Charles Mills, Cornell University Press “The Racial Contract” 1997. Pp. 52-53

In the slavery and colonial contracts, on the other hand, persons and subpersons necessarily interact regularly, so that constant watchfulness for signs of subperson resistance to the terms of the Racial Contract is required. If the social contract is predicated on voluntarized compliance, the Racial Contract clearly requires compulsion for the reproduction of the political system. In the slavery contract, in particular, the terms of the contract require of the slave an *ongoing* self-negation of personhood, an acceptance of chattel status, psychologically harder to achieve and so potentially more explosive than the varieties of subpersonhood imposed either by the expropriation contract (where one will either be dead or sequestered in a space far away from white persons) or the colonial contract (where the status of “minor” leaves some hope that one may be permitted to achieve adulthood some day). Thus, in the Caribbean and on the mainland of the Americas, there were sites where newly arrived Africans were sometimes taken to be “seasoned” before being transported to the plantations. And **this was basically the metaphysical operation, carried out through the physical, of *breaking* them, transforming them from persons into subpersons of the chattel variety**. But since people could always fake acceptance of subpersonhood, it was, of course, necessary to keep an eternally vigilant eye on them for possible signs of dissembling, in keeping with the sentiment that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. **The coercive arms of the state**, then—the police, the penal system, the army—**need to be seen as in part the enforcers *of* the Racial Contract**, working both to keep the peace and prevent crime among the white citizens, and **to maintain the racial order and detect and destroy challenges to it**, so that across the white settler states nonwhites are incarcerated at differential rates and for longer terms. To understand the long, bloody history of police brutality against blacks in the United States, for example, one has to recognize it not as excesses by individual racists but as an organic part of this political enterprise. There is a well-known perception in the black community that the police—particularly in the jim crow days of segregation and largely white police forces—were basically an “army of occupation.” Correspondingly, in all these white and white-ruled polities, attacking or killing whites has always been morally and juridically singled out as the crime of crimes, a horrific break with the natural order, not merely because of the greater value of white (i.e., a person’s) life but because of its larger symbolic significance as a challenge to the racial polity. The death penalty is differentially applied to nonwhites both in the scope of crimes covered (i.e., racially differentiated penalties for the same crimes) and in its actual carrying out. (In the history of U.S. capital punishment, for example, over one thousand people have been executed, but only very rarely has a white been executed for killing a black.) Individual acts of subperson violence against whites and, even more serious, slave rebellions and colonial uprisings are standardly punished in an exemplary way, *pour encourager les autres*, with torture and retaliatory mass killings far exceeding the number of white victims. Such acts have to be seen not as arbitrary, not as the product of individual sadism (though they encourage and provide an outlet for it), but as the appropriate moral and political response—prescribed by the Racial Contract—to a threat to a system predicated on nonwhite subpersonhood**. There is an outrage that is practically metaphysical because one’s self-conception, one’s white identity as a superior being entitled to rule, is under attack.**

**Leong 16** (Diana, Assistant Professor of English and Environmental Humanities at the University of Utah, *The Mattering of Black Lives: Octavia Butler’s Hyperempathy and the Promise of the New Materialisms*, Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, and Technoscience, Vol 2 No 2, Fall 2016, [aj] ExodusFiles)

*Black* lives matter and black *lives* matter and black lives *matter*. This homographic reading of the most salient political statement of recent years speaks to the torsions of blackness, matter, and life that have come to define our contemporary era. In “Unbearable Blackness,” Jared Sexton (2015) argues with regard to the triangulation of these concerns that anti-black fantasies “**do not render blacks, like so much of the planet, subject to death in an economy of disposability; rather, they subject blacks to ‘the interminable time of meaningless, impersonal dying**’” (p.168). In the wake of recent grand jury decisions not to prosecute the murders of Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown, to name only the most widely publicized cases, Sexton’s claims register most strongly in **the state’s refusal to allow these deaths to die.** They are caught instead in a biopolitical apparatus that **suspends racial blackness between a life unrecognized as such and an illegible form of death that can never pass into reason.