

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

**DRAWING OUT FUNGAL CARE:
AN ANTI-COLONIAL LATINA/X FEMINIST APPROACH TOWARD
REMEDIATING GAIA'S SYMBIOPOIETIC HOMEOKINESIS IN RESPONSE TO
THE METABOLIC RIFT**

A Dissertation in

Art Education and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

by

Xalli Zuniga

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2022

The dissertation of Xalli Zuniga was reviewed and approved by the following:

Karen Keifer-Boyd

Professor of Art Education and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

Art Education Graduate Program Head and Professor-in-Charge of Art Education

Dissertation Advisor

Chair of Committee

Wanda B. Knight

Professor of Art Education, African American Studies, and Women's,

Gender, & Sexuality Studies & Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Mariana Ortega

Associate Professor of Philosophy and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

Dr. Michelle Rodino-Colocino

Associate Professor of Media Studies and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

ABSTRACT

There is a metabolic sense to the way life is sustained on the planet. Nevertheless, nature's dynamic, life-producing processes are being disturbed by the current globalized production system, causing the current planetary crisis. In response, I propose to use creative efforts attuned to aisthesis, autoarte, and dialogic drawing, to begin to trace a paradigmatic shift from agonism to loving collaboration, inspired by how mycorrhizal fungi perform care in nature. Framing burnout as an expression of such a crisis, this dissertation presents a study of young worker experiences of energetic depletion as expressed by 22 'Millennial' participants who underwent a dialogic drawing exercise that I designed and called 'drawing out.' As a theory-informed practice, drawing out worked dialogically in relating participant experiences of burnout with the phenomenon of the metabolic rift. Entangling artistic means with ecological aims, this study grapples with decolonial, Latina/x feminisms—particularly the work of María Lugones—in identifying agonism to be the core affective-discursive substance leading to metabolic rifting. Agonism is perceived as fueling the artificial, second-order imposition of capitalist production that operates over nature's metabolism, enforcing the principle of extraction without return. Driven by the false prospect of infinite accumulation in a world with finite resources, the second-order imposition breaks the law of replenishment, interfering with the first-order's state of homeokinesis that it needs to survive, hence its self-destructive character. Metabolic rifting not only affects ecosystems but also impacts the bodies of workers through labor exploitation and alienation. Moreover, burnout has been popularly identified with the 'Millennial' label as a generational stigma. As participant testimonies demonstrate, burnout precludes younger workers from organizing in order to collectively and effectively respond to the environmental crisis that threatens their livelihoods and futures. Negative affects derived from exploitation and powerlessness create cycles of precarity for young workers involving modes of metabolic compensation that are framed as inherent 'Millennial traits. Therefore, it is imperative that people engage with a material analysis to firstly deal with the second-order imposition over nature in order to begin to remediate the planet from the effects of the metabolic rift. The purpose is to envision a model for a new politics of care built around the principle of symbiopoiesis as the metabolic production of life or 'worlding,' in resisting rifting.

Keywords: Agonism, Aisthesis, Queer Autoarte, Lugones, Burnout, Mycorrhizae, Decolonization, Latina/x Feminisms, Sympoiesis, Symbiogenesis, Loving-Perception, Coalition-building, Care

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
Positional Prologue.....	x
Chapter 1 Gaia’s Metabolic Care Crisis.....	1
Introduction.....	1
0	
Structure of the Dissertation.....	5
Problem Statement.....	10
First-order mediation (1-OM).....	10
Appropriation.....	11
Metabolism as Autopoiesis.....	12
Metabolism and the Death of Nature.....	13
Gaia’s Symbiopoiesis.....	15
Second-order Imposition (2-OI).....	17
Expropriation.....	18
The Metabolic Rift.....	18
Alienation.....	19
Material Alienation: Capital and Class.....	21
Class-based Exploitation: Gig Economy.....	23
Psycho-affective Alienation: Burnout.....	25
‘Millennials’ and Burnout.....	26
The Crisis of Care.....	33
Hope Labor VS Hustle Culture.....	36
Exploitation-Expropriation of Nature and Women under the 2-OI.....	40
Rifting Oikos: Economy and Ecology.....	41
The Lauderdale Paradox.....	42
Three Dimensions of the Metabolic Rift.....	43
Krisis and Care.....	44
Toward a Mycorrhizal Politics of Care.....	45
Care Webs.....	50
Gaslighting.....	52
Chapter 2 Theoretical Frameworks.....	55
Introduction.....	55
Decolonial Feminisms.....	55
María Lugones.....	57
Toward an Intersectional Marxism.....	59
Fusion.....	60
Colonial Discourses and The Enlightenment Myth of ‘Man’.....	65

Man: The Anthropos in Anthropocene.....	68
Cartesian Dualism.....	70
Social-Darwinian Parasitism.....	71
The Protestant Work Ethic.....	73
From Colonial Agonism to Decolonial Playfulness.....	75
Arrogance as Agonistic Coloniality.....	77
Playfulness, Loving Perception, and ‘World’-travel.....	78
Problematizing Coalition-building.....	83
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	85
Introduction.....	85
Dialectics.....	86
Dialectics of Sentipensar.....	90
Theoretical Foraging and Conceptual Composting.....	91
An Arts-based, Social Justice Activist Praxis.....	93
Feminist Dialogism.....	94
Socially Engaged Art (SEA).....	95
Drawing as a Visual Methodology.....	96
Hangouts.....	98
Dérive.....	99
Decolonizing Drawing.....	100
Drawing as Queer Autoarte.....	101
Mycorrhizal Sensibilities as Differential Aisthesis.....	104
Affective Mycelia.....	105
Symbiopoietic Coalition-building.....	106
Drawing and Fusion.....	108
Post-humanist (Co-)figuration in Drawing Out.....	110
Limit Cases and the Permeability of Thresholds.....	112
Chapter 4 Research Design and Data Coding.....	116
Introduction.....	116
Context of Analysis: Charted Precarity.....	117
Research Questions.....	119
Interpretive Instruments: Affective-discursive Coding of Data.....	120
The ‘Millennial Adult’ Discourse.....	124
Affects Associated with the ‘Millennial Adult’ Discourse.....	126
Sample Size and Selection Criteria.....	127
Preparing and Conducting Drawing Out.....	128
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process.....	130
Recruitment of Study Participants.....	131
Data Collection Process.....	134
Charting Coded Data.....	138
Chapter 5 Discussion, Limitations, and Findings.....	147
Introduction.....	147
Discussion.....	148

Content Analysis of Verbal Input.....	151
Art and the Drawing Experience.....	152
Playfulness.....	156
Burnout, Exploitation, and Mental Health.....	158
‘Millennial’ Condition and ‘Adulthood’.....	161
Alien Identities.....	166
Disenchanted Precarity.....	167
Nature and Care.....	168
Content of Visual Input.....	172
Thematic Findings.....	175
Facing Creative Vulnerability.....	175
Drawing In, Drawing Out.....	177
Trapped: Pandemic, ‘Potted’ Confinement.....	179
Affective-Symbolic Depictions of Burnout.....	184
Coping Mechanisms.....	185
Oppressive Double Binds.....	188
Conflict of Values.....	191
Gaslighting.....	193
Art as Care (Healing).....	194
 Chapter 6 Future Steps and Conclusion.....	 196
 Introduction.....	 196
Problems and Limitations.....	197
Theoretically Foraging Moore and Haraway.....	201
Future Steps.....	202
Conclusion.....	207
References.....	210
 Appendix A: Visualization Prompt Audio Transcript.....	 231
Appendix B: Participant Drawings.....	233
Appendix C: IRB Approval.....	237
Appendix D: Interview Questions.....	238

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A meme reflecting the ‘Millennial’s regard toward the generation’s condition.....	38
Figure 2: An MSCI graph displaying the Prosperity Index and Labor Force Entry, 1955-2020.....	40
Figure 3: Guardian graphic showing the increase in global surface temperature relative to 1850-1900.....	41
Figure 4: A meme posted as a Tweet that mocks the inconsistency of adopting intersectionality as a rhetoric without engaging with an actual praxis, for it becomes epistemically reduced	73
Figure 5: Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve.....	127
Figure 6: Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve.....	128
Figure 7: Three dimensions of burnout.....	137
Figure 8: A Diagram That I Drew Representing the Process of Drawing Out as a Flow Comprised of Four Main Stages with Internal Processes Each.....	139
Figure 9: Recruitment posters (in English and Spanish) for drawing out.....	141
Figure 10: Image of one of the first drawing out encounters I had over Zoom with a participant from the US, while conducting research in Mexico.....	144
Figure 11: Sample of a printed transcript that I formatted from each drawing out interview to engage in first cycle coding stage of the data	146
Figure 12: Screenshot of the template that I created using Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel to organize the data for second cycle coding.....	153
Figure 13: Screenshot of the template showing categories such as ‘pandemic,’ ‘Millennial’ identity experiences,’ and ‘‘Millennial’ representation,’ which were used for the second cycle coding phase of the study.....	153
Figure 14: Sample of a single participant’s WordCloud.....	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Participant identifiers, and the dates of participant interviews placed in relation to pandemic stages in 2021 and 2022.....148

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation drew a lot of caring energy from my networks of support. I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to everyone that lent their time and energy in making this study possible, with especial regard to my committee chair, Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd, who believed in my project and stood by me through the whole convoluted tracing of it. Alongside the notion of home, I learned with Dr. Keifer-Boyd that moisture is the substance of life. I would also like to thank Dr. Mariana Ortega for her light and insights that translate into artful meaning-making through the wonders of Latina/x feminisms. I am also incredibly grateful for my academic and personal conversations with Dr. Wanda Knight who showed me how to be a true ally by speaking from the heart against injustice. Many thanks also to Dr. Rodino-Colocino who helped me understand how to be critical yet humorous as we orient our work toward liberatory purposes. This study was highly sustained by the loving perceptions of friends and colleagues engaged in the world of fungi, Indigenous healing and community-building. Bruxas Bruxas feeds from that magic. Also, my Pastorizas. I am grateful to Dr. Elspeth Mitchell and Dr. Lenka Vráblikova for inviting me into the enthralling world of feminist ethnomycology. In addition, I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my participants, namely twenty-two kind individuals from around the world experiencing extreme hardship and burnout, who nevertheless agreed to play with me for a while and gifted me such insightful feedback. Also, thank you Ewan, to you and your parents who have been so kind to me, especially during these difficult times. I will always have you in my heart. Thank you, T'ümxi for appearing from behind the Maracuyá tree to give me your guidance, my little nahual. Thank you, familia, you are my main source of inspiration. If it were not for my parents' patience and support during the pandemic, I would not have been able to go through everything as I did. I am also infinitely grateful to the affective gusts that dialectically led me to you, e.

This is my love letter to the Earth.

And, lastly, this is for you too, Atila. We will someday share a glass of cachaça de banana, as we promised, while traversing the mycorrhizal afterworlds, and in celebration of the life that you dedicated to caring after our home.

Positional Prologue

[People] make their own history, but they do not make it [...] under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

-Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1818-1883*

The ‘Millennial’ discourses concerning burnout conceal a class problem. As a queer, Mexican community artist deeply concerned about the environmental crisis, my “‘Millennial’” label burns like a shortcoming. I am someone deeply involved with a social justice activist praxis, therefore, being reduced to a spectator as the world crumbles is excruciating. Those of us that feel similarly are left with little option but to witness the appalling negligence of global leadership in prioritizing profit over people during a global pandemic. We are left to suffer the consequences as if they were our own doing. Moreover, the hardships that fellow co-workers and friends from around the world experience reveal the patterns of similarity in our struggles as we attempt to earn a decent living amidst the dumpster fire that is capitalism. When exteriorizing these worries, ‘Millennials’ face gaslighting by being exposed to individualizing discourses concerning self-care, work-life balance, and about how it was always worse ‘back in the day.’ We are reduced to the stigma of our identity labels. Although this situation is not new, the reality is that it has gradually worsened, and, to resist its effects, it is vital that we take action before it becomes too late. As ‘Millennials,’ young workers were groomed for a life that no longer makes sense. Experiencing burnout results from being caught in a double-bind in which people are forced to labor for a wage in capitalism to survive, knowing that partaking in capitalism contributes to the larger threat of ecological collapse. In response, I decided to draw a spore print of this difficult moment threading core issues described by workers framed as ‘Millennials.’ The reality varies from experience to experience, yet the structures of exploitation remain the same. Therefore, I was compelled to reorient my own anger and burnout in creating this dissertation as a praxis-based reflection on how arts education pedagogical strategies such as dialogic drawing may help raise awareness around the underlying conditions leading to the ongoing destruction of Gaia’s livable landscapes.¹ Ultimately, and what this study seeks to stress is that burnout and ultimately, the environmental crisis—are tied to the same classed, metabolic problem.

¹ From now on, I will refer to planet Earth as Gaia, which frames it as a living meta-organism. Through the lens of Lynn Margulis’s symbiogenesis, the Earth—Gaia—is perceived as comprising multiple living systems that are co-producing via forms of collaborative exchanges that constantly transform them. This process refers to the what called evolutionary symbiosis, or symbiogenesis (Onori & Visconti, 2012).

Chapter 1

Gaia's Metabolic Care Crisis

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide a conceptual foundation for sustaining the main argument that this study proposes, which is voiced out in the spirit of anti-coloniality. Because decoloniality can be reduced to rhetoric if not used with critical care, I decided to provide a strong theoretical basis for articulating what this dissertation identifies as its problem statement: the metabolic rift. In order for readers to profoundly grasp the numerous implications of the complex phenomenon at hand, it was necessary for me to provide meta-contextual and historical coherence to the claim that this study is pushing forth. Such a claim involves a change of paradigm, inviting a new model for politics of care grounded in a spirit of evolutionary symbiosis and collaboration, as opposed to colonial agonism. Therefore, as the woven narrative of this dissertation demonstrates, 'the metabolic rift,' reveals an urgent quandary that can be rendered more clear and understandable through a Marxist critique of the current, globalized capitalist mode of production.

In addition, and from a historical-materialist perspective, I argue that it is pressing to use art-related processes to develop critical sensibilities in people that can raise awareness on how to best to address the current environmental crisis, specifically through forming working collectives. Through the expansive creativity that artmaking stimulates, people can become sensitized into organizing themselves to prevent what causes planetary rifting, namely, the stultification of nature's fundamental processes of replenishment and balance, perpetrated by the current global production system. Consequently, and based on preparatory research, I developed an arts practice that was meant to help people become aware of the two main scenarios that I considered to be dialectically connected to the metabolic rift (as energetic depletion). From this perspective, the metabolic rift can be seen to manifest as burnout (at the level of human bodies). However, at a global level, the metabolic rift manifests as the current environmental crisis, impacting the entire planet as a 'meta-body.'

The dialogic drawing exercise that I designed in response to the metabolic rift is called 'drawing out,' and it was created as mechanism for introspective exteriorization, oriented toward addressing the more immediate effects of rifting—such as burnout—and as specifically described by people currently entering the work force (most of whom belong to the generation of people

labelled as ‘Millennials’). I expand on the reasons why I chose art as consciousness raising means in Chapter 3, under the section titled ‘Arts-based, Social Justice Activist Praxis.’ What this study contends is that art, as a form of inquiry, can help produce knowledge that can advance the agenda that is concerned with dismantling systems of domination (Karen Keifer-Boyd, 2011b). Furthermore, my decision to implement a decolonial Latina/x framework of analysis for this study was meant to assist in the production of data that could be analyzed to help orient the change of paradigm (from parasitic agonism to symbiotic collaboration) that is urgently needed to overcome the Anthropocene.

Drawing, as an art-form, can act as a projective method for helping researchers delve into the affective and symbolic experiences of people beyond surface-value expression (Theron et al., 2011). In this case, drawing, as an art-form helped exteriorize information that could help frame of burnout as a small-scale manifestation of the metabolic rift.² During ‘drawing out,’ participants were able to share their pandemic experience albeit from a discursively dislocated perspective, for the initial prompt invited them to imagine they were plants. Therefore, this kind of work aimed to help emphasize the power that art, as praxis, has in research: (a) in terms of providing interviewees with a holistic means to fully express themselves without feeling too restrained by format or expectations, (b) to help them replenish in the face of burnout, and (c) to allow researchers to analyze more nuanced aspects of qualitative data (Capous-Desyllas & Morgaine, 2018).³

Using drawing both as corpus as well as process, I intended to highlight the importance that the discipline of art education has in developing important sensibilities for recognizing oppressive situations and teaching how not just to survive but to thrive in them, which also resonates with much of the work that is being done in Latina/x feminisms (Ortega, 2016a).⁴ More

² I discuss drawing’s potential as a research method in the section titled ‘Drawing as a Visual Methodology’ in Chapter 3.

³ For instance, since not everyone is versed in the languages and discourses that surround art as a ‘world,’ discipline or practice, it is important to address varied skills. For example Elliot Eisner suggested that an alternative would be “to create collaborative teams of researchers working with artists who are trained in the necessary techniques and possess artistic talents” (Capous-Desyllas & Morgaine, 2018, p. xii).

⁴ The mycorrhizal model based in nature is meant to act as a binding agent (which honors the function of fungi in the forest as protective-connective processes sustaining life) from which to establish a visual as well as real example of a care web or support system based on what I’m referring to as a ‘politics of care,’ which appears at the end of Chapter 1. For instance, I am envisioning the possibility of using art processes to connect knowledges from various disciplines. Art can inform science as well as the rest of the humanities (and vice versa), if incorporated symbiotically as a valid means for knowledge production.

importantly, the specific work that I'm engaged in with this study is meant to stress the relevance that artmaking has as a necessary activity of replenishment for people undergoing stress and burnout (energetic depletion).⁵ Artmaking can be oriented to work as an incredibly powerful practice of connection, which is why I am using the model of mycorrhizal fungi as a means to represent and project the relational and collective aspects of resistance and of self-learning in creative praxes that contrast the rifts or separations caused by coloniality and capitalism. As a process, not just an object or corpus to be analyzed, art is an education in itself, and involves many forms of reasoning and sensing that expand reductive colonial thinking. Artful explorations can help people delve into the affective realm of their beings, which is precisely what Latina/x feminisms are theorizing to assist with the praxis of coalition-building, such as with Mariana Ortega's concept of queer autoarte and differential aisthesis (Ortega, 2020).⁶

The proposed narrative structuring this study proposes the following: Although 'Millennials' workers are deeply concerned about the future of humanity with respect to the environmental crisis, nevertheless, they are undermined by the generational discourse which labels them as unfit for the modern workplace. Framing people as 'unfit' is a form of epistemic de-platforming (on the basis of a stereotype) that helps assert the false claim that the precarity and burnout people experience happen solely as a result of their own 'intrinsic' shortcomings. The 'Millennial' label works as a form of agonistic stigma that this study identifies as pertaining to the ideological domain of an artificial, modern-capitalist, second-order mediation imposed over nature's metabolism, which disrupts its fundamental, life-producing processes. The 'Millennial' label thus precludes people classified as such from engaging in proper forms of organized action that can deal with the ecological quandary at hand (a situation that further enhances their state of

⁵ Furthermore, an anti-colonial or decolonial approach to research resonates with what art educators Jan Jagodzinski and Jason Wallin (2013) posit in terms of pushing for art educators to perform fidelity-as-betrayal. They write that betrayal as enacting aisthesis (anti-colonial aesthetics) supports "the 'divine' plan of redeeming the arts to have their own 'special' forms of acting in the world, but to cut ties with a number of its directions for specific ethical, aesthetical and political reasons when it comes to furthering that trajectory along epistemological claims, and with a self-serving representational aesthetic." (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 2). What the authors suggest is precisely what I am trying to enact with this study: shifting from a stance based on ego (producing knowledge for proving one's 'greatness,') to producing knowledge that can be of use to the more-than-human life-collective inhabiting the planet (in terms of ecosocialism).

⁶ Latina/x feminisms stress the importance of difference in coalition-building, what I intend to contribute to their cause with this study is an alternative of non-reductive-connection that can help people realize that there are many forms to conceive collective work in a more-than-human manner. The point is to attain a dynamic balance between 'opposing' forces (to avoid subsuming into 'fixed' binaries), which is what the concept of homeokinesis stands for.

burnout). Therefore, and as this study finds, in order for younger workers classed as ‘Millennials’ to even begin to respond to the ecological crisis, it is required that they first dismantle the second-order imposition that causes paralyzing rifts in their own metabolism, of which burnout is a manifestation.

In such a spirit, this study sought to contribute to the production of knowledge concerning the root causes behind the environmental effects. My research questions involved inquiring into the way participants shaped their expression of burnout during the coronavirus pandemic. I investigated the particular manner by which participants grappled with the ‘Millennial’ discourse as a colonial-agonistic form of stigma, evincing the existing tension between conscious and unconscious, interiorized and exteriorized forms of acceptance or resistance to the label’s implications. In response, I mobilized an arts-based, dialogic drawing practice that I called ‘drawing out’ and that I designed to obtain and record projective information from participants, as a means to code and interpret their testimonies and drawings (as data), in a manner that could frame how people undergoing the metabolic rift structure such experiences.

Prioritizing the ecological crisis at hand, the ultimate goal for this study was to contribute to the creation of a model for a new politics of care inspired by the way mycorrhizal fungi perform connective sustenance in nature. As a means to fill a gap in the knowledge, this study was designed to offer a holistic, transdisciplinary, and arts-pedagogical praxis that connected various theoretical pathways via the projective power of artmaking. Namely, I drew simultaneous hyphal threads from (a) John B. Foster’s metabolic rift theory (1999), (b) Lynn Margulis’s theory of evolutionary symbiogenesis (1971), (c) Donna Haraway’s (Ortega, 2016) development of Humberto Maturana and Varela’s (1980) theory of autopoiesis as sympoiesis, (d) María Lugones’s (2003) decolonial feminist account of agonism and playfulness, and finally, and (e) Mariana Ortega’s (2020) differential aisthesis and queer autoarte. Mobilized through dialogic drawing rooted in the workings of drawing as a visual methodology of inquiry, I identified agonism to be the main substance structuring nature’s second-order imposition (capitalism). As an affect-wielding discourse, I my main claim was that agonism is what structures capitalism’s ongoing disruption the Earth’s metabolism, which leads to the planetary crisis of the present.

One of the main overarching arguments that this study was meant to stress was the urgent need that humanity has in enacting a paradigmatic shift from colonial agonism to decolonial care, in order to arrest the metabolic rift by addressing and changing its underlying, material causes before its effects become irreversible. The practice of drawing out is meant to assist with such shifts, albeit from a person-to-person perspective (in this particular case as a form of pilot), and

through a creative process of introspective catharsis enacted through drawing dialogues. As such, this practice can offer a starting point from which to begin to catalyze an actual (meaning real, material) change of paradigm, which requires organized collective action.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 of this dissertation presents the study's problem statement, which signals capitalism's self-destructive nature which is the main argument fronted by of the metabolic rift theory. The metabolic rift theory contends that the present planetary crisis is contingent on the disruption of the Earth's natural metabolic processes. Consequently, I introduce the first order mediation according to Istvan Mészáros's (2020) development of Marx's theory of metabolism, the necessary appropriative labor that happens as a non-disturbed mediation between humans and nature. I found it necessary to provide a brief explanation on the concept of appropriation, which refers to the necessary activity by which humans take and consume nature's wealth via different forms of labor-based mediations. As I explain, appropriation becomes twisted negatively by capitalism's 2-OI.

The following section presents a discussion of the concept of metabolism from the perspective of biologist Humberto Maturana's (1980) theory of autopoiesis, which offers a cybernetics approach to the conception of life as self-producing (Varela & Maturana, 1980). From that discussion I move on to compare and contrast the notion of metabolism (as a first-order mediation) with the ideological mechanization or death of nature, which is a constructed discourse that serves the interest of domination via the imposition of gender. I explain the implications that the historical-ideological debasement of nature and women had in the development of Patriarchal-mechanistic science. From this discussion, I move on to a topic that I've called 'Gaia's Symbiopoiesis,' which constitutes the central argument orienting this dissertation. The idea of Gaia's symbiopoiesis is meant to remind people to connect to the vision of the Earth, as a living symbiopoiesis (a conglomeration of entangled, life-producing processes), which is what the notion of *Gaia* is meant to denote. The Gaia theory suggests that the planet is self-regulating, and, therefore, should be regarded as a living meta-organism, as opposed to a dead rock floating in a spatial void (which is the conventional heteropatriarchal-scientific view).

Subsequently, I explain how the Second Order Imposition (2-OI) operates by replacing Gaia's metabolism, and, in result, leads to the metabolic rift. The second order imposition is paradoxical and refers to the system of capitalist heteropatriarchy (entangled with white—Anglo/European—supremacy) that actively thwarts Gaia's metabolic state of homeokinesis (a

balance attained through dynamism as opposed to stasis) by imposing non-reciprocal forms of extraction and production that impede replenishment as part of the process of production.

From the discussion of Gaia's Symbiopoiesis in Chapter 1, I discuss the concept of expropriation, which describes processes of extraction and appropriation that do not involve replenishment or reciprocity and thus contribute to rifting. Through an investigation of expropriation, I am able to craft an explanation of what the metabolic rift is about. As a concept, expropriation is core to this study and that helps explain the effects of breaking nature's law of replenishment that come with practices that wrongly assume that it is possible to perform labor without an energetic or material base of support, which is false, and is what has ultimately led to the current planetary crisis.

There were several key concepts (such as with appropriation and expropriation) in Marxist theory that I needed to explain in order to ground my critique of the metabolic rift in accordance to the dialectical-materialist manner that I chose to approach the problem identified by this study. For instance, I found that it was necessary to include a section on alienation, as a prior condition to burnout, with regard to a Marxian analysis of class, which has to do with the implicit labor roles that people have and that become reduced to identity features. Cultural identity helps hide the underlying relations of exploitation that determine how people live, with regard to how they are forced to sell their labor for a wage, as members of the working class, which contrasts the position of capitalists, who own the means of production and do not have to sell their labor power to others in order to survive in capitalism. From this discussion, I move to contextualize the Gig Economy, which is a labor situation that fragments people's ability to earn enough money as a result of being employed in various low-paying jobs in order to fund their expensive existence within the 2-OI.

I examine the psychoaffective impact that the Gig Economy has on workers in the next section, which builds toward my investigation of burnout as a phenomenon tied to alienation and exploitation, connected to ideas discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore, I introduce a contextualization of 'Millennial' burnout, in reference to the levels of exploitation endured by younger workers bearing the stigma of the 'Millennial' generational label. Subsequently, I engage in a discussion of the crisis of care, in reflection of the affects and effects associated with the metabolic rift and that concern social reproductive labor. I present a section on hope labor and hustle culture as embedded within such a crisis, from an ideological perspective that helps incentivize an abusive approach to production. I proceed to discuss the expropriation of women and nature under the 2-OI, which has to do with the epistemological rift that happened between

the sense of economy and that of ecology, which were once united holistically under the concept of Oikos, or home. The rift is explained by virtue of the paradoxical nature of the 2-OI, which is further explained by the Lauderdale Paradox, which discloses the contradicting interests that capitalists have in comparison to those of workers. The final sections of this Chapter involve a discussion of the three dimensions of the metabolic rift, as developed by metabolic rift theorist Kohei Saito, in relation to the two main axis organizing this dissertation's core discussion: that of crisis and that of care. I provide what I envision being a hopeful scenario that I am articulating as a move 'Toward a Mycorrhizal Politics of Care,' where I employ the concept of care webs in relation to the way mycorrhizal fungi perform care in nature. As a concluding section, I present a discussion of the psychological mechanism otherwise known as gaslighting, that mobilizes rhetorical moves meant to epistemically debase people, in this case 'Millennial's, against the causes of their oppression.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical frameworks structuring this study. I begin by introducing a discussion that contextualizes the development of decolonial feminisms as a result of María Lugones's critique of the concept of coloniality in its lacking of a perspective attentive to gender. From my interpretation of Lugones's theories, I propose to emphasize the need for the development of an intersectional Marxist approach to critiquing coloniality. I then engage in a discussion involving the main agonistic discourse that this study identifies as causing the metabolic rift: The Enlightenment Myth of 'Man.' I deconstruct such a myth through two main axes that involve Cartesian Dualism on the one hand and the Protestant Work Ethic on the other with regard to the establishment of fixed binaries that preclude people's metabolic understanding of nature on the basis of the ideological domain of the 2-OI. I include a section that considers Social Darwinism as leveraging a form of parasitic relationality that enforces non-reciprocal relations of exploitation which lead to rifting. I subsequently introduce Lugones's concepts of Playfulness, Loving Perception, and 'World'-travel, which serve to establish a critique of arrogance as agonistic coloniality from a perspective that embraces kindness as (mycorrhizal) care in terms of pursuing a shift of paradigm. As a final section of Chapter 2, I problematize coalition-building from a sense that seeks to avoid reducing difference to sameness for the sake of a fake sense of 'unity,' which goes against the principles and goals of this study.

Chapter 3 concerns the entangled methodologies structuring of this study. I begin by introducing a section of dialectics from the perspective of a materialist praxis, which then leads to a discussion of the conceptually-informed praxis of *sentipensar*, as a dialectical mode of engaging with both discourses and affects without succumbing to rifting binaries (such as those predicated

by the discourse of Cartesian Dualism). I subsequently present two major tactics that I developed and that follow the mycorrhizal model sustaining this dissertation. Namely, I am referring to the practice of theoretical foraging and conceptual composting, which deal with a critical-sensible capacity that people have in drawing useful aspects of existing theories while disclosing (composting) other aspects that could be considered to be problematic in certain contexts. From a critical consideration toward a dialectics of *sentipensar*, I developed a section where I engaged with the main methodological structuring of this study with regard to artmaking. Namely, I present arts-based research as orienting the dialogic drawing aspect of the exercise prompt that I gave participants in asking them to draw a self-portrait in plant form. I specifically engaged with a feminist approach to dialogism, which is another dimension influencing the arts-based, drawing component of this study. I added a section that shares the background informing practice of drawing out through the notion of ‘Socially Engaged Art,’ which is a relational approach to artmaking. From that discussion, I move to discuss what I mean by ‘Drawing as a Visual Methodology,’ from the perspective that is supported by the theoretical frameworks of Latina/x feminisms. I consequently present the notions of ‘hanging out’ and ‘*dérive*,’ which helped me coin and develop drawing out from a perspective attentive to transgressive practices that seek to defy normativity in terms of its conditioning of social behavior in space. From this discussion, I am able to offer my interpretation of decolonial drawing, which is grounded in the concept of *aisthesis* (or anti-colonial sense-perception) and queer *autoarte*, which is Mariana Ortega’s concept that bridges Gloria Anzaldúa’s conception of self-making through drawing (as *autohistoria-teoría*) and brings it into the realm of artmaking. I propose to develop what I’m calling ‘mycorrhizal sensibilities’ as differential *aisthesis*, which mobilizes people’s multiplicitous capacities for sensing and making meaning in their construction of new ‘worlds’ and visions of sense attuned to the different dimensions of oppression that people navigate in the 2-OI. I subsequently provide an explanation of a concept that I designed for this study that I called ‘affective mycelia,’ and that speaks of the abstract manner by which people develop rapport in their artful engagements with each other. I consider this concept to be central in the quest of forming *sympioietic* coalitions, specifically through drawing in terms of coalescing, through which I present an additive response to Lugones’s concept of ‘fusion’ in critique of previous problematizations that do not take a materialist account into consideration when theorizing resistances to oppression. From this discussion I move on to explain what I refer by the notion of a ‘post-humanist’ co-figuration, where I critique the concept of posthumanism by proposing the alternative notion of *compostism*, as suggested by Donna Haraway (2016). As a

closing section to this Chapter, I present the concept of a limit case with an overview of the permeability of thresholds, in response to the notion of fusion as a mode for coalition-building that can become attuned to symbiopoiesis as opposed to flattening difference.

Chapter 4 sketches the research design for drawing out by presenting the context of analysis of what I am calling ‘charted precarity,’ which offers visual references to help frame the current context in which ‘Millennials’ experience labor-based burnout in the present. I present a section where I introduce my research questions, which helped guide this study’s findings from an analytical perspective attentive to both the discursive as well as affective aspects of the data interpretation. I include a section on the main components articulating the ‘Millennial’ adult discourse and its associated affects. I also provide information regarding my sample size, selection criteria, and from there I move onward to discussing how the practice of drawing out was prepared and conducted. I present my data collection design, as well as the specific affective-discursive framework for coding that I implemented. In concluding Chapter 4, I offer an analysis of participant input with regard to how I decided to navigate the data interpretation aspect of this study in terms of charting coded input with regard to specific categories for coding and analysis.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter of this dissertation, and it begins with an overview of the data discussion on the basis of values coding, which pay attention to the way participants frame their experiences with regard to an inherent sense structuring their values, attitudes and beliefs. I then provide an analysis of content in terms of the verbal input from interview transcripts that I was able to retrieve and organize for coding. I established the four main categories that helped me organize the data, which are: (a) art and the drawing experience, (b) burnout, alienation, and exploitation, (c) the ‘Millennial’ condition and ‘adulthood’, and (d) Nature and Care.

After presenting my analysis of verbal input, I then present my analysis of visual input, with regard to the drawings that participants made in response to the prompt structuring the exercise of drawing out. I subsequently present the main themes that I drew from completing the initial cycles of coding, from which I was able to retrieve enough material to begin identifying patterns and frequency of term usage with regard to each of the themes that structured my interviews with participants. I conclude that ‘Millennials’ are caught in an oppressive double bind situation that leaves them vulnerable to gaslighting on behalf of discourses that are meant to individualize the blame for structural situations (causing oppression). Subsequently, I present a section where I delve into the feedback that I received from participants, which was mostly positive, and then I reflect on the problems and limitations constraining this study. I specifically

problematize some of the theorists that I rely on to build my argument through the practice of theoretical foraging that I introduced in Chapter 4, specifically Haraway's embracing of Jason Moore's problematic theory of the 'web of life,' which masks the underlying conditions of exploitation that this study is meant to emphasize. I then add a section where I reflect on possible future steps for this kind of study, from which I plunge into the conclusion that ties in the main arguments covered in the previous chapters of this dissertation.

Problem Statement

The metabolic rift theory explains capitalism's tendency towards its self-destruction. This study's problem statement concerns orienting the lens of such a theory to understand the historical process by which humans in power have organized their necessary exchanges with nature via egotism—in the form of extraction without return—thus breaking with nature's laws of reciprocity and replenishment that are necessary for production. The result is a disrupting of nature's metabolism or life-producing processes and its consequent rifts. The etymological origin of the term metabolism lies in the ancient Greek term *metabole* denoting 'a change,' from the root word *metaballein*, meaning 'to change,' whose prefix *meta* means 'change,' while its suffix *ballein* means 'to throw' (Harper, n.d.a). In other words, the key idea within is change. The concept of metabolism is useful in discerning what are the eco-systemic ways (pertaining to the first order metabolism of the earth) for humans and nature to interact; it helps disclose how such interactions become distorted under the dominance of capital and, as such, are made to lead humanity toward a crisis of ecological destruction. There are two main dimensions dialectically structuring Marx's conception of nature's metabolism: the ecological and the social orders. I will explain in the following section what both entail in terms of their conditioning of the mediations by which humans and nature metabolically interact.

First-order Mediation (1-OM)

The first-order mediation between humans and nature refers to productive activity in general, or what philosopher Istvan Mészáros's (2020) called the "ontologically fundamental self-mediation of [humanity] with nature" (Mészáros, 1970, p. 79). Comprising the first-order mediation between humanity and nature, the concept of metabolism stems from Karl Marx's theorizations on the social and ecological dimensions of labor, which he defined via the German concept of *Stoffwechsel* (B. Clark & Foster, 2010). Standing for social-ecological organization of energetic movement, the notion of *Stoffwechsel* is heavily grounded in Marx's conception of the

labor process. In Marx's words, labor, as the creator of use-values, "is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between [humans] and nature, and therefore human life itself" (Marx, 1990, p. 133). Marx, as cited by Foster (2000), understood labor to be the main mediating agent between humans and nature. His definition of the labor process was entirely set in metabolic terms:

It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of a historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital. (Marx, 1993, p. 1294)

According to this view, labor is a form of dialectical self-mediation because, metabolically speaking, the human body and the body of nature are considered extensions of each other. In Mészáros's own words, "labor fulfills the function of active mediation in the progressively changing metabolism between humankind and nature" (p. 420). Furthermore, Marx's definition of metabolism discloses the dialectical-transformative relation existing between the environment and the 'self' that is described through the necessary process of appropriation, considered to be the precondition of production.

