they were and get on the train to unknown
Are you the picture to carry courage forward generations
Are you living for someone else, A love that put other dreams on the shelf
If you can help it let it resonate
All your future descendants gon’ wonder what you ate
All this trauma dn bloody memories to wash
Got me thinking about all the future yesterday’s today”*

“Lament” – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

THE MIGRANT REPORT: A PRODUCTION ETHNOGRAPHY

My father’s cassette tapes

The Migrant Report began in my father’s archives of cassette tapes. He would record everything from radio shows to soccer games on VCR tapes. Our family knew of this recording but we had forgotten about it over the years. In the segment, my family is asked questions regarding the right to return following the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords signalling the end of the war. It features a 9-year-old me, my 1-year-old brother and my mother. I remember my father being present, but he did not speak during the interview. The questions centered around the future of peace in El Salvador and the future of my family, regarding the right to return, now that there was peace. My mother wrestles her brand-new tongue to describe the pain of

nostalgia she felt, from watching a home video that we had been sent from El Salvador. Steve Hunt, the interviewer asks me who were the people in the home video. I identify everyone by jumping between the Spanish and English pronunciation of their names.

The interview was a haunting experience for me. I was shocked to hear my own voice at the age of nine alongside the younger voice of my mother, who was at that moment probably going through a lot. I remember listening to the vibrations in her voice to discern the anxiety of having to think through life on such vast scales like the past, future, the children, the war and the peace. It was easy at times to be overwhelmed with emotion from listening to it. The thought of my mother weighing out the weight of her own dreams, as well as mine, on such a simple tension such as to stay or return, was impactful. It drew me into the past while centering me in the present. The interview had a temporally out of joint effect to my thinking. It felt like looking at the present from the past while looking at the future from another past. I had to think from two places in two directions at once. I dubbed the cassette tape and decided that whatever songs I ended up creating, I was going to weave the interview and its continuity into the present throughout its entirety.

All the instrumentals were produced by Jean-Paul aka Jeepz, a prolific producer and long-time collaborator. He used a combination of samples from old soul records and music he composed. Sample based hip hop uses existing music and remixes them into a new composition, Jeepz is a good listener. Him and I have always had a working affinity and a shared admiration and respect that works well between the producer and the emcee. Before Jeepz, as a beatmaker myself I was usually in the cockpit of collaborative work, as most of these collaborations were recorded in my studio, but with Jeepz I relished the moments I could work with him because it meant I could really focus on the embodied performance it takes to get in the zone and write a good rap song. It let me be free in my imagination without tinkering over keyboards and endless cords. Jeepz would send me a batch of beats and the choice was made based on the feeling it gave me and how I would feel when I found a certain rhythmic *pocket*. Most of the verses were written anywhere from a 30 minute to a 3-hour sitting.

hip-hop's metaphysical aesthetics and disobedient methodology

Allowing this essay to wrap around and be led by the narratives within my rhymes as a Hip Hop artist does not come without risks of losing the reader, or myself, within the attempts to make sense and weave theoretical meaning out of a rap album. It is only in trusting the slow process of digestion, or better yet, gestation, that I release for the time being, the fear to be wrong or convoluted. To strengthen the theoretical trust in the Hip Hop pedagogy, I outline the 9 aesthetic principles of hip-hop as identified by the theoretical work of spoken-word artist, dancer and playwright, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, currently vice president and artistic director of social impact at the Kennedy Centre (Business Website, n.d.) We need to identify certain forces of governance inherent within hip hop practice before it becomes a sociological lens and theoretical too, if we want to strengthen its capacity for interacting with the haunting. Bamuthi Joseph's nice aesthetic elements of Hip-Hop are as follows; ritual; energetic reciprocity; first sound; urgency; dub; (in)visibility; The Break; sampling; style; and magic (The Herp Albert Award in the Arts, 2011). These elements make up the metaphysical spirit that drives hip-hop to evolve and create in the way that it does.

Using this framework, my rap creation process would look like this: first of all, I might not be sitting down. I like to walk, or pace, or gyrate murmuringly in a corner. When I write a song, I search for the *first sound* and measure the *urgency* of the beat, I seek the *energetic reciprocity* between my voice (body) and the instrumental. Part of the old me becomes *invisible*, a new *style appears*, I battle the meter of the *break* like a boxer with ideas and execute combinations to make *magic* happen.

These practices were cultivated through centuries of intergenerational transmission of survival skills which emerged as complete form in the South Bronx in the 1970's after masses of people were displaced due to the building of the Bronx Expressway. From its inception, hip hop aesthetics were designed to deal with the dissatisfaction and dissent from the displacement (Ibrahim, 2009) and extraction from the politics of abandonment (Chang, 2008). It is the spirit for cultural renewal based on active resistance to oppression that drives those foundational years of hip-hop culture. Due to its incubation in landscapes of forgetting and suspicion, its principal tenets are that of validation and authenticity. The core of the concept in Hip Hop is from the idea that artists should remain true to who they really are and not use the culture as a

way to express something they are authentically not (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). Of course, this did not mean I couldn't become anyone I wanted in my rhymes either.

Hip Hop music carries inherent pedagogical and aesthetic modalities that allow for easier access to the more extreme thoughts and emotions we may crave to express and explore. It is a chance to have much more subversive interactions with hauntings and ghosts. It revindicates silence as an act of protection and understands rage and revenge in a much more empathetic way than regular discourse. Hip hop became a functional *hinge* where I could move in between the nostalgia and silences of the diasporic need to look back to move forward. The questions asked by the interviewer, Steve Hunt, are still questions we ask ourselves today, 28-years later; "where would you rather live?"; "will peace last?"; "will you ever return?". These questions play with time in the sense that I must think about what was it about that time that made us give those answers, as well as how those inquiries of the past reflect in the present, in the sense of how we would answer them now, and why?

The fact that the interview was a "report" inspired a journalistic element in the writing of these lyrics. It meant not only grappling with the evolution of my family's answers over time but as a report on how the choice to *stay in Canada*, had worked over time as well. It is an indirect critique of the settlement sector in Canada as well, of which I know very well since I work in the field for over 8 years. The writing is not as conceptually based as it is a set of impressions meant to present a *mood* or a *feeling*, or a *set of feelings* that together, could also form a coherent idea. The aspect of reporting and teaching is embedded in my momentum in writing these raps.

The personal nature of the songs revealed a spectre in my own life of things that are no longer and not yet. Although I did not know about hauntology two years into my MES master's program, it felt like a watershed moment when I encountered Anna Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*. I quickly began a further exploration and the unraveling of the fact that I too, was being *haunted* as I learned about *haunting*. At one point, I was overwhelmed in attempting to find a voice that was uniquely mine in academic writing. I wanted to write like the authors I was reading, but I found myself lacking the confidence and structural work. More issues of inheritance. It was in

these moments that I searched for a beat by Jeepz and processed what I was processing in something that felt true to a larger part of me.

The overwhelming weight of silence through migration attracted me into the future of exploring its *first sounds, urgency, (in)visibility or magic* through hip-hop. The craft taught me to master something without any formal training or institutional guidelines. The aesthetics intervene in the process of writing raps, as a consistent source of potential and style that can reorganize knowledge systems to suit the subject that wields its power. At its best, rapping is a way to meet yourself not where you are at, but where you need to go. The distance between those two is the agony and pain of life that we must learn to articulate, so it no longer gets stuck in our chests and kills us.

Although Hip-Hop exists first as a set of aesthetics, it is also a sociological lens that has a tradition of political resistance. Cheko7even became a ritualistic vessel for transmission of decolonial unsettledness inside a liminal space and time. It was where the rebel in the mountains could continue his trajectory towards his revolutionary goals, rather than the massive disillusionment felt by many guerrilleros and soldiers in the post-war era (Sprenkels, 2018). Its aesthetics allow the contradictions and subaltern narratives to interact with our personal and collective history of disappearance and dispossession. *Each* sample represents a form of inheritance that deals with a set of (in)possibilities.

In my own narrative reading of the album's contents, I identify four major streams that branch off into separate streams of through, each with their independent yet co-related focus. I consider these assemblages part of my inheritance and includes the presence of pre-extractive desires as well as impressions left by the knowledge I was interacting with as I created these songs.

Sample 1: Hauntology Rap and The Lost Desires of Revolution

*"It was indigo and cacao
Establishing Catholic towns
Dividing gold and copper
from skin that was black and brown*

*Shouted loud died in crowds
Martyrdom was the crown
Bullets shroud a proud spirit
Bodies they stack in mounds
A million, end of the worlds we've seen from oblivion
Calling on Quetzalcoatl from volcanoes of Obsidian"*

"Ancestors" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

My first sample from the album, "Ancestors", opens by speaking to the beginning of a history of subjection and extraction by linking the division of geological materials and the division of humans into categories of race. In the first years of Spanish Conquest, society was restructured under the principles of extraction, which included permanent tension to deal with the problem of the people who resist its conditions. Indigo formed the foundation for the first oligarchies that became the benefactors of the Independence movements, who then banked off of coffee after the invention of synthetic dye collapsed the indigo markets. Catholicism was of course, the primary source of discipline for the indigenous communities assimilating to settler colonial culture. The evoking of martyrdom and bodies in mounds calls upon the cyclical nature of massacres and exterminations on the territory, and a culture of pride towards giving your life to the cause against colonial extractions. The lines about the mythical god and historical figure of Quetzalcoatl invoke a long history of resilience and the presence of indigenous bodies on the land, on the volcanoes. The verse attempts to convey a feeling of many deaths and the destruction of worlds, and the resilience of living in a future where those endings are muted.

