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Toward a Decolonial Queer Ecology: Reparative Reading of Gothic and Speculative Fiction

Gregory L. Chwala

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TOWARD A DECOLONIAL QUEER ECOLOGY:
REPARATIVE READING OF GOTHIC AND SPECULATIVE FICTION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2017

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The issues that Gothic and speculative fiction most often confront deal with the deepest and darkest of human fears and concerns. Much Gothic and speculative fiction gets people to confront their fears in the way that it can address the problems of the present through imagined worlds. Might rethinking the value of imagined worlds move us toward a more-inclusive justice? This dissertation explores the human, human fears, and human imagination in Gothic and speculative colonial-themed texts to understand the ways that this kind of fantastic fiction has created and continues to address structures of power—how it critiques race, gender, sexuality, nature, and the human. Each chapter traces the development of a growing awareness of ruptures in our environment caused by these structures of power that are the consequence of a specific understanding of the human. Exploring a gradual progression of decolonial world making in H. Rider Haggard, Michelle Cliff, and Octavia Butler’s work can repair deep schisms and ruptures that colonialism, via extension of the human, has set in place between race/gender/sexuality and our environment to renegotiate our consciousness, rewrite the human, and un-trouble nature.

What I offer is a way to move us toward healing—a form of reparative reading that takes up a decolonial, queer, ecocritical lens to interrogate the human. A framework for decolonial world making emerges through my readings that I call *decolonial queer ecologies*, a framework which resituates knowledges and undoes the internalization of a logic of coloniality by exploring and/or rediscovering queer-inclusive notions of nature by deconstructing the human in Haggard,

Cliff, and Butler's work. Reading strategies for decolonial queer world making emerge that act as a form of reparative reading in ways that help us to see common goals and purposes that have been hidden by a colonial-driven understanding of what it means to be human, and in turn not-quite-human, nonhuman, and more-than-human. In sum, I argue that reading Haggard, Cliff, and Butler's texts moves us toward a decolonial queer ecology through the ways we can discover reading strategies for decolonial world making to reimagine new natures and queer ways of being.

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This dissertation was first inspired by Susan Comfort's course: "Literature, the Environment, and Social Change." In this course, I was able to realize how my interests in studying gender and sexuality, in being an advocate for the marginalized, and in sustaining our

environment might come together. It is this course that introduced me to queer ecologies and to Octavia Butler and Michelle Cliff. Thank you for nurturing my learning and guiding me toward understanding how loving and caring for our environment is in large part about embracing diversity and valuing and respecting each organism's contributions to our Earth. Though I have always had a passion for being in "nature," Susan set me on a path to realizing the many ways I might have idealized it and overlooked its historical contextualization. She also helped me to realize how the complexity of sexuality and gender is found outside of humankind—how queerness has always been and is a much needed aspect of our ecosystems. Thank you for your encouragement and direction.

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INTRODUCTION

LOCATING DECOLONIAL QUEER ECOLOGIES

Our *mythoi*, our origin stories, are always formulaically patterned so as to co-function with the endogenous neurochemical behavior regulatory system of our human brain. Humans are, then, a biomutationally evolved, hybrid species—*storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological*. With this, particular (presently biocentric) macro-origin stories are overrepresented as the singular narrative through which the stakes of human freedom are articulated and marked.

—Sylvia Wynter, *On Being Human as Praxis*

Reimagining Ecologies

Writing about our understanding of the human, Sylvia Wynter posits that humans are storytellers who have invented a biocentric story of being human: “*storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological*” (qtd. in Wynter and McKittrick 11). The insinuation is that throughout modern history our concept of what is human is a story that has focused on our biology, and this in turn ignores the fact that our understanding of what is human is largely dependent on our environment. For Wynter, the human is a combination of *mythoi* (beliefs and assumptions) and *bios* (material matter). Being human is wrapped up in complex biopolitics and sociopolitical processes with one another and our environment, and our biology is furthermore created by these processes. Our understanding about what is human has been historically constructed, as has our understanding of our environment as nature. For instance, Darwinian human theories of origin are largely misconstrued as essentialist rather than as theories of social adaptation, but as Leela Gandhi argues, Charles Darwin’s work is supportive of complex interdependence, cooperative coadaptation, and relational cohabitation invested in differentiation (112). There is no singular master narrative for what is human or how we come to be human. Humans are entangled in differentiation and the emergence of changing, new forms of being that are enmeshed in interconnected processes, constantly becoming and unbecoming. We

need new stories of the human that show this, and fiction is a place where those stories get worked out.

Understanding the damage of biocentrism is not only important for working through human trouble, but also for understanding how it drove colonialism and formed constructions and hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, recognizing that any identity is entangled in differentiation and enmeshed in interconnected processes is important for framing a new story that might reverse some of the damage that has been set in place. Using queer ecologies, a framework that investigates nonheteronormative, nonbinary, multiplicities of gender and sexuality and deconstructs race to understand how racism and racial categorization have formed binary notions of gender and sexuality, I seek to show how authors have framed new stories to move away from colonial logic and a biocentric understanding of the human—how stories that challenge the human complicate hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality. More than anything else, I aim to move readers toward dismantling hierarchies of power which have produced racism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, and anthropocentrism—all of which I argue stems from an understanding of what is human. I explore how speculative narratives suggest ways to move away from these hierarchies via how they are so closely aligned with colonialism. In simplified form, I pose my problem as this: human trouble leads to nature trouble, which leads to empire/colonization trouble, which leads to race/gender/sexuality trouble. Yet, our inheritance of Western colonialism is more complex than this. There is no simple way to move away from it because we are all implicated and caught up in the colonial system and actions of the colonizer. Decolonial queer ecology is not a solution, but a process that can never be fully realized. This is partly why I have decided to entitle my project *Toward a Decolonial Queer Ecology*—because it implies that we ought to move toward change and healing by repairing our relationships with our

environment and one another—by bridging the gap between what we understand as *nature* and *human*. Decolonial-queer-environmental world-building moves us toward the important work of change and healing.

This dissertation explores the human, human fears, and human imagination in colonial-themed speculative works to understand the ways that Gothic and speculative fiction have created and continue to address structures of power—how fantastic fiction critiques race, gender, sexuality, nature, and even the human itself—and how this understanding can undo much of the damage caused by colonialism and imperialism. Each chapter traces the development of a growing awareness of ruptures in our environment caused by structures of power that are the consequence of a specific understanding of the human in the nineteenth century that drove European colonialism and the horrors and terrors which accompanied it. History has produced imaginative fictions that reinforce hegemony and oppression. Nevertheless, speculative stories can reveal great truths, and we can imagine new forms to move toward freer worlds. The imagination is a powerful tool; yet, understanding how it has been used can often be a difficult and painful experience. Similarly, imagining how speculative worlds challenge our present inequalities by building new worlds that can move us toward a better future is hard work. Liberation is never easily gained. It is built on the imaginations and visions of collective forces over time. Repairing the damage done is a process that requires both critical thinking and engagement. This is what decolonial queer ecologies can do—contribute to this process. Reading with this framework can move us toward decolonizing our minds. Decolonial queer ecologies ask readers to look at the complexities of human imagination to better understand how and why characters are written the way they are. The framework asks us to abandon prejudices built on an ingrained understanding of what the human and nature are, and to think hard about contradiction,

complexity, and struggle—to explore negotiations of consciousness and ask how they might be impacted by historical discourse.

Gothic fiction and speculative fiction are genres for such a task of reparative reading because they deal so overtly with hierarchies, marginalization, and alternative worlds. The Gothic works well for an exploration of transitions and becomings in the way that the genre has atypically represented sexual identity and gender in interplay with ideas of uncertainty and ambiguity. As George Haggerty has pointed out in *Queer Gothic*, “The cult of Gothic fiction reached its apex at the very moment when gender and sexuality were beginning to be codified for modern culture. . . . Gothic fiction offered a testing ground for many unauthorized genders and sexualities . . .” (2). This is largely because of how the genre’s motifs and imagery create a framework for exploring taboo subjects and themes. Paulina Palmer argues in *The Queer Uncanny* that Gothic fiction is rich of motifs and images with uncanny connotations that create a frame for the discussion of novels from a queer position that includes trans issues, principally the following uncanny motifs: secrets (and mysteries); different locations and spaces; doubles and spectrality; and the monstrous and unnatural (6-16). These uncanny motifs have offered a way for readers to understand how authors have explored gender and queer issues in their fiction.

However, it is in asking “what if” that we can search for new directions. Speculative fiction offers this possibility of searching for new ways of becoming best. Decolonial-queer-environmental world-building is reparative in the ways it can imagine creative worlds that queer our reality and create fantasies that can probe complex issues and elevate people on the margins of society. Fiction which is speculative, which imagines new ways of being and becoming, new possibilities, can make great change. Teaching close reading strategies for understanding its value is essential. Producing scholarship that contributes toward world building is useful and

important. Nevertheless, world building is not an ends, but a process, always being remade, plotting new directions, and rediscovering alternative ways of being. Gothic and speculative fiction helps us to recognize the complexity of our existence and the complexity of our environment to move toward decolonization.

What are we to make of the fears that terror and horror provoke in Gothic and speculative fiction? How can Gothic and speculative fiction push readers to critique the margins of society in order to rethink new types of more-just worlds? Might rethinking the value of speculative worlds help move us toward justice? What both Gothic and speculative fiction share is their potential for creating fantastic worlds that address ways we might better understand our fears, liberate oppressed people, and dismantle structures of power. It is this potential that interests me, and the texts I have chosen work best to illustrate why. I select these texts because they are strong quintessential models of distinct genres with colonial themes that represent three different movements which address (non)human ecologies: the negotiation of British empire in the Imperial Gothic; the aftermath of empire in the postcolonial Caribbean (Jamaican) Gothic; and a reimagining of empire in speculative (science) fiction by the genre's first major African-American female writer. The novels are set in places and written at crucial times in colonial modernity¹ where decolonial-queer-environment world-building works well.

¹ By colonial modernity, I mean the impact of colonialism and colonial expansion founded on the building of European empires from the industrial revolution, which reached its height at the end of the nineteenth century through the collapse of these empires in the early to late twentieth centuries. In his analysis of the Imperial Gothic, Brantlinger calls the beginning of this period in Great Britain high imperialism, beginning approximately 1870 and reaching its height in the mid-1880s. In the twentieth century, the world saw a collapse of these empires as neoimperial empires, such as the United States, began to emerge. Cliff's novels deal with this transition in Jamaica from a postcolonial British state to an American neocolonial one, the time period after Jamaica established its independence in 1962 through the 1980s. Butler's novels are written during a time of heightened nuclear tension, during the Cold War in the 1980s, a time which saw a struggle of power between the two greatest imperial powers on Earth at the time—the United States and the Soviet Union.

Each of the three chapters that follow show why reading fantastic fiction is a meaningful practice, a useful way to intervene at the scene of nature/human/empire/sexuality trouble. The terrors and horrors that each of my chapter's texts provoke are directly linked to a human tendency to dominate and divide that can be traced back to an understanding of the trouble set in place by the human, a nature trouble I investigate that defines the monstrous in ways that safeguard a European standard for what it means to be human. Haggard's *She* (1887), Cliff's *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), and Butler's *Xenogenesis* (1989) show a gradual awareness of human relationships to environment over time that complicate, challenge, and change the ways that race/gender/sexuality play into this fold. The Imperial Gothic novel, postcolonial Caribbean Gothic novel, and late-twentieth century dystopian science fiction novel are good places to start because they emerge at crucial times in our history when people are rethinking relationships between the human and environment—the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth to late-twentieth centuries. Haggard's *She* marks the beginning of the Imperial Gothic and is its subgenre's most influential text, a subgenre obsessed with exploring the relationship between the human/nature that is marked by a combination of Darwinism, imperialism, and an interest in the occult. Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* are crucial Jamaican postcolonial Gothic texts that examine a transition from the ruins of the British Empire through the emergence of American imperialism and how this process changes the role that humans play in their environments. Butler's *Xenogenesis* complicates how humans think about themselves and their past and present to imagine their future in a time when imperialism is becoming a more indirect means through which natural resources are being abstracted from those colonized by the neoimperial force of capitalism, rather than the state.

In my analysis of each chapter, I trace an understanding of the human post Renaissance through the emergence of Darwin's theories of evolution and sexual selection in the nineteenth century after his publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Doing so is useful for understanding the relationship between the human, nature, and the monstrous in each speculative text. European society increasingly began to see the human as a fixed essence based upon a European standard for what it means to be human, and this fixed idea of the human as an essence based on this European model led to and justified the colonialism and colonial exploitation of racial others. This concept of the human, which neglects social and political influences that form the human, was also used to justify the elimination of alternate genders and sexualities, as well as the dominance of and creation of nature. In sum, the problems created by colonialism are the result of seeing the human as a fixed essence based on a limited European ideal. Identifying the ways that race/gender/sexuality and environment have been co-constructed by imperial and colonial narratives, often masquerading as scientific discourse, reveals troubling patterns, which I argue have structured not only our epistemologies and ontologies, but crucially our ecologies.

In Chapter One, I argue that H. Rider Haggard's Imperial Gothic novel *She* creates an imaginative world that troubles and subtly challenges racial, gender, and sexual norms through the ways that he juxtaposes depictions of landscapes to his characters, even though in the process, his fantastic fiction also reinforces the structures of power that trouble him. While Haggard's novel shows a struggle to understand ruptures in our environment as he negotiates British empire at its high point in the late nineteenth century, Michelle Cliff's work explores ways to repair the rifts in the ruins of British empire that have severed the colonized from their environment in Jamaica. In Chapter Two, I show how Michelle Cliff imagines new forms of queer liberation that might move us toward freer worlds. *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*

destabilize race, gender, and sexuality by reconsidering their relationship to environment and the human. Cliff begins to show how the human is the root problem of injustice, but Octavia Butler truly complicates the human as the root of the problem. In Chapter Three, I show how Butler's *Xenogenesis* gets readers to think more deeply about how a specific understanding of the human, which has come to us predominantly from nineteenth-century Europe, is responsible for late twentieth-century hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality in the way the human has structured all life into the human, not-quite-human, nonhuman, and more-than-human.

What I offer in this dissertation is a way to move us toward healing—a form of reparative reading that takes up a decolonial, queer, ecocritical lens to interrogate the human. A framework for decolonial world making emerges through my readings that I call *decolonial queer ecologies*, a framework which resituates knowledges and undoes the internalization of a logic of coloniality by exploring and/or rediscovering queer-inclusive notions of nature other than Western (colonial) modernity by deconstructing a European standard for what it means to be human. I propose that we might pursue decolonial options through a study and analysis of queer ecologies in cultural, fictional texts to reveal a process of decolonial thinking that delinks queer agency from the colonial matrix of power over time to reimagine new natures and being. I argue that doing so may offer suggestions for decolonizing ecologies by queering ecologies. Decolonial queer ecologies can move us toward an undoing of the nature trouble set in place by the structure of the human. Exploring the gradual progression of decolonial world-building in H. Rider Haggard, Michelle Cliff, and Octavia Butler's work can repair deep schisms and ruptures that colonialism, via extension of the human, has set in place between race/gender/sexuality and our environment to renegotiate our consciousness, rewrite the human, and un-trouble nature. My reparative reading of these authors' texts moves us toward a decolonial queer ecology. Reading

works that use imaginative writing to articulate ecologies is a meaningful practice, a useful way to intervene at the scene of nature/human/empire/sexuality trouble. I will investigate the ways that occupied land and oppressed people have been disconnected and reconnected to an understanding of nature over time to help us rethink the union between conceptualizations of the terms *queer* and *nature*. I read Haggard, Cliff, and Butler as a decolonial queer practice that is variously nearer to and further from their surfaces to create reading strategies for decolonial-queer-environmental world-building.

Decolonial queer ecologies clarify how and why nature and queerness have been written as monstrous at crucial historical time periods, and how the monstrous changes from the late-nineteenth century to the late-twentieth century. As humankind progresses from the 1880s to the 1980s, how do authors and characters challenge the (de)naturalization of the erotic? What happens when authors and characters redefine human embodiment and nature to form new relationships with the land that recognize interconnectivity? How are characters queered, and/or how do queer characters function in new relationships with nature when understood through a decolonial lens? H. Rider Haggard, Michelle Cliff, and Octavia Butler use imaginative writing to articulate ecologies that create reading strategies for decolonial-queer-environmental world-building. These reading strategies act as a form of reparative reading in the ways that they help us to see common goals and purposes that have been hidden by a colonial-driven understanding of what it means to be human, and in turn not-quite human, nonhuman, and more-than-human.

Nature Trouble

Nature is a troubling word. It has various meanings and elicits contentious response. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the word first appeared in English fiction as early as the fourteenth century in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to refer to bodily processes and restorative

powers of the body (or growth), but it is derived from the Old French word *nature* and Ancient Latin word *natura*—roughly meaning, respectively, “innate disposition, character, essence or universal force/order” and “birth, constitution, quality or physical world.” The Romans sometimes used *natura* to refer to the genitals (i.e., sexual differentiation), and during the Holy Roman Empire to refer to the divine. The *OED* broadly defines the noun *nature* in categories ranging from senses relating to the material world, innate character, mental or physical impulses and requirements, and/or physical or bodily power, strength, or substance. To some, the concept evokes images of wilderness (forests, rocks, undomesticated animals), while to others, it resonates with their understanding of essentialism (the doctrine that essence, that is an intrinsic quality of something, precedes its existence). Many have used (and perhaps still use) the word as a counter to that which is domesticated or civilized—in turn situating human beings in opposition to all other life and environments largely removed from human habitation.

Using the term *nature* in these various ways has troubled environmental sustainability and reinforced a hierarchy of human beings over that which is not human. Moreover, the meaning attached to the concept *human* has changed throughout history through resignifications of nature to disqualify some people as less-than-human when they do not meet certain racial, gender, or sexual norms. Nature trouble is a result of human trouble; both nature-as-innateness and nature-as-other-than-civilization rely on fraught and contentious understandings of humanity and selfhood. Walter D. Mignolo, in his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), discusses how the terms *nature* and *human* have changed radically since the Renaissance. Mignolo argues that our world is today ordered through a logic of coloniality. European imperialists implemented and forced universal notions of human and non-human onto the natives they conquered, and new knowledges, practices, and cultures changed the conception of nature to

be something quite more separate from and outside of the human subject that existed in contradistinction to culture. Once nature became a concept, Mignolo writes, “the relation of man to nature displaced the European medieval concept of labor . . . [and] . . . working to live . . . began to mutate into enslaved and then waged labor. . . . Enslaved and waged labor became naturalized in the process of creating an economy of accumulation that is today recognized as capitalist economic mentality” (12). This second transformation of the concept *nature* resulted in an extensive slave trade and human life as commodity “for the owner of the plantation, of the mine, and later on, of the industry,” he writes (12). Industrialization further stigmatized indigenous relationships with their environment as nature came to refer to natural resources, “the food necessary to nourish the machines of the Industrial Revolution that produced other machines (railroad and automobile) that required more food, charcoal, and so on” (12). Mignolo writes, “‘Environmental catastrophe’ started at this moment” (12). The moment Europeans crossed the Atlantic or the African continent and nature became natural resources and the colonized makers of consumer products—often consumer products themselves—marked modernity and the implementation of the logic of coloniality.²

Mignolo notes how this narrative became assumed reality and produced knowledge itself as a commodity: “Coloniality wrapped up ‘nature’ and ‘natural resources’ in a complex system of Western cosmology, structured theologically and secularly; it also manufactured an epistemological system that legitimized its uses of ‘nature’ to generate massive quantities of ‘produce,’ first, and massive quantities of ‘natural resources’ after the Industrial Revolution”

² *Coloniality* is not Mignolo’s original term, though he uses it to form a new framework for understanding the history of the construction of the human and nature. Arguments similar to those of Mignolo have been widely made by others, for instance, through Karl Marx’s idea of primitive accumulation. Mignolo builds on previous work to establish a new way for understanding how colonialism created divisions between the human (in its various forms) and our environment (structured as Nature).

(13). To the West, “the mutation of nature into natural resources” meant progress and modernization, relegating other civilizations to the past as stagnation falling behind the West. This process produced a logic of coloniality that held together the spheres of a colonial matrix of power (knowledge and subjectivity; racism, gender and sexuality; economy; and authority) through successive and cumulative stages: salvation, biopolitics, development, and modernity, which converted the colonized into “consumer entrepreneurs” (14). During the initial stage, European colonizers deployed their rhetoric of modernity under the guise of salvation—saving the souls of the indigenous by converting them to Christianity, but the second stage of colonization, as a civilizing mission, involved controlling souls by managing bodies—the set of techniques that Michele Foucault analyzed as biopolitics. “The third stage—a stage that continues to this day—began the moment the corporations and the market became dominant [and] biotechnology displaced eugenics,” Mignolo writes (14). Development became synonymous with modernity in the fourth stage: “The technological revolution together with the corporate values that were prioritized in Western Europe and the United States . . . made management itself the prime center of social life and knowledge. Corporate values require efficiency—the more you produce, the larger the gains, the happier you are supposed to be” (15). The colonial matrix is now maintained through reWesternization—of both nature and the human.

Once we realize not only how “unnatural” our conceptions of “nature” are, but also how the Western structure of the human is dependent upon colonial conceptions of “nature,” we might then be able to truly undo destructive ways of thinking and being in our world that promote injustice and inequality. In other words, our epistemologies and ontologies need a framework for critiquing the ways in which our environment is queer and complex: interconnected, adaptive, erotic, diverse, sexual, and always evolving toward something new and

different in a way that best benefits the overall ecological system in which we live. We need to reexamine ecologies. A queer ecocritical framework will promote decolonization and a movement away from a postcolonial condition—that which will help us decolonize ourselves from the human and its damaging conceptualizations of nature.

Western colonialism, in using a superior understanding of the human, subverted the “naturally occurring” processes of our world—and here I use the term *naturally* with caution. For what is nature to humans is very likely different to the variety of species that encompass our planet. Thus, as we struggle to find a word for our human and nonhuman environment that more overtly recognizes non-organic matter, we should use the word *nature* with caution, yet also without fear, and as we move into the future in a world plagued by a history of colonial discourse, we might recognize that a return to “nature” ought not be a reclamation of it per se, but a reworking of our understanding of the complex processes in our environment that are a mirror reflection of the workings inside our very own bodies. Systems must work together to operate properly in a way that benefits all. The coalitions that we form with one another in our fight for equality and equal rights might be a model for the types of alliances we form with our nonhuman environment—affinities, queer reimagingings of kin, reconsiderations of the ways in which nonhuman life should be family too. This requires renegotiating our consciousness and rewriting the human to understand how the human is not a fixed essentialism, but constantly becoming and varied, something that Gothic and speculative fiction can highlight quite well.

Haggard’s *She* struggles with abandoning the structure of the human as a fixed European model that is in opposition to nature. Cliff’s novels work at bridging this divide to imagine queer kinships that dismantle colonial structures. However, Butler does the best job of suggesting that we view the human as constantly becoming and all life as varied. I use Elizabeth Grosz’s work

to develop this thread from chapter to chapter. Grosz helps us see how situated knowledges, and in particular theories of sexual selection and evolution, are more geared toward adaptation rather than fixed essentialisms that promote hierarchies. In her 2011 book, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*, Grosz argues that life is a series of temporalities that are always in a process of becoming something new, and, as a result, becoming undone. She understands Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as not grounded in natural selection, but sexual selection, which is grounded in difference and variation: "Darwin has, in effect, produced a new ontology, an ontology of relentless operations of difference, whose implications we are still unraveling" (4). Her book explores this ontology through a new framework that she calls not a "new materialism" but rather a way of understanding matter and life in terms of "temporal and durational entwinements" (5). Grosz writes, "Matter and life become, and become undone. They transform and are transformed. This is less a new kind of materialism than it is a new understanding of the forces, both material and immaterial, that direct us to the future" (5). Grosz develops Darwin's work (as taken up by Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze) to show how life and identity are continually adapting: "how becomings undo the stabilities of identity, knowledge, location, and being, and how they elaborate new directions and new forces that emerge from these processes of destabilization" (3). In other words, life cannot be static nor stable, but is entangled in differentiation and the emergence of changing, new forms of being that are in turn enmeshed in interconnected processes. Grosz's work is useful for a reparative reading of both the human and nature in my reading of Haggard, Cliff, and Butler's work, and since her reworking of the nature of organic life and environment is so crucial to my dissertation's framework, a detailed discussion of her work is needed to situate my application of both decolonial and queer ecologies in the chapters that follow.

Grosz's work is especially important for understanding how human beings are not privileged, unique masters of environment, but inhuman variations (variations of the human produced by their environment) always engaged with and impacting and being impacted by processes, knowledges, organic and inorganic matter. Grosz explains that durational forces—forces of temporalities, complications, dispersions, difference—make becomings possible and the world an endless site for them. Life expresses becoming through species evolution and aging, but matter too must become other in order to sustain life (52). Becoming is more appropriately involution rather than evolution, as Deleuze and Guattari note in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “[Becoming] concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of symbiosis that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation. . . . Becoming is involuntary, involution is creation” (238). Life coevolves, Grosz notes, not simply through the related environments shared by species—as in Deleuze and Guattari's take on Darwin's sense of symbiosis—but in the sense of symbiosis between nonliving and living matter that contains the possibilities for becoming something new from the sum total of which it is: “Life recapitulates matter's durational dynamism by becoming in all directions available to it; that is, in differing as much as possible in its coevolution with matter. Life brings new virtuality to matter, which already harbored in itself the impetus of becoming” (54). This becoming is grounded in difference; “the real” is ever-changing, dynamic, complex temporality—durational only in a sense of temporal makings and unmakings, becomings and unbecomings—toward an outcome always something different and new. Darwin's genetic determinism, she argues, situates life not in static sameness, or homogeneity, but dynamic change, sexual differentiation and variation.

In opposition to contemporary sociobiology,³ which sees sexual selection as a complicated form of natural selection aimed at the survival of a species, Grosz interprets Darwin's discourse on sexual selection as "taste, appeal, and aesthetics," (141) and reproduction not as the purpose of sexuality, but as its by-product:

Homosexuality and other queer variants of animal sexuality cannot be reduced to maladaptive developments. The regularity of homosexual pairings in the animal world makes it clear that nature itself has no problem with the elaboration of all sorts of sexual activity that may have little to do with reproduction, for reproduction is in any case never or rarely the goal of copulation, only its accompaniment. (130)

She furthermore dismisses homosexuality as a by-product of reproduction, noting that if this were the case, and if homosexuality were solely a genetic by-product, then it would have been weeded out by natural selection long ago: "Male and female homosexuality are created generation after generation with such regularity and in so many wide-ranging and disparate species that it would have been weeded out of species and populations except to the extent that it remains indifferent or neutral rather than negative or dangerous (to individuals or populations) with respect to natural selection" (130-131). In sum, homosexuality is part of the sexual variation produced by species to enhance life through variety, not improve offspring through reproduction.

To Grosz, the function of sexuality is not for natural selection, and she argues that Darwin's one unique and singular contribution to biology was only sexual selection, which acknowledges a wide and "rich variety of life on earth" (141). Grosz writes,

³ Sociobiology is Eric O. Wilson's term for an early understanding of epigenetics, a theory that sees every form of life having a genetic code for variations that are triggered by environmental factors. Most recently, Wilson's work has been taken up to argue that homosexuality is an epigenetic mutation inherent in each person. See *Sociobiology: The New synthesis* (1975) for further reading.

The function of sexual selection is to maximize difference or variation, and it succeeds in doing this by maximizing sexual interests as much as bodily types and forms. Homosexuality and all the other possible encounters enabled by sexual attractions of various kinds are part of the production of variation for its own sake . . . [that is] a continuous and regular product or consequence of heterosexual encounters. (130)

Darwin was never opposed to homosexuality or nonreproductive sexuality, Grosz argues, but “homosexuality is itself a testament to the production of variation or difference in all its resonances that sexual selection brings to the life and forms of species” (131). Darwin interprets sexual and racial diversity as an excess that makes “life more enjoyable, more intense, more noticeable and pleasurable than it would otherwise be” (131). Darwin’s colleagues and predecessors (not Darwin himself) have misused his theory on sexual selection in the service of patriarchy and racism to justify imperialism and colonization under an assumption that sexual selection is in the service of natural selection.

Grosz interprets Darwin’s concept of sexual selection as creative involution (the creation of an intersubjective space of symbiosis) and sees both sexual and racial diversity as creative excess within species that produce a diversity of attractive qualities, tastes, and kinds of beauty. “Sexual selection,” she writes, “may be understood as the queering of natural selection, that is, the rendering of any biological norms, ideals of fitness, strange, incalculable, excessive” (132). What sexual selection does is produce an abundance of sounds, colors, forms, and shapes from raw materials (matter) to enhance the body and its environment. This is Darwin’s understanding of race, Grosz reveals—race is a cultural product but also results in biological variation to enhance taste and beauty:

Racial differences—which he [Darwin] takes to be visible differences regarding skin, facial features, hair, and body types, as well as historically and economically different modes of social and cultural organization—are those differences produced, not by the direct effects of environment (as sociobiology suggests), but through the operations of ideals of beauty and taste. (137)

In other words, race materializes as a result of human preference, culture, and interaction between members in communities over time to appeal and entice those members. While we might not adopt Darwin's thoughts so far as to exclude environmental influences on racial variation, his idea that a desire for sexual variation produces racial difference meant to enhance life is useful for an understanding of queer ecologies.

Furthermore, while Darwin's discourse on race problematized and furthered the labor of empire-building and colonialist and racist fantasies, Darwin himself consciously disavowed racism: "He [Darwin] consciously disavows the most obvious and worrisome forms of racism—that which, for example, announces a hierarchy between different races, linking the 'lowest' forms to primates and the highest to European civilization, and the related claim that races are at different levels of development in an underlying movement of the progress of civilization" (137). Quite the contrary, Darwin and his family were vehemently opposed to slavery, and Darwin's work shows that "racial differences are not steps or gradations of movement from animal to human, as much racist literature implies; rather, racial differences are all equally modifications or variations of a newly emergent, protohuman form" (139). Yet, Darwin's travels to research exotic flora and fauna were made possible by colonial worlding, a knowledge structure that decolonial queer ecologies must constantly reckon with, as we see in Haggard's *She* by the way he simultaneously perpetuates and challenges colonial worldviews. Racial and sexual diversity

are divergences made through sexual selection only meant to enhance variety and differentiate tastes, appeals, and life to benefit species and populations. Differentiation to Darwin, as Grosz notes, was never meant to fuel racism, sexism, homophobia, or anthropocentrism. Darwin meant to celebrate variation among species and reveal likenesses between species, including humans to other animals, in terms of capabilities for language, culture, adaptation, and social organization. Seeing Darwin in this way enables one to understand how becoming undone might be a move forward for discovering something new. It also helps us to understand nature trouble as human trouble, or the human as a myth that has perpetuated the idea of nature, both the human and nature being concepts fully realized in the nineteenth century which have driven and justified the colonization of both environment and people—what Europe came to call *nature* and *natives*.

Decolonial Ecologies

In her 2003 book chapter “Decolonizing Relationships with Nature,” Val Plumwood argues that “we need to rethink, relocate and redefine our protective concepts of nature within a larger anti-colonial critique” in order “to recognize that both nature and indigenous peoples have been colonized” (62). This is the first step of moving toward a decolonial queer ecology: rethinking, relocating, and redefining nature. Our understanding of the human is a key component of this step. Repairing our relationship with our environment (and understanding nature trouble) requires an examination of the human. We need an anti-colonial critique of how the West’s limited view of the human has disrupted relationships with the environment to understand how our ontologies have structured hierarchies of division. An engagement with speculative fiction can help repair this relationship. A decolonial and ecocritical reading of Haggard, Cliff, and Butler’s texts are useful in rethinking the harm caused by Westernization. In understanding Haggard’s *She* as an anti-colonial critique, we can discover reading strategies for

decolonial world making. Through a close reading of Cliff's novels, we can experience what happens when those living in a postcolonial state redefine their relationship with nature. Through a critique of Butler's *Xenogenesis*, we can understand how relocating colonialism redefines our role as humans, and we can rethink our relationship with our environment. Reading Haggard, Cliff, and Butler's texts offer a mode of reparative reading that can help to undo the damage that continues to perpetuate an often violent agenda under the guise of modernity. Reading their texts moves us toward a decolonial queer ecology through the ways we can discover reading strategies for decolonial world making to decolonize our ecologies.

The first part of my framework for a reparative reading of Haggard, Cliff, and Butler's novels, decolonial ecologies, draws from three scholars. I use Mignolo's concepts *decoloniality* and *delinking* to deconstruct human and nonhuman ecologies in this project by merging them with Lugones's idea of *decolonial feminism*, Sylvia Wynter's work on the construction of *the human*, and Emma Perez's concept of the *decolonial imaginary*. Their work needs to be understood in order to establish what I mean by the "decolonial" in my framework. Together the work of these scholars forms the basis of *decolonial ecologies*—the study of ways we can decolonize relationships with our environment from the colonial logic which has formed our understanding of being human through a Eurocentric lens, our conception of nature (including animals and plants) as solely human resources, and our exploitation of land and the disturbance of ecosystems as justified by capitalism.

Both Mignolo and Lugones borrow from Anibal Quijano the idea of *coloniality*,⁴ which Quijano uses to refer to classification of people in terms of races in order to forcefully implement

⁴ In his 2000 essay "Coloniality of Power," Quijano uses the term *coloniality* to refer to discrimination that lingers after colonialism set in place by the racial, social, and political hierarchies of European colonial legacies in the Americas. He further develops his use of the term in his 2007 essay "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." Maria Lugones extends "coloniality of power" to gender in her 2007 essay "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern

and maintain a capitalist world system whose power structure depends upon the exploitation and domination of racial others. Lugones explains in her 2010 essay “Toward a Decolonial Feminism”:

‘Coloniality’ refers to: the classification of the world’s populations in terms of races—the racialization of the relations between colonizers and colonized; the configuration of a new system of exploitation that articulates in one structure all forms of control of labor around hegemony of capital, where labor is racialized (wage labor as well as slavery, servitude, and small commodity production all became racialized forms of production; they were all new forms as they were constituted in the service of capitalism); Eurocentrism as the new mode of production and control of subjectivity; a new system of collective authority around hegemony of the nation-state that excludes populations racialized as inferior from the control of collective authority. (756)

Lugones agrees that race is a principal force driving European colonialism, but she sees gender as the dominant means of colonial imposition that structures race. Lugones reworks Quijano’s concept of coloniality to focus on European conceptualizations of gender as the framework that had predominant influence in organizing social, economic, ecological, and the spiritual *non-modern*, a term she uses to emphasize that these ways are not premodern, but that modernity reduces the non-modern to premodern. Mignolo, on the other hand, posits that we pursue “decoloniality” to as a way to “delink” from the “logic of coloniality” which has driven our experience with our environment through its creation of nature.

Gender System.” Sylvia Wynter (2003, 2007), Walter D. Mignolo (2007, 2011), Ramon Grosfoguel (2007, 2011), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007), and Elisabeth Middleton (2010) expand this concept.

Decoloniality is about “thinking and doing” as opposed to solely questioning and problematizing a historical European power base, though it also engages in this discourse by putting into practice responses which undo the inequalities perpetuated by Western imperialism and globalization. In recent years, Mignolo has been most vocal about the need for beginning a process of subverting the “logic of coloniality” to recognize the less destructive non-modern as opposed to pre-modern cultures that existed before Western thinking and Eurocentrism infiltrated notions of the best welfare for the global community (“Delinking” 500). He refers to a process which he calls “delinking.” In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), Mignolo writes, “Decolonial thinking presupposes delinking (epistemically and politically) from the web of imperial knowledge (theo- and ego- politically grounded), from disciplinary management. Delinking means also epistemic disobedience” (143). He explains how the responses of various rebels and radicals to the “logic of coloniality” have been throughout time decolonial in that these responses were “provoked by the remaking and making of the colonial matrix of power,” a foundational structure of Western civilization which “manifests itself in the rhetoric of modernity that hides the logic of coloniality” (16). This logic has acted as a cultural hegemony “that [has] guided actions in the domain of economy (exploitation of labor and appropriation of land and natural resources), gender/sexuality, and knowledge/subjectivity” (142-43). Mignolo emphasizes that decoloniality has been co-produced with coloniality through acts of resistance.

European colonization—of both people and environment—since the Renaissance has troubled our modern world; it has colonized both time and space. Mignolo writes, “It was during the Renaissance that the invention of the Middle Ages [time] and the invention of America [space] appropriated the idea of history, colonized time, and space located Europe as the point of reference [and model] of global [human] history. . . . The darker side of modernity materialized

in this belief” (xiv). Now it is time to delink from the colonial matrix of power through decolonial options, Mignolo notes, both in thinking and doing: “Decolonial thinking and doing focus on the enunciation, engaging in epistemic disobedience and delinking from the colonial matrix in order to open up decolonial options—a vision of life and society that requires decolonial subjects, decolonial knowledges, and decolonial institutions” (9). He argues for decolonial options rather than what he calls reWesternization—the continued implementation of a colonial matrix of power that uses a patriarchal and racial basis derived from theological and secular philosophies of the Renaissance to legitimize a world order through interrelated spheres of management and control: knowledge and subjectivity; racism, gender and sexuality; economy; and authority (9). Mignolo argues that Eurocentric universalities need to be surpassed by decolonizing the imperial concept of the human to reach a pluriversality that can help us build “decolonial notions of Humanity” (242). He reveals how the human has fueled modern (meaning post-Renaissance) imperialism, colonization, and global expansion, and he notes how the concept of nature became directly linked to a European colonial power structure, which in turn changed indigenous human relationships with land, flora, and fauna. Decolonizing notions of the human can also help us decolonize relationships with nature.

Lugones argues that Europeans imposed a gender system of coloniality that placed white males as a model for human, and females were understood from a normative position of “women,” the inversion of men. Native female sexuality was often demonized; females were often cast as whores of Satan. Native male sexuality was depicted as hypersexualized. Gender managed racial construction, and racial construction was defined by Europeans as a conceptualization of gender. Indigenous people and the black slaves carried to the Americas

were dehumanized and classified as non-human species, “as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild”:

Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human. The hierarchical dichotomy as a mark of the human also become a normative tool to damn the colonized. The behaviors of the colonized and their personalities/souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful. Though at this time [time of initial colonization] the understanding of sex was not dimorphic, animals were differentiated as males and females, the male being the perfection, the female being the inversion of deformation of male. Hermaphrodites, sodomites, viragos, and the colonized were all understood to be aberrations of male perfection.

(“Toward a Decolonial Feminism” 743)

This model over time became internalized in, to use Mignolo’s term, “a logic of coloniality,” which redefined relationships with environment and created new knowledges: “The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people’s senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization” (745). Lugones posits that “decolonial feminism” can help overcome this inheritance. She sees decolonizing gender as a necessary task to “enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social” (746). She asserts that what she calls “the coloniality of gender,” an analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression, can be overcome, and she calls this possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender “decolonial feminism” (742).

Sylvia Wynter has put forth very similar arguments about the human as Mignolo and Lugones. Wynter asks us: what does it mean to be human? She grounds an understanding of human in what she calls Man1 and Man2. She puts in the category of Man1 the form created from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century with the rise of the physical sciences, and Man2, she argues, derived from that point on with the rise of the biological sciences, notably in the nineteenth century. These modes of being human, she writes, “were to be processes made possible only on the basis of the dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation that the West was to discursively constitute and empirically institutionalize on the islands of the Caribbean and, later, on the mainlands of the Americas” (“Unsettling the Coloniality” 264). The globally expanding West, she argues, replaced the older dualisms of natural/supernatural and mortal/immortal with racial difference that was correlated with humanness: white/person of color = human/nonhuman. Wynter’s work, which builds on the idea of sociogeny from Frantz Fanon, the idea that the origin/development of agency is the result of social factors, posits that the human is a combination of beliefs and assumptions, or “mythoi,” and material matter, or “bios.” Phylogeny, evolutionary diversification of species, group, or organism, ontogeny, the processes through which each of us embodies the history of our making, and sociogeny, together, define what it means to be human (*On Being Human as Praxis* 16). Wynter furthermore argues that sociogeny makes it possible for the human to be rethought—to get out of the biological and tell new stories that enable nonmodern/decolonial versions of the human to emerge.