Appropriation

The concept of appropriation is key in Marx's analysis of the metabolic character of nature through his concept of property. As Marx explains, appropriation is the point of departure for the capitalist mode of production and is grounded on the objective relation that humans have to nature. It is, thus, predicated on the appropriation of materials that they need to consume to survive, and that are external to humans.⁷ Marx writes "all production is appropriation of nature on the part of an individual within and through a specific form of society," (Marx, 1993, pp. 213–214), which explains how appropriation happens in accord with human needs. Thus, at a first level, the appropriation of nature involves the initial processes that humans engage in order to live, such as with eating food, breathing air, drinking water, etc.

⁷ Humans have an internal digestive system, which, because of their evolutionary journey and conversion into mammals, and in stark contrast to how mycorrhizal enzymes operate (as Gaia's open digestive system).

Appropriation entails a kind of (momentary) destruction (of nature) for the sake of creation (of beings), and the cycle of life depends on the crucial phase of replenishment to be able to perpetuate itself, otherwise, there is nothing (no energy, either nutrients or fuel) from which to keep producing life. There are many ways to engage in appropriation, either in terms of return or in a non-reciprocal manner, which leads to rifting. However, the fundamental point is that appropriation is a process mediated by the labor that humans undergo in their mediations with nature. Such mediations have transformative effects on those performing the labor, as Foster explains

Through this movement [humanity] acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way [their] simultaneously changes [their] own nature.... [The labor process] is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction [*Stoffwechsel*] between [humanity] and nature, the everlasting nature imposed condition of human existence. (J. B. Foster, 2000, p. 546)

As an exchange of first-order eco-systemic equivalents, metabolic labor was used to describe the complex, dynamic, and entwined range of needs and relations brought into existence via ongoing processes of self-reproduction and reproduction among the many.

Metabolism as Autopoiesis

Metabolism denotes a complex biochemical process of exchange, through which organisms and systems engage with the environment to draw materials and energy and convert these into building blocks of growth (B. Clark & Foster, 2010). As such, metabolic mediation is defined as the “ceaseless flow of energy and matter through a network of chemical reactions, which enables a living organism to continually generate, repair, and perpetuate itself” (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 243). The concept of metabolism thus constitutes the basic process of life or the patterning of webs of exchange by which living beings are multidimensionally produced and organized.

As such, the notion of metabolism is consistent with biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela’s (1980) cybernetic/systems view of life. For these authors, the metabolic production of life is made possible by the process of *autopoiesis*, a term composed by the Greek words *auto* denoting ‘self’ and *poiesis* as ‘production,’ meaning *self-making*.⁸ Through

⁸ Autopoiesis further generates a phenomenological domain that Maturana regards as cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1980).

autopoiesis, living systems, as unities, are characterized according to the specific linkage that determine their relations of production in making “components that specify the system as a unity which exists only while it is actively produced by such concatenation of processes” (Maturana & Varela, 1980, p. 93). What they mean is that autopoiesis arises in a molecular system only when the overarching (‘meta’) relation that concatenates (links) its internal relations is produced and maintained constant via the production of the molecular components that constitute the system or entity through that very concatenation (linkage).

Maturana and Varela’s conception of life further resonates with that of physicists Arthur Iberall and Warren McCulloch in thinking about the complex biological organism (comprising both the human as well as Gaia’s multiple bodies) in a cybernetic sense. Iberall’s definition of life and life-like systems is as

any compact system containing an order and distribution of sustaining, non-linear limit cycle oscillators, and a related system of algorithmic guide mechanisms, that is capable of regulating its interior conditions for a considerable range of ambient environmental conditions so as to permit its own satisfactory preservative operation; that is capable of seeking out in the ecological environment and transforming and receiving those fluxes of mass and energy that can be internally adapted to its own satisfactory preservative operation (Iberall & McCulloch, 1969, p. 290)

Such a definition explains how living systems rely on maintaining a state of equilibrium based on the constant regulation of concatenated processes that allow them to be described as *autopoietic* (that self-produce). These metabolic processes show oscillatory properties, meaning that they swerve from extreme to extreme within a range of sequential variables as part of their transformative (life-producing) exchanges with regard to matter and energy. Since the process is inherently dynamic, Iberall helped coin the term *homeokinesis* to replace the less precise notion of homeostasis, which denotes a balance out of fixity (stasis) rather than of motion (Iberall & McCulloch, 1969). From these considerations I have come to regard life as operating metabolically in terms of self-production/autopoiesis on the basis of pursuing a state of *homeokinesis*, or dynamic balance. Reaching a state of metabolic homeokinesis becomes the ultimate goal in healing Gaia from the effects of rifting.

Metabolism and the Death of Nature

Marx’s conception of nature’s metabolism is two-fold. On the one hand, there is the ecological dimension which involves appropriation, or an ongoing-dialectical relation between

humans and nature that is self-regenerative, or *autopoietic*. On the other hand, there is the social dimension of labor, which concerns ideology and social reproduction. The ideological domain of the 2-OI, as a result of the process of historical development of human societies, has led to the mechanization—and consequent conceptual death—of nature.

As a concept, as feminist scholar Carolyn Merchant (1989) explains, the death of nature results from the acceleration of exploitation rate (impacting both nature and human bodies) in the name of culture and progress.⁹ Such was the result of the scientific revolution's triumph over the Platonic and Christian legacy of animism.¹⁰ Newtonian physics exorcized the 'spirit' out of matter and, thus, matter was declared dead, due to the tendency that male scientists had for using mechanistic terms to explain all natural processes (Frank & Shorr, 1937). From then on, nature was to be thought of as machine-like, and consisting solely of lifeless, separate particles mechanically obeying an external power.

Vandana Shiva (1993) and Carolyn Merchant (1989) have both characterized the death of nature as a dangerously reductionist idea, arguing that the attitudes promoted by the scientific revolution negated nature's capacity for creative renewal and regeneration, by reducing it to the idea of lifeless scenery or background. As Shiva explains: "In contrast to the organic metaphors, in which concepts of order and power were based on interdependence and reciprocity, the metaphor of nature as a machine was based on the assumption of divisibility and manipulability" (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 23). Shiva directly references Merchant by addressing the latter's framing of the main problems behind our current environmental dilemma to include the reconceptualization of reality and life as machine-like, rather than a living organism, which helped to entrench the domination of nature and women under Capitalist Patriarchy.

Patriarchal-mechanistic science is therefore a source of violence against the integrity and dignity of nature and women, in so far as it subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productive power with regard to reproduction and creation in general. Therefore, the concept of metabolism is key in resisting the reproduction-based oppression.

⁹ The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia provides an explanation of how exploitation rate is measured. They write: "Exploitation rate, applied on a fish stock, is the proportion of the numbers or biomass removed by fishing. If the biomass is 1000 tons and the harvest during a year is 200 tons, the annual exploitation rate is 20% (*Exploitation Rate*, 2020).

¹⁰ The discourse of the death of nature negated the platonic conception of immanence with regard to soul-bearing matter, which further helped shape the Christian idea of a 'spirit' inhabiting matter (Owens, 1983).

Gaia's Symbiopoiesis. The concept of Gaia is meant to remind humans to perceive the Earth as a living meta-organism, with a metabolism of its own, as a means to challenge the nefarious discourse of 'the death of nature.' As a hypothesis, the Gaia theory/paradigm was elaborated by James Lovelock in the late 1900s, promotes the idea that life on Earth (biota) is a self-regulating organism that operates by means of positive and negative feedbacks.¹¹ Namely, the theory states that Gaia's *homeokinetic* exchanging of fluxes of matter and energy is what makes it habitable.

Furthermore, the Gaia hypothesis suggests that organisms co-evolve with their environment, in helping to maintain the ideal conditions for life on the planet (Onori & Visconti, 2012). The idea of coevolution is akin to Lynn Margulis's theory of symbiogenesis, which explains fundamental relation between evolution and symbiosis that, for example, led to the origin of complex cells. Margulis defines symbiosis as the coexistence of two or more organisms in close association of mutual advantage to the partners, to exclude parasitism (Margulis, 1971)¹² Symbiosis demonstrates a kind of mutuality-based hospitality that is performed by beings (holobionts, or sympoietic entities/assemblages) engaged in mutualisms as a means to survive. Performing a form of evolutionary care work, heterotroph hosts (plant, animal, fungi) need the nourishing assistance of an autotroph-guest that can synthesize nutrients from a source such as sunlight cannot produce their own food.¹³

Another example of symbiosis that is emphasized by Donna Haraway (2016) is the relationship between acacias (examples of leguminous plants), mycorrhizal fungi, and certain free-living soil bacteria.¹⁴ As Haraway contends, acacias "In association with fungal mycorrhizal

¹¹ Including the chemical composition of the air for making the Earth's climate appropriate to accommodate life.

¹²As Haraway contends, the conventional definition of symbiosis becomes problematized with Margulis's theories to the point in which symbiosis ceases to be a synonym for 'mutually beneficial.' She writes:
The array of names needed to designate the heterogeneous webbed patterns and processes of situated and dynamic dilemmas and advantages for the symbionts/ holobionts is only beginning to surface as biologists let go of the dictates of methodological individualism and zero-sum games as the template for explanation." (Tsing et al., 2017, p. M26)

¹³ A popular example of symbiosis is the case of the hermit crab and the sea anemone, which stands in contrast to the typical prey-and-predator relationship. The symbiotic relationship between these two organisms is based on the anemone attaching itself to the shell of the crab, providing its partner with camouflage/protection from other predators, access to food (the anemone is nourished by stray bits left by the crab), and mobility (it is faster for the anemone to ride the crab than moving by itself).

¹⁴ As Margulis explains, neither organism can by itself retrieve nitrogen from the atmosphere. However, the roots of plants develop infection threads (similar to mycelia) that transport soil bacteria inside the root

symbionts (which host their own bacterial endosymbionts), many acacias fix the nitrogen crucial to soil fertility, plant growth, and animal existence” (D. J. Haraway, 2016, p. 123).¹⁵

Symbiogenesis thus explains the cobbling together of living entities (symbiont and symbiote) to make something new in terms of material reality, not just in the abstract.¹⁶ Haraway defines symbiogenesis as:

The fusion of genomes in symbioses, followed by natural selection—with a very modest role for mutation as a motor of system-level change [that] leads to increasingly complex levels of good enough quasi-individuality to get through the day, or the eon (A. L. Tsing et al., 2017, pp. M26, M27)¹⁷

Margulis’s understanding of symbiogenesis as a complex evolutionary mechanism is based on the grafting or transformative blending of previously independent organisms in new collaborative formulations. Such a process opens up the spectrum of collaborative living as a part of the broader metabolism of nature. Furthermore, in addition to developing symbiogenesis as a theory, Margulis also contributed to the development of the Gaia hypothesis: After helping Lovelock revise his original theory, Margulis realized that it was incorrect to think of Gaia as a single superorganism, namely as isolated autopoiesis. Rather, from Margulis’s observations, Gaia became revealed, not as an individual entity, but as a symbiogenesis of organisms of various kinds working together. In Margulis’s words:

structure where they transform into ‘bacteroids’ that have a specialized tissue called a ‘root nodule’ that can process nitrogen as a nutrient (Margulis, 1971)

¹⁵ The symbiotic-evolutionary work of mycorrhizal fungi is central to this study, which is also a fascinating example of symbiogenesis.

¹⁶ Haraway defines symbiont and symbiote (host and guest) as organisms living in a state of symbiosis (mutual association), whether beneficial or harmful to one or both. Symbionts and symbiotes can be human, non-human, and other-than-human. According to Haraway, both the human and the nonhuman partner should be called a symbiont or symbiote (Haraway, 2016)

¹⁷ To understand Margulis’s evolutionary symbiosis theory, it is important to revise some basic biological concepts. The cell, as the minimal unit for life, is divided into two groups: prokaryotes and eukaryotes. Prokaryotes are mostly microscopic and pre-nuclear, which means that their genetic material is dispersed throughout their cytoplasm, an example is blue-green algae and bacteria. Eukaryotes, in contrast, are truly nucleated and have central organelles in each of their cells which carry their genetic material as chromosomes. Eukaryotes are more common and more complex; they include most forms of life (trees, pets, plants, animals, etc.). From a deep observation of eukaryotic cells, Margulis was able to note an extraordinary resemblance between chloroplasts, mitochondria, and cyanobacteria, which led her to believe that these organelles (mitochondria and chloroplasts) might have once been independent organisms (bacteria) that, via a process of evolutionary fusion, consequently, became integrated into the cell as a component, helping with metabolic labor as a result of their symbiotic compatibility/association

The sum of planetary life, Gaia, displays a physiology that we recognize as environmental regulation. Gaia itself is not an organism [...] It is an emergent property of interaction among organisms, the spherical planet on which they reside, and an energy source, the sun” (Margulis, 1998, p.119). Thus Gaia can be seen as a self-regulating system, which connects the metabolic processes of microorganisms and atmospheric processes of the Earth in feedback loops.

In other words, the notion of Gaia denotes symbiosis extended to a planetary scale (Zukauskaite, 2020, p. 143). Thus, if the concept of metabolism—or what physicist Fritjof Capra explains that sages once called ‘the breath of life’—is to assist in changing the anthropocentric perception of a mechanical-dead planet to Gaia, it is important to think of the production of selves (autopoiesis) differently from an isolated notion of the selfhood, which is precisely what Donna Haraway’s concept of sympoiesis accomplished, which I expand on in Chapter 3.¹⁸

The Second-order Imposition (2-OI)

The first-order mediation establishes the conditions for life via the principles of *homeokinesis* and *symbiopoiesis*. However, in addition to the first-order mediation of human engagement with the appropriation of nature (as a means to secure survival via replenishment), there exists a superposed and nefarious mode of appropriation that does not engage with reciprocity. This second level can be explained further through Mészáros’s (2020) analysis of capital as a historically specific system of social metabolic reproduction (B. Clark & Foster, 2010). Mészáros (2020), a colleague of philosopher György Lukács, developed the concept of ‘social metabolism’ to analyze the unique way in which capitalism reorganized, not just the exploitative relations between capitalist and workers, but rather the more fundamental interactions between humans and nature.

Specifically, Mészáros theorized around the contradictions produced by hierarchical power relations intrinsic to capitalism, which he considered to shape the second-order mediation (that I am referring to from now on as an imposition, abbreviated ‘2-OI’) of production. The development of modern-capitalist societies led to the creation of what Mészáros identifies as an artificial second-order imposition of social character, which the ruling classes have placed over that of nature. The mediation brought about by this second order is paradoxical in character, since

¹⁸ For Maturana and Varela, the answer to the question “what is life?” is autopoiesis (Zdorovtsova, 2021).

it follows a logic of deception that claims to pursue infinite accumulation in a planet with finite wealth. As such, the second order mediation—driven by ego—actively disrupts the underlying metabolic relations that it needs to perpetuate itself, leading to a paradox that is explained by sociologists John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark as the metabolic rift.

Expropriation

The concept of expropriation refers to modes of appropriation that do not involve return, and thus intervene with metabolic replenishment. Following this chapter's discussion, it is a common understanding that the appropriation of nature is inevitable for species survival, at a first stage. Expropriation characterizes a form of appropriation that involves the disruption of nature's processes and that, as a result, produces rifts of various kinds. As Foster explains, drawing from Marx, expropriation is defined as appropriation minus the equality in all actual exchange relationships, or what philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon characterized as theft (J. B. Foster, 2018).

In contrast to reciprocal appropriation, which happens naturally and by necessity, the process of expropriation is a construction created by capitalism as a superposition upon the same metabolic equation. Thus, what supporters of the metabolic rift theory contend is that non-reciprocal forms of appropriation should be overcome in order to restore Gaia's state of metabolic homeokinesis.

The Metabolic Rift

Expropriation, as the 2-OI over nature's metabolism is the main cause behind what leads to the metabolic rift (2010).¹⁹ Mészáros's theoretical contributions denounced the destructive nature of capitalist 'progress' in claiming that:

¹⁹ The 'metabolic rift' concept was not coined by Marx. Rather, the term was brought to people's attention by Mészáros's successors, including John Bellamy Foster, Richard York, and Brett Clark who formed a school of thought based on that concept within contemporary Marxist theory. Foster and his colleagues built on Marx's identification of an 'irreparable rift' in a passage of *Capital* and developed it according to what they understood to be the argumentative trajectory of his later writings, which dealt mostly with ecology and the Earth's sciences. Since it was Engels who put together and published the scattered works that were left by Marx after his death—which included his theory of nature—most of what Foster's school has worked with has been rescued from several unpolished notebooks and manuscripts that had been ignored for most of the twentieth century. As Foster explains, "Capital itself was originally conceived as simply the first of what would have been five different books, including volumes on landed property, wage labor, the state, international trade, and the world market and crisis. The incomplete nature of Marx's project, given that even *Capital* was unfinished, has constituted a major problem for later Marxian theorists attempting to build on his dialectical social science" (Foster & Clark, 2018). As Saito (2020) explains,

[The] basic contradiction of the capitalist system of control is that it cannot separate ‘advance’ from destruction, nor ‘progress’ from waste—however catastrophic the results. The more it unlocks the powers of productivity, the more it must unleash the powers of destruction; and the more it extends the volume of production, the more it must bury everything under mountains of suffocating waste. (Saito, 2020)

Mészáros considered the global ecological crisis be of historical proportions, calling it “the potentially deadliest form of global hegemonic imperialism” (Foster, 2010, p. 49). Manifested as ecological collapse, the metabolic rift discloses a process that unfolds as a sequence of crises that result from the capitalist system’s disruption of the fundamental processes sustaining not only production but all of life, thus including social reproduction and nature’s metabolism (Foster & Clark, 2016, p. 2). More importantly, and according to one of the theory’s main supporters, Kohei Saito (2017; 2020), theorizing Gaia’s metabolism opens a window into a much-neglected dimension in Marxist thought: the ecological critique of capitalism as framed within the struggle for eco-socialism.

Foster explains Marx’s definition of socialism as a process of sustainable development that pointed to the necessity of maintaining the Earth for future generations, in addition to pursuing the greatest development of human freedom and potential. In that sense, Saito’s understanding of socialism thus requires that the associated producers rationally regulate the metabolism of nature and society (Foster & Clark, 2016). According to Saito, the law of replenishment has expanded the arguments raised by Mészáros by looking deep into Marx’s writings, from which he derived the context for presenting his nuanced critique of alienation.

Alienation

Metabolism, according to Foster (1999), constitutes Marx’s in-depth analysis of the alienation of nature, providing a clear picture of the complex, dynamic exchange between human beings and the natural realm, resulting from the labor of humans. Humans survive at the expense of their labor-based mediations with nature, for they are not separate from it. According to Foster, the metabolic approach to production is construed through Marx’s in-depth analysis of the alienation of nature, providing a clear picture of the complex, dynamic exchange between human

these documents remained buried for so long because they were considered incomplete and thus inconsequential, let alone worth publishing (2020, p. 7). Fortunately, these insightful writings have been recently released under the MEGA collection of works by Marx and Engels. MEGA stands for the historical-critical edition of all publications, manuscripts, and drafts as well as the correspondence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which can be found online at <https://mega.bbaw.de/de>

beings and the natural realm, which result from the labor of humans (1999, p. 382). Humans, as a part of nature, survive by laboring upon nature. Marxian alienation is formulated around the relationship between the worker, production, and nature, which entails a real (ontological) separation, resulting in a loss of reality for the worker. Alienation, according to Marx, develops from the fact that the objects that workers produce are not for them to possess, but rather end up belonging to others as commodities. As María Lugones explains:

Marx's alienated laborer [...] does not have any control over the means of production, is one example of a systematically oppressed person whose oppression is not escapable through her agency. In the logic of capitalist oppression, proletarians are not free to do anything but sell their labor power. In so doing, they enter a terrain where their labor power belongs to someone else who dictates the terms of its exercise. As labor power is used, what is produced in its consumption becomes hostile to the laborer in the form of capital. Their own productive activity becomes alien to them (Lugones, 2003, p. 196)

In other words, the object of labor presents itself as entirely independent of the labor that produced it. Alienated labor involves a degree of separation that precludes connective reciprocity from happening, as when you consume or use what you produce, instead of selling to others. Alienation, in the productive sense, refers to the symbolic substitution of workers by commodities in the plane of social relations, as regulated by the market. It is the material-perceptual result of expropriation-based appropriations of bodies and territories. However, from a more holistic sense involving not just production, but overall existence in nature, alienation takes a more complex character. As such, alienation is conceived as a distorted mediation of social nature between humans and nature. Thus representing “the contradictory, unsustainable character of the metabolic rift between nature and society that capitalism in particular had generated” (Foster, 1999, p. 399). Alienation is the main effect in expropriation, and in the natural sense, manifests as soil degradation and improper waste management, which was a major concern in Marx's time, and which led him to become more involved with an ecological critique of capitalism in his later years.

Alienation at the level of psychology (or what one can frame as the mind's metabolism, in terms of cognition and psychology) is a precursor to burnout, acting as a psycho-affective state that humans experience as a result of the capitalist dialectic between appropriation, expropriation, and exploitation. At the level of material relations, alienation constitutes an estrangement from one's labor and from the land: It is a concept explained and developed by Karl Marx through his critique of (so-called) ‘primitive accumulation.’ The subsequent sections explain what both the

material and psycho-affective levels of alienation involve, beginning with the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism that gave rise to the division of working society on the basis of class.

Material Alienation: Capital and Class. Central to Mészáros’s theorizing around the 2-OI of Gaia’s metabolism, the concept of alienation develops from Marx’s critique of Adam Smith’s (so-called) ‘primitive accumulation,’ which mainly involves: a) the enclosure of the commons, b) the rise of great estates, c) the dispossession and displacement of the peasantry, and d) the creation of a classed, bourgeois order (J. B. Foster, 2000). Marx identifies primitive accumulation as a warping of the principle of appropriation under capital, leading to the ideological and material separation of the means of production from labor and from the workers on the basis of class distinctions.²⁰

Socio-economic class denotes one’s relationship to labor on the basis of exploitation, class-based hierarchies reveal an existing tension between opposing bands with opposing interests.²¹ The classing of society addresses the levels of separation existing between workers and the means of production, dividing people into owners of such means and sellers of labor (Ste. Croix, 1984).²² Thus, exploitation on the basis of class is based on “the extraction of surplus from the laboring people in all class societies (which, in turn,) provides the material basis for their

²⁰ During the enclosure of the commons, previous communal spaces became systematically privatized via the imposition of property rights on what was previously a land for communal use. Thus, from then on, peasants were no longer granted open access to the wealth of nature that would otherwise offer them sustenance. Rather, in the newly emerging system of capitalism, resources are offered in exchange for a price set by the owner of the means that produced them. As such, primitive accumulation is meant to explain the divisive phase imposed over the first-order metabolic process, setting the base for expropriation.

²¹ People are classed according to their ability to hold control over the conditions of production as well as over other classes (Ste. Croix, 1984).

²² Surplus value is extracted from the workers by the capitalists—who sell the fruits of worker labor at a higher price (than what they cost to make), in order to make a profit. Meanwhile, workers are paid barely enough for them to keep on having to work to survive, as the cost of living is raised while wages go in the opposite direction. Consequently, class interests emerge from exploitation because as Marx explains: “The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes” (Marx, 1955, p. 18).

domination and social oppression” (Quick, 2015, p. 115). Class positions determine people’s interests, which are shared among the members: meaning that capitalists share the interest of lowering costs and raising profits, while workers share the interests of sustaining dignified (suitable, worthwhile) working conditions while earning a decent livable wage. These interests work against one another, through agonism, the foundational contradiction at the heart of the capitalist system that gives rise to what Marx refers to as ‘class struggle.’ Furthermore, ‘class consciousness,’ for Marx, involves an awareness of the inherent power inequities involved in the class struggle.

Class has different denotations and is a familiar concept used in daily speech. However, mainstream discourses around class are deliberately dubious so that people don’t have a clear idea of their class position nor their subsequent class interests. Either through the myth of all-absorbing middle class (the claim that everyone is part of the middle-class²³) or the expansion of the class system,²⁴ the rhetoric endorsed by capitalists is that the traditional working class is supposedly smaller than in the past and that working conditions are gradually being improved. Thus, it is naturally advantageous for the ruling classes to help mask the antagonism that is inherent to labor-based, social class divisions to avoid being ousted as blameworthy for the exploitation of workers, which would lead to important consequences (structural change via revolution, etc.). Ideology produces convenient narratives articulated by discourses that people interiorize and repeat and use to frame their lives in ways that mask exploitation (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). That is why ideology is a necessary tool in precluding people from developing class consciousness concerning their own state of exploitation.

²³ The middle-class discourse is used to critique Marx’s class analysis in stating that the present conditions do not match what he was able to foresee in his time. However, Journalist Charles Kenny establishes the following response: “And who, exactly, is in the middle class? That is a matter of some confusion. In their paper, “What Is Middle Class About the Middle Classes Around the World?” MIT economists Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo use a historical estimate based on the British middle class, which is often thought to be critical to Britain’s rise as a world power. They suggest that income for a family living off the wages of a clerk in his 30s in Britain in 1825 would be about \$10 per person per day in today’s U.S. dollars. They define a middle class as people with incomes between that level and the global poverty line of \$2 a day. Economist Homi Kharas at the Brookings Institution, meanwhile, uses a definition stretching the other direction from the \$10 mark, between \$10 and \$100 a day. Nobody is middle class according to both definitions.” (Kenny, 2011)

²⁴ For example, an article of the BBC established that a team of sociologists working with journalists came up with seven classes: the elite; established middle class; technical middle class; new affluent workers; emergent service workers; traditional working class; and the “precariat.” This specific denomination also helps mask the underlying relations of exploitation that were key in Marx’s critique.

Class-based Exploitation: The Gig Economy. The relation of exploitation that emerges between workers and capitalists compels workers to engage in waged-labor practices for subsistence, while owners reap their profits, which is a situation that has led to the development of the ‘gig economy.’ Marx defined the rate of exploitation (also called the rate of surplus-value) as the ratio of surplus value over variable capital (S/V), and as the ratio of the total amount of unpaid labor performed (surplus-value) compared to the total amount of wages paid (the value of labor power), (Marx, 1990; Zwolinski & Wertheimer, 2017). Feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (2016) identifies an aspect of exploitative relations of the present that creates the base for the myth of the middle-class. For Fraser, the expropriation aspect in exploitation involves an illusory choice for *precarized* workers who are, in reality, forced to sell their labor power to survive in capitalism. She proposes the compound concept of confiscation-cum-conscription-into-accumulation for describing the seizure of capacities and resources from the proletariat that are made to work, by force, in favor of the capital accumulation process.²⁵

The pervasiveness of precarity that forces workers to face expropriation in scenarios such as the gig economy is a result of late neoliberal capitalism’s shaping of the working world since the 1970s. Neoliberalism has subsumed all spheres of life to economization, and, in its doing so, it has normalized precarious employment forcing people to look for alternative and less stable models of work for survival, such as freelancing, and balancing multiple low-paying jobs (Hoppania, 2019).²⁶ The resulting survival-labor scenario ultimately describes what the gig

²⁵ Fraser explains that workers subjected to expropriation “are neither serfs nor slaves, but unencumbered individuals, free to enter the labor market and sell their ‘labor power’” (Fraser, 2016, p. 164). Expropriation either violently and directly, as in New World slavery, or subtly as with predatory loans that lead to debt. Furthermore, Fraser is careful in emphasizing that the dimension of exploitation and expropriation are dialectically co-constitutive and, in that sense, the subjection of those who are expropriated by capital constitutes the masked condition of possibility for the (relative) freedom of those exploited in the same process. This dynamic helps disclose the centrality of racialized dependent labor to societies ruled by capitalism. As Fraser explains, the reality is that workers have little actual choice in the matter, for they are deprived of any direct access to the means of production (invoking the separation between labor and the means of production that I have discussed before), and thus can only secure the means of subsistence by signing a working contract in exchange for a living wage. Fraser writes, “Workers vulnerable to expropriation are politically constructed as ‘lesser beings,’ comprising chattel enslaved people, indentured servants, colonized subjects, ‘native’ members of ‘domestic dependent nations’, debt peons, felons, and ‘covered’ beings such as wives and children, who lack an independent legal personality” (Fraser, 2016, p. 165). Thus, expropriation feeds upon the unfree, dependent, and unwaged labor of workers who are subjected to domination unmediated by a wage contract.

economy stands for. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), Penn State, chapter president Michelle Rodino-Colocino,²⁷ the ‘gig’ in gig economy consists in “a labor arrangement that the US Department of Labor defines as ‘a single project or task for which a worker is hired, often through a digital marketplace, to work on demand’” (Dolber et al., 2021, p. 3). As an effect of neoliberalism, the gig economy discloses the individualization and occlusion of the material reality of the exploitation-expropriation behind economic production and social reproduction.

As a result, newer generations of workers bear the real brunt of precarized labor, while lacking the support granted by the labor and living protections that were traditionally offered to previous generations of workers. These protections refer to healthcare, a decent living wage, long-term employment, dignified living conditions, paid leaves of absence and holidays, child and eldercare, union membership, welfare, etc. The gig economy paradox reveals a tension that Dolber, Rodino-Colocino et al identify between, on the one hand the anti-work efforts that seek to substitute life for work, and on the other, the tendency to want to submerge life into work and thus make work ubiquitous (Dolber et al., 2021). Aspiring to abandon work while at the same time making all of life about work produces a confounding situation for those who are most active in the labor market.

Through a rigorous analysis of the labor conditions involved with ‘gigging,’ authors Rodino-Colocino, Brian Dolber, Chenjerai Kumanyika, and Todd Wolfson establish that the gig economy is frequently portrayed as a shift, disruption or transformation in the work regimes and business environments of this modern era (Dolber et al., 2021). The growing cultural ideology sustaining the gig economy promotes an individualized sense of how, for example, by adopting ‘the right mindset,’ one can attain personal growth via hard work in completing labor gigs. Central to the middle class myth, further promoted by the ‘gig mindset’ discourse, is the idea that

²⁶ Neoliberalization describes the gradual precarization of labor conditions via the ideological distribution of agonism, which focuses on maximizing financial gain while minimizing the cost of production (including worker wages). As communication professor Brian Dolber (2020) explains:

Neoliberal economic policies across the globe have aimed to spur economic growth by relying on financial power rather than productivity, while dramatically driving down labor costs since the 1970s, producing a global “reserve army of labor”—the unemployed or underemployed on whom capital depends to drive down the wages of the formally employed workforce—of approximately 2.4 billion people, approximately 70% larger than the International Labour Organization’s (ILO’s) estimated size of the active labor army of 1.4 billion (Dolber et al., 2021, p. 2)

²⁷ Information about the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) can be found in the following website: <https://www.aaup.org/news/new-aaup-chapter-penn-state>

if one works hard enough and makes the appropriate decisions and connections, one too can become a member of the capitalist class. There are exceptions to the rule, but the sad reality that the gig ideology discloses is that of (self-induced-by-influence) exploitation and expropriation, which have deleterious effects on the mental health of those impacted (Dolber et al., 2021).

Psycho-affective Alienation: Burnout. Burnout is related to the experience of alienation involved in exploitation-expropriation, which involves a feeling of worthlessness and estrangement from one's humanity resulting from a perceived failure in self-actualization (or in the actualization of the expectations of others in power) through labor (Carignan et al., 1981; Yuill, 2005). Extant research links economic exploitation (amount of non-returned value of one's labor) with psychological distress and mental illness (Prins et al., 2020). As the motor of capitalism, exploitation generates profits and perpetuates the system at the expense of the interests and general wellbeing of workers: it helps refer to the structural process that generates inequality. However, exploitation is deliberately concealed in wages and salaries in a way that makes it difficult to measure the exact manner by which workers are not paid in full for what they produce. As research shows, total exploitation (concealed and unconcealed) is by larger than unconcealed exploitation, thus its toll is a factor likely damaging workers' mental health. As researchers Prins, Mcketta, Platt, Muntaner, Keyes, and Bates contend: "Since the 1990s, the prevalence of depression and death by suicide have increased substantially among adults in the United States, while educational attainment has increased, and real wages have remained flat" (Prins et al., 2020, p. 307). The term burnout provides a mental image of the state it connotes, meaning, when a working process (a human, or a machine) has run out of energy (resources) left to 'combust' through work.²⁸

Burnout is considered a mental health diagnostic that first appeared in 1974, when psychologist Herbert Freudenberger created a diagnosis for observed cases of physical or mental collapse as the result of overwork (Petersen, 2020). The term emerged as a response to a concern that dealt with a notable decrease in rates of work productivity and job satisfaction (Malatino, 2020). Burnout is not the same as 'exhaustion,' although there is an important relationship between the two conditions. Exhaustion occurs whenever one's body has reached a point where it

²⁸ Suffering from burnout is the equivalent of having an alarm sounding off to signal when one has run out of fuel, (or wax, as with candles, namely, material to 'burn' as energy). In the words of journalist Anne Helen Petersen (2020), one's energy "is finite, and when you keep trying to pretend that it isn't—that's when burnout arrives (Petersen, 2019, p. 23).

cannot work any further, whereas burnout refers to a stage that goes even beyond exhaustion. Namely, when the body has run out of energy to work, yet it is still being pushed to perform further (either due to internalized or external causes, such as with wage-labor).²⁹ Christina Maslach, to whom the term is more popularly attributed, burnout is “a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems” (Malatino, 2020, p. 21). Furthermore, Maslach conceives burnout as a type of job stress arising from the social interaction or work mediation between helper and helpee.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as a syndrome “resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” (WHO, 2017), and identifies three dimensions to such a syndrome including: (a) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; (b) increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and (c) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (WHO, 2019).³⁰ Burnout as a symptom involves emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Such affects can emerge among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind (Doherty et al., 2021). For Maslach, the key issue in this description is the contextual conditions for labor.

‘Millennials’ and Burnout. People that fall within the ‘Millennial’ category inhabit a kind of historical interstice— or limen—that Antonio Gramsci (1999) framed as an interregnum, or an obstructed transition between an old and dying and another that cannot yet be born (Lin et al., 2021). The ‘Millennial’ condition is that of class immiseration. The current state of the

²⁹ The [US] National Academy of Medicine’s website, provides a document containing a list of ‘valid and reliable’ survey instruments to measure. According to the list, there are several existing inventories meant to assist with measuring burnout in the workplace and for research, including the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory the Well-Being Index, the Stanford Professional Fulfillment Index, and the more popular Maslach Burnout Inventory (among others), (National Academy of Medicine, n.d.)