This passage responds to the *haunting* of what appears to be a *no* longer within the Salvadorian political imagination. It points to an inheritance of mourning for the lost desires of previous revolutions and the apparent impossibility for the indigenous revolutionary figure to return to the collective imagination as real. The indigenous figure along with his cosmovision, haunts Salvadorian society every time it re-enacts the injury of erasure and denial. Under the blinding universality of western knowledge, the spectrality of the enduring presence of indigenous people can arise in many cultural practices in society. The possibility to create is in the shadows of fugitive knowledge and the mourning of the indigenous figure on a certain

plane of representation. The haunting is an invitation to breathe life into the fact that indigenous people and their consciousness, still exist and is actively resisting the conditions that promote erasure and denial.

In the Book, “Poets of Resistance” by Joaquin, he examines the evolving alliance between urban and peasant intellectuals during the two decades that preceded the civil war in El Salvador. He specifies in the book that by intellectuals he “designates individuals – academically trained or not – who articulated the ideology and politics of social and revolutionary movements” (Chavez, 2017.pp.3). The book revolved around these intellectuals and how they “incarnated cultures of resistance drew on memories of indigenous peasant uprisings and civic mobilizations in El Salvador, revolutionary and anti-colonial movements from across the globe and a variety of intellectual political and religious traditions” (Chavez, 2017.pp.3). From reading this book I extracted three main realizations; first, the decision to go to war had been an arduous 20-year deliberation between the forces of reformism and the radicalization of insurgency; secondly, urban and peasant intellectuals were radicalized by the escalations of state terror by the oligarchic-military regime and a deepening socioeconomic crisis; lastly, these intellectual narratives and ultimately, the reasons for the start of the war, have been displaced and distorted by the war and post-war power struggles respectively (Chavez, 2017). It was notable that the intellectuals of the left relinquished their Marxist-Leninist ideologies or the spirit of Liberation Theology that penetrated prior movements and embraced a democratic socialism by the late 1980’s (Chavez, 2017.pp.239).

*“Militant love never cease
Peace is devoured by the Beast howling out empty promises of release
Freedom by whom? The same ones that assumed
We’d forget the songs, medicines, ceremonies and plumes”*

“Ancestors” – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

Learning the intellectual history that preceded the war and their spectral poetics of liberation during the making of this portfolio helped to demystify some of the binaries and mainstream narratives of the war that could not capture the complexity of why people did what

they did. For many years it seemed like the conversation on Salvadorian politics centered around reparations in the post-war era and neoliberalism was open for business with commodification, privatizations and marketizations (Loftus & Budds, n.d.). As Sprenkels explains in this exploration of FMLN members political participation in the post-war era, it was a period characterized by the disillusionment and erosion of the pre-civil war principles and values and the corruption-inducing practice of clientelism and corruption in the Salvadorian political system under neoliberalism (Sprenkels, 2018).

The damage of erasure is that it helps neoliberal logics transform through various strategies of dispersion and coding so that it becomes undetectable as a familiar thing to people who do not know its past. It is where fatal repetitions come to grow and settle. There are similarities between the desires of the liberalism in the 60's and 70's and the desires of neoliberalism under the populist and authoritarian regime in 2023. Liberalism always implies the erosion of civil liberties and subjectivities through a performance of absences against a set of curated, generally market-based liberties. This erosion encourages the forgetting of past events so that the neoliberal act of dispersion and re-coding can continue. One could say neoliberal logics influenced the 1992 Peace Accords and framed the democratic reality for the next 30 years. On a global scale, we see that democracy does not equal transformation of neoliberal logics or curtail the damage its capitalist force commits. The violence that was displaced onto the gangs, has now relocated to the familiar force of state violence, which has made itself undetectable once again.

This rupture with memories and their possible afterlives limits our ability to imagine the future that balances out the forces which were in conflict to make this world. It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the ways democratic governance is controlled or subverted by financial capital. However, it should be noted that much of the subversive and radical discourse has lessened and, in some cases, appropriated and refashioned by intellectuals into a discursive form that is permeable to capital. Through the process of technocratic normalizing the tendencies of capital, society loses continuity with certain subjectivities from the margins.

Hip-Hop is a framework for the inversion of power. This inversion works not only in the present moment of creation, but also in our reflections of the past and the future. Hip-hop lyricism as a technology of language and pedagogy can teach people to create liminal spaces from which to preserve a connection to the past. It is a sanctioned space for an imagined community to exist in continuity with a counter-narrative from the past. A ghost perhaps, that can help us project an alternative future to the one we are forced to swallow. These counter-narratives hold keys to create new counter subjectivities that can carry on the spiritual and intellectual work of a people historically excluded from the production of knowledge. Within the Migrant Report and within Cheko7even's cosmovision, there is a will to revive the fugitive desires of the failed revolutions of the past.

This nostalgia for a type of more direct confrontation with the state has led me to walk with the ideologies of a rural peasant insurgencies, liberation theologies, Islamic law or the redefinitions of capitalism as war by the Zapatistas (Schussler, 2016). These encounters with different traditions of resistance from around the world have led me to consistently question the nature/society divide and how it influences our worldviews of issues regarding the environment. It led me to look deeper into the production of nature in our society through the experience of migration and its influence over the projection of our futures. Our conceptions of power shape our capacity to relate with the human and non-human world around us. What do our histories of extraction have to say about our relations with one another and how do we transmit frameworks to help us understand the metaphysical force of capitalism.

Will you give up all your people's history to make history?

"Laments" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report LP (2023).

Sample 2: The Commodity Form, World-eating Capitalism and Hip-Hop Critique

*"don't get shanked and disappear it's a spiritual world don't turn ghost
fall to fear gotta' live on the ropes
my sound sheared through wastelands of industrials space
divided by race, urban cyborg face got me losing my sense of taste
betta' love yours"*

“Love Yours” – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

This passage responds to the *haunting* of what appears to be absent only because it is too large to be seen. The counter-subjectivities of the previous sample, collectively point to something that is *like* the totality of a force they were resisting against. In thinking of the difference between resisting capitalism at home or on away context, they differ in that in the west, because there is much more corporeal equality, the issue of resistance is more about epistemic disobedience while in countries like El Salvador, resistance looks more like embodied material resistance, a type of corporeal materiality. The issues back home always brought more of a material pressure to them. This dual reflection asks me to look at how material and psychological assemblages are constructed and explore the ways we account for the metaphysical force of capitalism.

The metaphysical force of capitalism has a universalizing effect which threatens our subjectivity of locality or personhood. Capitalist realism accepts that the market, and the technologies it produces, is the only way to resolve the problems causing climate change. It is the belief in smart cities and corporate charity or the belief in structural adjustment policies and environmental assessments. It is an occupying force on the planet that functions through the spectrality of the capital form and the agency of the virtual market. The haunting gives birth to technocratic ideas of the world that blinds the viewer itself from solving the problem of development effectively because it is in denial that its colonial view of nature and evolution, was and still is the main cause for climate change and global warming.

Kathryn Yusoff takes aim at the blindness of the Anthropocene and climate change discourse by revealing the practices of erasure and metaphysical manipulation, in particular through the use of scientific language and categorizations. Yusoff argues that extractive societies where we live in the aftermaths of slavery and its displacements created race as a technological tool to justify and continue its primitive accumulation and its colonial aftermaths. Yusoff famously states, no geology is neutral, referring to geology as white geology to identify the racial dimensions, colonial and extractive practices which have been in actuality, the

primary causation of what we now call the Anthropocene (Yusoff, 2018). Just as the earth has been re-categorized in the function of resource extraction, the ‘human’ has also been re-constituted into racial categories in service of those same extractive logics. Yusoff argues the *native* and the *slave* were the first geological subjects in history. While the native was deemed an unfit subject to work on plantations and mines and were relegated to less physical labor, the slave was extracted and imported to carry the load of colonial extractive practices. These practices were normalized through the invention of new sciences like physiology, psychology or phrenology⁴. Geology was the first of these disciplines and the crux of her argument is that skin and flesh of black and native bodies endure a radical material and psychic re-organization by the technology of racial stratification, which happens in direct relationship to the process of creating geological subdivisions fit for extraction. “Bodies become gold, emptied of the sign of the human, reinvested with the signification of units of energy and properties for extraction” (Yusoff, 2018. pp.83). This simultaneous thrust towards reconfiguring the value of difference through inhumane practices and the value of materials through scientific reasoning, helped to bake racist logics into the structure of modernity itself. The ‘double dispossession’ of human and land give way to the loss of space, place and land and the social reproduction of citizenship, non-being and inhumanity. This material and metaphysical act of violence have led to a legacy of epistemic structures and disciplines that serve to naturalize the barbarity and irrationality of slavery, the plantation and its afterlives. Yusoff borrows a sentence from the infamous Sylvia Wynter to persuade her readers to feel the epistemic disparity of history: “white utopia is a black inferno”, speaking to the horrors of slavery and how it served as the precedent for what Europeans called the age of ‘enlightenment’ (Yusoff, 2018).