Mignolo, in his article “Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?” argues that Wynter seeks to undo this knowledge and thus engages with a decolonial option by questioning the human and its capitalist framing. Mignolo writes, “Wynter’s argument [on the exploitation of slaves for labor] recognizes the ways in which the massive exploitation of labor corresponds to

the massive appropriation of land. The colonization, expropriation, and violence directed at lands and peoples engendered a new type of economy based on the investments of gain and impulse to increase production that would create and satisfy a global market” (113). In the same article, taking up Wynter’s work, Mignolo also establishes the argument that the biological scientific movement that Wynter identifies as accompanying Man2, be decolonized, a process he calls *decolonial scientia*, which has three tasks: reimagining rather than denying links between geo-history/biography and knowledge; exploring the consequences of globalization on environment and populations (for instance in the exploitation of natural resources); and generating new knowledges that build communities wherein life has priority over worth (economic gains, growth, and development). He writes, “This is a knowledge that will subject economic growth to human needs rather than submit human needs to economic growth and development” (118). Mignolo’s call for reimagining knowledge resonates with Emma Perez’s idea of the *decolonial imaginary*. Furthermore, their work reinforces the idea that decolonization is a goal we can share as we build what pathways are in our power toward it.

In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Perez uses Foucauldian methodology and the work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha to construct her concept of the “decolonial imaginary,” what she refers to as “the time lag between the colonial and postcolonial” to “decolonize otherness” (6). Her work offers strong evidence for the shared projects of postcolonial and decolonial frameworks. In her essay “Queering the Borderlands,” she borrows Foucault’s challenge that we examine our bodies more fully to see how they have been inscribed and transformed through the impositions of laws, moralities, and customs over time to understand “how land is imprinted and policed by those traversing and claiming it as they would claim a body—both becoming property for colonizers” (123). The decolonial imaginary is for Perez a “rupturing space, the alternative to

that which is written in history” by a colonial imaginary that “still determines many of our efforts to revise the past, to reinscribe the nation with fresh stories that so many new voices unite to carve [in Jose Esteban Munoz’s words] new disidentities . . .” (123). She proposes that we decolonize our histories and historical imaginations by uncovering and honoring multiple experiences and voices from the past to decolonize all relations of power, whether gendered, racial, sexual, or classed, to prevent the “white colonial heteronormative gaze” from reconstructing and interpreting our past (123). Decolonial world making is truly invested in this uncovering of multiplicities, including those whose relationship to the colonial is not straightforwardly oppositional (as with Haggard), and as I will show in my analysis of Cliff’s work, characters come to reexamine their relationship with their bodies and land more fully to reclaim that which has been taken from them in the ruins of empire. Butler’s *Xenogenesis* complicates an understanding of the imaginary through decolonial ecologies by creating a “rupturing space,” an alternate history of the colonial imaginary that reconstructs identities which force us to confront the role human exceptionalism has played in colonialism and the destruction of our environment.

Understanding the various impacts of European colonial exploitation is useful for dismantling constructions of nature that influence our engagement with environment. Lugones notes that most indigenous populations before European colonialism (notably nineteenth-century European colonialism) had different, less-destructive agencies and relationships with their environments prior to colonization, including different perspectives of gender and sexuality. She furthermore posits that the modern colonial gender system did not impose “precolonial” arrangements but a new form of heterosexualism which disrupted preexisting colonial agencies when she writes, “Colonialism . . . imposed a new gender system that created very different

arrangements for colonized males and females than [even] for white bourgeois colonizers. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing” (“Heterosexualism” 186). Lugones reminds us that for many indigenous people, gender was not biological, sexuality was more liberating, and that there were not even categories for many “precolonial” cultures. Native perspectives of gender and sexuality were often aligned with that of animals by European colonizers because they transgressed the boundaries of the colonizer.⁵ Realizing this is a starting point for queering decolonial ecologies.

Mignolo’s discussion of one indigenous people in particular can also act as a starting point for queering decolonial ecologies. His careful study of the native Andeans is useful for showing how decolonial goals can be goals which also sustain our environment. The Andeans have a word for our environment that is not quite what we think of when we think of nature. Their view of the environment insists on the inseparability of humans from all collective ecosystems, which they call *Pachamamaan*. Approaching a reading of speculative fiction from this understanding of nature moves us toward a process of decolonization by dismantling a hierarchy of humans over the environment, and it is essential for understanding what Haggard, Cliff, and Butler’s work can do. Building on the idea of *Pachamamaan*, Mignolo writes that decolonial options should focus on: (1) the right to life (each person, ecosystem, plant, and animal); (2) the right for nature (*Pachamamaan*) to be able to regenerate its bio capacity, as opposed to production and recycling; (3) the right to clean life (the elimination of pollution and limitations of using resources at the expense of profit); and (4) The right to harmony among all

⁵ Lugones’s assertion has a tendency to flatten all indigenous people together here. Qwo-Li Driskill (2015), Mark Rifkin (2011), and Scott Lauria Morgensen (2010-2011) have developed arguments that articulate the many differences and complexities of indigenous gender and sexuality.

and with all—that is to be part of an interdependent system among both human beings and *Pachamamaan* (*Darker Side* 310-11). These four focuses of decoloniality drive environmental sustainability, and when we consider that there is an advocacy for each type of person here, we might be reminded that this includes queer individuals, a breakdown of hierarchies of race and class, and a dismantlement of the colonial matrix set in place by the logic of coloniality. In sum, these are the goals of queer ecologies, a framework that offers a way by which Mignolo's decolonial options can be met, Lugones's decolonial feminism employed, Perez's decolonial imaginary explored, and Wynter's notion of the human deconstructed.

Queer(ing) Ecologies

Decolonizing ecologies can be met by queering ecologies. In other words, moving from the European colonial (now globalized) logic that informs our relationships with our environment to more sustainable non-modern ways of thinking, living, and being can be accomplished. Such a shift may occur by critiquing, reimagining, and worlding the ways that sexuality, race, and gender inform notions of environment and/or nature—away from those knowledges driven and maintained by capital exploitation. Deconstructing and resituating new knowledges—that is critiquing, reimagining, and worlding through queer ecologies—implements Walter Mignolo's call to decoloniality. Queering the human and nature can help us discover less hierarchical and more sustainable ecologies that move away from the logic of coloniality, which has formed the modern, destructive systems that have driven inequality and the exploitation of living beings and natural resources for capital gain. Queer(ing) ecologies can help us to (re)discover nonheteronormative, nonbinary, multiplicities of gender and sexuality. It can also help us deconstruct race to understand how racism and racial categorization have formed binary notions of gender and sexuality. Decolonizing human and nonhuman ecologies can be pursued

through a lens of decolonial queer ecologies to discover new ways of becoming. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson write, “Connections, assemblages, and becomings form central concerns for many queer and nature writers, and possibilities offered by models and metaphors are truly quite limitless” (39). Queer ecologies offer rich material for considering how amalgamations have been produced as a result of European colonialism, and how new conceptions of becoming may promote a social activism that can decolonize relationships among humans and nonhumans, and between humans and their environments, areas that this project explores in its investigation of “nature trouble.”

Though the term *queer ecologies* has been evolving since the late twentieth century, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erikson’s 2010 edited volume, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, really established the term. The European discourses of nineteenth-century “unnatural” and “degenerate” sexualities, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson argue, are directly linked to contemporary as well as historical formations of the way that natural space has been organized by different understandings of sexuality. In the book’s introduction, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson highlight the origin of the concept *queer ecologies* in Greta Gaard’s 1997 essay, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” and they establish a foundation for the lens through histories of both sexuality and ecology; for instance, in critiques of nature by scholars such as Jeffrey Weeks and Jonathan Katz, the biopolitics of Michele Foucault, the historical writings of Charles Darwin, Richard Krafft-Ebing, and Havelock Ellis, and the late-twentieth century work on animal sexualities and gender of Bruce Bagemihl, Myra Hird, and Joan Roughgarden (1-30). Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson clarify the goals of queer ecologies when they write, “Specifically, the task of queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and

its biosocial constitution and . . . demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence . . . that world” (5). An extension of ecology, which understands how crucial it is for human beings, animals, plants, and ecosystems to cohabit and support intersections of needs and differences, queer ecologies stress not only an understanding of how sex informs discourses on nature, but also how environment informs discourses on biology.

Greta Gaard’s work is useful for understanding how the logic of coloniality formed the human and conceptions of nature, and still inform them today. Gaard’s formative work outlines some linkages between homophobia and colonization and proposes that we need to combine queer and ecofeminist theoretical insights in order to liberate, transform, and reconceptualize the erotic from a long colonial history of Western, fundamental conceptions that have represented the erotic and nature as opposed to masculinity and humanity, reason and culture, an erotophobia and ecophobia that support and reinforce each other. She provides a historical contextualization of what she calls *colonial erotophobia* (distinguished from homophobia) by calling attention to the ways that same-sex sexualities, non-conforming gender roles, and non-heterosexual practices were rooted out, destroyed, and conquered by European colonialists, and she calls for a movement toward a queer ecofeminism to address this dilemma: “A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that liberating the erotic requires reconceptualizing humans as equal participants in culture and in nature, able to explore the eroticism of reason and the unique rationality of the erotic” (149). Gaard calls for a queering of ecofeminism that builds on the coalitions of social feminists and environmentalists which have sought to further sever historical linkages between women and nature to address racism, reproductive politics, animal liberation, environmental degradation, and reveal the interconnections between racism, classism, and sexism to bring value to the erotic and sexual diversity. The liberation of queers, she argues,

cannot be fully affected without the liberation of nature—and vice versa. However, queer theorists and ecocritics alike have since offered a fuller and richer understanding of how nature and culture have informed one another, as well as how biology materializes.

Queer(ing) ecologies are, on the one hand, about dismantling purely essentialist notions of biology. Biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling makes a complex argument for the ways that not only organisms, but also cells form and change over time in the human body due to environmental influences, starting with the fetus and continuing through life. In her book *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), Fausto-Sterling considers biology as a key player in forming our gender, sex, and sexuality, explaining through medical terminology how some of us can physically form differently due to the ways that our bodies are influenced by environmental factors. She also highlights the danger in assuming binary genders, sexes, and sexualities, since there are truly more than two of each. Using a metaphor of the Mobius strip, she illustrates how the social can become material (24), and using the metaphor of a Russian doll (254), she explains how our existence and meaning is interconnected between cell, organism, psyche, relationships, culture, and history—all adaptable yet not always able to revert back from that which they have materialized. Our different levels of biological and social organization are not only interconnected, but also nonhierarchical, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary (235-55). She notes that though culture and gender have most often been understood to be constructed, versus sex and nature “real,” this too is a misconception because all categories are not only politicized, but also dependent upon the other as the body forms and adapts, and people are much more different than we think (24-29).

Fausto-Sterling’s research is useful in thinking about the ways that biology and environment inform one another and are interconnected, complex concepts that have been

controlled, manipulated, and changed over time, further helping us think about our relationship to our planet when we compare the complexities of our bodies to the complexities of our world. Like a strand of DNA or cell, we too can change, adapt, and impact our world, just as our world can be changed and manipulated by our responsible or irresponsible action or inaction. Though Fausto-Sterling's work is not directly part of the ecocritical canon, she has much to offer ecocritical studies when we consider the ways that she shows us how nature can be culturalized, and culture naturalized. Fausto-Sterling is one of the scholars who has taken apart the idea that culture and nature are oppositional; she also shows the many problems that reifying that distinction can cause. Her work is thus quite useful in questioning human and nonhuman distinctions to deconstruct and understand the separability of humans from their remote environments, which have come to be understood as wilderness to some and nature to others.

Judith Butler has also come close to bridging ecological studies with queer theory, though her work has only been suggestive rather than inclusive of our non-human world. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), she draws our attention to the heterosexist performance of gender, arguing that gender is not a concrete, fixed, or closed system, which can help us think about nature in the same way (133-34). More closely, in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler provides insight into the way that our bodies materialize (matter) through repetitive behavior or exposure to environmental agents, and she argues that "a rethinking of 'nature' as a set of dynamic interrelations suits both feminist and ecological aims" (4). Butler and Fausto-Sterling's work is in line with epigenetics, which examine the changes in organisms caused by a modification in gene expression due to environmental factors, and their work certainly contributes to ecofeminism and queer ecologies.

Queer(ing) ecologies are, secondly, about reconfiguring heteronormative spaces as queer spaces. David Bell's chapter from *Queer Ecologies*, "Queernaturecultures," draws on Bruce Bagemihl's book, *Biological Exuberance*, Joan Roughgarden's work on homosexuality and transgenderism in animals, and Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird's work on queering the non/human, from a 2008 book of the same name, to highlight the ways that queer sex and identity are part of natural, public spaces, and hence nature, in both non-human and human environments (134-44). In doing so, he examines what Jeffrey Weeks calls "the nature of our sexual natures" by contemplating three distinct articulations of the "nature of sex" and the "sex of nature" in queer animals, eco-porn, and naturism (134). Bell raises some interesting questions relevant to this study of landscapes and bodies: are human publics natural spaces, how is nature public, and can a discussion of non-human sex in nature change queer theoretical discussions about the politics of sex and nature?

Bell establishes that both Bagemihl and Roughgarden have extensively documented evidence of the naturalness of homosexuality and transgender existence in thousands of "queer animals" by studying their nonreproductive gender and sexual practices, and citing Giffney and Hird as support, he thus concludes that as the homosexuality in nonhuman animals is naturalized: "homophobia is denaturalized as a culturally specific human response since animals do not exhibit hostility toward same-sex acts in their presence" (137). Bell's second example of ecoporn links sex politics and ecopolitics; Fuck for Forests (FFF) is a not-for-profit organization that funds its ecological projects through subscription donations in exchange for photographed or videotaped public sex acts staged in natural settings. Bell asserts that FFF's stance that sexuality and nature are connected "provides a platform for nature-centered activism" because it "repoliticizes" and "renaturalizes" public sex by "fucking in as well as for forests" (135). Bell's

third example, naturism, contends that “it is human culture that codes nudity as sexual” rather than natural, and he draws from Donna Haraway’s idea of “naturecultures” to answer the question: “Is sex nature or culture?” (141-42)

To understand how “naturecultures” are directly pertinent to queer theory, it is useful to recall the discussion of “sex in public” by Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant, as well as Samuel Delany’s work in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, a text that called attention to the important cultural significance of public sex spaces we now call counterpublics. The work of Warner, Berlant, and Delany can help one see how urban spaces can too be seen as natural environments for sexuality. Further, the idea of counterpublics can help us consider the significance that both animal and human sex in nature can bring to queer theory because queer sex acts in nature also influence culture, and culture influences the ways we think about nature, which I have noted in one way through discussion of the ways that European imperialism and colonialism changed notions of nature and sexuality. However, animal cultures, which practice non-reproductive sex, have also been shown to influence behaviors that show us how sexuality is biosocial.

Stacy Alaimo’s contribution to chapter one of *Queer Ecologies* can best summarize these ideas when she writes, “Nonhuman animals are also cultural creatures, with their own sometimes complex systems of (often nonreproductive) sex” (57). Myra Hird further concurs, arguing that “it is no longer feasible to maintain that only humans have culture: there are as many cultures as there are species with cultural behavior because each species is neurophysiologically unique” (61). David Bell further explains why no person can be separated from the environment and no person is “unnatural” when he says that, “nature is cultural” and “culture is natural” (143). In Bell’s words, Donna Haraway’s discussion of “naturecultures” stresses the “impossibility of

uncoupling ‘nature’ from ‘culture’” (134). Haraway’s research is invaluable for arguing the ways that both nature and culture influence identity and behavior, rather than one or another, ideas essential to my research for uncoupling conceptions of the unnatural from those of nature. As Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson note, queer ecologies that investigate nature/culture relationships “. . . balance between legitimizing queer behavior . . . and delegitimizing the binary constructions of sexuality and animality that have informed scientific and cultural discussions of sex” (32). Queer ecologies aim to reverse damage caused by a contradictory alignment of the images of nature with “unnatural” identities and behaviors to redefine a meaning of nature that includes not only animals and plants, but also queer people, women, and diverse ethnic people by emphasizing that queer beings have long been, and still are a part of, “naturecultures,” societies that depict nature inseparable from culture.

Queer(ing) ecologies is thirdly about using coalition building to establish access to every type of environment for all groups of people, stressing that everyone is part of a “superorganism,” or planetary ecosystem. Coalition is crucial for decolonial ecologies, just as it is for queer ecologies. Decolonization requires the commitment not just of the colonized, but also of those who might benefit from colonization. Recognizing the importance of working together for the common goal of sustaining the environment helps to deconstruct hierarchies. Valuing queer kinship, variation, and becoming something new can assist those at the top of a colonial power structure to adapt and change. Greta Gaard raised coalitions as being an important aspect of queer ecologies as early as 1997 in her essay “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” when she wrote, “Rejecting colonization requires embracing the erotic in all its diversity and building coalitions for creating a democratic, ecological culture based on our shared liberation” (149). Though my chapters investigate texts from different time periods, places, locations, and identities, forming

coalitions to strengthen relationships with ecosystems presents a potentiality that benefits characters in each of the novels I explore, but what is especially interesting in each text is that they are set in time periods in which the human and environment are simultaneously threatened. In Haggard's *She*, British (white and male) characters feel threatened by difference and change, on the verge of a time when colonial exploitation is about to destroy native environments. In Cliff's novels, Jamaicans feel threatened by American imperialism and the destruction of their cultural environments, but they challenge their fears by forming coalitions. In Butler's *Xenogenesis*, humans fear forming coalitions with not only their Oankali captors/rescuers, but also one another, just after they have destroyed their environment—the entire Earth. Dividing and conquering fares less well for the characters in each set of novels as time progresses forward. The situation becomes more and more dire. Organizing coalitions between queers/people of color and white/non-queer people is imperative to decolonial-queer-ecology world building. In order to tackle the inequities between persons of color/sexual minorities and those that have inherited privilege, collaboration in working toward a common goal, the urgent goal of sustaining our planet, is urgent.

Coalitions are addressed by queer theorist Roderick Ferguson when he writes, “In this historic moment probably more than any other, oppositional *coalitions* have to be grounded in nonnormative racial difference” (137, my emphasis). He highlights a very important point—that queer coalitions can work only if they put race at their forefront. In *Aberrations in Black* (2004), Ferguson defines *queer of color critique* as an analysis that “. . . interrogates social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices” (149). His queer of color critique is an extension of black lesbian feminist and women of color discourses on

coalition (133), and his book highlights the ways in which African Americans have been historically pathologized through oppressive legislation that has essentially queered and marginalized them as “other.” He asserts that heteronormativity is racialized: “As its embodiment in whiteness attests, heteronormativity is not simply articulated through intergender relations, but also through the racialized body” (20-21). Ferguson’s work has much in common with decolonial thought, and this type of thinking—that which is grounded in social collaboration and coalitions—is the type of queer theory that might find resonance with environmental studies, which value all diversity and aim to make natural spaces available where intersections of race, gender, and sexuality are valued. My emphasis on the decolonial provides a necessary critique that queer ecologies must move toward embracing more fully.

Only by understanding and respecting our interconnectivity can we learn to empathize with others. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson note, “A queer ecological framework not only . . . offer[s] a possibility of coalitions between racial and sexual inequalities, but also . . . provide[s] an analysis of the contemporaneous development of race, sexuality, and nature through each other” (35). Katie Hogan, in her article from *Queer Ecologies*, “Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism,” also reminds us that coalition is an important aspect of queer ecologies, which oppose the abuse of nature in establishing social hierarchies. She claims that who belongs to nature and who has access to it has historically depended on a person’s race, gender, sexuality, and class, noting how people of color as well as queer people have been traditionally driven from nature and/or had unsafe access to it because they are deemed unnatural—a clear contradiction—and she also argues that queers and minorities must reclaim naturecultures through coalition building (236-41). She writes, “Since both queer and environmental justice perspectives assume that nature and environment are not neutral ahistorical categories, and each critical practice looks

at how the very language of nature and environmentalism can often mask harm to humans and nature, this shared theoretical and historical experience could serve as a basis for coalition” (241). Queer coalition building stresses that all people deserve an appreciation of “nature” and should not be alienated from it, nor marginalized; similarly, all components of the environment help maintain a healthy interdependent world, and none of the Earth’s components should be neglected or ignored. It isn’t queerness that is unnatural or threatening, but rather economic imperialism and homophobia that are toxic. Hogan’s work is useful for a study aimed at uncovering the links between (post)colonial environments and queer agencies.

Queer ecologies offer a decolonial option which can transform our understanding of not only how nature and culture influence one another, but also how sexuality and diverse gender identities are inherent to and have always been a part of life. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson write, “Queer ecology suggests . . . a new practice of ecological knowledges, spaces, and politics that places central attention on challenging hetero-ecologies from the perspective of non-normative sexual and gender positions” (22). In other words, queer ecologies seek to establish diverse gender and sexual positionalities in environmental spaces, practices, epistemologies, and ways of life, challenging a European colonial propagandistic understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature to include queer people as part of the “natural order” of our environment, acknowledging that our idea of a “natural order” is largely constructed, but at the same time recognizing the abundance of queer non-human behaviors in our global flora, fauna, and ecosystems, which only substantiates how much our world is a very queer place. Viewing the world through a queer ecological lens reminds society that the “wilderness,” as well as human environments, are not spaces restricted solely for the pleasure, dominance, and superiority of a European-white-male prerogative, and when combined with decolonial studies,

can demonstrate the various ways that this truth is substantiated by historical records and accounts of harmonious balance between queer and non-queer sexual behaviors and identities in many African and American indigenous populations before they were colonized by Europeans.

A social justice position that offers a way to bridge an understanding of the erotic and nature and reveals how diverse (indigenous) cultures in history viewed our modern conceptions of queer identity as part of their natural world should appeal to queer theory, not only because promoting diversification is a queer concept and position, but also because this direction of thinking helps eliminate the concept of *nature* as a taboo subject for queers and acknowledges our melancholy longing to once again be a part of our remote environments. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson write, “Queer ecology allows us to understand the links provided by queer theory to understand that our pleasures are not merely between humans, but are expanded and significantly shaped by the production of nature and the space around us” (37). Very importantly, it also steers the queer scholarly community closer to environmental concerns so that queer advocacy and issues of social activism are no longer dominated by an anthropocentric focus. Similarly, decolonial studies will equally find appeal in uncovering and initiating new ways of decolonization that help oppressed people to rediscover and reconnect with a more inclusive world. We need to question the normative use of nature, as Mortimer-Sandilands puts it: “The political imperative is, I think, to maintain a spirit of ‘queering’ nature in any move that asserts a (politicized) gender-nature affinity. To queer nature, in this context, is to question its normative use, to interrogate relations of knowledge and power by which certain truths about ourselves [the human] have been allowed to pass without question” (“Mother Earth, the Cyborg, and the Queer” 35). Doing so requires deconstructing Western conceptions of not only humans and nature, but also the nonhuman, not-quite-human, and more-than-human in order to

understand what happens when nature becomes an entity separate from humankind and how the erotic, in being aligned with nature, also, as a result, becomes taboo.

Queer ecologies aim to undo and recognize the damage caused by distancing the nonhuman environment from the human and to develop a sexual politics that, as Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erikson write, “more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution” to understand how sex influences discourses on nature, and environment on sexuality, which offers a mode of reparative reading of imaginative texts quite useful for an engagement in decoloniality (5). Queer ecologies destigmatize the relationship between conceptions of nature and those who identify as queer by exploring the ways that ecological diversity, coalition building, empathy, and queer agency rewrite colonial notions of nature and subvert the logic of coloniality that has produced the patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, and capitalist exploitation that has resulted in exclusion, oppression, division of the human from naturalized environments, and environmental destruction. Queer ecologists address “nature trouble” by reclaiming the term *nature* from the logic of coloniality. Reexamining the relationship between land and colonized bodies initiates this reclamation, and coalition building puts it to action.

Reading Reparatively

Reparative reading focuses on the element of surprise. It aims to find pleasant surprises and unexpected pleasures in texts that have been critiqued in specific ways for a very long time. In 1995, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick proposed “reparative reading” as a critique of what she called “paranoid reading” to draw attention to our reading habits. She posits that readers go into reading a text with preconceptions about what to expect, prejudices that are heavily grounded in our Western sensibilities and biases. A reader might take issue with a text even before they begin to

read it—or read about it. This kind of reading Sedgwick calls paranoid reading: anticipating the context of a text as problematic even before considering new possibilities (“Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”). Decolonial queer ecologies are a framework which offers reparative reading strategies. They ask readers to look at the complexities of human imagination to better understand how and why characters are written the way they are. They ask us to abandon prejudices built on an ingrained understanding of what the human and nature are. It also asks us to think hard about contradiction and struggle—to explore negotiations of consciousness and ask how they might be impacted by historical discourse. For instance, one might expect a story written in the nineteenth century influenced by empire and imperialism by a white English man like H. Rider Haggard to be inherently racist propaganda—to reflect the dominant norms of the times. One might expect postcolonial novels written in the late-twentieth century by a black Caribbean woman like Michelle Cliff to battle through rejecting these racist norms. An alien invasion story by an African-American female writer like Octavia Butler might seem as if it would reflect only on the horrors of historical slavery. A reparative reading asks readers to think about complexities and contradictions in what they read. How might texts written by a white English man, a black Caribbean woman, and an African-American woman together provide a conversation that allows each piece to reflect on one another? What kinds of reparations can we find when we think about the time-period challenges that each Haggard, Cliff, and Butler face? What kind of narrative emerges by looking at their stories collectively?

My readings that follow of Haggard, Cliff, and Butler’s novels offer decolonial options that both queer nature and implement queer ecologies that promote more sustainable human practices with one another and our environments. However, each chapter does not fully encapsulate what a framework of decolonial queer ecologies can do. Rather, my analysis moves

increasingly toward a decolonial queer ecology, as a narrative of world building emerges from understanding their work collectively. In each chapter, I will show how decolonial queer ecologies offer reparative reading strategies that stress an investment in our future which destigmatizes queer sexuality and agency, deconstructs harmful constructions of race and nature, and explores collaborative ways to challenge the logic of coloniality through proposed decolonial options. My reparative reading is not just of the novels themselves, but also of nature—the discursive construction of nature itself. I investigate the ways that Haggard, Cliff, and Butler complicate the erotic in their fiction, but also how they are influenced by and how their characters consider coalitions with one another and their environments. I examine how characters rethink and react to race, gender, and sexuality when set in remote environments that put them in more direct contact with flora and fauna. My analysis of Haggard, Cliff, and Butler’s texts will help readers to understand how Eurocentric conceptions of *nature* are implemented by a damaging logic of coloniality and that reaching toward decoloniality—that is delinking from the colonial matrix of power that has formed the ways we think about knowledge and subjectivity, racism/gender/sexuality, economy, and authority—requires a decolonial world building that moves us toward becoming undone to discover something new. In my analysis, I will show how becoming undone can help us learn the value of forming queer kinships and affinities, as well as the importance of adaptation and variability in our environment, and I will illustrate how speculative literature offers a rich imaginative space of new possibilities for this process to suggest ways that move us toward rethinking, relocating, and redefining nature, and by extension the human, to rework the colonial race/gender/sexuality paradigm.

In Chapter One, “Negotiating Empire: Supernatural Demons in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*,” I reread Haggard’s novel through queer ecologies. *She* has been read as a racist, homophobic,

and pro-imperial text, but I posit that there may be more to the novel than this. I begin my reading of Haggard's *She* by situating it as *the* foundational novel of the Imperial Gothic and as a popular text of speculative fiction. I show how the novel explores gender and sexual panic, as well as a fear of the Other, through scenes of Gothic terror and horror that move its plot: strange places, clashing time periods, power and constraint, death and decay, mysterious identity and inheritance, and the supernatural. I argue that the novel imagines an African-interior world in order to negotiate empire. How does the supernatural in *She* explore the imperial consciousness? What does the monstrous characterization of Other in *She* say about the British colonist's own demons? How is an understanding of nature linked to shifting attitudes about African natives, gender, sexuality, and environment? I posit that answers can be found by contextualizing the novel in its late-nineteenth-century discourses. For instance, how might Haggard have internalized Darwin's ideas as well as the radical discourses opposing Victorian norms and imperialism of the time? Leela Gandhi's work is useful for considering how. Utilizing Leela Gandhi's work, I explore the ways that an emergence of anti-colonial, affective communities in the late-nineteenth century likely influenced Haggard's writing of *She*, and I argue that reparative colonial imaginaries are discovered through an analysis of the novel's subtle subtexts and subconscious struggles with empire.

Haggard's novel explores sexuality through his depictions of landscapes and characters, and Victorian gender-role reversal is present in his characterization of Ayesha, the novel's tyrannical female villain, who maintains a grip of power over a more feminized male protagonist, Leo Vincey. Yet, at the same time, Ayesha and Leo are both characterized as the visual perfection of female and male beauty. The Amahagger natives are portrayed as racial caricatures, as over-sexualized cannibals; yet, at the same time, Haggard explores and perhaps even praises

their sustainable habits and collaborative community. A close reading of *She* reveals subtle contradictions and conflict regarding pressing issues of late-nineteenth-century Empire. In my analysis, I draw out these subtleties to posit that Haggard's *She* may offer an early form of decoloniality in its exploration of sexuality, gender, and an understanding of nature. Haggard himself expresses conflicting feelings about the Zulu natives he lived among in southern Africa as an early man in the Transvaal War. Building on the work of Ardel Haefele-Thomas and Andrew Smith, I show how Haggard's conflict plays out in his life and fiction. Haefele-Thomas notes that Haggard brings conflicting feelings about his mourning for the conquered Zulus and killed British soldiers into *She*, "but he has trouble locating the action of the story precisely because the map of Africa had already been 'coloured red' and there is a disturbing sadness that functions simultaneously as mourning over the loss of lives as well as the fact that there is no more to conquer" (80). Andrew Smith notes how "Ayesha becomes both the double of colonial subjectivity, and the pathway to a world which transcends colonialism . . . [by the way that] the novel [*She*] is quite explicit in its condemnation of empire-building even whilst elsewhere it falls back on to some crude racial stereotyping in the representation of the cannibalistic tribe, the Amahagger" (105-07). From these observations, I show how Haggard's empathy for the Zulu and recognition of their environmentally sustainable, cultural practices and beliefs is also a compassion for their queerness, which is subtly reflected in a reparative reading of *She*. In other words, I argue that Haggard's *She* can be read as reparative because of its use of queer ecologies, in the way that it subverts heteronormativity, explores the erotic in an understanding of nature, and presents an interconnected environment.

Haggard's negotiation of the imperial consciousness illustrates how he propagated yet coped with the consequences of British Empire through the way that his speculative fiction uses

Gothic tropes and themes. I argue that a queer ecocritical examination of H. Rider Haggard's novel *She* can reveal changing attitudes about natural environments and archetypes of gender, race, and sexuality, importantly noting that dualistic and distinct Western conceptions of identity and nature were the cause and justification for the oppressive conditions of imperialism leading up to the twentieth century. My analysis reveals that Haggard struggled with imperialism even though he was very much a part of its propagation. Haggard's subconscious projections of anti-imperialism in his colonial imaginaries are a historical starting point for understanding how decolonial queer ecologies can be useful. My reparative reading of *She* shows how people reevaluate hierarchies structured by *the human* when presented with a new understanding of different people and environments. Yet, letting go of colonial constructions and power structures proves difficult for Haggard. Furthermore, his use of the Gothic seemingly reinforces empire and focuses on Others as demons instead of reevaluating our own. Haggard superimposes the supernatural onto his African topographies and into his readers' conceptualization of the native and "nature." Though a close reading of *She* reveals subtle digressions from this practice in the way that Haggard challenges human-nonhuman ecologies, his fantastic reworking of empire—with Ayesha at its head—reproduces the horrors he struggles to evade.

While Haggard is grasping for a way out of the empire that he is building, Michelle Cliff is writing after empire and dealing with the ways in which, as a postcolonial subject, she is formed by British colonialism, despite her characters' attempts to decolonize and discover a cultural heritage more closely engaged with nonhuman environments that are more inclusive of queer agency. Nevertheless, Cliff shows how Jamaican people might cope with the after-effects of their colonial servitude. I will show how her fiction offers coalitions, temporalities, and a reworking of human ecologies as possibilities for queer becoming and decoloniality. Her novels'

imagined spaces and queered relationships deconstruct human/nonhuman conceptualizations of *nature* to offer alternative notions of world-building in the ruins of empire. Reestablishing healthy relationships with the land requires rediscovering our relationship to it in non-hierarchical ways. Cliff's fiction helps us to understand that we must situate new knowledges and reappropriate spaces that work for all types of bodies—both human and nonhuman alike—and that we must furthermore break down these boundaries to understand that we are (everything is) truly an amalgamation of vibrant material, political practices, and symbiosis. How we implement our political practices in our engagement with our environment and each other will determine the extent to which decolonization is possible. *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* challenge us with complexity and to embrace difference. A decolonial queer ecocritical reading of Cliff's postcolonial Gothic fiction hence offers a means of reparative reading that can do some good. Nonetheless, my analysis in Chapter Two shows how the effects of colonialism are not easily evaded. Humans are deeply entwined in the system.

In sum, in Chapter Two, "Ruins of Empire: Michelle Cliff's Caribbean-Gothic Novels," I examine how Cliff's characters utilize queer ecologies in their attempt to decolonize Jamaica as they rediscover meaningful cultural values rooted in the respect for a new understanding of natural environment that values queer agency—and a queer agency that values healthier conceptions of nature. Queer ecologies offer a mode for the characters in Cliff's novels to reparatively read the colonial legacy of ruinate/ruination on which they are trying to build. In other words, I show how decolonial queer ecologies utilize a queer ecocritical framework to establish a philosophical discourse that helps those colonized to take back ownership of cultural values, rediscover a far less hierarchical and oppressive heritage, and invest in more ecologically responsible behaviors. Using the work of Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley and Edouard Glissant, I

will show how both raced and classed queer and trans characters transgress colonial boundaries through the ways that they reappropriate spaces and bodies in Jamaica's ruinate, and how the Afro-Carib people they assemble there challenge American imperialism and embrace queer and female leadership. I argue that Cliff and her characters, like Haggard and his characters, negotiate their identity. However, the negotiation of identity in Cliff's novels is more appropriately a renegotiation of human agency in the ruins of empire.

Tinsley and Glissant help me to work through how one aspect of decolonial queer ecologies, an investment in coalitions, is formed between queer and non-queer characters with the land to help characters deconstruct the logic of coloniality. Coalition building is central to Cliff's plot in both novels. As a child in *Abeng*, Clare explores her sexuality and gender as well as a freedom from racial and class hierarchies in the setting of wooden environments. However, as I will show in Chapter Two, it is in *No Telephone to Heaven* that Cliff more fully utilizes coalition building as a form of decolonization to explore non-hierarchical relationships between queer and non-queer characters and their relationship with the land. Ruinate, which acts as a character of its own that haunts and resists colonial exploitation, becomes a means through which characters in the ruins of empire can regroup, rediscover, and rekindle non-hierarchical human relationships with one another and new conceptions of nature that cause pause and reflection. Queer coalitions are used to reclaim ruinate as a part of what defines human agency.

In Chapter Three, "Rewriting Empire: Posthuman Ecologies in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*," I reinvestigate some of the Gothic themes explored in Chapters One and Two by asking how Octavia Butler might be reframing Gothic figures, tropes, and themes; for instance, in how Butler rewrites the monstrous in *Xenogenesis*. I use the word monstrous to explore the concepts of posthuman and nonhuman to ask: how can we understand these terms through

decolonial queer ecologies—that is as a tool of transformative learning that acts as an agent of world-building? Chapter Three’s subtitle, “Monstrous Reversals,” is an allusion to Butler’s reworking of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Gothic and science fiction figure of the monster as racial Other and/or alien—a character which Stephen Arata has argued was born from a fear of reverse colonization at the height of late-nineteenth-century empire building. In *She*, Haggard’s erotic, mixed-race queen Ayesha is likened to a monster when she threatens to invade Great Britain and displace Queen Victoria. Cliff’s monster, on the other hand, is more realistic than speculative; though horror and terror haunt the pages of *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* through the looming ruinate, it is through the murderer and rapist Christopher, a product of empire in its ruins, that a localized monstrous figure emerges. All three of these novels explore intersections of race, gender, and sexuality as products of European colonialism in their own way. However, Butler does something else with the monstrous to explore colonialism altogether; rather than examining human hierarchies to explore threats of the monstrous, she posits that the whole conception of the human may be a monstrosity itself.

This is what the reader learns from Octavia Butler. *Xenogenesis* asks us to consider just how much colonialism defines us—how deeply it lingers in our understanding of ourselves and our world and how hard it might be to leave go. Butler complicates human identity itself by challenging our understanding of ontology and epistemology. Decolonial queer ecologies in Butler’s reworking of empire offer a means of coping with the contradicting stories she presents: one a speculative reworking of colonial legacy, and another a revelation of the interconnectedness between queer agency and environmentally sustainable practices—queer ecologies. From Butler’s fiction, readers might learn new ways of coping with the Western colonial legacy inherited in modernity since the Renaissance, which prompted global

exploration, expansion, and conquest of the New World. Understanding the ways in which gender, race, sexuality, and class form and are formed by assemblages, and recognizing the ways in which bodies matter, both physically and metaphorically, can help us as humans realize how Western conceptions of *nature* are damaging and propagate hierarchies and superior thinking as a result of essentializing categories and creating taxonomies. Moreover, Butler's *Xenogenesis* asks us to think about how we might establish more sustainable relationships with our environment and accept the symbiosis we see. What can we learn from what we discover when we embrace biodiversity? The answer might just be the value of embracing queer kinships. How can we adapt and resituate our knowledges? The answer might lie in becoming undone. As we look toward the future, we might look toward decolonial queer ecologies as a framework through which we can become something new.

Butler situates the conflict of her trilogy around the same types of colonial discourse outlined in the introduction and explored in Chapters One and Two—that internalized discourse which Walter Mignolo names “the logic of coloniality” (*Darker Side* 16) in his discussion of the European colonial matrix that he argues constructed and continues to implement hierarchies of race/gender/sexuality through a post-Renaissance model of the human, a construction that also came to understand nature in Africa and the Americas as the exploitation of colonized land and resources, including its people. *Xenogenesis*, a word that the *OED* defines as “the supposed production of offspring markedly different from either parent,” refers to the construct children born from an interspecies breeding of humans and the Oankali, the extraterrestrial colonizers in Butler's trilogy. *Xenogenesis* comments on race through its focus on the creation of a hybrid lifeform constructed from two intelligent species, one human and one extraterrestrial, but Butler plays with which may be the most monstrous, beckoning readers to think about human agency.

She further complicates not only the colonial structure of race, but also gender, sexuality, and nature through a third gendered character called an ooloi, nonheteronormative sex between three genders to reproduce one child, and the Oankali's decolonization of biological environments. Yet, Butler's fiction is not only complicated, but also full of contradictions. For instance, the very characters breaking apart the colonial matrix of power through their deconstruction of nature, racism, gender, sexuality, knowledge, subjectivity, and authority (the Oankali), also reproduce human colonial behaviors, which does not offer comfort so much as direct readers to work through the uncomfortable to repair relationships with one another and the environment.