³⁰ The WHO also advises against using the term ‘burn-out’ to describe phenomena not specifically concerned with the occupational context, and thus, according to them, it should not be applied to describe other experiences in life, which seems as reductive as it is cautionary. Even though burnout might seem like a Western problem to many, it is not, for the notion of ‘death from overwork’ is well recognized as a phenomenon in Asia. For example, in Japan, ‘death from overwork’ is termed *karoshi*, in South Korea it is called *gwarosa*, while in China there is a similar term called *guolaosi*. These terms are used to frame the condition by which people die prematurely due to overwork, generally as a result of suffering from heart attacks or strokes (Parker, 2021).

exploitation rate reveals a gradual increase in demands of labor productivity while compensation (as wages) stagnates or dwindles.³¹

In spite of being considered the most educated of generations, ‘Millennial’s experience life in perpetual exhaustion as a result of their historical-economic context. As journalist Malcolm Harris expresses “people are having a hard time just living. The average young person under 18 scores in the same range—in terms of anxiety, depression, and fear— as the average child psychiatric patient did in the 50s” (Harris, 2017; Strelka Institute, n.d.).³² Human capital is forming and influencing education. Millennials were raised for success, in reflection of their caretaker’s own accomplishments. As a New York Times article of the 2000’s expresses:

the energy we once spent offending our elders is now spent honing our kids [...] how are we doing as parents? [...] the answer comes back pretty great. We boomers are raising a cohort of kids who are smarter, more industrious and better behaved than any generation before. And boy does that reflect well on us! (Brooks, 2000)

The scenario of the present has changed dramatically and for the worst. As Figure 1 exemplifies via a meme, the regard toward Millennials has changed over the years. In stark contrast to what was expected of them, the current mainstream portrayal of Millennials represents them as lost, frail, broke, indebted, commitment-phobic, brand-name-obsessed and irresponsibly wasteful (MSCI, 2021). An example is the nickname ‘snowflake,’³³ which is meant to ridicule people in framing them as ‘unique’ and ‘frail.’ Stereotypes around the Millennial label help promote the absurd idea (popularized by Australian millionaire Tim Gurner) that people labelled as such could not afford houses due to their irrational spending of money on trivial yet expensive things instead of saving (Levin, 2017). As with the former Generation, Gen X, who were once also portrayed as

³¹ I am expanding what the discourses surrounding the “Millennial” stereotype imply in Chapter 4 where I explain the research design of this study.

³² This is according to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). To assess general psychopathology, many clinicians use well-known and well-validated omnibus measures of psychopathology, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory 2–Restructured Form (J. L. Anderson et al., 2015, p. 802).

³³ In a similar way to ‘buttercup,’ and ‘cupcake,’ the term snowflake is used to depict people as ridiculous and in their asking for help when feeling uncomfortable (with safe spaces, for example). It was popularized by Donald Trump during his presidential campaign as a political insult against his opposition. The term has had different connotations over time in the US, for example a snowflake in the 1860s was a person who was opposed to the abolition of slavery. Subsequently, however, the term snowflake denoted a white or black person who was perceived as acting too much like a white person (Goldstein, 2017)

lazy and cynical by their elders, Millennials are the recipients of the negative projections of older generations.³⁴

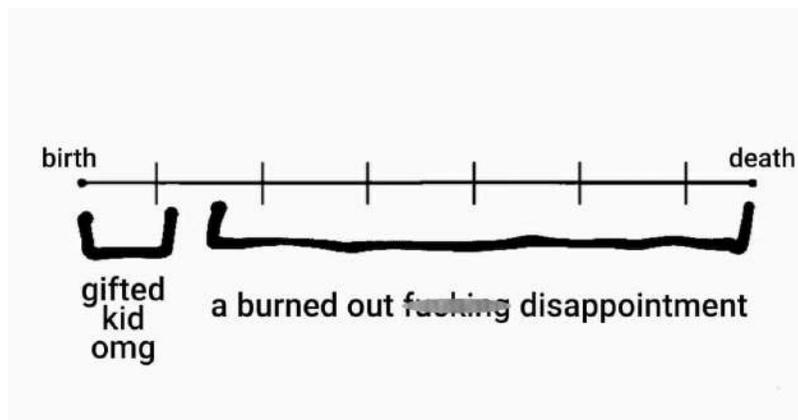


Figure 1. A meme reflecting the Millennials regard toward the generation's condition ([Facebook](#), Don't end my life because I relate to memes, April 28, 2021)

However, negative portrayals of Millennials are strategic in their discursive individualizing of the blame for the structural and economic conjuncture conditioning the material reality of Millennials, thus hiding the class exploitation factor. Born at a time in which technological advantages should improve people's lives, the opposite is happening: Millennials face a life in downward mobility within a context influenced by a doubling of the demand for productivity on the one hand, and of the stagnation (flat-lining) of worker wages on the other (L. N. Clark, 2018).³⁵ Tech companies such as Facebook, Google, and Amazon could be understood to form a parasitic mycorrhizal network that performs 'care' in the sense that it protects their own interests against those of whom they exploit for the purpose of following the interest of 'infinite accumulation' (Naidu et al., 2018). From a material perspective, a monopsony evinces the basic

³⁴ Generational stigma is not necessarily new, nor is the use of generations for marketing purposes. For example, Gen X youth were considered to be 'cynical slackers who go in for depressing music and ironic detachment' by older generations, and they were marketed as the 'Pepsi' generation, as NYT journalists wrote at the turn of the century (Brooks, 2000; Elliot, 1997; Strelka Institute, n.d.).

³⁵ This current situation is shaped by the exacerbation of the power of the invisible forces through which systems of domination operate, such as with the example algorithms (hiding exploitation-by-monopsony), hyper surveillance in record-keeping, as well as low payment and scarce jobs, as the gig economy reveals.

equation of class exploitation: capitalists pursue wage decrease for profit (so they organize to do so) while workers pursue the opposite in terms of their self-preservation.

These interests go against one another and usually what ‘wins’ has to do with relations of power. The result, when the playing field is not balanced, is that even though the overall economic conditions might be ideal or giving signs of improving (such as with economic expansion), the ones benefitting from this ‘growth’ have been capitalists.³⁶ The proof lies in noting the reality that, while company profits have increased, wages have hardly improved for workers; they either stagnate or decrease. A 2017 report published by Brookings demonstrated that the expectation of rising living standards—generation to generation—has diminished as a result of wage stagnation.³⁷ Consequently, the expected betterment of work and life conditions for people has not taken place because wages have only raised 10 percent since 1973 (Shambaugh et al., 2017)³⁸ The U.S. economy has experienced long-term real wage stagnation and a persistent lack of economic progress for many workers. Therefore, capitalist growth is predicated on the exploitation of the working class.³⁹

Within this particular unfolding of underlying historical-economic situation (exploitation) shaping current structural precarity, Millennials entered the labor force in one of the worst recent periods for economic prosperity, as Figure 2 shows. As a material analysis shows, the veneer of success does not equal actually (materially) having it; Millennials are caught in the contradiction of displaying the façade of a middle class background (through taste and in terms of consumption) albeit lacking the material reality of a middle class life (L. N. Clark, 2018).

The investment research firm Morgan Stanley Capital International published a consumer profile for Millennials where they display a ‘Prosperity/Misery Index,’ (see Figure 2) constructed as the calculated difference between two times economic growth less the sum of inflation and the

³⁶ The term capitalist is meant to refer to people who own means of producing commodities (industry, factories, companies, businesses, etc.) and who pay wages of people who are forced to sell their labor power in exchange (which compose the proletariat or petty bourgeois classes).

³⁸ That is until 2017 (when the report was issued), adjusting for inflation and with annual real wage growth merely below 0.2 percent, as the report states.

³⁹ As journalists Naidu, Posner and Weyl argue, growing labor market power may well be a significant explanation of the host of maladies that have beset wealthy countries, notably the United States, in the past few decades: declining growth rates, falling labor share of corporate earnings, rising inequality, falling employment of prime-age men, and persistent and growing government fiscal deficits. It’s remarkable how well labor market power alone can simultaneously explain all these trends (Naidu et al., 2018).

unemployment rate: the higher the sum, in theory, the better the economic conditions for income and financial stability for the average household (MSCI, 2021).

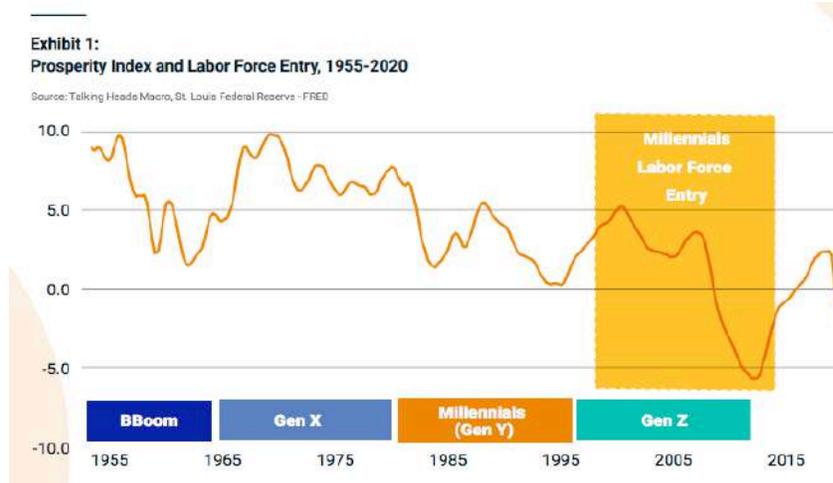


Figure 2. And MSCI graph displaying the Prosperity Index and labor Force Entry, 1955-2020 (MSCI, 2021)

The findings displayed by the MSCI report are key in showing how Millennials faced particularly strenuous economic conditions upon their entry into the labor force in comparison to other generations. A weak economy equals a lower probability of employment and a lower starting wage. As the MSCI report states:

Some graduates from the Baby Boomers and Generation X entered the labor force during the recessions of the 1980s and '90s, but the dip in prosperity was short-lived. That meant the majority of Baby Boomers and Generation X faced fairly benign economic conditions upon entering the labor market. Millennials, on the other hand, faced a precipitous decline in prosperity: Those years were the only time since 1955 that this index has gone (deep) into negative territory [...] For Millennials, the tough labor market was combined with financial obligations upon leaving college. The absolute numbers are interesting: Nearly 15 million Millennials have student debt, compared with 14.2 million Gen Xers older than them and 7.8 million Gen Zers born afterward of Generation X (MSCI, 2021)⁴⁰

⁴⁰ There are important factors to consider that add nuance to the class critique of the Millennial condition. For example, according to the MSCI report, the average student debt load is slightly lower than that of Generation X. Additionally, Millennials lack of housing or consumption-related debt is a considerable factor acting in their favor (MSCI, 2021).

The MSCI index analysis point to the terrible moment in which ‘Millennial’s became adult workers within a recovering economy, damaged by previous periods of crisis (which the index calculates as taking around a decade to happen).

However, in spite of the present dire situation, there are also positive projections for the future, as the report declares that ‘Millennials’ “long shadow of difficult entry into the labor force seems to be passing. ‘Millennials’ already are showing better income trends” (MSCI, 2021). If it were not only for the fact that ‘Millennials’ are also facing a crisis of another nature: the environment via climate change. As the image below shows, there has been a gradual an increase in global temperature due to a combination of factors, but mainly driven by human activity.

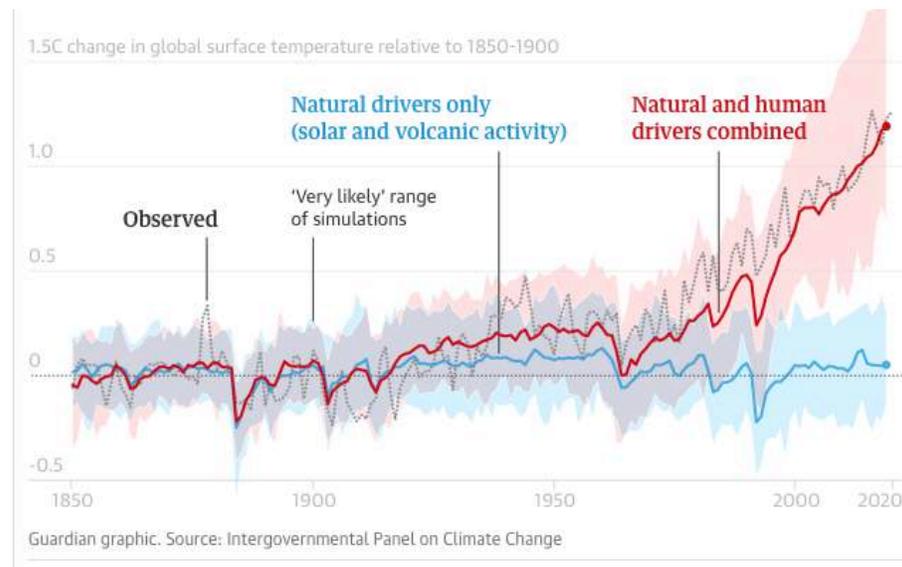


Figure 3. Guardian graphic showing the increase in global surface temperature relative to 1850-1900. The data was retrieved from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (The Guardian, 2021).

As the graph shows, the industrial work of humans has changed Gaia’s climate in ways that have become inevitable and “irreversible,” as climate scientists have warned over the years (see Figure 3). For example, journalist Fiona Harvey writes:

Within the next two decades, temperatures are likely to rise by more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, breaching the ambition of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, and bringing widespread devastation and extreme weather [...] Only rapid and drastic reductions in greenhouse gases in this decade can prevent such climate breakdown, with every fraction of a degree of further heating likely to compound the accelerating effects,

according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading authority on climate science (Harvey, 2021).

Climate-based anxiety is another factor that contributes to Millennial burnout, as younger people express fear and uncertainty regarding the future of the planet, in which they will have to most likely struggle for resources. However, the fight for restoring Gaia's metabolic state of homeokinesis is not one of a generational nature. All living beings should be involved regardless of their (anthropocentric) identity classifications, the problem is that, given the current class climate, it would seem that generations are meant to 'naturally' fight one another for a decent life.

Nevertheless, the reality is that the concept of generation serves marketing purposes. As a convenient construct for capital, German sociologist Karl Mannheim's 1928 theory of generations helped consolidate a division of society into distinct age groups rather than on the basis of bloodline kinship (Connolly, 2019). Ever since, countless marketing experts have profited from generational consumer profiles, such as the MSCI one addressed previously, treating generational divisions as a natural sociological phenomenon is meant to mask the fact that generation labels were created for branding purposes. Coupling people into age-based categories helps build consumer profiles for social control as well as for profit (Strelka Institute, n.d.). Separating people into generations helps mask the underlying class relations in a way that naturalizes exploitation. Misunderstanding the source of their struggle, people are unconsciously compelled to blame one another for the actions of the class that actively exploits them while convincing them otherwise (*divide et impera*).

The world inherited by Millennials, faces the deliberate (neoliberal) dissolution of support systems meant to provide care and meant to follow the law of replenishment (of metabolic energy) that prevents rifting.⁴¹ At the same time, the 'Millennial snowflake' discourse is meant to mask the underlying relation— of exploitation— between workers and capitalists whereby the latter, as owners of productive assets “exclude workers from access to certain productive resources, control workers' labor process, and appropriate the fruits of their labor” (Prins et al., 2020, p. 303). The relation of exploitation is antagonistic (or rather agonistic, in the

⁴¹ Furthermore, it is important to understand that the precarization of labor that leads to 'Millennial' burnout has worked wonders especially for the creative industry sector in creating a willingly exploited labor pool, which, assisted by new technologies, has been a key strategy for growth in the face of stagnation, as capital aims to develop modes of accumulation. The pervasive discourse around the 'creative economy,' which originated in the Reaganist 1960s “has served ideological ends, making precarious forms of employment seem to be a matter of choice and perhaps even socially progressive given their flexibility” (Dolber et al., 2021, p. 2).

sense that this study posits), since the material abundance of owners (a minority) is predicated on the material deprivation of workers (the majority). As discussed earlier, alienation and powerlessness bear heavily on worker's psychological health standing, for exploitative labor conditions have harmful consequences for mental health such as with lasting mental pathologies.

Moreover, and taken to the extreme, burnout can lead to serious injuries of physical nature including the development of physical disabilities, trauma, and even death. The costs of burnout are significant and dangerous, something which is demonstrated by a new report on the relation between overwork and death by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) shows in analyzing the health outcomes of people working 55 or more hours per week.⁴² What the report shows is that ischemic heart disease and stroke are the main products of the hustle culture, a movement that promotes working harder and longer hours to 'make it,' in life, meaning to attain financial 'success' at becoming rich. While in reality, the hustle mindset only increases mortality and morbidity in people and does not yield the results it claims to pursue (Dai et al., 2022).

Therefore, the immiseration thesis remains true for Millennials, meaning that, as long as the capitalist class controls production, the more powerful they are going to become as time passes as workers grow weaker. The challenge is thus to learn to recognize the apparatuses by which exploitation is normalized so that people can effectively organize to form care webs that can assist and protect them in the transformation of political structures that lead to precarized living, labor, and its effects such as burnout.

The Crisis of Care

Burnout is a symptom of the present care crisis. Philosophy and politics professor Nancy Fraser (2016; 2020) refers to 'the crisis of care' as a paradox within capitalism that concerns the exploitation-expropriation of social reproduction, defining the latter as the creation and maintenance of social bonds among people in society. Fraser's 'crisis of care' concerns the metabolic standing of the social reproductive dimension that is tied to production, where the labor necessary for sustaining individuals and communities is regarded as 'a free gift' and is

⁴² The report's findings showed that working 55 or more hours a week led to 745,194 deaths in 2016 and to roughly 590,000 deaths in 2000. Of those deaths, 346,753 to heart disease whereas 398,441 were attributable to stroke (Press, n.d.). The facts disclosed by such studies demonstrate that working long hours raises the risk of stroke by 35 percent while also raising the risk of heart disease by 17 percent, compared to other people regularly working 35 to 40 weeks.

consequently undermined and not properly replenished [nor waged], leading to further forms of rifting in the social fabric (Fraser, 2016).

As authors and members of the Care Collective⁴³ argue, the crisis of care has significantly worsened over the last 40 years, due to the actions of neoliberal governments in accepting capitalism's near-ubiquitous positioning of profit-making as the organizing principle of life, settling over and thus disturbing its underlying, natural metabolism. In their view, “[Neoliberalization] has meant systematically prioritising the interests and flows of financial capital, while ruthlessly dismantling welfare states and democratic processes and institutions” (Chatzidakis et al., 2020, p. 16), which has led to the dissolution of the systems of support upon which ‘care’ rests, setting up the current context for young workers (including Millennials).

As a result, care work becomes epistemically/materially undermined, which dismantles the networks of sustenance that are crucial for the perpetuation capitalism as a system in the first place (Fraser, 2016). Namely, the lizard eats its own tail until the lizard is no more. The undermining of social reproductive work leads to the system's inability to restore the energetic basis from which production (involving labor and commodity production/exchange) is made possible. By contrast, and as another dimension to this paradox, productive work is remunerated and highly valued, even though it relies on the very reproductive labor it occludes/sabotages to survive.

As a means to counter the effects of the care crisis (such as burnout), some of the main discourses circulating around work in contemporary spaces center ‘self-care,’ ‘work-life-balance,’ and ‘self-governance,’ help to individualize the problem of exploitation and make it about workers' attitudes as opposed to the actual conditions that lead them to burnout and exhaustion.⁴⁴ The individualization of burnout helps mask its systemic rootedness, as Hil Malatino contends “burnout is conceptualized as a personal—individualized—rather than a communal issue, one that affects, in particular, those in the so-called (and often feminized) helping professions” (Malatino, 2020, p. 21). As sociologist Nicki McGee writes:

Capitalism's care problems [...] are what social theorists call ‘structural.’ They are not the sort of problems that individuals bring upon themselves, nor do they yield easily to

⁴³ The Care Collective was formed in 2017, originally as a London-based, transdisciplinary reading group that turned to activism in aiming to understand and address the multiple and extreme crises of care. Its authors-members include Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal. (*The Care Collective*, n.d.)

⁴⁴ I delve deeper onto these discourses in my discussion of data findings in Chapter 6.

individual solutions. Instead, structural problems are baked into the ways we organize production and reproduction. Care labor is simply too expensive when market principles are applied to every aspect of daily life (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 42)

The fundamental kind of care that is required to remediate rifting goes against the logic of profit and capital. Care requires proper, person-to-person attention and also requires emotional labor, which drains people's energy levels as a result.⁴⁵ However, because of mainstream, 2-OI discourses around production and individual success by meritocracy (the 'bootstraps' discourse) there is stigma around having to turn for self-care. Asking for help in needing care projects personal failure, as if one's situation were solely the result of bad decision-making (Hobart & Kneese, 2020).

Moreover, there are particular histories that need to be addressed with regard to the wellness industry and its promoting of consumerism masked as 'self-care.' For example, radical care is done in resistance to the wellness industry in its appropriation of the care discourse from the perspective of whiteness and white supremacy. As Rodino-Colocino writes:

Wellness has been promoted for and by white people; industry leaders and attendees at wellness events tend to be white [...] The industry's emphasis on individualism and consumerism, not community well-being, social justice, and collective action, align with neoliberal, white supremacist values of supporting the status quo" (Rodino-Colocino, 2021, p. 315)

As both Rodino-Colocino and Angela Davis observe, current notions of care have changed over time into a form of activism in resistance to the mainstream notion of self-care-as-self-indulgence (which would be the white supremacist approach).⁴⁶ For example, as both authors contend, Audre Lorde engaged in self-care as a form of self-preservation and as an act of political warfare in the face of cancer and systemic racism (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Rodino-Colocino, 2021).⁴⁷ Radical

⁴⁵ McGee writes that "Economies of scale are notoriously difficult to apply to care work. While capitalism is exceptionally good at producing a surfeit of things, it has yet to provide a system that reduces the labor time required for care" (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 43)

⁴⁶ As an example, the slang phrase 'treat yo self' originated in the popular NBC show 'Parks and Recreation' when character Tom (played by Aziz Ansari) and Donna (played by Retta) portrayed as financially self-destructive adults who work in the Parks and Recreation Department of the fictional city of Pawnee, Indiana, decide to spend an entire day pampering and spoiling themselves; a process that leads them to destroy their bank accounts (Wisner, 2017).

⁴⁷ Audre Lorde's example of radical care helps raise attention to how healing, attention to the body and the spiritual dimension of existence have become part of the radical contemporary struggle in striving for social justice, when that was not the case in the past. (Hobart & Kneese, 2020).

self-care, thus, and as Rodino-Colocino contends, has to do with being able to discern when one should establish boundaries (in addressing one's needs for replenishment) and in response to what one is being asked or expected to perform as labor. The aim is to end the need for people to engage in overextending, which involves going beyond the boundaries that secure wellbeing when it comes to exerting efforts (energy) for work. Overextending means doing more than one should with respect to one's health limits and labor expectations (Rodino-Colocino, 2021). Further, such a phenomenon helps mask the exploitation rate, as workers perform 'extra' labor that is not quantified, rarely waged,⁴⁸ and that adds pressure to their lives. Burnout can be thus perceived as an effect of overextending, and thus, if the goal is to end the structural causes leading to overextension (which compromise health), worker's demands should aim at obtaining shorter hours and better compensation for their labor. The core structure in reference is the exploitation rate.

Thus, as representatives of *crip femme* and trans activism argue, it is fundamental to stress the relation between exploitation, expropriation, burnout and mental health as establishing the material conditions that structures people's struggles in terms of their work demands, rhythms, and expectations (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Neoliberal, 2-OI discourses such as the consumerist approach to self-care help mask burnout's structural causes. Therefore, from a critical perspective attentive to class-based exploitation, Millennial burnout, as contextualized within the crisis of care of the 2-OI, is not a result of younger worker's personal shortcomings as individual 'snowflakes,' but rather occurs as an effect of a larger structural, historical situation that this study identifies as the metabolic rift. In other words, the paradoxical world Millennials inherited has set them for burnout (Illing, 2020). Furthermore, the historical background of the care crisis involves the advent of industrialization and the subsequent establishment of modern (consumerist) culture within financialized capitalism. Thereafter, market-centered societies separated social reproduction from economic production, associating the former with women (and obscuring its importance and worth) and the latter with men, through the social construct/category of gender.

Hope Labor VS Hustle Culture

Precarized labor is romanticized under neoliberal capitalism. The ideological romanticization of individualized labor is a strategy by which human classes in power have

⁴⁸ It's done out of one's generosity, or as a favor.

historically been able to hide the underlying conditions of exploitation that evince the contradictory nature of the 2-OI. Ideological romanticization can be achieved through religious or ideological (media influence-based) indoctrination. For example, Max Weber (1980) asserted that Protestantism conceived work as a vocation to fulfill the Protestant commandment—as an ethical duty—in glorifying the will of God (Kininmonth, 2016; Weber et al., 2001). According to Weber (2005), capitalist discourses around production were enhanced by ethical considerations around labor promoted by Protestantism.⁴⁹

Consequently, even though the material conditions have exponentially changed for the worse, there is an ideological component to the 2-OI that allows for there to be persuasion that the reality is different from what people experience it to be.⁵⁰ For example, as austerity measures have diminished public welfare and fragmented formal employment (gig) over the years, exacerbating inequality and prolonging labor-based uncertainty, younger workers have been forced to ‘hustle’ as a way to navigate precarious employment.⁵¹ “The hustle’ has become a buzzword in a culture that establishes that it is fashionable to work oneself to death. Glamorizing what is also referred to as ‘the grind,’ the hustle scenario denotes “as a collective condition of individual insecurity disproportionately distributed amongst young people navigating uncertainty in irregular employment through prolonged states of ‘waithood’” (Thieme, 2018, p. 530). Even though it has been appropriated by US (white) culture for embracing human capital, hustling has several meanings in the present as well as a racialized past.⁵² As journalist Isabella Rosario

⁴⁹ Weber’s thesis around the Protestant work ethic can be summarized in the following principles: The first principle is a sense of Christian calling to one’s earthly occupation, stemming from a belief in the predestination concept. Secondly a related notion that a whole life should be spent in the service of God and, therefore, represents an opportunity to worship God in all areas of life, including business. Thirdly, the accumulation of wealth can be desirable as it allows acts of generosity through which God can be served; fourthly that reinvestment of wealth is beneficial to all; and fifthly that expenditure on self-gratification is bad (Kininmonth, 2016). In other words, the new capitalist spirit manifested as an obligation to perform one’s best efforts in wealth-creating labor, as a means to please the will of an overseeing God (Kininmonth, 2016).

⁵⁰ This discussion concerns the effects of gaslighting, a psychological technique that I explore later on in Chapter 4, through the discourses that articulate the Millennial figure.

⁵¹ Authors Michelle Rodino-Colocino, Brian Dolber, Chenjerai Kumanyika, and Todd Wolfson engage in a critical revision of popular management and self-help literature around ‘gigging,’ from which they find that the ability to “pick and choose” various “side hustles” that suit to one’s portfolio is seen as pivotal for curating a set of gigs that carries a “higher sense of purpose.” The literature helps promote marketing advices such as ‘be yourself’ and ‘do what you love’ in exchange for concealed forms of (self-)exploitation.

⁵² The term hustle derives from the Dutch ‘husselen’ meaning to shake. Later on, it became equated to hurrying or obtaining by begging. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, hustle denoted either hard work or

explains “Hustle—or a lack thereof—helped create an association between blackness and laziness [...] Throughout the 20th century, hustle was used to describe the reality of what many poor black people had to do to make ends meet. In his 1965 autobiography, Malcolm X wrote, ‘everyone in Harlem needed some kind of hustle to survive.’ whether that meant illegal gambling, selling drugs, or flipping stolen merchandise” (Rosario, 2020, para. 7, 10). Hustle culture has been popularized by hip hop culture in celebrating a particular kind of black masculinity.⁵³ Yet, in the present the hustle discourse is a screen that projects the myth of meritocracy as an equal-opportunity venture, wherein hard work is the only thing that separates poverty and wealth, which is an illusion that gives a makeover to exploitation.

Hustle culture belongs to the second-order imposition’s (2-OI) ideological lattice,⁵⁴ and, as such it helps naturalize the necessary values to keep up with demands in production. Religious belief systems, such as with Christian ideology, are thus implemented to manage work ethics in order to perpetuate the capitalist order of domination, which at an individual level means keeping workers in place (managing labor so the system can be reproduced).

In the absence of religion, entrepreneurs and companies aim to mimic dogmatic effects in developing alluring narratives such as the meritocracy myth to convince people to be willing to cope with the irrational way of living-and-working that neoliberal capitalism produces. For example, the notion of “hope labor” describes how and why individuals come to provide free labor (such as with internships or volunteering) with the expectation that such sacrifice will lead to secure employment or economic stability of any sort (Dolber et al., 2021). Such narratives idealize self-exploitation as the ‘morally appropriate’ and logical means to attain wealth and self-fulfillment. Another example presented by Jacobin editor Miya Tokumitsu is the myth of work-

laboring in illegal activities (including sex work, stealing and common scams). This is why, in the present, when one speaks of one’s ‘side hustle,’ it is in reference to the extra and unofficial labor that one performs in addition to one’s ‘formal’ job in order to pay one’s bills (Rosario, 2020).

⁵³ From a non-US-centered perspective, as scholar Tatiana A. Thieme contends,

Hustling emerges from the practices of Kenyan youth, who through engaging in informal waste labour in Nairobi, combine hand-to-mouth survivalism, shrewd improvisation, and a vibrant ‘ghetto-based’ politics of struggle that contests various appearances of authority. These Nairobi youth waste workers might characterize an ‘ordinariness’ in their urban struggle, people who ‘get by’ rather than exotic slum dwellers who are differentiated and negated by their informal socio-economic practices (Thieme, 2018, p. 530).

It is necessary to contextualize what ideas and things mean outside of the hegemonic focal point that is the US.

⁵⁴ or what Guy Debord refers to as Spectacle, which I delve into with more depth in Chapter 2 (Debord, 1983).

as-love, which is powerfully appealing in selling the notion that virtue, or moral righteousness of (individual) character and capital go together naturally. Tokumitsu (2015) explains:

The mythologies of artistic labor, as fueled by passion, genius, mental illness, faith, drug abuse, longing, mystical visions, and, of course, love, is vast. But, ultimately, all of these romanticized motivations are masks, hiding the simple fact that work is work, even if it produces something cherished or beautiful. (p. 8)

‘Love’ becomes a currency that is given unconditionally in the form of labor; however, it is also unwaged because of its intended function within the system of domination that is gender.⁵⁵

Fraser’s analysis provides a historically situated and materialist explanation of the usage of the language of love and hope in masking labor-based exploitation. Masked exploitation under the discourse of unconventional love leads to a phenomenon that cultural theorist Lauren Berlant (2011), calls ‘cruel optimism’ wherein the things/situations people desire become the very obstacles to their flourishing. In what could easily be ascribed to Millennials today,⁵⁶ Berlant writes:

We have seen that they have always been the subjects of cruel optimism and its modes of slow death, having inherited their parents’ future-directed, life-building, do-it-so-your-kids-won’t-have-to discipline of the respectable body and soul. Now, in this relation of life-building to life-expending, they induce new generational orientations toward exhaustion. From coasting to the activity of the hustle they embody styles of being that can seem anything from subcivilized and extralegal to entrepreneurial and ambitious, in the good sense. In this final logic, though, capitalist sensibility in ‘Exchange Value’ manifests as crazy in the way that reason is crazy—not only crazy-dogged, crazy-compulsive, crazy-formalist, and crazy-habituated, but crazy from the activity of maintaining structural contradictions (Berlant, 2011, p. 41)

Noticing the oxymoronic paradox between optimism and cruelty points to the causes of rifting and burnout that can be addressed to avoid falling into ideological forms of violence concealment

⁵⁵ As Nancy Fraser explains, capitalist societies establish a gendered rift since the industrial era that created a separation between the (feminized) sphere of social reproduction and the (masculinized) sphere of economic production, remunerating “‘reproductive’ activities in the coin of ‘love’ and ‘virtue’, while compensating ‘productive work’ in that of money” (Fraser, 2016a, p. 102). I would even go as far as to argue that hope labor and hustle culture are both gendered and marketed forms of exploitation, appealing to either masculine or feminine constructions of identity in capitalism.

⁵⁶ Also speaking about a situation that is not new but has become increasingly unjust, stressing an urgency to dismantle the systemic structures producing it.

that negatively affect people's health and wellbeing. After all, a material analysis of the gig economy (that, for example, focuses on the Marxist concept of 'exchange values') paradox demonstrates that its highly marketed appeal is meant to perform affect-masking exploitation.

Exploitation-Expropriation of Women and Nature under the 2-OI

Since its inception, the capitalist valorization system has debased the work of nature and women by means of expropriation due to the second-order imposition over the metabolism of Gaia, and in the form of appropriation without replenishment. Progress and nature in this sense become antagonistic. Domestic work becomes devalued and unwaged—therein the anti-value label of such work. As Foster writes: “The capital system exists invariably in nature's midst and emerges out of prior household-based modes of production” (J. B. Foster & Clark, 2018, p. 10). The crisis of care underlines one of the main paradoxes in capitalist heteropatriarchy, addressing a rift/crisis concerning reproduction. Philosophy and politics professor Nancy Fraser (2016; 2020) identifies the crisis of care as an issue within capitalism that refers to the expropriation of social reproduction, defining the latter as the creation and maintenance of social bonds among people in society.

The crisis of care exemplifies the metabolic rift at the level of expropriated household and care work. The following paradox helps explain the crisis of care as a consequence of the social reproductive inferiorization (via the concept-system of gender) of domestic laborers and carers within capitalist patriarchy, the fundamental labor, and agents involved with the reproduction of the workers that keep the system going. As the writings of the Care Collective explain, the history behind the undermining of care and care work is long and has to do with a devaluation by association, by which women and nature are deemed 'unproductive' and thus carry less pay and social prestige (Chatzidakis et al., 2020).

Therefore, I argue that it is important to be able to read/understand situations from both an affective as well as a discursive lens; to discern the personal from the political, yet to also understand how both are entangled and co-constitute each other (this is a central focus of my dissertation). Because of the current coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown that nations have enforced on their populations to contain the spreading of the virus, the crisis of care has become exacerbated and bears a heavier weight on those performing social reproductive and care-related labor. Carers are being discursively framed as 'essential workers,'⁵⁷ by most

⁵⁷ As the authors behind the Care Collective consider, this rubric includes those most at risk from Covid-19, namely, health workers, social carers, the elderly, the precariously employed, those with underlying

(modern/colonial) governments, a designation which only serves to justify forcing them to work in the most vulnerable conditions and in exposure to the virus (as a form of biopolitical death) in responding to the demands of capitalism, which unequivocally places profit over people. It is paramount that people develop a consciousness around the role of occluded labor that is involved in social reproductive care/work and its involvement in the phenomenon of burnout, in which this dissertation intends to contribute to developing such a critical consciousness.

The specific epistemic violence that justifies the inferiorization of women, according to renowned ecofeminist Vandana Shiva (2014) is what capitalism uses to frame nature as a woman, and by creating the myth (discourse) that both are inferior to white men. Core discourses justifying violence within capitalist patriarchy form a constellated mythical narrative that inferiorizes women and nature by means of rendering them both into objects subjected to violence, in order to justify and perpetuate their exploitation.

Rifting Oikos: Economy and Ecology. The economic and ecological realms of the Earth are two sides of the same coin. The Greek term Oikos, before being reduced to a yogurt brand, referred to one's 'home' or 'household.' In both economy and ecology, the prefix 'eco' derives from Oikos (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 104). Oikos-logos (ecology) and Oikos-nomos (economy) mean the knowledge and management of the household. However, Oikos suffered a Cartesian split, an epistemological rift, that was historically placed between the ideological understanding of what ecology and economy meant, as a result of the development of the Enlightenment discourse of 'Man.' Such a discourse emerged as part of the ideological domain of the system of capitalism, and it was rooted in agonistic approaches to human understandings of evolution. This is because capitalism is materially predicated on the destruction of nature.

Ecological concerns under capitalism have become inversely proportional to the notion of economic growth, which turned a symbiotic relation of co-constitution into a contradiction that is currently destroying the spaces, processes, and beings that are key in the production and reproduction of life. Nonetheless, the main understanding of the functionality of Gaia's metabolism is clear and establishes that life on the planet is contingent on the fact of interrelated dependence (as generative forms of collaboration) between multiple webs of life. From this perspective, it is incredibly painful to witness the actions and choices of political leaders in prioritizing the health of the economy over the health of Gaia over nefarious discourses such as

health conditions. Most of these people have received negligible help or support, while lessons on the best ways for protecting them have been largely ignored (Chatzidakis et al., 2020).