*"micro-aggressions and those little white lies
That make up the whole structure of how we live out our lives
Somatic songs keep my nerves calm
You need a smack in the face to see what's going on
But I'm a sucka for love"*

"White Lies" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report

⁴ All disciplines made possible through the primitive accumulation of slavery itself which provided the luxury of time and the motive for justifying such a way of seeing the world.

I hesitate to underestimate the psychological domination of the commodity form and its occupation within the social imaginary around socio-ecological issues. That is to say, I am interested in the metaphysical force of capitalism and its effects on the discourse around subjectivity and the environment. This metaphysical force, sustains a network of subjectivities that limit the possibilities for counter-agency against neoliberal progress and facilitate the depoliticization of critical environmental issues and the alienation of opposing logics.

The metaphysics of capitalism connects with the historical geography of space, shaping its institutional, cultural and revolutionary discourse. Due to Mesoamerica's intimate history with the origins of modernity, the continuum of its development depends on its invisibility, a process that is codified, intensified and accelerated as capitalism shapeshifts to fight off its perennial existential crisis. The unraveling of a 500-year process inspires a structure of a monster that is too large to focus on with one set of eyes. An imaginary that has penetrated the metaphysical space of society so deeply, albeit unevenly, that it makes the disentanglement of decolonial options difficult to enact. In short, the techno-capitalist development that seeks to continue neoliberal policies and symbiotic relationships between the Global North and South deny the metaphysical and spiritual claims of indigenous communities, while itself having a very robust metaphysical and spiritual form; one that is totalizing and omnipresent as it is divisive and polycentric.

In recognition of the metaphysical force of techno-capitalism, the spectral qualities of coloniality and the ways that disarticulated subjectivities can help in breaking from the modern code, it is important to understand how we conceptualize the techno-industrial capitalist system. There are many theories engaging global extractivism, many of which have contributed valuable research used in this essay, none of which tell the story better than the ecological history of El Salvador itself. Dunlap and Jakobsen's (2020) exploration of how people make sense of their domination by development through mythical figures is an insightful tool to encapsulate what they call total extractivism and I believe key to capture the extend of the damage in a country like EL Salvador. Total extractivism is referred to as "The Worldeater"; a network of

‘devils, worms octopuses and worldeater(s); a set of techniques that form the logic of violent extraction; an alternative etymology for ‘colonialism’ read as *colon*, or a large intestine; colonialism as the digestion of one people by another; a framework that focuses on the ‘entrails’, that is the *shit*, or b-products that are produced by colonial systems (Dunlap,A., & Jakobsen, 2020). Total extractivism, the *Worldeater*, or *The Beast*, as I shall introduce, is a framework that considers the ideal a form of inquiry to be framed in mythic expression, one that challenges technocratic and academic language as it gives voice to the disarticulated bodies and establishes that the wonders of one world is the plunder of another.

In a literature review of theories on extraction, Dunlap and Jakobsen (2020) employ Ye and Colleagues (2019:2,2) ten defining features of extractivism which I believe critical to the conversation regarding the totality of extraction on territories nearing 500 years since first contact. The features are; “(1) ‘the creation of a monopoly over resources’ that becomes (2) ‘intertwined between state and private capital groups’. This (3) requires infrastructural development, (4) often controlled by an ‘operational center’ that (5) accumulates the generate wealth. Extractivism then (6) triggers inequalities that (7) sometimes entails various degrees of remediation by the state through redistribution. Extraction, most of all, (8) amounts to ‘production without reproduction’ – that is, destruction – amidst (9) ‘boom-like’ profits that (10) result in socio-ecological ‘barrenness’: degraded societies and ravaged landscapes” (Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2020. pp15). They also offer two key critiques on current extraction theories that help us understand the changing and shifting nature of the global system of extraction. First, is the hyper emphasis on centralization which is problematized by the rollout of decentralized logical systems that spread diffusely through industrial infrastructure, extractive sites, communication and transportation systems. Secondly, rather than amounting to ‘production without reproduction’, as claimed by sustainable city advocates, we see that extractivism produces more opportunities for green economic initiatives, which is a form of finding socio-ecological fixes to the inherent nature of crisis that defines capitalism (Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2020). This work is important to this work because understanding how the system of global extraction is the primary of capitalism and has determinant effects on the socio-ecological natures produced in that society.

In this vein, there is nothing that capitalism will not rematerialize in commodity form, so much so, that in order to build testimonies to what life under global capitalism is like in different places of the world, we find mythical language being used as people make sense of the impressions capitalism leaves on them. The passages in the Migrant Report reflect a need to speak to larger, slower and more invisible forms of extractivism that affect our memories and rupture the links between psyche and society.

Sample 3: The Urban Political Ecology of Migrant Lyricism

This next passage from the track, “Child of the Light” on the Migrant Report album, I articulate a similar legacy of conceptualizing the metaphysical force of capitalism in a few lines, and its interlinking relationships with ecological and social bonds. The verse reads;

*“We had, five millennial memories
Crowd around burials to pour out some Hennessy
the Crown wants to minerals to grow white supremacy
We ain’t really down with that at all
Stealing from the commons since the cannonballs
Supreme arrogance Irritant
Chef a bowl of rice you can share with the militant
we filling in the blanks of everything you made primitive
Dialogue deliberate All city raw natural derivatives”*

“Child of the Light” – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report LP (2023)

Terms like “the crown”, “supreme arrogance”, “white supremacy” coincide with a decolonial consciousness as well as an attempt to find more colloquial euphemisms for Total Extraction. The line about the crown wanting minerals to grow white supremacy, invokes the link between material and socio-ecological assemblages. Once again, the militant can show his teeth, before jumping into an urban political ecology critique of how all material and metaphysical force within a modern city is the sum of raw natural extraction and its derivatives. These lines were inspired by the literature I was reading in the field of political ecology. They offer a way to disentangle from a technocratic understanding of our urban societies around us,

and its production of the climate change crisis. Instead, the lyrics flow freely between materials and embodiments, suppressions and impressions, expressing the way the city haunts by the way it conceals its origin and internal systems, its pipes and sewers and dumps and tombs.

Political ecology can include streams of thought from studies in geography, anthropology, environmental studies, extractive studies, agrarian studies, all with an emphasis on looking through these disciplines through a critical lens. Political ecology sees urban environments as “inherently socio-material and hybrid form(s) of metabolism, whereby “social categories such as capital, money, norms, gender and races are intimately interlinked with material assemblages as in the build environment, flows of water, food, energy and other non-human matter” (Swyngedouw & Erneston, 2019.pp.5). Urban Political Ecology argues that the Anthropocene is projected on a world stage through which it peddles the narratives of management, science-based intervention and capital in order to ‘save the planet’ and economy as it stands (Swyngedouw & Erneston, 2019).

Adopting from urban political ecology (UPE), we inform our understanding of the urbanization of nature as a process of transforming nature through human labor, capital and technology. It is an ‘inherently socio-material and hybrid form of metabolism, whereby social categories such as capital, money, norms, gender and race are intimately interlinked with material assemblages as in the build environment, flows of water, food, energy and other non-human matter’ (Swyngedouw & Erneston, 2019). Its methodology is to follow a glass of water backwards to discover the assemblages of nature that allow its performance as a fictitious commodity for consumption and the depoliticization of its cost (Kaika, n.d.). It understands that the sustainable development is inherently biopolitical and seeks to disentangle itself from the destruction of the ‘other’ space.

*“I been up all night
we’ve seen this coming for years
A material world built by cynical engineers
Whose forefathers created fields of budding careers
To reinforce realities that were governed by fear, Let it fall
We built around the rubble its clear
That the ruins you left behind is my current affairs”*

“Light” – Cheko7even – Codebreaker Mixtape Vol.1

In using an urban political ecology discourse within the lyricism of the Migrant Report, Cheko7even seeks to transmit that humanity’s geo-agency is intrinsically tied with the process of capitalist planetary urbanization, driven by the elite’s pursuit of gain and the commodification of life that has created the uneven urbanized landscape (Swyngedouw & Erneston, 2019). The Anthropocene then becomes an intersection of discourse and materiality, often producing ecophylactic remedies that hide the unequal realities of neoliberal capitalism. Each remedy with its own narrative, each carrying with it its own way of seeing, and unseeing the world.