Xenogenesis does not merely offer simple solutions set in the future, nor does the trilogy solely reflect upon problems of the present or past. What Butler's work *does* do is cause pause and reflection. It gets readers to think about important, pressing issues—such as racial and gender inequality, ecological ruin and environmental sustainability, sexuality and the material body, and human and nonhuman relationships. It gets us to think in more critical and complex ways by offering a speculative, imaginative world that reconsiders the consequences and meaning of human identity itself. What does it mean to be human in our modern world, a world now more cognizant of biosocial interrelations, sociopolitical understandings of nature, and a more enlightened understanding of ontology and epistemology? What can we learn by reconsidering our notions of race, gender, sexuality and their relation to our understanding of biopolitics and nonhuman environments (what many have come to call nature)? Can there even be such a thing as nonhuman environments? What can our encounters with the material world tell us about ourselves, and what might speculative worlds teach us about the interrelations between the human and nonhuman? Using Alexander Weheliye's deconstruction of the human together with Pramod K. Nayar's employment of critical posthumanism, I explore these

questions in Chapter Three not only to search for the affect produced when Butler both queers identity and addresses ecologies, but also to show how an application of queer ecologies to *Xenogenesis* might work as a practice of decolonization. In other words, I aim to show how decolonial queer ecologies can be used as a tool of transformative learning to question the human (and human relationships with environment) in a reparative reading of Butler's *Xenogenesis*.

In sum, in Chapter One I identify a specifically queer ecological framework in H. Rider Haggard's novel *She* that may offer a new way of understanding and critiquing the colonial as it emerges within empire. In Chapter Two, I extend this queer ecological framework to Michelle Cliff's novels *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* to draw out the ways that Cliff's overt challenge to empire after colonization might be understood through this queer ecological framework as a process of decolonization. Finally, in Chapter Three I situate decolonial queer ecologies as a more concrete tool that can be used to examine Octavia Butler's complex rewriting of colonial hierarchies in *Xenogenesis* to argue that Butler's work accomplishes two overarching tasks: one, her trilogy reworks the logic of coloniality by reversing the scenario, wherein humans are now facing colonization and extraterrestrials are the colonizers, in order to emphasize how the construction of the human is the root cause of colonialism and to speculate on the damage to which the effects of colonialism may still lead; and two, her fantastic reimagining of colonialism offers a keen perspective on the ways that human and nonhuman ecologies might interrogate colonial structures of identity, namely those of race, gender, and sexuality, which can help us to become undone—to become something different—to become something new. These chapters together create a framework for reparative reading and decolonial world building that can help undo colonialism and its deeply-rooted, pernicious effects, a framework I call decolonial queer ecologies.

CHAPTER ONE

NEGOTIATING EMPIRE: SUPERNATURAL DEMONS IN H. RIDER HAGGARD'S *SHE*

How thinkest thou that I rule this people? I have but a regiment of guards to do my bidding, therefore it is not by force. It is by terror. My empire is of the imagination.

—H. Rider Haggard's Ayesha, *She*

Yes, it's a queer country, and a queer people, too, Job.

—H. Rider Haggard's Horace Holly, *She*

Rereading Haggard

The above two epigraphs situate H. Rider Haggard's 1887 Imperial Gothic novel *She: A History of Adventure* in its psychological complexity. The speculative world Haggard creates in *She* teases out some of Haggard's own conflicting feelings about British imperialism, which is evidenced by his edits to the text in subsequent editions of the novel. Ayesha tells Horace Holly that she rules her people through "terror," rather than "force," and that her "empire" is largely maintained through "imagination" (134) in the 1896 edition of *She*,⁶ but in his initial, serialized publication of *She* in *The Graphic* the 20th of November 1886, Haggard uses the phrase "a moral one" (170) rather than "of the imagination."⁷ Ayesha instead says, "My empire is a moral one." Why did Haggard use the phrase "my empire is a moral one," and what did he mean by making the change?

She is certainly not a moral novel, nor does it follow a moral code. The novels published thereafter in his trilogy, the sequel *Ayesha: The Return of 'She'* (1904) and the prequel *Wisdom's*

⁶ I use the popularized text of Haggard's final 1896 edition of *She* in this chapter, reprinted in *Three Adventure Novels of H. Rider Haggard* (New York: Dover, 1951) unless otherwise noted.

⁷ I cite here from Andrew Stauffer's 2006 Broadview Press edition, which prints the serialized and illustrated form of the novel in *The Graphic* from October 1886 to January 1887. An illustrated American edition of the novel was published by Harper and Brothers 24 December 1886, followed by the first, unillustrated English edition 1 January 1887 by Longmans, Green, and Co. A later illustrated English edition followed in 1888. Haggard made slight revisions to the novel each time and continued to revise the novel for later editions that appeared in 1891 and 1896. Norman Etherington records the variants between editions and Haggard's original serialization in *The Annotated She*.

Daughter: The Life and Love Story of She-Who-Must-be-Obeyed (1922), do showcase a more empathetic Ayesha, but she nonetheless continues to speak from a position of power and privilege. Overall, Haggard's novels portray a myriad of colonial stereotypes, "yet they are unusual for the degree of sympathy with which the native populations are portrayed," notes Stephen Coan. In *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), for example, Haggard casts the Zulu warrior Umslopogaasi in a heroic role, and Ignosi, the rightful king of Kukuanialand, abolishes arbitrary capital punishment. Haggard's sympathy extends to his non-fiction work too. In his first full-length publication, *Cetywayo and his White Neighbors; or, Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal, and the Transvaal*, written at the age of 19 and based on his time working in South Africa, Haggard advocates for freeing the Zulu, casts British imperialism as devastating for the Zulu, and argues for their better qualities.⁸ Nevertheless, as this chapter's second epigraph encapsulates, Haggard's presentation of the Amahagger natives in *She* appears to cast Africa and his African characters in a strange and hence inferior light: "Yes, it's a queer country, and a queer people, too, Job" (59). Haggard's use of the word *queer* and its various meanings will be central to this chapter as I explore how he negotiates sexuality and empire in my reading of *She*. Through an exploration of his use of language, I posit that Haggard is perhaps negotiating with subconscious demons—demons rooted in anxiety over race, gender, sexuality, nature, and the human itself.

"Negotiating Empire" aims to situate the psychological complexity of the imperial consciousness in the late-nineteenth-century British Empire in order to better understand its

⁸ The conflict Haggard exhibited can be seen in his daughter's references to the Zulu juxtaposed to her father's empathy for them. Lilius Rider Haggard, in her biography of her father *The Cloak that I Left*, writes that Africa "became part of him [her father], and as he loved the country he also loved the race that dwelt there. . . . He loved them as it was given to him to understand and immortalize other ancient and savage [sic] peoples" (35-36). Though Haggard advocated for Zulu rights, he continued to refer to them as savage.

demons by exploring how a subtle anti-imperial/anti-colonial Gothic imaginary is expressed in *She*, which can be analyzed using queer ecologies—notably the ways in which Haggard explores homoeroticism/gender subversion and coalitions with natives and in nature. What does close attention to imperial narratives bring to ecological discourse? Can an even subtle, seemingly subconscious subtext of queer ecologies offer a means of decolonization, and what are the consequences of negotiating the imperial consciousness? Though the term *queer ecologies* certainly did not exist in *fin-de-siècle* Great Britain, I seek to show how the ideas which form its basis were emerging through the ideologies of collaborative, affective communities composed of destitute and radical populations engaged in anti-imperial and anti-colonial thought. When examined alongside these ideologies, read as emerging queer ecologies, I argue that Haggard’s critique of non-Western queerness in *She* can be understood as informing a rudimentary, implied criticism of British Empire that is influenced by both radical discourses of the time and his appreciation for non-normative gender and play with homoeroticism between British characters in his text’s African interior. In sum, reading Haggard’s *She* as a starting place for queer ecologies is reparative because this process recognizes queer ecological values in non-Western characters and cultures: the subversion of heteronormativity, a naturalization of the erotic, and coalition building heavily grounded in nature-culture mutuality and respect. Though implicit and inchoate, Haggard’s fiction doesn’t only glorify the non-Western as queer,⁹ but also brings that queerness home as a critique of empire that links decolonial queer ecologies to a time-period radical utopian socialism that acts as a starting point for reparative colonial imaginaries.

⁹ Sinan Akilli claims that “Haggard was in fact glorifying the savage [sic] and uncorrupted nature in Africa and . . . criticizing the destruction inflicted upon nature by the agents of British imperialism” (301).

I begin by first situating the Imperial Gothic to illustrate how the damage propagated by *fin-de-siècle* imperialism—what Patrick Brantlinger has coined the *Rule of Darkness*¹⁰ in his book of the same name—internalized the fear of and created a distancing from both the erotic and wilderness. Doing so will establish a context for showing how Haggard’s novel *She* significantly contributed to this development. Yet, at the same time, situating the Imperial Gothic is also crucial for understanding why Haggard’s *She* is so unique in the way it explores imperial conflicts and human ecologies. I then use Leela Gandhi’s research to work through Haggard’s negotiation of empire in section three of this chapter. Gandhi explores how a radical utopian socialism informed affective communities that opposed the phenomenological structures set in place by colonialism in the late-nineteenth century. I explore how Haggard’s writing of *She* was influenced by these affective communities that included notable radicals like Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt, and M.K. Gandhi. These radicals created discourses which challenged the horrors of imperialism central in supporting a limited concept of what is human: racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and anthropocentrism. This context helps set the foundation for my analysis of *She* as queer ecologies in section four, where I highlight an early form of ecocriticism present in Haggard’s *She* that is very queer. Building on Ardel Haefele-Thomas’s premise that “the gender and sexual panic” in *She* is “specifically queer rather than homosexual” because it is “infused with anxieties about shifting—read as morally degenerating—gender roles and identities” that go “beyond the specificity of male/male or female/female to suggest genderqueer, trans, and even queer heterosexual modalities” (72), I show how Haggard’s empathy for the

¹⁰ Brantlinger refers to the “rule of darkness” as the period between 1830 and 1914, which he claims as a moment of “high imperialism” that involved conquests translated as adventures in late nineteenth-century Imperial Gothic fiction that focused on atavism, interest in spirituality/the occult, and Darwinian science.

native Zulu people and their environmentally sustainable, cultural practices and beliefs is also a compassion for their queerness and is subtly reflected in a close reading of *She*.

In my critique of empire—to return to the contextualization of language—it is useful to be mindful of the historical and contemporary meanings of the terms *queer*, *civilize*, and *cultivate*—terms I explore in this chapter. One should furthermore be skeptical of the concept *nature*. It is the evolution and adaptability of these terms which bridge queer theory and ecocriticism in this study to explore the conflict generated in a statement such as this: as Victorians sought to *civilize* the *queer* bodies they found in the distant lands they explored and colonized, they also made great efforts to *cultivate* the *natural* landscape. The words *queer*, *civilize*, and *cultivate* used to describe the history of imperialism and empire are relative, complex signifiers that I use here to intentionally stir contention because they imply that non-normative bodies need to be normalized through Westernization and non-Western lands tamed to Western standards. Moreover, the concept of *natural* relies on viewing indigenous relationships to land as something other than human cultivation. For Victorians, cultivation also often meant abstracting resources from colonized land for material gain to expand the growth and realm of British civilization, and, as I will highlight, Victorians perceived matriarchal gender paradigms, same-sex practices, and gender diversity outside of the binary as queer practices that required their being civilized and cultivated.¹¹ *Queer* was a word used by Victorians that had a range of distinct and different, yet intersecting variations and meanings: strange, odd, eccentric; questionable, suspicious, dubious; to puzzle, to confound, to baffle; contemptible, worthless, untrustworthy; rare (later homosexual in the sense of unnatural, abnormal, perverse); and eerie,

¹¹ I contextualize Haggard's use of terminology notably in section four. For the relationship between capitalism/consumerism, imperialism, and abject bodies and zones, see McClintock's *Imperial Leather*. See Hennessy's *Profit and Pleasure* for a discussion of sexual subjects and commodity logic.

spooky, uncanny¹²—meanings explored in this chapter that are of particular interest to, and deserve careful analysis in, a study of Imperial Gothic fiction.

Situating the Imperial Gothic

The racial/colonial anxiety and fear of de-evolution that pervade Haggard's novel influenced three very popular *fin-de-siècle* Imperial Gothic novels that followed: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. Each published between 1897-1899, these novels strikingly share similar characteristics to Haggard's *She*, and, as Judith Wilt establishes, show a preoccupation with anxieties that are the direct result of imperialism and colonization: "the expected counter-attack, the dreaded regression, and the threatening future, the unhuman" (621). The vampire, so-called barbarian, and alien in these very popular novels—each perceived as unnatural, uncivilized, and sexual aberrations that are representations of a Victorian mind that projects anxieties onto others that are dominated, conquered, and demeaned—reflect a transition from high Gothic to science fiction in the age of a new imperialism driven by commodity racism, fetishism, and commercialization, as Anne McClintock notes in *Imperial Leather*.¹³ Stoker, Conrad, Wells, and their characters owe a great

¹² The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines and records the etymology of the word *queer* in its various uses and parts of speech (adjective, verb, noun, etc.). In Victorian context, the *OED* provides several examples. Charles Dickens uses the adjective *queer* in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841): "It was a queer [strange, odd, eccentric] fancy . . . but he was a queer [questionable, suspicious, dubious] subject altogether" (162). William Douglas Parish uses the past-tense verb *queered* in *A Dictionary of the Sussex dialect and collection of provincialisms in use in . . . Sussex* (1875): "It had queered [puzzled, confounded, baffled] me for a long time to find out who that man is." Dickens again uses *queer* as adjective in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865): "Concerning that bill-broking branch of the business . . . what queer [contemptable, worthless, untrustworthy] bills are to be bought, and at what prices?" Sir Walter Scott uses the noun *queer* in *Woodstock; or, The Cavalier* (1826): "His appearance bordered . . . upon what is vulgarly called the queer [rare, in various senses]" (202), and this usage found its way into late 19th-century descriptions of Oscar Wilde, for instance by the 9th Marquess of Queensberry, John Douglas, in his November 1st letter of 1894 to describe Wilde and his sexual affair with his son, Lord Alfred Douglas, as well as their circle of homosexuals, as *queers*: "I write to tell you that it is the judgement on the whole lot of you. Montgomerys, The Snob Queers [meaning unnatural, abnormal, perverse] like Roseberry & Christian hypocrite Gladstone." Francis Edward Smedley uses the adjective *queer* in his *Sharpe's London Magazine* piece "Harry Coverdale's Courtship v" (1853): "A dark archway . . . which . . . looked jolly queer [eerie, spooky, uncanny] and ghostified."

¹³ McClintock offers a thorough examination of British imperialism and its intersections with gender, race, class, and sexuality. She uses feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytical and socialist theories to argue that these categories do not exist in isolation but are intimately related to one another.

amount of gratitude to Haggard's 1887 novel *She*. Ayesha threatens to invade Great Britain and overthrow Queen Victoria, which is not unlike the fear of the invasion of vampires or Martians colonizing home, nor is it hard to see how Ayesha's immortality and presumed annihilation by fire at the end of *She* is similar to that of Dracula. Moreover, forms of cannibalism that reflect anxieties of degeneration are present in all four texts as well: in the native Amahagger's actual intent to eat the European explorers Horace Holly, Leo Vincey, and their servant Job in *She*; in Marlow and Kurtz's horror at seeing human heads stuck on poles and facing rumors of cannibalism in *Heart of Darkness*; in the fear of being deprived of blood and hence life by the Martians that invade the planet in *The War of the Worlds*; and similarly, in becoming a feast for a vampire by having blood sucked from the human body, or far worse, becoming the immortal undead in *Dracula*. It is not very hard to see the influence Haggard and *She* had on the imperial masterpiece *Heart of Darkness* after recalling Kurtz's infamous last lines, "The horror! The horror!" (71) words eerily first spoken by Horace Holly in *She* when he describes his disgust upon seeing Ayesha degenerate into a "monkey" after bathing in the pillar of fire responsible for her immortality and supernatural powers: "oh, horror of horrors!" (220).

Haggard's *She* no doubt influenced the colonial anxieties expressed in later popular fiction. However, *She* is also unique in establishing a critique of empire that fed Stoker, Conrad, and Wells's horror fiction. *She* reveals a conflict of interest grounded in events and discourses of its time. Great Britain experienced a resurgence of imperialism after the First Industrial Revolution, which ended in the mid-nineteenth century, followed by an anxiety of national decline that was provoked by a fear of reverse colonization during the Second Industrial Revolution, notably toward the end of this century.¹⁴ Andrew Smith and Robert Mighall have

¹⁴ The First Industrial Revolution, which introduced machinery and technology, began sometime in the mid-eighteenth century around 1760 and climaxed between 1820 and 1840, giving rise to the emergence of the modern

argued that Victorian Gothic texts tend to reveal that this anxiety of national decline was not rooted in reality, but in discourse—fear of racial degeneration, risk to masculinity and nationhood.¹⁵ This fear can be observed readily in the Imperial Gothic novel. Characters in Imperial Gothic novels, such as Haggard’s Leo Vincey and Horace Holly in *She*, are quintessential staples of Gothic adventures that are not unlike the expatriates or explorers who set out on missions to civilize people and cultivate places for their Queen Victoria. Yet, a study of Haggard’s characters reveals an inconsistency that is no doubt influenced by a conflict between his imperial values and his developing empathy for the Zulu people he had met during his time in the Transvaal as a young man of nineteen, and this in turn shows how empire was unmaking itself in the midst of its consolidation. Haggard’s empathy is evidenced in some of his non-fiction writing, for instance when he advocates for the protection of the Zulu from the Boers in the Transvaal: “The natives are the real heirs to the soil and surely should have protection and consideration . . . we have handed them over without a word to the tender mercies of one where natives are concerned, of the cruelest white races in the world” (qtd. in Pocock 51-52). Lindy Stiebel notes how Haggard’s interest and respect for the Zulu extended to his fiction too, even while at the same time showing his support for imperialism: “Haggard exhibits the tensions and contradictions of his age, for at times he supports the ‘empty land’ myth by his lyrical descriptions of vast, seemingly uninhabited, lands. Yet, because of his genuine interest in and respect for the Zulu people particularly, they are in a sense ever present in his fiction . . .” (15).

capitalist economy. It evolved into the Second Industrial Revolution by 1870 that lasted well into the twentieth century and was characterized by steam-powered transport and machinery, which more easily enabled new imperial quests (see Landes and Roe). Stephen Arata notes how an anxiety of national decline during this second period was provoked by a fear of reverse colonization.

¹⁵ Andrew Smith’s book *Victorian Demons* argues that in the final decades of the nineteenth century “particularly complex set[s] of . . . dominant masculine scripts came to be associated with disease, degeneration, and perversity” (1). He explores how sexological writings, degeneration theory, and medical writing produced anxieties of national decline often developed in literary texts. Robert Mighall explores how the Victorian Gothic novel in particular reflected fears and attitudes about national decline in his book *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*.

Haggard furthermore expressed a conflict of interest regarding the way that Native-African environments were exploited by imperialism. Sinan Akilli argues that Haggard believed that civilization disrupted “the balance of the ecosphere” (305) and that “Haggard’s attitude towards Africa was one which called for the protection of the land from Europeans, and certainly not one which promoted its exploitation, let alone its rape” (303). In sum, though Haggard’s experiences make rich content for Gothic adventures, there is a subtle context in his novel *She* that can be reread as a subconscious pathway to anti-imperial/anti-colonial speculation. Similarly, within the Gothic subtext of Haggard’s *She* emerges a faint reparative queer ecocriticism. Haggard’s Imperial Gothic text can act as a starting place for decolonial queer ecologies.

Patrick Brantlinger established the Imperial Gothic as a distinct genre in his 1988 book *Rule of Darkness*. In his chapter “Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914,” he writes:

Imperial Gothic combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult, [and] . . . the link with occultism is especially symptomatic of the anxieties that attended the climax of the British Empire. No form of cultural expression reveals more clearly the contradictions within that climax than imperial Gothic. (227-28)

In other words, the Imperial Gothic is distinctly situated from other colonial-themed fiction because it blends an adventure story with Gothic elements in an aim to understand self-agency through a reconciliation of Darwinian ideology with scientific materialism, which the late Victorians then used to search out new sources for their religious beliefs and faith in the form of the occult and paranormal (supernatural)—in séances, telepathy, and psychic research—often symptomatic of regression. Haggard became interested in the idea of reincarnation, which

undoubtedly influenced his immortal character Ayesha and her belief in the reincarnation of her lover Killikrates in the form of his descendent Leo Vincey in his *She* novels.¹⁶ Imperial Gothic is characterized by apocalyptic images and includes three principal themes: “individual regression [atavism] or going native; an invasion of civilization by barbarism or demonism [reverse colonization]; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world” (230). These elements which come together to form the Imperial Gothic novel, and the historical context that influenced this genre, have great impact on the conflict of interest revealed in reading *She*.

She first of all outwardly uses Gothic tropes to develop themes of imperialism that greatly influenced popular *fin-de-siècle* novels that continued to struggle with colonial conflict and anxiety.¹⁷ The novel begins with an orphan of mysterious family lineage (Leo Vincey), who as an adult, sets out from London on a quest to discover the ancient civilization of Kôr in the interior of Africa with his guardian (Horace Holly) and his male nurse (Job). Holly, a Cambridge professor who has raised Leo as his ward, was given instructions to open a locked iron box for Leo on his twenty-fifth birthday that will reveal his identity, wherein they find a map written on a potsherd passed down through history from Amenartes, Leo’s Ancient-Greek maternal ancestor, lover of Killikrates, a former priest of Isis who was killed by the priestess Ayesha two thousand years ago in a fit of jealous rage. After being shipwrecked, the men are captured by the native Amahagger people that live on top of a dormant volcano in catacombs above Kôr and are ruled by a tyrannical white queen whom the Amahagger claim to be a demoniacal sorceress,

¹⁶ Like Haggard’s biographers, Brantlinger notes how much his interest in the occult influenced his fiction. He writes, “Haggard was interested in occultism from the time when, as a young man in London, he attended séances at the house of Lady Paulet . . . [and] after about 1900, according to Norman Etherington, Haggard dwelt with ‘increased fervor on the truth of reincarnation’” (243).

¹⁷ See Punter for discussion of the Gothic tropes that follow: an orphan set to inherit a fortune with an ancient ancestral bloodline (Leo); a virginal maiden of a noble family who escapes a villainous tyrant (Ayesha’s backstory); and a castle (here replaced by a volcano) with catacombs, labyrinths, and mummies.

which Leo and Holly are soon horrified to learn is the priestess (Ayesha) who killed Leo's ancestor Killikrates. Ayesha has supernatural powers to read minds, heal wounds, and cure illness, as well as a thorough knowledge of chemistry,¹⁸ and she insists that Leo is Killikrates reincarnated. After Leo becomes enchanted by Ayesha's beauty, she attempts to convince him to bathe in the pillar of fire responsible for her immortality to preserve their lives and love; however, all does not go as planned when Ayesha de-evolves into what is described as a "mummy . . . no larger than a monkey" (221) after stepping into the flame to prove it harmless."¹⁹

Though the plot in *She* may seem to be a straightforward imperial influence on the novels of the Imperial Gothic genre it established, I seek to show how Haggard also explores a subtle desire to move beyond empire, which has already been established in different ways from those I will develop in sections three and four. For instance, in "Beyond Colonialism," Andrew Smith explores a conflict of self in *She* when writes, "The basic tension in the [*She*] novels is between a lament for a lost colonial world and a desire to move beyond that colonial world" (113). This requires a loss of the self to form a subjectivity that is not based on the notion of otherness. Smith argues that even though Haggard's writings do support certain imperialist and patriarchal ideals, ". . . they also explore the possibility of moving beyond a colonialist identity politics reliant on conceptions of racial otherness" (104). Smith posits that some of Haggard's novels,

¹⁸ It is important to note that Ayesha's knowledge of chemistry comes mostly from studying nature. Ayesha explains that she can alter the body and genetics through breeding programs as well, and she has created special guards from the Amahagger that have superior strength and a distinct look. *She* might be viewed as an early precursor to H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

¹⁹ The scene of de-evolution is described in detail: "Smaller and smaller she grew; her skin changed colour, and in place of the perfect whiteness of its luster it turned dirty brown and yellow like an old piece of withered parchment. She felt at her head: the delicate hand was nothing but a claw now, a human talon resembling that of a badly preserved Egyptian mummy. . . . Smaller she grew . . . till she was no larger than a monkey. . . . On her shapeless face was the stamp of unutterable age, . . . no bigger now than that of a two-months child, though the skull retained its same size . . ." (221).

including *She*, explore a transition between his tendency to “lament the decline of Britain’s colonial status” and to “positively explore a new identity politics” as a result of the “refashioning of colonialist subjectivity” (104). In other words, Smith argues, the older dualities of colonialism (self/other, west/east, white/black) are no longer feasible during the late-nineteenth century because imperialism began to lose its focus of empire building as a necessary means to “civilize” the “savage.” As Smith notes, Haggard began to explore a way to tackle these politics and transgress old ideas by exploring the representation of these older dualities through Gothic tropes—namely their symbolic representation in the relationship between the dead and living. Death and resurrection are used to remap and reconstruct a new kind of identity politics that questions simplistic binaries and hierarchy itself, “. . . one in which the self’s very instability functions as a threshold into another possible world that transcends the colonial” (104). The supernatural in *She* allows Haggard to deconstruct notions of the native to reconstruct and renegotiate the identity politics of race, gender, sexuality, and imperialism in the British Empire.

Haggard’s *She* provides a fantastical background wherein late Victorians can play out their fears and anxieties of the colonized other. The British protagonists set off on a heroic quest to avenge Leo Vincey’s ancient ancestor in the heart of Africa at the turn of the century wherein they discover an anachronistic world inhabited by natives that threaten their Western identity, and, as noted, Ayesha later reveals her plot to invade Great Britain and overthrow Queen Victoria. In *She*, time-period fears and anxieties are pacified by fantastic, supernatural elements and the Gothic: phantasmagoria, telepathy, immortality, necrophilia, and nostalgia. The novel also suggests that reading about a lost city reveals an understanding of the mysterious origins of advanced human civilization—the mystery of advancement a colonial concept itself. Haggard’s Imperial Gothic fiction gets readers to confront their qualms about imperialism as well as the

unknown and uncomfortable through confrontation with horror. *She* provided its contemporary readers with a speculative world wherein they could negotiate a threatened breakdown in meaning that was surfacing during the time as a result of the loss of a distinction between their selves and the other—represented through familiar Gothic characterizations of imagined African natives in wilderness settings. The interconnections between domestic preoccupations and imperial violence especially make this novel important. Ardel Haefele-Thomas writes, “Queen Victoria and Ayesha become linked in a strange amalgamation of imperial and domestic violence and queer desire” (95), and this leads one to question what made the novel so popular. *She* was a great success and has never been out of print; it was praised by many, including Haggard’s friend, novelist Rudyard Kipling, and critic Andrew Lang, who afterwards came to be Haggard’s editor and staunch advocate.²⁰

The novel’s popularity as a founding Imperial Gothic text is also largely due to the sense of justification or inevitability for the colonial project that it provided through its subjugation of native, colonized bodies. *She* perhaps attracted readers because it offered landscapes that were uncanny; even though most readers had never been to Africa, familiar Gothic tropes permeated foreign—understood by Victorians as exotic—settings. Haggard himself thought the novel his very best work; he is said to have exclaimed of *She*, “There is what I shall be remembered by,” when he delivered the manuscript to his agent, A.P. Watt (*Days of My Life* 246). Andrew Lang, on reading the proofs, declared, “I think it is one of the most astonishing romances I have ever read. The more impossible it is, the better you do it, till it seems like a story from the literature of another planet” (247). In a more serious critique of *She*, Andrew Lang later wrote that the aim of “romance-adventure” fiction, i.e. the Imperial Gothic subgenre Haggard largely created, was to

²⁰ See Ellis for a discussion of the reception of *She* in the late-nineteenth century and its continued success.

“evoke and excite ‘the Eternal Boy,’” a notion that later resonated with Sigmund Freud, which he wrote about in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Freud’s reference to the novel is in response to a dream made 13 years after the novel’s publication, 15 years after its serial debut in *Graphic*; nonetheless, the reference is very important because it shows how Haggard’s fiction influenced *fin-de-siècle* politics and culture. In his interpretation of the dream, Freud associates *She*’s antagonist Ayesha and Africa with the “eternal feminine,” which he equates with “the immortality of our emotions” (qtd. in Brantlinger, xvi-xvii). Norman Etherington summarizes Freud’s dream concisely: “He found himself in a laboratory engaged in the gruesome work of dissecting his own pelvis and legs. The scene changed to a perilous journey through a wild landscape peopled by savages. At the end of the journey he had to cross a chasm on narrow planks. He awoke in a ‘mental fright’” (“Rider Haggard, Imperialism” 71). Freud’s dream was likely influenced by a conversation that he had had earlier with a female patient who asked him to recommend her something to read, to which he replied, “I offered her Rider Haggard’s *She*. ‘A *strange* book, but full of hidden meaning,’ and began to explain to her: ‘the eternal feminine, the immortality of our emotions’” (qtd. in Etherington 453) Freud seems to be preoccupied with a threat to his masculinity, in being unsexed, and in facing a great challenge in crossing from one side of a “chasm” to another, from a “wild landscape” to someplace unknown, horror-stuck by people that he calls “savages.” This type of subconscious response, for we must call it subconscious if Freud is able to remember the dream and where its origins come from, but not understand its full meaning, was not unfamiliar to the imperial mind of the late Victorians, and it also shows the ways that Gothic sticks in the subconscious. Freud produced a language of the un/subconscious, but he is arguably displaying

the underside of European culture in the Victorian age. His connection to Haggard's *She* makes his work effectively visible.

When the public read *She*, and when Freud recommends that a female patient read the novel, it is not hard to see how they interpellate European-white-male-superiority as a natural essence of self-identity. What Freud speculates from his dream, and what the public, but especially boys of the time period first reading Haggard's adventure fiction must have felt, is that the excitement generated by fiction was feminine and primitive, characteristics that they must distance themselves from yet could explore from a safe distance through supernatural mystery and an imperial adventure. Patrick Brantlinger supports this assertion when he writes:

Africa was a setting where British boys could become men, and British men, like Haggard's heroes, could behave like boys with impunity. Africa was a great testing (or teething) ground for moral growth and moral regression (the two processes were often indistinguishable). And because imperialism always entailed violence and exploitation and therefore could never bear much scrutiny, propagandists found it easier to leave it to the boys to 'play up, play up, and play the game' than to supposedly more mature audiences. (190)

Brantlinger refers to subconscious responses and feelings about imperialism, notably those of sexuality, gender, race, and the domination and accumulation of resources and animals, understood by Victorians as the cultivation of nature, which are readily present in Haggard's Imperial Gothic fiction. It is as if Andrew Lang insinuates to Haggard that "the eternal boy" cannot be "evoked" or "excited" within the boundaries of Great Britain itself, but that this emotion eagerly finds a playground in the fiction written about colonized landscapes and

bodies—safely fetishized and eroticized emotions at a distance from reality and carefully packaged into Gothic romances.

Consumption of foreign cultures and spaces was realized through fetishized Gothic romances in the late-nineteenth century. In *Imagining Africa*, Lindy Stiebel posits that decades of the consumption of foreign culture and artifacts reappropriated strange space into colonial space, which allowed novel writers to tame “otherness,” bring it under control, and own it by “repeatedly generating similar depictions of foreign landscapes” (3). She argues that “such is the power of imagined foreign landscapes that anxieties that underlie the imperial and later colonial project would be likely to surface, in a writer such as Haggard, in these repeated, almost fetishistic representations of perceivably exotic, foreign landscapes, even in those supposedly domesticated” (3). Yet, Haggard’s fiction seemingly challenges late-Victorian norms through his representation of often fetishized African landscapes and characters. It is useful to consider how racialized, gendered, eroticized, and queer bodies and landscapes are forcefully conquered and cast from constructions of nature in Haggard’s text—both as a result of the events of colonial domination and in the way that they have been accounted for Haggard’s historical narratives—while natural landscapes and native bodies are queered, raced, gendered, and as an amalgamation, come to be exotic. Colonized bodies and queered bodies are often sites of metaphor and ridicule in Imperial Gothic fiction although they come to be driven from wilderness spaces through imperialism and colonial conquest. In fiction such as Haggard’s they are frequently associated simultaneously with primitiveness, eroticism, and exoticism—qualities also often used to characterize nature. Though this entanglement most often helps to support an imperial mission, in Haggard’s fiction, it divulges a lot about the imperial consciousness in the mind of the author, his audience, and even contemporary readers that is in contradiction to the

imperial mission. This leads one to inquire not only into whether there is something to be learned from even a fetishized, fantasized version of native bodies and topographies, but also what motivates Haggard's fetishized speculative world.

Further analysis of Freud's suggestion to his patient to read Haggard's novel can help answer this inquiry. Freud's correlation of Ayesha and Africa with the "eternal feminine" as the "immortality of our emotions" more so projects male anxieties about women and wilderness than anything else, and when the novel is put into context, African natives and queered bodies, equating them with women, women with our emotions, and our emotions with inferiority. In *She*, the African nonhuman is eroticized and gendered as feminine in order to be dominated, controlled, and manipulated, which is not a surprise considering that Haggard gendered the map of Africa in his previous novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, as Anne McClintock has noted in *Imperial Leather*.²¹ McClintock and Ann Laura Stoler have both noted how notions of sexuality (including erotic preoccupations largely concerned with gender boundaries) became firmly anchored in colonial racism. Domestic sexuality and gender came to be raced, and colonized bodies and nonhuman environments were gendered and sexualized. In *Race and the Education of Desire*, Stoler notes how the Victorian project of "ruling colonies" came to entail both "colonizing bodies and minds," which was "fundamental to the colonial order of things" (4), and this colonization frequently involved gender appropriation and eroticizing and racializing

²¹ McClintock notes in her introduction to *Imperial Leather* how the map to *King Solomon's Mines*, when inverted, resembles the diagram of a female body, her breasts overtly named Sheba's Breasts for the mountains through which the adventurers must pass to reach the mouth of the cave to find the treasure, and the mound beneath the naval named "Three Witches," a triangular formation of three hills "covered in dark heather" that conceal entrances to the "two forbidden caves" female genitalia. Behind lies the "anal" pit through which the men must traverse to find their way out of the "womb" of the cave, which symbolizes a "male birthing ritual" (3). This sexualization of the land is similar to what is found in Haggard's *She*, which I examine in the fourth section of this chapter. However, it is useful to here note McClintock's critique of the map in *King Solomon's Mines*: The men "give birth" to three "orders" which act as "governing themes of Western imperialism" when they exit the mines with diamonds the size of the "pigeon eggs": "the male, *reproductive* order of patriarchal monogamy; the white *economic* order of mining capital; and the global, *political* order of empire" (1-3).

landscapes and bodies in imperial fiction. Women and degenerates, which came to include the poor, the prostitutes, and the homosexuals of Great Britain, as McClintock and Haefele-Thomas have noted, were aligned with raced natives of colonized and underexplored territories, as well as wilderness landscapes, to justify their inferiority to and maintain their control by a white-male-heterosexual-bourgeois—read as the European, typically British, hypermasculinized power structure. Haefele-Thomas notes that the consequences of these alignments resulted in “the heart of Africa” collapsing “into the core of Britain,” and “the heart of Britain” collapsing “into the core of Africa” (95). Michel Foucault has written about the construction of different “varieties of racism” in the late-nineteenth century as essential for the state to monitor and control sexuality (26); yet, his analysis of the intersections of race and sexuality as collapsing into each other falls short of a colonial investigation, as Stoler has noted.

Stoler criticizes Foucault for his lack of consideration of race and the colonial body in his theorization of biopolitics, but she also notes how colonial history has more so preceded from a Freudian premise that has not been fully explored or acknowledged, and speculates how Freudian and Foucauldian projects have converged: “For Freud, sexual desire is a cause; for Foucault, an effect. Freud accounts for the psychological aetiology of perversions; Foucault looks to the cultural production and historical specificity of the notions of sexual pathology and perversion themselves. . . . Both were concerned with boundary formation, with the ‘internal enemy’ within” (168-69). While Foucault concerns himself with the ways that social bodies are at conflict to understand how racial conventions emerge, however slightly, Freud focuses on how they arise from the “psychological contortions of the individual at war with her or his own subliminal desires” (169). Yet, neither Freud nor Foucault, nor Stoler for that matter, sufficiently explore how biopower is maintained through the control of nature, an incredibly loaded word

that I refer to in its Victorian understanding, namely as a removed, independent environment inhabited by wild animals and flora—sublime landscapes needing to be tamed for habitation. Clearly this representation poses a problem because it imagines human beings as not part of and hence superior to natural settings and sees humans that are part of these settings before such taming as wild. How does Haggard address these issues in *She* through the use of the Gothic?

A critique of imperialism in Haggard's *She* is more complicated than it first appears. By understanding the developing awareness of new human and nonhuman ecologies in the late Victorian Era, one can better situate the idea of nature as a cultural construct that aided imperialism but nonetheless was beginning to change. Contextualizing the historical origins of Haggard's *fin-de-siècle* Gothic tropes and motifs in *She* can enrich our understanding of emerging conflicts in the late-nineteenth-century British Empire between the human/non-human/not-quite-human and nature. Haggard's fetishizing of characters in *She* is complexly correlated to late nineteenth-century discourses that began to challenge hierarchies of various forms that made those on the margins visible and brought pressing issues front and center. It is these complexities that I explore in the next section in order to situate my analysis of *She*.

***Fin-de-Siècle* Horrors and Rebels**

It should not be surprising that late-nineteenth-century Victorian fears and anxieties were played out in Gothic novels, fiction known to explore the connections between horror and terror, concepts that drew distinct meanings early in Gothic fiction. Ann Radcliffe, in her 1826 essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry," distinguishes between "horror" and "terror," describing terror as preceding horror and eliciting anxiety, anticipation, fear, and surprise, and horror as a response to terror, a more obscure emotion that is a state of shock, fright, and revulsion (149). Terror is an action that often produces and precedes horror in Imperial Gothic fiction; the

experience of terror is often initiated by the imperial adventurer, and what they often find terrifies them and is followed by an experience of horror. For instance, in *She*, Leo Vincey and Horace Holly initiate travel into the heart of Africa to find a lost world, fully expecting that what they find there will terrify them. They are terrified when they see what is to them exotic animals engaged in a battle of life and death when a crocodile wrestles a lion to death, snapped in its jaws, followed by blood and gore (horror). They are terrified when they meet the Amahagger natives, followed by horror and dismay when they discover that the natives indulge in cannibalism. They are terrified by the sublime landscape they must traverse to reach a pillar of fire that will give them immortality after bathing in its flames, and they are horrified when Ayesha de-evolves into what is described as a small “monkey” after demonstrating to them that the flame is harmless, which ironically proves to be untrue.²²

However, we can reverse the order of things by viewing Ayesha herself as the imperialist. Ayesha is actually not native to Kôr, the land that the Amahagger inhabit. She comes from an Arab nation, and we learn, has worked as a priestess of Isis in Egypt. She flees to Kôr, and after two millennia, has come to rule over the Amahagger people, a hybrid race between the extinct people of Kôr of Arabic origin and African natives, whom she breeds into genetic creations and slaves to serve her. Ayesha terrorizes the Amahagger and produces the horror that Leo and Holly find. I posit that the imaginative circumstances that describe horror in Haggard’s *She* say more about the conflict of imperialism present in the mind of Haggard and reflected through his characters than the actual people he encountered when living in Africa, namely the Zulu nation. There is more conflict and contradiction at play here than simply reproduction of the colonial

²² Ayesha is resurrected in Haggard’s sequel *Ayesha: The Return of ‘She’* in India, eerily proving her last words in the first novel, *She*: “I die not. I shall come again, and shall once more be beautiful. I swear it—it is true!” (221). I return to this storyline shortly.

image of Africa in the colonial European imagination. Haggard's speculative imagination creates anachronistic characters that migrate through time and place which are subconsciously driven and culturally informed, and I argue, represent conflicting emotions of the late Victorians about sexuality, gender, race, anthropocentrism, and imperialism. Haggard's use of the uncanny in *She* helps to draw out the complexities of imperialism and address these conflicting emotions. His use of horror and terror elicit feelings of abjection that cause his readers to reflect on race, gender, sexuality, and their relationship to environment—understood by Victorians as nature.