‘progress,’ ‘individual success,’ and ‘infinite growth,’ especially with respect to the ongoing destruction of Gaia, as an ecological household within and prior to periods in crisis (Mies & Shiva, 1993).⁵⁸

What is absolutely vital is for humanity to enact a change of paradigm addressing the dialectical nexus between ecology and ‘the’ economy, which involves delving into the mycorrhizal aspects that structure the system of capitalism. Understanding the causes behind rifting involves recognizing capitalism’s paradoxical nature leading to ecological collapse. For such reasons, it is necessary to engage with Marxist theory to render a clear picture of how the commodity value system runs into metabolic ruptures—rifts— caused by breaking the law of replenishment or reciprocity. After all, the metabolic rift is a symptom of structural lack for care provision (as replenishment) occurring within and because of our institutionalized social order acting as a 2-OI.

The Lauderdale Paradox. The Lauderdale Paradox is predicated on the difference between *use-value* and *exchange-value* in Marxist theory. The concept of *use-value* refers to the natural, material basis that is tied to production, while *exchange-value* stands for the concretization of abstract labor. Wealth, for Marx, consists of *use-values* produced both by nature and labor (as raw material and energy), whereas *value* or *exchange-value* is obtained from the exploitation of the worker’s labor power, which is expropriated as surplus value. Nature’s wealth (what I refer to as gifts or sources of energy for sustenance), conceptualized as ‘resources’ under capitalism, is considered to be freely granted and thus does not enter directly into the production of value, according to Foster and Clark (Foster & Clark, 2016). This mythic contradiction produces what is called the *Lauderdale Paradox*⁵⁹ which states that: “the accumulation of private riches (or exchange values) under capitalism generally depends on the destruction of public wealth (use values), so as to generate the scarcity and monopoly essential to the accumulation process” (Foster & Clark, 2016, p. 5). In other words, the accelerated environmental degradation

⁵⁸ The onto-epistemic rift between ecology and the economy has posed a serious problem for humanity: the contradictions that humans are facing are almost as ecological as they are economic, and it is urgent that people reorient their ways of living in accordance to how those entwined concerns operate. Ecology and the economy dialectically co-constitute each other, they sustain our inherent relationship to our home, planet Earth, or Gaia. Following foundational laws that help sustain its metabolic standing, the health of living landscapes in Gaia allows for beings such as human animals to exist and survive, in utter dependence on their exchanges with the rest of her inhabitants as living processes.

⁵⁹ Named after James Maitland, eighth Earl of Lauderdale who was a nineteenth-century political economist according to John Bellamy Foster (2014).

destroying the sources of shareable wealth in terms of land access is deliberately made to generate ‘scarcity’ as tension in the demand and production of commodities, meant to secure the raising of prices (benefitting capitalists). The deliberate production of scarcity responds to the structure of the capital-centered mode of production and is not produced randomly but can be traced back to a specific process.

Moreover, capitalism’s constant drive for more, and more surplus-value maximizes the exploitation of energy and resources, which then get thrown back into the environment as (usually toxic) ‘waste.’ Thus, the Lauderdale Paradox helps clarify the contradicting character of wealth/value, which generates a tension between total public wealth (the sum of use-values) and the aggregation of private riches (the sum of exchange values) according to Foster (2014). The contradicting character of the 2-OI leads to various kinds of rifts, revealing subsequent paradoxical scenarios that feed into the overarching rifting process that is leading toward environmental collapse.

Three Dimensions of the Metabolic Rift. The inherent contradictions of the 2-OI have different effects depending on the ecological levels at which replenishment becomes thwarted. From this understanding, Kohei Saito observes three dimensions to the metabolic rift, divided in terms of soil, space and time. The first dimension refers to the disruption in the circulation of soil nutrients, where Marx drew from what German agricultural scientist Justus von Liebig’s research on soil depletion to understand his ‘law of replenishment,’ which, in Saito’s words worked as the first principle of so-called *rational agriculture*, “emphasising the importance of carefully returning a sufficient amount of minerals absorbed by plants to the original soil, if one is to maintain the soil’s fertility” (2020, p. 15). Liebig understood this lack of replenishment and consequent alteration of important nitrogen and phosphorus cycles as ‘robbery agriculture,’ for it demonstrated how important nutrients were constantly being taken from the land, thus leading to soil desertification as a symptom of metabolic rifting.

The second dimension involves the spatial rift as predicated capitalism’s organization of space as the ‘antagonism between town and country,’ framing the disproportionate impact of capitalism's excesses, which is explained by how the Global North can externalize economic and environmental costs onto the Global South. The third dimension is temporal, emphasizing the disconnection between nature and capitalism’s time: nature cannot produce fast enough to meet capitalism’s demand in terms of production rate for mass quantities. This is why toxic chemicals (as fertilizers, hormones, and antibiotics) are used to accelerate

nature's production processes and thus meet capitalism's impossible demands in terms of speed. Thus, these three dimensions help articulate the greater picture of how Gaia's metabolism is actively being tampered with by capitalism in a manner that is self-destructive, and for which we are experiencing the consequences of such rifts.

Thus, the second-order imposition's assault on production is fundamentally based on the idea of infinite economic growth, thus depending on the competence of a non-regulated market. By consequence, such a system cannot offer any effective countermeasures against the climate crisis. Rather, what is demanded is a global response of cooperation for the sake of collective survival (Saito, 2020). Nevertheless, the concept of metabolism is thus crucial for resisting the core mechanisms of production that lead to separation-as-rifting. For example, through the concept of crisis (and in relation to alienation) it becomes possible to shed light on the material and psychological effects produced by the metabolic separation (rift) between workers, their labor, the means of production, and most importantly, nature.

Krisis and Care

Crisis demands care. The paradoxes inherent to the 2-OI lead to inevitable periods of crisis, the more popular term to refer to the effects of 'rifts.' The word crisis, or *krisis* derives from the Greek *krinō*, a verb that means 'to choose' or 'to decide,' but also means 'to separate' or 'divide,' and can be traced back to its Proto-Indo-European root, *krey-*, which refers to the practice of passing material through a sieve, thus suggesting that in its earliest uses 'crisis' finds its original meaning in the act of separating wanted from unwanted material (DeCaroli, 2020). More importantly, *krisis* was used to refer to methods of juridical settlement on the one hand but was also much implemented in medical discourse in ancient times. For example, the famous Greek physician Hippocrates described the *krisis* of an illness as the critical period in which there is a judgment that determines whether or not a patient is going to recover or succumb. Additionally, Greek philosopher Celsus described *krisis* as "the determination of the disease as it were by a judicial verdict" (DeCaroli, 2020, p. 5). From this observation it is clear that there exists an interesting etymological and hermeneutic link between the terms crisis and care, and it is established through the notion of curing and judgment.

For example, the origin of the term medicine is the Latin *medicus*, itself deriving from the verb *medeor*, whose remote Indo-European root—MED—means to reflect, to consider, or to care (Charen, 1951). Consequently, contemporary terms that reference medical healing or curing once referred to thinking in general, then judgment in specific, (similarly to *krisis*) and subsequently it

involved actively providing care to a specialized group: the sick. The Latin word *cura* (to ‘care for’) meant to give attention to the sick and ultimately referred to the act and process of curing of them (Charen, 1951). Furthermore, this same root is shared by another term that is also relevant to this study: art curation. As scholar Claire Robins explains “contemporary gallery or museum curators has its origins in the Latin: *cura*, (again, meaning ‘care’), designating both curator and curate as one who has ‘a cure or charge’ (Robins, 2005, p. 150). Therefore, I argue that it seems appropriate to treat crisis as separation, while understanding care (and art-making) as a form of healing connection.

Moreover, caring for the Earth, that is, with the intention of healing, through Hippocratic thinking involves understanding the natural logic that bodies (Gaia’s and workers’) have when it comes to healing, in terms of being able to restore a fundamental balance via either action or rest (depending on what is needed, which is metabolic homeokinesis involves). For, according to Hippocrates, “the cause of these maladies is found in the presence of certain substances, which, when present, invariably produce such results. But when the nature of these substances becomes changed, the illness is at an end” (Hippocrates, 1978, p. 194). Therefore, to treat others with the purpose of healing, in terms of replenishment, is thus ultimately what constitutes humanity’s etymological and praxical foundations for care. These stand in stark contrast to those of the 2-OI.

Toward a Mycorrhizal Politics of Care

Carelessness produces rifts in the metabolism of nature which lead to crises of different natures and degrees. Yet, this situation is not new, for, and as the active subjectivities behind the care manifesto⁶⁰ remind us, even before the pandemic leaders and people in general “had simply been failing to care for each other, especially the vulnerable, the poor and the weak” (Chatzidakis et al., 2020, p. 14). Decades of neoliberal policies endorsed by both left-wing and right-wing politicians alike have, in the name of ‘austerity,’ slashed and made care services inaccessible as a result installing a profit-centered health care system, a hyper-carceral response to migration as well as a crisis of social reproduction now exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic (Cain, 2018).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Members of ‘The Care Manifesto’ include writers Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg and Lynne Segal authored ‘The Care Manifesto’ in 2020 in an effort to putting forth a vision for a truly caring world, where care is placed at the heart of the debate of the current multidimensional crisis between geological epochs (what I have agreed to call the Anthropocene, as an interregnum).

⁶¹ In addition, and as the Care Collective posits, the pandemic has presented another level to the paradox of care. They write: “We have, for a very long time, been rendered less capable of caring for people even in

What people most need, metabolically speaking, according to my findings posited in Chapter 5, involves rest, replenishment, joy/love, connection, belonging, a dignified living wage, less working hours, and community. These ingredients can help activate a radical change of paradigm, from one based on competition and animosity, to one that centers care as the organizing principle of society and nature. Therefore, the proposal for radical—mycorrhizal—politics of care that serves to orient this study embraces the image of a lattice of support (or safety net) invoking the practices of care that happen in movements for social and health justice. A mycorrhiza is a kind of mycelial webbing, it is often called ‘the wood wide web’ (Sheldrake, 2020, p. 11), albeit one that is not solely virtual, but rather grounds itself in the power of collective organizing by raising consciousness around living beings’ natural interconnectedness.

I posit that embracing these qualities of fungal metabolic replenishing (*mycoremediation*) can help leverage and promote practices that focus on love and playfulness as affect-based forms of care work, as opposed to agonism. A safety net is there to catch those who ‘fall’ (in the sense of being in need of assistance/help), and it is woven by many threads, each of those representing a source of aid of various kinds, forming a web of care.⁶² In contrast, the model that I am presenting gains relevance through the recognition of difference, contingency and multiplicity of people (non-human people too) and is aligned with ongoing efforts oriented toward the justice and liberation of all oppressed peoples facing colonial-capitalist domination on the planet.

As such, this proposal for a mycorrhizal care politics necessarily places care at the center of life. Mycorrhizal care takes a radical supportive stance to performing/conducting trans care or disability care and disability justice,⁶³ especially in seeking to nurture a complex ecosystem involving many interrelated lifeforms. Mycorrhizal care is meant to contrast the current attitudes

our most intimate spheres, while being energetically encouraged to restrict our care for strangers and distant others” (Chatzidakis et al., 2020, p. 18).

⁶² Moreover, I am offering the metaphor of the mycorrhizal web as an alternative to the Aesopian fable of the father and son, from where the fasces of fascism gains significance, which is meant to represent the strength of the many (promoting an idea of unity by sameness). Aesop’s fable goes as follows:

A certain man had several sons who were always quarreling with one another, and, try as he might, he could not get them to live together in harmony. So he [was] determined to convince them of their folly by the following means. Bidding them [to] fetch a bundle of sticks, he invited each in turn to break it across his knee. All tried and failed. And then he undid the bundle and handed them the sticks one by one, when they had no difficulty at all in breaking them. “There, my boys”, said he, “united you will be more than a match for your enemies. But if you quarrel and separate, your weakness will put you at the mercy of those who attack you. (Aesop, 2003, p. 184)

⁶³ As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha explains, disability justice is a term coined by the Black, brown, queer, and trans members of the original Disability Justice Collective (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 14).

and policies of companies and institutions that are pushing workers to improve their ‘work-life balance’ on their own, as if this was a matter of choice, or ‘love’ for what individuals do regardless of whether or not they get remuneration for it. Basically, governments are leaving people to pick themselves up by their bootstraps: Students and workers are offered free yoga sessions but no time to practice in their extremely packed schedules.

What is becoming a more popular approach to an ‘ethics of care’ involves Joan C. Tronto’s understanding of care as a “species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Holstein & Mitzen, 2001, pp. 60, 61). The notion of ‘world’ that Tronto is presenting encompasses our bodies, selves, and the environment, namely “all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web” (Holstein & Mitzen, 2001, p. 61).⁶⁴ Tronto’s unfolding of care involves four phases: Caring about, caring for, caregiving and care receiving. The first phase, ‘caring about,’ is about awareness of the need for caring; and needs to ask about the nature of the problem that one is to care about. The second phase, ‘caring for,’ concerns assuming/ascribing responsibility for solving the ‘who’ in making that care happen. The third phase is ‘caregiving,’ and involves the actual material tending of a caring need. Finally, ‘care receiving’ is about the response that one gives after having been cared for, in terms of feedback and for [potential/future] conflict resolution (Holstein & Mitzen, 2001). Tronto conceives care to be a species activity, highlighting the importance of mutual care, as a defining feature that makes people *human*.

However, beyond the growing, popular regard toward care from the standpoint of ethics, what living beings truly need is to enact a new politics of care that places care at the center of material life.⁶⁵ As Tronto contends, the challenge is to change the mainstream value associated with care to make its role into a priority for social organizing, to challenge coloniality-related supremacist views which are currently hegemonic/normative. Thus, and as Gregg Gonsalves and Amy Kapczynski explain, a politics of care is one that prioritizes people’s basic needs and connections to other people, the global community, and the environment (Chasman & Cohen,

⁶⁴ I am subsequently thinking about linkages with Lugones’s notion of ‘world’-travel (which I delve on in Chapter 2), meaning individual and cultural constitutions of sense.

⁶⁵ As Parsons, Kearney et al contend, an ethics of care consists in “a way of living one’s life and resolving personal conflicts that is driven by feelings of responsibility for enhancing the well-being of others and a sensitivity to the interpersonal consequences of one’s actions and choices” (Parsons et al., 2021, p. 794). Namely, an ethics of care is an approach to relationality which centers attentiveness and mutual respect.

2020).⁶⁶ After all, care is a political act in the sense that it reminds humans of their embeddedness within webs of life. As members of the Care Manifesto establish:

‘Care’ is also a social capacity and activity involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life. Above all, to put care centre stage means recognising and embracing our interdependencies ... Care is our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself (Chatzidakis et al., 2020, pp. 20-21)

Furthermore, a politics of care is described by politics professor Deva Woodly as “oriented toward intentional community rather than natural rights/laws; acknowledges trauma; upholds political action/change as integral to healing” (Woodly, 2021, p. 50). What Woodly describes as a Radical Black Feminist Pragmatic involves an understanding of interdependence as factual and key in unfolding an abolitionist stance that is based on repair rather than punishment.

Addressing harm, which is a core part of healing, requires personal-political action toward care, in awareness that social ills need to be healed (not by atomized individuals acting on their own, but rather) via social action. Thus, care does not only involve an ethics but it also calls for a political treatment, since it inherently involves a kind of governance set on recognizing that the responsibility to provide care is always required for life and therefore must be properly responded to in the organization, management, and maintenance of society and political existence (Woodly, 2021).

The major foundations structuring the model for a mycorrhizal care politics that I am presenting are profoundly interwoven and caringly honor Deva Woodly’s (2021) Radical Black Feminist Pragmatics, as well as Hil Malatino’s (2020) trans care, which, in turn, is woven through the notion of ‘care work’ originally developed by disability activist, and queer writer Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018). Care work demands recognizing the intersections of oppressions in

⁶⁶ Further, the politics of care proposed by Gonsalves and Kapczynski is meant to emphasize the importance of social movements. A politics of care as such ought to be “organized around a commitment to universal provision for human needs; countervailing power for workers, people of color, and the vulnerable; and a rejection of carceral approaches to social problems” (2020, pp. 44-45). The question for them is how to connect that idea to organizational/infrastructural responses that address the needs of the moment and its futurity. The challenge thus is to aim at ‘non-reformist reforms,’ which are reforms that “embody a vision of the different world we want, and that work from a theory of power-building that recognizes that real change requires changing who has a say in our political process” (2020, p. 45). The kinds of care that I am referring to include personal, political, direct, indirect, in-between, concrete abstract, affective, discursive, material, structural, urgent, medical, psychological, social reproductive, etc.

resistance. As such, it is described by Piepzna-Samarasinha as a place where disability justice and queer femme emotional labor intersect.⁶⁷ Consequently, healing justice—a multidimensional enterprise that is necessary not only for the individual but also for society—is core to the disability justice movement, and as Woodly explains, it encompasses the environmental movement as well (Woodly, 2021, p. 85). In awareness of intersection between disability justice and environmental justice via attention to the need for [metabolic] healing, people can begin to invert the normative logic dictated by the modern life (structured by coloniality) to come up with new ways of building infrastructures and policies centered on a practical and multidimensional approach to care, as opposed to solely economic profit.

What is necessary is to shift the present hegemonic and globalized paradigmatic stance, from neoliberal agonism—which is centered on competitive self-enhancement—to ecosocialism—where cooperative forms of aid can be activated via loving-perception.⁶⁸

Eco-socialism is the standpoint from which I am drawing hopeful motivation for my mycorrhizal mode for a care politics. Consequently, contributing to the international growing recognition of the global dominance of capitalist heteropatriarchy over vulnerability and precarity, this theory-informed praxis seeks to put in praxis Hobart and Kneese’s definition of radical care. Hobart and Kneese define radical care as a “vital but under-questioned practice of radical politics that provides spaces of hope in precarious times” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 2). Within the multiple collaborations (symbioses) from which I am inviting participants to tend to this growing, multispecies ecosystems of creative collaboration, it is therefore important to value, above all, the levels of reciprocity and attentiveness to the dynamics of inequality that describe the current social landscape “represent the kind of care that can radically remake worlds that exceed those offered by the neoliberal or postneoliberal state, which have proved inadequate in its dispensation of care” (Hobart et al, 2020, p.3).

However, adopting a caring stance does not automatically yield results, for this process involves commitment and consistency regarding ongoing labor (care) and therefore demands

⁶⁷ She writes, “disability justice means a political movement and many interlocking communities where disability is not defined in white terms, or male terms, or straight terms” (2018, p. 38). Furthermore, Piepzna-Samarasinha importantly states that “disability justice is to the disability rights movement what the environmental justice movement is to the mainstream environmental movement” (2018, p. 38)

⁶⁸ However, I propose to embrace a radical stance toward care by problematizing, for example, Tronto’s placing of ‘competence’ as the moral dimension of caregiving (within her third phase of care), which Lugones would conceive as agonistic. The purpose is to change the paradigmatic stance/value to that of playfulness and collaboration via loving perception.

engaging in radical in-action work that is attentive to material conditions, and that surpasses a mere criticism of ideology that is meant to only operate in the abstract.⁶⁹ From this understanding it becomes clear that efforts that seek to make room for the new in dismantling —not just reforming— the present institutionalized social order, need to acknowledge the interrelatedness between the many systems of domination sustaining it.⁷⁰

Care Webs

A mycorrhizal care politics develops the initial work theorized via the concept of a care web. A care web involves a voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 77). It is an action-based kind of grouping for drawing mutual support that emerges out of a need to provide care laterally and from below in terms of power. Meaning that, the purpose of a care web is to provide an alternative to the model of paid attendant care, so as to be able to provide care in an active mode⁷¹ and in absence of the support granted by institutions and government policy.

The model of a care web constitutes a *crip-femme* reimagining of the constituent anarchist concept of mutual aid. As such, it is guided by phrases such as “solidarity not charity” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 76) and “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need” (Malatino, 2020, p. 2). Mutual aid, in contrast to charity, does not feed the discourse (of the Enlightenment Man) that states that those giving hold a moral superiority over those receiving. According to Malatino, in his paraphrasing of Piepzna-Samarasinha, a resilient care web:

Coheres through consistently foregrounding the realities of burnout and the gendered,

⁶⁹ An example of this is the case for liberal discourse of identity politics (otherwise referred to as the culture wars) that is not used for transformative purposes, which reflects what Indigenous, Decolonial scholars Tuck and Yang call a ‘move to innocence,’⁶⁹ or a change in ideology that does not reflect in material reality.

⁷⁰ ‘Collapsology’ theory founder Pablo Servigne (2020) writes:

But perhaps we don’t actually know how to talk about disasters – the real ones, those that last, those that don’t fit into the news cycle. After all, let’s admit it: we’re facing some serious problems to do with the environment, energy, climate change, geopolitics, and social and economic issues, problems that are now at a point of no return. Few people say it, but all these ‘crises’ are interconnected, influencing and intensifying each other. We now have a huge bundle of evidence suggesting that we’re up against growing systemic instabilities that pose a serious threat to the ability of several human populations – and indeed human beings as a whole – to maintain themselves in a sustainable environment (pp. 33-34).

⁷¹ Bearing in mind that it is important to resist the notion that disabled people can only receive care passively. Care webs are meant to honor the fact that disabled people are very much capable of giving care and also of determining what kind of care they deem necessary (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018).

raced, and classed dynamics that result in the differential distribution of care—for those receiving it as well as those giving it. A care web works when the work that composes it isn't exploitative, appropriative, or alienated (Malatino, 2020, pp. 1, 2)⁷²

Forming mycelial-webbed groupings for providing care horizontally involves a challenge to be deliberate in communicating and developing of different capacities. As such, as Malatino contends, forming care webs involves unlearning the shame (coloniality as affective programming) that individuals have been taught to experience when recognizing that they are in need and that they need to ask for help.⁷³ Such process also requires learning how to learn how to respond with care when others ask for help. In sum, an effort in building and sustaining a care web is meant to ask people to reflect on what each person consider to be 'good care' and how to best care for one another in turbulent times such as these ('to each according to their need'). Since the focus is on impact, rather than righteousness (as supremacy) the process of enacting proper mutual aid takes time and consideration, as disability studies scholar Piepzna-Samarasinha writes:

If collective access is revolutionary love without charity, how do we learn to love each other? How do we learn to do this love work of collective care that lifts us instead of abandons us, that grapples with all the deep ways in which care is complicated?" (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 66)

The purpose of joining forces through the practice of loving perception is to embrace the collective body that humans belong to (where they came from and where they'll end up after dying) and to challenge the neoliberal illusion that individualizes the blame for (structural) ecological devastation. Humans are aware of the deleterious, large-scale impact that extractivist industrialization and the military forces have had on the environment for years. Yet, individuals cannot work alone in facing this Leviathan of a situation (the Anthropocene-interregnum) that inevitably leads to metabolic forms of rifting.

⁷² I would only add exploitation to the mix of characteristics that care webs avoid being.

⁷³ This process is complex and requires a keen management of boundaries with a material regard to each person's capacity for caring, but especially those giving. This is essentially what the mutual aid motto states: *from each according to their ability, to each according to their need*. Much attention needs to be given to affective contingency to take into consideration how other people respond to what individuals communicate (as an evidence of care) in human caregiving and how that changes the context. It is important to consider one's possibility within the giving/gifting of care to not end up with care-burnout, which is common in activist spaces. Burnout from care happens when individuals do not give themselves time to recover in caring for others. The law of replenishment becomes relevant here too. Thus, it is also important to know how to set boundaries and pace oneself in caregiving, minding one's metabolic standing (paying attention to one's levels and reserves of energy and health) to avoid encountering rifts.

It is crucial that humans begin to understand that this unrestrained and colossal level of predation can only truly be stopped by producing deep coalitions engaged in structural-transformational change with regard to the current institutionalized social order. Humans are starting from the perspective of the local (and personal, in feminist terms) in order to address overarching global issues that result from the current geopolitical era. The personal is deeply structural, and to become aware of that fact it is necessary to trust oneself in the face of structural-ideological gaslighting.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a phrase used to describe a situation where a person is made to doubt the source of their evidence for thinking in a particular way (Beerbohm & W. Davis, 2021). As government scholars Eric Beerbohm and Ryan W. Davis explain,

gaslighting “induce[s] in someone the sense that her reactions, perceptions, memories and/or beliefs are not just mistaken, but utterly without grounds” [...] The gaslighter’s final goal is not to lead the victim to doubt their own perceptions and beliefs, but to protect the gaslighter’s own conception of the world by eliminating even the possibility of challenge or disagreement (Beerbohm & W. Davis, 2021, p. 2)

Referencing the 1944 film *Gaslight*, the term has gained popularity in describing the actions of perpetrators (usually in a position of power) in manipulating information in order to make others believe that their own points of view are flawed with regard to some internal form of certainty. In doing so, people who engage in gaslighting undermine their victim’s capacity to make inferences and assertions that differ from the gaslighter’s point of view with regard to a certain situation.

I am using the example of gaslighting to describe the manner by which younger workers labeled as ‘Millennials’ are treated whenever they complain about the abuses that they are subjected to within exploitation. For example, during the famous interview that led to the ‘avocado on toast’ stereotype, millionaire Tim Gurner (an Australian luxury property developer) implied that young people should stop complaining about not being able to afford homes due to their irrational spending habits (as in buying overpriced food and coffee at hipster cafes) (Levin, 2017). Gurner then employed the meritocratic discourse as a means to ridicule and shame people who are undergoing downward mobility with the typical response that also led to the invention of the popular “ok boomer” retort. He said: “When I was trying to buy my first home, I wasn’t buying smashed avocado for \$19 and four coffees at \$4 each [...] we’re at a point now where the expectations of younger people are very, very high” (Levin, 2017, para. 4). Gurner’s response

mirrors a discursive attitude that many people from older ‘generations’ have towards younger folk (although, as I have discussed before, this is not new) whenever uttering the now hackneyed “when I was your age.” However, the gaslighting aspect in this situation involves confusion and deception in the sense that this person himself expressed in the same interview “we are coming into a new reality where [...] a lot of people won’t own a house in their lifetime. That is just the reality” (Levin, 2017, p. para 5). So, which one is it? Either ‘Millennials’ are to blame for the rise of prices in houses or are they to be blamed for not being able to afford them due to the lowering of wages? Or both? In response to this abusive kind of absurdity, journalist Brigid Delaney (2016) declared in another Guardian (2016) article that ‘Millennials’ are not going out for brunch instead of buying houses, rather, they are brunching because they cannot afford to buy houses (Delaney, 2016). She writes:

somewhere along the line real estate became to living what porn is to sex. The houses unattainable to Normals, auctions as entertainment, the whole thing an absurd fantasy accessible only to the super rich – or those who already had a leg up and the equity to negatively gear(sic). Hey, Salt – your maths is(sic) wrong! Houses prices in Sydney have surged beyond the price increases of smashed avo with feta on sourdough. The median house price is \$1m. You would now have to save \$200,000 to put down a 20% deposit on something not great, somewhere not grand (Delaney, 2016, para. 6, 9)

The difference lies in the fact that people who are aware of their dire circumstance (which is often out of their control) will still want to have decent life and pursue worthwhile experiences, which cost money in capitalism. Contrary to how most ‘Millennials’ like to present themselves on social media (as an idealized, desirable version of themselves) their reality is that of precarity. The main problem that has led to such a situation is due to the gradual rise of the cost of living while wages have drastically dropped. The result is an exacerbation of the inequality gap between those who are comfortable in this economy (due to privilege) and those who are not. In order to be able to make this assertion, I consulted several sites on the Internet and found graphs that claimed to be referencing data published by the Federal Reserve of the US government. Consequently, I delved into the data and found insightful (and accurate) correlations that I discuss in Chapter 4 as part of the research design. For example, a website called “Visual Capitalist” (2020) reiterated accurate and factual information from the Federal Reserve site that established that even though Millennials are starting to accumulate wealth, the amount and rate of accumulation is significantly behind older generations. The result is a situation that makes even the greatest

efforts seem pointless, which is why people cynically consume in ways that do not mirror their actual realities, as a form of reckless resistance against economic despair (Wallach, 2020).

Chapter 2

Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

The theoretical frameworks supporting this dissertation include Decolonial Latina/x Feminisms, Decolonial and Differential Aisthesis, Dialogism and Drawing as a Visual Methodology. I begin this Chapter by presenting a discussion around the development of decolonial feminisms as a result of María Lugones's incorporation of a gender critique within the development of the broader theory of coloniality of gender, brought about by Latin American theorists who mostly theorized domination through race. I subsequently consider the urgent need that scholars involved in ecological justice have in adopting an approach that mobilizes an intersectional-Marxist regard to critiquing systems of domination as coloniality. Subsequently, I introduce the main discourses articulating the notion of coloniality of power through the establishment of the mythical figure of the Enlightenment 'Man.' I subsequently offer an analysis of the two main discourses articulating the ideology placing white men at the top of the food chain: Cartesian Darwinism (through which I develop the notion of 'Social-Darwinist Parasitism'), and the Protestant Work Ethic. From this discussion, I propose to enact a shift, following the theories of Lugones, from agonism to decolonial playfulness. The following section involves explaining how arrogance is seen as the main substance fueling agonistic coloniality by promoting a selfish and individualistic mode of relating with others and nature. In contrast, playfulness, loving perception, and 'world'-travel which are central concepts for Lugones, admit the possibility of a mycorrhizal politics of care that actively problematizes coalition-building in order to avoid flattening differences within spaces of oppression. I begin by introducing decolonial feminisms.

Decolonial Feminisms

Capitalist heteropatriarchy is parasitic in nature. Much like a predatory kind of fungus, the entanglement between capitalism, colonialism, and consequent eurocentrism sustains global domination in the present. As such, the colonial matrix of power is behind the different dimensions and manifestations of the metabolic rift I have discussed so far. But my task at hand is to provide a sort of fungal spore-print—or snapshot—of the experiences of burnout as drawn by members of the

‘Millennial’ generation. The mycorrhizal model for sustenance that I am envisioning seeks to offer a platform from which to reflect on the severity of the problems that humans currently face, not only as a generation (as is the case for ‘Millennial’s, or any other), but as an ancient global community composed by multifarious/multiplicitous⁷⁴ beings deriving from the same matter and spatial debris. It is necessary to excavate such a cosmic legacy, one that speaks about evolution in terms of a complex, nonlinear process that can articulate both collision and collaboration with separation and competition, rhythmically, to paint a complete picture of the ideal energetic flow for life and all of its manifestations. Consequently, it is crucial to debunk the ideological layer of illusory truths that preclude people’s understanding of ‘history’ but from a cosmic perspective. Such illusory truths that manufacture the modern way of life in terms of labor distribution.

Decolonial feminisms have as a task the conjoined effort to trace the histories of the world buried by colonialism. As a discipline formally assembled by Maria Lugones, decolonial feminisms aim to imagine a different world, one where many worlds can coexist. For decolonial Latine scholars such as Ochy Curiel (2015), decolonization implies a process of disengagement from all colonial syndrome, meaning not solely from an epistemic stance, but also materially and affectively (Curiel & Galindo, n.d.). For example, as art education professor Karen Keifer-Boyd contends, “Decolonizing a praxis of empathy is much more than feeling sympathy; it is an activist practice of dialogue that bridges difference and builds relationships” (cited in Wexler & Sabbaghi, 2019, p. 195). Decolonial feminisms thus seek to rearticulate the work that was first introduced by post-colonial studies,⁷⁵ which theorize from a supposed end of colonialism (which is a colonial idea in itself).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that colonialism has not ended, and still haunts the territories it once ‘conquered,’ and shaped as colonies. Coloniality is described as a form of persistent, virulent, or fungal infection. In response, and sprouting from the humus of post-colonialism, a bundle of theorists from Latin America consolidated the ‘Grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad’ (Modernity/Coloniality Group), which catalyzed the *decolonial turn*, calling attention to the fact

⁷⁴ I will discuss Mariana Ortega’s notion of the multiplicitous self in relation to Maria Lugones’s notion of playfulness and world-traveling later in this second Chapter (Ortega, 2020).

⁷⁵ Postcolonial studies emerged as a mainly US-centered effort to build a discipline aimed at delving into the realm of culture in order to challenge the grand narratives of colonial eurocentrism from the perspective of the experiences of oppression (Bhambra, 2014). Following Quijano, the Modernity/Coloniality Group adopted Edward Said’s elaboration of the Foucauldian understanding of knowledge and power as integrated, which was integral to his theory of Orientalism (Zhao, 2017)

that the foundational operability of colonization managed to outlive its formal-historical end.⁷⁶ For the Group, coloniality still manifested as residual and ongoing infrastructures for the socioeconomic organization of colonized societies, giving way to the capitalist/modern way of life. I will now explain my own approach to decolonial feminisms via Maria Lugones's critique of Quijano's *coloniality of power* to establish a dialogue with more indigenous-oriented efforts from around the world.

María Lugones

Decolonization involves playful-caring scholarship. María Lugones was an Argentine queer theorist whose dislocated theoretical perspectives (of colonial difference), as *other*, around the coloniality of power involved gender as much well as they involved race. Her critique of Quijano's concept *coloniality of power* in its failure to address gender was groundbreaking in the sense that its focus on gender led to the development of decolonial feminisms as a discipline.⁷⁷ At the same time, Lugones's gender approach to coloniality provided an alternative to second-wave, White feminist disregard for women of color's active subjectivities and specific struggles, which excluded racial considerations toward the oppression of women within coloniality.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ The group MO was formed almost exclusively by Latin American men theorists, including Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, (as well as others). However, the group incorporated Maria Lugones and Catherine Walsh and became less male and race-oriented.

⁷⁷ The coloniality of power was countered the discourses declaring an end to colonialism. As such coloniality refers to the ongoing presence of the specter (structures) of colonialism in 'postcolonial' territories. According to its main developer, Peruvian theorist Anibal Quijano, coloniality referred to the Eurocentric configuration of a neo—colonial— system of exploitation that structured and categorized all forms of labor control around the hegemony of capital. Thus, the purpose behind the racialization of labor—including wage labor, slavery, servitude, and small commodity production— was to organize production in the service of capital accumulation. This method allowed settler colonizers to expropriate the labor of those politically deemed inferior, and to deny or limit the access of such targeted populations toward the economic/political opportunities that would otherwise grant them survival within that system. Quijano's conceptualization of coloniality places racialization at the center of the group's critique and is consequently understood as a situation in which "the conquered and dominated peoples were situated in a natural position of inferiority and, as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power" (Quijano, 2000, pp. 534, 535). However, this account lacked a gendered critique of the same matrix of domination exerting coloniality.

⁷⁸ Lugones is critical of the liberal configuration of *agency*, which is deemed colonial (as constructed within German Idealism, to be specific). Rather than subscribing to the rational method implicated in such model, Lugones proposes the alternative of active subjectivity, which is not reduced to the individual, but endorses multiplicity and multifocality in dwelling within and in resistance to [colonial/modern/capitalist-

The premise of Lugones's concept of decolonial feminism is that Western modernity was made possible through colonialism. Furthermore, Lugones posits that colonization acts as the mechanism by which capitalism penetrates a given territory and subsequently installs its divisive systems of governability, like a parasitic fungal infection (Lugones, 2010). Capitalist-colonialism was based on the dispossession and repression/exploitation of its original inhabitants—thus enabling the expansion of colonial empires and the reproduction of the capitalist system. Lugones's concept of decolonial feminism ultimately aims to provide a conceptual platform from which to leverage already existing efforts of women of color from around the world in organizing communities for dismantling the systems of domination affecting them directly as racialized, gendered, and classed individuals.⁷⁹

Thus, decolonial feminisms engage with perspectives drawn from feminist theories that seek to expose the multifaceted character of colonialism and colonization. For example, writing from the perspective of Chicana/x feminisms, Emma Pérez frames the 'decolonial' as that which "disrupts the dominant ordering schemas of modern society, [...] the binaries of colonizer/subaltern and citizen/alien [and] identity pairings that usually map on to a white-black (or white/nonwhite) racialized social imaginary [of] the United States" (Shemo, 2013, p. 4). Pérez developed her concept of decolonial imaginary by embracing what she regarded as the fragmented, different, non-linear and non-teleological character of the domains that undergird the capitalist state and its subordinating power, which is consistent with Lugones's view.