The Anthropocene is not only a discursive tool of historical erasure but a re-inscription tool for the legacy project that is colonialism, modernity and its underpinning racial and material stratification. Climate change discourse informed by mainstream ideas about the Anthropocene create biopolitical subjects geared to desire strength to endure the malevolent condition of capitalist society. Luca Mavelli’s study, “Governing the resilience of neoliberalism through biopolitics”, they critique resilience within neoliberalism as resting on people’s capacity to withstand the turbulence of socio-economic order that are engineered to create and sustain crisis (Mavelli, 2017). Mavelli contends that the principles of competition and inequality governing the market in neoliberalism are complementary alongside the biopolitical logics of care of the population based on racism towards those who threaten its survival and well-being (Foucault, 1980). This means that neoliberalism does not only produce resilient subjects, but works alongside biopolitical rationalities that contribute to regulate, modulate and govern the uncertainties and risks that stem from the neoliberalization of life and the production of crisis (Mavelli, 2017). The main function here is to compensate from the risks and failures brought by neoliberalism’s infinite appetite for capitalist expansion and the need for new subjects to work the growth. Mavelli distinguishes biopolitics as its own governmental rationality separate from neoliberalism because it is important to discerning counter-movements that may promote the protection of life, specifically of neoliberal life that extracts its meaning from the market.

Biopolitics is one of the primary ways in which the Anthropocene produces logics that guarantee the human body continues to be a strategy for the accumulation of capital.

Biopolitical governance has direct impacts on who we imagine ourselves to be and the possibilities of the future we can imagine as a collective. If we do not resist biopolitical governance, we risk the complete surrender of the future of our own subjectivity. This is why we need new forms of engagement that engage, deconstruct and rearticulate the discourse of *common sense*. Urban life is a contradiction within the Anthropocene's programming, it creates a powerful immunological drive towards believe that urbanization equals justice for those victims of development. What happens to our production of knowledge when we understand that urban space is inherently contradictory to the ideal of sustainable development? As Cusicanqui questions, "What are cities today if not luck of the excess of images, of visual overflow, a promiscuity of scenes, signs and situations?" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010).

In advanced landscapes of disaster such as the tiny territory of El Salvador, these discursive tools allow, and even steer public discourse and policy towards continued and unfettered extraction. This despite 80% of El Salvador's territory being under water stress and 60% of available water being contaminated (United Nations, 2023). The first General Water Law ever mandated in the country has been widely criticized for prioritizing commercial and industrial water use such as large-scale sugar cane production, occurring precisely in the areas under water stress (General Water Law, 2021). According to the Trinational Network for Rescuing the Lempa River, the Lempa provides 70% of potable water for the capital of San Salvador, offers water for 10'000 hectares in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador and satisfy 28% of energy demand in the country (Red Trinacional por el Rescate del Rio Lempa, 2022). The group calls the Lempa situation a crisis due to overexploitation from; mismanagement of solid waste; discharge of black waters from urban areas; waste management from agro-industrial sector; and deforestation on the basis (Red Trinacional por el Rescate del Rio Lempa, 2022). According to an El Faro report in July 2023, 907'000 people are in a critical phase facing food insecurity and 210,456 fell into extreme poverty in the past three years (Gavarette, 2023). Data incorporating the official statistics of US Customs and Border Patrol for the past 11 years suggests that the year since Bukele have seen record numbers of migration nearing 100,000 a

year (US Government, 2023).

This bundle of reports should not normalize disastrous qualities and associate them with territory. They are a product of the global drive to project a future saved by capital and immunological prophylactics. They are bundled because anthropogenic impressions on the psyche occur due to its temporal logics with material and social implications.

“Societies that dominate nature also dominate people. Where there is the idea that a massive dam should be built to control a river’s flow, there is the idea that people should be enslaved to build it; there is the belief that a giant metropole may serve itself by despoiling the surrounding countryside and devouring its raw materials, there are castes and hierarchies to ensure that this is accomplished.”

- Kirkpatrick Sale -

The subjectivity present through the rhymes of Cheko7even resists power that marginalizes alternative ways of knowing and disobedience universalized modernity. Hip-Hop emerged as a resistance articulation of black and latino expressions against white hegemony. The culture has been a tool documenting and celebrating, as well as a “platform for coordinated political resistance and deliberation” (Roy, 2022.pp.187), a model for seizing a means of production through mastery and rupture of media technology (Rose, 1994), a redistributive act of appropriation that modelled black entrepreneurship(Christopher, n.d.).

There is a mechanism in Hip-Hop that aligns it with other psychologies of resistance which have been especially criminalized since the End of the Cold War, when we signed the Peace Accords, in which the neoliberal mechanism moved to producing technologies of the state targeted at ending social moments and any subversive, critical thinking through the hypnotizing and haunting allure of capital and its worlds. This includes being able to look at the gangs not just through their extractive label, terrorist, but as a subject, a human being with complex trauma and desire. In this context, an urban political ecology approach to the ecological condition of El Salvador cannot proceed without recognizing the polarizing, immunological and destabilizing role the gangs play in shaping the urban political space, and by

extension, the relationship between discursive imaginations and extractive realities in El Salvador.

Sample 4: Illicit Economies, Gang Society and the Silence of the Fugitive

*“We bear the scars of all out revolt
When without defense we held on to hope
Got you in my scope
better squeeze before the dog grabs your throat
That’s for all my G’s who stay baggin’ dope
Noble thieves that confront the tyrants
Who raped their lands and turned them to migrants
Occupations and vows of silence
Emo spaceships and metal islands”*

“My Wrath is Sacred” – Cheko7even – Thirst Trap LP (2018)

In the fourth sample, I extract from the Migrant Report album the inheritance of a wrong mourning or an unsettled relationship with death. One would need a necromancer to learn to commune with that which has already perished, the revenants in our history. It manifests with moments that express an allure for the obscure, for the counter-currents beneath the surface, the affiliations and little-regard for the law. Rap music allows oneself to commune with absences of a lost possibility and the possible incoming inevitabilities. It is a liminal time for the rogue passions such as empathy, vengeance or dignity.

This allows the revival of a ghost in my generation that saw us grow up beside the gangs, if not literally than through association, then with the dominance they had over Salvadorian political discourse. The hegemonic language of today deems gang members modern terrorists, but the spectrality remains that they are who we could’ve been, and still could be. So many who are currently in prison are associated with gang activity through forced extortion or are recently initiated gang members, whose life circumstance offer them little luxury to escape the security offered by the gangs. This inheritance of the dead, or what I call the Visible/Indivisible, is what drives the need to access a ‘criminalizing’ motif in the music. It encourages listening to gang

members talk and seek to know what they are thinking. They are central to a silence in transmission of our current history that neglects to address the primary conditions for the creation of gangs in the first place.

The book by Oscar Martinez and Juan Jose Martinez, “The Hollywood Kid – the violent life and death of an MS-13 Hitman”, builds strength around an intimate testimony into the life and mind of Miguel Angel, a member of MS-13, a gang historically marked by secrecy and non-disclosure. Through a myriad of angles, key historical moments, the lived ontology of the gangs is told through the people and events that shaped Miguel Angel’s life. This is a life that began and ended with extreme violence, a life controlled and dictated by The Beast, and its entrails. In the preface, the book opens, “This book is about scraps, it’s about leftovers that the enormous machinery of the United States chucks across its borders, Scraps are tossed into El Salvador, a country that grinds up much of what it received. These human leftovers, however are still living when they’re expelled. And, in time, they bear fruit that will clog up the gears of both the machine that threw them out and the machine that’s grinding them up.” (Martinez & Martinez, 2019.pp.11).

For the political mechanism in El Salvador, the bodies of gang members became the Invisible/Indivisible because; their complex personhood has been stripped in the name of their spectral form, and indivisible because as a force, they can always be felt even without presence. They were in a sense another type of *hinge*, between the past and the present future where they served the function of leveraging power, of filling in the voids of governance with order, or as vengeance, for a great forgetting of who they were. The gangs have been politicized in the power struggle to be the power of order and authority despite the political roots of their origins, being depoliticized and forgotten. The gang member body continues to be a source of scrap for the *beast*, a source of flesh and capital, or power and apples in the people’s eyes.

It is important to know who the gangs are, the why and the how, all of which is beyond the scope of this interruption. I will, however, try to reason through the process of their disarticulation, and explain their relation to the metaphysical force of capitalism, their depoliticizing purpose as the self-producing internal enemy and their value in decolonizing

knowledge by including their testimony, that is their complex personhood, into our mappings of power.