** Against this timeless, spectral dying, we can read the declaration that “Black Lives Matter” as a call to return racial blackness to a form that matters, to a form, in other words, that is matter. On this score, I ask: how do black life and death become matter, and what is at stake in the demand that they should assume such form? Octavia Butler’s Afrofuturist novels Parable of the Sower (1993) and Parable of the Talents (1998) dramatize these questions through protagonist Lauren Olamina and her condition of hyperempathy. In this article, I explore hyperempathy as a speculative embodiment of “pornotroping” (Spillers, 2003) to understand how racial blackness structures current theorizations of matter. Questions about the proper scale, scope, and character of matter have assumed a renewed sense of urgency given the emergence of the Anthropocene, a distinct geological epoch in which human activity has become so influential as to alter fundamental aspects of the Earth System. While ecologist Eugene Stoermer and Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen introduced the current definition of the term in the 1980s, we have since witnessed a growing scientific consensus about the rigor of the concept. A recent article published in the journal Science by the Anthropocene Working Group (2016) provides the latest example of this support, demonstrating that fluctuations in the content and pace of sediment deposits and extinction rates are anthropogenically driven. However, the very nomenclature of the “Anthropocene” has been subject to critique from within the humanities for allowing an **abstract notion of the “Anthropos”** to anchor an implicit philosophy of history. Daniel Hartley (2015), for instance, comments in a recent issue of the UK-based magazine Salvage, “Inherent to the Anthropocene discourse is a conception of historical causality which is purely mechanical: a one-on-one billiard ball model of technological invention and historical effect, which is simply inadequate to explain actual social and relational modes of historical causation” (para. 4). Hartley takes special issue with the presumed origins of the Anthropocene, which many geologists date to the industrial and nuclear revolutions. This determination, he suggests, interprets the environmental impact of technology as the “net effect” of an **undifferentiated “human” activity** (Waters et. al., 2016, p. 139). In order to assert a causal link between technological development and ecological catastrophe, **any consideration of the roles race, class, and gender have played in engineering our historical present must be obscured.**1 {1 Nicholas Mirzoeff notes in his forthcoming essay, “It’s Not the Anthropocene, It’s **the White Supremacy Scene, or the Geological Color Line**,” that a recent publication by geologists locates the origins of the Anthropocene in the arrival of Europeans to America. While this preliminary acknowledgement of the large scale impact of colonialism and slavery is hopeful, any discourse on the Anthropocene should also be accompanied by “a politics that **challenges [the racial and humanist] hierarchy”** often implied by its philosophy of history (Mirzoeff, forthcoming 2016, p. 22).} The benefits and consequences of technological development and environmental disaster, after all, are **rarely if ever distributed symmetrically** among and within human populations. “It is not all people that are indicted by the onset of the Anthropocene,” writes Nicholas Mirzoeff (forthcoming 2016), “but a specific set: **colonial settlers, enslavers, and would-be imperialists**” (pp. 19-20). At the same time, this remodeling of human history and ecological philosophy is not unique to geologists. Indeed, the Anthropocene’s scientific definition may have become matters of debate only recently, but its constitutive concerns—global warming, genetic technology, biodiversity loss, environmental racism—have **thrown our prevailing concepts of nature and culture into crisis** well before the epoch’s formal identification. At stake is not only the fate of homo sapiens as a species, but also the basic composition of a world yet to come. The challenges of analyzing the effects of non-human systems (e.g., weather patterns or ocean currents) and actors (e.g., viruses or pesticides) while attending to the uneven distribution of environmental risks and resources have generated a range of philosophical responses. For example, publications like Dipesh Chakrabarty’s (2009), “The Climate of History,” Elizabeth Kolbert’s (2014) The Sixth Extinction, and Roy Scranton’s (2015) Learning to Die in the Anthropocene recommend a universal or existential “species thinking” necessary for grasping the complexities of climate change. Other responses, like Jane Bennett’s (2010) Vibrant Matter and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s (2015) Stone, interrogate fantasies of human mastery as a way of reckoning with the power of non-human agents. Over the last decade, one particular variety of response has acquired critical purchase within the academic left: the new materialisms. As part of what Richard Grusin (2015) has named “the nonhuman turn” in contemporary thought, the new materialisms join affect theory, critical animal studies, and object-oriented ontology