According to Lugones, both (white-centered) feminism as well as (Latin, male-centered) decolonial theories could—via a critical approach—help develop non-hegemonic, historical genealogies of social organizations concerning power, if theorized in a non-reductive manner. With enough critical work, these perspectives could help unveil both the institutional violence of production that is inherent to capitalism and the economic manifestation of the present-day colonial situation (in globalization, for instance).

patriarchal] structures of power (Lugones, 2003)(2003, p. 49). Her concept of *I-we* results from her deliberations on active subjectivity, as a decolonial instrument.

⁷⁹ The coloniality of cultural identity involves the imposition of the categories of race (the subordination of non-White people for their labor and possessions), gender (the subordination of women to domesticity and reproductive/sexual labor) and class (the subordination of waged workers to capitalists owning the means of production). These categorical impositions provided the grounds for the prospering of the Patriarchy within the colonial system.

Toward an Intersectional Marxism. Lugones's decolonial thinking around race and gender as colonial forms of subjective debasement established a crucial dialogue with Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality.⁸⁰ Intersectionality was designed by Crenshaw as a tactic to bring awareness to the deliberately occluded and dynamic intersections existing between identity categories that contribute to the plural oppression of Black women, which masked the interlocking character of domination embedded within the US legislative system. Intersectionality has become a fundamental technique for unmasking the complex character of oppression in the sense that it focuses on its effects on people. Oppression affects people in multiple, various ways and it is not always made evident unless one is directly affected by it, which points to the importance of theorizing in terms of bringing into awareness the way institutions enforce discriminatory practices specifically on the basis of class, gender and race (these categories interact and affect people from underneath normative perception).

As art education professor Wanda Knight (2006) explains, there is a paradoxical manner to the way certain identity-based privileges become normalized (and thus occluded) in modern, pedagogical settings and erase—or (e)-race⁸¹—people. For example, white privilege (or 'whiteness'), as a racial position, is not easily identifiable precisely because of its (normalized) ubiquity, meaning that it is taken as the 'norm' (Knight, 2006, p. 330). By contrast, "Black/ness is marked or made invisible as a racial position; however, in the same instance Black/ness is erased or invisible in school curricula [...] textbooks, and scholarship" (Knight, 2007, p. 330). However, coming to an awareness of the specific racialization that people undergo in terms of Blackness, Brownness, and Whiteness (as a few examples, yet there are more phenotypical traits that serve as identifiers) is not enough, for oppression does not operate only in terms of identity-based dualisms (observable as effects), since there is an underlying structure to exploitation (causes), which is Lugones's main critiques of white bourgeois feminisms and Latino 'macho' theory.

In addition, moving beyond dualisms and occluded hierarchies is precisely the main lesson that intersectionality teaches. For, if people undergo various kinds of oppressions simultaneously, it is paramount to be able to trace the material causes behind the effects that oppressions create,

⁸⁰ As Crenshaw explains "Intersectionality was introduced in the late 1980s as a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics. It exposed how single-axis thinking undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for local justice" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 787).

⁸¹ Knight's concept of (e)raced equates racialization with erasure in a powerful manner as a means to call attention to the effects of race in bodies of people of color in the US (Knight, 2006)

together, and in terms of their multidimensional character.

Fusion. In response to Crenshaw, Lugones theorizes around the potential of ‘fusion’ as a method for coalition building that draws from intersectionality albeit in a manner that could be read as agonistic, when it should, in fact, perform loving perception. In her essay *Radical Multiculturalisms and Women of Color Feminisms (2014)*, Lugones endorses intersectionality’s methodological aim in disrupting the tendencies to frame categories and oppressions associated with race and gender as separate or mutually exclusive. Yet, at the same time, Lugones also raised an important criticism that needs to be rephrased with tact and in consideration of the need to avoid erasing the legacy and aims of Black feminist scholarship (echoing Knight) from which intersectionality originally emerges (Thomas, 2020; Velez, 2019). In what she considers to be a ‘second unmasking’ of manners by which white bourgeois feminisms collude with the oppression of Women of Color as a means to serve Western hegemony, Lugones writes,

Crenshaw, interested in the law and the legal situation of women of color under violence, stresses intersectionality to show how women of color are not seen precisely because the categories are not seen to intersect. Once one sees the intersection, one sees the violence. This is a radical move. But seeing the violence while trapped in its logic does not awaken one to resistance to it. Indeed, depending on one’s location perceiving the violence may move one to promote it, or to resist it. It is part of our location as women who experience these violences that we resist them. Oppression does not exhaust the understanding of our location. Violence is met with some degree of opposition (Lugones, 2014, p. 75)

Lugones’s warning echoes Marx’s famous argument that stresses the shortcomings of interpreting the world, (sole critique does not suffice) for “the point is to change it” (Marx et al., 2001, p. 170) Meaning that, the move from rhetoric (idealism) to practice (materialism) is fundamental when it comes to organizing coalitions for dismantling systems of domination. It is not enough to identify and understand how oppression works, but rather it is vital that people take direct and physical action in tearing apart the structures that expose them to so much violence on a regular basis. The message warns against the presence of what I call the ‘coldwarniality’ of power, referring to the active legacy of the Cold War in its shaping of world culture according to ‘the American Way,’ and against the soviet specter of Communism (and any prospect of socialism or anything forged in the

spirit of anti-capitalism).⁸² As a scholar from the Global South, I cannot but notice the message behind what Lugones somewhat clumsily articulated in terms of stressing the need for a materialist-practical approach to intersectionality. A shift from agonism to loving perception is needed. For example, as gender and peace studies professor Ashley J. Bohrer's (2020) work demonstrates, it is of utmost importance that the intersectional work being done is attentive to anti-colonial critiques of performative liberalism (which leads for faux decolonization, as Eve Tuck has pointed out).⁸³

Bohrer shares, for example, Raya Dunayevskaya's views in proposing to create a form of 'Intersectional Marxism' which seeks to promote an analysis of domination that intertwines "issues of race, gender, and colonialism with those of capital, class, and globalization" (K. B. Anderson et al., 2021, p. 5). In addition to the inclusion of gender, as Lugones did for decolonial feminisms, class can become a fundamental lens from which to address the causes of oppression, and not just its effects. As Bohrer contends, a multifocal praxis is fundamental in reframing the historical narrative of the present in tandem with a "polycentric mode of accounting that attends to differences across multiple geographies of power" (Bohrer, 2020, p. 537). The purpose is not to engage in an agonism to assert 'the winner' position when justifying a political stance, purely in terms of moral or epistemic righteousness (for meaning is always is contingent, complex and

⁸² With this concept that is a play on words on 'coloniality,' (also referencing to a lingering, occluded presence of structures of domination) the concept of 'coldwarnality' refers to the US government campaign of cultural propaganda conducted via the 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' that operated during the height of the Cold War and whose mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of American foreign policy interests abroad, disguised as a 'Pax Americana.' As scholar Frances Stonor Saunders explains, such a program had installed "offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances" (Saunders, 2013, p. 1). US cultural influence via the media is hegemonic, thus extending its influence worldwide (not just in Europe) thanks to information and entertainment apparatuses of global reach such as Hollywood that serve to spread the ideology of its North American center.

⁸³ However, and I must add, there is a strong Marxist legacy in intersectionality that comes directly from its origins in the Combahee River Collective, who declared themselves as socialists. However, such a legacy needs to be stressed further to ground intersectionality's critique through important concepts such as alienation and exploitation via class struggle. As members of the Combahee River Collective expressed in their famous Black Feminist Statement (2019): "We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe the work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources." (Combahee River Collective, 2019, p. 32). However, they also expressed that a true socialist revolution needed a component situated in feminist and antiracist resistance in order to guarantee the liberation of all oppressed people.

contextual). Rather, in de-centering the hegemonic imperial knowledge-production locus that is US, the aim is to gain an awareness of the mechanisms by which white bourgeois Anglo ideology reproduces capitalist's violence by appropriating the epistemic/rhetorical/discursive aspects of resistance and reorienting them for its own purposes, meaning, profit-making.⁸⁴

A controversial example of resistance-appropriation-by-inversion by capitalism is the famous CIA 'woke ad,' which featured a Latina officer who declared: "I am a cisgender 'Millennial,' who has been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder [...] I am intersectional, but my existence is not a box-checking exercise" (Borger, 2021). It takes a lot of nerve to release something like this into the public of the present, in cynically equating resistance to domination, considering the CIA's violent-genocidal interferences around most of territories in Central and South American (in terms of its complicity in the drug trade) as part of their military operations for territorial control in the latter half of the 20th century (McCoy, 2003).⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the fact remains that co-optation is the precise manner by which power corrupts and reorients (reterritorializes) anti-colonial and anti-capital efforts through ideological forms of rhetoric control.⁸⁶ In both examples, people can come to appreciate how linguistic intentions needs to be

⁸⁴ An example of this kind of appropriation includes the incident in which Kendall Jenner, one of 'America's' most famous supermodels was criticized for making an appearance in an ad where she supposedly attended a public protest. She was portrayed as grabbing a Pepsi soda can (from somewhere ridiculously unrealistic) and then walking over to the fake front-line of security in order to hand the can to one of the officers, as a gesture of 'kindness in unity.' (A. Smith, 2017). This ad blatantly appropriated the aesthetic of the Black Lives Matter protests happening at the time, thus reducing an actual movement against domination to the marketing enterprise of selling a product—a sugary drink at that—not minding the relation that sugarcane harvesting has with the history of slavery in the continent, never mind the role of diabetes as a weapon against the lives of people of color in the present.

⁸⁵ Placing a Brown woman of Latin American descent as the face of the CIA is an incredible insult to anyone aware of the US's involvement in installing bloody dictatorships across Latin America throughout the 70s thanks to a program called "The School of the Americas" (Gill, 2004).

⁸⁶ This process is explained in Angela Nagle's book 'Kill all normies' in how fascism co-opts the (alluringly persuasive) aesthetic of the avant-garde for its own purposes, turning from resistance to mass deception (Nagle, 2017). However, the process of negation in capitalism is also explained by French theorist Guy Debord's concept of the Spectacle, which explains how capitalism atomizes social relations and mediates them through images that play with people's desire to consume in order to gain social acceptance and keep selling their labor for profit. Debord describes the Spectacle as "a concrete inversion of life [...] As a part of society, it is the focal point of all vision and all consciousness. But due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness: the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation" (Debord, 1983) The Spectacle helps establish an ideological social order that prevents individuals from attaining a direct relation with reality through their own means in terms of meaning production. Debord consider the Spectacle legitimizes reality in the sense of what is already in existence, and further denies any possibility of change in terms of the genuine creativity of the individual.

accompanied with actual work, otherwise the problem is reduced to mere critique, which is what indigenous-anti-colonial scholars call a “move to innocence,”⁸⁷ namely a solely performative way to approach ‘resistance’ to oppression. As Mariana Ortega contends, the error lies in thinking that “recognizing the pervasiveness of coloniality is the same as engaging in decolonial practice” (Ortega, 2020, p. 207). It is the equivalent of people clapping for essential workers during the pandemic as opposed to granting them a decent livable wage. That is what a material analysis portends. Otherwise it is possible to perform the exact opposite of what one is claiming to do, all the while justifying one’s actions on the basis of one’s claims, as the example in Figure 4 demonstrates.⁸⁸



Figure 4. A meme posted as a Tweet that mocks the performative ‘moves to innocence’
(@PMemeister, 2020)

In consideration of these existing cases that exemplify how intersectionality is vulnerable to being co-opted without a proper Marxist analysis component leading to a materialist-informed praxis, I argue that Lugones’s criticism of intersectionality is not malicious or ill-willed, but, to the contrary, it is absolutely necessary. Furthermore, it needs to be stressed now, given the manner by which the

⁸⁷ I will develop this concept in the section that I’ve titled “Toward a Mycorrhizal Politics of Care.”

⁸⁸ The meme pokes fun at the fact that from a position that only references the intersections (effects) of domination as opposed to the causes (the 2-OI), can reproduce the very domination it seeks to dismantle. For instance, claiming that one is against domination while supporting geopolitical policies of economic control is tantamount to pasting progressive stickers on missiles that are sent to kill people in the Middle East. What matters most is what people actually do and how their actions affect others in reality, regardless of what they express their intentions to be.

ideological apparatus of the matrix of domination operates, meaning, in terms of appropriation and inversion of techniques that could lead to its dismantlement.

Consequently, scholars engaging with discussion of material liberation need to work with utmost care in phrasing what they mean, to avoid misinterpreting and flattening other people in the way. For example, it is an error to reduce intersectionality to an epistemic framework or to frame it as a theory of identity that ‘needs’ to be superseded by a ‘better’ decolonial method (Thomas, 2020). This would reflect agonistic thinking and thus defeat the purpose of engaging with intersectionality in the first place. As feminist Latina/x theorist Emma Velez warns, “though containing important insights, [Lugones’s] linguistic critique of intersectionality risks jeopardizing the possibility of generating the “deep” coalitional politics emphasized by decolonial feminisms, especially between Black women and Latinas” (Velez, 2019). I recognize the importance that the specific wording that academics choose has, with respect to contextual hermeneutics and material impact. Mutual respect is paramount whenever addressing others. However, one can engage in constructive criticism through the logic of loving-playfulness as opposed to one of agonism and arrogance, but that necessitates a change of paradigm from competition (and profit) to care with regard to knowledge production.⁸⁹

Ultimately, the point that I’m foraging from Lugones’s message remains true and reveals an urgent reminder that anything created in resistance to capitalism (especially rhetorically as well as aesthetically) can, and most likely will be co-opted by capitalism.⁹⁰ Thus the purpose of engaging in this discussion is not corrective, but rather additive from the perspective of loving perception, in seeking to ultimately actively and efficiently establish a shift from a logic of oppression to a logic of resistance. Furthermore, as Africana studies scholar Bailey Thomas posits, intersectionality and fusion are, in reality, compatible and should be mobilized toward similar ends in dismantling systems of domination that affect people differently (Thomas, 2020, p. 13). After all, both means

⁸⁹ Moreover, loving perception also needs a critical component to avoid falling into what Mariana Ortega’s warns against with her problematization of ‘loving-perception,’ which evidences the case of white women in positions of privilege/power engaging in what she calls ‘loving, knowing ignorance,’ which consists in addressing a mode in which an awareness of the possibility of perceiving better that does not translate into a change in demeanor but rather “leads them to continue to perceive arrogantly, to distort their objects of perception, all while thinking that they are loving perceivers” (Ortega, 2006, p. 60). It is crucial that scholars incorporate considerations such as these into human thinking around collective resistance to domination that upholds difference, to avoid reproducing coloniality, even with the best of intentions.

⁹⁰ Such as with the avant-garde aesthetic that has been adopted by fascism, which is covered as a subject within the discussion of the culture wars in Angela Nagle’s book “Kill all normies,” for further reference (Nagle, 2017)

respond to identifiable material needs, within the expanded sense of labor that this study embraces, following the metabolic rift theory. The liberation of Black women is also a concern of Latina/x feminisms.

Therefore, the main point is that intersectionality does not deliberately and automatically collude with white feminism, but it is still vulnerable to that violence of appropriation that is always active under the capitalist gaze, if not complemented by a materialist standpoint. Lugones understands intersectionality's relevance in writing "It is because we have resisted the violence at the intersection of multiple oppressions that we understand the logic of resistance" (Lugones, 2014, p. 75). Thus, part of the challenge is to develop more materially aware and critical-practical frameworks that articulate epistemologies in the sense of effectively moving from an initial performative stance (of identification) to that of collective action against that which is being identified. Ultimately, Crenshaw understands the complementary character of intersectionality in writing: "While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color" (Lugones, 2014, p. 74). More importantly, Lugones supported Crenshaw's recognition of the potential in mobilizing intersectionality to reconceptualize race as a coalition between people of color occupying opposing, extreme positions in the gender-subjectivation specter as pertaining to the broader structure of power coloniality.

Colonial Discourses and the Enlightenment Myth of 'Man'

The sexual division of labor appears as the earliest form of hierarchical social organization in human history, even before colonization. Yet it was imposed and became standard through this very process. Gender-based labor division works as the basis for theories of patriarchal politics, conceptualizing patriarchy (and subsequently heteropatriarchy) as a social system in which male power, enacted via sexual roles and relations of reproduction, oppress women and non-males (Gimenez, 2019). The Enlightenment discourse of 'Man,' which serves to ideologically justify male domination, is steeped in the belief in the 'natural' and total superiority of males, which draws its exceptionality from their capacity to coerce others by force (beginning with physical strength). It is meant to create a false universal of man represented as homogeneous. Consequently, the central figure upon which this false universal rested is a white, Christian heterosexual male person, as the apex of humanity. As Martha Gimenez explains, the "sexual division of labour and society has its origins in 'ideological and political interpretations of biological difference ... [M]en have chosen to

interpret and politically use the fact that women are the reproducers of humanity” (Gimenez, 2019, p. 67).⁹¹

Patriarchy springs from the discursive emphasis on biological determinism in terms of procreation, where women are framed as more vulnerable, in bearing children, and consequently dependent on men for survival. Sex differentiation in capitalism assigns public roles to men while enclosing women in domesticity. It is from this situation that feminism arises, as a movement in which this structural disparity is made evident for it to be dismantled. Dismantling heteropatriarchy necessitates a historical and material understanding of its origin.

As feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) explains, in the case of Capitalist heteropatriarchy, there has been a confluence of influential traits taken from different cosmological traditions—religious, as well as scientific—that have been adjusted in order to produce the discourse of male supremacy. The Enlightenment discourse of Man was created to deliberately accommodate the personal beliefs of the ruling elites and thus perpetuate their specific mode of domination, regardless of how much truth it conveys.⁹²

Radford Ruether’s observations disclose important historical shifts in these myths that need to be addressed for us to understand their influence on modern thinking.⁹³ As she explains, deities were first understood in the plural (as multi-generational and having two genders), and they usually spoke of a “more ancient matrilineal world [...] that [needed to] be overthrown to make the new world of the patriarchal city-states” (1992, p. 60). For example, in the Babylonian and Mexica creation stories, a male champion is meant to slay the ruling queen to give way to a new order forged in agonism: centering military strife, and the need for battle and conquest (for example with the victory of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war over Coyolxauhqui, the moon goddess). The consequent new order was not gestated (by a godly mother of sorts) as before but was rather built

⁹¹ As Gimenez argues, the basis for heteropatriarchy (the sexual division of labor) in society has a material form (as sex roles) as well as an ideological reality (the stereotypes, ideas, and myths defining such roles) (Gimenez, 2019).

⁹² For example, a genealogical tracing of the Christian cosmological tradition would mark its mismatched incorporation of notions taken from Near Eastern, Hebrew, and Greek cultures. As Radford Ruether notes, all of these creation stories were formulated in Patriarchal and slave-holding societies and thus reflect values that justify the domination of (white) men over everyone/everything else.

⁹³ Radford Ruether’s analysis reveals the deep influences that Modern-Christian religious thought took from Judaism, which also borrowed from the Babylonian world that came before, and that also came to incorporate key elements of Greek philosophy (specifically Plato’s *Timaeus*).

by the labor and will of an overseeing architect-supervisor deity.⁹⁴

The matricidal component in these narratives helped shape the cosmological struggle between the forces of order and chaos: establishing a hierarchy wherein the former rules as male and the latter is ruled as female. This is how, as Radford Ruether explains, the dialectic of master and slave is cosmologically represented; wherein “The gods are the immortal counterparts of the ruling military aristocracy, and humans the counterpart of the slaves whose coerced labour is the basis of their leisure and power.” (Radford Ruether, 1992, p. 60).⁹⁵ From a subsequently edited version of the story, for example, in the Bible (in Genesis 2-3), priestly authors explained human creation from a perspective that stressed the supremacy of the male and the supplementary or secondary nature of the female (1992, p. 61). From this stance, ‘woman’ is made to overcome a double kind of inferiorization, first as a mortal then as a female.⁹⁶

And, as Radford Ruether relates, many Church Fathers accept the Platonic notion that placed women, by nature, closer to the bodily and the animal. By contrast, the male is constructed as intrinsically more rational and closer to the spiritual soul than to the earthly body. Christianity, however, eliminated the soul’s ability to reincarnate (assisted by the death of nature discourse), by setting the basis for gender and class hierarchy with the story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Paradise, which set a gender-based, power division thenceforth enacted within institutional formations such as the family and the state. Christianity also sharpened the anthropocentric dualism between humans and animals, by claiming that the former had rational souls and the latter did not.

⁹⁴ Radford Ruether explains: “The new world is ‘made’ by killing the mother and turning her body into dead ‘matter’ which can then be shaped by the will of an architect god” (1992, p. 60) such as with the Mexica myth of Coyolxauhqui. This architect ‘god’ then splits the slain body of the mother to create the world of the heavens and that of earth.

⁹⁵ According to the Hebrew version of the story, the relation between god and humans is that of master and servant, however, and not slave. Adam, God’s earthly representative, acts more as a viceroy than a servant, and is responsible for supervising the administrative labor being performed on Earth.

⁹⁶ In addition, the fallen state from which the soul of the human must escape is a notion borrowed from Platonic philosophy. Plato’s division between what he considered to be the eternal mind and chaotic matter set the ontological grounding for establishing primacy of the soul over matter. For Plato, the soul is trapped in the material world and must escape its embodied prison by refining itself, namely by mastering unruly-bodily passions until reaching an ideal state of perfection. If failing to master the body, the soul reincarnates as an inferior being: either as an animal or as a woman.

Man: The Anthropos in Anthropocene

Anthropogenic activity has brought the world into a new geological epoch in which humans have become a geomorphic force at a planetary scale (Letzter, 2019). This epoch is generally referred to as ‘The Anthropocene,’ or the new age of *anthropos*, the human. The term Anthropocene was first coined by biologists Crutzen and Stoermer (Merchant, 2020) and has ever since been widely adopted as a descriptor for a moment in time where human animals (*homo sapiens*) have developed a powerful influence on the planet enough to alter its natural cycles and processes, namely, its metabolism (J. Foster B. & Clark, 2020).⁹⁷

The naming of this epoch has created controversy around the rhetorical implications that the term Anthropocene has in its omitting of class. For example, Donna Haraway (2019) has deemed the concept problematic in its reduction of the ecological crisis to a species act, when it is in fact due to a historical set of conjunctions that primarily hinge on class relations. Blaming the whole of humanity for this crisis ignores the issue of unequal power distribution in the world’s classed political organization. It is such inequality that has led to the present planetary crisis.⁹⁸

The Anthropocene is a problem tied to a lack of political agency on the part of most of the world’s population: the global proletariat (or what is being called the ‘precarariat’ but that refers to the working class) conformed by those who are forced to sell their labor for a wage in order to survive. In conversation with Anna Tsing, however, Haraway acknowledges that the Anthropocene has a positive effect in allowing a crucial interdisciplinary conversation between natural and social scientists (or between STEM and the humanities).⁹⁹ Another important contribution that the term offers is that it brings attention to the conceptual power of *Anthropos* in structuring the Enlightenment myth of ‘Man,’ through which agonism is able to structure how people relate to one another, meaning, through discourses inscribed within the ideology of the 2-OI. As prominent feminist anthropologist Anna Tsing (2016) contends, it is fundamental that

⁹⁷ Supporters of the concept understand it as being divided into two main phases: the old involving early manipulation of land by humans (such as with fire and early agricultural strategies), whereas the new phase refers to the modern industrial era.

⁹⁸ Haraway expands on this point by explaining that, “Most peoples on this planet have precisely not lived and exercised the same kinds of processes that break generations, that radically simplify ecologies, that drastically force labor in a mass way that creates a kind of global transformation and global wealth that is in and of itself genocidal and extinctionist” (*Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway & Anna Tsing*, 2019, p. 5)

⁹⁹ (*Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway & Anna Tsing*, 2019)

scholars problematize the discourse of Man, which, according to its liberal creators is—a white, Christian figure—that represents the *Anthropos* in Anthropocene.

Tsing suggests that this male figure, who she refers to as the actor (man) predating over Gaia, should be approached as “a serious power neither to be dismissed nor to be innocently followed is just what we need to notice the ‘Anthropocene,’ that is, the uneven and unequal terrain of Earth stalked by Man” (A. Tsing, 2016, p. 3). This stalker of Gaia’s greatest dialectical antagonist is Nature (represented by and representing ‘woman’), and it is in its ultimate form that Man was forged, in a motley proliferation of controllable sameness—as manifested in the plantation system with the notion of the monocrop/monoculture, which I consider to be fascistic forms of organization against rhizomatic or mycorrhizal multiplicities.

As prominent ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (2014) explain, at the center of the discourse animating Capitalist heteropatriarchy lies the structural dichotomization of reality, which “hierarchically opposes the two parts to each other: the one always considered superior, always thriving and progressing at the expense of the other. Thus, nature is subordinated to man; woman to man; consumption to production; and the local to the global, and so on.” (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 5). Thus, what is known as ‘Western’ thought (the buzzword, such as with ‘Anthropocene’ and ‘precariat’), more appropriately refers to coloniality of power, namely an interrelation of legacies and practices of European colonialism in their shaping of social orders and knowledge.

Coloniality, as a Eurocentric system of knowledge perceives all other systems as comprising the same set of formal characteristics such as: uniformity, sameness, atomism, dualism, essentialism/reductionism, progress (evolutionary ascent) and fixity, among others.¹⁰⁰ I consider these as the main discourses articulating the agonistic paradigm that I will discuss in the section titled ‘From Colonial Agonism to Decolonial Playfulness’ in this chapter. I will discuss what I consider to be the underlying axis shaping coloniality in terms of agonism—as the substance upon which the Global North exerts its domination— on the basis of three main themes: Cartesian Dualism, The Protestant Work Ethic, and Social Darwinism.

¹⁰⁰ The colonial-Eurocentric approach to knowledge is projected as objective, and so-called ‘experts’ and ‘specialists’ are consequently understood to be the only legitimate knowledge seekers with control over all material reality (Mies & Shiva, 1993, pp. 23, 24). This rational control over materiality was distributed unequally, falling mostly into the hands of a new male ruling-class formed by men of industry who sought to maintain their state of power over others. Colonizers, for instance, directed this form of power-knowledge to erect a dominion over nature as well as other (inferiorized) human beings.

Cartesian Dualism. Dualism, as a discourse, is tied to the idea that proclaims the death of nature, which precludes human understanding of Gaia's metabolism. Although modern science contributed to the dismantling of religious beliefs that were having harmful effects at the time, scientific developments were ideologically used to erect violent binaries that in turn became key to the discourses of (heteropatriarchal, supremacist) Eurocentric 'Western' cosmology. As Vandana Shiva (1993) explains, attitudes promoted by the Scientific Revolution excluded other(ed), alternative and non-official ways to produce knowledge, therefore reducing the confines of what counts as "official" knowledge. These attitudes also reduced nature's creative capacity for regenerating life, by thinking about it as inert and fragmented matter.¹⁰¹

As Radford Ruether reminds us, Newton's framing of the universe as mechanically controlled by a transcendental clockmaker/engineer was further enhanced by Descartes' emphatic dualism between mind and matter (Radford Ruether, 1992). In Descartes, the mind is the central agent governing the body (in its capacity for truth-devising). As such, it becomes counterpart to the figure of 'God,' (as the apotheosis of 'Man') and works as the mimicked projection of an elite-male thinking mechanism whose rational logic is faultless. The mechanistic/reductionist reconceptualization of the non-human world as lifeless objects of control meant that from then on, animals, women and the subjugated races/classes were to be thought of as 'things' in need of external direction. The consequent elimination of personhood—by means of othering—solidified the foundations for the construction of broader schemes of totalitarian control built on scientific models that made anything deemed irrational its enemy. This was the ultimate triumph of Man over nature, which served as inspiration for the shaping of institutions for social control, such as with prisons and mental hospitals, where total domination over life is executed, from a distanced perspective based on the power of masculine 'Reason.'¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ As Shiva explains, "In contrast to the organic metaphors, in which concepts of order and power were based on interdependence and reciprocity, the metaphor of nature as a machine was based on the assumption of divisibility and manipulability" (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 23). Shiva directly references Merchant by addressing the latter's framing of the main problems behind our current environmental dilemma to include the reconceptualization of reality and life as machine-like, rather than a living organism, which helped to sanction the domination of nature and women under Capitalist Patriarchy.

¹⁰² Merchant contends that the power that the scientific method held over the concept of nature was of a special violent kind, for it exerted a rational permissibility for torture. As exemplified in the rhetoric of Francis Bacon, this power "implied the constraint and even the torture of nature." (Merchant, 2006, pp. 517, 518). After all, that which is dead cannot feel pain. Bacon, one of the founders of modern science, argued that it was permissible for knowledge seekers (e.g. male scientists, colonizers) to use Reason in the form of force to extract truths/goods from nature without the need for consent. According to Merchant, theories such as Bacon's treated "nature as a female to be tortured through mechanical inventions, [which

The Cartesian split sprouted from Descartes's framing of the self as realized (created) by means of its own thinking, contained in his famous philosophical statement "Cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am). As Vandana Shiva explains:

During the scientific revolution, Descartes fashioned a new intellectual world order in which mind and body were deemed to be totally separate, and only the male, European mind was considered capable of complete intellectual transcendence of the body. Intellectual and manual labour were thus pronounced to be 'unrelated', even though all human labour, however simple, requires a degree of unity of 'head and hand'. But capitalist patriarchy denies the 'head', the mind, to women and Third World peoples (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 243)

Cartesian dualism therefore established the primacy of the discourse of 'mind over matter,' creating an enduring, perceptual split that has marked most of Western epistemological thinking since its inception. Current philosophical approaches to ecology posit that this split needs to be overcome if humans are to properly address the metabolic rift; for the present environmental quandary demands a truly holistic and integral effort that can critically identify and denounce its less evident foundations. Cartesianism was further complemented by Darwinian evolutionism, which is another discourse that sustains much of the violence happening under capitalist production.

Social-Darwinian Parasitism. Darwin's theory of evolution was groundbreaking at the time and sparked a revolution in science in the 1860s by dethroning both religious teleology and anthropocentric views of nature, which were hegemonic at the time.¹⁰³ His influence on Marx is noted by Foster who writes:

led to] the interrogations of the witch trials and the mechanical devices used to torture witches" (2006, p. 518). Francis Bacon's understanding of scientific experimentation, guided by a mechanistic view of animals as automata, thus legitimated violent experiments to be conducted on living animals, a lot of which are nowadays considered to be forms of torture.

¹⁰³ As Cotten Seiler (2020) explains in his historization of the origins of white care; Darwin's theory of evolution (published in 1859), created controversy in the scientific community, because its notion of species transmutation contradicted the common religious belief in 'special creation,' which framed living beings as fixed (non-changing) and controlled by an overseeing Creator/architect. Hegemonic, ideological worldviews of the time did not agree with Darwin's framing of humanity as bestial and the universe as aimless and chaotic (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). Darwin's stressing of the importance of context-contingency (demanding a multiplicity of biological capacities for species' adaptation and survival) created friction with other fellow scientists' viewpoints, who preferred to view evolution as a process of refinement and advancement, based on the rational power of the will. He wrote, "Only by a diversity of traits could a species hope to survive the natural violence of the world [and by] becoming something different by generations" (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 19).

Marx incorporated evolutionary ideas into his perspective from the beginning, as early as 1844, insisting, against the religious view, on the spontaneous generation of species sometime in the distant geological past. He saw nonhuman and human animal species as sharing an evolutionary and morphological kinship (J. Foster B. & Clark, 2020)

As Haraway explains, Since Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, "biological evolutionary theory has become [...] essential to our ability to think, feel, and act well; and the interlinked Darwinian sciences that came together between the 1930s and 1950s into the "Modern Synthesis" or "New Synthesis" remain astonishing." (A. L. Tsing et al., 2017, p. M28).¹⁰⁴ As Foster explains, Darwin's famous proposition establishes that all species, including human animals, are the product of an evolutionary process governed by natural laws of selection and historical contingency (and not by 'design'). Darwin's theory was rooted in especially competitive relations, and was never truly able to determine how natural selection operated as a creative force of collaboration because he died before the development of genetics as a technology, which gave birth to what is known as 'the modern synthesis' or 'Neo-Darwinism' (Pestre & Krige, 2013).¹⁰⁵

There is a stark contrast between Darwin's original theory of natural selection and social Darwinism (what I refer to as Darwinian parasitism). Cosmologies shape not only religious beliefs, but also underscore what are considered to be scientific 'truths.' According to Radford Ruether, scientific cosmologies contributed to the building of current perceptions around male and white supremacy in ways that accommodated the interests of scientific as well as religious dogmatists in power.¹⁰⁶ For example, Darwinian evolution placed animals and humans in the same developmental continuum, against the Christian belief in a hierarchical separation between human and animal creation (Radford Ruether, 1992). However, as James Allen Rogers argues, the mention of

¹⁰⁴ Darwin, according to Foster, insisted that "the world must be explained in terms of itself and that there is continuity among all life-forms, which are connected through common ancestors" (Clark et al., 2009, p. 338, 339).

¹⁰⁵ Social Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism developed Darwin's original theory of natural selection, then sought to frame evolution—the tracking of the origins of species—as being predicated upon a reductive reading of the phrase 'survival of the fittest.' (Pestre & Krige, 2013)

¹⁰⁶ For example, the Copernican heliocentric model demystified the notion that placed earth at the center of the universe thus challenging the Christian characterization of the heavens as dialectically superior to the earth (rendering stardust and earthly matter as the same). The Copernican debasement of earth as universally centric had such impact in the order of the world that even Nietzsche considered that ever since, 'Man (with his concomitant notions of reason and rationality) has 'been . . . rolling faster and faster away from the centre' (Wenman, 2013)

Darwinism in the present immediately connotes the ‘struggle for existence’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ which were not originally part of Darwin’s thinking, rather they came from the ideologies that led to the creation of Social Darwinism (Rogers, 1972). Social Darwinism applied the rules of ‘natural selection’ to people and was thus later on used to justify domination in the sense postulated by white supremacist, heterosexualist/heteropatriarchal ideologies.

As Rogers explains, Social Darwinists saw the role of society and government as obstructing the economic conditions of the market (in terms of *laissez-faire*, which is what characterizes the second-order imposition). Social Darwinists crafted a parasitic version of Darwin’s evolutionary theories that accommodated their interests in terms of eugenics (in attempting to establish the biological foundations to justify White Supremacy) leveraging the more hostile/problematic aspects of Darwinism and complementing these with the Malthusian racist discourse on ‘overpopulation,’ which set the basis for eco-fascism in the present.¹⁰⁷ Malthusian theory argues that population augments exponentially while food production and agriculture grow at a significantly slower pace, adding up to a point where, eventually, population growth would exceed the Earth’s carrying capacity.¹⁰⁸ Social Darwinists thus reoriented Darwin’s theories to create a biological base supporting Malthus’s delirious concept of a struggle for existence in human society, echoing Thomas Hobbes’s idea of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, meaning ‘the war of all against all.’ For Hobbes, after all, war is human nature (Dawson, 1996). Consequently, and along with Cartesian Dualism, as power wove Social Darwinism into the discourse of war against it also established the ideological foundations for the agonistic model (2-OI) that is currently predating over the actual natural order of Gaia and its 1-OM.

The Protestant Work Ethic. The mechanistic view of the world (the notion that framed nature as lifeless and exploitable) describe the 2-OI’s inherent *modus operandi*. Supported by

¹⁰⁷ As scholars Dyett and Thomas warn, “The intersection of population growth and climate change rhetoric has often adopted hegemonic discourses subtly laced with racist and sexist undertones—placing the burden of our climate crisis on the Global South and oftentimes pointing to birth control for women of color in the ‘third world’ as the solution to this problem (Dyett & Thomas, 2019).”