*“If The Beast takes you away, you’ll know why.
Those taken by the Beast are adored by the Beast, spoiled by the Beast.
He’s dead now, the Beast took him.
The Beast’s horns are made of gold.
You die the death the Beast wants you to die.
I saw the whole Beast, with all her seven horns.
I could feel the Beast breathing down my back.
The Beast’s still in control here.
They know I’ve got their back, that if anyone lays a finger on them, the Beast will come out.
I’ve lost everything to the Beast.
The Beast is following me, waiting for me to mess up.
He’s part of her now, already part of the Beast
I turned and told him: It’s for the Beast, you fucking son of a bitch, then pop, pop..”*

- *As found in Miguel Angel aka The Hollywood Kid’s notebook, MS-13 gang member, assassin and state informant (excerpt from: “The Hollywood Kid” by Oscar Martinez)*

The gangs in El Salvador reveal a lineage of scars and injuries from all levels of political, cultural and economic structures of society. Salvadorian Gang culture is rooted colonial legacies of neglect, poverty, violence, hyper-militarization and American imperialism, impressions that also give the gangs their chimeric worldview and cultural anatomy. The authors of the *Hollywood Kid* accurately refer to the cultural existence of gangs as ‘scapegoats, scraps and nightmares’ (O. Martinez & Martinez, 2019). In other terms, the gangs represent a societal haunting, born out of the actions taken by both sides during the war, the ingestion of bodies through the great migration by the U.S. cultural production and the disillusionment of what had to be given up in exchange for the promise of democratic politics. What left from El Salvador in the 1980’s were children fleeing from war, what was returned was a neoliberal subject of criminality. The ghosts of this haunting are social figures devoid of any complex personhood. Their role in society as ghosts is to provide a socio-biological fix for the cost of death at the hands of capitalist neoliberal development. In other words, gangs are the extractive war material secured in order to maintain a narrative of imminent crisis and the internal enemy, a process that serves the depoliticization of less explicit forms of state violence including green

extraction. The fictitious commodity of fear is something that the haunting of the gangs helps to produce. A social imaginary fixated in a wrong relationship with death and violence, will struggle to retain historical awareness and existential imperatives, since the prospect of violence from the environment is attuned to detect the threat of the invisible/indivisible, social figure of the ghost.

Yet another product of the societal hauntings that are part and parcel of post-colonial capitalist worldmaking. A look at Stirner's theory of ghosts can illustrate this point. German philosopher Max Stirner did not believe in an objective reality outside of the individual and considered the abstractions of social categories as key to understanding the roots of domination and enslavement. His theory states how ghosts and phantasms, in the same manner to Polanyi's 'fictitious commodities' (Polanyi, 1944) in relation to land, labor and money, are discursively born (Stirner, 1995). He explains that *"ghosts arise from the fiction and lived embodiment of universal categories that people believe, create and project by various psycho-social means and material acts. Such ghosts are the idea of 'society', 'tribe', 'the people' and 'humanity' itself"* (Stirner, 1995, pp.197). That is, there are some truths we are forced to lie about and some lies that we must live as truth.

Neoliberal forces inscribe haunting into its modes of operation so that we naturalize being haunted as a part of a normal life. Many of these hauntings come from enduring the process of modernity and its crushing subjective process, crafting symbols of strength from the broken bodies of life under the conditions of capital. In order to resist these logics, we must understand where we are complicit in our silence, and find *first sound* for that silence to emerge out of the many voices that have been silenced. Hauntology rap served as a hinge for my investigation of *first sounds* from subjects that had been historically silenced and explore the possibility of what those silences could mean for the future.

*"still another oil spill water turns black
From this point there ain't no turn back
Blood under the bridge Rosaries Veils Stolen Land
Love the greatest weapon known to man
Shouting Black Lives Matter BDS for Palestinian freedom
Whatchu mean you gon' detain us for no reason, Say What?"*

*I need that raise. No longer the mind of the slave
Don't worry master I'm 'bout to misbehave"*

"Misbehave" – Cheko7even – The Migrant Report LP (2023)

CONCLUSION

*"I been up all night
we've seen this coming for years
A material world built by cynical engineers
Whose forefathers created fields of budding careers
To reinforce realities that were governed by fear, Let it fall
We built around the rubble it's clear
That the ruins you left behind is my current affairs"*

"Light" – Cheko7even – Codebreaker Mixtape Vol.1

Coded Inheritance

I imagine the process of rapping as similar to using the machines my grandmother sews with for her *oficio*, the ones that go back and forth through different materials and in different patterns. Hauntology rap is a machine that stitches together the fragments of memory through order, repetition, double articulation, and allows us to create sites for creation and transmission. Just like the seams of the clothes my grandmother makes, there is sides meant to be seen, and others that are not. The structure of feeling comes from the transformative recognition that happens within the ethnographic subject, such as the history of individuals on the unconscious of a culture, or the historicity of a culture in shaping the unconscious of individuals, or the mourning of *no longer* and the anxiety of *not yet*. In making the Migrant Report and thinking about the act of transmission and sense of heritage, I realized the entirety of known history on El Salvador was a potential item to collect and re-interpret, through the voice of the rapper.

In working with fragments, hip hop is an ethnographic and hauntological machine for the transmission of historical memory, as it allows the reconstruction of the past within the

fragmented struggle to heal trauma from our historical context. It not only gives space to our mythical place of belonging to be developed but makes room for our cultural identity to constantly be in renegotiation. It is a place to link imagination with critique to capture forces at a larger scale. It is a double modality of narrative structure that is in conversation with itself to distinguish the real and the spectre.

Through the use of hip hop aesthetics as an ethnographic tool for knowledge-making, I have tried to argue that through finding ways of transmission that can hold the spectrality of what it means to live as part of a *post-war* diaspora, we can reframe our sites of trauma and desire into sites of creation allowing us to deconstruct the hegemonic power of forgetting over our memory. It offers a way to weave through the coded inheritance and examine the ghosts and hauntings in order to counter the fetishistic desire to see all things and reveal all coding. The transmission of historical memory through hip hop is a technique to include the fictional, theoretical and factual to get a better view of the spells of power so that we may “tame the sorcerer and conjure otherwise” (Derrida, 2012).

Acclaimed author of Afro-futurism, Ytasha Womack writes, the “un-initiated will understand hip-hop’s logic best when they think of it as music born of the post-apocalypse” (Womack, Ytasha, 2022). It’s life after earthquakes and tragedy, disappearances and final battles. The important thing here is that it is an expression *from* another future after capitalism, a future that rejects its claim as the only reality. Hip Hop in a sense, is a hauntological hinge into the different past and the (un)altered future.

The first sample brings us into the structure of mourning over the lost desires of revolution. The passages lead us into the intellectual labor it took to reach the boiling point of war. The diversity of objectives and subjectivities influencing the making of the album was a way to interact with those desires in the present, inside a liminal space, where the more unsanctioned consciousness could breathe and speak with sorrow, wrath or vengeance. These counternarratives, along with the agrarian and earth stewardship-based ideas of the revolution led me to the second sample: interrogations of the global force of capitalist through the introductions of the *world-eater* and *the beast*, as mythical framings of the techniques that form

the logic of total extraction, that is, the metaphysical force of capitalism (Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2020). To capture the force of capitalism's universalizing force on people who live on the margins of its authority, requires narrative technologies that account for cause as well as affect. To counter the force of *the beast*, we open the fourth sample arguing that merits of being open to fugitive desires, gang members and illicit economies retaining their complex personhood as we engage in research or study with and alongside them. In encountering the haunting as a site of creation, we can also consider how bodies, human and non-human assemblages can tell their stories, past or present against the hegemonic force for forgetting that comes with neoliberal subjectivities.

This narrative of thought was mapped through the analysis of this LP, created at the same time as I was enrolled in the MES program. It was created in the act of mapping the Salvadorian Political Imagination, but the process forced me down the more personal path of ethnography and historical memory through family history. This narrative mapping was product of the epistemic shift of desire and the hauntological nature of memory in the diaspora.

I was confronted with emotions when I interacted with the object such as the cassette tape or the immaterial essence of the beats Jeez was sending me. Our emotions in regards to objects are informed by our cultural histories and personal memories. Sarah Ahmed uses David Hume's concept explaining how objects generate feeling through a combination of perception, cognition and emotion which he calls "impressions" (Ahmed & Sara, 2014). Impressions can mean either to; make an impression, to be under an impression, to create an impression or to leave an impression (Ahmed & Sara, 2014). Feelings 'about' things are shaped by contact and orientation, like impressions on the skin, they are relational because they orient us toward or away from objects (Ahmed & Sara, 2014). Those feelings produced are shaped by histories and memories through the circulation in the affective economies, which seek to socialize emotions in an instructive manner (Ahmed & Sara, 2014, pp). Ahmed suggests that "emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process which suggests that the *objectivity* of the psychic and social is an effect rather than a cause" (Ahmed & Sara, 2014, pp.11). Shared feelings are not about commonality as she argues against Sylvan S Tomkins *contagion* theory where emotions get passed around like viruses, rather it is the "objects of

emotion that circulate rather than emotions as such” (Ahmed & Sara, 2014, pp.11). As objects of emotion circulate through our complicated histories, our collective impressions become shaped by that movement and attachment. Ahmed explains, “the relationship between movement and attachment is instructive. What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence, movement does not cut the body off from the ‘where’ of its inhabitation, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes places through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others.” (Ahmed & Sara, 2014, pp.11).