in calling for enhanced attention to matter and materiality. The popularity of this approach, evidenced by a growing number of monographs, special journal issues, and anthologies, appears grounded in the need to develop strategies of coexistence attuned to the Anthropocene’s political and ecological crises.2 How, for example, should we understand agency and embodiment in light of recent developments in biotechnology and the increasingly unpredictable behavior of non-human objects? The promise of the new materialisms thus inheres in the notion that a focus on materiality can offer us more comprehensive and efficacious ways to respond to these developments. As Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) write in their introduction to the New Materialisms anthology, “What is at stake here is nothing less than a challenge to some of the most basic assumptions that have underpinned the modern world, including its normative sense of the human and its beliefs about human agency, but also regarding its material practices such as the ways we labor on, exploit, and interact with nature” (p. 4). There is much to recommend an intensified engagement with matter, not least of which is Coole and Frost’s proposal that such engagements can disrupt our “normative sense of the human” and of “human agency.” Given this professed interest in dismantling human exceptionalism, it is curious then that, as Zakiyyah Jackson (2015) and other critical race scholars point out, the new materialisms have systematically “[ignored] praxes of humanity and critiques produced by black people, particularly those praxes which are **irreverent to the normative production of ‘the human’ or illegible from within the terms of its logic**” (p. 216).3 Black thought has long challenged the enforced description of Africans and their descendants as non-human objects of science, as specimens for study and experimentation, as commodities for market exchange, as things. In fact, from at least the 16th century onward, black bodies provided **crucial raw material for the development of natural history, the natural sciences, and the life philosophies in Enlightenment thought.**4 Both geology and biology, for example, pursued notions of species and evolution that **preserved early racial taxonomies**; the techniques of observation and interpretation used to analyze geological activity were **the same as those employed by the racial science of phrenology.** Mirzoeff (forthcoming 2016) leverages this history to argue that “the very concept of observable breaks between geological eras in general and the definition of the Anthropocene in particular is **inextricably intermingled with the belief in distinct races of humanity**” (p. 2). His claim that the concept of the Anthropocene **reproduces race-making technologies** gestures to the historical fact that **the human as such has emerged through the exclusion and extermination of black bodies.** Proscribed from the realm of the human, black intellectuals have had to think within and through the categories of the non-human and the inhuman to pursue **new ways of being in the world**. Philosophical questions about the vitality and agency of the human, the animal, and the object are therefore longstanding in the fields of Black studies. Alexander Weheliye (2015) observes in Habeas Viscus that across Sylvia Wynter’s oeuvre, “it is the human—or different genres of the human—that materializes as the object of knowledge in the conceptual mirror of black studies” (p. 21). The scholarly work of Hortense Spillers (2003) and Fred Moten (2003), and the Afrofuturist contributions of Nalo Hopkinson (1998; 2000) and Nnedi Okorafor (2010), similarly confront the “most basic assumptions that have underpinned the modern world,” including our notions of history, temporality, and modern science.5 And yet, as it is with the Anthropocene’s implied philosophy of history, much of the scholarship produced under the banner of the new materialisms tends to reduce race to a crude “identity politics” or to endorse a model of difference-without-race.6 This reduction and disavowal of race, I contend, is something of a structural necessity for the new materialisms. In what follows, I trace the general theoretical principles of the new materialisms to a dissatisfaction with the linguistic and cultural paradigms of post-structuralism. I then demonstrate how this dissatisfaction enables an ethics of relation or affect that further legitimizes the reduction and dismissal of race. However, as a close reading of Butler’s Parable duology reveals, one of the primary figures of the new materialisms—the material body—is defined by and through disavowed social fantasies about black female flesh that are linked to the global legacies of modern slavery. My examination of the critical responses to Butler’s novels further suggests that such fantasies are necessary to secure a libidinal investment in the ethical potential of materiality. I argue, thus, against a misrecognition of black female flesh as a resource against the violence of hierarchical differences, rather than the site of their active production. Finally, I turn to a reading of Butler’s Parable duology as an allegory about the dangers of proceeding in the Anthropocene without a **robust analysis of the formation of racial blackness**. Because a proper survey of new materialist literature is beyond the scope of this article, the comments below should be taken as entry points for probing the (absent) place of racial blackness in theories about matter.7