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Malthus (1798), a professor who worked for no other than the East India Company argued that, “to avoid exceeding the Earth’s carrying capacity, society should assist in suppressing the rate at which people in poverty procreated” (Dyett & Thomas, 2019, pp. 212, 213). This meant imposing harsh penalties for people experiencing precarity, on the basis that they should be rendered expendable as a means to balance the Earth’s natural tendency toward destruction. This kind of thinking is projective and thus does not consider that the Earth itself might have another way to operate other than through war.

Newtonian physics, the mindset that led to the death of nature also laid the foundations for the development of the system of capitalism in accordance with the work ethics of Protestantism (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Max Weber's essay titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (2001) described the religious and cultural influences that helped explain economic development within capitalism. His considerations revolved around the social perception around money and wealth as necessities, not as means to an end, but seeing wealth as an end in itself. According to Weber (2005), capitalist discourses around production were enhanced by ethical considerations around labor promoted by Protestantism. Weber asserted that Protestantism conceived work as a vocation, namely, as an ethical duty to perform one's labor in a methodical manner as a means to carry out God's plan (Kininmonth, 2016). Weber discusses how the notion of vocation as 'one's duty in a calling' emerged in Protestantism, as the key principle framing the social ethic according to the lifestyle dictated by capitalistic culture. 'Vocation' also denoted the ethical duty to perform one's work well and in a methodical manner, or as

an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel toward the content of his professional activity, no matter in what it consists, in particular no matter whether it appears on the surface as a utilisation of his personal powers, or only of his material possessions (as capital) (Kininmonth, 2016, p. 1238)

Furthermore, according to science-backed Protestantism, as Merchant explains, "God had provided man's soul with an inventive faculty, and hands to carry out his ideas."¹⁰⁹ The present social order, like the present natural order was the most useful for carrying out God's plan" (Merchant, 1980, p. 250). The Protestant understanding of work as a vocation thus helped shape modern capitalism by creating a way of life that embodied a new sense of purpose based on economic asceticism.

Weber's thesis around the Protestant work ethic can be summarised in the following principles:

The first principle is a sense of Christian calling to one's earthly occupation, stemming from a belief in the predestination concept. Secondly a related notion that a whole life should be spent in the service of God and therefore represents an opportunity to worship God in all areas of life, including business. Thirdly that the accumulation of wealth can be desirable as it allows acts of generosity through which God can be served; fourthly that reinvestment of wealth is beneficial to all, and fifthly that expenditure on self-gratification is bad (Kininmonth, 2016, p. 1239)

¹⁰⁹ For example, within the Baconian method the tortuous examination of design in nature was considered as a way to fulfill the Protestant commandment in glorifying the will of God (Merchant, 1980).

In other words, the new capitalist spirit manifested as an obligation to perform one's best efforts in wealth-creating labor, as a means to please the will of an overseeing God. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination also gave way to the discourse of American exceptionalism with regard to how violence was executed by God's chosen people in performing his will (Mualim, 2021).

Predetermination and exceptionalism became core discourses to the ideology of the capitalist market. For, as Merchant reminds us, "Naturalist theologians represented an adaptation of organicism to the managerial ethos of mechanism and the ideal of progress in an expanding market society" (1980, p. 252). In reality, the rules of production governed by the capitalist market, as a second-order imposition, establish the base of the capitalist system of production, which is further complemented by a superstructure. An ideological domain thus helps naturalize the necessary values and principles that capitalism needs to keep up with demands in production. Religious belief systems, such as with Christian ideology, are thus implemented to manage work ethics in order to perpetuate an order of domination, which at an individual level means keeping workers in place (managing labor so the system can be reproduced).

From Colonial Agonism to Decolonial Playfulness

An excess of coloniality and agonism requires the presence of playfulness and care to balance the social and ecological equation. In an effort to embracing multiplicity as opposed to dualistic forms of division, decolonial scholars such as Lugones provide important texts that theorize on the possibility of forming deep coalitions by engaging in complex forms of communication addressing the specter of colonial oppression as it shapes the world.¹¹⁰

Decolonization implies a shift of paradigms. Thus, motivated by a feminist decolonial stance as envisioned by Lugones, I'm proposing to frame agonism as the core affect in coloniality that causes the metabolic rift. From this sense, I am framing agonism as the substance through which the capitalist-heteropatriarchal system is able to reproduce itself infinitely, causing increasing rifts that, for example, have led us to the anthropogenic metabolic rift.

Lugones's conceptualization of agonism is conceived in anti-coloniality and thus needs to be contextualized semiotically to be distinguished from other uses that the term has in political theory. The etymological root of the term *agonist* is the Greek word *agōn*, and translates to several

¹¹⁰ Decolonial scholars face the challenge of thinking through coloniality for creating forms of political collaboration that do not universalize or horizontalize all experiences of oppression under convenient (monolithic, reductive) epistemological terms and categories, such as with the ideology of liberalism.

meanings, including ‘contest,’ ‘competition at games,’ and ‘gathering.’ In ancient Greece, agons (its plural form in English being ‘agones’) were public contests held during important celebrations. These contests—such as the ancient [and modern] Olympics—ranged from competitions in athletics to chariot/horse racing to contests in music and literature. The literary use of Agon, for instance, denotes the dramatic conflict between the main characters in a Greek narrative or, more broadly, between the central characters in any work of literature. Agon or agonism can therefore be used to refer to conflict in general.¹¹¹

Agonism, in the sense envisioned by Lugones, involves a hostile sense of interaction (as play), in which competence is central (Lugones, 2003).¹¹² According to Lugones, an agonistic sense of playfulness involves following strict rules that inspire hostility; it is meant to push those involved to risk uncertainty in attempting to win by making others lose (p. 318). For Lugones, the modern/normative conception of play, as adopted by Gadamer and Huizinga, is inherently agonistic in the sense that it is concerned “with contest, with winning, losing, battling” (p. 318). Thus, Lugones’s understanding of agonism epitomizes the colonial (patriarchal) doctrine that organizes production around hostile regard toward the other. Within agonistic play/playfulness, one’s winning (in the game of accumulating riches) is directly proportional to others’ losing.

In colonization, for instance, agonism produces a form of ideological negation that actively *others* those whom it seeks to take advantage of (those ‘others’ who produce wealth yet are deprived of such credit). It creates a discursive attitude that favors the senseless extraction and appropriation of wealth involved in capitalism, which is based on defeating all others (or anything ‘other’) based on self-gain. Therefore, agonism (a sense for navigating relationality via

¹¹¹ For further reference, the term agonist is defined etymologically as a "state of being mutually opposed; opposition between two things or against something," 1797, from French antagonisme or directly from late Greek antagonisma, noun of action from antagonizesthai, "to struggle against, oppose, be a rival," from anti "against" [...] + agonizesthai "to contend for a prize," from agon "a contest, a struggle" (“Agonist,” 2020). As we have seen, even though the term agonism is polysemic, it conveys a common conception: that of struggle or conflict between parties opposing one another. For further reference refer to ‘agon’ in the definition provided by Merriam-Webster dictionaries.

¹¹² Lugones’s definition of agonism is not the same as political philosopher Chantal Mouffe’s (1999), whose model of ‘agonistic pluralism’ works as an alternative to the dominant model of ‘deliberative democracy’ as envisioned by Jurgen Habermas and embraces a rational method for reaching consensus in resolving democracy’s multiple, political disagreements. Mouffe proposes to embrace antithetical oppositionality as a tool crucial for liberation, thus, she marks an important distinction between antagonism and agonism. Whereas she considers antagonism to frame the other as an enemy to be destroyed, agonism, in contrast, perceives the other as an adversary, namely someone to defeat but not kill (Roskamm, 2015, p. 385). However, even though Mouffian agonism is not antagonism as such, it still carries the active substance of arrogance in promoting a perception of the other that frames them as someone to defeat, instead of someone to work alongside in the construction of something mutually beneficial.

competition) is at the root of the animosity and consequent separateness/divisionism that neoliberalism and globalization not only produce but thrive on. As individuals become more disconnected from their life sources in the colonial/modern paradigm and experience the effects of their own metabolic rift, we develop psychopathologies, which are mechanisms by which human psychology compensates for the abuses/excesses involved in (egotistical) anthropocentric exploitation, such as with alienation and burnout.

Arrogance as Agonistic Coloniality

Lugones performs what I am conceptualizing as theoretical foraging¹¹³ of Marilyn Frye's understanding of arrogance and love in her canonical essay "In and Out of Harm's Way, Arrogance and Love" (1983). Marilyn Frye's description of arrogance is insightful in identifying the key affect behind the patriarchal-colonial gaze that structures capitalism and therefore produces harmful rifts in the metabolisms of both nature and human social psyche.¹¹⁴ As philosophy professor Mariana Ortega (2006) explains, Frye's

arrogant perceiver is guilty of seeing with arrogant eyes, eyes that skillfully organize the world and everything in it with reference to [his] desires and interests. [Objects and people are made] to serve the purposes of the arrogant perceiver. By virtue of his dominance and status in society [...] goodness and health are measured by how well the arrogant perceiver's desires are satisfied (2006, p. 59).

Ultimate selfishness and individualism, central the Enlightenment myth of 'Man,' as Anna Tsing calls it, are mobilized as arrogant affects that work in the service of capitalist production. As a hegemonic discourse, the myth of 'Man' creates the illusory truth that frames men as the absolute rulers of the universe, while everything else is secondary and made to be at their service. From this specific conception of arrogance, as the active substance in agonism (and in coloniality) I,

¹¹³ Theoretical foraging involves critically selecting useful strands of information from existing theory-based imaginaries to weave out sensibly (with attention to intention and impact) in newer contexts. I will develop this concept more fully in Chapter 3 after the section on the dialectics of *sentipensar*.

¹¹⁴ Frye writes that according to the Bible:

Woman is created to be man's helper. This captures in myth Western Civilization's primary answer to the philosophical question of man's place in nature: everything that is resource for man's exploitation. With this world view, men see with arrogant eyes which organize everything seen with reference to themselves and their own interests. The arrogating perceiver is a teleologist, a believer that everything ... is either 'for me' or 'against me.' (1983, p. 67)

therefore, argue that capitalism (epitomizing the matrix of domination) is deeply rooted in such substance, which is characteristic of the capitalist way of life: a mode of being in which self-gain is placed before the wellbeing of others creating it. In here, empathy, or the capacity to think-as-other, is suspended. Agonism projects the ego's coercive gaze that bears a powerful influence on others as if by a magnetic force. It establishes a discursive expectation that is meant to shape the form it impacts accordingly (Lugones, 2003). Agonism amounts to the failure of identification with another, namely an obstacle to making a loving connection: it creates a rift that prevents humans from recognizing the inherent value in other life forms, as having vulnerability. As an 'I' that imposes itself, the ego colonizes through the world 'mine.' The possessor-as-self-appointed-author.

The arrogant mode of perception is thus egotistical at its root, which is why Lugones thinks of an alternative to the first and third-person narrator in the "I-we." She writes "The 'I' is a misdescription of formation of dispersed and complex collectivity [whereas the] 'I-we' captures the looking-for-company-but-the enduring not-yet-fulfilled quality of the subject, which also mitigates the 'arrogance' and exemplifies the looking-to-dismantle quality." (Lugones, 2003, p. 713). Consequently, the I-we stands for the quasi-solitary character of the self, in seeking to maintain an openness to hanging out with other people despite ego-coloniality. For Lugones, arrogance equates to ethnocentricity, it is the disrespectful indifference that the feeling of superiority with respect to others encloses (p. 165). Arrogance, in Lugones' view, is what precludes loving perception from occurring, for love is grounded in a non-arrogant sense of play.

Playfulness, Loving Perception, and 'World'-travel

Playfulness is a vital concept in the fungal-inspired practice of drawing out and constitutes a way out of harmful ideological constructions of identity that are meant to entrap people within the logic of coloniality.¹¹⁵ Lugones describes playfulness as "the attitude that I recommend as the loving attitude in traveling across 'worlds'" (2003, p. 316). Her account of playfulness is deeply tied to her use of love in her development of 'loving-perception,' which is meant to contrast the more negative notion of 'arrogant perception.' For Lugones (1987), "love is seen not as fusion and erasure of difference, but as incompatible with them. Love reveals plurality" (p. 3). Namely, to perceive the other in a loving manner can allow for there to be mutual recognition of each other's

¹¹⁵ Lugones's concept of playfulness is central within the conceptualization of the practice 'drawing out,' that I will develop in Chapter 3.

plural being and active subjectivities. In traveling to the ‘world’ of the other, it is preventive to enact loving perception in seeking to attain complex communication, without subsuming the other’s experience within one’s own. Loving perception is a stance in positionality that orients itself toward others, and of which ‘world’-traveling is a fundamental attribute. By learning to travel into each other’s ‘worlds,’ we begin to learn to love each other and thus connect expansively, as if by the mycelia of fungi.

As the counterpart to Lugones and Frye’s arrogance, Lugones offers us the gaze that she frames as a loving kind of perception. In contrast to the force of influence masked as ‘love’ that is present in coercion, as Ortega contends, Frye’s conception of love does not cause the perceiver to dissolve or disappear.¹¹⁶ Rather, instead of acting on a fear of the other as representing what is unknown to us, the loving perceiver is required to become more intimately engaged with oneself and with that other—in the realm of indeterminacy and alterity—from outside of fixative normative-categorical judgment, which is colonial at heart. Ortega explains, “The loving perceiver does not see the other as a constant threat or as someone who is there to fulfill all of her desires,” (Ortega, 2006, pp. 59-60) which is characteristic of the agonistic way to perceive anything external or other, namely as someone/something that needs to be defeated in order for the (colonial, ego-driven) self to keep its position within the power dialectic as master/oppressor.

In contrast, the love that is involved in playful kinds of practice is meant to compensate for the negative affective charge of fear that emerges while crossing the border/membrane into another ‘world’ of meaning. Lugones writes: “Playfulness is [...] an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred, and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight” (Lugones, 2003, p. 140). In her view, playfulness is meant to assist one in keeping focus during the process of ‘world-travel,’ by which one experiences differences in a way that changes one through multifariously different encounters with others.

¹¹⁶ It is important to mention that Frye explicitly states that the loving perceiver does not intend to blend or fuse with its perceptual object in terms of interest, namely within “vital parasitic or symbiotic relations.” (p. 75). This creates tension between the symbiotic model that I am creating for developing mycorrhizal relations. However, I would like to explore the concept within the playfully expansive setting that I am proposing, on the one hand looking into human’s evolutionary upbringing in symbiosis (as I will discuss later on with Lynn Margulis’s work and Lugones’s concept of ‘fusion’ as artmaking) and on the other, I am minding human material futurity in invoking the metabolism between human-animals labor and nature. My purpose is not to subsume the other as one would do under arrogance, rather my point is to reach affective transformations in both parties (as they sympoietically constitute each other, not as fixed entities but as evolving matter) to challenge Frye’s original considerations and to expand on Lugones’s development of loving perception as a feminist decolonial tool for artmaking and for forming deep coalitions.

Subsequently, the concept of a ‘world’ is central to Lugones’s thinking, especially with relation to her construction of playfulness. As such, it is a spatialization of meaning, namely a mise-en-scène that constructs us in ways that are not always legible to humans, for sometimes people lack awareness with respect to how power scripts influence different cultures. A world can thus be “an incomplete visionary non-utopian construction of life, or it may be a traditional construction of life” (Lugones, 2003, p. 299). Reality, as seen through this conceptual prism appears not as atomistic, but rather as heterogeneous and multiple and not just in terms of interpretation. In her description, Lugones has provided an incredibly insightful commentary on the way people constructed outside of the cultural dominion or ‘world’ of the US (as the organization of society regarding nature) become world travelers out of necessity.

In other words, world traveling becomes fundamental because it allows for Latinas (and people who are in-between ‘worlds’) to navigate between different identity configurations, to be able to escape harm and be at ease. Travel is understood by Lugones as “the shift from being one person to being a different person” (Lugones, 2003, p. 304).¹¹⁷ ‘World’-travel is a tool for people facing political subjugation-as-subjection, which makes them prone to exploitation and expropriation. As such, this concept can be placed in dialogue with Dubois’s concept of ‘second sight’ or ‘double consciousness’ in the sense that he understands the splintered tension between the identity of ‘American’ and that of ‘Negro.’¹¹⁸ As art education professor Wanda Knight (2007) explains, there is a double role that Black people must play to survive in the social landscape that is the U.S. In the case of Black women, there is an additional dislocation of reality—double jeopardy— that results in them having to cope with racial as well as gender discrimination (Knight, 2007). Knight agrees with Lugones when she says that “to survive, it is important that we learn to “shift” between both of these worlds” (Knight, 2007, p. 24).¹¹⁹ After all, these worlds are set in

¹¹⁷ World-traveling can be done from hostile to less violent spaces (and vice versa, depending on context), as Lugones writes, “Those of us who are “world”-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different “worlds” and of having the capacity to remember other “worlds” and ourselves in them. We can say “That is me there, and I am happy in that “world.” So, the experience is of being a different person in different “worlds” and yet of having memory of oneself as different without quite having the sense of there being any underlying ‘I’” (Lugones, 2003, pp. 302, 303)(Lugones, 2003, pp. 302, 303)

¹¹⁸ In Dubois words, double consciousness is a way of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings (Boxill, 2020, p. 2)

¹¹⁹ I would emphasize, also in the spirit that Knight promotes, that the main challenge is for people not just to survive but to thrive, meaning to prosper and not to merely deal with the bareness of life.

black and white terms, which stand in opposition to each other.

Furthermore, the ability to identify and shift from patterns of meaning—as these weave the two worlds that DuBois identifies as constructing Black people in the US— resonates with what Latina/x feminist theorist Chela Sandoval (2000) has conceptualized as ‘differential consciousness.’ For Sandoval, differential consciousness is an oppositional ideology that depends on a form of agency that is self-consciously or performatively mobilized in order to be effective. She writes, “differential consciousness operates like the clutch of an automobile: the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power” (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 57, 58). Sandoval considers that the proper mobilization of differential consciousness generates the conditions of possibility for creating coalitions with liberatory movements for emancipation in global affinities and associations (Sandoval, 2000).¹²⁰

However, in order to be opened to engaging playfully and lovingly in a different ‘world,’ it is fundamental to foster a theoretical recognition of the self’s multidimensionality with respect to worlding. As a response, Lugones’s array of tools for survival in agonistic spaces (where coloniality pervades) includes the notion of active subjectivity. Active subjectivity is meant to replace the common notion of agency, which is not reduced to the individual, but endorses multiplicity and multifocality in dwelling within and in resistance to [colonial/modern/capitalist-patriarchal] structures of power (Lugones, 2003). Thus, the concept of *I-we* results from her deliberations on active subjectivity, as a decolonial instrument. The *I-we* thus helps stretch what had been previously theorized as a multiplicity of self, such as with *mestizaje*, in a way that does not seek to negate blackness into a false universal of brownness, as with Mexican politician José Vasconcelos’s discourse of *la raza cósmica* or the cosmic race.¹²¹ Rather, Lugones builds on

¹²⁰ Sandoval’s differential consciousness performs similarly to Anzaldúa’s theory of *la conciencia de la mestiza*, or *mestiza consciousness*; namely, it weaves between and among oppositional ideologies and positionings to provide a common ground nurtured by the subjective power of difference. As Sandoval explains, Anzaldúa’s “*conciencia de la mestiza* is born of life lived in the ‘cross-roads’ between races, nations, languages, genders, sexualities, and cultures: It is a developed subjectivity capable of transformation and relocation, movement guided by the learned capacity to read, renovate, and make signs in behalf of the dispossessed in a skill that Anzaldúa calls ‘*la facultad*.’ So too does the philosopher Maria Lugones claim that the theory and method of U.S. third world feminism require of its practitioners nomadic and determined ‘travel’ across ‘worlds of meaning’ (Sandoval, 2000). Following Sandoval’s considerations toward Lugones’s concept of the *limen*, it is important to acknowledge the influence that the theories of Gloria Anzaldúa have had on both thinkers.

¹²¹ The cosmic race was centered around European whiteness, fueled by a Christian conception of evolution, and thus constituted a form of theological racism that effectively mirrored US racism, shared the US manifest destiny belief in racial destiny. Namely, as Agustin Palacios contends, the cosmic race was guided by a race-conscious God and thus, according to its author, “would be superior because it would be

Anzaldúa's construction of *mestizaje*¹²² in a way that allows for selves characterized by constantly being-between-worlds to cross the borders between those worlds as safely and playfully as possible. As gender studies professor Hil Malatino, explains (a former student of Lugones), these tools are meant to assist people who "lack the privilege of an uncomplicated 'I' (and the ability to conjure oneself into such an 'I' is always a product of privilege, to be sure)" (Malatino, 2020, p. 35).

Lugones's theories are meant to trigger decolonial perceptions and practices around identity, subjectivity, and culture to be able to provide resources for caring (for each other, mostly) that do not reproduce colonial agonism. According to Keifer-Boyd, the concepts presented by María Lugones's famous essay "Playfulness, 'World'-travelling, and Loving Perception" hereby discussed, offer strategies for the development of decolonial forms of affect, such as (decolonial) empathy that are key and include:

an openness to surprise, not being wedded to rules but instead articulating rules as they emerge in an interaction, centering the aims of marginalized groups, allowing another's experience to become central, interacting in the unfamiliarity of another's world, and being willing to take risks in perception and interpretation of the art (Karen Keifer-Boyd, 2011a, p. 6)

Within a decolonial or anti-colonial mode of thinking and acting, playfulness and loving perception are meant to be performed via the activation of the logic of resistance, in sharp contrast to the logic of oppression and false universalization, which is created under coloniality.

the product of a racial synthesis that would filter out the inferior traits and retain the superior ones" (Palacios, 2017, p. 420).

¹²² Anzaldúa's theory the borderlands/la frontera (1987) is foundational to Lugones's decolonial thinking. The borderlands, as a concept, has to do with a superimposition of the liminal, colonial notion of the border, for example, making reference to the one existing between the U.S. and Mexico. Anzaldúa conceives this border as a physical-historical wound that, to be healed, first needs to be brought to people's awareness. She describes the border as a "1,950 mile-long open wound, dividing a pueblo, a culture, running down the length of my body, staking fence rods in my flesh, splits me, splits me, me raja, me raja" (1987, p. 2). Her account of the borderlands is metaphorized both as a corporeal as well as a territorial entity. Acknowledging the existence of the borderlands is a tactic that is meant to exhume the colonial legacies of oppression that subordinated women from even before the time of the colonization of Abya Yala. Anzaldúa subsequently elaborates on the idea of the border as a liminal site by introducing the notion of *nepantla*, or "a space/place where realities interact and imaginative shifts happen" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, p. 35). *Nepantla* is a word of Nahuatl origin that refers to an "in-between space." Anzaldúa made use of this term as a means to represent the psychic-spiritual, and material spaces for potential subjective and social transformation.

Problematizing Coalition-building. Forming decolonial coalitions in multiplicity is challenging, for the aim is to produce unity without the colonial ego-drive, which upholds tendency to homogenize contextual contingency or negate-by-erasure important differences of those involved. The monolithic flattening of multiplicity is what women's and gender studies professor Chandra Mohanty (1988) advised against in her famous essay *Under Western Eyes* in which she identified a tendency in Western feminist scholarship for using a floating signifier — the third world woman — as a false universalizing form for representing all women from/in the 'developing' worlds.¹²³ Mohanty considers the oppositional or differential grounding of efforts such as those constructed in Latina/x feminisms (an opposition or difference to the dominant rule, or the matrix of power) to reproduce dualism and therefore coloniality.

What Mohanty stresses is the importance of developing more nuanced perspectives that acknowledge differences and particularities women's experiences to identify connections and commonalities with relation to what she calls "a tightly integrated capitalist system" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 511). Thus, in a revised issue of that same essay, around fifteen years later, Mohanty reflects on the potential of raising the causal links between marginalized social locations and experiences through a transnational, anticapitalist feminist critique, one that draws on historically attentive dialectical materialism and centralizes racialized gender.

She writes "the differences and borders of each of our identities connect us to each other, more than they sever. So, the enterprise here is to forge informed, self-reflexive solidarities among ourselves" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 530). Her claim becomes highly relevant when working with Lugones's decolonial feminisms since it evinces Mohanty's endorsement of Lugones's understanding of decoloniality as resisting heterosexualism (racialized gender, for instance) and thus can be articulated toward liberatory coalitions by means of addition.

From a critical and complex embracing of difference, I would like to further unfold Mohanty's proposal for identifying 'connections and commonalities' in experiences of third-world domination. As Mariana Ortega contends, it is fundamental that individuals recognize the inherent complex/multiplicitous/ambiguous and even contradictory character that shapes the constant evolution of selves, but at the same time, selves must also recognize that "there is still a togetherness to our multiplicity" (Ortega, 2001, p. 16) however complicated that may be. I would

¹²³ Mohanty writes "Feminist work on women in the third world which blurs [the distinction between 'Woman' and 'women'] [...] eventually ends up constructing monolithic images of 'Third World Women' by ignoring the complex and mobile relationships between their historical materiality on the level of specific oppressions and political choices on the one hand and their general discursive representations on the other" (Mohanty, 1988, p. 77).

like to dare readers to think about that *togetherness*, from the depths of human existence, relationally but also in terms of an actual substance—metabolized stardust—albeit in a way that does not reduce us to one another, but rather reveals the expansive potential that mutualisms have in producing positive transformations that can help us resist systematic hate. ‘World’-traveling is key. A common denominator in building coalitions that do not center the human is born out from a perspective that focuses on human evolutionary trajectory through symbiosis, as Lynn Margulis’s work shows.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter concerns the methodological structuring of this study. The first section presents an introduction to dialectics from the perspective of a materialist praxis. Consequently, I argue that dialectical thinking can be enacted via *sentipensar*, a practice that combines sensibility with cognition, thus defying the legacy of Cartesian dualism in thinking that feeling and thought are separate dimensions within humans. From this discussion I then introduce the critical-sensible practice of theoretical foraging that is meant to assist in problematizing sources of knowledge while keeping the aspects that are still useful. Subsequently, I present the methodology involving the artistic component of this study, which relies on the notion of arts-based research in relation to a social justice, activist praxis. From this contextualization, I further develop a discussion of my particular approach to feminist dialogism, which shows how dialogue helps exteriorize affects in a way that can help understand the effects that systems of domination have on people's perceptions and bodies. I contextualize the dialogic aspects of drawing out within an exploratory and expansive approach to drawing that involves an open and ongoing process of meaning-making, as opposed to the creation of an end 'product.' The following section involves the use of drawing as a visual methodology, where I tie in two of the major influences structuring this study: Socially Engaged Art and a Social Justice Activist Praxis. From a perspective that images what decolonial drawing entails, I provide a discussion of the main theoretical influences that allowed me to come up with the name 'drawing out' placing María Lugones's concept of 'hanging out' (2003) in dialogue with Guy Debord's notion of 'dérive,' (Costa, 2021) both involving practices of walking or moving through space in a sense that defies territorial normativity. Referring back to the practice of drawing out, I describe what I mean by attempting to develop 'mycorrhizal sensibilities' in artmaking in an effort to produce a notion of 'decolonial drawing.' Through the notion of aisthesis, or anti-colonial sense-perception, the purpose is to open the human sensorium toward alternative (anti-colonial) forms of meaning-making that also reference self-making in collectivity. Thus, through a discussion of Mariana Ortega's concept of 'queer autoarte,' I delve on the potential that drawing and fusion (as a form of material coalescing), from an evolutionary perspective have in terms of building of anti-colonial coalitions centered on care and that theorize

from the perspective of a self that creates itself (via the many) in resistance to coloniality. Finally, I discuss the potential that post-humanist co-configurations have with regard to limit cases and thresholds.

Dialectics

Dialectics offer a way out of dualistic thinking. As a philosophical system, dialectics conceive things and entities not as static and immutable, but rather as contingent processes in flux (Farjoun, 2019).¹²⁴ Since Descartes, various philosophical efforts have attempted to heal the profound division that Cartesian dualism produced in mainstream thinking, beginning with Kantian metaphysics, which subsumed all material reality into an external and fixed idealistic plane that could only be grasped via sense-perception and was ultimately transcendent and thus unreachable/unknowable (J. B. Foster & Burkett, 2000).¹²⁵ Hegel's dialectical philosophy envisioned a way out of the Kantian impasse by claiming that 'objective' separation of humans from the external world (which created serious problems for cognition) were, in fact, part of a larger process that involved the development of what he called 'spirit/Geist' in history.¹²⁶ For Hegel,

¹²⁴ An exhaustive revision of what dialectics 'are' would cover the length of a whole dissertation, or even more. However, in line with this study's anti-colonial aims, I consider what dialectics can contribute to environmental justice and remediation. However, as a quick overview: although generally attributed to Hegel, Aristotle considered Zeno of Elea to have originated dialectical thinking as the argumentative method of taking an opposing proposition and proving it illogical by deriving two contradictory conclusions from it.

¹²⁵ Kant responded to Cartesianism by creating a more transcendental dualism, which he thought was a necessary condition for critical thinking. For Kant, there existed a reality outside of the body, in the realm of the 'noumena' (or the impassable 'thing in itself'). However, this external reality could only be grasped via sense-perception and was ultimately transcendent and thus unreachable/unknowable.

¹²⁶ For Kant, dialectical antinomies (opposites) are fixed, and thus exist forever in mutual negation, while for Hegel, dialectics are "the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative" (Carter, 2003, p. 66). Hegel's dialectic responds to "the mutual identity innate to contradictory forces" (Carter, 2003, p. 66) that evince the contradictory nature of reality. Dynamism, the transformative motion of becoming(-with) through various stages of contradiction, is what makes the difference between Kantian and Hegelian dialectics. For Hegel, dialectics are unfolded in a series of threes that duplicate as fractals do, following the foundational principle of contradiction and negation. Thus, at a first moment, self-consciousness exists for itself, and this moment is of understanding and fixity. However, self-consciousness also exists for another, from which it comes out of itself at a second moment called dialectical, which is about instability and self-sublation (Maybee, 2020). And, as such loses itself momentarily and recognizes in the other its own self and thus cancels itself to pass onto its opposite (although maintaining an aspect that keeps it self-identical). The third moment is of speculation or when the unity of the opposition between the first two moments is the positive result of the transformation of both into another, unified self. A simple

human knowledge of the world, in terms of the confirmation of reason —via instances of contradiction and transcendence— is produced as humans transform the world, and with it, themselves (Foster, 2000, p. 34).

Even though Hegel’s dialectical method provided a means to reconnect with an external world, his view of dialectics remained deeply idealist, even from an ontological standpoint. In response, Karl Marx grounded Hegel’s dialectic within a practical, materialist context prioritizing a materialist ontology via praxis and that centered on labor (Foster & Burkett, 2000, p. 404).¹²⁷ Marx explains the difference in that his dialectical method,

not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought (Marx, 1990, p. 102)¹²⁸

Although fundamentally different, these two perspectives were articulated around the concept of alienation. While alienation for Hegel is the self-alienation of the mind in falling for the illusion of objects as externalized from subjects, Marx contended that alienation is self-alienation of the material reality, which is the illusion of production or goodness as externalized in private property and religion (Carter, 2003). Hegelian alienation is overcome by the self-possession of the mind, while Marxian alienation is overcome with a movement back to the material world of praxis.

As a means to challenge dualism through dialectics, it is important to emphasize the gerund potential in phenomena that tend to be frozen in their infinitive form. Namely, it is to regard ‘being’ as ‘becoming.’ According to the principle of dialectics, phenomena go through moments of tension, or contradiction in themselves in their constant process of becoming. When encountering one another, they become transformed into something *else/other*, as a part of the

example of this is lived by humans as mortals: individuals grow and change constantly yet remain the same in some respects.

¹²⁷ For Marx, idealism inevitably led to a quasi-religious worldview that denied both humanism as well as materialism.

¹²⁸ Marxian dialectics address a dynamic interplay between two principal realms that I will, for practical purposes, call physics (the concrete, material world) and metaphysics (the realm of abstractions, ideas, concepts, and the spiritual). Metaphysics are ‘physics,’ albeit operating at a degree of separation from reality (‘meta’ refers to an abstraction).

infinite motion of the dialectical process.¹²⁹ In other words, what dialectical movement involves the coexistence of two contradictory/opposing sides which enter conflict and, as a result, fuse into a new category.”¹³⁰ Core to this process is fusion. However, Marx’s dialectical approach had become co-opted and defamed by coloniality (flattened as abstraction) and can reproduce problematic notions such as absolute fixity, if not contextualized within a more complex set of parameters that embrace the ontological and sympoietic character of the metabolic flux of life. Because coloniality is profoundly grounded in dualistic thinking and thus attempts to confuse dialectics with dualism. From this perspective it would seem logical to think that oppositional politics are not necessarily controversial if they address the dynamic (dialectic) character that dialectics have and that dualism paralyzes. Marx, as cited by Carter, writes:

because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary (Carter, 2003, p. 71)

Dialectical thinking can stitch through the dualist divide—the rift— between the human and natural worlds (the first and second order of Gaia’s metabolism) by insisting that “the human and natural realms share a materially grounded, if also internally differentiated and contradictory, reality, and are better viewed as relatively distinct than as absolutely different” (M. E. G. Smith, 2009, p. 359). Furthermore, and as Marxist philosopher György Lukács posits, in the words of Foster, Marxian dialectics are a theoretical tool by which to constitute a mere approximation to reality, since it is in a constant flux.¹³¹ Lukács writes, “scientific laws can only fulfill themselves

¹²⁹ The simplified version of dialectics is taught via reductive the two-into-one formula: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, which is meant to establish the main stages of becoming(-with) of nature’s phenomena. As Marx explains, within the dialectic process opposites encounter each other, thus “The yes becoming no, the no becoming yes, the yes becoming both yes and no, the no becoming both no and yes, the contraries balance, neutralize, paralyze each other. The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them. This thought splits up once again into two contradictory thoughts, which in turn fuse into a new synthesis. Of this travail is born a group of thoughts. This group of thoughts follows the same dialectic movement as the simple category and has a contradictory group as antithesis. Of these two groups of thoughts is born a new group of thoughts, which is the antithesis of them” (Marx, 1999, p. 258).

¹³⁰ What this means is that, for example, when a thing (such as reason) poses itself as a thesis, this thesis splits up into two opposing thoughts (positive and negative). Thus, the tension, or ‘struggle’ as contradiction between these two antagonistic elements (as antithesis) is what constitutes the dialectical movement.

¹³¹ Lukács writes, “reality consists of the incessant interaction of complexes, which are located both internally and externally in heterogeneous relationships, and are themselves dynamic syntheses of often

in the real world as tendencies, and necessities only in the tangle of opposing forces, only in a mediation that takes place by way of endless accidents” (Foster & Clark, 2016).¹³² Therefore, a dialectical approximation to reality is not primarily epistemological and entirely objective, for it rather reflects the ontological determinacy of being itself which is both infinite and heterogeneous.

Moreover, as sociology professor Murray E. G. Smith (2009) contends, to be truly revolutionary, dialectics need to address, on the one hand, the defense of realism in epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and the defense of monism in ontology (the theory of being/becoming/what exists), as an antidote to ontological dualism.¹³³ However, from a dialectical regard monism should not be approached from the perspective of absolute fixity, rather, it should be approached as dialectically constituting itself on the basis of homeokinesis, as part of the general metabolic process of symbiopoiesis.