Ahmed’s theory, which draws on psychoanalysis and Marx’s theory of circulation and accumulation, describes how society become invested in social norms and how it can attach us to the conditions of our subordination (a type of bio-political immunity). The splitting of experience that is emotionality in a hyper-logical society necessarily prioritizes certain knowledge systems over others and erases the histories of the production of labor in order to maintain an ideal neo-colonial subject. Found in Hornkheimer and Adorno’s “Dialectic of Enlightenment: On the Theory of Ghosts” was the description on the reasoning behind why we go looking for ghosts, as being due to the “despairing at our loss of historical perspective, at our disturbed relationship with the dead” (Adorno 1987: Gordon, 2008a, pp.23).

What I hope the Migrant Report LP and ethnographic narrative analysis convey is that the diasporic political imagination depends on the transmission of the *hinge* to be *hauntologically* attuned to its spectral transmission of trauma and nostalgia. The diasporic subject, especially those facing the largest force of metaphysical capitalism and displacement, to contribute an important piece to the fight against total extraction and its logics. I hope this essay enriches the debates the grammars of immigration and settlement in Canada and offers a wider range of subjectivities a chance to be included in authoritative texts regarding lived experiences. I also consider this text as a starting point for further investigation into areas such as diasporic cultural production, transnational imaginations between cultural producers, or work connected to finding decolonial ways to build projects or organize communities. This can be a step towards more identity formation practices that foster remembrance of historical memory for 2nd or 3rd generation diaspora.

In many ways, processing a master's degree through the aesthetics of *first sound*, *urgency*, *dub*, *(in)visibility*, *The Break*, *sampling*, *style*, and *magic and ritual* as well as my own personal narratives was a haunting experience, akin to finding a magical flower at midnight due to a long prayer and fast from having to know it all. Using these rogue techniques to finding the fruit of the hinge and hauntology was like folding the flower in right pattern to bring the fortune of insight and memory. Encountering the *beast*, was like the words written in Miguel Angel diary, a dance with the devil.

Appendix 1: Migrant Report Lyrics

Ancestors

It was indigo and cacao/ establishing Catholic towns
Divided gold and copper from skin that was black and brown
Shouted loud died In crowds
Martyrdom was the crown/ bullets shroud a proud spirit
Bodies they stack in mounds
A million, end of the worlds we've seen from oblivion
Calling on Quetzalcoatl from volcanoes of Obsidian
Militant love never cease/ peace is devoured by the beast
Howling out empty promises of release
Freedom by whom?
The same ones that assumed we'd forget the songs medicines
Ceremonies and plumes
Blowing smoke mirrors / pull up in your night terrors
Brujo dope dealers/ campesinos on four wheelers
can't get no realer/ dome spillin'
Devil is soul stealing he's an old villain no feelings type/
A cold killer on some stolen land/ let me hold a soldier's hand
Through the frozen sands/ its not understood but we overstand

My Ancestors, My Ancestors
My Clan Destined to be Clandestine
Secret code words hand gestures
Withstand pressure, Withstand Pressure
I'm calling on my ancestors
"I pray they bring the fam blessings"

The year was 1989, cold rigger at 5
Rebels woke up in the city had to run in and hide
Black helicopters pepper the sky
Bombs drop Jaws lock, Life is Jekyll and Hyde
The city shook as the war changes the essence of time
wasn't old enough to fight but had the presence of mind
To know that violence a response to dejected designs
Built to strip away our dignity get us to resign
I hold on to the sleeve of my mother trying to breathe
but I'm smothered under rubble and the consequential evil that men do
Half man half ghost from the trauma we went through
The slow triggers feel like eye stabs with a pencil

Read the stars to replenish because this war ain't finished
Even scars that ugly, can reflect Gods Image
Looking back, going forward in reverse
Long before we was dispersed like seeds across the earth beneath dirt huh

Nipsey

Generally walking the edge, juggling these hutles I keep ignoring my bed
These juggernauts think muscle can't grow inside of your head
Your cred tumbling from all that you said its Red Alert
Read somewhere that we're split in two lines after we're dead
Got ahead of that fork in the road, this for the set
and the hardworking mama's, keeping the table set
and the papa's with the rent on time
Making bread like I said
I'm moonwalking on the ledge, bluemooning on the web
Blood moon that wants my neck she wants revenge
gotta loot I'm outta meds
Gotta duck, shoot, move around the feds
Cuz the groove the only thing to heal my pain I'm cutting heads
You can't download lowdown, it's a real life showdown
This how real life goes down
Be round pro brown
we B.I.G. rounds
We G'd up beat clowns
We Up Beat, sit Down

Nipsey: "we make out dream realer and you make your team better, wake your game up and you make your scheme better"

Without a fuss and a lack of lust survival is miraculous then we're back to dust
Hope you didn't pack a lunch in the back of bus those baddies packed a punch
We had to wait for power to circle after us
Now its police that are backing up/ criminals and felons back with us
discussing options but the cash a must, watch the envy
I peeped it when my parents fleeced and copped a 10-speed
or when I started reaching people, with the way my pen bleed
Letting in inside left my heart and eyes empty I apologize A product of the lies for 5 centuries
I don't need no crown though as long as I stay Brown though that's a two touch pound bro
Two blunt, round home now I shoot like Rambo
Found a blue white Lambo time to scoot down south Ho
I'm off with it Off-put with it
we not evolving, soft and the flaws augmented

all the stars lost their shine and the cars all rented I'm done
I'm seeking applause from my exhaustion
the levels of my art and sauce that got tossed into the cauldron
hot like an arson first one out on late nights like I'm Carson
Here to bring the holy end to the Jargon – The Heartest –

Love to bring the light

A child of the light
Despite the power going off at the height of the night
The candle shimmers for the lost ones lost ones rocking the mic
Revealing powers to ignite
cuz I don't think we taking off if we don't make this thing right
Something from nothing to make
cheap rates for the zombies that are sleeping awake
The streets grace me with the power to achieve what is great
Don't get stuck in your place revealing truths you too stubborn to face
We had, five millennial memories
Crowd around burials to pour out some Hennessy
the Crown wants to minerals to grow white supremacy
We ain't really down with that at all
Stealing from the commons since the cannonballs
Supreme arrogance Irritant
Chef a bowl of rice you can share with the militant
we filling in the blanks of everything you made primitive
Dialogue deliberate All city raw natural derivatives

Lament

How do you get by without touching love
Just one under the covers lonely nights without such and such
Can you teach yourself what type of skills are you brushing up
Can you touch your wealth, in yourself do you trust enough?
I know its hard to see them
Must be harder to be them
Garden your arboretum and go ahead and Carpe Diem
Homeland, is your state of mind clear as holy water
Is your karma clean enough to spare future sons and daughters
Will you remember Martyrs?

Forgive all the sins of fathers?

Are you the reason for someone to ride and hustle the streets?
Are you the reason for someone to wash the dirt off their feet?
Do you believe when they say to win you gotta be like someone
Gotta be like somebody else?
You thinking all sinners will go to hell?
If you can help then for heaven's sake
If you know you gon' yak and do it on a hater's face
Cancel all your vacation get on a new mental plane
While they bitchin' and dissin' we'd rather disseminate
Fuck whatever they say

Will you give up all your people's history to make history
Find the perfect love but struggle to solve the mystery
I asked you where you lay your head
You told me on a bed of ice I must've asked a million times
I think I need a better vice
Still waters run deep
From the old country
Spoke her mother tongue the flower rare like a slum tree
You should've never dumped me
We say that when we hungry
And we forget the whole shebang started from a sunseed
We'll make it there one day
Love is never fair gun play

Are you the reason for someone to ride and hustle the streets?
Are you the reason for someone to wash the dirt off their feet?
Do you believe when they say to win you gotta be like someone
Gotta be like somebody else?
You thinking all sinners will go to hell?
If you can help then for heaven's sake
If you know you gon' yak and do it on a hater's face
Cancel all your vacation get on a new mental plane
While they bitchin' and dissin' we'd rather disseminate
Fuck whatever they say

(Lauren Bridge)

How you gon' win when you ain't right within? X8

Will you remember martyrs?
Forgive all the sins of fathers?