Haggard's *She* emerged from a Victorian culture not only preoccupied with imperialism and empire, but also with exiled rebels and destitute populations, many opposed to British nationalism, Victorian morality, and Darwinian-influenced social conventions. In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault discusses how Victorians came to police non-normative populations and obsess over sexual conduct, prostitution, criminals, and the poor, often merging destitute populations into one another—through not unchallenged. Leela Gandhi asserts that “the principles of [Darwin's] sexual selection [in the Victorian era] . . . were . . . instrumental in producing the nonheterosexual or homosexual as a ‘civilizational’ aberration [and that] in so doing, they also conferred upon this figure a potentially symmetrical relation to all those other savage, colonized peoples concurrently relegated to the jealous margins of Western civility” (49). Yet, Gandhi, too, discusses opposition. Lindy Stiebel argues that Haggard was heavily influenced by a pro-imperial discourse that emerged from this history: “Haggard frequently displays his adherence to a kind of social Darwinist cultural relativity in his comparison of European and African cultures, to the former's detriment” (15). However, Stiebel fails to address how Haggard's work begins to challenge Western discourse in subtle ways. What Foucault, Gandhi, and Stiebel do not sufficiently address are the ways in which a new understanding of

nature began to take shape in speculative literature of the late-nineteenth century—howsoever slightly—that shows a struggle with negotiating empire between its horrors and its rebels.

The “horrors” that the white-male-heterosexual-bourgeois-driven Victorian society of the British Empire faced in the late-nineteenth century were firmly rooted in what Greta Gaard aptly labels *ecophobia* and *erotophobia*.²³ These fears propagated and influenced attitudes about racial superiority, patriarchy and gender, sexuality, and imperialism and colonization in Victorian fiction. One has only to think of the way Charles Dickens works so hard to normalize the middle class through his demonization of working-class characters like Uriah Heep and his killing off of David’s decadent (read queer) friend Steerforth in *David Copperfield*, his portrayal of Magwitch come back from exile in Australia in *Great Expectations*,²⁴ or his orphans, prostitutes, and hooligans in *Oliver Twist*. Haggard’s work often followed in this tradition of demonizing non-European and/or non-normative characters. Yet, these fears are far more complex than we realize when they are more clearly contextualized and historicized. Rebellious movements emerged that began to challenge the hierarchical British, white-male-heterosexual-bourgeois system, though they were often violently conquered, suppressed, and pathologized, largely through the emergence of discourses led by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing’s field of sexology and Max Nordau’s theory of civilization—antecedents of degeneration theory and its influence on the Victorian Gothic.

²³ Gaard’s essay, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” is largely credited with the beginning of the field of queer ecologies, though there are certainly earlier contributions from ecocritics such as Val Plumwood, Carolyn Merchant and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, as well as influential work from scholars such as Anne Fausto-Sterling, Donna Haraway, and Elizabeth Grosz—work discussed in depth in the introduction.

²⁴ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said argues that Magwitch’s exile to Australia “others” him in a class with the colonized: “The prohibition placed on Magwitch’s return is not only penal but imperial: subjects can be taken to places like Australia, but they cannot be allowed a ‘return’ to metropolitan space, which, as all Dickens’s fiction testifies, is meticulously charted, spoken for, inhabited by a hierarchy of metropolitan personages” (xvi).

Krafft-Ebing's 1886 *Psychopathia Sexualis* became the authority on sexual pathology.²⁵ It popularized the terms sadism and masochism, and it proposed that the mental state of sexual deviants be considered in legal judgements. Max Nordau's 1883 *Conventional Lies of our Civilization* made severe claims representing the views of educated and cultivated people, no doubt reinforcing superior attitudes of Victorian Britain. These discourses, along with an often misinterpreted view of Darwin's "survival of the fittest," skewed yet reinforced natural selection as justification for imperialism. Elizabeth Grosz's book *Becoming Undone* (2011) provides an insightful critique on how the domestication of Darwin impacted cultural perceptions of difference and identity. In my introduction, I discussed Grosz's argument in depth to show how Darwin believed that sexual differentiation and variation was essential for life, not some notion that evolution was about the survival of the fittest in the sense that the fittest was a normative biological determinism. These often misinterpreted views of Darwinism often influenced Gothic depictions of evolutionary degeneration and horror, as Kelly Hurley has argued in *The Gothic Body*. Hurley posits that theories of "degeneration" and criminal "atavism" are "'gothic' versions of evolutionism—discourses that emphasized the potential indifferenciation and changeability of the human species"—and she refers to a "criminal anthropological theory of the atavist, whose body was a compendium of human and non-human morphic traits"²⁶ to point out that "the topics pursued by nineteenth-century science were often as 'gothic' as those found within any novel" (20). Imperial Gothic fiction thus significantly drew upon time-period circumstances to shape fictional fears and tropes of horror through the origins of British terror. For instance, Patrick

²⁵ Krafft-Ebing referred to same-sex sex as "sexual inversion." The term *homosexual* was used in 1868 in a letter to Karl Heinrich Ulrich from Karl-Maria Kertbeny, later published in an anonymous German pamphlet, which advocated for the repeal of Prussia's sodomy laws. Ulrich coined the term *uranian* to describe same-sex identity. *Homosexual* was first used in English in Charles Gilbert Chaddock's 1892 translation of Krafft-Ebing's work, though Krafft-Ebing never used the word himself. See David Halperin for further background.

²⁶ I will return to this point in Chapter Three to explore how *the human* itself is a problem that perpetuated hierarchies of inequality and is destructive to environment.

Brantlinger notes how the occultism and atavism of the imperialist-influenced Gothic fiction in the late-nineteenth century: “The subjectivism of Gothic romance as a genre thus intersects with the atavistic character of both imperialist ideology and occultist belief” (245). Robert Mighall’s *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* offers a rich discussion and analysis of the Victorian era and its discourses, notably those of sexology and degeneration, but also criminology and psychiatry. His book shows how historical discourses found their way into Gothic fiction, but also how Gothic fiction found its way into historical discourses—how they were mapped onto the body to produce a “Darwinian nightmare” (130).

However, in order to appreciate a reparative reading of Haggard’s *She*, we must not only consider how the Imperial Gothic is understood as producing a “Darwinian nightmare,” but we must also recognize how *She* uses terror and horror in order to provide an outlet for Victorians—an outlet through which abject feelings about gender, sexuality, race, class, and nature are realized and experienced. In other words, situating the abject in Haggard’s *She* is necessary for understanding how his novel can act as a starting place for decolonial queer ecologies. Julia Kristeva, in her book-length essay *Powers of Horror*, describes abjection as the subconscious reaction of horror one experiences when one is threatened by the corporeality of a distinction between the self and the Other (4-9). Morality, politics, religion, language, and art, but notably literature, often reflect abjection, Kristeva asserts: “Because it [literature] occupies its place [the place of horror], because it hence decks itself out in the sacred power of horror, literature may also involve not an ultimate resistance to but an unveiling of the abject: an elaboration, a discharge, and a hollowing out of abjection through the Crisis of the Word” (208). “This is Kristeva’s brilliant insight,” Anne McClintock notes in *Imperial Leather*, “the expelled abject haunts the subject as its inner constitutive boundary; that which is repudiated forms the self’s

internal limit” (71). Haggard’s internal limit is revealed through a closer examination of his subconsciously informed, speculative novel *She*; Gothic tropes and motifs highlight the expelled abject in *She* to work through discourses that show he was truly troubled by the way that the British deployed their imperialism, and furthermore notions of race, gender, and sexuality, and in this way, his fiction challenges dominant colonial discourse.

Kristeva uses the example of the corpse to elaborate on an object which may elicit abjection. In Haggard’s *She*, the corpse and other tropes (decay, cannibalism, death, and necrophilia) are fetishized to provoke abjection, but at the same time, they explore intersections of queerness and environment.²⁷ For example, I argue in section 3.4 that Haggard’s use of cannibalism and necrophilia are subtexts for exploring sexuality and human ecologies that disturb Victorian cultural conventions and identities. The terror and horror evoked by Haggard’s sublime landscapes and often grotesque characterization of both living and dead bodies are more than Gothic instruments because they are used as a new kind of social commentary—one highlighting the value of difference in the Other as opposed to threat. As noted in the last section, Andrew Smith’s analysis of dead and living bodies in *She* provides a strong reworking of this point. Smith argues that Haggard explores a way to tackle politics and transgress old ideas by exploring the representation of dualities through Gothic tropes—namely their symbolic representation in the relationship between the dead and living. Death and resurrection are used to remap and reconstruct a new kind of identity politics, “. . . one in which the self’s very instability functions as a threshold into another possible world that transcends the colonial” (104).

²⁷ In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock uses Kristeva’s notion of abjection to chronicle the intimately-related intersections between gender, sexuality, race, class, and wilderness that shaped British imperialism in the late nineteenth-century; she interrogates relations between material history and psychoanalysis through diverse cultural forms that include art, fiction, fetishism, commercialism, consumerism, advertising, and mass commodity spectacle.

The literary subtext on the Other in Haggard's *She* brings queerness home as a critique of empire that links a radical late-nineteenth-century utopian socialism²⁸ to decolonial queer ecologies. During the period in which Haggard was writing, rebellious outcasts had formed countercultures that rejected hierarchical, normative standards in society as well as the horrors of colonialism. Leela Gandhi notes in her book *Affective Communities* how many of these outcasts, radicals, and rebels formed coalitions. Gandhi asserts that radical utopian socialists had formed coalitions and communities as early as 1880, "unlikely kinships, strange alliances, and seemingly impossible identifications," and she concludes that the "disciplinary mutations" of Darwin's *Descent of Man* was responsible for the kinship formed between the "homosexual" and the "savage" because "both were exiled to the desert surrounding the heavily policed oasis of Western heteronormative civilization, and in the ideological mirages to which this desert was rone, their features slowly began to merge into each other so that no one could any longer say for certain who was the 'real' homosexual or who was the 'true' savage" (53). Edward Carpenter, a relatively open homosexual for his time, was at the forefront of forming coalitions between those on the margins, what Gandhi calls a "politics of friendship" between radical and rebellious figures (55). For instance, Carpenter collaborated with animal-rights activist, Henry Salt, and M.K. Gandhi, an anti-imperialist and vegetarian who lived and traveled in-between London and India. Gandhi notes how their protestations and causes intersect with those of the domestically oppressed: prostitutes, "sodomites," Jews, and Masons—populations that Ardel Haefele-Thomas notes became the usual suspects during the Jack the Ripper investigations (73-74).

²⁸ Marx and Engels saw "utopian socialism," a term they introduced in *The Communist Manifesto*, as counterproductive to their own brand of "scientific socialism," which they argued was more grounded in the material conditions of society. Frederick Engels's "The Development of Utopian Socialism" (1880) argued against utopian socialism as idealistic and naïve. Most utopians did not believe that a class struggle was necessary and immanent, but instead believed that cooperative affinities could promote change. See Keith Taylor's *The Political Ideas of Utopian Socialists* for further discussion. Gandhi writes about late-nineteenth-century rebellious communities as products of utopian socialism.

As industry, commodification, and fetishism found its way into many facets of *fin-de-siècle* society and culture, not only the homosexual, prostitute, poor, criminal, and foreigner—often living in destitute populations—were driven to the outskirts of the “map” of high or “new imperialism” through often brutally enforced exclusion and terror, but also many late-Victorian radicals—often exiled rebels, as McClintock argues in *Imperial Leather*:

Certain groups are expelled and obligated to inhabit impossible edges of modernity: the slum, the ghetto, the garret, the brothel, the convent, the colonial Bantustan, and so on. Abject peoples are those whom industrial imperialism rejects but cannot do without: slaves, prostitutes, the colonized, domestic workers, the insane, the unemployed, and so on. . . . Inhabiting the cusp of domesticity and market, industry and empire, the abject returns to haunt modernity as its constitutive, inner repudiation: the rejected from which one does no part. (72)

As McClintock alludes, there were a variety of rebellious peoples that inhabited yet repudiated and challenged Victorian norms. These included the Chartists, who advocated for the labor class in the spirit of transnational collaboration, often at the forefront of socialism. Gender non-conformists, who crossed the boundaries of being complicit bastions of domesticity, challenged binary-gender roles and traditions and promoted female suffrage. Vehement animal rights activists that opposed vivisection often practiced vegetarianism and opposed exotic, big-game hunting²⁹ to help forge early discourses on environmentalism. Mystic radicals and occultists, who challenged dogmatic Christianity and advocated for Theosophy, a spiritual understanding of the mysteries of nature and being, the origin of divinity, and humanity’s place in the universe and

²⁹ Madhudaya Sinha discusses how the politics of masculinity, imperialism, and big-game hunting intersect in *She* to reinforce radically conservative homosocial views of manhood and race: “In the late nineteenth-century, the act and sport of hunting was simultaneously a mark of fitness of the dominant race, an emblem of imperial rule and an allegory of the human, particularly in sexual affairs” (42).

the world, undermined the evils of religion and its justification for the dominance of natural spaces by human beings. Aesthetes and decadents, who repudiated bourgeoisie materialism, challenged traditional values, promoted sexual and political experimentation, and questioned prudish morality and capitalism. Finally, utopian-minded socialists, notably anti-imperialists, who disagreed with British colonial politics (notably the hierarchies of culture, race, and the idea of a civilization built upon classifications of gender, class, and species) led a protest against British imperialism and empire.

Leela Gandhi's research has revealed the great influence that these rebels had in forming coalitions at the forefront for a break from tradition and for radical change. People on the margins of society were in the process of establishing an early form of queer ecologies. Coalitions of the late-nineteenth century had transformed socialism into a utopian idea that was opposed to imperialism, Gandhi notes, but also supported efforts to protect animals, advocated for vegetarianism, saw homosexual exceptionalism as a keen affect that could be used to form coalitions, dabbled in mysticism as a spiritual conduit to understand difference as part of an interconnected web of support, and understood that art, notably fiction and poetry, could rehabilitate an aesthetic autonomy that more openly celebrates alterity (156). Gandhi writes, "A growing awareness of the interconnectedness between disparate domestic and foreign causes . . . provided an ideal breeding ground for . . . espousing the prerogatives of the body and the demands of affectivity and personal transformation within the realm of the political," (123) which she adds happened through dress, diet, health, and sexual reform. Suffragists, anarchists, vegetarians, prison and land reformers, and even Christian socialists "attended each other's meetings, contributed to each other's journals, and organized joint demonstrations" (123). Gandhi calls the coalitions behind these collaborative efforts *affective communities*.

Anti-imperial subcultures in the late-nineteenth century emerged that began to form affective communities grounded on coalitions between many social movements that saw hope in change. Social radicals of the *fin-de-siècle* maintained similar philosophies, which opposed Hegelian and Kantian imperatives for disinterest in culture as a hybrid political model, Leela Gandhi argues. She furthermore posits that Kant's interpretation of beauty as freedom from cognition and morality, which releases judgment from a vested interest in difference—what she calls “the ethics of domicilium,”—supports anti-colonial thought (156). Conversely, she sees Kant's “colonizing imperative of disinterest” as antithetical to anti-colonial thought because it “. . . recoils from these compromises of reflection to reclaim for judgment an autonomy premised on division from nature,” creating an imperial subject set on gaining territory and civilizing those different, producing a “war with alterity” (156). Gandhi writes that the “. . . subcultures of *fin-de-siècle* anti-imperialism . . . obtained something of its . . . distinct political style from the overriding grammar of contemporary utopian socialism, [which] . . . conferred upon its various affiliates a distinct style of coalition and collaboration marked by apparent disregard for what we now know as ‘identity’ or ‘single-issue’ politics” (177). Coalition became an alternative to the critique of disinterest for many late Victorians. Though not an obvious reading of his work, a close reading of Haggard's *She* through queer ecologies in section 1.4 can reveal how Haggard refuses the “war with alterity” in the ways that his work indirectly collaborates with the discourses produced by late-nineteenth-century affective communities, anti-imperial subcultures, and social radicals. Haggard's *She* contributes to coalitional efforts in the ways that he disrupt norms, question hierarchies, and repurposes the abject and uncanny. His use of Gothic horror and terror produces a rebellious, anti-imperial discourse that can act as a starting point for decolonial queer ecologies in the way that his ideas illuminate time-period discourses on utopian socialism.

The words *coalition* and *collaboration* are particularly important here because they communicate the basis for a politics of collected subcultures advocating for a mutual goal. Gandhi writes that these coalitions thus enabled “the easily transferable sympathies and promiscuous alliances that we have witnessed among unlikely bedfellows (for example, bringing the affective urgencies of zoophilia or homosexual asceticism productively to bear upon the cause of the colonized races)” (177). For instance, Edward Carpenter (the late-nineteenth-century socialist, homosexual, animal rights activist, and prison reformer earlier noted) published in *Towards Democracy* (1883) anti-colonial sentiment, and Gandhi notes, “evidence of his influence can be found, for instance, in the pages of *Justice*, the journal produced by the Social Democratic Foundation, [of] . . . a systematic attack on British imperialism, asserting full parity between the cause of workers at home and that of colonized ‘races’ abroad” (34-35). The radicalism that Gandhi writes of in her book *Affective Communities* which influenced Victorian discourse on anti-colonialism bears a striking resemblance to a framework of queer ecologies—a framework grounded in coalition building that subverts oppressive forms of (hetero)normativity, explores healthy relationships of the erotic in (non)human environments, and challenges non-sustainable ecologies.

She as Queer Ecologies

Queer ecologies allow for new types of analyses which reexamine the ways that sexuality, gender, and nonhuman wilderness spaces have informed one another, and a queer ecological critique of fiction enables readers to not only acknowledge the damage done by Western metaphysical thinking, but also empowers readers to reconstruct speculative worlds and ask how and why they are constructed. Such a task is especially important to both a reading of queer and imperial-themed texts because it dissolves and moves beyond a nature-culture binary

of race, gender, and sexuality to address a variety of inequalities caused by issues such as racism, poverty, heteronormativity, and anthropocentrism—all crucial for the maintenance of British Empire in the late-nineteenth century. This type of reading also emphasizes the importance of nonhuman environments in that their manipulation and use are not without risk to human relationships and sustainability. Queer ecologies offer a solution which can transform our understanding of how nonhuman wilderness spaces and human culture influence one another in Haggard's *She*, and in turn, the novel offers a mode of reparative reading that can act as a historical starting point for an exploration of what speculative queer ecologies offer to the process of decoloniality—the undoing of colonialism and its pernicious cultural effects.³⁰

Haggard's *She* has been analyzed for its imperial and anthropocentric portrayals of landscapes as well as its subjugation of native characters. Lindy Stiebel argues that Haggard's "duality" and inevitable ambivalence in the representations of other cultures and places/spaces together finds its expression particularly in his African landscapes (8). Anne McClintock writes about the way that Haggard gendered/sexualized landscapes in *King Solomon's Mines*.

Madhudaya Sinha and Stiebel both explore how imperialists exercise control over the "natural" environment in *She*. Shawn Malley, Robert Michalski, Patrick Brantlinger, and Wendy Katz each explore imperial turns (racism, sexism, nationalism) in *She*. There has also been ecocritical insight made from feminist, Marxist, and even a few queer theoretical perspectives.³¹ However, with the exception of Sinan Akilli, no scholar has yet to critique the ways that Haggard has

³⁰ As outlined in the introduction, Walter Mignolo explores decoloniality as an "undoing of colonialism" and defines it as follows in an interview with Christopher Mattison: "Decoloniality moves toward delinking [a colonialist logic] from every domain (economy, authority, gender and sexual heteronormativity and racism)" (Delinking).

³¹ Murphy, Katz, and Bunn offer feminist critique. McClintock and Stiebel explore how landscape is gendered. O'Gorman and Reid critique imperial capitalism and environment. Haefele-Thomas and Young offer queer critiques. Gold and Akilli offer ecocritiques.

challenged imperialism through ecology.³² In her 2011 essay “Henry Rider Haggard: An Early Ecocritic?,” Akilli posits that Haggard possesses an “ecological consciousness” in part because he criticizes “. . . the white man’s disrespect for animal life and its significance for inhabitants of the land” (306). Akilli further writes, “From an alternative point of view, Haggard’s attitude towards Africa was one which called for the protection of the land from Europeans, and certainly not one which promoted its exploitation, let alone its rape” (303). These assertions are useful in a queer ecocritical analysis. Though Haggard’s *She* undoubtedly propagates an imperialist agenda that is heavily influenced by the anxieties of the late-nineteenth-century Victorian ideas of nationalism, industrialization, imperialism, degeneration theory, Darwinism, fear of the New Woman, the consciousness of a homosexual identity, and the illegality of male same-sex practices, as discussed thus far, the novel also offers a promise of hope in the way that Haggard represents these anxieties through literary tropes and a speculative imagination. In its situation of the Imperial Gothic, Haggard’s *She* subtly highlights the beginning of a subconscious transformation that we might claim as a starting point for decolonizing colonial imaginaries through queer ecologies by the way that it is influenced by and contributes to the late-nineteenth-century radical discourses and rebellious affective communities that I have discussed in the previous section.

Decolonizing colonial imaginaries first requires observing how imperial motifs intersect with naturalized landscapes to see how fears of the nonhuman are linked to fears of the native.

³² Akilli’s argument primarily concerns itself with an analysis of Haggard’s character Allan Quatermain, who is introduced in *King Solomon’s Mines*. She argues that Haggard’s fiction was atypical of Victorian society, but not in ways that have yet been explored by an anti-imperialist ideology or from Haggard’s call for the protection of African land from European exploitation. Akilli develops Quatermain as a mouthpiece for many of Haggard’s positions on the environment and imperialism, noting how Quatermain comments on how modernism has not necessarily made Westerners happier than natives, that the eternal principles of human life were to be found in native life and their reverence for nature, and the ways in which Haggard identifies “Africans with natural beauty and Europeans with natural corruption” (305). Haggard’s admiration for “African nature as opposed to white man’s culture,” (305) as expressed through Quatermain, Akilli argues, shows his ecological consciousness.

Likewise, exploring how race, gender, and sexuality influence sublime landscapes in Haggard's *She* is a good starting point for a queer ecocritical analysis. Critiquing discrepancies between the ways that Haggard juxtaposes his production of nature settings with queered characters to waver from pro-imperial to anti-imperial thinking is work for decolonial queer ecologies. There are several descriptions of landscapes in *She* that are raced, sexualized, gendered, and queered that at the same time create an atmosphere of the fear of nature. Perhaps the most popularly-noted racist passage in the novel is the description of a mountain peak shaped like what Horace Holly describes as a "negro's head . . . stamped [with] a most fiendish and terrifying expression . . . so odd that . . . [he] . . . believe[s] this is not a mere freak of nature but a gigantic monument . . . [serving as] . . . an emblem of warning and defiance to any enemies" (45). The lost city of Kôr is also described quite sexually with "hideous black water-snake[s], of which the bite is very dangerous . . . [swimming around a swamp that has an] . . . "awful smell of rotting vegetation" (88).

Shannon Young provides a strong queer critique of *She*. Young recounts the sexualized and gendered landscape that Horace Holly and Leo Vincey enter: a deep cavern (womb) reached by crossing a chasm (vagina) that presents the obstacle of a "tongue-like phallic rock" directed toward a "clitoris-like rocking stone" to reach a pillar of fire that promises immortality after bathing in its flames (138-40), and she furthermore highlights a visibly queered landscape that reinforces the homoeroticism and homosociality³³ present between Holly and Leo when they escape the cavern by leaping over a wide gap, the plank they crossed having fallen into an abyss,

³³ Young's analysis is heavily grounded in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work from *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. The triangular formation of desire that Sedgwick discusses in her book is quite apparent in *She* between Ludwig Horace Holly, Leo Vincey, and Ayesha. This love triangle continues in the sequel to the novel, *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1905) and is also present in the prequel, *Wisdom's Daughter* (1923), between Ayesha, Amenartes, and Killikrates. Allan Quatermain also discusses the love affair in his account of meeting Ayesha in *She and Allan* (1921).

as they then lie upon a spur which the novel describes “. . . sprang out like a spike from a wall . . . [as the two men lie] panting side by side, trembling like leaves, with the cold perspiration of terror pouring from [their] skins” (230). Haggard’s imagery here likens Holly and Vincey’s experience to exhaustion after same-sex intercourse after “they [subsequently] traverse a tunnel opening off the base of the spur suggesting anal intercourse,” Young notes (140). Ardel Haefele-Thomas furthermore posits that the tyrannical queen who the Amahagger fear (Ayesha) resides in the “very pinnacle (read nipple) of a great mountain” that Holly and Vincey describe as sublimely frightening (84). These scenes noticeably reinforce both ecophobia and erotophobia, and though there is apparent homoeroticism in these observations, there is also certain misogyny and gender phobia present in these interpretations that may shed light on Haggard’s conflicting thoughts and allegiances.

When one reexamines the effect that these scenes have on the reader, a queer anti-imperial ecocritique begins to emerge. The descriptions of landscape in the above examples do provoke terror to maintain an imperial discourse, but, at the same time, the descriptions also explore eroticized and gendered bodies through personified landscapes in ways that simultaneously reproduce and challenge Victorian norms and renegotiate the imperial consciousness through an awareness of the ways that wilderness environments are not only queered but also manipulated and exploited by human agents. Haggard’s *She* explores homoeroticism between Holly and Vincey in a wilderness environment that challenges them to overcome homophobia, but the novel also reinforces Victorian sexual prudishness and racism through its phallic images of black water snakes and misogynistic personification of female genitalia as a swamp that smells of “rotting vegetation.” Furthermore, while the novel’s imagery of female-gendered landscapes that evoke wombs, vaginas, nipples, and cunnilingus reinforce

misogynistic views of women and nature, the novel's imagery and exploration of coded female sexuality and homosexuality challenges Victorian taboos and contributes to a discourse surrounding non-normative sexuality that Michele Foucault has reminded us Victorians were more obsessed with than not. Though perhaps not intentional, Haggard's *She* also provides a subtle queer anti-imperial ecocritique of the way that imperial fictions sexualize and gender indigenous wilderness environments and by the way that the novel explores queer sexual possibilities between British characters (Holly and Vincey) in an African setting. The novel discreetly—perhaps overtly to some—appears to welcome the erotic and recognize homoerotic, or at least homosocial, interplay between male characters, and, at the same time, it reflects rebellious and non-conforming notions about sexuality and gender that would have been familiar to late-nineteenth-century radicals that had begun to form affective communities between homosexuals like Edward Carpenter and anti-imperialists like Mahatma Gandhi. *She* renegotiates normative colonial depictions of nature, sexuality, and gender in the imperial consciousness through reimagined landscapes and characterizations to showcase conflicting viewpoints.

As the examples thus far have shown, though *She* surely can be interpreted as an imperial discourse, there is also a subtle rebellious commentary in the novel that investigates interplay between human eroticism and nonhuman wilderness spaces. Additionally, *She* challenges yet maintains heteronormative and patriarchal ideology, showcasing further conflict. For instance, the matriarchal Amahagger people live in a self-sustaining environment called Kôr that is portrayed simultaneously both queer and “unnatural”—queer because of the way Leo Vincey and Horace Holly view Kôr's strange and eerie setting, and “unnatural” because of the way that they understand the female Amahagger's non-heteronormative matriarchal custom of choosing their

husband by force, not to mention their perception of female sexuality and aggressiveness as perverse. Yet, Haggard seemingly inserts a challenge to Western patriarchy and heteronormativity when he writes, “Women among the Amahagger are not only upon terms of perfect equality with the men, but are not held to them by any binding ties. . . . It is very curious to observe how the customs of mankind on this matter vary in different countries, making morality an affair of *latitude*, and what is right and proper in one place wrong and improper in another” (63, my emphasis). Haggard here insinuates that there is not only one gender normativity—that British gender norms are not inherently proper everywhere and that there is scope for freedom of action or thought (*latitude*). Yet, Haggard still shows contradiction through his character Billali’s comment on the Amahagger’s matriarchal system. Billali mentions that Amahagger society is perfectly happy with women controlling society, but that, whenever women gain too much power and appear to overthrow and oppress the men of the community, a few of them are killed off to maintain balance. This depiction of matriarchy brought under violent control alongside the novel’s commentary on a variation of gender norms across cultures evidences Haggard’s conflicting feelings. Haggard creates and celebrates this possibility of an alternative, then undercuts it, but the undercutting is less convincing than the initial idea given that we do not see it practiced in the novel and only have one character’s word for it.

Haggard’s statement about gender leads the reader to wonder why he even creates the kind of speculative world that modern readers might perceive as queer—queer in the sense that it challenges norms and conventions. Though we can only speculate why Haggard creates such a world, his novel both maintains and uproots Victorian sexual and gender norms, and in the process, it also masks a subtle discourse on the relationship between the environment and the erotic that challenges Eurocentrism. We are tempted to draw a correlation between Leela

Gandhi's scholarship and Haggard's challenge to patriarchy and gender inequality in the previous passage. This one instance of Haggard's subtle discontent is not enough to stake such a claim alone, but the presence of repeated textual descriptions which can be interpreted as anti-colonial ideology leads one to further investigate the potentiality of Haggard's speculative world, which furthermore sometimes represents environment through an anti-colonial discourse.

Radical coalitions of the late-nineteenth century, much like queer ecologists, advocated for the protection of the "natural" environment. Imperialists were taking resources for profit, and that in return perpetuated hierarchical systems of governance and ecological imperialism.³⁴ Haggard's *Amahagger* show this system in reverse, for they have engaged in cultivation practices that do not profit imperialism and hierarchy, but each other. The *Amahagger* cultivate the land to benefit their community members equally, and their socialization of their environment works to benefit a classless system. Haggard explains how the *Amahagger* have created a society that has mastered cultivation in an environmentally sustainable and biodiverse community that works together collaboratively: "A great portion of the plain thus enclosed by Nature was cultivated, and fenced in with walls of stone placed there to keep the cattle and goats, of which there were large herds about, from breaking into the gardens" (98). It is also worth noting that even though the *Amahagger* eat goat meat and beef, Ayesha is a vegetarian who eats only "fruit and cakes of flour, and a little water" (117); thus, even though one might argue that Ayesha represents an imperial power that rules over the *Amahagger*, she does not benefit from

³⁴ Ecological imperialism is Alfred Crosby's term for the introduction of invasive species and/or foreign animals, plants, and diseases into native ecosystems, which he has theorized led to the collapse of colonized environments. Huggan and Tiffan note how biopiracy (taking of resources from the land) imposed European presence and governance, and the introduction of goods and invasive species also altered indigenous ecosystems: "European imports to the newly settled colonies—humans, animals, plants—were regarded on the other hand as necessary and 'natural' impositions on, or substitutes for, the local bush or wilderness; and even if these invading species were initially difficult to establish or acclimatise, they soon prospered in lands where their control predators were absent. The genuinely natural ways of indigenous ecosystems were irretrievably undone as 'wild' lands were cleared for farming and opened up pastoralism" (7-8).

their cattle and goats and takes only what she needs from their cultivation to sustain herself. She does not profit from the Amahagger in ways the British did from the Africans in the Transvaal. This second example also reflects a conflict between nature and Western culture that challenges Victorian imperialism by highlighting radical agendas that seem to be played out by Haggard in *She*. The Amahagger, living in the remnants of a supposedly greater civilization, seem to be a kind of queer alternative to imperial temporality that both tempt and disgust the narrator, which also reflects the contradiction present in the novel.

Contradiction also presents itself in the novel through a Gothic queer temporality that offers rich material for an ecocritical reading. Haggard's *She* can be read through what Elizabeth Freeman calls "erotohistoriography." Freeman writes that erotohistoriography "against pain and loss . . . posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times [and] insists that various queer practices . . . produce form(s) of time consciousness, even historical consciousness, that can intervene upon the material damage done" (59). Haggard's novel does this by challenging what is natural and acceptable when he eroticizes a corpse fetish, highlighting in great Gothic fashion how human sexuality and dead organic matter inform and make one another. Anne McClintock's explanation of how racial fetishism and sexual fetishism become entangled is useful for understanding why and how Haggard uses fetishism in *She* to explore conflicting emotions about race, sexuality, and wilderness spaces:

The invention of *racial* fetishism became central to the regime of sexual surveillance, while the policing of *sexual* fetishism became central to policing of the 'dangerous classes,' both in Europe and in the colonies. Colonized peoples were figured as *sexual* deviants, while gender deviants were figured as *racial* deviants. 'Fetish-worshippers' in the colonies and sexual fetishists in the imperial

metropolises were seen as the visible, living evidence of evolutionary degeneration. Identified as atavistic *subraces* within the human race, fetishists were, all too often, seen as inhabiting an anachronistic space in the linear time of evolutionary progress, warranting and justifying conquest and control. In this way, the imperial discourse on fetishism became a discipline of containment. (182)

Haggard's use of necrophilia challenges the imperial discourse on fetishism in being a discipline of containment. Necrophilia is used to create a queer relationship between the character Billali and his love object, a corpse, which bridges the past and present, producing a sort of erotohistoriography set against the natural landscape of the caves, which have acted as an interdependent ecosystem with humans for years, leaving Billali to speculate about love and loss. My erotohistoriographic critique of *She* offers an affective, reparative reading useful for understanding the novel through decolonial queer ecologies.

Ayesha's servant Billali recounts his story of being in love with a female mummy and saving her foot: "I would creep up to her [the mummy] and kiss her cold face, and wonder how many men had lived and died since she was, and who had loved her and embraced her in the days that long passed away . . . [u]ntill one day my mother . . . feared that I was bewitched [and] . . . set fire to her hair, . . . but the feet, I came back and saved" (85). While the necrophilia experienced by Billali within the naturalized setting of the caves used as tombs would usually incite only fear, it also produces an erotic time consciousness for the reader that when experienced through the pathos created by Billali can dismantle the interrelated fears the imperialist has between the erotic and nature, transgressing abjection through the renegotiation of an imperial consciousness that in turn contributes to discourse on both queer ecologies and decoloniality. The necrophilia and fetishism of the indigenous character Billali is both erotic and

eco-conscious. The novel's use of erotohistoriography transcends restrictive *fin-de-siècle* politics, highlights how sexuality and ecosystems inform one another in a native setting, and renegotiates colonial subjectivity.

What is particularly important here is that Billali's eroticism is not bound to time and that it is queer. It is also interracial and transcends class since the mummy is of Arabic descent and Billali is not, and the mummy is of a higher class and Billali is an indebted slave to Ayesha, information we find out from Ayesha herself. Billali's eroticism "unbinds time." Freeman writes:

Unbinding time does not mean simply unleashing a biological instinct or psychic drive, be it sex or death. Nor does unbinding history mean simply showing how whatever looks like sex is actually a superstructural result of unequal economic relations. Rather, unbinding time and/from history means recognizing how erotic relations and the bodily acts that sustain them gum up the works of the normative structures we call family and nation, gender, race, class, and sexual identity, by changing tempos, by remixing memory and desire, by recapturing excess. (173)

Billali's acts unbind him from time and challenge normative structures. The reader is not told whether or not Billali has actually engaged in sexual activity with the mummy, and it is important to note that I am not arguing that his eroticism is the result of unequal economic relations. Rather, his necrophilia disrupts his family relations, influences his sexual identity, and remixes his desire and memory in his account of telling the story. Billali's erotic relations and desire for bodily acts with the undead mess up the normative structures of history and sex and at the same time disrupt Victorian attitudes toward death.

Haggard's fascination with death works as a trope which also functions to reimagine and queer nature itself by circumventing the biological cycle of life and death to produce a

temporality that eroticizes historical settings and corpses through the necrophilia of Ayesha's love for a corpse and her supernatural longevity. Andrew Smith has commented on the ways that death and resurrection are used to remap and reconstruct a new kind of identity politics in *She*, “. . . one in which the self's very instability functions as a threshold into another possible world that transcends the colonial” (104). This other possible world is Haggard's speculative world, a world in which Victorian conceptions of nature and the erotic are not stable fixtures. Ayesha transcends her biological mortality not only by living for two thousand years, during which time she never ages, but also when she resurrects in Haggard's 1905 sequel to *She*, entitled *Ayesha: The Return of 'She,'* a story set in Tibet. In that novel, Ayesha reappears reincarnated in the form of an old priestess of the god Hes. Furthermore, Leo Vincey is believed to be the reincarnation of Killikrates, Ayesha's love obsession, and in the sequel, the character Atene, the queen of Kaloos, also in love with Leo, is proclaimed by Ayesha to be the reincarnated Amenartes, maternal ancestor of Leo that caused the jealousy in the now repeated love triangle between Ayesha, Killikrates, and Amenartes. These reincarnated characters thus transcend the biological, normative-life cycle, which is not only eerie and supernatural, but also a challenge to the Victorian construction of nature and life/death. The essence of all three characters can moreover be viewed as queer by nineteenth-century definitions—as out of the ordinary, suspicious, unnatural, abnormal, uncanny, and bizarre—but they also are queered in terms of gender position because Ayesha and Atene maintain power over the male characters, which transcends patriarchy and heteronormative standards of the time period.

One more example, though almost certainly not intended by Haggard, is worth mentioning because of its powerful, erotic illustration of Gothic-fashioned recycling. Haggard's Amahagger natives work collaboratively to sustain their environment by reusing artifacts from

the catacombs of the lost civilization of Kôr—the people of which have been buried under the volcano on top of which the Amahagger live—for everyday essentials, which is eerily reminiscent of recycling. The depiction of the cycle of life reworks notions of abjection, Gothic horror, and sustainable reuse. The embalming table is used for feasting; they sleep in the tombs of the dead, often with the bodies; they reuse vessels buried with the dead, and in great Gothic fashion, they burn mummified bodies as torches.³⁵ Barri J. Gold calls this recursive recycling; she notes how “the Amahagger . . . embrace what others abject as refuse, filth, or waste [and claims that] they are the ultimate recycling society” (323). She furthermore writes, “Within *She* . . . the corpse provides a figure for those moments of tension, anxiety, abjection, that tell stories and promote (reading) practices undoubtedly not originally intended” (306). Despite Haggard’s intention, Gold raises an interesting analysis about eroticism that disrupts time in *She* to support yet another instance of erotohistoriography. When Haggard recycles the dead, he also fetishizes them through the burning of their corpses to produce a historical consciousness out of time and place, against “pain and loss,” which elicits “pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfillments” and also interrupts the imperial mission.³⁶ Rather than cataloguing and displaying the mummies and artifacts, as the Victorians did, the Amahagger see practical value that aids their everyday lives.

Haggard’s subconscious negotiation of *fin-de-siècle* radicalism with imperialism also appears thinly disguised in his text. Haggard’s mummy scene glosses over the value of the Amahagger’s recycling society by eroticizing the Gothic scene even further when he uses the word *orgies* to describe the burning bodies: “There was something very terrible, and yet most

³⁵ Though it should also be noted that burning bodies—which are carbon—is also quite a lot like burning fossil fuels. It is not an ideal form of environmental sustainability. Nonetheless, the Amahagger are not burning wood, but producing fuel from recycled material, and this unique Gothic imagery becomes something else as ecocritique.