Edwards and Randolph 20 [Dr. Erica R. Edwards and Sherie M. Randolph, 11-22-2020, "68 Seats and More: Black Women and the Myth of American Democracy," A-Line, https://alinejournal.com/vol-2-no-4/68-seats-and-more-black-women-and-the-myth-of-american-democracy/ //cohn]

Backs might have been breaking in Louisville, in Portland, and in Kenosha, when the ghosts of Black radicalism were called upon once again to bridge the chasm between the liberal democratic tradition of representative democracy and the radical demand for abolition democracy.1 By late summer 2020, that demand had municipal governments defunding their police squads and local shopkeepers, suburban moms, and public relations experts for corporations and universities scrambling to put their commitment to antiracism on conspicuous display. In a virtual speech at the 2020 Democratic National Convention, vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris began by paying homage to the Black insurgents on whose shoulders she claimed to stand. Among her honor roll of predecessors were: Black woman suffragists who “rallied and marched for a seat at the table”: anti-lynching organizer Mary Church Terrell; New York State Senator and federal judge Constance Baker Motley; educator and NAACP president Mary McLeod Bethune, who served in Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration and helped to pull Black voters from the Republican to the Democratic Party; Sunflower County organizer Fannie Lou Hamer, who faced merciless beatings to register others to vote in Ruleville, Mississippi and co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; Nashville student organizer and SNCC co-founder Diane Nash; and New York congressional representative Shirley Chisholm, who helped secure provisions for women with infant children (WIC) before embarking on a Black feminist contest for the presidency in 1972. Harris’s list of predecessors with shoulders stout enough to uphold the “trailblazers” Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, as well as herself, **echoed DNC Chair Tom Perez’s infamous 2017 tweet proclaiming Black women the “backbone” of the Democratic Party.** This utterance, while roundly **criticized for invoking the mammy-like trope of the Black woman tirelessly caring for a democracy now on life support**, was reproduced in celebrations of Senator Harris’s nomination on the evening news and on the morning talk shows. In a nightmarish **replay of the nadirs that followed the 1960s surge in radical democracy**, when Black politicians in high places traded the demands of revolution for individual distinction and the promise of reform, the Democratic Party leadership dragged Black women by their backbones, or perhaps, their very strong shoulders, into a scene of inevitable compromise. The backbone thesis, a name we use for the argument—sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes performed by beautiful, well-manicured, beige spokespersons for the state—that Black women are foundational to American democracy, and that it is our vocation to support the myth that equality, liberty, and justice can be secured through incremental, procedural reforms rather than militant confrontation, is a dangerous presumption of contemporary liberal politics. It undermines the ways that the Black feminist radical democratic tradition has consistently refused the compromise that trades abolitionist demands for symbolic representation.2 It is not Black women’s mission to bolster American democracy; it is our work to identify its grammars of subjection, especially when these appear in the guise of inclusion, and to subvert its founding myth of progress through “seats at the table.” Black women are not the backbone of American democracy, but are rather its chronic pain: We are its reminders that democracy, even as best imagined, rests on the backs of those whose pain sustains a society not only in the throes of ecological disaster, pandemic, militia and vigilante violence, and authoritarian rule, but also through its moments of inexorable breakdown and dystopian crisis. Senator Harris’s claim to be the inheritor of Black feminist electoral activism was received as a welcome gesture in contemporary political discourse in part because it was in line with the U.S. government’s post-World War II embrace of antiracism to signify its beneficence as a global democratic superpower. But the official antiracism that motivated, for example, State Department–sponsored foreign tours for Black artists, was not just public relations for a putatively multicultural democracy. **It was also a strategy to legitimize the authority of a state that was contracting public services while steadily feeding the military and carceral industries after the seemingly irreparable rupture of the 1960s, during which the worldwide rebellion against racial capitalism threatened to engulf the government’s official program of gradual and limited desegregation.