Are you the season for someone to say goodbye to their home?
Give up the person they were and get on the train to unknown?
Are you picture to carry courage forward generations
Are you living for someone else?
A love that put other dreams on the shelf
If you can help it let it resonate
All your future descendants gon' wonder what you ate?
All this trauma and bloody memories to wash away
Got me thinking about all the future yesterdays today
Fuck whatever they say

Mandela

Got the mayan blood inside I sacrifice to the sun
With the AK-47 that's how they got it done
Only way to break the cycle of imperial drums
The scenarios on the run the American funds
that imported aerial tonnes make you run out the house
I was nascent with the rebels and my Tia can vouch
loaded Colt 1911 in the sleeve of the couch
Knew the code of silence way before I learned how to count
You can say the whole flex is a bit TMI
Ever since the G.I. Joe I been all CSI
Trying to find who plays the role of an All-seeing eye
G in me win the prize
Take a seat on the side
Evil deeds denied
How many times I've gotta lose myself
Before the meaning of my freedom defined
Do Wudu to refine the rough draft of the mind
Make it do the right thing with an indisputable line
you know the time when you see me

You Ain't Gotta Ask If I Goes In

I'm echelons beyond couldn't see me with God's eye
I'm the Mandela in the ego apartheid
I'm a candela when I enter the dark side and

Known to start fires in ascension to starchild
Found a general, make him pay for war crimes
Think I found beef, Don't eat pork rines
Breaking a peace treaty since handed a beat CD

I walk on the streets beedy She under the sheets needy
I'm digging her deep, To the center of the earth in a Jeep
Fill my body up with life when I skeet
Illuminati wants everybody to die to their sleep
Dream of life we forgotten that we entitled to keep
Gotta fight on your feet
Real riders united against the lie that divided into numbers

To feed the mouth of The Beast
I got a death drive,
The smoke kiss my left eye, held in the last toke
Froze and let fly
It's him.

White Lies

I promise myself to never let go of the truth
even if it cost me life I resurrect through the youth
through the years of complaints
must've forgot all the dangers of treating brothers like strangers
cuz their from another place
say that shit to my face
year that's what I though
hatred got no imagination no relation to art
all the stories you told about me gon' tear us apart
it takes a certain kind of arrogane don't care of your smart
in my area squaring up under aerial lights with the wrong apparel
in peril I want my burial rights
I don't care that you went out your way to say something nice
when there's miracles of this life that keep disappearing on sight
but whats appearance and light?
a piercing gaze through the night
a circulation of love a body made to ignite
without intention we fall and I intent to love all
but your abusing your priviledge that shit be putting us off
but I'm a sucka for love

sex, love and all the above
drugs and the raw
where you think we got it from?
your diamonds can't phase me I see what you do
I'm crying I'm naked to get closer to you
so come and hit me with your white lies
I fall for it everytime

come and hit me with your white lies
knock me down like a glass of wine, but I'll be fine

You say you love me to you I'm just an idea
relation gets complicated you gone too soon like Aaliyaah
I mean like a magic trick, you hid inside a museum
the author, the narrator the one who pays our per diem
you act so polite, then take up all the space in the world
you want us to wait our turn
but made up race and its terms
to keep us low, while you keep a high rate of return
on a highway to hell, like how do you find the nerve?
I'm high, reaching my limit
you lie, you've been forgiven
You cry, feeling offended I feel there's no way to end it
I die, you play the victim and hog all the attention and
hide, behind the walls of your false memories invented
micro-aggression and those little white lies
that make up the whole structure of how we live out our lives
somatic songs keep my nerves calm
you need a slap in the face to see what's going on
but I'm a sucka for love

Appendix 2: Adrift: An Adaptation of the Salvador Alvarenga Story

ADRIFT

An adaptation of the Salvador Alvarenga Story

Written by Sergio Guerra

Screenplay written as a component to a Major Portfolio submitted to the Faculty
of Environmental Studies and Urban Change in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies, York University,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Costa Sul, Chiapas, Mexico. Nov 17 2012

Salvador Alvarenga and Ezekiel Cordoba are freshly off the shore heading towards the ocean on a 25 ft long and narrow canoe shaped boat: Salvador sits beside Ezekiel who is manning the propeller engine, briefing the young Mexican on the fishing plan ahead.

Salvador:

Cordoba, Ju are a champion mijo. Para alla! From here, West,

Thanks for filling in last minute for Ray.

You in good hands.

I been fishing for 15 years, es mi vida

I don't even need a line to catch fish mijo
yo con mis manos (*gesture*)

Asi que, ponte las pilas, were gonna work hard sin stop for two days straight,
Asimira (*gestures*) , let out two miles of finish line y ya papa! pisto en el pocket mijo, or how you
mexicans say it, pura lana papa!
we can head back drink for a whole week

I've never had a problem aqui en Chiapas. Nada, I go out, fishing two days, hechar verga, bam,
Dinero to spend the rest of the week, tranquilo mijo!(*gestures the drink*)

It's not like in El Salvador, puta alla, they'll kill you for a fish head. Just death and corruption. Y la
Guerra con policias and the gangs. (*kisses teeth*)
no, no, esta malo alla, that's why I don't even go anymore...

you couldn't even go to la tienda without risking your life.

I left when the children started disappearing.

(*silence: "how long have you been away"*)

Its been 10 years. Can you believe that.

I don't think I'll return. I like Mexico better, more space
more things to see and explore, more places to be alone.
Alla en El Salvador, huuhhh es un hormiguero, an ant hill.

Everywhere you go, someone, someone someone.
Eso si...I miss the pupusas. That goes without saying vea?.

That's why, El Master Plan, (sound), pal norte.

Alla...todo es major, everything better.

(silence: "do you have family back home")

Si, mi mama, my daughter, and her mother.

(Silence)

Es complicado.

How old are you Cordoba ?

22. You married>?

(silence)

One day you'll understand.

(silence)

no. *(long pause)* I haven't spoken to her since she was 7. *(no turn around)*

(silence)

(Salvador stands up looking at the horizon)

(silence: Cordoba asks about the storm)

yea, that's a storm.

But not today Cordoba.

today, you and I are the storm.

Vale Chonga,

Ey! She's not a boat. She's a little ship. I been through bigger storms than that.

And you know what they say: The fish love to come out when it rains.

(silence)

2

(Recording of May Day Call)

3. Panic and Despair: Drinking Turtle Blood

(on the boat, the icebox, used as shelter, One Strike on the Moon Count, Salvador and Cordoba)

sit in a fetal position inside the ice box, discussing Cordoba's aversion to drinking turtle blood and piss, when a bird perches on the boat, and Salvador decides to catch it and eat it.)

(speaks in panic)

Cordoba, Cordoba, you have to eat, you have to drink. If not, you wont get better.
you have to drink it, I know you don't like the taste but you have to drink.
its been 7 days since its rained, its Going to rain soon! (It has to)
We've collected enough bottles to give us water for two weeks! (Laughs hysterically)
and they say pollution is a bad thing?

We'll find more garbage bags of food, another cabbage, mas chocolate maybe,
Watch, were gonna land right on that garbage island they talk about,

Imagine! all the treasures we can find Cordoba.

(silence)

No Cordoba...the radio broke in the storm remember?

We let go of our catch and equipment when we were racing back to shore.

Right now, Right now, I need you to focus on me. El moment Viejo.

think about right now. What we gotta do now? Huh? *(panicked)*

Oh we gotta feed Pancho soon?

Ahhh mira, Pancho's outside right now

He's our only friend Cordoba, Pancho needs us..

(silence) (stares dryly at Cordoba)

It doesn't matter that He's a seagull Cordoba...he's Pancho.

(silence)

he's not gonna fly away I tied him to a showlace Papaaa. Gotta hae faith in God mijo...

Cordoba! Mira, you gotta get back home a tu Nana,

she waiting for you with a big sopa de frijol mira,

un gran guisado she must have for you.

Cordoba, you gotta eat the turtle meat mijo, mira

I dried it with saltwater on the dock and mira, im gonna cut them into strips and serve them on

A turtle shell, on toothpicks made from the vertebrae asi, mira,

Pedasitas, bite sized que rico

like a 5 star restaurant in the south of France mira.

Cordoba, Look at me, Look at me! *(raises voice)*

You are not going to die! Vas a vivir! You're gonna make it! .

but you have to be brave,

you have to drink your urine,

you have to drink the Blood from the turtle,

The rain is coming!
(silence, Salvador stares at Cordoba. Volume down)

Salvador listen to me, no no...listen...mijo, Amigo,
You're sick. You're not dying,
I promise you, I didn't know that bird had a snake in its belly, Creemelo Cordoba,
I didn't poison you so that I could eat you.
You're not alone, I'm here, were in this together,
but you have to have faith.
(silence) (fishes bump the bottom of the boat)
shh. Quiet. You hear that.
(silence)
the fish are here. Ok you stay here, im gonna go catch one
and your gonna eat it,
Cordoba... tenga fe.
(Salvador leaves the ice box)

4. A week After Death: In Conversation

(Salvador sits, sluggish and frenzied, on the bow of the ship talking to Cordoba's corpse, 7 days after his death. Two Strikes on the Moon Count)

The rain is coming. *(Takes deep breath)*
I can feel it. *(looks at cordoba's corpse)*
When the rain comes, youre gonna have to help me cerote!
You know the drill.
You pale out the water. I collect the water.
Then we switch. Okay!
lazy piece of
look! Look at yourself! You been sitting on your ass for 7 days.
And they say Mexican's work hard.
Salvadorians work hard!
Mi abuela moved to the city by herself when she was 15 to sell meat at the market.
She hustled tortillas on the side while she taught herself how to sew,
so that she could eventually open up her own shop and work for herself.
She was born during ethnocide, survived 8 military dictatorships
4 major earthquakes
2 volcano eruptions

1 husband with another family
hundreds of strikes
12 year bloody civil war
an addiction to massacres

4 car accidents

6 surprise military inspections

a complete gang takeover of the neighborhood
A Salvadorian epidemic called gastritis

The dollarization of our currency
a daily average of 16 homicides a day

What do you know about being scared to death Cordoba!?