³⁶ I am using Freeman’s language here on erotohistoriography from her earlier quoted passage.

fascinating, about this employment of the remote dead to illuminate the *orgies* of the living. . .” (164-65, my emphasis). Haggard’s description produces voyeurs of the novel’s characters, and the word *orgies*, which can allude to unrestrained sexual activity, is used to produce a scene of Gothic horror and erotic fear in a naturalized setting, though one’s nightmare can be another’s fetish. Nevertheless, this scene recognizes that in death humans survive through their repurposed matter and property, and this erotic setting queers and challenges *fin-de-siècle* imperial discourse. It is an apt example of a queer ecocritique of the Imperial Gothic.

Reparative Colonial Imaginaries

One of Haggard’s biographers, Peter Ellis, takes the stance that Haggard was actually a great anti-imperialist, when he writes, “In my quest for Haggard, one aspect of his work particularly fascinated me and that was his lack of racial prejudice and cultural exclusiveness which was so often a dominant factor in literature of the period,” (6) and, “when Haggard came up against a *genuine* imperialist, the man for who empire spelled financial exploitation and profit, he was sickened” (7). Ellis furthermore contends that Haggard’s yearning to understand the universe and humankind’s purpose in it shows his discontent with his own time and his fascination over time in imagining and investigating ancient cultures; “this,” he writes, “is one of the *subconscious* keys to the immortality of Haggard’s tales and a reason why the stories, in whatever historical setting he gave them, are timeless” (10, my emphasis). Though I do not agree with Ellis’s rationale for Haggard’s being a great anti-imperialist, Ellis does make a good point about how Haggard subconsciously reworks his discontent through speculative worlding. Haggard expresses his dissatisfaction concerning the treatment of the Zulu nation during Europe’s great scramble for Africa. His statement on his disgust for the Boer’s use of imperial violence on the Zulu in the Transvaal is evident: “The natives are the real heirs to the soil and

surely should have protection and consideration . . . we have handed them over without a word to the tender mercies of one where natives are concerned, of the cruelest white races in the world” (qtd. in Pocock 51-52). Nonetheless, the idea that the Western intellect is best positioned to understand non-Western history and culture undergirds the “genuine” imperialism that Haggard disavowed. Haggard was not a great anti-imperialist, nor was he a staunch imperialist; he wavered between positions in his feelings and in his fiction. Haggard’s *She* negotiates empire through subconscious colonial imaginaries that often merge an understanding of what is natural with the Gothic supernatural. A close reading of contradictions in *She* establishes a starting point for a kind of reparative reading that moves us toward a decolonial queer ecology in the way that reparative colonial imaginaries begin to emerge—however slightly.

“Negotiating Empire” has aimed to show how some Victorians of the late-nineteenth century struggled with their conflicting emotions and stances on imperialism and empire. The work of McClintock and Gandhi reveals that *fin-de-siècle* British imperialism was a complex endeavor reliant on many negotiations that we must reconsider: the ways in which capitalism, gender, sexuality, race, and wilderness spaces intersect to produce meaning and cultural values. Reexamining the ways that the discourses produced in the late-nineteenth century impacted divergent stances on crucial issues related to empire is necessary for understanding the Victorian psyche. Doing so allows us to discover new intersections between queer and ecocritical readings. Gandhi reveals that affective communities of radicals in the late-nineteenth century collaborated on issues ranging from environmental sustainability to homosexual and gender rights to liberal spiritualism. Such radical and rebellious viewpoints were perhaps known to Victorian leaders of cultural production—novelists such as Haggard. Nonetheless, Haggard’s speculative fiction only subtly teases out challenges to the norm while simultaneously reinforcing imperial discourse.

While Haggard writes an imperial tale on the surface, a deeper close reading reveals interesting preoccupations with Victorian taboos. Haggard's colonial imagination seems to create a decolonial queer ecology in spite of itself. I would not go as far as to say that Haggard was a "genuine anti-imperialist," (7) as his biographer Peter Ellis has argued; nor would I feel comfortable claiming that Haggard was "an apologist of empire," (41) as Laura Chrisman claims, though I do agree with her that his characters are likely subconsciously driven. I argue that Haggard is complex and wavered in his feelings about imperialism (as seen through his critique of gender, race, sexuality, and the domination of wilderness spaces in the Gothic terror and horror he produced)—sometimes consciously, and at other times unconsciously or subconsciously. One might not go as far as to claim that Haggard was an avid anti-imperialist, but it can be argued that he digressed from staunch British imperial stances and was a different kind of imperialist. Haggard often displaces and projects his feelings not only through his non-fiction writing, but also readily in his Gothic fiction, which I argue can be read as a means of implicit decolonization. As Ardel Haefele-Thomas notes, in the process of displacing his feelings, Haggard also transgresses boundaries, disintegrates binaries and bodies, and produces queer imperial transmogrifications in *She* that transcend the alignment of racial otherness and queer possibility but also create panic (72-95). The queer possibilities that Haggard creates and the boundaries that he transgresses furthermore intersect with a kind of radical discourse on environmental sustainability for the time period that may offer a unique perspective of reparative queer ecocritical reading.

Though Haggard's *She* is not richly overt in its depiction of reparative queer ecocritical tropes, I posit that it does offer an imaginative world that challenges mainstream depictions of gender, sexuality, race, and nature in ways that intersect with the collaborative ideas and efforts

of radical Others present during the late-nineteenth century in Great Britain. Haggard's speculative imagination creates anachronistic characters that migrate across spaces and through time, subconsciously driven and culturally informed, which I argue may represent the conflicting emotions of the late Victorians about sexuality, gender, anthropocentrism, race, and imperialism. *She* offers a commentary on culture and imperialism that undermines gender privilege and sexual constraints by utilizing a conception of queer, Gothic time and characterization to express changing yet unstable attitudes about African natives and their environments, challenging Victorian hypermasculinity, sexuality, and imperialism. Haggard's uncanny antagonist, Ayesha, and the Amahagger natives that she rules over, are queer in ways that undermine ecological imperialism. Haggard utilizes Gothic tropes, motifs, and themes that often racialize, gender, and sexualize landscapes and native bodies as toxic in a subconscious way that in turn veils his native characters' cultural values, values that both promote sustainable-like practices and embrace the erotic across time, a sort of erotohistoriography that disrupts patterns of imperial stability in the novel and creates imaginative migratory spaces through which the novel's characters and readers traverse.

A close attention to select narrative scenes in the *She* discloses an early form of ecocriticism that enables us to see the challenges the text brings to traditional readings of the relationship between naturalized spaces and queer agency, and, in this way, acts as an early form of decoloniality. Sinan Akilli posits that Haggard was an early ecocritic, and I agree. Haggard uses his speculative imagination to highlight the ways that sexuality informs an understanding of nature, and vice versa. These few examples—a gender inversion used to question gender inequality, the collaborative community of the Amahagger, recycling and interdependency between the living and the dead, and an exploration of the different ways that sex, desire, gender

and sexuality inform a late-Victorian understanding of nature through portrayals of eroticism—only scratch the surface, yet they illustrate how Haggard’s novel subtly highlights a queer ecocritical discourse. I do not claim that Haggard’s fiction does not promote imperial propaganda, for certainly many noted examples show otherwise; however, I do propose that his Imperial Gothic novel *She* communicates a subtle discourse that highlights different ways of knowing and world-making that are valuable in dismantling a dual phobia of both the erotic and nature. Haggard’s conscious yet sometimes subconscious imagination resists imperialism and initiates an early form of decolonization firmly rooted in queer ecologies. In the next chapter, I leave the Imperial Gothic to trace decolonial queer ecologies in what has commonly been referred to as the postcolonial Gothic. I will investigate the ways in which terror and horror are used to depict queer characters and sublime landscapes in Michelle Cliff’s novels *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. In Cliff’s novels, characters of African descent are haunted by but return to nature to reclaim their agency.

CHAPTER TWO

RUINS OF EMPIRE: MICHELLE CLIFF'S CARIBBEAN-GOTHIC NOVELS

Abeng is an African word meaning conch shell. The blowing of the conch called slaves to the canefields in the West Indies. The *abeng* had another use: it was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and reach one another.

—Michelle Cliff, *Abeng*

This distinctive Jamaican term [ruinate] is used to describe lands which were once cleared for agricultural purposes and have now lapsed back into... 'bush.' An impressive variety of herbaceous shrubs and woody types of vegetation appears in succession, becoming thicker and taller over the years until 'high ruinate' forest may emerge.... Ruinate of all forms is an all-too-frequent sign on the Jamaican landscape, despite population pressure on the land.

—B. Floyd, *Jamaica: An Island Microcosm*

Queer Ecologies as Decolonization

The above two passages which frame Michelle Cliff's novels *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) are rich in meaning and metaphor. Each passage provides foresight into a historical context that situates this chapter. The ruinate Cliff refers to in *No Telephone to Heaven* applies not only to the reclamation of abandoned land by its vegetation, but is also used as a metaphor for taking back Jamaica from British colonialism and more recent American imperialism. Just as the colonizer consumes the resources of the land, so too does the ruinate consume the land; however, the reclamation of Jamaican land by the ruinate acts as a trope that mirrors the reclamation of national identity from the ruins of empire. The ruinate is embraced by characters as an adaptive agent that assists them with a rebellion to resist traces of British colonialism and continued American imperial exploitation. Similarly, *Abeng*, Cliff's novel written and set prior to *No Telephone to Heaven*, recalls an artifact that is reclaimed as a form of resistance. The *abeng* was once a form of communication used by slave drivers to enforce agricultural labor, but it was reclaimed by escaped slaves, who used the *abeng* for calls to

resistance in Jamaica. The abeng recalls both the terror of the plantation and of war; it is an allusion to what Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert notes as the crossroads between the Caribbean colonial and the Gothic: “the frightful other, the defeated, the eerie, the disappeared, the dead” (254). Both the abeng and the ruinate are haunting cultural metaphors that are part of a historical mental repository, but they also each draw attention to the importance of *nature-culture*³⁷ interconnectivity to the process of Jamaica’s decolonization.

In Cliff’s novels, characters of African descent are haunted by, but return to, nature to reclaim their agency in the ruins of empire. I use the word *nature* here to connect to its Victorian conceptualization in Chapter One, which I argued Haggard subconsciously negotiated as he wavered between imperial and anti-imperial sympathies; nevertheless, I use it with more caution in Chapter Two and argue that conceptualizations of nature change significantly in Cliff’s work when the fear of the erotic and “wilderness” no longer become reinforcing phobias that humans attempt to distance themselves from and tame—but instead embrace. This chapter aims to reveal how nature is an amalgamation that is informed by decolonialism through the ways that the human and the nonhuman are perceived in new ways in the ruins of empire. Whereas Haggard explores ontology through ecologies while grasping for a way out of the empire he is building, Cliff, in writing after empire, deals with the ways in which the postcolonial subject is formed by British colonialism—but challenges it through queer ecologies. Both Haggard and Cliff are troubled by similar contradictions in being built by and building colonial worlds to lesser and greater degrees in spite of themselves. However, in Cliff’s novels, the ecologies become metaphors for subjectivities that move toward decolonization. Chapter One’s exploration of *She* established a foundation for reexamining settings and characters through queer ecologies to

³⁷ I use the phrase *nature-culture* here to mean the way that biology materializes in response to cultural environment and how materialism in turn informs environment. See Haraway, Grosz, Barad, Alaimo.

allow for new ways of seeing how Haggard's fiction challenges the relationship between naturalized settings and queer agency, in turn producing a sort of anti-imperial imaginary. This chapter will utilize queer ecologies to show how Michelle Cliff's postcolonial Caribbean Gothic fiction more overtly challenges colonialism and its relation to "nature" through the reappropriation of ruinate. In other words, Chapter Two explores what a queer ecocritical analysis offers to the process of decolonization in Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*—a process that could only be explored in the imperial, but not quite yet colonized, world of Haggard's fiction in Chapter One. The glimmering speculative possibilities for decolonization found in Haggard come to fruition in Cliff's novels.

Abeng and *No Telephone to Heaven* show the centrality of queer ecologies to a decolonial imaginary, but unlike the way that Haggard uses Gothic tropes to solely explore speculative possibilities in *She*, Cliff uses Gothic tropes to describe postcolonial realities in addition to speculative possibilities, highlighting the Western-centrism of traditional realist/fantastic distinctions. In Cliff's novels, decolonial queer ecologies are grounded in materiality, for example, in the way that her characters use violent revolt to resist British colonialism and the recent American imperialism that has come to exploit their Jamaican land and culture. Decolonization, simply put, is the undoing of colonialism, but also a broader and deeper intellectual practice. The *OED* defines *decolonization* as "the withdrawal from its former colonies of a colonial power; the acquisition of political or economic independence by such colonies." I use the term as Walter D. Mignolo uses it to mean "delinking" from the "logic of coloniality" as developed in the introduction (*Darker Side* 143). Nevertheless, in decolonial novels, this often involves violence. As Frantz Fanon contends in *The Wretched of the Earth*, violence is often symptomatic of decolonization: "Decolonization is always a violent event"

because “the colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system” (1-2). Fanon asserts that all people are entitled to moral consideration—that no person is dispensable—but justice often requires dismantling and resisting constructions of the colonized world. This is the core of his decolonization theory which continues to inspire human rights and social justice, not unlike the goals of queer ecologies. However, this analogy is not the only relationship between these formations, as I have discussed in the introduction. Decolonization theory and queer ecologies notably share an urgency in deconstructing and dismantling human boundaries and obstacles that specifically exploit a separation of select human beings from their right to be a part of and interact with their environments—those deemed by colonialism to be not-quite-human or nonhuman.

Michelle Cliff’s novels showcase the relationship between queer ecologies and decoloniality. One cannot commit to decolonization without acknowledging queer ecologies because the ways that the Western concept *nature* has influenced colonization is deeply ingrained in a discourse of sexuality and gender, and it is likewise impossible to have queer ecologies, even ecocriticism, without a commitment to decolonization because fear and oppression of Western conceptions of both the erotic and isolated nonhuman environments—the erotophobia and ecophobia mentioned in Chapter One—are so deeply intertwined. “To queer” ecology means to scrutinize the intersections and boundaries of sexuality/gender and environment to understand the biosocial constitution of the material, nonhuman world, and our experiences and perceptions of what constitutes it. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson explain, “Queer, then, is both noun and verb in this project: ours is an ecology that may begin in the experiences and perceptions of non-heterosexual individuals and communities, but is even more importantly one that calls into question heteronormativity itself as part of its advocacy

around issues of nature and environment—and vice versa” (5). This chapter examines how values and attributes that define queer ecologies—coalitions, empathy, interdependency, biodiversity, and most importantly the ways that sexuality/gender and conceptions of nature inform one another—are present in *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. Building on the foundation established in Chapter One’s analysis of Haggard’s Imperial Gothic fiction, I will trace what I call *decolonial queer ecologies*—reflections of the aforementioned queer ecological values and attributes which I claim assist in the process of decolonization—in order to investigate the ways in which Cliff uses Gothic terror and horror to depict queer characters and sublime landscapes in ways that enable Cliff and her characters to reverse and repair colonial damage to reclaim their agency and discover values displaced by colonialism. In sum, I will argue that what makes Cliff’s novels decolonial texts is their investment in queer ecologies. Queer ecologies are a necessary element in the production of decoloniality.

Queer ecologies offer a decolonial solution which can transform our understanding of how the material environment and culture inform one another in Cliff’s novels as we explore the ways that characters come together and some reclaim their queer agency in ruinate to undermine hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality. What is the significance of the diverse coalitions that are formed in the context of abandoned colonial land—now overgrown and reclaimed by its flora and fauna? On the one hand, Cliff comments on homophobia in her novels through the terror-stricken death of queer characters, but on the other hand, she also creates a safe environment for her trans character Harriet and her Afro-Carib revolutionaries in the ruinate of a once colonized land. Cliff’s novels challenge colonialism through cultural reappropriation and the reclamation of ruinate. She positions the terror of revolutionary struggle alongside the transformation of her

characters and landscape, both of which attempt to reclaim their agency, for the ruinate acts as a character of its own that haunts and resists colonial exploitation.

Throughout my analysis, I examine the ways in which Cliff's use of postcolonial Gothic settings, imagery, tropes, and motifs articulates a convergence of gender, race, sexuality, capitalism, and colonialism in the material environment to produce divergent and sometimes conflicting meanings and cultural values that we can understand in new ways through decolonial queer ecologies. In section 2.2, I situate the work of Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley and Edouard Glissant to lay a foundation for my decolonial queer ecocritical analysis of Caribbean texts. Both Tinsley and Glissant stress the importance of the land to Caribbean culture and people, but Tinsley further establishes a framework for queer Caribbean studies that can help us better understand my critique of Cliff's novels. From this established framework, in section 3.3 I will show how both raced and classed queer and trans characters transgress colonial boundaries through the ways that they reappropriate spaces and bodies in Jamaica's ruinate, and how the Afro-Carib people whom they assemble there challenge imperialism partly by forming a coalition that embraces queer and female leadership. Section 3.4 focuses on how queer coalitions help characters to reclaim ruinate. I show how Cliff utilizes coalition building as a form of decolonization to explore non-hierarchical relationships between queer and non-queer characters and their relationship with the land in order to renegotiate their human agency in the ruins of empire. This allows me in section 3.5 to in turn explain how Cliff repurposes the Gothic as a means for characters to rediscover new, more productive relationships with each other and their environment.

Reclaiming Ruinate

Edouard Glissant argues in *Caribbean Discourse* that landscape often becomes a character in Caribbean writing when he states, “The relationship with the land, one that is even more threatened because the community is alienated from that land, becomes so fundamental in this discourse that the landscape in the work stops being merely decorative or supportive and emerges as full character” (105). Cliff utilizes landscape as character in her work to show the interconnectivity that her characters come to experience with the land, a relationship that colonized peoples have typically been denied, despite the importance their ancestral cultures placed on it. Land was especially important to Jamaican culture because of its ties to ancient African religions such as Obeah, Kumina, and Pocomania, each of which impress the importance of environment working in concert with organic life—the interconnectivity of ecosystems. Furthermore, the Taíno, an indigenous Arawak tribe with a matrilineal system of kinship, also practiced rich symbiosis with their environment.³⁸ Though land once held great value to the natives of Jamaica, colonization robbed its people of much of their knowledge of and respect for the land, along with their human dignity. Caribbean writers of fiction remind readers of the importance of the land, often going to great lengths to characterize it, as part of a process of decolonization that might lead to a rediscovery and reclaiming of part of those values that have been lost. Cliff attempts to repair these lost relationships with land in the ruins of empire. Reclaiming agency is a decolonial process that involves her characters rediscovering the ruinate.

³⁸ For further study of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, see Nicholas J. Saunders’s *The Peoples of the Caribbean* (2005). He provides a thorough background on the Taíno, Arawak, and African religious sects of Obeah, Kumina, and Pocomania. Saunders chronicles the struggle of indigenous people that are trying to reclaim and revitalize their cultural and historical identity.

Frantz Fanon also frames the importance of land to Caribbean people in *The Wretched of the Earth*, noting how colonized peoples were denied healthy relationships with and access to land:

For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread, and, naturally, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with ‘human’ dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal. All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his bread. (9)

Fanon highlights the Western-centrism of the human to which Europeans had placed nature in opposition, aligning colonized peoples as closer to nature as justification for their exploitation and violent mistreatment. Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, in *Thieving Sugar*, elaborates on Fanon’s position of the violence colonized people experienced on their land in the explanation of her book’s title: “The metaphoric phrase *thieving sugar* calls up the contested space of the cane field: a site of sexual violence and exploited labor, a Caribbean landscape that was never a natural topos but one constructed for colonial purposes” (3). Tinsley highlights how nature is inseparable from the colonial histories that have altered and defined it, and argues that interior and exterior spaces are not so easily divided in the Caribbean, where “erotic geographies” underlie relationships that challenge norms formed during periods of great duress and oppression in opposition to slavery’s stifling conditions. Tinsley furthermore asserts that understanding queer identities and relationships in the Caribbean are complicated because of Western-colonial, binary metaphors like “the closet” and “coming out,” metaphors which are problematic to an

understanding of nonheteronormative relationships and identities in the Caribbean because they fail to consider the sociocultural importance of landscape and access to land (27). These ideas are crucial for realizing the importance Cliff places in establishing healthier relationships between her characters and Jamaican land in both of her novels.

Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* emphasize the inseparability of Jamaican culture from its environment. In her retelling of Jamaican colonial history, Cliff stresses that Afro-Carib bodies have been marked and driven from Jamaican land that has been stolen, used, and afterwards abandoned. *No Telephone to Heaven* follows its protagonist, Clare Savage, through her travels in Jamaica, England, Europe, and the United States. Clare, a light-skinned Jamaican creole of English, African, and Arawak ancestry, immigrates to the U.S. from Jamaica with her family as a young girl, and after her parents' divorce, she remains there with her father, while her mother and sister return to Jamaica. As a young adult, she studies in England but returns to Jamaica for vacation, where she befriends Harriet, a trans character. She eventually ends up in Jamaica, and with Harriet forms a guerilla revolutionary coalition that fights for the island's independence. The novel, written out of chronological order, begins and ends with the rebellion of the guerillas preparing in the ruinate and then fighting an American film set in the Jamaican jungle. The novel is a sequel to *Abeng*, which introduces Clare as a child and uses stream of consciousness to tell a story of Jamaica's history and the Savage family background, concluding with teenage Clare's growing awareness of the dynamics of sexuality and race in Jamaica.

Both human bodies and land are central to the anxieties of the Caribbean colonial imagination. Cliff takes up this problem of the inseparability of the Jamaican people and land (or bodies and landscapes) from one another in her novels, but she adds a further layer to this

ecological critique that queers it. Several of her characters who have special connections with the land are first of all queered: Mma Alli, Nanny, Uncle Robert, Clinton, Harriet, and even the protagonist of both novels, Clare Savage herself. These queered bodies are also terrorized, and in the case of Mma Alli, Nanny, Uncle Robert, and Clinton, suffer horrific ends. Secondly, Clare's homoerotic exploration of sexuality with her childhood friend Zoe, which takes place in the bush and forest on at least two occasions, connects Caribbean queer sexuality to the land. Thirdly, the coalitions formed between queer and revolutionary characters often take place in *ruinate*, a distinctive Jamaican term used to describe land once cleared for agricultural purposes that has lapsed back into overgrowth, and the land that they seek to reclaim from colonial exploitation is part of the culture they seek to rediscover. Conversely, Cliff's novels instill a sense of queer oppression—which is understood as a direct product of colonialism—that can be noticed by the toxic discourse surrounding the way that characters describe “battymen” (male homosexuals) as diseased, lesbian love as unfathomable, and gender transgressions as taboo throughout her novels. Her novels also draw attention to racial hierarchies that are reinforced in Jamaica through capital exploitation and economic class. Nevertheless, Cliff challenges the status quo in her novels with racial, gender, and sexual transgressions that are heavily vested in interdependency, a crucial aspect of queer ecologies that Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson communicate are vital for understanding the values shared by queer coalitions and biodiversity. This is witnessed through connections between oppressed people and land in Cliff's novels. Her characters cross boundaries, form bonds, and break down barriers to change the status quo, understand themselves, become something new, and create a place for themselves, a world pieced together from a cultural and historical mental repository of collected stories, knowledges, and a reconnection with the land.

Jamaica is portrayed in *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* as a place where boundaries are set and challenged, proclaimed but never completed. Cliff attempts to disrupt boundaries and emphasizes the importance of interdependency between her characters, most notably between her protagonist Clare Savage and the characters with whom she interacts. *Abeng* focuses on Clare Savage's childhood, whose flashbacks reveal Jamaica's history as well as Clare's hybrid identity, having ancestors that were once both slaves and plantation owners. As a child, Clare is told that she should behave like a girl, but she does not feel a connection to feminine interests. In *Abeng*, Clare is confronted by gender restrictions when she is not permitted to understand the mysterious activity of her male cousins, who hide the male rite of passage from her of eating hog penis and testicles. Joshua and Ben belittle Clare for wanting to know the "ways of men," and Clare feels powerless because of her gender: "They had the power to hurt her because they were allowed to do so much she was not—she was supposed to be here, in this house, with all the dressed-up women" (61). Clare is further ostracized from her family when she kills her grandmother's bull in chapter 15, not only because she has done something wrong, but also largely because she has transgressed gender boundaries. Her grandmother, Miss Mattie, accuses her of being, in Clare's words, "A girl who seemed to think she was a boy. Or white" (134). Gender and race appear here together as sites of power improperly claimed by Clare, who also experiences racial passing at various points. What is also interesting, however, is that which happens in the scene immediately before this that causes Clare to shoot Miss Mattie's bull.

Clare and her childhood friend, Zoe, are in the woods swimming naked together, when they are disrupted by a man in khaki, a cane-cutter from Miss Mattie's fields, which frightens Clare and causes her to pick up her rifle and shoot a warning. The bullet unintentionally hits Miss Mattie's bull, Old Joe. The scene that follows of Clare and Zoe's homoerotic exploration

defies Jamaican boundaries and customs, even after Clare has revealed the consequences of homosexuality in Jamaica to readers, and this is especially important because she and Zoe swim naked together after Miss Mattie forbids Clare to swim, out of fear that she will see her male cousins Joshua and Ben swimming naked in the river. The boys' swimming naked together is not construed as homoerotic by Miss Mattie, but Clare fears that her swimming naked with Zoe will be construed as homoerotic, which is not unfounded, since she does disclose sexual desires for Zoe as they explore each other's bodies while swimming naked together in the woods:

Zoe's naked body was lean and muscled. Her hips were narrow and her thighs long. The patch of tight curly hair between her legs glistened in the riverwater and the sun. Clare's own body was also long. . . . Pussy and rass—these were the two words they knew for the space-within-flesh covered now by strands and curls of hair. Under these patches were the ways to their own bodies. Their fingers could slide through the hair and deep into the pink and purple flesh and touch a corridor through which their babies would emerge and into which men would put their thing. Right now it could belong to them. (120)

This passage is certainly homoerotic, but what is more significant is that Clare is exploring the interiority of a female embodiment she has been taught to think of only in relation to masculinity (her body as the ground in which a man will plant seed but which she is experiencing as something else—body as land on its own terms, touching other land)—a form of queer ecological eroticism.³⁹ Clare makes a conscious choice to see herself as something else, and the land as something else—as a place that offers her freedom for challenging conscripted identity.

³⁹ See Merchant's *The Death of Nature* for the colonial exploitation of land through its feminization.

Clare furthermore defies heteronormativity and challenges colonial boundaries even after learning of the repercussions and risks (after hearing horror stories of “battymen,” male homosexuals, who died because of their queerness). Though female homosexuality is seemingly invisible in Clare’s immediate environment as a young girl in postcolonial Jamaica, the stories Clare hears of gay men or males perceived to be gay are full of horror that would seem to terrify her from exploring lesbian sexuality. Though she does not see female homosexuality being punished, stories that deviate from heteronormative relationships with men do permeate Cliff’s texts. Uncle Robert committed suicide by swimming out into the ocean after being disowned by his family for being what they call “funny,” and a young boy named Clinton is allowed to drown by the townspeople because he is perceived as queer. He is not even allowed a proper funeral, which causes his mother to go insane and stalk the night looking for his *duppy* (ghost). Cliff writes, “Clare knew what ‘funny’ meant. She knew that Robert had caused some disturbance when he brought a dark man home from Montego Bay and introduced him to his mother as ‘his dearest friend’” (125). Robert’s mother Dorothy tells Clare that funny means “it is when one smaddy is a little off—is one sint’ing one smaddy born with. Him no can help himself. . . . Him is battyman—aim want fe lay down wi’ only other men. No ask me no more” (125). The insinuation is that male homosexuality should not be spoken of because the consequences of even being suspected of being queer are dire. Andil Gosine notes in *Queer Ecologies* that “the criminalization and policing of sexual acts between men [are not] distinct phenomena, [but] intimately interwoven through the projects of colonialism, development, and nation building” (150). British colonial legacy instilled a gender hierarchy that was not to be transgressed. The privileging of masculinity over femininity that puts females in confined spaces is what seems to anger the townspeople about Clinton when they say, “If she [Clinton’s mother] had not been

fool-fool [foolish/stupid], her son would not have been sissy-sissy [effeminate, implied homosexual]. Because he was sissy he was drowned” (65). These norms are so ingrained that Robert commits suicide by swimming out into the ocean and drowning. The state-supported expectations for heteronormativity and hypermasculinity in men and the homophobia it supports are part of a colonial legacy that Clare challenges through her exploration of female homosexuality.

There is a preoccupation with British masculinity at play here, where women in the novel are not described as “funny” in the same way; yet, Clare risks exploring her sexuality with another girl. Clare’s desire for Zoe is not quite the same as Robert or Clinton’s positions because the constraints are different for each gender, but knowing that norms can be challenged does perpetuate Clare’s sexual inclinations and exploration with Zoe in the bush and forest. Why Cliff chooses to use wooded environments as the setting for the girls’ homoerotic exploration is my point of queer ecocritical interest here that works as a form of decoloniality. Nature is presented as both a cultural and sexual safe haven that is not feared. In addition, race and class barriers seem to dissolve in the runiate (the bush and forests); Zoe is no longer beneath Clare in the runiate because she is more black and less British. Nonetheless, the legacy of British colonialism (the taboos it has set in place) ultimately do stifle the girls’ exploration. The decolonial moment never reaches full fruition, but the conflict is presented—the possibility plotted. Immediately before their sex is disrupted, Cliff writes, “Clare held on by the river that the two of them could erase difference. . . . In the moments before the cane-cutter startled them, she had wanted to lean across Zoe’s breasts and kiss her. To thank Zoe for stopping her from being fool-fool” (124). The connection to Clare being fool-fool like Clinton’s mother implies that femininity must keep its place under men (and for men) but not part of the male subject. Clare checks herself for stepping

out of line. The interruption of Clare and Zoe's homoerotic moment by the cane-cutter reintroduces British colonial taboos that reinforce differences: polarities of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Bathing in the river, in the woods alone, away from civilization structured through British norms, allows Clare to discover what comes spontaneously to her—an erotic attraction to the same sex—but the cane-cutter surfaces feelings of guilt and stupidity. Clare comes to realize after this scene she and Zoe's racial and class divisions and the consequences this presents between them in pursuing a friendship: "The space between them was not as neat as Zoe had perceived it. But Clare, who had never considered the subtleties of this division, could not now analyze or explain to her friend what she felt about their given identities in this society, where they met and where they diverged" (121). Cliff shows readers how colonial hierarchies not only cause but also reinforce divisions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, seemingly in this order. Due to the hierarchies created between structures of class and race after colonialism in Jamaica, Clare and Zoe's erotic foreplay, and even friendship, is seemingly impossible outside of the narrow confines of the "wild countryside." However, the hierarchies created as a result of colonialism seem to be broken down as Clare comes to realize that the many evils and restrictions around her are the result of their colonized inheritance.

I posit that the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender are noticeably important here and can be better understood through what I have called decolonial queer ecologies, for Clare and Zoe transgress several boundaries, explore an interdependency that defies hierarchical structures, and realize freedoms within the confines of Jamaican ruinate for a short while—before the power of the British colonial world reinscribes them. The girls discover a freedom in the ruinate where they can resist their racial and economic class differences, explore their

homoerotic sexuality, and refuse colonial-ascribed gender roles. Clare's exploration of sexuality with Zoe while bathing in the forest provides her with a private space where she can feel free, and their differences help them to form a coalition that suspends class, race, gender, and sexual constraints, even if just for a bit. Cliff notes that it is the landscape setting in the novel that enables this decolonial turn: "In their [Zoe and Clare's] friendship the differences [which enabled their friendship] could become more and more of a background, which only rarely they stumbled across to confront. . . . They had a landscape which was wild and real and filled with places in which their imaginations could move" (95). When Clare meets Harriet in *No Telephone to Heaven*, this decolonial turn is more fully realized; she discovers Jamaican ruinate is a space which must not just be reclaimed, but reappropriated.

Reappropriating Spaces and Bodies

In *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare discovers other attributes of decolonial queer ecologies: observance and value of empathy as a crucial tool in sustaining and securing the future, a realization that queer being is part of a quintessential life force of ecological thinking, and a recognition that eco-sexual resistance to heteronormativity is a necessary part of greening science. Nicole Seymour emphasizes in *Strange Natures* how empathy plays a crucial role in the queer ecological imagination and futures of queer fictions that offer crucial insight on environmental issues. She argues that a queer understanding of nature, an emphasis on the nonhuman, and the deterioration of the environment are best explored through an evaluation of texts from both a queer and ecocritical perspective (1-34). Ellen Melroy's exploration of queer being and becoming, from the desert bighorn and humpback chub to cyborg and/or transgenic species, offers what Chisholm calls "a queer paradigm of desire that replaces the apparatus of

heterosexual genealogy, while embracing other, creative variations of becoming-life” (376).⁴⁰ This type of ecological thinking views queer desire as a “quintessential life force,” Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson note, “since it is precisely queer desire that creates the experimental, co-adaptive, symbiotic, and nonreproductive interspecies couplings that become evolution” (39). Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands note in their introduction to *Queer Ecologies* that eco-sexual resistance, by which they mean a position that not only advocates for queering ecology, “but of greening queer politics [is] the extension of queer into ecology, . . . not . . . simply [as] a question of making nature more welcome to gay inhabitation, . . . [but] also an invitation to open queer theory to ecological possibilities, and thus produce a queering of ecocultural relations along the lines of Halberstam’s queering of space . . .” (22). Empathy, queer being, and eco-sexual resistance each help Cliff’s characters to reappropriate nonhuman spaces and human bodies as queer inclusive—a crucial task of queer ecologies.

Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson write that “queer ecologies suggests . . . a new practice of ecological knowledges, spaces, and politics that places central attention on challenging hetero-ecologies from the perspective of non-normative sexual and gender positions,” and this is exactly what Clare Savage does (22). Clare comes to accept and feel a real empathy for the novel’s trans character Harriet, and her relationship with Harriet leads her to secure her grandmother’s ancestral plantation, now overgrown with ruinate, for guerilla revolutionaries gathering under Harriet’s leadership, which they do without hesitation, despite Harriet’s being openly trans. It is important to note that when this novel was written and where it

⁴⁰ Dianne Chisholm, in her analysis of Ellen Melroy’s fiction, utilizes Edward O. Wilson’s concept of “biophilia” to explore “bio-erotic-diversity” and symbiosis. Chisholm notes how Melroy shares with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari a Darwinian versus Freudian conceptualization of the processes of evolution that describes “a vitalism in which nonreproductive sex is a primary force of nature” (360). In *Becoming Undone*, Elizabeth Grosz explores Darwin’s work as an area rich for positive reflections of queer being and becoming as part of nature and natural selection.

is set (1980s Jamaica) male femininity and trans identity were often clumped together, meaning that Harriet's trans identity would likely have been viewed simultaneously as both sexual and gender deviance. Harriet's trans identity may have been viewed as feminine male homosexuality. Nevertheless, my point is that the revolutionaries empathize with a character that transgresses heteronormativity and dares to challenge the role hypermasculinity should play in the life of a person born biologically male. Empathy, as Nicole Seymour has argued in *Strange Natures*, is an instrumental part of a "broadening ecological [including social] consciousness," (30) and it furthermore helps queered characters like Harriet and Clare to think in terms of relationships rather than dualistic thinking and hierarchism. Clare's queer sexuality, along with her hybrid background, puts her in a unique position. Though Clare is more economically advantaged than most and her lighter skin privileges her, her mixed-race background inherited from her mother Kitty and father's slave-driver ancestor Justice Savage, along with her queer identification, puts her in a unique position that challenges her to recognize interconnectivity. Her sexual attraction toward the female gender strengthens her willingness to form bonds with others and recognize the value of empathy. In addition, Clare's sexual awakening with Zoe as a child importantly happens in ruinate, and she later experiences the presence of a slave-ancestral spirituality in this environment. However, it is Harriet who makes Clare eco-conscious and suggests to her that they assemble their anti-colonial coalition in the ruinate of her grandmother's land.

Harriet becomes for Clare both an erotic partner and a nurturing mother-figure, but it is her role as a strong (trans) female leader for Clare and their guerilla revolutionaries in *No Telephone to Heaven* that directly challenges gender roles. Cliff deconstructs and reappropriates feminine stereotypes to show how Harriet, as a trans woman, can lead a decolonial rebellion. In addition, Harriet's role as mother is built on interconnectivity and empathy, rather than

biological reproduction, and Harriet is allowed to be queer, unrestrained in the ruinate (once colonized land now overgrown into bush). However, this was not always the case, since Harriet was ostracized beforehand as a child and even as an adult. Harriet actually has a very interesting understanding of her gender identity and sexual orientation, which is understood as a product of nature. Harriet tells Clare about her being raped and sodomized at the age of ten by a park camp officer, and she then immediately insists that this could not have had anything to do with her sexuality and current identity: “And no, girlfriend, before you ask, if you intended to ask, or assume, that did not make me the way I am. No, darling, I was born this way, that I know. Not just sun, but sun and moon” (128). Harriet maintains that her queerness is part of a natural order, deploying nature against the phobic frame that marks queer gender as a result of trauma, but equally important is the association of guilt and shame that follows this rape largely because of racial difference and colonial conquest. Harriet continues to note that the desire to be feminine and her following her maid around (a sort of replacement for her mother), asking to wear her lipstick and pierce her ears, had nothing to do with who Harriet is, nor did it contribute to any shame or guilt: “No, man, that t’ing didn’t make me who I am. Didn’t form me in all my complexity. But the man’s brutishness made my journey hard. . . . Ten years old and guilty that a big man in khaki uniform, braided and bemedaled, in the garrison of Her Majesty, did to me what he did. What else to expect but guilt . . . shame . . . whiteman, Black bwai [boy]” (128).

There are two important things to consider from the way that Harriet understands her sexuality and trans identity. First, Harriet says her sexuality and trans identity are biologically informed by stating that she was “born this way,” (128) which raises an important point regarding how a colonial discourse reinforces one’s perception of their queer/gender identity in regards to how it fits within their environment when understood as part of nature, though the

insinuation that one is born queer is also problematic to a queer critical discourse. It is important to note that “born this way” is a strategy that can be deployed in more than one way, operating differently at different scales and different in racial/gender/national contexts. Harriet’s assertion that she was “born this way” is not as reductive as the “born this way” of recent popular LGBT discourse. It is important to consider Harriet’s emphasis on the complexity of identity. How one understands their sexual/gender identity as being part of nature is largely dependent on what one understands the construction of nature to be. Nicole Seymour’s notion of “organic transgenderism”⁴¹—“gender transitioning as a phenomenon that is at least partly natural—that is innate and spontaneous—rather than primarily cultural, or constructed” (36)—is useful in understanding Harriet’s insistence on her trans identity as being biologically informed:

Organic transgenderism . . . involves the treatment of gender transitioning as a biological phenomenon on the same order as puberty; an obviation of the medico-technological complex and its commodification of the body, in favor of ‘homegrown’ and psychic solutions to bodily problems; the characterization of self-knowledge as equal, if not superior, to medical knowledge; and a focus on individual will as transformative. Works that articulate this vision of transgenderism insist that the perceived ‘unnaturalness’ of that process is the result of simplistic binary thinking—thinking that victimizes trans people as well as the natural world. (36)

⁴¹ I use the word *trans* to describe Harriet in this chapter, though Harriet herself might or might not perceive “all her complexity” to be adequately described by a term like *trans*. The term *transgenderism* is rather dated, though the term *transgender* is a term with broad usage in and out of academia. Language used to describe those who identify as other than their biological birth or as transitioning is always in flux.

When the process of Harriet's "transgenderism" is understood in this context, the importance of her understanding her trans identity as biologically or naturally informed is not so much at odds with a queer critical discourse, but is the result of colonial discourse.