** Members of the liberal-conservative intellectual elite were key strategists for the state’s recovery of authority or “governability.” Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who is now infamous for demonizing the Black women who were leading the world in true democratic transformation, and Samuel Huntington, whose “clash of civilizations” thesis ultimately justified George W. Bush’s declaring the “war on terror,” were among the experts who co-authored the 1968 report, The Crisis of Democracy. They posited that the “excess of democracy” unleashed by the antiracist, anticolonial, and antiwar movements had dampened the American public’s approval of defense spending and had led to demands for increased spending on public services. They blamed the failure of the U.S. war on Vietnam on the overwhelming popular opposition at home, which limited the ability of the state to act aggressively. They urged a “moderation” of democracy, a contraction of “the democratic principle.”3 Inclusion was the antidote to a crisis of democracy they saw as enacted not by armed militias at the polls or by police trampling, raping, and beating protestors, but by those who risked their lives to “make democracy a reality,” in Fannie Lou Hamer’s words.4 The wager Huntington and his colleagues made was that the promise of social visibility and cultural recognition could force radicals to stop fomenting rebellion in the streets and instead sit their backbones down at the table. While some accepted that bargain, Black feminist radicals refused, continuing through their insurgent acts and defiant speeches to slow the self-assured forward motion of a “democracy” built on the violent denial of the power of the people. When Kamala Harris invoked the name of Fannie Lou Hamer, we were quickly reminded of the civil rights leader’s powerful speech in front of the Credentials Committee fifty-six years ago, at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. On behalf of the newly formed Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Hamer detailed how white police officers violently arrested and beat her when she attempted to register Blacks to vote. “I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush,” she said. Hamer attempted to move her body away from the blows of another white man who, seeing that her dress was “worked up high,” walked over and hiked the hem up further. **“I pulled my dress down and he pulled my dress back up,” she lamented.5 Hamer wanted the committee and the world watching the televised proceedings to know that Black women organizing to claim their citizenship rights were subject not only to merciless beatings but also to repeated sexual violence at the hands of the state.**6

Alexis Gumbs; Ph. D Duke University, “We can learn to mother ourselves, the queer survival of black feminism 1968-1996,” pp. 17-20

Survival. The condition of bare life. The mythology of differential fitness. The continuity of property and properties. But survival is more than this. **Survival,** as it emerges as a key word in the theory and poetics of Audre Lorde and June Jordan **is a poetic term. It provides the basis for the reconsideration of its own meaning, and the reconsideration of the meaning of “life,” that which “survival” queerly extends despite everything. Survival is a pedagogy: secret and forbidden knowledge that we pass on, educating each other into a set of skills and beliefs based on the queer premise that our lives are valuable in a way that the economization of our labor, and the price of our flesh in the market of racism deny. Survival is a mode of inquiry, providing a repertoire of critical insights, gained from discerning what approach to a political and economic framework we can afford from one moment to the next. Survival is an afterlife; by continuing to exist we challenge the processes that somehow failed to kill us this time. Survival is a performance, a set of aesthetic invocations that produce belief and resonance. Survival is a poetic intervention into the simplistic conclusion of the political narrative: we were never meant to survive**. **The “we” that was never meant to survive is a challenge to the gospel of individualism**. The content of that “we” is at stake because survival redefines who we are. For those of us who constitute the collection of people addressed by Audre Lorde’s ‘A Litany for Survival,” **the meanings of our lives have been slandered within an economy that uses narratives of racial inferiority, gender determinism, and sexual subjectivity to devalue our bodies, our breathing, our time. If we are survivors, who “we” are is the question of survival,** and whether we survive depends on the generation of a set of relationships that prioritizes who we are *to* each other through our queer acts of loving the possible collectivity represented in each of our bodies.**2 Survival is a queer act for oppressed communities because it interrupts the social reproduction of the sanctioned deaths of those who were never meant to survive.** In this chapter I argue that **survival as a fact, a possibility, an act, a tactic and an approach, is a performative and poetic intervention into a meaning of life that the narrative of capitalism reproduces: the belief that a differential monetary value can be assign**