(pause)

how is death Cordoba? Is it as peaceful as they say it is?
Is it free from suffering? Because I'm sure not!

Even death has forgotten me, just like my daughter

(pause)

What are you looking at pancho?

Stupid bird.

Mira, este bird is mas useful que tu!

Pinche Pancho.

What do you know about death!

(kisses teeth) y ate voy a cocinar.

(looks down in frustration, takes deep breath)

So what, you gonna tell me what God is like?

Is he as much wrath as mercy?

or maybe you went to hell Cordoba?

I didn't know you. Maybe you were a pinche narco, o un asesino!

Is hell as fucked up as this?

Look at us...in the middle of the fucking ocean

surrounded by man's garbage. All we do is eat and shit and fuk and breed and die

Smells like Hell to me.

Tell me Cordoba...

Como es el Diablo? Is he as ugly as me. (Laughs hysterically)

What are you looking at Pancho!?

(under breath)

Pinche pancho.

(pause, looks back at Cordoba's corpse)

Do you know what I did, what I had to do what they made me do?

Era un Cipote, I was a child.

They put a stolen Colt.45 in my hand

and a SA-7 Grail Rocket Launcher on my back.

We were camped out on the mountainside in morazan.

We didn't even hear the helicopter rising from below

y Cabal, paahh. Asi me quedo *(gestures in front of him)*

They hadn't seen us yet. SO I took el cuete on my back,

mi chero loaded it up, I closed one eye I looked through the scope

(pause)

(explosion sound)

Happy new years.

There were maybe seis in there.

(pause)

I lost count Cordoba.

What would you say If I told you I don't remember how many times I've died.

Maybe I'm dead right now. And if this is death than what is after death? Maybe its time to die again! *(change of pace)*

Because you're, pretty pinche boring, and el infierno, sounds like a hell of a better time than sitting hear waiting to die with you!

What are you squacking about Pancho?!

(pauses to look around, hears a storm)

(looks back wide eyed at the corpse and stands still for a long pause)

Pancho says your dead. That I should stop talking to you.

He says I have to get ready for the rain now.

And that I'm not dead

because if I was

You'd be talking to me and not Pinche Pancho!

(Salvador gets up with energy towards Cordoba's Corpse)

5. *The Long Haul: In Exile*

(7 marks on Moon Count, Salvador is dehydrated, emaciated. He sits on the boat, about to feast on a bird he caught. The boat is littered with new items he's found at sea. The boat is surrounded by floating water bottles).

Let us bow our heads in prayer.

(gestures everyone to bow their heads)

En el nombre del hijo del padre del espiritu santo.

Dear God, the Most Benevolent and Merciful

Giver of life, All seeing all knowing

Ometeotl, supreme overlord of the universe

Tezcatlipoca the Smoking Mirror Enemy on Both Sides

to the feathered serpent liberator of man and gods Queztalcoatl

The Living Christ

The keepers of time,

Santa Maria Madre De Dios

the Ancestors in the stars

The Crowd of Martyrs that flower your crown

It is in you we gather today, in humble gratitude of all your blessings.

in this house of butterflies.

Surrounded by good company, familia and and friends

For Cordoba

For Pancho...who lays in front of us today,

In literal sacrifice to the sun

so that we live on

and that God is happy.

(...I don't know, maybe laugh)

AMEEN

Ok, thank you everyone for joining me today

I usually don't have this much company over so,

don't mind the crowded space, the fish guts everywhere

or the 5 x 4 icebox that takes up more than half my boat

which I kinda need that to survive

Ok, So

Time to get to know everyone, What s your name.

And where are you from.

And your name? and what do you do for a living?

(jabbers on)

You, I already know you, we go way back. You and I *(points)*

we gonna talk.

Ok so my name is Salvador Alvarenga, I'm from El Salvador
I have a daughter, her name is Alma Alvarenga, Her mother is named Veronica
Mi amor de mi vida, I'm a fisherman but also do plumbing, electric, construction, landscaping,
sanitation services, piñata making, *sewing*, and car mechanics,
and I like Green mangoes con limon y sal, y alhuaxxte,
Solid ground over water and
and my guilty pleasure is...
(*closes eyes*) eating my fingersnails to fight off the hunger pains
(reopens with one eye)
Okay, now that we've gotten a little more comfortable with eachother
lets play a little game:

If you were going to be left adrift to die on a tiny little boat, sorry, a little ship.
What are three things you would bring with you. GO (*points at anyone*)

Me? I wouldn't bring anything. Nada.
All that is precious is no more.
I have found peace in knowing that having nothing
will give me everything I need.
Look at me. How is it that I'm alive,
Did I bring anything? No, I'm here because of God.
Who demands I empty my vessel, so that there is room
for his bounty.
What Devotion Can I show to any man, flag or army?

The emptiness of the heart of man,
his greed, his avarice, his insatiable lust to produce, consume
and then throw it all in the ocean.
All that we forget
There must be 30 trillion tons of it out there
I've seen it with my own eyes
I've found everything that you can imagine in these waters.
(*list off things*)

The ocean ,the infinite depository of man's lost memories.
I think they wrote about this is Egypt.
(*pause*) Yes, there is solitude in my exile,
but nowhere have I felt more loneliness,
than wading through the fragments of man's amnesia.
I've found so many useless things that you wonder how much time people lost using them.

but you know what the most useful thing I've ever found was?
You. (squints eyes) and I'm beginning to suspect that
you are not who you say you are? (*long pause and stare down*)
Hey, Shhh, you guys hear that?
Look, its calm. Do you guys wanna go for a swim?
C'mon it's safe (*pause*) theres no sharks I swear
Don't you see I've create bobbing out of coca cola bottles and tied them to books that are used
as anchors. If the cans are not moving, there's no sharks.
C'mon it's a beautiful day, everybody's out and about
looking good, Chale, Last one in has to eat Pancho's eyeballs
(*Salvador jumps in the water, slowly*)

6.

Deep: Into a zone:

(Salvador sits with 13 strikes on the Full Moon Count. His hair and beard, dehydration and lack
of proper food has left him unrecognizable. He is still collecting water in bottles, continuing to
wander the world in his mind)

Who's there? Who's knocking on my door like that Oh
La migra? Ice? Theres no children here! Puchica,
disuprting my dreams...(closes eyes again)
where was I, ahh yes, las pupusitas,
2 de frijol con queso
3 tres revuelta----4 revueltaas
(dozes off again)
(apparent knock at the door)
(Salvador sighs in frustration)

Even in Exile they find me hijue la gran sesenta mil putas
Come In...!
Y tu...que quieres...what do you want?
ID? I don't have ID.
Name? I don't have a name?
Address? Look around you man.
te voya dar un coscorron
What do you guys want here anyways
Yea I caught those fish myself
NO I Do Not have a license
A permit? My permit is that I take a shit right at the other end of this boat.
(turns to one direction)
you look like clint eastwood man. (turns another direction)
Don't touch those fish nets the seagulls gotta game tonight
and their gonna swarm me if I don't referee.
Okay, Don't touch me. Don't touch me.

You are not in your jurisdiction.

This is castaway rules, no nation or government can claim domain this far out at sea.

SO you guys are gonna have to get out. Ya estubo.

No I don't have ID.

Look, let me tell you who I am for the last time, before you think you can drag me out of here

like some little goat your taking out to slaughter,

I am from a Rich Land, An ancient and advanced

Descendent from the Elders of from the Holy city of Teotihuacan,

Following the Great lineage of the Toltecs .

who from them arose a white feathered Serpent named Quetzalcoatl,

half human half lord who aspired a transcendant piety for the people

He who denounced sacrifice, denounced excess and profligacy

Banishes and outcast to the East

Later to be confused for the white Spaniards by Moctezuma

Who fell in Love on the banks of Lago Guiga,

And rebuilt his Kingdom among the volcanoes and Ceiba trees

Later to be renamed by the Cuzcatlan nation

Who's last prince stabbed Perdo Alvarado in his leg,

Leaving him with a limp for life

Son of slaves,

Daughters of Chocolate, Tabacco and Indigo

near extinction we remained

Long before the guns came

My father is from Sonsonate, the sight of the great rebellion of Anastasio Aquino,

And where Feliciano Ama and Farabundo Marti would later polish shoes and organize the people against the facist state

My mother from Morazan, Where the fearless amassed by the thousands to fight against imperial regaenistas

Born in the valley of the hammocks,

Captain of this ship and Master of the deep waters

Under the command of el reyes de los reyes

Lords of the 7 skies and the 9 hells,

Command you, to take your hands off my things,

and remove yourself from my paradise

and if you don't get outta here, before that next full moon comes,

yo te aviso! I'm gonna

Oh Look.

A coconut.

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