Symbiopoiesis, or the production of life out of ‘togetherness,’ derives from Haraway’s notion of sympoiesis (framed within Fritjof Capra’s ‘systems view of life’) and helps to explain the dialectics that bind a unified conception of mind, matter and life as they metabolically reproduce-by-producing-one-another, a trans-poietic process. Within this view, the biological, the cognitive, the social and the ecological dimensions become integrated, or fused into a common dynamic/transformative cell/project, that is infinitely transforming, as with the mycorrhizal care politics model that I am developing. From this understanding I would like to approach both the concepts of sympoiesis, and metabolism—namely what refers to the becoming-with/making-with of organisms— as a form of dialectics, where fusion is central, albeit as a moment within the infinite process of transformation-via-contradiction.¹³⁴

Furthermore, from this understanding of dialectics, I argue that it makes sense to regard Lugones’s ‘I/we’ and Ortega’s multiplicitousness as concepts that allow for the recognition of the

heterogeneous components, so that the number of effective elements can be quite unlimited” (Foster & Clark, 2016)

¹³² I will develop this consideration in the following section regarding the ‘epistemic fallacy.’

¹³³ According to philosophy professor Sean Sayers (1985) a dialectical approach is necessary to resist dualism, because it can highlight the important interplay of thought and reality and thus break through the anti-realist tendencies in the theory of knowledge.

¹³⁴ Jung offers some examples of enantiodromia, including the conversion of St. Paul and Raymund Lully, the self-identification of an ill Nietzsche with Christ, as well as his deification and subsequent hatred of Wagner, the transformation of Swedenborg from an erudite scholar into a seer, etc. (Jung, 2017)

potential that the self holds in order to constantly self-produce-as-other-and-with-others, as it unfolds in a myriad of iterations that reflect the fractal-resembling character that keeps the self being self-identical, yet radically different from itself and from others, in an infinite process of becoming. Symbiopoiesis becomes readable through dialectics, and it points to the possibility of developing a kind of dialectical thinking through sensibility and cognition, thus entangling discourses and affects through a process that is called *sentipensar*.

Dialectics of Sentipensar

Thinking dialectically through discourses and affects is a practice that is being developed under the anti-colonial, Latina/x feminist concept of *sentipensar*. Sentipensar translates from Spanish as ‘thinking-sensing,’ and, as an anti-colonial practice, it meaning that is constructed out of a dynamic (dialectical) confluence of human sense-perception, emotion and cognition (Escobar, 2014). In other words, sentipensar complements what aisthesis used to denote before being reformulated as (colonial) ‘aesthetics.’ The concept is becoming more popular within decolonial movements in Latin America. As anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2014) contends, sentipensar involves thinking and sensing with the territory, by activating both the heart and the mind.¹³⁵

As such, it has become a means for communities of resistance, such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, to develop ‘the art of living.’ Meaning that, sentipensar invites people to think-sense along with the ontological aesthetic grounding of their cultures, to learn to progressively abandon colonial-oppressive notions that discourses such as ‘economic progress’ or ‘development’ carry and that frame territories of the Global South as ‘less capable’ or inferior to the more ‘developed’ territories of the Global North (Escobar, 2014). Rather, aligned with an arts practice, sentipensar has the potential of helping individuals understand that our knowledge of the world does not exclusively hinge on our sense of sight or reason, but rather is woven through multiple relationships that emerge in the interstices that bind sensation with thought. In terms of this study, I was able to engage in sentipensar as a tactic through which to conduct my drawing out encounters.

¹³⁵ Escobar writes in Spanish: “Sentipensar con el territorio implica pensar desde el corazón y desde la mente, o co-razonar, como bien lo enuncian colegas de Chiapas inspirados en la experiencia zapatista [...] es la forma en que las comunidades territorializadas han aprendido el arte de vivir. Este es un llamado, pues, a que la lectora o el lector sentipiense con los territorios, culturas y conocimientos de sus pueblos — con sus ontologías—, más que con los conocimientos des-contextualizados que subyacen a las nociones de “desarrollo”, “crecimiento” y, hasta, “economía”” (Escobar, 2014, p. 214)

Consequently, I have implemented *sentipensar* as a form of approaching an affective-discursive analysis of participant expression about burnout. The aim is to establish paths in both sensibility as well as cognition for recognizing and bringing into consciousness the kinds and aspects of labor that we perform and that are not necessarily valued by the agonistic gaze of capitalism. Beyond, an additional aim of such a practice involved the building of care webs through alternative meaning-making processes that did not aim to repeat colonial construction, but rather sought to affirm people's dignity and self-worth as members of the same, living planetary community that is Gaia (Palacios Córdoba, 2019).

Approaching meaning-making through *sentipensar* from a holistic anti-colonial stance is meant to de-center the human while embracing the possibility of considering different kinds of relations (not only in terms of linear exchanges) that could reorganize production around care rather than self-destruction via senseless accumulation. I thus propose to consider mycorrhizal symbiopoiesis (the production of the many-by the many, from the perspective of symbiotic collaborations as care) as the imaginative platform from which to orient practices such as dialogic drawing in helping to raise awareness on the aspects of coloniality—such as agonism—that lead to metabolic rifting (such as with burnout or the overarching environmental crisis). As an example, mushrooms (as the fruiting body of mycelia) can act as a signifier for representing the unrepresented, namely the people (human and more-than-human) and the labor that has been rendered occluded by the production-obsessed perceptions created by the ideology sustaining capitalist heteropatriarchy.¹³⁶ In that same sense, drawing also performs the 'mushroom' of the fine art genres and, as a form of studio practice, it is usually relegated to the margins in terms of funding and attention. As a colonially debased art-form, drawing calls to be decolonized from a perspective that is capable of sifting through current knowledge in terms of critically discerning useful material from controversial content that should be problematized rather than blindly accepted. The practice of theoretical foraging is meant to perform just that.

Theoretical Foraging and Conceptual Composting

The practice of theoretical foraging is based on paying critical attention to texts recognizing useful aspects within theories that can be salvaged from a more problematic milieu (or even

¹³⁶ I am mostly referring mostly to the unwaged or underpaid labor of women of color from around the world and the care work they perform (along with other beings and) in relation to the many metabolisms that we rely on to lead a healthy, meaningful, and fulfilling life.

authorial intention).¹³⁷ This is a means for us to not have to ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater,’ in our critical and contemporary problematization of colonial works. Rather, it is key that we acknowledge the contingency and the complexity of theoretical traditions that spring from coloniality. *Theoretical Foraging* (TF), as a tactic, takes inspiration from feminist theorist Karen Barad’s (2014) concept of diffraction, which refers to a physical phenomenon that results from the overlapping of multiple waves as they either meet an impasse or each other (Geerts & Van der Tuin, 2021). In other words, the key is to understand diffraction patterns as patterns of difference that make a meta-difference and that shape the world. Diffraction is meant to stand for a critical and difference-centered mode of thinking and sensing that pays attention to alterity and multiplicity, and thus aligns well with the methodological frameworks that I am employing.

In contrast, and from an additive perspective, the practice of conceptual composting is designed to be the counterpart of theoretical foraging in allowing the more problematic aspects of theories to rot in the soil of knowledge production. Their organic decay—via a critical approach—can allow for new life to spring from that rich organic humus. Composting at the level of concepts involves signaling attitudes and claims that serve as vehicles for the perpetuation of colonial ideology. The aim is to let that which is problematic guide the public in general toward understanding why coloniality is harmful in given situations. The way is to offer arguments that contextually unearth the discourses and affects that pertain to normalized colonial thinking, to rather normalize these as problematic. Conceptual Composting (CC) is meant to avoid forms of censorship or rapid dismissal of entire works that could otherwise be sifted or ‘composted,’ and made useful. Namely, works deemed ‘problematic’ in certain contexts can be further analyzed to retrieve ‘nutrients’ (useful ideas) that can serve different (maybe not yet even thought-of) contextual needs, with regard to the metabolic flux of knowledge production. Conceptual composting is a practice that can be extremely useful for work that is aligned with anti-coloniality, namely it describes what decolonial aisthesis performs in response to colonial aesthetics.

Together, TF and CC provide a means for readers to engage with texts with a critical eye toward complexity, meaning, in challenging colonial notions that actively guide the production and

¹³⁷ For example, of Mariana Ortega’s foraging of the Heideggerean *dasein* can be conceived as a form of theoretical foraging. Namely, Ortega draws from Heidegger, who had extremely problematic views that aligned with Nazism, as manifested in his recent black books. Yet, her notion of the multiplicitous self both springs from Heidegger’s *dasein*, yet challenges that very origin in providing new alternatives for its conception. Another example of theoretical foraging can be Donna Haraway’s development of Humberto Maturana’s theory of autopoiesis (self-becoming) from which she draws the notion of sympoiesis (becoming-with). Namely, it does not discard the theory entirely, but rather adjusts the message to fit into the factual context of reality.

reception of knowledge based on nefarious discourses such as Cartesian dualism, fixity and hierarchy. Thinking through complexity and contingency allows people to envision a different approach to knowledge-making.

An Arts-based, Social Justice Activist Praxis

The practices of theoretical foraging and conceptual composting were strongly shaped by a political and ethical embracing of a social justice-activist praxis.¹³⁸ According to art education scholar Keifer-Boyd social justice approach involves “continual critical reflexivity in response to injustice” (Karen Keifer-Boyd, 2011a, p. 3). In a similar manner to the way Lugones conceptualizes the limen in need of value-laden action to become liberatory (Lugones, 2006),¹³⁹ Keifer-Boyd shows that arts-based practices, such as drawing out, must also be enacted according to the right research criteria and values that can help it become truly feminist, critical, coalitional and anti-colonial.

Drawing out is conceived as an arts-based research practice that leverages drawing as a visual methodology. Arts-based research encompasses a spectrum of tactics and resources that take art as a mode of inquiry, dissemination, representation, and transformation. Keifer-Boyd (2011) defines arts-based research as a “hybrid form of action research based in art processes, and/or art based in action research processes” (2011a, p. 5). If dynamically aligned with feminist art activism, research involving the arts can unearth the patterns of coloniality (manifested as inequity, oppression and in this case: burnout), and simultaneously leverage acts of transformation and activism. For this study, I engaged in a dialogic-drawing, arts-practice approach to analyze how

¹³⁸ For art educator Karen Keifer-Boyd, “The bridge is an access, a decolonial empathy strategy, to encounter difference in a way that decenters normative frames of reference” (Wexler & Sabbaghi, 2019, p. 194). Keifer-Boyd has a vast experience in leveraging the arts to create connective dialogues across difference. Understanding that art, as life process, is sympoietic (is collectively created), Keifer-Boyd curates spaces of encounters where people can experience unfamiliar ways for connecting with profound perceptions of multiplicity and alterity that unsettle coloniality. The purpose is to develop and orient self-knowledge toward challenging stereotypical assumptions and expectations that come with artmaking and that impede people from drawing important lessons from the experience of uncertainty and discomfort. The key is dialogue. I consider this practice to be aligned with Anzaldúa’s notion of *crossing borders* (Anzaldúa, 1987) as well as Lugones’s concepts of playfulness, loving perception and world-travel (Lugones, 1987).

¹³⁹ Lugones defines the limen as “the edge of hardened structures, a place where transgression of the reigning order is possible. As such, it both offers communicative openings and presents communicative impasses to liminal beings” (Lugones, 2006, p. 75). According to Lugones, the limen can become coalitional on the condition that people inhabiting that third space are able to recognize each other as performing hybridity opaquely, namely “occupying liminal sites across a host of differences” (Lugones, 2006, p. 79).

members of the ‘Millennial’ generation express their affective experiences of burnout through creative expression and conversation, with special attention to how meaning-making is discursively as well as affectively performed. There is extant literature that shows the benefits of conducting a practice approach to research that incorporates artmaking as a means for participants to project aspects of their experience that might escape conventional research considerations (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Garner & Ebrary, 2008; Lykes & Crosby, 2014; Theron et al., 2011). Furthermore, a practice approach that embraces transdisciplinarity through the substance of creativity can expand understanding of what artmaking can do in research, especially when enhanced by a dialogic component.

Feminist Dialogism

A feminist approach to dialogism can be an effective means to help render affect explicit during a communicative exchange, especially when drawings are involved. Dialogism borrows from Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) theories on the complexity of language, which he frames as a multi-vocal process of information exchange across different interconnected strands in a given context of enunciation. Feminist dialogism (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991; Eigler, 1995; Hohne & Wussow, 1994) would emphasize gender in dialogism as a means to disrupt patriarchal hierarchy. Feminist dialogism challenge the monologism of Eurocentric thinking by de-centering the self in order to make space for a multiplicity of voices to constitute a stipulation of meaning (Hohne & Wussow, 1994).

Furthermore, as Adetty Pérez de Miles explains in her commentary of Pablo Helguera’s relational artworks, both Bakhtin’s as well as Helguera’s works attempt to make significant inroads in using counter-discourses within the relational-dialogic praxis. She writes, “contiguous with Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, Helguera advances the notion that voice is accomplished only when participants in dialogue can produce, rather than repeat (recapitulate) discourses” (Pérez Miles, 2010, p. 376). A dialogic of transformative ‘voicing’ is exactly what I intended to provoke during my drawing out encounters, namely as a shift from agonistic repetition of utterances to the creative production of alternative forms of meaning that are playfully enacted via dialogue. The point is to re-envision dialogue as an action of communicative power that is dynamic, participatory and gives way to critical viewpoints that seek to construct more than they seek to destroy.

Moreover, my aim is not to use dialogism to over-emphasize the verbal aspects of social interaction in the drawing out sessions. Rather, I focus on affect as a strategy inspired by Susan

Sontag's (2001) call for an erotics of art.¹⁴⁰ In her famous essay "Against Interpretation," Sontag (2001) posits that there can be a sensorial experience of art without the need to overemphasize intellect-based hermeneutics. From her stance, the hidden truths of art do not need to be excavated by the spectator, but rather constructed through a sensory-based dialogic experience that is not necessarily predetermined by an authority of intelligence. The beauty of relational art is that meaning can be constructed through collective forms of creation and social interaction.

Socially Engaged Art (SEA)

Art has the power to generate meaning in a sense that can importantly contribute to the research process in more than one way, especially when dialogic interactions are involved. As part of this project's main influences, artist activist Pablo Helguera's (2011) concept of socially engaged art (abbreviated as SEA) helped me build the prototype for drawing out. I designed such a practice in conversation with another key influence that is the concept of mycorrhizal encounters developed by feminist ethnomycologists Elspeth Mitchell and Lenka Vráblíková in the UK and Czechia (Mitchell and Vráblíková [forthcoming] 2020). The prototype of drawing out that I produced was designed to retrieve data from participant drawings in conversation by putting into practice values and strategies used in SEA.¹⁴¹ Socially engaged art emerged as an interactive articulation of influences derived from practices such as conceptual art, performance art, relational aesthetics, situationism and *artivism* (meaning the use of art as a form of activism).

SEA, as Helguera explains, developed from the tradition of conceptual process art, and it is centered on community-building, therefore bridging the gap between relational aesthetics and social practice with actual artmaking. Helguera writes "social interaction occupies a central and inextricable part of any socially engaged art. SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved" (Helguera, 2011, p. 8). In order to properly engage in SEA, one must take into consideration the ongoing possibility of reconstructing and reinventing fundamental concepts and definitions, according to the needs of the context in reference, something which I consider to align itself with

¹⁴⁰ She writes, "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art" (Sontag, 2001, p. 46). Sontag's stance reflects an issue that is prevalently discussed in Latina/x feminist circles, for instance according to Juan Mah y Busch, Chela Sandoval's differential consciousness is an example of a theory that draws from love's erotic forms and manifestations. For Mah y Busch, Sandoval considers love to serve as a discursive punctum, a wedge enabling spontaneous insight (Mah y Busch, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Refer to Appendix A, where all the participant drawings that I coded for this study appear.

decolonial aisthesis. His implementation of the term ‘transpedagogy’ is insightful and refers to hybrid art-based projects that blend educational processes with artmaking in order to offer participants an unconventional way to learn through the experience of collective artmaking in a way that can incite them toward change.

By having people undergo a common artistic experience, SEA aims at the construction of a community or temporary social group on the basis of an active purpose, not just a prior given identity (Helguera, 2011). Furthermore, Helguera’s work emphasizes the power of relationality in communication as a form of learning-together. Specifically, his project “The School of Panamerican Unrest” (SPU) has been described as a pedagogical-dialogic artwork by art educator Adetty Perez Miles (Pérez Miles, 2010), in its implementation of voice as a way to reach beyond one-way forms of conversation. Helguera’s relational artmaking as pedagogical activism is another reason why I am drawing from his work as an important inspiration.

Drawing as a Visual Methodology

Drawing out pairs drawing methods with feminist dialogism in the drawing (as making or exteriorizing) of sense.¹⁴² Usually understood as the act or result of trace-making—the making of lines or marks—on a given surface and with any kind of means, drawing is also a means and a fundamental cognitive-sensitive activity of the sensorium. Within the overarching framework that is arts-based research, I employ drawing as a visual methodology to investigate the ways in which the drawing praxis can help enhance the expressive (discursive and affective) patterns of participants that will lead to further insight regarding their experience of burnout during the pandemic.

Drawing as a visual methodology is housed within arts-based research (ABR) as a genre that involves artmaking in producing and analyzing data for qualitative research.¹⁴³ The term

¹⁴² This is a notion that Andrea Kantrowitz explores as a part of her ongoing transdisciplinary project centered on drawing “Thinking through drawing” (Kantrowitz et al., 2011). Kantrowitz’s work on the core relationship between drawing and cognition is influential to this project.

¹⁴³ ABR is concerned with how the research inquiry can be shaped and enriched by incorporating arts-related processes into the production of new knowledge. ABR focuses on the artistic process to obtain important research-worthy insight about the key qualities that individuals use to frame their experience of social/political life. As such, ABR can involve the following: (a) the use of artistic products or processes as data, (b) the creative representation of data or methods for analysis and dissemination, (c) the exploration of the meaning and nature of the artistic/aesthetic experience, and (d) a combination of other methodological perspectives dealing with art processes, among other possibilities. The hyphen in ABR between the terms ‘arts’ and ‘based’ (arts-based research) is particularly relevant, as Keifer-Boyd contends, for it creates a condensed metaphor that “appears to place art as a base in a contiguous relationship with research” and, which in turn “suggests a way to gain insight via art” (Karen Keifer-Boyd, 2011a, p. 5).

‘drawing research’ is relatively new but is also currently gaining traction. This is because the use of drawing to explore ideas is widely known and accepted (Garner & Ebrary, 2008). Extant literature demonstrates how drawing may be a useful tool in settings that do not necessarily revolve around art, such as with clinical and forensic settings. For example, in marketing research (which centers on efficiency and accuracy to favor capitalism) there are significant benefits to implementing drawing to produce research data.

As a form of projective technique for research conducted for marketing purposes (building consumer profiles from feedback, etc.), drawing serves to provide information in an indirect and non-verbal manner (Kolb, 2008). Images created through drawing serve as raw data that can be turned into information and subsequently into knowledge. As author Bonita Kolb (2008) establishes “projective techniques tap into feelings at the emotional level. The information that is written or drawn may reveal feelings or ideas of which the participant is unaware or would have difficulty verbalizing” (Kolb, 2008, p. 171). As such, projective techniques are excellent ways for obtaining affective rather than rational responses, allowing privacy and intimacy when discussing sensitive topics, and they tend to maintain the interest of participants, which is also important during interviews.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, findings demonstrate that drawing tends to have no negative effect on the accuracy of people’s accounts because it increases the amount of information that people share and that incorporates the nonverbal aspects of semiosis and expression (Gross et al., 2009; Patterson & Hayne, 2011). On the contrary, drawings become helpful in creating a visually traceable path toward the nonvisual; the realm of affect and the ineffable/nonverbal. As a creative task —within the genre of projective techniques— drawing can help reach underlying perceptions that can be further explored in dialogue, which is why I am using a form of dialogic drawing for this project. Since dialogue is complementary to the images, artistic ability is not really required, which is something that helps participants relax and become more emotionally involved with the topic (Kolb, 2008). Moreover, employing drawing as a visual methodology tends to increase the number of open-ended questions that can be asked during an interview, which also minimizes responses that interviewers need to use.

Drawing and dialogue go well together in research, as art professor Judith M. Burton posits drawing, “as both a poetic expressive and scientific-discursive discipline [...] has a long trajectory

¹⁴⁴ I will expand on what I mean by ‘affective’ in the section where I discuss my discursive-affective approach to coding interviews with participants during our ‘drawing-out’ mycorrhizal encounters.

in western art practice and scholarship” (Kantrowitz et al., 2011, p. 3). Drawing can help provide an indirect manner for people to reflect on and provide feedback about ideas or memories that are difficult to process because of their content and implications. Thus, another benefit to using drawings in research is that drawing combats investigative biases when left unstructured and are affected by the amount of researcher-imposed structure in the scope of how drawings could be interpreted. Ultimately, drawings help to create triangulation of study data in a way that’s most efficient for interpretation and presentation (Kearney & Hyle, 2012).

Even though the task of drawing is usually considered to be simple for not requiring too much in terms of equipment or space for the task, using drawing as a visual methodology demands for researchers to pay close attention to the complexities that arise in the data (the drawn images). As such, it requires for researchers to be aware that there are multiple points of entry for working through the drawing process, and for which a multi-level approach is consequently necessary for data analysis (Theron et al., 2011). Analyzing artworks and images also requires researchers to take into consideration the participants’ own views with regards to their work, which are structured in response to themed prompts, and flow according to the way in which the semi-structured interview is conducted. After all, it is important to keep in mind that artwork in the form of drawings, collages, and other media are extensions of the participant’s self and ethos (Saldana et al., 2011). Drawings are considered ‘projective’ because they throw (draw) out input from the well of our being into an external surface, where others can be exposed to such content.

From these examples, I have considered several existing ways in which drawing can (undeniably) contribute to research. However, the same regard toward the potential of drawing is not necessarily shared in spaces of artmaking and formal fine art reception. In the art world, drawing is debased as a genre, yet it offers incredible potential as a research method (Garner & Ebrary, 2008).

Hangouts

‘Drawing out’ is a theory-informed practice that employs an arts-based framework inspired by María Lugones’s (2003) conceptual practice of ‘hanging out’ (2003, p. 284). As such, such practice is also in conversation with the Debordian notion of the ‘dérive,’ as both practices resemble a spontaneous, playful journey conducted through a given landscape. Lugones (2003) considers ‘hanging out’ to be a streetwalker’s practice, which embodies her notion of *la callejera*, which is performed from below (in terms of an unequal power distribution) and is meant to produce resistance emerging from interlocked oppressions (2003, p. 657). Lugones writes:

This practice is compatible with developing a rather large sense of the terrain and its social intricacies. Hanging out permits one to learn, to listen, to transmit information, to participate in communicative creations, to gauge possibilities, to have a sense of the directions of intentionality, to gain social depth. (2003, p. 284)

Hangouts are, for Lugones, a highly-permeable configuration in spatial terms. The notion of space is understood in terms of distinct configurations of power, as with Lugones's notion of 'worlds' in which she 'travels' with either loving perception or arrogance. Hangouts are forged in defiance of the structures and logics performed by the colonial-cartographic gaze, which encloses its subjects within a closed system. Thus, in hanging out, playfulness is central, as openness to uncertainty (in being a fool) and acts as a means from which to enact transgressions against the logic of domination and coloniality.

Dérive

In addition, a *dérive*, also a practice of streetwalking, is an exercise of random urban roaming or drifting that the renowned French intellectual Guy Debord conceptualized and French Situationists used, aligned with Libertarian Marxism, in order to initiate new members into their organized resistance against capitalism (Costa, 2021). Debord writes "the *dérive* entails playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll" (Costa, 2021, p. 79). *Dérive*, in practice, involves uses of experimental behavior in space that leverages collective actions to bring awareness to systemic inequities through social and political critiques, such as with the figure of the 19th Century *flâneur*, which is another reason why the Situationists' practice of *dérive* is akin to Lugones's notion of streetwalkers' 'hanging out,' as a collective action of care in looking out for each other in spaces of vulnerability to the violence of the social order.

In both practices—*dérive* and hanging out—there is an invitation to move through space in a manner that seeks to disrupt normative framings for bodily expression and behavior. Walking as such, from an anti-colonial perspective that is attentive to the possibility of expansive drawing, is to draw on the membrane of the world, as if caressing its skin, to incite important changes that need to be made for walking and tracing to become acts oriented toward liberation.

Decolonizing Drawing

The practice of drawing out was designed in a way that resonates with the practice of ‘hanging out’ that streetwalkers perform, in Lugones’s view. Walking and drawing become akin through which people can reflect on the traces that they leave as they unfold their lived trajectories over the skin of the planet. To consider walking and drawing as sister practices is to engage in decolonial aisthesis, a mindset that seeks to liberate creation from aesthetic agonism, which concerns the management of ‘taste’ according to the gaze of fine art, which is characteristically reductive and exclusionary. Drawing out’s anti-colonial challenge involved taking advantage of what both drawing and loving perception accomplish together in research, beyond drawing’s debasement within colonial aesthetics.

To invoke aisthesis (or anti-colonial modes of sense-perception) with respect to drawing is to suspend colonial judgment and to become aware of the joyful energy that oozes from the power of interconnection. A materialist approach to the analysis of art reveals that how people come to understand or engage with art is a reflection of their own cultural and political placement in a given plane of perceptual normativity. This is what Jacques Rancière calls a ‘regime’ of perception, which he develops within his more general theory of aisthesis.¹⁴⁵

The branch of coloniality of knowledge that concerns aesthetics and art led to the production of an agonistic regime of perception upon which the discourse of ‘fine art’ is rests. And, in the sense that Rancière contends, colonial art conditioned both by ideological coloniality as well as the market, for the latter determines the relations of production and consumption that condition artmaking and its possibilities within capitalism. Consequently, and since colonization, art—as the expression of genuine/sporadic sense-perception—has become historically subjected to the specific forms of valorization that the discourse of capitalist aesthetics projects onto it. This is what both Rancière and Walter D. Mignolo understand to be “the cognitive operation of colonization of aisthesis by aesthetics” through the concept of aisthesis (Mignolo, 2011, p. 11).

Aisthesis comes from the Greek and its original meaning denoted ‘sensation,’ ‘perception,’ or ‘sense-perception.’ The term suffered a conceptual transformation in the XVII Century by Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and Hegel. Rancière explains:

Art as a notion designating a form of specific experience has only existed in the West

¹⁴⁵ As Rancière describes: “The term Aisthesis has designated the mode of experience according to which, for two centuries, we perceive very diverse things, whether in their techniques of production or their destination, as all belonging to art. This is not a matter of the ‘reception’ of works of art. Rather, it concerns the sensible fabric of experience within which they are produced” (Rancière & Zakir, 2013, pp. 9, 10)

since the end of the eighteenth century. All kinds of arts and practices existed before then, to be sure, among which a small number benefited from a privileged status, due not to their intrinsic excellence but to their place in the division of social conditions (Rancière & Zakir, 2013, p. 8)

Consequently, as a result of colonization, a common phenomenological process (aisthesis) in human animals became ideologically regulated under the guise of aesthetics and was taken to denote the sensation of the ‘beautiful,’ as a specific *a priori* category (Mignolo, 2011).¹⁴⁶

Aesthetics is to coloniality what aisthesis is to decoloniality, namely, a means from which to relate to reality without the violence conveyed by colonial-categorical mediation.¹⁴⁷

Drawing as Queer Autoarte

The practice of ‘decolonial drawing’ is, in a way, meant to perform what Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes through writing, as a gruesomely visceral form of creative self-birthing, but specifically through her notion of *autohistoria-teoría*, which, according to Andrea J. Pitts (2016), refers to the explicit task that women of color have in developing forms of self-knowledge that are attentive to the plurality of selves that articulate them.¹⁴⁸ Lugones understood these plural selves to additionally bear a relational memory to other selves in terms of a connective complexity (Pitts, 2016) (Pitts, 2016). Pitts refers to Anzaldúa’s description of autohistoria as description of the “genre of writing about one’s personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir” (Pitts, 2016, p. 357). Autohistoria consequently performs similarly to autobiographical fiction (also known as *autobiografiction* or *autofiction*) with regard to literary genres that combine facts with creative ‘truth-stretching’ or ‘lapses from fact’ (Reynolds, 1906) for aesthetic, narrative purposes. Furthermore, Anzaldúa draws the term *autohistoria-teoría* to describe

¹⁴⁶ This happened during what is known as the Romantic period in German philosophical thought, from which liberalism emerged as an ideological justification of colonization on the basis of the ‘natural’ inferiority of non-(white) Europeans (and with it, the Enlightenment myth of ‘Man’).

¹⁴⁷ The decolonial task is to embrace aisthesis, as unmediated sense-perception to come to learn new/ignored things about the way humans can come to perceive differently, in learning to unlearn our colonial ways, following Mignolo’s propositions.

¹⁴⁸ There are many practices and theorists currently engaged with Anzaldúa’s autohistoria teoría and, in my opinion, there needs to be a critical-materialist companion to self-theorizing to avoid succumbing to an ego-centered form of navel-gazing disguised as ‘theorizing.’ However, I am only making reference to the concept as a means to bridge into the discussion that concerns autoarte specifically in the sense that a decolonial approach to drawing entails.

a relational genre of autobiographical self-making that blends one's life story with other forms of biographical theorizing that are not reduced to cognition or linguistics (Ortega, 2020). Ortega's notion of *autoarte* reimagines *autohistoria-teoría* but from the perspective of artmaking.¹⁴⁹ She writes:

Similar to *autohistoria* and *autohistoria-teoría*, *autoarte* is the result of a mobile, creative process that engages one's lived experience, desires, and longing in the process of sensuous art making in the context of one's communities, cultures, and histories. It is a creative process in which the making of art constitutes a making and transformation of self (Ortega, 2020, p. 211)

Autoarte becomes a dimension within the broader realm of *autohistoria-teoría* that specifically centers sensuousness and sense-perception in the labor of artistic creation. As a decolonial endeavor, the challenge for those engaging in *autoarte* is also to queer such a practice by embracing their multiplicity and alterity in aesthetic practices to produce art objects/situations that enable the creation and subsequent transformation of their selves through queer forms of enunciation.¹⁵⁰ A queering of the artist is a form of *autoarte* for Ortega, which is further explained as

a critical, affective and sensuous process [namely,] a movement, prompted by queer desire and longing, that makes colores, hues and textures disclose identities that have been relegated to oblivion, tokenism, shame of a violent, colonizing gaze that relegates desire to heteronormativity [...] Through *autoarte*, the (queer) artist pours their soul and life into their canvases, photographs, or beautiful pieces of wood and metal waiting to be shaped by desire, love, lust, need, and longing in order to make worlds anew. (Ortega, 2020, p. 209)

The queering process in *autoarte* entails that artists and active subjects name, reframe and reimagine themselves in an effort to integrate their various social identities and cultural heritages that shape them via a transformative creative praxis. Within the notion of *autoarte*, a decolonial-dialectic-dialogic approach to drawing (in alignment with a Latina/x feminist praxis), or what I'm calling *decolonial drawing* performs *autoarte* as going beyond representation and gives birth to a self via artmaking (Ortega, 2020). Therefore, a notion of self-drawing transitions a notion of self-painting,

¹⁴⁹ Ortega develops her notion of (queer) *autoarte* from Anzaldúa's *autohistoria-teoría* as involving a "creative expression that is informed by one's own everyday experience as well as one's cultural intersubjective influences, which arise from various sources, ranging from the unconscious to more explicit, conscious, intentional cultural norms, practices, histories, stories, and relationships." (Ortega, 2020, p. 226).

¹⁵⁰ Meaning, in the sense understood by both Anzaldúa and Ortega.

(as self-naming) into what Jean-Luc Nancy understands as an opening up or *drawing out* of form. Nancy believes that there is something to discover between the act of drawing out in terms of showing, for he considers drawing to be the birth of form. He writes:

The gesture of showing by extending-extending in order to show or bring to light, extracting the lineament and incision of form, contour, sense, or idea from the shadow or a compact mass— such is the gesture of existing [...] To exist is to sketch oneself ... to open oneself to the desire of (letting oneself) being drawn to the outside” (Nancy & Armstrong, 2013, p. xiii).

I am daring to think of the notion of self-drawing as performing what Humberto Maturana’s autopoiesis (where systems are considered to self-produce as autonomous units) in the sense that Donna Haraway defines as sympoiesis, namely as a self-making that simultaneously makes others via ‘making-with.’ Sympoiesis is conceived by Haraway as a tentacular, entangled process of multispecies becoming-with that engages in the production of worlds, or worlding-with (D. J. Haraway, 2016). Through sympoiesis, one can begin to consider how people don’t just enter into other fixed and stable worlds, in world-traveling. Rather, these ‘worlds’ are constantly shifting in their self-production (metabolized) through the permeability of different membranes, which act like the surface of the paper onto which we are drawing ourselves (as dancing over a plane of existence).

Dialectics involve a process of self-identification in difference that, through decolonial drawing, can help trace the transformative path and impact that the notion of *making-with* as *becoming-with*, albeit contextualized within a common metabolic setting: that of nature. Moreover, Jean-Luc Nancy’s as well as Haraway’s considerations resonate with Capra’s understanding of networked living systems as a continuous flow of energy and matter sustaining a network of life in terms of perpetual transformation (Capra & Luisi, 2014). The notion of metabolic sympoiesis, or — *symbiopoiesis*—as a unified conception of life’s processes, is consistent with the term’s etymology as it invokes the fundamental relation that energy, change and life have with one another. For example, as biologist Emiliano Salvucci (2012) posits, the hologenome theory considers symbiopoiesis— or the codevelopment of the host and symbiont— to be the process by which an organism and all of its associated symbiotic microbes (parasites, mutualists, synergists, amensalists) are brought to life through metabolic creation (Salvucci, 2012).

Capra’s systems view of life (from which I derive part of my conception of metabolism) involves conceiving the ‘network’ as the basic pattern of organization of all living systems. Therefore, in actively defying the discourse of Cartesian dualism, Capra understands the process of

life (the dynamics of self-collective perpetuation as symbiopoiesis) to be identified with cognition, or with the mind. Weaving Capra and Nancy's reflections allows for a consistent approach to symbiopoietic drawing that resonates with Andrea Kantrowitz's considerations around drawing, which consider it to be not a mindless, second-rate, hobby-type activity, but rather as a fundamental cognitive operation, recognizing that it brings together a significant number of capacities of the human sensorium (Kantrowitz et al., 2011). Symbiopoietic drawing becomes a reflective/introspective operation that evinces our metabolic self-creation-in-collectivity through the creation of images that take a snapshot of a moment in our journey of perpetual becoming. Approaching drawing as such allowed me to code the data retrieved from the drawing out encounters in a manner that expanded the meaning through interpersonal and introspective dialogue.

Mycorrhizal Sensibilities as Differential Aesthesis. Symbiopoietic drawing additionally performs differential aesthesis in helping to develop what I am calling a 'mycorrhizal sensibility,' which refers to a sensorial attunement built in awareness of our connectedness to the metabolic flow of life and its multiple ecosystems. A mycorrhizal sensibility entails recognizing one's sympoietic-evolutionary nature as ex-fungal beings, in order to build care webs as coalitions among those that Gloria Anzaldúa's named 'los atravesados.' Mariana Ortega refers to Anzaldúa's atravesados as "the marginalized, the unwanted, those who have been marked by difference, those whose 'queerness' is about whom they love and lust over" (Ortega, 2020, p. 208). Those pierced within the interstices of identity categories —the atravesados— know the negative affects associated with never being able to 'fit in,' entirely within defined (colonial) social spaces. Therefore, the purpose of developing creative practices oriented toward decolonization is at least twofold: on the one hand it strives to build solidarity among the atravesados—via creative forms that lead to a dialectics of contestation and affirmation— and in the other, it strives to dismantle the systems that oppress people. The mediation aspect is crucial and involves embracing our dialectical relation to the creative power that humans hold as a form of labor as well as to their inscription within distinct and overlapping spatial configurations of power.