Secondly, the guilt and shame that Harriet feels seem to be not so much about her being raped and sodomized as a child as it is because of the way she is taunted afterwards and called "a sweet lickle monkey" by the white officer who raped her, then as a young "black bwai [boy]" (130). It is the colonial conquest that bothers Harriet, which is evidenced when she says, "I have been tempted in my life to think symbol—that what he did to me is but a symbol for what they did to all of us, always bearing in mind that some of us, many of us [humans], also do it to each other" (129). Michelle Cliff's allusion to the rape of Jamaica by the British is obvious here. The rape of the land is symbolized by the terror inflicted upon its people in this one example of same-sex rape. Harriet recalls that after this incident, a constant fear lingered over her and that her maid Hyacinth helped hide this rape from her father because she was "afraid if they found out I would be 'ruined' and turned from son to servant" (129). However, Harriet also admits that the incident was not as much of a symbol after all, as it was a reality of her life: "Not symbol, not allegory, not something in a story or a dialogue with Plato. No, man, I am merely a person who felt the overgrown cock of a big whiteman pierce the asshole of a lickle Black bwai [boy]—there it is. That is all there is to it" (130). Harriet's refusing to let Clare experience a symptom of a larger structure insists on its embodied reality. However, for the reader, it is hard to dismiss that the terror inflicted upon an Afro-Carib by a British colonial is not largely responsible for Harriet's queerness being made to seem unnatural, especially in the scene immediately following when Clare and Harriet run through the bush, canefields, and ruination, and end on the beach,

where Harriet tells Clare she feels safe to be herself because of the association of the ruinate (natural space) that contains a haunting presence of tortured slaves and their ancestors.

Ancestral presence is experienced deeply when in the ruinate—a place where hierarchies seem to dissolve. Harriet discusses “de duppy” (spirits of the once enslaved Maroons) and their inseparability from nature—meaning the land. She tells Clare about what went on in the ruins of her grandmother’s land (once canefields) and of its ghosts:

But I have seen them [their ancestors] . . . for I come here often Some of our people, girlfriend . . . some of our ancestors. . . . But, you know, t’ings not so different now. Do you know what happens on this island still? The lives of cutters, of timekeepers? . . . Were we to sleep on this beach, we might hear more than . . . our people celebrating cropover. (131-32)

The insinuation is that by getting back in touch with the ruinate, Clare and Harriet are also rediscovering the culture of their once enslaved ancestors who fought for their freedom. This connection is further witnessed by a Gothic-like description of the ancestral ghosts that continues in chapter 7, entitled “Magnanimous Warrior,” a chapter consisting of only one full page. The magnanimous warrior is described as “she whom the spirits come quick and hard. Hunting mother. She who forages. Who knows the ground” (163). She is described as caring for her people and scattering bone fragments among other natural debris (163) in an almost recursive recycling, not unlike that described by Haggard in *She*, but Cliff’s hunting mother burns herself in an act of retaliation: “Mother who goes forth emitting flames from her eyes. Nose. Mouth. Ears. Vulva. Anus. She bites the evildoers that they become full of sores. She burns the canefields” (163-64). The Gothic fire imagery, haunting, and torment of humans by a spirit is noticeably sexual and gendered; yet, it furthermore alludes to a symbiosis with the land as an act

of decolonial resistance. Harriet and Clare experience a sort of catharsis in the biosocial space they seek to reappropriate that helps them deal with the oppressive conditions their ancestors have been a part of and of which they now face liberation from as queer individuals.

Clare and Harriet both strive for liberation from a restrictive colonial environment, a liberation found only in ruinate with each other; what is also remarkable about Harriet is that she redefines gender and opens up room for both the acceptance of non-conventional genders and a deconstruction of colonial logic, quite remarkable for a character in a novel written in 1987, when being queer or trans in Jamaica could mean death. Cliff was certainly embedded in feminist and queer contexts that suggest Jamaican homophobia did not go uncontested. However, Cliff characterizes Harriet's identity not as a singular phenomenon, but as a complex duality that is innately plural, manifested in her appearance. Sally O'Driscoll (1995) writes, "Cliff's project is to examine the possibility of *claiming* an identity—a project that moves her away from essentialist notions of identity and toward a postmodern concept of a constructed subject" (61). Cliff's character Harriet is ahead of her time as a queer character in the 1980s whose identity is not stable but in flux; however, what is also interesting about Harriet is how her presence contributes to a deconstruction of the colonial system in *No Telephone to Heaven*.

Harriet is able to teach Clare a lot about her Jamaican identity, race, respect for the environment, and also gender and sexuality, which can be viewed as a challenge to the logic of coloniality—to the colonial system; however, it is the way that Harriet queers ecologies that makes her a unique character. Rosamond King (2008) argues that Harriet "re/present[s] the idea of gender itself by deconstructing the myth of the 'real woman' and the 'real man'" (595). This is important because getting people to accept queer and trans individuals must start with deconstruction of the problem, as King writes:

The first step in understanding how trans individuals reveal and reinforce ambiguities in Caribbean binary gender is recognizing how they deconstruct the system. . . . On the surface trans expressions of gender may seem to highlight that which they are not—‘authentic’ or conventionally-gendered men and women. But in fact trans individuals, set up by others as myths, ironically reveal ‘true’ and ‘real’ genders as profound myths—even for conventionally-gendered women and men. This revelation then opens a space for the recognition of other genders.(595)

Harriet is able to teach both Clare and the guerilla revolutionaries that gender is not constrictive or limiting, but also the limits of colonial structures. She opens Clare to new possibilities and helps her to break down racial barriers as well as come to terms with her sexuality, for Clare and Harriet are more similar than they would have thought; they are both talented leaders, largely because of what they learn from one another, and their plights are more similar than one first realizes. Though the role of a trans character in opening up a cisgender character to new possibilities has been quite soundly critiqued in trans studies by scholars such as Jay Prosser, but what is unique about Harriet is the way that as a trans character, she challenges the colonial system and its overall structures through the ways she queers ecologies.

Harriet introduces to Clare the complexity of identity and teaches her that queerness is not only legible as exclusive homosexuality. While Harriet’s queerness as a trans person is more apparent to the revolutionaries than Clare’s sexuality, Clare’s queerness lies in her unique amalgamation—in her position of class/race/gender/sexuality and access to Jamaican environment. As noted earlier, Clare certainly had homoerotic experiences with her childhood friend, Zoe; however, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, she appears to be heterosexual for the majority of the novel, an entire chapter devoted to her relationship with an African-Vietnamese-

American man, her pregnancy with his child, and subsequent miscarriage caused by what they assume to be his exposure to toxins during the war. This leaves Clare sterile and much like Harriet—unable to reproduce as women. Yet, Harriet is able to give new meaning to gender, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, and she redefines what it means to be female in a profound way that transcends the idea that women hold a birthing role in reproduction, opening possibilities—such as that of Clare and Harriet’s love affair. However, Clare’s queerness lies not only in her same-sex experiences with Zoe, but also in her challenge to heteronormative roles—in reproduction and maternity, in a love affair with a trans character, and in her ability to see Jamaica from a unique perspective as a creole woman who has been able to migrate across continents. She and Harriet are maternal to their cause, to the revolutionaries, and to Jamaica, but Clare’s queerness puts her in the unique position of giving Harriet the ability to seek decoloniality.

Clare and Harriet’s ability to decolonize, however, is importantly first grounded in queer ecologies, largely by the way that they are able to reappropriate not only their bodies, but also spaces. This is evidenced in a scene in chapter 5 when Harriet and Clare go swimming on the “most beautiful beach on the island” (130) of Jamaica, the most secluded, where “they could swim as girlfriends” (130). They frolic and eat mangos, then lie side by side, “touching gently, kissing, tongues entwined, coming to, laughing” (130). When Harriet asks Clare if she finds her strange, although Clare responds that she finds Harriet no stranger than she finds herself, Cliff expresses Clare’s inner thoughts: “Of course, I find you strange; how could I not? You are a new person to me. At the same time I feel drawn to you. At home with you,” to which Harriet responds, “The time will come for both of us to choose. For we will have to make the choice.

Cast our lot. Cyann [can't] live split. Not in this world," (131) a statement which seems to claim Clare's queerness and express her comfort with Harriet.

Nevertheless, though Clare feels drawn to and at home with Harriet, Harriet's statement in having to make a choice presents a contradiction. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley calls this scene the "novel's most erotic and postcolonial journey" (188), refers to Harriet's agency as "male womanhood" (169), and her and Clare's relationship as "lesbian eroticism" (192). Harriet's "choice" might not be as straightforward as it seems. The choice might lie in a blurring of distinctions—in choosing between living in the ruins of empire versus moving toward becoming something new and building a new future. Furthermore, the choice to which Harriet refers can be understood as queering the permanence of gender and sexuality altogether—in seeing the environment in all its complexity as a movement toward decolonization. Tinsley writes, "This secluded afternoon is a moment when s/he [Harriet] makes an intimate connection to one Jamaican whom s/he can love and help lead to freedom while embracing both woman's full complexity, and so opens the novel's only lesbian love scene and a unique imagination of the erotics of decolonizing gender and sexuality otherwise" (192). Tinsley's close reading attests to the importance of reappropriating (queer) spaces and bodies as a means of decolonization; Harriet and Clare's erotic encounter with one another acts as a form of colonial resistance deeply entwined with the land that in turn propels them to form a coalition with guerilla revolutionaries.

Queer Coalitions

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, in her 2010 book *Thieving Sugar*, draws attention to queer coalitions formed between women who loved women in Caribbean history, from middle-passage same-sex eroticism to same-sex relationships that were part of a rebellion under brutal conditions of slavery; she also draws attention to the importance of coalitions between Caribbean

revolutionaries and nature (1-28). Tinsley examines metaphors of landscape and sexuality which undermine an “imperial obsession with separation and categorization that divides human from slave, female from woman, and man from nature,” metaphors which instead emphasize connectivity and form what she calls a “poetics of erotic decolonization” (23). Nature, when understood through a decolonial context in the Caribbean, she argues, is not static nor distanced from human culture, but importantly interconnected to an understanding of queer agency. “Flowers, trees, land forms, sexed bodies, sexual natures,” she notes, have been “constantly, tactically remade by both colonialists and countercolonialists” (22), never static, but always in a state of interruption, redirection, and bonding. These interconnections (these coalitions) are crucial to an understanding of queer ecologies, and are not only true of the Caribbean. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson further argue that “a queer ecological framework not only . . . offer[s] a possibility of coalitions between racial and sexual inequities, but also would necessarily provide an analysis of the contemporaneous development of race, sexuality, and nature through each other” (35). This redirection is, at times, an important aspect of rebellion and revolution led by characters who refuse to conform to sexual, gender, and racial normalities. Chapter One discussed how Haggard wrote about a coalition between the Amahagger natives and their environment, but the coalitions formed in Cliff’s work are more grounded and apparent.

Tinsley’s argument helps to not only situate the importance of environment in Caribbean culture, but can also enable readers to see the value of rebellions and revolutions that emphasize the importance of wilderness spaces to the process of decolonization, resistances instrumentally dependent on queer coalitions. Cliff’s resistance is not unlike that of the affective communities formed by late-nineteenth-century radicals in Haggard’s time. This discussion leads to one final application of decolonial queer ecologies to Cliff’s fiction—the emphasis that heterogeneous

coalitions which celebrate naturecultures establish needed solutions. Katie Hogan, in her article “Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism,” reminds us that coalition is an important aspect of queer ecologies. Although Hogan’s argument is written for a contemporary U.S. audience, her overall argument is also useful in a decolonial context. She claims that who belongs to nature and has access to it has historically depended on a person’s race/gender/sexuality/class, noting how people of color and queer people have been driven from nature and/or had unsafe access to it because they are deemed unnatural (241). This is not unlike what happened in postcolonial Jamaica. Hogan argues that queers and minorities must reclaim naturecultures through coalition building (236-41). She writes:

Since both queer and environmental justice perspectives assume that nature and environment are not neutral ahistorical categories, and each critical practice looks at how the very language of nature and environmentalism can often mask harm to humans and nature, this shared theoretical and historical experience could serve as a basis for coalition. (241)

Queer coalition building stresses that people should not be alienated nor marginalized from the land and emphasizes the interdependency of Earth’s biodiversity to maintain a healthy world. It is not queerness that is unnatural or threatening, but rather economic imperialism and homophobia that are toxic. Coalitions that consist of queer and non-queer characters interacting with the land are instrumental stories in both *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Abeng*.

In *Abeng*, Nanny of the Maroons and Mma Alli, characters that refuse to conform to sexual, gender, and racial colonial-influenced normalities, resist slavery, and Nanny leads a great rebellion that is reliant on interdependency with the environment. Nanny, an obeah woman who uses her magic (i.e., knowledge of plants) to fight colonizers and slavers, forms a united coalition

of rebels and plantation slaves to expel colonizers from the control of their land and bodies. She is rumored to be tough and can catch a “bullet between her buttocks,” (14) which transgresses gender boundaries because she terrifies the British with a role they perceive as masculine, but what is also important is that her coalition emphasizes a respect for the land, a reciprocal relationship that is formed in several ways. Nanny’s revolutionaries are protected by the refuge of forests, caves, and mountains; they cultivate cassava, yam, and plantain for sustainability, and they gather roots, bark, and birch gum to make poisons for their enemies. Nanny tells her people that Jamaica was once said to be one of the most fruitful places on Earth, but this changed after colonial cultivation, which the reader knows was set in motion by the rape of the land for foreign commodities. Nanny’s revolution aims to change this.

The story of Mma Alli’s resistance is also a decolonial attempt invested in queer ecologies largely because of its emphasis on queer coalition building. Mma Alli uses the erotic and environment to help slaves fight for control of their own bodies and escape the terror and horror inflicted upon them. Timothy Chin argues that “Mma Alli is spiritually, if not biologically related to Maroon Nanny” (137); yet, what is different about Mma Alli is that she is located as a slave on the Savage plantation. Ronald Cummings notes that “her acts of marronage contrast to those of Nanny of the Maroons in that they are comprised not of open resistance and fighting but of private erotic acts of desire and remembering between women” (329). Mma Alli’s resistance is more of an erotic marronage rather than revolutionary marronage. She comforts slaves, while they respect her queerness and leadership. She also uses queer sexuality as a powerful tool to resist colonial control over the body, enabling slaves to reclaim their agency. For example, Mma Alli helps a slave named Inez escape from her plantation’s owner, Justice Savage (Clare’s slaver ancestor), who has taken her by force to his plantation house to be his mistress, where he

repeatedly rapes her and enacts savage punishments on runaway slaves: he himself strings up and whips slaves, rubs salt in their wounds, hangs them till nearly dead from a cotton tree, and dissects them while still alive and naked into four parts, which are suspended by ropes on the property, eaten by vultures and flies, and become fertilizer for cane (30-35). Mma Alli leads a resistance against this horror, which starts with the plight of Inez. She builds a coalition in the forests to rebel against the colonial slavers.

Mma Alli and Inez's story is invested in queer ecologies not only because the women partake in a same-sex love affair, but also because of the way they challenge colonial structures through knowledge of environment and form coalitions with and in the environment. Mma Alli's sexuality is only a part of the reason that she gains respect from the people. The reader learns of Mma Alli's queerness in two distinct passages in *Abeng*:

She [Mma Alli] taught many of the women on the plantation about this passion and how to take strength from it. . . .[and] Mma Alli had never laid with a man. The other slaves said she loved only women in that way, but that she was a true sister to the men—the Black men: her brothers. They said that being with her in bed, women learned all manner of the magic of passion. How to become wet again and again through the night. (35)

Her queerness is a unique aspect of her appeal; however, Mma Alli's story also intersects with the land because she teaches Inez how to use herbs (tea roots and leaves) and a chant during an erotic, sexual encounter to abort her child (the child being a colonial product of rape, by Justice Savage). Interestingly, Harriet studies healing practices in *No Telephone to Heaven*; Cliff writes, “[Harriet] had been studying the healing practices. At the university and with old women in the country, women who knew properties of roots and leaves and how to apply spells effectively . .

.” (171). Mma Alli further teaches several women all manners of magic via botany, “how to soothe and excite [themselves] at the same time. How to touch a woman in bed deep-inside and make her womb move within her . . . [and how] . . . to keep their bodies their own, even while they were the whimsical violence of the justice and slavedrivers, who were for the most part creole or *quashee*” (35). Inez gains control over her body and reproductive choices, and fellow slaves begin a rebellion that is championed by Mma Alli’s resistance. However, neither Nanny’s rebellion nor Mma Alli’s resistance is successful, and they result in worse terror. Nanny is betrayed by Cudjoe, who secretly conspires with the British governor to quiet her rebellion, and Mma Alli and her slaves are burned alive on the eve of their freedom from the British by Justice Savage, who ends a reign of terror that has included mutilation, quartering, skinning, and dissection, with one final atrocity.

Nevertheless, both Nanny of the Maroons’ rebellion and Mma Alli’s resistance are stories grounded in decolonial queer ecologies that inform the identity of *Abeng*’s protagonist, Clare Savage, who identifies herself through her matriarchal line and uses these stories to help Jamaican revolutionaries fight American imperialism through an investment with the land and in their ancestry. The stories of Mma Alli and Nanny act as an erotohistoriographic connection that is nevertheless complicated by Clare’s descent from both slaves and owners. It is the Jamaican cultural repository of these erotic stories that helps Clare to reevaluate her position and put what she learns into practice to resist colonial oppression. She identifies with a queer, non-patriarchal past through Mma Alli and Nanny of the Maroons. Clare, who has a mixed-race bloodline but is descended from the Savage slave owners (Justice and Mrs. Savage—Jack and Isabel—Caroline and Iceman—Boy Savage and Kitty), recites her investigation into the horrible, brutal history of slavery enacted by her ancestor, Justice Savage, and wonders what she might do

to rectify resulting colonial influences. She finds her cause when she meets Harriet, who eerily recounts an ancestral presence felt when in the ruinate—as mentioned earlier—for instance when Harriet discusses the spirits of the enslaved Maroons, their bone fragments scattered among the ruinate debris.

Clare and Harriet decide to fight back by forming a coalition. They and their revolutionaries train within the grounds of her deceased grandmother's ruinate, where Clare expresses an anger regarding the toxic pollution of their ancestral land and water as a result of colonization, a damaged past they seek to avenge as a way of moving forward into the future. It is important to note that although Clare's inheritance from a colonizer is what provides this land for their coalition, it is not simply her position alone that enables this coalition, but the process of discovering connections between the land and queerness that have enabled a decolonial resistance to form. Clare says, "You know then that the rivers run red . . . and the underground aquifers are colored . . . from the waste of the bauxite mines and the aluminum refineries? We do not speak of past here, but present, future" (195). This passage is important for two reasons. First, it highlights the relationships among industry, colonialism, and ruinate to show the ways that the land cannot be fully taken back—how colonialism endures in the form of poisons. Second, the future Clare speaks of is grounded in a decolonization invested in queer coalition, queer becoming, queer temporalities, and queer ecologies. Though the land cannot be fully reclaimed, relationships with the land can change for the better. This is one way that *No Telephone to Heaven* invests in queer ecologies as a movement toward decolonization.

Harriet also resists colonialism and embraces queer ecologies on many fronts to promote change and build queer coalitions. As noted, she insists that her gender and sexual identity are a product of *nature*, a term she transforms and redefines as a process of becoming, not a cultural

product of male-on-male rape and white colonialism, for instance. She also sees no reason for changing her biological body, which is arguably another act of colonial resistance and her choice, despite whether or not she could afford trans reassignment surgery: “Cyann [can’t] afford [genital reconstruction],” Harriet tells Clare, “Maybe when de revolution come . . . but the *choice is mine*, man, is made. Harriet live and Harry be no more . . . you know, darling, castration ain’t de main t’ing” (168, my emphasis). Harriet’s refusal of trans reassignment surgery is importantly embraced by the coalition of guerilla revolutionaries she leads, who recognize Harriet as female, yet are indifferent to her remaining biologically male. Thus, both her decision and her revolutionaries’ embracement of her trans identity can be construed as an anti-colonial move that allows her to be queer and accepted, and the revolutionaries to defy the gender and sexual normativity they have inherited from a colonial legacy, which only strengthens their coalition. Furthermore, Harriet’s independence and queer leadership reflects Jamaica’s self-sufficient ability: “The trans body, like Jamaica, is presented as independent and self-sufficient: close to nature in an *ideal* sense, rather than underdeveloped, primitive, and in need of outside help. In fact,” Seymour writes, “the novel [*No Telephone to Heaven*] nearly collapses organic transgenderism and anti-colonial militance into each other” (60). An independent Jamaica that is interdependent with queer and non-queer bodies alike as well as cognizant of the role of *nature* (to use Seymour’s word) in its future is the goal of this coalition.

Harriet’s revolution wants to be independent from American imperialism, including capital and tourism, and the revolutionaries plan to invade an American movie set that has come to exploit Jamaica and rewrite the history of its legendary hero, Nanny of the Maroons. It is important to realize that their goal is not economically motivated, but an anti-colonial quest aimed at fighting segregation and economic inequality with the aim of taking back ownership of

their cultural heritage from the colonial development of Jamaica. Seymour clarifies the intent of the guerilla revolutionaries when she writes, “Cliff makes clear that this band is changing the landscape not for profit through exploitation, but as a way to repair that exploitation. And, interestingly enough, they leave a layer of ruinate to keep their operations under cover—a human-nonhuman reciprocity that is engineered, but reciprocal nonetheless” (60). This point is important not only because it emphasizes the unselfish motives of the coalition, but also because it highlights the reciprocal relationship they have built with their environment.

Cliff’s coalition reinvests in a knowledge and rediscovery of nature/culture interdependence that values queer bodies and spaces, and its members resist being othered or viewed as monstrous rebels or terrorists, instead using terror themselves to reclaim their land and culture from American imperialists. What is also interesting is the way that the ruinate is used as a place to form a coalition between oppressed Others that society considers misfits; the ruinate becomes a place wherein the guerilla revolutionaries can reclaim the land not for capital profit or exploitation, but as a way to repair the colonial damage done. However, there is no easy way out of the colonial matrix; the revolutionaries also strategically embrace capital when they need to in order to achieve their goals, as they do Clare’s relation of ownership to the land. Decolonization is a process—not a straightforward, easy solution. The point is that this coalition that is formed emphasizes an important attribute of decolonial queer ecologies—natural space becomes queer cultural space. The characters of Cliff’s decolonial fiction realize that the commodification of the environment as well as hierarchical cultures—both understood as products of colonialism—cause imbalance in their world. They discover spaces that welcome queer bodies and explore a means of decolonization through coalitions that are both queer-inclusive and ecofriendly.

Decolonizing Jamaica materializes for the revolutionaries in a united purpose and common goal to expel American filmmakers from Jamaica that are trying to rewrite their history—the history of their heroine, Nanny of the Maroons. As noted, it is equally important to remember that their union is organized and led by the trans character Harriet, with whom Clare and the revolutionaries empathize and welcome, now seemingly only within the confines of the ruinate in which they meet; Harriet is only allowed to be queer and unrestrained in the ruinate (130-31). Harriet’s freedom becomes Jamaica’s freedom, as Seymour writes, “Gender freedom and freedom from colonial domination thus become inseparable goals,” (60) but freedom in the ruinate becomes their means and cause. In this ruinate, they plant and garden for sustainability (yam, cassava, plantain, coconuts, and apples), but they also leave up much of the ruinate for their protection from authorities; thus, they work with the land, protect it from exploitation, and receive their nourishment from it—a reciprocal relationship. The coalition is able to transgress terror and rediscover a symbiotic relationship with their environment, and even though the rebellion is unsuccessful, there is a promise of success in their failure (through their union with one another in and with the ruinate) and in the novels’ queer ecological temporalities.

A queer ecological temporality surfaces in Cliff’s work, for example, by the way she refuses to allow her story to be defined by its ending. The revolution is not defined by its failure, but instead challenges readers to think about how queer failure offers new alternative possibilities. Jack Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure* that “under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (2-3). I posit that *No Telephone to Heaven*’s indeterminate ending does these things. The language used on the last page (and in the last two chapters) suggests a queer non-linear, temporality. It ends

with onomatopoeia and shots fired, framed between the words “She remembered language. Then . . . it was gone” and the novel’s last two words, “Day broke” (208). Cliff’s use of language in her last two chapters explores history as queer loss and memory, evoking yet another queer temporality. In chapter 10, “The Great Beast,” Cliff explores hybridity and a queer rewriting of history: “This new sort of history . . . that you have taken on; is there proof involved in it as well,” Clare is asked (194). She replies: “It’s not as simple as that. I am in it. It involves me [. . .] the practice of rubbing lime and salt in the backs of whipped slaves [. . .] the ambush tactics of Cudjoe [. . .] the promised fight of Alexander Bedward in rapture back to Africa [. . .] cruelty [. . .] resistance [. . .] grace. I’m not outside this history—it’s a matter of recognition [. . .] memory [. . .] emotion” (194). Clare negotiates her history and finds herself implicated in the actions of the colonizer. She finds herself caught up in a colonial system that is difficult to release entirely, but, in feeling backwards, she comes understand history through place—with the land. She says, “I have walked the cane [. . .] poked through the ruins [. . .] rusted machines marked Glasgow [. . .] standing as they were left. I have swum underwater off the cays. . . . Yes—some history is only underwater” (193).

We might view Clare’s introspection (as well as the novel’s indeterminate ending) as transformative rather than failure. Decolonization is about struggle, and the work is never quite finished. Decolonial queer world building is not an ends, but a process always being remade. Cliff’s work is successful because the goal of her work is to recognize the complexity and contradiction that colonization and life after colonization always involves. For Clare, unbecoming who she is works to undo and unmake her inheritance of colonialism and plot new directions—to rediscover alternative, new natures.

Transgressing Terror, Rediscovering Natures

In chapter 11 of *Abeng*, Cliff comments on the Gothic when she notes the ways that Europeans created inhuman monsters to “minimize the terror” and “render the actual inhabitants [of the Caribbean] harmless” (78). *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Abeng* are filled with Gothic imagery that often represents sentiments of the Western colonizer. Cliff writes in *Abeng*, “The true inhabitants will always be less fearsome than these imaginary creatures and therefore easier to conquer. . . . Their primary feature is their difference from white and Christian Europeans. It is *that* heart of darkness which has imagined them less human. Which has limited their movement” (78-79). The allusion to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in this passage is obvious. The heartless darkness of colonization certainly haunts Cliff’s postcolonial Gothic novels. However, Cliff reverses Gothic terror and horror back onto the colonizers. The horror of slavery and the terror of colonization is overcome through ancestral spiritual ties experienced by revolutionaries who form a coalition led by a trans character, which is created and nurtured in nature, to decolonize Jamaica from a history of British colonialism and more recent American imperialism. The imagination and empathy of Cliff’s characters enable them and their coalition to be successful in breaking down barriers, even though their “coup d’état” is unsuccessful itself. “Imagination and empathy,” Nicole Seymour asserts, “allow humans to build political coalitions across divides such as race and sexuality, and to identify across species in ways that benefit the biosphere rather than the individual, the nation, or the corporation” (28). These qualities—imagination and empathy—inform the queer ecological framework that fuels Cliff’s decolonial fiction—even though decolonial queer ecologies maintain their groundedness in reality.

Michelle Cliff provides hope for transgressing the realities (the terrors) of postcolonialism through her protagonist Clare Savage, who rediscovers the value of

interdependency between nature/culture to include queer individuals and coalitions that invest in more sustainable, ecological practices, in return transgressing toxic discourses of the other queer characters described as diseased from *Abeng* like Clinton, Uncle Ralph, Mma Alli, and Nanny. Clare is able to come to terms with her own sexual exploration with Zoe through Harriet and has great empathy for Harriet in the sequel *No Telephone to Heaven* as she comes of age. Cliff seems to insinuate that the rediscovery of an ancestry and culture before the British colonization of Jamaica can help solve some of the problems which have separated people from their environments and created hierarchies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Queer ecological values are realized and practiced by Cliff's protagonist and revolutionary characters as they work to decolonize Jamaica from both a history of British colonization and new looming threats of American imperialism. Cliff shows that through decolonial queer ecologies individuals can divest themselves of colonial baggage to re-inherit a tradition that understands a world beyond binary gender roles and sexual orientations, a world in which interdependency is necessary and urgent. She shows that through decolonial queer ecologies, characters transgress traditional Gothic themes and tropes in decolonial literature that have served as methods of regulation to reproduce Eurocentric conceptions of a racialized Other as well as possess ownership of land. It is the rediscovery and redefining of nature that moves Cliff's transgressions.

Cliff's postcolonial Gothic fiction shows a growing awareness of the ways that colonialism has created hierarchies of power based on the biological determinism of human bodies and environments, and it works to undo them. Unlike Haggard's *She* novel, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* work at deconstructing colonialism, rather than negotiating it alone. The Gothic mode works quite differently in Cliff than it does Haggard. Haggard's speculative vision subtly invites his readers to imagine what a world that transgresses heteronormative boundaries

and undermines the devaluation of nature might look like, while for Cliff, Gothic tropes are used to describe postcolonial, grim realities still facing much of the Caribbean: neoliberalism, homophobia/xenophobia, and environmental turmoil—problems rooted in postcolonialism and modern-day imperialism (in the ruins of empire). Both Haggard's and Cliff's novels explore human and non-human ecologies to engage the imagination in alternative ways of being, becoming, and understanding that are reparative, but in very different ways. In Chapter Three, I leave the Gothic to explore a reading of speculative, science fiction that can be understood through decolonial queer ecologies in yet a new way. Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* offers a different perspective that reexamines and deconstructs the concepts of the human and the nonhuman themselves through posthuman ecologies. In Butler's speculative world, humans are colonized by extraterrestrials that are far more invested in queer ecologies, but are nevertheless both complex and imperfect amalgamations that lead us to challenge and situate our knowledge as we rewrite the monstrous.

CHAPTER THREE

REWRITING EMPIRE: POSTHUMAN ECOLOGIES IN OCTAVIA BUTLER'S

XENOGENESIS

But it won't be human. . . . It will be a thing. A monster. . . . You can't understand, but that *is* what matters.

—Octavia Butler's *Lilith*, *Dawn*

They [humans] could not exist without symbiotic relationships with other creatures. Yet such relationships frighten them. . . . I think we're as much symbionts as their mitochondria were originally. They could not have evolved into what they are without mitochondria. Their earth might still be inhabited only by bacteria and algae. Not very interesting.

—Octavia Butler's Nikanj, *Adulthood Rites*

He [a human] had been resisting for a century. He had been teaching children that people like me were devils, monsters, that it was better to endure a disfiguring, disabling genetic disorder than to go down from the mountains and find the Oankali.

—Octavia Butler's Jodahs, *Imago*

Monstrous Reversals

Octavia Butler's trilogy *Xenogenesis*, published as *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989),⁴² speculates on possibilities that engage readers in world-building to address inequalities deeply rooted in the enculturation of colonial legacies. Each novel in the trilogy reiterates the human story of colonialism, its causes and effects; Butler sees colonialism as inherent to the human species. Yet, at the same time, her complex reimagining of colonialism rewrites notions of empire to propose how we might go about decolonizing the mind. It often feels as if Butler is holding a mirror to history, but a mirror that is blurry and seemingly mistaken about its characters—colonizers who are now alien but become less and less monstrous as the reader realizes how monstrous our idea of the human can be. In having the human colonized by

⁴² I use the 1989 edition of *Xenogenesis* published by Guild American Books, which consists of the trilogy *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*. *Xenogenesis* has since been reissued under the title *Lilith's Brood*.

the nonhuman, Butler is asking whether we can have colonization without the power structures of the colonial beyond the ruins of empire—a question with which left-leaning science fiction has long been fascinated in its representation of the monstrous and with which my study of the Imperial Gothic has focused in its negotiation of super(natural) demons. What demons and monsters lurk in the ruins beyond empire? In Haggard's *She*, the demons and monsters are at times the African native, but at other times the European or non-native (mind of the) colonizer. In Cliff's novels, the demons and monsters are represented as both the present American imperialists and the repercussions of colonialism through which people are left to work. In Butler's reframing of the future, the answer to this question lies in an understanding of the concept of *human* itself. For Butler, the human lies at the heart of colonization. In this way, her work moves beyond what Haggard's and Cliff's work does for understanding how colonial hierarchies are constructed/dismantled.

The novels focus on three different protagonists: Lilith Iyapo, her child Akin, and Jodahs. In *Dawn*, Lilith, a 26-year-old black American woman, awakens from stasis years after being rescued from extinction caused by nuclear war on Earth; she finds herself captive and questioned by an extraterrestrial race called the Oankali. She discovers that she and several humans are on a ship orbiting Earth and learns the Oankali's motive—gene trading. The Oankali intend to recolonize the Earth, but they survive by interbreeding with other species to constantly evolve into other beings; humans are their next target for interspecies reproduction. Their reproduction is more appropriately the (re)construction of an intelligent organism that is mediated through a third gender that the Oankali call an ooloi. An ooloi uses neurotransmitters to stimulate sexual pleasure as it collects genetic material through a tentacle-like sensory arm before mixing the genes of two Oankali and humans (both female and male) with its own to produce what they call

a construct. The act is not entirely mutual, however, since the ooloi seduces humans with chemicals, and humans are kept drugged and guarded for days during a process that they call imprinting. Humans are also sterilized, so that the only way they will be able to reproduce will be through interspecies reconstruction, through ooloi intervention.

In *Adulthood Rites*, Akin, the first male Oankali-human hybrid (construct) born to a human mother (Lilith), comes to realize the need for both human independence/survival and interspecies reconstruction, which the Oankali believe will prevent humans from their inclination to destroy themselves once again. Akin sympathizes with humanity after he is kidnapped by a community of human registers, humans who refuse to gene trade with the Oankali, and he negotiates their being permitted to reproduce and form their own colony of humans on Mars, since the Earth will be left an empty shell once the last of humans there perish and the Oankali leave. In the final novel *Imago*, Jodahs, the first ooloi construct, prepares humans for Mars, but more importantly, Jodahs further negotiates Oankali-human relationships to leave both species in a relationship more equal than before. In sum, Butler uses queer ecologies to complicate race, gender, heteronormativity, and imperialism/colonialism.

How does Butler deconstruct the toxic discourse surrounding imperialism and colonialism to rewrite the human as monstrous? An examination of the ways that queer agency intersects with environmental sustainability in Butler's trilogy can help answer this question, and, I contend, can furthermore offer a means of decolonization that is needed today—in a time experiencing the resurgence of neoimperialism, racial tension, and xenophobia. Even though *Xenogenesis* does not let non-Western humans off the hook, by focusing on the hierarchies that motivated and maintained Western colonization as the problem in the first place, Octavia Butler's trilogy reverses and recreates the circumstances of colonialism and gets readers to think

more retrospectively about the colonial legacies of the West that continue to replay in our present. *Xenogenesis* does this in part by suggesting decolonial solutions in the way that it addresses ecological crises and their connection to cultural hegemony, and this leads readers to reimagine how ecological crises can be avoided through the ways Butler complicates and challenges the meaning of what is monstrous via the way the trilogy invites us to engage in an introspection of the human. *Xenogenesis* reflects on the past, challenges our present, and offers a grim look into an imagined future on Earth that is the result of a refusal to accept and value difference, change, and adaptation. Consequently, *Xenogenesis* leads us to reexamine structures of agency by queering our ways of life, investing in biodiversity, and understanding the need for sustainable environments, and in this way, through this introspection, Butler's trilogy offers a means of decolonization informed by queer ecologies.

Butler's alternative world-making constructs a kind of decolonial queer ecology that highlights the harm done by the human colonization of the Earth itself through an investigation and analysis of the Oankali's value system, a value system grounded in interspecies reconstruction of the human (and lots of other species) that challenges heteronormativity and racial hierarchies, invests in adaptation, and emphasizes symbiosis and interdependency. Yet, Butler's speculative world also requires violence, coercion, and the extinction of humanity on Earth. What Butler offers for decolonial world-making is complex and sometimes steeped in contradiction. Nonetheless, her complicated story can move us toward a decolonial queer ecology because it causes us to reflect on the damage colonialism causes while hinting at ways that we might dismantle what supports colonial structures—namely the neglect and disrespect of one another and our environments.

In this chapter, I again use the term *decolonial queer ecologies* to explore human interactions in and with postcolonial environments and ecosystems. However, what makes this chapter different is that I use decolonial queer ecologies to more closely examine the human itself in order to reveal the ways that Octavia Butler's work transforms our understanding of colonization and ecology by complicating and challenging essentialized notions of race, gender, sexuality, and nature that are heavily reliant on what it means to be human. For example, by examining the ways that *Xenogenesis* complicates and challenges what it means to be human in juxtaposition to the historically queered and racialized, monstrous body of the extraterrestrial, readers can begin to understand the human as monstrous. Decolonial queer ecologies reveals how H. Rider Haggard's subconscious literary exploration of race, gender, sexuality, and nature begins to highlight the human as monstrous, but falls short. As Haggard struggles for a way out of the imperial project he was building in his negotiation of empire, he fails to realize the underlying problem—that race, gender, sexuality, and nature are cultural manifestations which are heavily reliant on his British understanding of what it means to be human. Decolonial queer ecologies work differently in Michelle Cliff's work; the human surfaces as a postcolonial problem that her novels begin to deconstruct. In writing after empire, Cliff explores interconnections between nonhuman and human environments through postcolonial subjects that are formed by but revolt against British colonialism in the Caribbean. An application of decolonial queer ecologies in Octavia Butler's work complicates the human even further. Butler's work provides a key that reveals the contestation of the human as central to the decolonial queer ecologies I examine throughout this dissertation.

In my analysis of *Xenogenesis*, I deconstruct the notion not just of nature, but of the human and the nonhuman too, concepts that I argue have perpetuated and damaged our relations

and environment. In doing so, I hope to show how an understanding of human and nonhuman structures as biologically determined is the root cause and lingering effect of the hierarchies which form empire, an argument that is central to a fair bit of decolonial and Native scholarship. This chapter then aims to explore how Butler's work rewrites the way we can understand the monstrous, and through it, empire. *Xenogenesis* reveals the monstrous as a biologically determined structure of the human, rather than seeing change to and variation from the human as a threat that is often manifested in the monstrous. In sum, I argue that *Xenogenesis* accomplishes two overarching tasks that are of interest for an analysis using decolonial queer ecologies. One, the trilogy engages in decolonization by offering a view of the posthuman that reconfigures Donna Haraway's metaphor of the cyborg to better account for race by acknowledging, yet also transgressing, what Alexander Weheliye refers to as *racialized assemblages*, and this helps readers to speculate on reimagined ways that humankind might reverse the damaging hierarchical processes that have motivated and resulted from colonialism and its sexualized racial/gender matrix. Two, Butler's novels utilize queer ecologies to suggest ways that we might engage in a process of decolonization by highlighting alternative ways of being and living responsibly that best sustain the environment and its biodiversity. My analysis will reveal how Butler's work is reparative, yet quite complex and troubling. It will show how the human is bound up in a colonial discourse that even Butler may have trouble escaping. Humans may have destroyed their planet, but the Oankali are anything but innocent. Butler highlights what humans might do better, but also recreates the essentialisms and hierarchies she seeks to escape.

I develop my argument by showing how Butler's investment in a sex/gender system focused on reproduction and biology stands in the way of a queer reading of her work at the same time as it challenges an understanding of not only gender and reproduction, but also race.

Moreover, I argue that the alien species in *Xenogenesis* operates as a racial analogy by the way the Oankali maintain their own hierarchical (racial) structures. The Oankali see themselves as biologically superior to humans, and although the Oankali reconstruct an Oankali-human being that is mediated through a third-gender ooloi, the ooloi reproduce non-hybrid Oankali this way as well, while refusing to allow human beings to reproduce alone. They argue that their biology is just better adapted, which is exactly what colonial white supremacy has always argued. In addition, although gene trading will mean the extinction of both a human and an Oankali form to create a new, more highly-specialized species fitted for progress rather than extinction, the Oankali more greatly benefit and never totally assimilate. Because the Oankali have left the only essential part of themselves—their organelle, a part of their cell—throughout space in the hopes that it will find ways to adapt with other life, and because the reader comes to learn that the Oankali will split their species and some will move on without hybridizing with humans to look elsewhere for more genes to trade, the Oankali expect humans to sacrifice more than themselves. Thus, humanity certainly has more at stake than the Oankali, which complicates their role as colonizers/decolonizers. In addition, the Oankali have sterilized humans to prevent them from reproducing any other way because they believe humans are a threat to themselves and others due to “the Human Contradiction,” a human tendency to form hierarchies that they believe conflicts with intelligence. But what is to be made of the hierarchy the Oankali maintain themselves?

Butler’s complex reimagining showcases hierarchical relations and forces us to acknowledge the relationship between human hierarchies and colonial hierarchies. She complicates matters by presenting the reader with contradictions and problematics in the ways that the Oankali act much like humans have—as colonizers—while insisting that intelligent

beings cannot peacefully and sustainably maintain hierarchies. At times, the novel can seem to support racism, colonialism, slavery, and heteronormativity. For example, the Oankali criticize human beings for their enslavement of one another, but they are also enslaving humans by coercing them and controlling their reproduction. Many humans in the story feel enslaved by the Oankali because they have colonized the Earth and control human reproduction. The Oankali chastise humans for the hierarchies of species and races they have created on Earth, while at the same time insisting that their way of reconstructing new forms that totally eliminate the human race is not only advantageous for humans, but also what an intelligent species should want. They also insinuate that the colonial exploitation of one group of humans over another has led to the destruction of the Earth, but they intend to exploit the Earth themselves and leave it as an empty shell when they have finished using it.

Finally, although Butler introduces a third-gender character that mediates sexual relations between human and Oankali males and females, there is still a preoccupation with heterosexuality and breeding. The Oankali emphasize the value of their three-gender system of reproduction, and though Butler may break down heteronormative barriers by highlighting homophobic reactions by male humans in being dominated in a sexual act, the Oankali still maintain an emphasis on the importance of a male and female for reproduction. It would seem that genetic engineers would be able to reproduce a being from various combinations (perhaps four males and an ooloi or four females and an ooloi), or even transcend species restrictions to produce constructs from only humans and an ooloi, without the need of Oankali males and females. My point is that although Butler draws attention to the problematics of human hierarchies, in her speculative world the Oankali species still seem rather dependent on and reproduce the very hierarchical systems that they criticize humans for valuing.

Nonetheless, what also interests me is that as the story progresses, it becomes more apparent how the trilogy advocates for environmental sustainability, queered agency, communities structured on the premise of interconnectivity, and coalitions that are eventually formed on the basis of affinity rather than solely homogeneity. Very unlike the monstrous hierarchical values of humans that have resulted in isolation and destruction, the Oankali value and employ diversity, community, empathy, and interdependency, the same queer ecological tenets I explored through Michelle Cliff's characters in Chapter Two, conditions which sustain ecosystems. Nevertheless, the appearances of slavery, colonialism, and heteronormativity do not go away. Instead, Butler challenges her readers to figure out how they can coexist with emerging radical coalitions, which is an uncomfortable and complex journey. As Bernice Reagon points out, the hallmark of coalition politics is its difficulty, discomfort, and pain. For things to change, humanity must experience a metamorphoses, and it must evolve into something new, unpredictable, and unknown. Butler's use of intelligent hybrid beings that transform and evolve over time might act as a metaphor for such a metamorphoses, and her challenge emphasizes that becoming undone can help humanity to become something new.

Becoming "something new" will require a deconstruction of the human. In section 3.2, I explore how Pramod Nayar's concept *critical posthumanism* from his book *Posthumanism* (2014) and Serpil Oppermann's concept *posthuman ecocriticism* from her essay "From Posthumanism to Posthuman Ecocriticism" (2016) move us toward a decolonial queer ecology that is useful for understanding Butler's work. Building on Sylvia Wynter's concept *the human*, Lynn Margulis's concept of the *holobiont*, Rosi Braidotti's conception of *posthumanism*, Karen Barad's concept *intra-action*, and Donna Haraway's reimagining of the posthuman as cyborg and discussion of interspecies symbiotic relationships most recently developed in her latest book

Staying with the Trouble (2016), Nayar and Opperman offer a new, refreshing kind of posthumanism that critiques human/nonhuman ecologies and interrogates human exceptionalism to stress the importance of interconnectivity, symbiosis, and coalition. Nayar and Opperman's work collectively helps to situate Butler's complex reimagining of colonialism through queer ecologies.

In section 3.3, I reconstruct the cyborg to offer a reparative reading that is more cognizant of the ways that being human, not-quite-human, nonhuman, and more-than-human informs constructions of race by showing how race informs gender, sexuality, and nature in Butler's complex work. I reexamine Haraway's cyborg through black feminist theories of the human to show how *critical posthuman ecocriticism*, an idea that I draw from Nayar and Opperman's terms, redirects an understanding of Butler's work through decolonial queer ecologies. Utilizing Alexander Weheliye's concept *racializing assemblages* from his book *Habeas Viscus* (2014), which is built on the work of Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Giorgio Agamben, and Michel Foucault, I show how cyborgian analyses of Butler's *Xenogenesis* by Patricia Melzer, Helen Merrick, and Cathy Peppers also move toward but fall short of a decolonial queer ecology, largely by bypassing race via the construction of the human.

In section 3.4, I apply my reimagined framework of the cyborg to show how it challenges colonial hierarchies by emphasizing how all organic and inorganic bodies are affective, symbiotic, and vibrant matter reliant on adaptation and alternative ways of being, in contrast to colonial structures of the human. My analysis reveals how Butler's *Xenogenesis* moves toward a decolonial queer ecology in the way that it emphasizes symbiosis, affinity, and queer kinship, even in the midst of sometimes reinforcing colonial structures. I end in section 3.5 by showing how Butler's idea of embracing biodiversity is her most promising and useful message in

Xenogenesis for moving toward a decolonial queer ecology. Embracing biodiversity is the foundation of queer ecologies, and the several ways we understand this in Butler's work can act as decolonial tools.

Decolonizing ecologies requires understanding how assemblages of race, gender, and sexuality are formed by and inform one another, and this practice requires deconstructing the human—not always an easy task. This task requires dismantling colonial matrices of power by embracing change to form new assemblages patterned on the symbiosis found in ecosystems; this is the aspect of Butler's *Xenogenesis* that I find most useful and which I argue offers a form of reparative reading that invests in our future. Butler's fiction gets us to think differently about the human and the role we play in our environment, how we might change that role, and what might happen when we form coalitions with the nonhuman. However, Butler shows us that what we may find is not always perfect. A reparative reading of *Xenogenesis* acknowledges how her speculative world lacks the kind of investment in queer world-building that moving toward a decolonial queer ecology entails.

Posthuman and Nonhuman Ecologies

Butler's *Xenogenesis* is a story of the posthuman, a posthuman conceptualization that strives to deconstruct our narrative of the human—and as a result the hierarchical structures we have created within and of the human and the nonhuman—to more fully realize that relations in the world are, and must be, acknowledged as heterogeneous, symbiotic, and interconnected. In other words, Butler's trilogy forces us to see how pressing problems and crises in the world stem from a static, biologically-determined notion of what it means to be human. I use the term *posthumanism* here not in the sense of moving beyond and/or improving the human as a distinct

entity, what is referred to as *transhumanism*,⁴³ but within a discourse of ecology and environmental sustainability. The view of posthumanism I use and develop in this section does not leave the human intact, but deconstructs and dismantles the human as everything but fixed and/or biologically determined. I use posthumanism in a context which understands the human through ecology, as part of our environment, constantly transforming and becoming something new. We cannot move beyond the human because there is no such thing as a stable human identity, just as there is not a stable gender, race, sexuality, or nature—all is interdependent. While this viewpoint can sometimes erase race and gender and cover over power relations, the destabilization of the human itself helps to emphasize why minority identities need be emphasized in the first place—because of the hierarchies established by what is understood as human. The posthuman is useful to my analysis because of the way it can critique the boundaries of the human and the nonhuman and interrogate human exceptionalism to stress the interconnectivity of life. This understanding of posthumanism can be used to better understand how Butler's *Xenogenesis* centralizes race, gender, and power relations to deconstruct their stability and destabilize the human itself, in the process highlighting an alternative posthumanism much like Rosi Braidotti's view of posthumanism.

Braidotti, in her 2013 book *The Posthuman*, defines *posthumanism* as that moment in which humanism and antihumanism,⁴⁴ which she defines as that which challenges the

⁴³ See Bostrom for the development of the word *transhumanism* and its connection to the term *posthumansism*. As Nick Bostrom points out, transhumanism was first used by Aldous Huxley's brother, Julian Huxley, who was a distinguished biologist, to refer to the idea of the human species transcending itself through the realization of new possibilities of being, yet still remaining identifiable as human. In more recent years, the idea of the human merging with the nonhuman (mainly with technology) has resulted in the term *transhumanism* being merged and often confused with the term *posthumanism*, mostly generically meaning after the human as we have known it. However, posthumanism has evolved to different meanings.

⁴⁴ Braidotti defines anti-humanism as that opposed to Humanism, the notion that Europe is the "site of origin of critical reason and self-reflexivity, both qualities resting on the Humanistic norm" (15). Anti-humanisms are driven by social movements and youth cultures, she argues, such as those developed in the 1960s and 1970s: "feminism, de-colonization and anti-racism, anti-nuclear and pacifist movements" (16).

enlightenment view of human progression, are no longer in opposition, and she “traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards [exploring] new alternatives, . . . without sinking into the rhetoric of the crisis of Man. It [posthumanism] works instead towards elaborating alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject” (37). Braidotti’s push away from “the crises of Man,” which she defines as starting with “the progress of mankind through a self-regulatory and teleological ordained use of reason and secular scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectability of ‘Man’ . . . ,” (37) challenges Western philosophical humanisms, much like the decolonial frameworks explored by Sylvia Wynter and Walter Dignolo, which I have explored in the introduction. Man as center of the universe and in control of human destiny is a myth that Butler forces us to confront.

Butler conceptualizes the human subject not in opposition to the human altogether, but by reconfiguring its meaning to dismantle hierarchies created by humanism. By focusing on a human inclination for hierarchical behavior, Butler posits that this is the origin of our overarching conflict with each other and our environment, and she predicts it will lead to our demise. In doing so, she draws attention to several inequalities that are the result of biocentric and human-centered hierarchical thinking, among them patriarchy, racism, homophobia, colonialism, and the destruction of ecosystems—problems quite interrelated. The Oankali’s emphasis on “the Human Contradiction,” intelligence at odds with hierarchical thinking, as a biological/genetic flaw, works to challenge what it means to be human in the first place (676). Butler’s Oankali argue that human species biology contains a seed for hierarchical thinking that has manifested into hierarchies of division, but Butler’s fiction also shows how the human species is not biologically determined but constantly adapting, changing, and evolving from its flaws and symbiotic relationships. For instance, Nikanj, Lilith’s ooloi, reminds her of the

symbiosis found within the human body with mitochondria (organelles within cells that break down nutrients and create energy-rich molecules for the cell, a biochemical process known as cellular respiration): “They [humans] could not exist without symbiotic relationships with other creatures. . . . They could not have evolved into what they are without mitochondria” (418). The Oankali even see human cancer as a genetic mutation that has the potential for improving/changing the human. Lilith tells Tino that it is cancer that gives both humans and the Oankali the ability to adapt in useful ways once its knowledge is fully realized: “Regeneration was limited to wound healing. Now they [the Oankali] can grow you a leg if you lose one. They can even regenerate brain and nervous tissue. . . . We had the ability, and they knew how to use it. . . . It was cancer that made Humanity such a valuable trade partner” (287). Butler shows how the human is formed by an exchange with complex interdependent networks and communities, much like ecosystems. Butler’s attention to the symbiotic interconnections within humans draws attention to the symbiotic relationships that humans disrupt when they categorize, divide, and essentialize identities and concepts, the practice of which blinds humans from acknowledging that life—further all matter—is a complex network with a proclivity for adaptation and interactions that foster coalitions.

Furthermore, *Xenogenesis* highlights how what we understand as human has evolved through various human narratives. By human narratives, I mean Sylvia Wynter’s view of *the human* as that formed from *mythos* and a *bios* heavily influenced by the development of human thought as humans transitioned from Man1 to Man2, from a world in which humanity is defined by religion to one in which humanity became defined by what we can control, a view responsible for the development of new hierarchies and taxonomies driven by the scientific revolution. Butler’s fiction does this in part by first putting human beings in the position of a colonized-

species (an analogy for race) to get readers to reflect upon the damage caused by colonialism via hierarchical structures of the human. Further, Butler's suggestion in *Xenogenesis* for more environmentally sustainable ways of thinking and living in and with our environment conceptualizes more useful ways of being human (vegetarianism, living shelters, green energy, an openness to change and variation), which although the humans refuse, offers insight into human resistance to environmental sustainability and adaptation as problems. Wynter's framework works well if we think of the Oankali as Butler's imaginative assertion of the necessity of finding new ways to be human. Butler imagines an alternative to anthropocentrism by showing her readers how humans can change through the way that organisms interconnect with their environment in her novels, in turn calling attention to the importance of everything in our environment. Reconceptualizing the human as a very small part of a whole changes the way we think about environmental sustainability. Pramod Nayar calls this process of reconceptualizing more useful and sustainable ways of thinking, living, and being with our environment and other species *critical posthumanism* (30). It is through this kind of posthumanism that Butler's work can be better understood as a movement toward a decolonial queer ecology.

In his 2014 book *Posthumanism*, Nayar utilizes the work of Foucauldian poststructuralism, materialist feminism, technoscience studies, and critical race/postcolonial studies to conceptualize posthumanism within a new framework that resembles ecocriticism to examine several cultural texts. Critical posthumanism, he writes, is a strand of posthumanism that is "far more critical of . . . traditional humanism, and treats (i) the human as co-evolving, sharing ecosystems, life processes, genetic material, with animals and other life forms; and (ii) technology not as a mere prosthesis to human identity but as integral to it" (8). Nayar's

framework thus envisions the human as “an assemblage” that is “enmeshed with the environment and technology” (4) and “sees embodiment as essential to the construction of the environment” (9). Mergers, symbiosis, and adaptation with and between different lifeforms and non-organic matter are not only necessary, but also in flux, continually reinventing the ways that environments and entities become something new. Critical posthumanism, by focusing on interspecies identity, advocates for an ecocentric value system not unlike that found in Butler’s *Xenogenesis*. Nayar’s critical posthumanism is critical of the human and sees the human as interdependent with organic and nonorganic matter in the environment; he sees technology informed by biology, not unlike the Oankali’s spaceship, an idea that terrifies the humans in *Xenogenesis*. When Celene realizes that the spaceship they are on is living and that toilets digest garbage and waste, she reacts with horror: “Digest! . . . They . . . they’re alive themselves?” (137). Lilith responds, “Yes. The ship is alive, and so is almost everything in it. The Oankali use living matter the way we used machinery” (137). Nayar would see Butler’s work as contributing to a critical posthumanism, and I find his work useful for a decolonial queer ecocritique of *Xenogenesis*. Critical posthumanism enables us to deconstruct human ecologies in order to see them as decolonial queer ecologies—as alternative, new forms of the human located outside of yet very much caught up in *the logic of coloniality*, Walter D. Mignolo’s term for reason influenced by universal European notions of the human and nonhuman, as laid out in the introduction.

Throughout Butler’s trilogy, human and Oankali behaviors are juxtaposed to emphasize the importance of the Oankali’s ecocentric value system, and interspecies reconstruction is offered as an alternative to essence and hierarchy. Nevertheless, this juxtaposition is not without its problems. The Oankali reproduce human colonialism in all its ugliness. They enslave the humans they “rescue,” force sterilization, insist on their advanced intelligence, and exploit the

Earth after its nuclear destruction for its resources (with plans to leave the Earth as an empty shell after the human race is extinct). The Oankali plan for the colonization of Earth poses a threat to many humans that see the control of their bodies and reproductive capabilities as a form of slavery, and this is not without reason. Despite this, the Oankali plan also offers a unique queer-ecological futurity that is invested in collaboration and coalition, not unlike Nayar's vision of critical posthumanism, only with more emphasis on gender and sexuality. Butler's emphasis on environmental sustainability moves us toward a decolonial queer ecology, but her reproduction of colonialism is also troubling. Butler gets humans to confront their ugly past by showing the horrors of colonialism via the Oankali as colonizers, while offering a posthuman ecology that queers the boundaries of the human/nonhuman to get her readers to question how it is we move toward something less destructive and more environmentally sustainable. Her use of a self-sustaining spacecraft that is a living organism that provides for the Oankali and human populations and is provided for in return, emphasis on Oankali vegetarianism and their respect for all organic life, and focus on valuing the genetic composition of each organism offer new ways for learning how interdependence works and how this realization can strengthen environmental sustainability. *Xenogenesis* thus might empower us to reconceptualize the human in new, more complex, ecological, sustainable ways: through community, interdependency, and mutuality. The trilogy might furthermore get us to think about queerness in the different ways that it is enmeshed with environment.

Understanding how Butler's conception of a posthuman society might transgress limitations imposed by Humanism on human and nonhuman structures helps to situate *Xenogenesis* within a framework for a decolonial queer ecocritical analysis. For one, queer ecologies are largely built upon the work of human and nonhuman ecologies. Sylvia Wynter

posits that our ability to create narratives has driven our capacity to understand our ontology via science; humans are storytellers driven by what she calls *homo narrans*: “Humans are, then, a biomutationally evolved, hybrid species—*storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological*” (qtd. in Wynter and McKittrick 11). This understanding has had a significant influence on our understanding of scientific objectivity, which should not be a surprise because the critique of objectivity, and of the false equivalencies to which an excessive idealization of objectivity can lead, underlies feminist and decolonial critiques of Western thought. Nevertheless, Wynter’s idea that humans are “*storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological*” (11) offers a way to understand Butler’s storytelling about humans as biologically hierarchical. For Wynter, the human is a combination of “*mythoi*” (beliefs and assumptions) and “*bios*” (material matter). In other words, she writes, “as Fanon says, phylogeny [evolutionary diversification of species, group, or organism], ontogeny [the processes through which each of us embodies the history of our making], and sociogeny [origin/development of entity as a result of social factors], together, *define what it is to be human*” (16, emphasis in original). Butler invents the human as its own worst enemy in order to tell a different story. The Oankali’s emphasis on “the Human Contradiction” as being a biological flaw underlies a root problem of human hierarchies and inequalities—an overemphasis on being human as genetically and biologically driven. Butler’s storytelling brings us closer to seeing being human as a process informed by phylogeny, ontogeny, and sociogeny.

Wynter argues that humans have come to understand ourselves as genetically driven through a narrative of evolution that is biocentric—a narrative constructed by humans as a scientific truth—especially since the introduction of Darwinian human theories of origin, theories that are largely misconstrued as essentialist rather than as theories of social adaptation.

Leela Gandhi's close reading of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* also reveals that "while Darwin's metaphor of a 'web of affinities' finds tacit political expression [in human-animal sociality as key to a more egalitarian world] . . . it is his attending theory of ecological cooperation that achieves . . . direct revolutionary articulation" (111-12). Contrary to its being taken up to support a "survival of the fittest" hierarchical, taxonomical and imperial discourse, Darwin's work is supportive of complex interdependence, cooperative coadaptation, and relational cohabitation, Gandhi argues (112). Both Gandhi and Wynter's assertions can help us understand the ways in which Butler might challenge Darwinism as biological determinism or essentialism. Butler's emphasis on a symbiotic ecosystem, and the ways in which she shows how organisms adapt in ways that transcend a binary gender system and heteronormative human-sex practices, deemphasize intelligent species hierarchies as well as heteronormativity as a biological determinism. Butler's world emphasizes that life is not static nor stable, but entangled in differentiation and the emergence of changing, new forms of being that are enmeshed in interconnected processes and in becoming undone. Her fiction in many ways echoes Elizabeth Grosz's interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution being grounded not in natural selection, but sexual selection grounded in difference and variation, as discussed in the introduction.

The Oankali may echo Wynter's assertions in their belief that humans are genetically driven, as in the innate weakness of their "Human Contradiction," but Butler's fiction also gets us to think critically about biological determinism by destabilizing fixed-biological human, gender, and racial identities. She gets us to think about the value of differentiation and variation; *Xenogenesis* gets us to think about evolutionary biology as a process of adaptation entangled in the stories of human historical consciousness—that evolution is sociobiopolitical—and, furthermore, her work affirms that refusing to acknowledge the interdependency of life with our

environment is not only foolish, but also damaging and dangerous. We need to think outside of a fixed notion of the human, a fixed notion of a binary gender system, and a fixed-sex practices. Her trilogy explores virtual sex with neurotransmitters instead of heterosexual sex, explores a family of five parents with three genders, and asks us to consider why the human race cannot and should not change. Her work gets us to imagine what would happen if the human race did change. Why is a biological, fixed human body so important? Butler's fiction challenges us to create new narratives, narratives that help us to accept and realize that humans (and further distinct types of humans) are not the privileged center of the universe. The kind of posthuman world-making she constructs is not unlike that suggested by Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble*.

In *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway creates a posthuman world where interspecies symbiotic relationships cultivate and embrace biological adaption and variation, which can help us understand how Butler's work might challenge human biological determinism even in its midst of reproducing colonial exploitation. Haraway's creative scholarly book advocates for a kind of environmental justice that is engaged in what she calls "decolonial approaches to multispecies worlding" (225). She interprets Lynn Margulis's concept of the *holobiont*, "assemblages of different species that form ecological units," as "symbiotic assemblages . . . more like knots of diverse intra-active relatings in dynamic complex systems" (60) engaged in symbiosis and symbiogenesis (the making of a new organism through the merging of two or more). Haraway's interpretation of this concept plays into her largely creative non-fiction text to develop an intelligent interspecies lifeform comprised of plants, animals, and humans that is attuned to multi-species flourishing and environmental stability, which is useful for

understanding how Butler's *Xenogenesis* might offer a means of decolonization by focusing on organisms as symbiotic assemblages.

Given that Haraway has written about *Xenogenesis* in "The Cyborg Manifesto" and *Primate Visions*, and directly refers to Butler's *Parable* novels in *Staying with the Trouble*, *Xenogenesis* might be one of the texts that she draws on to develop her ideas, and if she is, it is useful to think about what Haraway is taking from it and what she is leaving behind, as well as how posthuman ecologies can help readers understand Butler's work as moving toward a decolonial queer ecology. Like Butler, Haraway develops human characters that are genetically engineered with animals and plants over time to produce variation that makes them better creatures; however, Haraway's intention in doing so is to dismantle hierarchies and deconstruct the human being as biologically determined. Furthermore, Haraway's notion that symbiotic relationships form "intra-active" relationships, which she borrows from Karen Barad's 2007 book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, emphasizes that material bodies and matter are not interactive, but "intra-active," the mutual constitution of entangled agencies (56), an idea that she uses to account for the "agential" contributions of all social and natural material forces (66). Haraway, much like Butler, gets us to think about the value of interspecies worlding, but both Butler and Haraway emphasize how bodies intra-act, become enmeshed, entangled, undone, and something new. Barad's idea of intra-action can also help readers understand how Butler's work complicates the human as central, fixed, and determined.

Much like Butler's *Xenogenesis* does, Karen Barad argues that we must look at the practices that produce distinctions between the human and the nonhuman, but also at the practices through which their differential constitutions are produced; phenomena are neither individual entities nor mental impressions but "entangled material practices of knowing and

becoming,” (56) (entangled agencies produced from theorizing and experimenting brought about not by intervening but intra-acting from within and as part of the discovery produced). In short, knowing comes from direct material engagement with the world. There are not representations and separate entities waiting to be represented, but this type of thinking appears to threaten human identity, which is shown in the way that the humans in *Xenogenesis* perceive the loss of their essence as extinction in reproducing to form hybrid organisms with the Oankali. Also, reading Butler’s *Xenogenesis* from this perspective—that is through the ways in which organisms are constructed through intra-action—helps to reveal how her imagined world experiments with key principles underlining a queer ecocritical analysis, namely that nature is a product of environment just as much as environment is informed by the biology it influences. Collectively, these ideas help destabilize European conceptions of what is human and what is not, as well as what lies in between, structures that have been essential for colonialism and slavery. One way we might work through the contradictions present in *Xenogenesis* is to interrogate the ways that Butler both severs and reinforces the link between the human and the queer, the human and nature, and the human and the colonial other. Serpil Oppermann’s idea of posthuman ecocriticism is useful in this task.

Serpil Oppermann, in her 2016 essay “From Posthuman to Posthuman Ecocriticism,” more directly names an emerging field of study that investigates the way that ecocriticism has become posthuman, and this notion helps to better situate how Octavia Butler’s work (as a form of queer ecocriticism) offers possibilities of worlding. “Simply put,” she writes, “ecocriticism becomes post-human, post-natural, and post-green in critiquing the taxonomy of the human and nonhuman” (23). Oppermann merges the fields of new materialism, posthumanism, and ecocriticism to explore a new way of viewing the human that is not an anti-humanism but “an

evolutionary co-emergence within a shared field of existence marked by the interdependency of life” (26). Stacy Alaimo’s term *post-humanist new materialisms* from her 2011 essay “New Materialisms, Old Humanisms” (282) allows Oppermann to conceive how material ecocriticism is posthuman ecocriticism: “Since material ecocriticism has progressively co-opted many of the critical posthuman visions, forging a post-naturalist environmental imagination in the making, it has already become part of the posthuman turn and can thus be called posthuman ecocriticism” (29). Though Butler was writing in the 1980s, her work has something to offer in this moment where posthumanism is becoming increasingly ecocritical and ecocriticism is becoming a form of posthumanism. Furthermore, understanding *Xenogenesis* through a framework of posthuman ecocriticism offers a way of reading Butler’s work reparatively—in deconstructing the human to reconstruct better ways of being in the world.

Oppermann builds on Karen Barad’s argument that human beings are integral parts of “agentially intra-acting components” (33) of nature, and Rosi Braidotti’s assertion that a “contemporary critical posthumanism” which incorporates “ecology and environmentalism” (47) “produces a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged community, based on environmental inter-connections,” (48) to argue that posthuman ecocriticism forces humans “to step into somewhat strange environments of beings and forces that are *worlding* with us,” worlding “in the sense of becoming and being-in-the world” (28). “Conserving the new materialist understanding of the nonhuman (biotic and abiotic) as already part of the human in the world’s becoming,” the goal of posthuman ecocriticism, she writes, is to “maintain a sustainable ecological critique of the material interaction of bodies and natures in a highly technologized world and their conceptualizations in literary and cultural texts,” and she argues that “storied matter and narrative agency,” which are the agential, “principal concepts of material

ecocriticism,” are “particularly suitable for exploring . . . emerging posthuman agencies . . . [and] . . . “technological posthuman forms” (30).

Oppermann’s concept of posthuman ecocriticism and Wynter’s understanding of the human, along with Haraway’s imagining of the posthuman and Nayar’s concept of critical posthumanism, can help situate Butler’s complex reimagining of colonialism in *Xenogenesis* as emerging queer ecologies. Furthermore, these ideas collectively help readers to understand why speculative fiction is so important. In building alternative and imaginative worlds, speculative fiction challenges us to think differently, better understand our surroundings, our history, and our flaws. A decolonial reading of *Xenogenesis* that utilizes queer ecologies might help us envision how posthuman ecologies are becoming nonhuman ecologies, and this destabilization of human essentialism (or biological determinism) is useful for the undoing of colonial structures that have created the inequalities and injustices we still face today. Queer ecologies can help to dismantle the colonial structure of the human which has sustained racism, patriarchy, homophobia, and anthropocentrism. Queer ecologies ask us to abandon biophobia and embrace biophilia, what Edward O. Wilson defines as “the urge to affiliate with other forms of life” in order to understand interconnections that include sexual, gender, and racial diversity (1). Understanding how lifeforms might affiliate with one another to deconstruct normalized notions of gender, sexuality, and nature is central to Butler’s work, as is a call for more sustainable environmental practices and the deconstruction of racial (via species) hierarchies. A decolonial reading of *Xenogenesis* through queer ecologies can also help us work through the contradictions present in Butler’s work to understand how worlding is hard, complex stuff, but nevertheless offers a way to repair the damage set in place by colonialism and how its notion of the human has enabled conquest, division, oppression, and the irresponsible consumption of resources. An analysis of

Butler's work through decolonial queer ecologies can help repair the colonial damage caused by segregating humans from their "natural" environments, from one another, and into normalized genders and sexualities.

In sections four and five of this chapter, I will argue how queer ecologies reveal the ways that Butler's text suggests a decolonial multispecies (critical posthuman) worlding that dismantles hierarchies of the human and the nonhuman and invests in sustainable biodiversity; however, I first critique the ways in which race, and in particular, black feminisms, are applied beyond interpretations of the posthuman metaphor of Donna Haraway's cyborg in an analysis of Butler's work to lay the foundation for my critique. Doing so will allow me to show how Butler addresses the foundation that European colonialism so depended on in the Americas—human essence. In the next section, I offer a reconfiguration of the cyborg more attuned to the principles of a queer ecological reading to reveal how queer ecologies might inform a process of decolonization.

Reconstructing the Cyborg

The cyborg has been a popular metaphor for moving beyond the human in transhumanism studies and has usually been about the merging of the human with technology; however, it is Donna Haraway who popularized the metaphor of the cyborg in "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1984/1991) by altering and extending its meaning. Haraway's cyborg metaphor has been used in discussions of posthumanism, as noted in the previous section, but it is especially useful for understanding and complicating identity formation in Butler's *Xenogenesis* because of the way it can help readers understand race, which is interesting given that the cyborg has been critiqued for not sufficiently engaging with race. My aim in this section is to reconstruct the cyborg to better account for race, which I argue can in turn help us to deconstruct the human to

better invest the cyborg in symbiosis, affinity, and queer kinship to move an understanding of Butler's work toward a decolonial queer ecology.

Haraway uses the metaphor of the cyborg to reject rigid boundaries of being and expose situated knowledges.⁴⁵ She critiques traditional humanisms and feminisms bound up in the politics of identity, arguing that coalitions formed through affinity are more useful than those constructed from biological markers and/or the socially constructed categories of gender, race, sex, and sexualities (155). Situated knowledge runs counter to the very idea of bias as it is typically used in dominant culture. Haraway's argument is that there is no unbiased place from which to stand, no "god's eye view," even as the power to pretend a god's eye view has created our technoscientific world (155). Of utmost importance to her argument, the cyborg is made, not unlike the way in which hybrid beings are reconstructed in Butler's trilogy. Haraway further notes how humans have evolved to separate the human from animal, animal-human from machine, and the physical from the non-physical, largely through oppressive hierarchies set in place by patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, naturalism, and I argue, heteronormativity—hierarchies which *Xenogenesis* sometimes challenges—to create taxonomies, what she calls "antagonistic dualisms," which form the foundation of Western discourse (152-155). The cyborg offers a way to rethink rigid and oppressive boundaries of the past and consider how coalitions can promote a critical posthumanism, coalitions not of constrictive identities, but of affinities and common causes.

Haraway's cyborg metaphor celebrates kinships structured around affinities cognizant of mutual needs, structures, and interests, where symbiosis is necessary and valued, to dismantle

⁴⁵ In her 1991 book, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, along with "The Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway republishes her article "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question and Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in which she discusses how science has held as biased view of knowledge production, a situated knowledge.

hierarchies empowered by European colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, damaging social constructions of nature, and a future preoccupied with heteronormativity, children, and reproduction. Her ideas open up to the possibility of other worldings, not unlike the world Butler presents to readers in *Xenogenesis*, which is no accident considering that both Haraway and Butler are writing out of the same cultural moment—the Reagan era—a time of Cold War militarism and the rise of a conservative movement in the United States, where hierarchies and destructive behavior were readily apparent. Cyborg imagery can help us better understand the contradictions in Butler’s work and open up to the possibility of other worldings. Although *Xenogenesis* promotes slavery, colonialism, and heteronormativity when we read it through a logic of identity and dualism, the trilogy opens up to other worldings when we approach it through cyborgs and coalitions. Cyborgs are not dependent on oppressive hierarchies, but do yearn for interaction. Cyborgs are needy for connection, but connections which are interdependent, not parasitic. Coalitions of affinity, not constrictive notions of distinct and unalterable material identities, form the basis of Haraway’s cyborg (170). The cyborg helps us to see how each living and non-living thing is informed by and informs that with which it “intra-acts,” forming complex amalgamations. Thus, the cyborg is useful for a decolonial queer ecocritical analysis of *Xenogenesis*, not only because of its queer implications and critical posthumanist applications (in technohuman-nonhuman co-evolution, shared ecosystem, genetic material, life processes), but also because of the ways that the metaphor can merge in analysis to offer decolonial processes that critique race.

It is no surprise, then, that the cyborg metaphor is used by Patricia Melzer, Helen Merrick, and Cathy Peppers in their analysis of Butler’s *Xenogenesis* to interrogate boundaries; yet, their use of the cyborg metaphor stops short of a full understanding of how posthumanism

can help us understand race and its relation to a gender/sexuality matrix. Critical posthuman ecocriticism can better interrogate amalgamations of race/gender/sexuality/nature and their relation to the human identity constructed by European colonialism. Melzer, Merrick, and Peppers notably comment on the ways in which Butler's work uses the cyborg to interrogate the nature/culture binary and examine the human and the non-human, most obviously in how the alien acts as a metaphorical stand-in for non-humans, but also in how Oankali technology transgresses boundaries between organic life and machines through the ways that their spaceships are themselves organisms and in how they fuse plant and animal genetic material with their own. However, they do not sufficiently critique the way that the European colonial-construction of the human has determined relations between race and gender/sexuality to deconstruct these categories as fixed entities which support colonialism.

Melzer's work gets close to the mark. Her work shows how the cyborg disrupts the stability of the human as a European colonial structure in the way that the cyborg can reveal sociopolitics to suggest alternative ways of being. Melzer discusses how the Oankali interrogate boundaries when she writes,

The confusion of boundaries that Haraway advocates is manifested in Butler's symbols of integration and appreciation for difference, which reveal the 'politics of differentiation' at the same time as they suggest alternative forms of approaching difference. Like the cyborg, her figures are situated within the system, but outside its power structures. Only from that position can power be distributed. (102)

Melzer particularly focuses on how Butler's work queers human relations by reconfiguring the production of life so that it is no longer "reproduction but [a] reconstruction" that destabilizes

boundaries between the physical and nonphysical, notably by observing how the Oankali and humans have sex in a virtual-reality-like state of imagined pleasure reinforced by the manipulation of neurotransmitters through the sensory tentacle of the ooloi as it collects genetic material for offspring, which will be the result of four more parents (95).

Merrick, in “Alien(ating) Naturecultures,” discusses the cyborg through what she calls the Oankali’s “living embodied biotechnologies,” namely their relationship with their spaceship and their genetic engineering: “The Oankali are a radical example precisely of Haraway’s cyborg metaphor in the sense that they are part of a cybernetic system, and confuse the boundaries between human and machine, self and other, technoscience and nature” (1). Cathy Peppers addresses the way in which *Xenogenesis* is a cyborg origin story, specifically addressing the issue of race, when she writes, “*Xenogenesis* is a ‘cyborg’ origin story in two senses: discursively, it’s not a monologic ‘salvation history,’ but a dialogic hybrid, creating an Other human identity by ‘seizing the tools to mark the world that has marked’ everyone except white men ‘as other’; and it’s also a story of our origins as cyborgs” (52). Peppers argues that Butler’s narrative “relentlessly keeps the discourses of slavery and sociobiology in continuous dialogue,” even though the Oankali “insist that their gene trading is not about ‘slavery’” (52). This is a particular point that I take up in this section.

Though Melzer, Merrick, and Peppers, among others, discuss slavery and race via the cyborg in Butler’s *Xenogenesis*, their analysis tends to bypass that the human’s Western metaphysical understanding of itself and the world (with race at its center) is largely dependent on the way that the human is understood post Renaissance via slavery, conquest, and colonialism, as Sylvia Wynter has noted in her essay “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom.” Further, most critiques of Butler’s *Xenogenesis* focus on how the

trilogy mirrors/reverses the slave story and indirectly uses the cyborg to deconstruct racial boundaries. Peppers compares the Oankali spaceship to ships of the Middle Passage that transported slaves to the Americas, but she does not focus on how racial identity via cyborg identity is a result of human identity. This is something that Haraway understands—humans are already cyborged bodies because they are amalgamations of their environments and discourses.

Pramod Nayar agrees, but also raises the issue of disability and the cyborg when he writes about the hybridity of all bodies in being the effect of convergence and co-evolution with their environment:

All bodies, irrespective of abilities, are cyborged bodies because their abilities and subjectivities are the effect of a convergence and co-evolution with devices and institutionally facilitated networks: all bodies are hybrid; it is not a subject (human individual) + object (device) model that works any more within disability studies: it shows how the very subjectivity of the subject is always already the effect of interactions with ‘objects,’ and thus the organic/inorganic, human/non-human boundaries break down. (107-08)

Disabled bodies, like racial bodies, though arguments about racialized and disabled cyborgs differ, are also often placed outside the human, as Alison Kafer discusses in the cyborg chapter of her 2013 book *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Kafer has cautioned use of the cyborg in the way that many posthumanists have used it because it can perpetuate ableist politics by highlighting binaries and reinforcing boundaries. Instead, she calls for a *crippled cyborg politics*, meaning “recognizing that our bodies are not separate from our political practices,” (120) and she argues that “the cyborg . . . can be used to map many futures, not all of them feminist, crip, or queer” (128). The cyborg can be used to understand human bodies themselves, as well as racial bodies,

gendered bodies, queered bodies, but it is the purpose of the cyborg's application that requires careful consideration.

Perhaps this is something that Haraway alludes to herself in "The Cyborg Manifesto" when she writes, "'Women of colour' might be understood as a cyborg identity, a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities and in complex political-historical layerings . . ." (174). Though this point is especially important in an analysis of coalition politics, which will be addressed in section four of this chapter, we need to first consider how and why the nonhuman as "outsider identities" have influenced modern understandings of people of color through various "political-historical layerings" that have constructed the human in the first place. How can the cyborg help us to better understand politics surrounding the concept of the human and then help us to complicate it and dismantle it in ways that promote ecology? Butler's fiction helps us understand how. Her trilogy allows us to understand how race is managed through the control of sexuality and how it has historically distanced African Americans, for instance, from normative notions of the human—namely heteronormativity.

Hortense Spillers has provided insight into how African-American slaves were dehumanized when they were denied the nuclear, heteronormative family in her article "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe." She argues that because marriage between slaves was not recognized, and consequently their children were perceived as illegitimate and merely bred for human use, sold and often separated from their families (i.e. treated like the nonhuman), slaves were thus denied what their masters had that defined the white family as human, and this notion of the separation of the human from the not-quite-human, justified the sexual violence of black women and ungendering of black males in the mind of the white patriarch. The dehumanization was so

ingrained that white masters often sold their own children conceived through the rape of their female slaves without hesitation. Spillers writes:

[This] socio-political order of the New World, with its human sequence written in blood, *represents* for its African and indigenous peoples a scene of *actual* mutilation, dismemberment, and exile. First of all, their New-World, diasporic plight marked a *theft of the body*—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least *gender* difference *in the outcome*, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. (67, italics in original)

Historicizing this sexualized racial/gender matrix can help us to see how hierarchical structures centered on notions of the human are at the root of race and racism. However, moving beyond the human in the way that transhumanism and some posthumanism attempts to do, bypasses the role that race has played in the construction of the human.

What is needed is the kind of posthumanism that alters the “underlying structure of Man’s being/knowing/feeling ‘human’” that Zakiyyah Iman Jackson calls for in her 2015 essay “Outer Worlds”:

‘Movement beyond the human’ may very well entail a shift of view away from ‘the human’s’ direction; however, accomplishing this effort will require an anamorphic view *of* humanity, a queering of perspective and stance that mutates the racialized terms of Man’s praxis of humanism . . . [and] . . . demands a redirection of the euro(andro)(anthropo)centric terms through which perspective

is understood, necessitating a disruption of (certain) humans' efforts *to direct and monopolize the internally divided field of perspective*. (217)

Butler's posthuman vision uses the cyborg in this way to challenge the heteronormative, nuclear family, but also sociopolitical structures of race. Her fiction moves past the need to transcend the human via the cyborg by dismantling constructions of the human as already cyborgian by showing us how human bodies have always been symbiotic amalgamations of our environment (and thus ought to also practice more respectful, symbiotic ways of living outside of our bodies in our engagement with our environment). Here we might again recall, for example, Nikanj's explanation to Lilith in *Xenogenesis* that creatures have always resided within the human body from this chapter's second epigraph: "They [humans] could not exist without symbiotic relationships with other creatures. . . . They could not have evolved into what they are without mitochondria" (418).

Xenogenesis engages its readers with the biopolitics of race and racism via the posthuman cyborg by drawing attention to what Alexander Weheliye calls *racializing assemblages* in his 2014 book *Habeas Viscus*. Weheliye posits that though questions of humanity have been a priority in the last century, they have come to revolve around biotechnology through the cyborg and posthuman, ideas which "do not take into account race as a constitutive category in thinking about the parameters of humanity" (8). His title, which means "you shall have the flesh,"⁴⁶ extends Hortense Spillers's distinction between the flesh and body and insinuates that "exceptional" populations that do not fit into the "bare life" politics of society have become queerly racialized mobilities (8). Butler helps us to see how black skin and other racial makers

⁴⁶ This is a play on the legal term "habeas corpus," which describes a subject's right to their own body under law and is used to challenge unlawful detention. Habeas viscus signals that the "corpus" of habeas corpus is not structurally available to all; some are bodies with legal rights and others are flesh that can be not only imprisoned but also mutilated and murdered without state outrage or legal recourse.

come to signify “bare life,” Giorgio Agamben’s term for a person deprived of any rights, as opposed to “bios,” qualified life (qtd. In Weheliye 33-34). “Bare life” comes to signify a nonhuman state, perhaps not-quite-human state, not unlike the states that Akin and Jodahs experience when they are rejected by human resisters in Butler’s trilogy.

Akin and Jodahs are marked in a similar way that black skin acts as a marker; it is hard to gloss over the parallel when Jodahs is referred to as having scaly skin and a serpent like tongue by the human registers. It is these biological markers that classify Akin and Jodahs into the not-quite-human that makes us reconsider how these characters are socio-politically constructed by the human registers as a racialized assemblage. Weheliye argues, “The idea of racializing assemblages . . . [in contrast to bare life and biopolitics] . . . construes race not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans . . . [that play an essential role] . . . in the construction of modern selfhood” (4). Weheliye can help us see how race is superimposed in Butler’s *Xenogenesis*; we might, for instance, view the human resisters as humans, the constructs as not-quite-humans, and the Oankali as nonhumans. However, Jodah’s shapeshifting abilities in *Imago* complicates any distinction between the three. Butler deconstructs the sociopolitical processes that divide and separate the human from the nonhuman by queering her characters; a queering revalorizes the human/not-quite-human/nonhuman in unstable ways. It is these processes that I argue Butler complicates in *Xenogenesis* that readers can better understand through Weheliye’s advocacy for “the radical reconstruction and decolonization of what it means to be human” (4).

In other words, *Xenogenesis* appeals to Weheliye’s call. Butler’s trilogy begins with a dystopian Earth set in place by the naturalization of hierarchies exacerbated by colonization that

still—that already—exists. The trilogy then not only gets readers to think about the sociopolitical construction of race with its introduction of the Oankali, but also reconstructs organic life in ways that challenge the racialized and gendered assemblages from which colonization on Earth has thrived. Butler's work recalls the sexual violence that African Americans experienced, as well as the ways in which black women's reproduction was controlled and black men were emasculated. It is hard to miss the Oankali's enslavement, forced sterilization, and selective breeding of humans. It is the black female body of Lilith that is the first to interbreed with the Oankali, initially without her knowledge. Not unlike what enslaved black women endured in America from white masters, Lilith's body at first becomes a site for forced, inter-group procreation. Human males in the trilogy furthermore feel that masculinity is threatened when men are sexually dominated by an ooloi, which they associate with being dominated like a woman, even though oolois have no human-equivalent gender. Furthermore, human males use homophobic slurs about men who allow themselves to be dominated by an ooloi to challenge the masculinity of those men. However, Butler then complicates this sexualized racial/gender matrix with her interspecies reconstruction of a new cybernetic organism—the Oankali-human construct ooloi—that I argue is aimed at dismantling hierarchies to challenge racial/gender categorization and heteronormativity. The hybridity contained in the construct ooloi reformulates both human and Oankali colonialisms. Butler's use of aliens as colonizers that are highly critical of hierarchy tackles race, gender, and normative notions of sexual desire to remind us that it has been human reliance on biological determinism—in insisting that race, gender, sex, and sexuality are biologically determined—that has allowed cultural hegemony to service colonialism. However, it is the construct ooloi Jodahs that truly disassembles categories because of his shapeshifting abilities. Though the Oankali are colonizers, their de-emphasis of the importance of fixity

complicates the structure upon which Western colonialism has justified itself—the structure of the human as European, heteronormative, and white.

Xenogenesis challenges the human as a fixed entity through its use of reimagined frameworks that emphasize the importance of adaptation to evolutionary processes—key among them shapeshifting. Butler’s use of shapeshifting reminds readers that evolution is about adaptation and that it is adaptation that informs the material body, not essence or biological determinism. The Western construction of the human as European has been used to justify colonialism, heteronormativity, racial inequality, and patriarchy. Butler transcends—more appropriately destabilizes—the boundaries and hierarchies that maintain these inequalities by getting readers to rethink the human as a biologically determined. Her work gets us to consider how several categories related to this understanding of the human are malleable, not fixed, and in this way, Butler’s work can help us to dismantle the logic of coloniality. First of all, the genetic engineering of a hybrid species from five parents of three genders situates an alternative world where organisms are reconstructed rather than reproduced, which challenges the human as a fixed, biological determinism and dismantles the superiority of binary gender and heteronormativity to demand queered concepts of family. Furthermore, there is a large emphasis on the way that culture and environment shapes and influences biology, especially in the character of Jodahs, who can adapt his gender and species-form to appeal to the gender choice and sexual desire of a human or construct mate.

Shapeshifting as Jodahs does from human to Oankali, male to female, black to white, non-living matter in the environment to recognizable intelligent organisms, and engaging in same sex and opposite sex eroticism through these various forms, complicates race and its relationality to gender and sexuality through the metaphor of the cyborg. This cyborgian figure

reconstructs an amalgamation that already exists—we are already the end product of various forms of humans and nonhumans. Furthermore, race and racism could not exist without the construction of the human and the nonhuman as distinct identities, the static immutability of which allows white supremacists to invent race by hierarchically organizing humans into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans, but Butler breaks down the hierarchies these structures create. She does this by showing readers how evolution is about adaptation and symbiosis and that nothing is or ought to be viewed as an individual essence. Queering the human helps her to complete this task.

Patricia Melzer too posits that Butler destabilizes essentialism by creating a “queer essence” when she writes,

In the figure of the shapeshifting aliens [the construct ooloi], Octavia Butler creates a ‘queer essence,’ the inevitable drive to adapt one’s appearance to the needs of the desired object, which is compulsive and at times threatening to the self. . . . This ‘queer essence’ not only challenges notions of sex/gender/sexuality and the dichotomy of sexual difference but questions the very social order the heterosexual matrix relies on—the nuclear family—and demands queered concepts of family. (238-39)

While Melzer’s assertion certainly supports a queer reading of *Xenogenesis*, her use of the word *essence* is problematic because it continues to rely on immutability, which can reconstruct rather than dismantle race and racism and can lead us to a damaging use of the posthuman for a need to become something beyond what already is, rather than acknowledge that all life is an adaptation which is meant to benefit from symbiosis. I contend that there is little essence placed on the Oankali because their organic bodies are constantly adapting, becoming something else and

becoming undone, even though the Oankali refer to their organelle as a sort of essence—the only part of them that will remain after time passes through reconstruction. Oankali evolution is more heavily placed on adaptation and change than fixity, and this helps us to see how there too is little such thing as a human essence—the basis upon which European colonialism has thrived.

Butler's characters help us to critically examine the human to formulate a new understanding of materialism (of how bodies matter) that accounts for how humans have constructed race, gender, sexuality, and nature in ways that do not properly account for environment as co-evolving and being interconnected. Elizabeth Grosz offers insight into the anti-essentialism of evolution itself when she writes, "Matter and life become, and become undone. They transform and are transformed. This is less a new kind of materialism than it is a new understanding of the forces, both material and immaterial, that direct us to the future" (5). The Oankali organelle is a prime example of how matter and life become and become undone, transform and are transformed. Jodahs notes that the organelle is an essential part of the Oankali body and makes Oankali "collectors and traders of life, always learning, always changing . . . [but that] the organelle made or found compatibility with life-forms so completely dissimilar that they were unable even to perceive one another as alive" (530). The organelle transforms life and is transformed by it. It is constantly becoming something new.

In sum, Butler's fiction beckons readers to think about the material body and evolution in new ways that are invested in both queer and sustainable futures—futures grounded in adaptation rather than immutability—and this reimagined framework of the cyborg challenges colonial hierarchies, which are largely dependent on biopolitics. Butler's use of adaptation offers another way that we can engage with a text using decolonial queer ecologies—by embracing difference and change. *Xenogenesis* asks how an intelligent lifeform could engage in acts which unite and

conquer when humans have learned that the world works in ways quite opposite. Ecosystems, the human body, and the planet itself—all organic and inorganic bodies—are symbiotic, affective, vibrant matter, not separate essential categories, as Jane Bennett has noted.⁴⁷ It is symbiosis and adaptation that I turn to in more detail in the next section to explore how Butler’s trilogy offers decolonial, alternative ways of being and living responsibly that best sustain the environment and its biodiversity.

Symbiosis, Affinity, and Queer Kinship

Octavia Butler’s emphasis on the Oankali’s queer ecocentrism is not only a sharp critique of colonialism and imperialism, but also suggests a dire need for humankind to engage in sustainability and embrace diversity by recognizing the importance of symbiosis to form new types of kin based on affinity. In the previous section, I noted how Donna Haraway’s notion of the cyborg celebrates kinships structured as coalitions of affinity. Haraway sees promise in the cyborg because it creates kinships between animals and machines, redefines the monstrous and illegitimate, and welcomes an affinity for relationships constructed by choice, much like Butler’s *Xenogenesis*. However, the ways in which the Oankali manipulate desire and consent does raise issues about how we can read “choice” in Butler’s trilogy. It is the lack of choice humans have in *Xenogenesis* that mirrors the colonialism with which we are all too familiar. Simply put, Butler’s fiction shows readers what should not be done and offers possibilities for what might be done to change the consequences of colonialism. Forcing superiority and norms upon others is surely not a way to undo the logic of coloniality, but reaching for symbiosis, affinity, and queer kinships just might be. Helen Merrick, in “Queering Nature,” argues that “thinking about queered notions

⁴⁷ See Bennett’s 2009 book *Vibrant Matter* for a discussion of the way that a “vital materiality” runs across all bodies, both human and nonhuman. Bennett’s work upsets the idea that organic bodies have a fixed essence at any given time because they are constantly in flux, engaged in an active participation in undoing and reconstructing their physicality.

of ‘kinship’ that involve human and non-human others . . . provides different perspectives on Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* series” (230). I agree. Forming queer coalitions based on affinity can help dismantle knowledges of the human that are responsible for constructing oppressive hierarchies of biopower. Haraway alludes to this in “A Cyborg Manifesto” when she writes, “Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism, . . . [but] if we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions . . . to build effective affinities” (155, 170). Yet, while Haraway’s notion of the cyborg is helpful, it stops short of imaging the human as already an amalgamation of symbiotic organisms and processes, as argued in the previous section, where I posited that Butler’s cyborgian reimagining does something a bit different in its commentary on the link between intelligence and symbiosis.

The Oankali show us that whereas human intelligence is jeopardized by an urge for maintaining hierarchies over other human cultures, animals, natural resources and environments—which has fed imperial conquests and colonization in human history and led to the Earth’s destruction—the intelligence of the Oankali places value on biodiversity, interdependence, and affinities with all aspects of environment to create new, interconnected life—symbiogenesis. In fact, symbiosis and kinships of affinity are requirements for their survival, and although Butler’s trilogy can be perceived as a reverse colonial story in the way that the Oankali have colonized humans, if one examines *Xenogenesis* more closely, it becomes apparent that the Oankali do not believe they are doing humans any harm. Then again, neither did Western colonizers, which shows how Butler is compromised in reproducing the colonialism that she is trying to escape. The Oankali truly believe that they have helped and are making

things better for human beings, but they are clearly not. Coercion is not free consent. We might consider to what extent free consent is even possible in *Xenogenesis*. Nevertheless, the Oankali recognize that sustainable habits are necessary and will best benefit both humans and their own continued existence. The Oankali are respectful of other lifeforms and do not seek to destroy them, but become part of them—very unlike Western human colonizers. While this is irrational to humans, it is inconceivable to the Oankali that human beings would want to resist improving themselves by learning new ways to coexist with all life and matter in their environments and beyond. The Oankali are furthermore astonished that humans refuse to believe that a human tendency toward hierarchy will lead to their extinction when humans nearly did just cause themselves to become extinct through nuclear war.

This is not to say that the Oankali perceive genetics solely as essence; quite the contrary, I argue that the Oankali understand that culture is a very important part of forming genetics, which is one of the reasons they seek to create relationships with humans. They do not need humans solely for their bodies, genes, and matter. Joseph, Lilith's first human mate, understands this. In a conversation with Nikanj, Joseph insinuates that the Oankali do not need humans for reconstruction (reproduction) because the Oankali have already taken reproductive cells from humans and can artificially reproduce and/or clone them. However, they cannot reproduce the person with their biology alone. Environment matters. Nikanj tells Joseph, when speaking about the Oankali interest in humans: "We . . . do need you. . . . A partner must be biologically interesting, attractive to us, and you are fascinating. You are horror and beauty in rare combination. In a very real way, you've captured us, and we can't escape. But you're more than only the composition and the workings of your bodies. You are your personalities, your cultures" (151). Here Butler's fiction recognizes the importance of intra-action, the importance of cultural

exchange and the way it informs biology. Nikanj seems to be saying that both Oankali and humans are the sum total of their bodies and knowledges because their culture informs their biology, which in turn affects their culture.

This is not to say that the concept of biological determinism is totally absent from *Xenogenesis* and the Oankali. They certainly believe that human beings are biologically determined to destroy themselves through their Human Contradiction of intelligence and hierarchy, but they are also biologically programmed to mate with other species, learn from them, change and adapt—or die. Butler’s text is clearly not a utopia, and her extraterrestrials admit that they make mistakes and are not always right. I am not arguing that *Xenogenesis* is a straightforward anti-essentialist or anti-colonial text. What this chapter has been developing is the way that Butler’s text complicates our understanding of biological determinism, the human, and environment. What I do propose is that Butler’s text offers symbiosis as a counter-reality to the conception of an innate form to correct hierarchical, oppressive conditions. Sustainability and equality are largely issues at all because human beings have reversed the symbiotic reality that is readily apparent around us (if we can only be urged to admit it). In other words, our constructions of “normal” are quite skewed because if one looks within and beyond the human they will find the world to be a very queer place once we acknowledge the symbiotic complexity of life and the various networks found in our environment.

One way that Butler’s text highlights the stubborn, adamant position of humankind is through her human characters’ fear of strangeness or difference—queerness. Butler challenges heteronormativity even as she continues to use it in various ways as a contrast to new and complex imaginings of intelligent life. Here I return to the way that Butler queers the family, which was briefly discussed in the last section. Oankali’s form their families of two humans (one

male and one female), two Oankali (again one male and one female), and a third gender they call ooloi. It can be argued that Butler's text maintains heteronormative configurations by keeping opposite sex partners and by making reproductive biology the definition of what forms the family, especially in that there are no same-sex acts in the trilogy. However, Butler complicates and subverts heterosexuality with polyamory and a gender-neutral dominant sexual partner in the ooloi. In some ways, the ooloi is othered in her text, not unlike Michelle Cliff's trans character Harriet in *No Telephone to Heaven* or H. Rider Haggard's gender-subversive character Ayesha in *She*.⁴⁸ However, ooloi are quite different in that they do not challenge the category of gender by resisting it—but eliminate it as a tool of reproduction. It is not the male or female of either species in *Xenogenesis* that is responsible for the active role in sex or reproduction—but the ooloi. Butler notes how this makes human men most uncomfortable, which in turn underlies that homophobia might be less about the sex of a person than the characteristics assigned to their gender. Male characters in the trilogy fear dominance, difference, and challenge to their manhood; they associate sex with an ooloi as a homosexual experience and despise queer kinship, whereas the Oankali celebrate this complex arrangement, as I will now illustrate.

Homophobic reactions are prevalent in *Xenogenesis* on three distinct occasions. One occurs when Curt is faced with his participation in the creation of a new species in *Dawn*. Curt becomes rebellious, despite Lilith's attempts to explain the ooloi's role. Gabriel notes that Curt has a right to fear and reject the Oankali plan for reconstruction: "Look at things from Curt's point of view. . . . He's not in control even of what his own body does and feels. He's taken like

⁴⁸ Haggard's character Ayesha is much different, however, as is Cliff's character Harriet. Ayesha is emulating what was for Victorians a masculine role and is not British, even though she can be seen as a parallel to Queen Victoria, and in this way is Other. Harriet is put into a different place and time as a trans character that defines boundaries of gender, but adopts of female persona. The ooloi have no human gender. My point is that all three characters are queered as Other in their respective novel.

a woman. . . . He knows the ooloi aren't male. He knows all the sex that goes on is in his head. It doesn't matter. It doesn't fucking matter! Someone else is pushing all the buttons. He can't let them get away with that" (201). Echo Savage and Jim Miller note how sex with an ooloi challenges male essence. Savage contends that "when a man is feminized in this manner [ooloi sex], he is stripped of the control that he has been socialized to believe is solely his within sexual interactions" (55), and further argues that Joseph's murder in *Dawn* is motivated by homophobic humans "intent on excising what they understand as threats to the natural, heteronormative order" (57). Joseph's killers know that he engages in sex with an ooloi, which to the human men represent the Other because they are "ungendered, highly-sexualized beings [that] confound and entice their human counterparts—they confuse notions of discrete gender identities... [and thus] become the expressly sexualized Other" (54). Miller argues that sex with an ooloi challenges not only male identity, but also human essence; it represents a "loss of selfhood in a kind of polymorphously perverse transcendent moment that is not only beyond the 'natural' heterosexual experience, but beyond the human. It entails a utopian loss of the ego in the process of blissfully merging with a larger self that includes the alien other" (344).

Both Savage and Miller's assertions show how queer kinship with the Oankali is resisted with often violent reactions, which is evidenced again when Jodahs is challenged in *Imago* by the human register Joao, who tells him, "I know what you do—your kind. You take men as though they were women! . . . Yes! Your kind and your Human whores are the cause of all our trouble! You treat all mankind as your woman" (581). These examples cause us to reflect on why the humans in Butler's text refuse non-heteronormative sex and what this says about queer kinship. If people refuse to be open to change, how can they ever recognize the benefit and importance of symbiosis or form affinities with others unlike themselves?

The Oankali struggle to understand why human resisters defy gene trading and insist on living with rudimentary tools and dominating their environment when they are sent to Earth because it seems that they would be intelligent enough to understand that life is symbiotic.

Nikanj (Lilith's ooloi) voices its thoughts to explain that the human body is already symbiotic:

Inside . . . [human] cells, mitochondria, a previously independent form of life, have found a haven and trade their ability to synthesize proteins and metabolize fats for room to live and reproduce. . . . Even before we [the Oankali] arrived [humans] had bacteria living in their intestines and protecting them from other bacteria that would hurt or kill them. They could not exist without symbiotic relationships with other creatures. Yet such relationships frighten . . . [humans]. . . . I think we're as much symbionts as their mitochondria were originally. They could not have evolved into what they are without mitochondria. (418)

Pramod Nayar notes how this passage echoes Lynn Margulis's work on evolution in her 1981 book *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution* (42). Margulis writes, "The evolution of symbiosis—that is, the formation of permanent associations between organisms of different species—has been the origin of some parts of eukaryotic cells" (1), and she shows how mitochondria developed:

[Mitochondria] developed efficient oxygen-respiring capabilities when they were still free-living bacteria (3). . . . The symbiotic complexes . . . [of] plant and animal cells . . . became more and more integrated, and the partners more dependent on each other. The dependence between each organelle and the metabolic products of the others is now so complete that only with modern techniques of ultrastructural analysis and *in situ* chemistry can the metabolic pathways of the original partners be traced, and even now with difficulty. (5)

The similarities between Butler's *Xenogenesis* and Margulis's work are eerie, but what I want to argue here is how Nikanj explains to Lilith that human bodies are already mutually dependent and symbiotic—in fact that all biology *is multispecies*. Recognizing this reality, it would seem that humans would at least be open to forming coalitions of affinity with other lifeforms, especially since the Oankali cure diseases, improve their immunity, prolong their lives, and give them the chance to develop what they once saw as supernatural abilities—though this is not by free choice. We can see exactly why the humans are suspicious, given histories of violence that have been justified by claims that were aimed at granting victims “improvement.” We can see how closely the Oankali are similar to European colonizers, for instance. The Oankali do take away the ability of humans to reproduce by making them sterile if they refuse to engage in reconstruction, and humans who do engage in sex with an ooloi can no longer enjoy human sex, so their choice is not so clear cut. Nevertheless, recognition of symbiosis is key in Butler's trilogy for building bridges and dismantling walls—for forming queer kinships of affinity.

Symbiosis is present throughout Butler's *Xenogenesis*—from the structures in which humans and Oankali live to how they eat, dispose of wastes, feel emotion, and understand the world. For one, the Oankali are vegetarian and have a mutual respect for all living things; they form affinities with plants and ecosystems. The relationship they have with their spaceship is even a queer kinship; both they and their ship have formed an affinity for one another. They have created a spaceship that is a living ecosystem, even more appropriately an organism because, as Jdahya, the first Oankali to meet Lilith, explains, everything attached to it is an appendage. The spaceship is an intelligent lifeform that produces food, oxygen, provides shelter, and disposes of wastes. Nonetheless, the relationship did not start this way, and the affinity is not entirely equal. The ship is more appropriately a creation/collaboration with the Oankali, who manipulated it to

evolve in the ways that would be most useful to them, but the Oankali recognize a resemblance in structure between themselves and all living things enough to understand how the ship and they can both benefit from one another and live in symbiosis. Symbiosis is not always entirely mutual, as Dianne Chisolm notes in her 2010 article in *Queer Ecologies* when writing about the rhizome, a plant structure that “involves creative—adaptive, symbiotic or parasitic, evolutionary—entanglement of heterogeneous elements across species/specific lines of filiation and descent” (369). The rhizome “involves other beings in micro-couplings of becoming-other that may invade and compound genetic and genealogical transmission in life’s virtually ongoing experiment” (369). Chisolm’s work emphasizes that symbiosis is in many ways parasitic, much like the bacteria that thrive in human bodies and the parasites present in ecosystems. The Oankali spaceship is not one organism that reacts the same way, but rather a rhizome-like network, which feels pain.

Lilith learns this the hard way in the beginning of *Dawn* when, on her trip outside her pod in the area known as Kaal, she poisons the organism (ship) by burying orange peels in the ground instead of letting the plant-ship decide how to dispose of them: “Seeing its violent twisting Lilith forgot that it was not an individual organism. She focused on the fact that it was alive and she had probably caused it pain. She had not merely caused an interesting effect, she had caused harm” (70). It is even suggested that the spaceship feels emotion. Jdahya tells Lilith, “The human doctor used to say it loved us. There is an affinity, but it’s biological—a strong symbiotic relationship. We serve the ship’s needs and it serves ours. It would die without us and we would be planetbound without it. For us, that would eventually mean death” (38). Humans furthermore grow their own rooms on the ship while Lilith prepares them for the recolonization of the Earth. When Lilith awakens them from stasis, she explains to them how she grows rooms and stores

food and clothing in the walls, how the ship will “digest anything that isn’t alive” (137). Lilith explains: “Yes. The ship is alive, and so is almost everything in it. The Oankali use living matter the way we used machinery. . . . We’re protected from one another . . . We’re an endangered species—almost extinct. If we’re going to survive, we need protection” (137). The protection Lilith refers to is, in part, from one another, but also in learning survival skills. She tells her humans, “We’ve got to be able to work together before we reach Earth. It isn’t enough for us just to refrain from killing one another. Down in the forest, we’ll probably be more interdependent than most of us have ever been. We might be a little better at that if we give each new set of people time to fit in and a growing structure to fit into” (142). The hope is that the colonies of humans learn to structure their habits and standards of living in ways that are also interdependent with their environments.

This affinity continues on Earth. Lo, the organic structure that shelters Lilith and several other humans on Earth, is also symbiotic, and further adaptive, not unlike how Jodahs is able to shape himself to the image, gender, species, etc. of his sexual partners in *Imago*, which is part of his ability as a construct ooloi. However, Lo is different from the spaceship because on Earth it acquires new intelligence and is able to adapt to protect itself and its occupants more effectively. The complete passage in which Butler explains the Lo structure is worth citing in detail:

The Lo entity shaped itself according to desires of its occupants and the patterns of the surrounding vegetation. Yet it was the larval form of a space-going entity. Its hide and its organs were better protected than any living thing native to Earth. No ax or machete could mark it. Until it was older, no native vegetation would grow within its boundaries. That was why Lilith and a few other people had gardens far from the village. Lo would have provided good food from its own

substance—the Oankali could stimulate food production and separate the food from Lo. But most Humans in the village did not want to be dependent on the Oankali. Thus, Lo had a broad fringe of Human-planted gardens, some in use and some fallow. Akin had had, at times to keep Tino from tramping right into them, then realizing too late that he had slashed his way through food plants and destroyed someone's work. It was as though he could not see at all. (295-296)

This passage is important not only because it explains the symbiotic and adaptive ability of Lo, but also because it highlights how some humans living within the organic structure wish to continue to resist symbiosis and interdependency, which does not account for the resisters who live outside of Lo, build homes from wood, kill animals, and cling to the past.

Butler, moreover, emphasizes that the relationship between Lo and humans, Oankali, and constructs is not one way; just as Lo looks out for them, they must look out for Lo as it learns and adapts. Butler writes:

But now the [Lo] entity was changing, moving into its next growth stage. Now it could learn to incorporate Earth vegetation, sustain it, and benefit from it. On its own, it would learn slowly, killing a great deal, culling native vegetation for that vegetation's ability to adapt to the changes it made. But the entity in symbiotic relationship with its Oankali inhabitants could change faster, adapting itself and accepting adapted plant life that Dichaan and others had prepared. (305)

This is what is important to understand—symbiosis should aim for mutual benefit, and it is important that affinities are formed in ways that Lo comes to be perceived as kin and is treated as family, with respect. The Oankali learn this over time but never completely come to respect

humans as equal partners. They cannot escape their colonial logic, which often causes them to compromise the values and intelligence they believe they hold superior to the human race.

What Butler offers in *Xenogenesis* is complexity that shows us just how impossible it is to escape from the logic of coloniality in which we all are ingrained—herself included. However, in rewriting empire, she does offer something useful and new—a critical posthuman ecology. This critical posthuman ecology moves toward a decolonial queer ecology in the way that it is invested in a critique of the human (often via the Oankali), symbiosis, queer coalitions and kinships, engagement with the nonhuman environment, and an exploration of the ways that sexuality and environment inform one another. Rather than hierarchical taxonomies, the Oankali aim to structure life based on coalitions of affinity that are symbiotic and interdependent, which helps them to engage in sustainability and embrace biodiversity, and this alternative world of Butler’s in some ways undermines the dominant and oppressive hierarchies that have historically validated colonial structures. For instance, Butler’s *Xenogenesis* highlights the ways that humans fear difference—how this is the tragic flaw of the human, as Lilith tells her son Akin in

Adulthood Rites:

Human beings fear difference . . . Oankali crave difference. Humans persecute their different ones, yet they need them to give themselves definition and status. Oankali seek difference and collect it. They need it to keep themselves from stagnation and overspecialization. If you don’t understand this, you will. You’ll probably find both tendencies surfacing in your own behavior. . . . When you feel a conflict, try to go the Oankali way. Embrace difference. (321)

Butler’s overarching theme in *Xenogenesis* just might be embracing difference. *Xenogenesis* can be read as a call for change, a change to lead more symbiotic lives to help us respect our

environments and one another and to deconstruct the identities that colonialism has made immutable (constructions of identity that have and greatly continue to fuel xenophobic violence and hierarchies). The Oankali show us through their own colonial dimensions just how difficult embracing biodiversity can be, even while they model sustainable ways of living.

Embracing Biodiversity

In her discussion of *Dawn in Primate Visions*, Donna Haraway writes, “Monsters share more than the word’s root with the verb ‘to demonstrate’; monsters signify” (378). Indeed, monsters do signify. Butler uses the extraterrestrial to reflect the monster within humans themselves to demonstrate how hierarchical constructions violently discipline organic life into the human, not-so-human, and nonhuman. These phenomenological structures extend not only to racial assemblages, but also to interdependent configurations with and of gender and normative sexual desire, and they are often anthropomorphized to colonize and exploit non-human life and ecosystems. The greed, lust, and power that drive human beings to divide might in the end destroy our planet. This is Butler’s grim warning, which is very similar to the way that Walter D. Mignolo describes the forces of colonialism and global capital. In the grimmer aspects of Butler’s vision, the human has become coextensive with the forces of colonialism and capital. There is no escape from these forces. Butler’s work clearly shows how she becomes wrapped up in reproducing the colonialism that she tries to escape through her speculative world.

Decolonization requires addressing the problem of the human and sustaining our environment in large part by embracing biodiversity, the biodiversity which forms us and which we affect. None of us truly lie in the space of the human or the nonhuman because everything is the sum total of intra-actions with not only materials in our environment, but also the discourses that help to produce it. Queering human and nonhuman ecologies is a practice that decolonizes

the environment from hierarchies, and this process might help us see how we truly are assemblages. This is the kind of posthumanism we need. Alexander Weheliye argues:

Many invocations of posthumanism, whether in antihumanist post-structuralist theorizing or in current considerations of technology and animality, reinscribe the humanist subject (Man) as the personification of the human by insisting that this is the category to be overcome, rarely considering cultural and political formations outside the world of Man that might offer alternative versions of humanity. (9-10)

Embracing a kind of posthumanism that seeks not to transcend but dismantle discourses of the human and the nonhuman to instead offer alternative versions of humanity can offer a useful form of reparative reading because it can help us direct our reparative efforts toward understanding how the human becoming undone is not a threat, but an improvement that allows us to see that there is value in becoming something new. Becoming something new can allow us to leave behind fixed constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and nature on which the human and colonialism has so largely depended.

Pramod Nayar's concept *critical posthumanism* and Serpil Oppermann's concept *posthuman ecocriticism*, which are more in line with queer ecologies than transhuman posthumanisms, are two frameworks through which we might consider the cultural and political formations of nonhuman environments. They have provided a strong foundation for my new framework of decolonial queer ecologies. Butler's work moves toward a decolonial queer ecology in the way that it interrogates yet reinforces colonialism; Butler helps readers to see how we become complicit in the logic of coloniality even as we try to escape it. *Xenogenesis* helps us to think more critically about the European construction of the human post Renaissance that has

driven race and its connection to gender, sexuality, and nature as sociobiopolitical markers. Weheliye seeks to abolish the systems that define the human, systems which have constructed “lexicons of resistance and agency” that produce concepts which “have a tendency to blind us, whether through strenuous denials or exalted celebrations of their existence, to the manifold occurrences of freedom in zones of indistinction” (2). Weheliye offers a powerful description of the way that *Xenogenesis* works to dismantle any easy understanding of resistance/colonization, especially through the way that resistance to the Oankali persists, yet is shown to be destructive even as it is never fully demonized or refused.

The worlding offered in the speculative fiction of Octavia Butler helps to abolish these systems, and critical posthuman ecocriticism can show us how. Butler’s *Xenogenesis* explores the abolishment of the systems that define the human by emphasizing how all (id)entities are the sum total of intra-actions in their environments. As Nayar writes, “Critical posthumanism emphasizes that, only by recognizing the link between speciesism and discriminatory practices like racism and sexism, and the shared vulnerability of all species, can we begin to rethink connectedness and mutuality with *all* forms of species and life . . . to accept more of [the] other-species within us” (156). Though it is easy to simplify Butler’s story as a mirror image of racism and race relations through speciesism and species relations, and/or a deconstruction of racial identity through hybrid species breeding, paying closer attention to her ecological context reveals how her use of symbiosis and adaptation questions any stable identity, and it also calls attention to the way in which she addresses racism, speciesism, homophobia, and anthropocentrism, as well as how she might offer a means away from these monstrous forms of xenophobia. The queer ecologies found in *Xenogenesis* are decolonial tools.

Butler's speculative imagination reflects a looming apocalypse, but if one looks more closely, suggested decolonial solutions reside within her text. The values that her Oankali species try to teach humanity are reminiscent of queer ecologies, which work to destabilize and deconstruct assemblages of race, gender, and sexuality that have been used to maintain colonial structures. Naomi Jacobs reminds us that "the Oankali, unlike human colonizers, are not driven by greed, lust, and power, but because of a desire to embrace difference, which is a biological necessity for survival" (99). Unlike what is found in most colonial stories, Butler's speculative world values biodiverse life and invests in an alternative world that sustains environments; both the Oankali and human beings have investment and genetic contributions to a new species that will only be stronger than the two which formed it. From *Xenogenesis* we learn that investment in humanity means adaptation, kinships formed from affinities, collaboration, and symbiosis between all vibrant matter. Dismantling colonial matrices of power requires embracing change, celebrating diversity, and forming new assemblages that recognize that the symbiotic patterns found in ecosystems are models for our own bodies and relationships. Butler's visionary fiction highlights how decolonial queer ecologies are vital processes for world-building which seeks to challenge injustice.

CONCLUSION

LOOKING FORWARD

Decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is: for it is where all other forms of decolonization are born. Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless.

—Walidah Imarisha, *Octavia's Brood*

Gothic and speculative (fantastic) fiction reveals the best and worst of people. It digs at us. It gets us to confront our fears, pain, hopes, and desires. It offers imaginaries that can challenge ingrained knowledge and destructive thinking, and I find this useful to the process of decolonization. Fantastic fiction can unshackle the imagination and provide limitless opportunities for liberation, as Walidah Imarisha notes in her introduction to a collection of fiction in the tradition of Octavia Butler entitled *Octavia's Brood* (2015). Imarisha reminds us of what speculative (fantastic) fiction can do—decolonize the imagination: “Decolonization of the imagination is . . . where all other forms of decolonization are born,” she argues (4). She refers to the fantastic as “visionary fiction” that “encompasses all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending toward justice . . . [to build] . . . new, freer worlds from the mainstream strain of science fiction, which most often reinforces dominant narratives of power” (4). Imaginaries can challenge ingrained knowledge and destructive thinking, and this is what a process of decolonization must also do. The imagination is a powerful tool; yet, it can be dangerous. History has produced imaginative fictions that reinforce hegemony and oppression. Nevertheless, both Gothic and speculative (fantastic) stories can reveal great truths, and we can imagine new forms to move toward freer worlds.

I have offered decolonial queer ecologies as a tool of reparative reading in fantastic stories in an attempt to address conflicting emotions and affects at specific moments in time. Decolonial queer ecologies destigmatize the relationship between conceptions of nature and

those who identify as queer by exploring the ways that ecological diversity, coalition building, empathy, and queer agency rewrite colonial notions of nature and subvert the logic of coloniality that has produced the patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, and capitalist exploitation that has resulted in exclusion, oppression, division of the human from naturalized environments, and environmental destruction we all too often experience today. Hierarchies are still very much alive in world societies, in fact growing in strength and manifesting with pride seemingly overnight in the United States. This is witnessed through the march for white supremacy in Charlottesville during the summer of 2017. It is seen in the way the government is attempting to control women's reproductive rights. It is shown in the way that "religious freedom" is being used as a platform for LGBT discrimination, or in the number of trans people who are disproportionately murdered each year. Expressions of minority calls for equality are being translated into special rights. It pains me to hear the phrase "White Lives Matter" or to hear the question "Why isn't there a Straight Pride Parade," while also witnessing the destruction of our planet and exploitation of marginalized people and the poor. The point I am making is that this is why decolonial-queer-environmental world-building is important—because it contributes to the social justice that matters most of all, which is liberating our planet and everyone on it. This is what decolonial queer ecologies can do. Reading with this framework can move us toward decolonizing our minds.

Moving toward a decolonial queer ecology entails looking at the complexities of human imagination to better understand how and why characters are written the way they are. It means abandoning prejudices built on an ingrained understanding of what the human and nature are. It means thinking hard about contradiction, complexity, and struggle to explore negotiations of consciousness and ask how they might be impacted by historical discourse. My goal has been to

illustrate how authors can deconstruct hierarchy through world-building, but are nonetheless very much so implicated in the logic of colonialism in the process. World-building can be problematic, icky stuff. Haggard's *She*, Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, and Butler's *Xenogenesis* represent moments of human consciousness in which readers can search out ways of decolonial-queer-environmental world-building by looking at this complexity. Ecologies become metaphors for subjectivities in my analysis as characters (perhaps authors) search out the quality of *being* ascribed to human and nonhuman environments influenced by personal opinions, feelings, and tastes—that quality that I've shown exists first in a person's mind before it does the external world. And this external world is largely a cultural manifestation itself, yet also influences conceptions of the material, biological body. Readers of Gothic and speculative fiction can use decolonial queer ecologies as a framework for reading colonial narratives as worlding (as a process of transitioning, becoming, and/or transforming as recovery). Imagining other possibilities to challenge the status quo makes this possible. Asking “what if” helps readers and writers alike to build new stories.

However, there are limits one might run up against in using decolonial queer ecologies as a framework for critiquing colonial narratives as a movement toward world-building. For instance, despite attempts to challenge readers from the kind of linear thinking that Western colonialism brings, Haggard, Cliff, and Butler's novels are full of contradiction. Haggard's work reinforces imperial fetishism, while also challenging Victorian gender norms and what is natural about sexuality. The revolutionaries in Cliff's novels strategically embrace capital in order to achieve their goals of decolonization, and Clare Savage acknowledges that she is part of the colonial legacy in Jamaica from which she is trying to escape. Butler's Oankali leave the Earth as a rock stripped of its resources, even though they promote environmentally sustainable ways

of living. In each of these novels, characters promote colonialism, while at other times dismantling it.

How can we come to terms with these contradictions? Is it ever possible to escape the imposition of hierarchies? What might the future of decolonial-queer-environment world-building look like? How might we engage with a framework of decolonial queer ecologies in different ways to challenge the logic of Western colonialism that many cultures have inherited and from which those colonized seek to move beyond? Is a framework of decolonial queer ecologies limited to Gothic and speculative fiction? Can it be a useful form of reparative reading in other texts? These are questions and problems that others might address and explore to plot new directions and discover other alternative world-building possibilities. By creating new narratives, we can negotiate the complexities of the human to liberate us from its shackles. The imagination is a powerful tool that we can use to challenge the inequalities and injustices maintaining oppressive hierarchies today. Asking “what if” allows us to imagine and implement what we might become tomorrow.

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