A symbiopoietic (queer-decolonial) practice of drawing thus embraces "the sensuousness of the artistic materials themselves" (2020, p. 226) going beyond the written word and the surface upon which it is embedded. As William Kentridge (2014) posits "All drawing works with the precept of the paper as the membrane between us and the world." (Kentridge, 2014, p. 19). From a symbiopoietic perspective, to draw is to explore the sentient thresholds that bind all living beings

within the broader living ecosystem that is Gaia. Drawing as such can reveal the rhetorical matrixes that construct the illusory division between entities/people and the metabolic flow of everything existing. Revealing Gaia's metabolic flux is what contesting colonial aesthetics entails, in the words of Mignolo, as an effort to undo "a particular kind of aesthesis, of senses, that is the sensibility of the colonized subject" (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2014, p. 201). The aim is to suspend the discourse of faux 'universality' of the colonial gaze with regard to local experiences of those fitting the description of queer *atravesados*.

This process embraces the transformative-affective quality of images as vehicles into the unconscious, invoking what Mariana Ortega frames as *differential aesthesis*, or the ability to engage in sensing from a multiplicitous standpoint (Ortega, 2020).¹⁵¹ The creative process as *differential aesthesis* can help reveal the ways in which individuals can both perceive, inform, and perform themselves—differently—from what is expected or normatively scripted. Decolonial drawing grounds its principles in differential aesthesis as it specifically involves understanding the forms of relationality that can be coalitional in a sense that pursues to develop affective-mycelial connections.

Affective Mycelia. I am conceptualizing forms of mutual understanding/rapport that emerged between participants and I during drawing out as 'affective mycelia.' Following the key principles involved in the practice of 'radical care' (Hobart, 2020) as developed by anti-colonial feminists in academia, 'affective mycelia,' refers to an affect-based reconceptualization of the methods by which plant-fungal associations known as mycorrhiza perform care in nature. This nature-based reconceptualization of care is cognizant of how plants and fungi engage in mutual-aid forms of coexistence by developing underground networks of filaments (mycelia) for nutrient distribution. Through the mycelia of fungi, different plants are able to exchange information and nutrients, and thus are able to tend to the needs of different members of the same community. Thus, by 'affective mycelia,' I refer to patterns of affective identification that allow for the (underlying) discourse of power to be surfaced and/or brought into focus (by virtue of the inequality of relations that it dictates), and that emerge and materialize through the practice of 'drawing out.'

¹⁵¹ The idea is to resist the notion of reductive, colonial sensing to be able to arrive at an experiential awareness of one's positionality within a network of power grid structured by predetermined signification (normativity) that is usually hidden.

I am taking into consideration how mycorrhizae are etymologically as well as materially constituted by the root systems of plants—their hosts—in association with a fungal guest. ‘Myco’ is the Greek prefix for fungi (μύκης *mýkēs*, "fungus") as in mycology, whereas the Greek suffix ‘rhiza’ means root (ρίζα, or *rhiza*) which is also where the word ‘radical’ derives. Similarly, within the decolonial aesthetic imaginary that I am crafting with this study, the emergent patterns of affective care and sustenance are meant to help people identify key links between (personal) participant experiences of burnout and structural causes. It is important to understand that both the root and the fungal aspects of the study are entangled in dialectical symbiosis.

I conceptualize both participants and technologies involved in this study as constituting a dynamic environment—a kind of practice-based, theoretical ecosystem—of creation that is not individually-based but rather relies on the actions of multiple members to exist. The mycorrhiza, as a form of symbiosis, is also reflective of sympoiesis or the processes by which different organisms engage in forms of collective creation that are akin to artmaking, thus comprising the whole universe of signifiers articulating what I mean with the term *symbiopoiesis*.

Symbiopoietic Coalition-building. Mycorrhizal care can mobilize complex forms of communication to assist in building coalitions attentive to the challenges posed by the current state of coloniality. The fact remains that not everyone experiences oppression and exploitation in the same exact manner, yet everyone is exposed to the same overarching and underlying structures that organize production and reproduction, and that have parasitically taken over the planet. There are many dimensions to the multiculturalist paradigm as well as many criticisms that have radically different agendas, therefore it is important to learn how to distinguish them from one another. The main critiques against multiculturalism have been influenced by a Social Darwinist intolerance of alterity, multiplicity, and difference. Social Darwinism is grounded in the discourse of eugenics which entangles the ideology of White Supremacy, breeding hatred in the form of racism and xenophobia (Rogers, 1972).

However, there are more progressive criticisms that warn against engaging with multiculturalism uncritically, namely as a form of tokenism or as what Lugones (2014) calls “ornamental multiculturalism,” which constitutes a colonial move to innocence (2014, p. 69). For example, Maria Lugones (2014) and Fiona MacDonald (2010) posit that there are alternatives to hegemonic, liberal-democratic models for autonomous multiculturalisms (such as Mouffe’s development of agonistic pluralism to counter deliberative democracy) offered as the ideal solution

to cultural identity difference. The problem with such liberal approaches to multicultural autonomy is that they are produced by people whose class privilege experience has shielded them from understanding oppression from a first-person perspective, as it presently impacts most of Gaia's inhabitants. Not understanding oppression from a complex, profound, and personal perspective can lead people to develop solutions grounded on and fed by colonial discourses (that they might be unaware of and) that reproduce the problems they are attempting to ameliorate.¹⁵²

As MacDonald (2010) argues, colonial discourses such as “self-determination” and “self-government” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 202) reflect a nefarious and individualism that fixes people as static entities and thus impedes the necessary forms of mutual understanding that can allow for different people to come together, albeit without homogenizing or erasing their important differences in terms of cultural identity, as Mohanty warns. Rather, mutualisms can be cultivated by acknowledging people's immersion within the same (also mycorrhizal, but oriented toward destruction)¹⁵³ infrastructure organizing oppression at a planetary scale. Consequently, the parasitic system of domination creating the multiple oppressions experienced around the planet is what Mohanty (2003) refers to as global capitalism and it is ultimately what articulates the production processes that lead to the relentless exploitation and expropriation (as appropriation without return) of bodies and the land. The result is alienation, health decline and burnout. MacDonald (2010) writes:

The problem with existing models of group autonomy lies in the failure to acknowledge and theorize the continued influence and authority of other agents, particularly the state. This omission obscures relations of power that remain at work and promotes a static conception of autonomy that is then entrenched in law through group-differentiated rights (MacDonald, 2010, p. 200)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² This is the main critique against what is called the ‘white savior’ complex, which is based on a “confluence of practices, processes, and institutions that reify historical inequities to ultimately validate white privilege” (Yu, 2021, p. 1)

¹⁵³ A mycorrhizal lattice does not have value in itself and is therefore contingent on context. Mycorrhizae can be oriented toward any purpose, including that of worsening capitalist exploitation (a ‘care’ web albeit for oppression, which, for the purposes of this dissertation could be considered as ‘anti-care’), which is why it is important to sustain a critical stance that critically and sensibly questions (through dialectics of *sentipensar*, for instance) not just the intents, but rather the effects and impacts of the structures of production and reproduction that are used to organize society on Gaia.

¹⁵⁴ For example, the discourse of dualism fixity needs to be actively contested, for people are constantly changing as they produce themselves with and through others, therefore it is important that the political models that humans create respond to the actual conditions of a reality in flux, not just discursive

The alternative is a care critique of the liberal-multiculturalist sense of ‘autonomy’ through people can be reminded of the fact that autonomous individuals “must not be conceived in an overly abstract, self-maximizing, atomistic manner. Autonomy must be understood as social in nature and contingent, or processual, in practice. Autonomy is about agency, and that agency is always exercised by an embedded self” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 203). It is thus paramount that human-animals develop mutualisms geared toward anti-globalization, for, regardless of where we come from in terms of territory, we exist on the same planet and have suffered through the same evolutionary process that led to the appearance of our species from older forms of life that humans come from. As Ortega contends, “Coalition politics can open the possibility for becoming-with, the possibility that my relations with others with whom I fight oppression is an experience that stands to change both who I am and my understanding of the worlds I inhabit” (Ortega, 2016b, p. 146).

Transformation in terms of a collective sense of futurity is key, and thus, by embracing evolutionary sympoiesis through our capacity to create and artmaking becomes fundamental for remediating metabolic rifts at various levels of human and more than human existence. From this stance, I would like to approach Lugones’s project for developing coalitional politics via the concept of fusion, albeit from a ‘post’-human-as-humus regard toward evolutionary symbiopoiesis¹⁵⁵

Drawing and Fusion. An approach to drawing through symbiopoiesis in the sense contemplated by this study is meant to leverage care and collaboration as evolutionary forms of creation. And, specifically through the entangled notions of becoming-with, and making-with, I am orienting an expansive regard to drawing that is conscious of how life is metabolically produced in a constant process of transformation between selves interacting in space-time. Decolonial drawing is meant to remind people of their becoming process and its creative possibilities. The aim for this study was to create a practice that resonated with Margulis’s theory of evolutionary symbiosis and the origin of complex cells, which I have presented in Chapter 1.¹⁵⁶ Margulis’s theory of

impressions that are artificial and imposed for the sake of simplicity in governance (which often leads to fascism).

¹⁵⁵ As I explain, the notion of posthumanism needs to be foraged (problematized) to give way to a compostist approach to figuration, as I explain at the end of Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁶ As a reminder, Margulis’s theory traces an evolutionary path of the eukaryotic/nucleated cell wherein certain organelles (components) of the cell that perform important functions in producing and replenishing

symbiogenesis establishes the possibility for previously independent entities to coalesce into a larger entity by means of their transformative symbiopoietic (metabolically evolutionary) processes.¹⁵⁷ Through a deliberate crossing of thresholds or membranes, bacteria or people can coalesce into a larger ‘home,’ or *Oikos* (a living, dynamic project such as a care web) which is represented by the ‘complex’ cell in Margulis’s evolutionary model.

Fusion as a means for coalitional coalescing bears the potential of providing people with a strategy to become a part of a larger project than themselves, looking up to the way mycorrhizae perform care in nature. Thus, the purpose is to transgress and transcend the normative confinements and conditionings produced by discursive coloniality through ego (individualism and selfishness). Lugones writes “fusion or coalescence enables us to move fully into resistance” (Lugones, 2014, p. 73). For Lugones, fusion constitutes the necessary complement to intersectionality, which is the fundamental standpoint from which to attain collective liberation. Intersectionality and fusion should not be conceived as mutually exclusive. After all, intersectionality emerged from and spoke to the racialized and gendered paradigm that is the U.S., and it is oriented toward addressing the specific kinds of (entangled yet occluded) oppressions that Black women experience under the legislative systems of the U.S. Hence, in order avoid dismissing its contextual underpinnings and to further avoid erasing the contributions of Black feminists created for the purpose of their own liberation, it is necessary to be able to ‘borrow’ critically (by dutifully crediting those who have developed such resources) to orient intersectionality toward a broader horizon, one that is not only US-centered, but that is directed toward ending all forms of imperial control of Gaia, as *Oikos*.

The idea behind orienting intersectionality toward a transnational/planetary effort to dismantle of imperial structures of domination is not new and has been encouraged by scholars such as Dean Spade, who uses “intersectionality-informed resistance strategies” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 978) as materially-aware forms of praxis that seek an all-out overcoming of regimes of oppression. Crenshaw explains, “As Spade sees it, marginalized and oppressed people can and should form alliances—tied together by their similar experiences of oppression, even when the genesis of these oppressions does not have a[n easily noticeable] common link” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 803). Rather, as

energy—for example: mitochondria, centrioles, and Golgi apparatuses— were once previously independent organisms such as cyanobacteria.

¹⁵⁷ As I have explained in Chapter 2, cyanobacteria evolved into chloroplasts through endosymbiosis (symbiosis in which an organism or ‘symbiont’ lives inside another) and gained the fundamental, function of maintaining the cell’s metabolic state and flow by producing energy within it, which the cell would otherwise have to perform in other, more difficult, ways.

Spade contends, “in order for all people to resist domination, all groups must work to dismantle systems everywhere that serve to constitute oppression” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 804).

Spades’s position helps emphasize the fact that systems of domination such as race, gender and class not only intersect (as if they were independent and static) but rather are inseparable and belong to the same tree-system of domination, which is incredibly useful for the cause of fighting global capitalism and heterosexualist, supremacist patriarchy. Furthermore, from an anti-colonial, ecologically oriented perspective that embraces a playful and loving perception in leveraging efforts such as coalition-building via artmaking, the notion of fusion becomes less reductive and problematic, for it follows a complementary (as opposed to negating) materialist stance toward intersectionality.¹⁵⁸ Thus, from the logic of evolutionary sympoiesis (as symbiopoiesis), a fusion approach to intersectionality is meant to reflect the very conditions by which life is produced and sustained in terms of constant movement and change via forms of dialectical collision and transformation.

Post-humanism and (Co-)figuration in Drawing Out. The idea of a transnational, trans-species coalition-making is what motivates the mycorrhizal model for a politics of care that this dissertation envisions. Informed by Haraway’s theories, a posthumanist approach, in its de-centering of the human, can contribute to resisting agonism, for it is deeply concerned with aspects of life that are meant to ultimately transcend anthropocentrism. According to Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton, and Sweeny (2018),¹⁵⁹ reaching beyond the human is precisely what post-humanism involves (hence the ‘post’ prefix). They write, “theorizing the social and material world beyond anthropocentric conceptions to more deeply understand interactions with nonhuman entities, critiquing previous notions of subject-hood and individuality” (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018, p. 23). Post-humanism addresses situations and phenomena that are other-than-human yet entangle and involve humans in a de-centered manner for navigating being/knowing/doing in relation to the broader realities that exist on the planet. *There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Moreover, this manner of shifting-toward-coalescing does not literally nor necessarily mean that two organisms (or people) should or can fuse into a single (fixed, stable) organism, for things and entities are more processes than nouns and are constantly creating each other out of their interactions in space-time.

¹⁵⁹ This is Rosi Braidotti’s definition, cited in Keifer-Boyd et al.’s paper.

¹⁶⁰ Borrowed from Hamlet, the play (Shakespeare et al., 2003)

As a means to further the resistance that the figure of the ‘posthuman’ is meant to offer with regard to anthropocentrism, I would like to invite perceptions to think of the human (and of trans-species people) not as *Anthropos* but rather as *humus*. Since the work I am engaged in is anti-colonial at heart, the aim is to transcend the ideological 2-OI considerations that epistemically debase nature. Celebrating the role of rot and death in decomposition can therefore bring about newness, a newness that is tied to an impetus for replenishment of the soil and to living beings’ matter-ed needs. The term human and humus both etymologically share a Proto-Indo-European root in *dhghem- which means ‘earth’ or ‘soil,’ which was implemented as a way to distinguish terrestrial beings from celestial ones (Harper, n.d.-b). Moreover, and in light of the fungal model that I am presenting for this study, individuals are encouraged to recognize themselves as ‘compost-ists’ (in contrast to ‘posthuman-ists,’) by declaring that “we are all compost, not posthuman” (Haraway, 2015, p. 161). The purpose is to keep active critiques and actions grounded in contexts that respond to life and its fundamental processes of genesis, flow, and reproduction, in order to heal from the arrogant rifts brought by the colonial system.

The fact of the *matter* is that, from a material perspective, all beings come from stardust digested and transformed mostly by plants and fungi.¹⁶¹ Haraway’s compostist concept of figuration, for example, becomes highly useful in theorizing alternative modes of subjectivity that are not reduced to anthropocentric conceptions and discourses such as with individualism and stasis in terms of what living entities are supposed to ‘be’ and ‘do’ in the world. Figuration, for Haraway, is a technique inspired by the work of women of color that “rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility” (Bastian, 2006, pp. 1028, 1029). Working as a performative imaging of the future, figuration is present in drawing out and paired with a compostist approach to artmaking (hence the mycorrhizal model for inspiration), which is set to recognize the active involvement of the cyborgian¹⁶² technological

¹⁶¹ Most of the elements in the human body were once created in a star over the course of billions of years and multiple lifetimes of stars (even supernovas). Most of the elements shaping the human body were once formed in stars. As van den Heuvel explains “Our Milky Way system formed by the merging of a number of more or less spherical gas clouds of almost pure hydrogen and helium, in which already the first stars were forming. In this way a slowly rotating almost spherical system of gas and stars was formed” (van den Heuvel, 2016)

¹⁶² Haraway conceives cyborg figures as “the end-of-the-millennium seed, chip, gene, database, bomb, fetus, race, brain, and ecosystem-are the offspring of implosions of subjects and objects and of the natural and artificial” (Haraway, 1997, p. #). Cyborgs, for Haraway, inhabit life itself with its inscribed temporalities shaped by communications enhancement efforts that seek to create new forms of kin and kindred through methods that look to redesign systems.

capacities that have assisted beings in their evolutionary journey as Gaia's offspring (Robertson, 1996).¹⁶³ In the presence of others, figuration becomes co-figuration, in the sense intended by Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton, and Sweeny (2018).

Posthumanist co-figuration allows people to acknowledge their own embeddedness within creation/creative processes that employ mobile technologies in their work (as I have). As Keifer-Boyd et al., contend, "Co-figuration asserts a posthuman critique of relationships and networks, decentering the individual through forms of intersubjective embodiment and digital data networks" (2018, p. 24). Thus, co-figuration allows for there to be an understanding of the networked relations produced in (technologically assisted) creation as sites for potential transformation, (game)play, embodiment, and data-identity constructions.

With respect to the specific practice of drawing out as dialogic drawing that I am presenting in this dissertation, it is important to highlight the technological mediation that allows for these encounters to happen. Because of the existence of computer-based communication via programs such as 'zoom,'¹⁶⁴ it is possible for me to host digitally mediated interactions between people occupying different geographical positions in the world. Thus, the pandemic version of drawing out presented within my dissertation¹⁶⁵ adopted and sought to enact Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton, and Sweeny's (2018) proposal for a "posthumanist movement art pedagogy," because such a practice considered the technological means and apparatuses involved with such encounters as embodiment extensions, namely as *co-figured* along with the bodies of those participating.

Limit Cases and the Permeability of Thresholds. Art educators Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton and Sweeny consider the concept of the limit case an example of compostist movement art pedagogy. According to these authors, a limit case is "when something reaches a limit and thereby is about to change into something else. Three types of limit cases are when a structure becomes an event, an expectation is suspended, and a landmark becomes a sensation" (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018,

¹⁶³ Haraway understands the cyborg as inhabiting "a mutated time-space regime that [she] call[s] technobiopower. Intersecting with-and sometimes displacing-the development, fulfillment, and containment proper to figural realism, the temporal modality pertaining to cyborgs is condensation, fusion, and implosion" (D. J. Haraway, 1997, p. 12)

¹⁶⁴ I will provide a description of the technological means and tools that were implemented in this project in Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁵ Drawing out, in this case, was conducted digitally and through the Internet due to the restrictions posed by pandemic confinement, although drawing out can happen as an in-person form of encounter as well.

p. 25). A limit case can take the form of an event or affect, stressing the sensation of transformation, in manner that evidences the potential of change. Referencing the work of new media artists Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse, who photographed limit cases as they drove around the southwestern territories of US, Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton and Sweeny provide examples of what limit cases can be. For example, a limit case happens “when a building becomes a place of worship, when electricity fails, and when Las Vegas is a site of a mass shooting” (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018, p. 25). Limit cases involve a semiotic transformation of space that creates different affective impressions associated with it, in terms of symbolic remembrance.¹⁶⁶ Reaching a limit is a transformational praxis in the sense that it highlights the importance of decision-making when it comes to crossing borders (one faces limits through vulnerability to one’s ultimate limit: death). Another way to approach a limit is by considering the permeability of membranes and the consequent possibility of fusion-by-permeability. For example, Lugones considers the mycelia of fungi as a means to think about aesthesis in terms of permeability and connection. Lugones writes,

Mycelia, fungi, constitute one third of the earth’s living beings. They are the oldest living beings [...] they stay in constant communication with their environment [...] [forming] a communicative tree system [and] stay in constant molecular communication with their environment [...] In my view, they are the most clear and astonishing example of the permeability of living things, and rocks, water, as they all carry and are made, in part, by mycelia [...] I choose to think about permeability, because they are not as socially normed as many other living beings. They exhibit clearly the porosity of our habitat, not just their own permeability. Thus they exhibit the porosity of the habitat itself (DiPietro et al., 2019, pp. 1141, 1142, 1143)

Permeability for Lugones is what allows people to reconceive the world they live in, through a decolonial deconstruction of the aesthetics privileging the senses, which is a main orientation guiding this study of the tension between crisis and care (DiPietro et al., 2019, p. 1141).

Furthermore, considering the law of replenishment—which is what sustains the ideal permeability in terms of the 1-OM as metabolism—it is important to be able to identify and discern when limits

¹⁶⁶ As some examples of thresholds in the sense implied by the concept of the limit case (but not limited to these examples), the artists consider: litter, surface, projected imagination, picnic, landscape, waste, borders and proximity. Another example of a limit case is that of roadside memorials, described by Mariana Ortega as “those spaces marked by white crosses and all manner of unsophisticated memorial objects, the plastic flower, the discolored ribbon, the tattered stuffed animal (Ortega, 2021, p. 113). Roadside memorials as spaces of mourning also involve limits in the sense that space becomes epistemically and ontologically transformed through a proximity to death (which could be considered as the ultimate limit in terms of life).

are reached, so that certain thresholds are respected for the sake of sustaining metabolic homeokinesis, which is one of the main arguments that I am positing within this dissertation.

Thus, from the perspective of anti-colonial artmaking and allopoiesis, I contemplate the possibility of embracing the processual possibility by which previously isolated/alienated individuals can contribute—with their labor and care—to the construction of a project that could better their living conditions in terms of respecting their dignity and metabolic-energetic. Transformative coalition-building, as evidenced by Margulis’s theory of symbiogenesis (as the formation of the complex cell) is consistent with Maturana’s immanent-transcendental biological thinking. For example, the conversion of cyanobacteria into chloroplasts¹⁶⁷ namely, their becoming into active components of the complex cell exemplify Maturana’s concept of allopoiesis, which refers to a system that produce something different from themselves, in contrast to the same-self-production of autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Etymologically, “allo” stands for ‘other’ in Greek, and “poiesis” means production, therefore, allopoiesis can refer to the production of alterity as a form of resisting oppressive realities. I believe allopoiesis can become a useful concept in the development of coalitions-in-difference through the collaboration between intersectionality and fusion.

As Mariana Ortega reminds people, coalitional politics involve a process of interactive transformation between those involved (2016b). Consequently, fusing equates to a moment in the process of symbiopoiesis (becoming-with/making-with) that is ultimately greater than the notion of an individual ‘stable/fixed person’ (which is a colonial illusion). The aim is to reverse the paradigmatic transformation of eco into ego that I am framing through the affective discourses of agonism and playfulness. Fusion, thus, from the perspective that I am pursuing, mirrors the possibility of what a mycorrhizal-caring politics organization could accomplish in maintaining a constant openness to newness while not dismissing what is contextually and materially needed for multispecies wellness and survival. Consequently, if willing, anyone can become incorporated and fused into a larger symbiogenesis (as Gaia) or political project where they can take an active part in.¹⁶⁸

Everyone is contributing to building a futurity, or, as the zapatistas propose: “un mundo en donde quepan muchos mundos” or “a world where many worlds can have a place” (Escobar, 2014,

¹⁶⁷ Or the conversion of *alphaproteobacterial* into mitochondria (Roger et al., 2017, p. R1178)

¹⁶⁸ For, it is important to consider the contextual differences that have shaped each person, the point is not to forget the past or people’s places of origin. Yet, people ought not to reduce themselves to conceptions that are meant to constrain them with regard to power.

p. 59).¹⁶⁹ The objective is to leverage caring principles to protect the law of reciprocity regulating the many metabolisms that exist on Gaia.¹⁷⁰ From each according to their ability, to each according to their need. Drawing can thus be conceived as the body/sensorium's cognitive/sensitive actualization with respect to one's constant, symbiopoietic becoming, and in relation to a greater plane of multispecies transformation.

¹⁶⁹ If each member maintains a definite role within the 'cell' (the mycorrhizal-ecosocialist model as a transformative process, namely a care web) where they have been fused, there is a lesser chance of its components experiencing species being-alienation in the Marxist sense, for their metabolisms would not be expropriated by a power that has interests over their bodies.

¹⁷⁰ Through a rigorous awakening of creative and mycorrhizal sensibilities, people can orient their creative capacities, via symbiopoietic aisthesis, to draw their own meaning in terms of politically caring for a common home, a true economy/Oikos. And there is a good chance that each actor (active subjectivity) within the cell can be valued accordingly, respected and encouraged for offering their labor in providing for the common project that is caring for Gaia (as opposed to an individual sense of artificial profit).

Chapter 4

Research Design for Drawing Out and Data Coding**Introduction**

Chapter 4 concerns the research design that led to the theory-informed practice drawing out. The first section describes the context of analysis. I provide a discussion aided with visual elements that offer factual information to help paint a picture of the economic context within which ‘Millennials’ struggle to find a decent living with regard to labor. Considering burnout to be a psycho-affective manifestation of the second-order imposition producing the metabolic rift, my research questions aimed at arriving at an understanding of the way young workers labeled as ‘Millennial’ navigate contemporary adulthood. I sought out to explore the tension between the discourses on labor that ‘Millennial’s employ in their description of their experiences of burnout, and the underlying reality of heightened exploitation; wherein demand of productivity has doubled while wages have stagnated (reflecting the level at which capitalists increasingly steal surplus without paying workers their fair share). The subsequent section addresses the interpretive instruments that I implemented. I explain how I was able to code participant transcripts by implementing a discursive-affective analysis of contemporary notions of ‘adulthood’ (with regard to human capital and productivity), to notice how each shaped their experiences of burnout as ‘‘Millennial’s.’ Thus, by activating a dialectics of sentipensar through the development of mycorrhizal sensibilities, I was able to pay profound and critical attention to the emergence of themes and patterns that structured the findings that I present in Chapter 5.

In the next section I describe the data collection process that allowed me to engage in first cycle coding using a manual technique over printed transcripts of participant interviews. Subsequently, I provide what I considered to be a basic description of what discourses, ideologies and affects mean, both separately and in relation to one another. The purpose of this clarification is to establish an argumentative bridge from which to challenge agonistic thought-feeling processes that are articulated by colonial discourses and that lead to burnout in people, and especially in ‘Millennial’s, the target population of this study. The aim in studying ‘Millennial’ burnout is to disclose the structural situations that set the conditions for the emergence of such a phenomenon.

Context of Analysis: Charted Precarity

The context of analysis with regard to the coding aspect of this study presents a material understanding of the dire (and worsening) economic situation under which ‘Millennials’ are made to work (which is the cause for their burnout) as compared to other moments in the past. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 1, on the section that corresponds to ‘gaslighting,’ I referenced the wealth gap that exists between generational groupings of people who have been impacted by different historical periods within a same economic gradient. I was able to compare the information that was shown on the website “virtual capitalist,” (from which I obtained the table shown in Figure 5), with the official data presented on the government site of the U.S. Federal Reserve. From the contents displayed on Federal Reserve website, I was able to retrieve a graph that mapped the existing wealth disparity distributed in terms of generations. And, as the graph demonstrates (see Figure 6), the wealth corresponding to Silent Generation and the Greatest Generation combined went up from \$16 trillion in 1989 to \$19 trillion in 2019, peaking at \$27 trillion in 2007 (before the 2008 crash, which is made visible if looking at the gradient’s trajectory). Meanwhile, the Baby Boomer generation held more than half of U.S. household wealth by the end of 2020. Currently at \$59 trillion, ‘Boomers’ hold more than ten times the amount held by a comparative number of members of the ‘Millennial’ generation (Wallach, 2020). Subsequently, Generation X has also gained wealth in the past three decades, currently owning five times the wealth of ‘Millennials,’ although when it comes to Boomers, their rate of growth has fallen (\$440k/person).

Generation	Wealth (2019)	Population (2019)	Wealth/Person
Silent Generation & Older	\$18.8 Trillion	23.0 Million	\$817,391
Baby Boomers	\$59.4 Trillion	71.2 Million	\$834,270
Generation X	\$28.6 Trillion	65.0 Million	\$440,000
Millennials	\$5.0 Trillion	72.6 Million	\$68,871

Figure 5: Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve (*Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989, 2022*)

‘Millennials’ currently hold the least amount of wealth for the greatest population (see figures 5 and 6), currently at 73 million in 2019, with an average of \$69k/person (*Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989*, 2022; Wallach, 2020).¹⁷¹

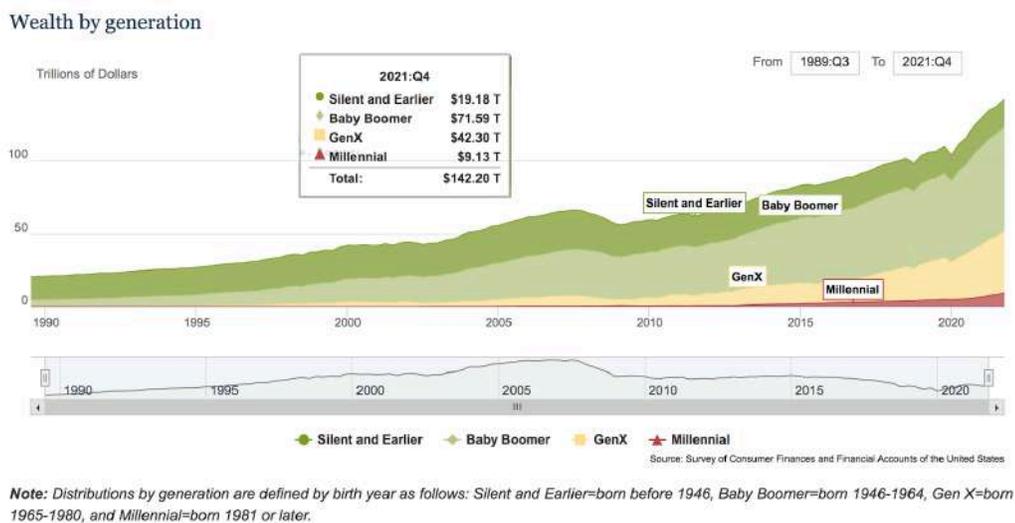


Figure 6: Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve (*Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989*, 2022)

The graphs displayed as Figure 5 and Figure 6 are meant to illustrate the current economic context in which people classified as ‘Millennials’ are living and working, disclosing precarious conditions in terms of the actual material reach (which is extremely limited) that young workers have in bettering their situation solely by means of personal effort.¹⁷² A report issued by Brookings came up with thirteen facts about wage growth from 1973 until 2017, which contended a number of issues defining the context upon which ‘Millennials’ have to work in the

¹⁷¹ However, it is important to mention that the rate of growth for ‘Millennial’ wealth is climbing slowly, from \$3 to \$5 trillion, at least, from 2016 to 2019. Given the positive tone of such a projection, it is tragic to consider that at the horizon lies the threat of climate collapse, which dwindles the promise of a better future for younger generations. Especially given the response to disasters that government leaders have shown throughout the pandemic in prioritizing the market over life.

¹⁷² As a personal example, when ‘doing taxes’ with another international student colleague in the French department (who made significantly more money than I did as a graduate student), I was informed that I qualified for food stamps due to how low my stipend was. It does not matter that I have been saving almost every penny of what I have been paid throughout my years studying at PSU, I will still struggle in the future and will likely not afford a house just by saving money and not spending it on worthwhile moments that I can have with friends (on an inflated economy), which is the very least that people have.

present. For instance, the report's findings state that the share of economic output workers receive has generally fallen over the past few decades, as a result of the fact that wages rose for those in the top half of the wage distribution, but stagnated for those in the bottom half (Shambaugh et al., 2017, p. 20). Other factors affecting the present economic moment include the rise of the economic wage premium since 2000, the fact that globalized technological developments have placed downward pressure on less 'skilled' workers (according to their standards). In addition, there have been declines in the minimum wage and union membership, as well as the fact that people are less and less capable of moving to different places in order to search for a job. Consequently, what these facts demonstrate is that, presently, 'Millennials' have to bear not only the material weight of their current circumstance, but, as if this were not sufficiently hard, they also have to face ideological gaslighting (which is psychological abuse) when complaining to their older peers and superiors about such a circumstance.¹⁷³ As I have discussed before, in Chapter 1, the ideological domain of the 2-OI establishes specific narratives that confuse younger workers and make them feel blameworthy for the structural circumstance that creates their precarity and that is out of their control as individuals. In the following section I present the analysis strategies that allowed me to identify the patterns and themes in invoked via the discourses and associated affects that 'Millennials' face in the present with regard to their economic standing and to the labor expectations (in terms of individual, financial success) that have been placed on them by others with more capital-power.

Research Questions. The three research questions orienting this study were: How do participants shape their experiences of burnout? In what ways does participant expression in drawing reflect how they navigate their subjectivities in relation to the "Millennial" label? How do participants orient their creative expression in resisting or affirming the discursive meanings articulating their identities as working 'adults' in the 2-OI?

The questions that I designed to help me conduct this study were meant to identify some of the main factors affecting both people's experiences of burnout as well as their work-life experiences as 'Millennials' under the current economic and pandemic crisis. Moreover, I looked into assessing validity of the idea that frames burnout as a manifestation of the 2-OI causing the

¹⁷³ The situation itself is not new, as I have mentioned before, there has always been some sort of judgmental abuse on behalf of older generations with regard to their conception and treatment of younger people (it is part of the change in paradigms). However, in combination with extreme structural precarity, which is the reality a lot of people face in the present, it can lead to disastrous consequences, now more than ever.

metabolic rift, albeit operating at a personal level. Furthermore, I was interested in coming to understand the main causes behind the burnout epidemic, which has added pressure to already stressed people throughout the course of the pandemic. Through these research questions, I was able to craft a semi-structured interview form that guided me through the interview process with participants. I specifically looked to categorize questions into thematic blocks that could further assist me with coding. These blocks included participant relation to artmaking, their experience in undergoing the drawing exercise (with an emphasis on the visualization prompt and its effects on their decision-making), questions regarding burnout with regard to their overall pandemic experience, and finally their regard toward work-related abuse in terms of the relation between crisis (as the present) and care (as potential futurity). I focused on the way “Millennial’ adulting’ as a discourse shaped participant expression around burnout.

Interpretive Instruments: Affective-discursive Coding of Data

I selected a hybrid method for data interpretation that assisted me in the process of completing this study of “Millennial’ experiences of burnout. By entwining the fundamental principles of critical discourse analysis with those corresponding to methods of affective nature, I aimed at implementing sentipensar to grasp a fuller picture of participant input (both visual as well as verbal) in coding. The purpose was to tap into the inner cognitive-sensorial systems of participants using a combination of values coding, symbolic and emotion coding and versus coding, to trace the dialectic play between the many factors that come into play with regard to meaning-making (Saldaña, 2021). Therefore, a hybrid method attentive to the symbolic and emotional structures shaping people’s embodied consciousness allowed me to pay close attention to the data. Discourses and affects co-constitute each other in the building of impressions that are stored in memory as a means to inform people about their surrounding environment. Through this understanding, I was able to rely on loving perception to travel into participant ‘worlds,’ through which people create their particular worldviews. ‘Worlds’ are structured by systems of values, attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the shaping of participants’ sense of self through an ongoing process of assessment and actualization (with regard to the creation of impressions and memories). These values, attitudes and beliefs thus allow for people to develop a sense of certainty with regard to their navigation of their environment. Therefore, I was particularly attentive to the way participant sense of certainty and self, became warped through agonistic discourses pertaining to the 2-OI, which carry nefarious contradictions in the sense that they occlude what the 1-OM (the underlying metabolic sense to Gaia).

For the coding stages of this study, I was able to make use of *sentipensar*, as a dialectical approach to grasping important factors involved in the process that I have just described (that produce people's sense of certainty). Therefore, I engaged in conversational analysis attentive to both affects and discourses as they co-emerged and created meaning in flux, as opposed to being fixed, *a priori*, within a colonial dyad. Thus, *sentipensar* allowed me to map the way participants formulated ideas conveying specific affects (expressed in direct or indirect association) with regard to their description burnout while performing the 'adult 'Millennial'.' The intention was to accomplish a more holistic and *symbiopoietic* understanding of how sensibility and cognition can help people critically navigate nefarious ideological constructs.¹⁷⁴

According to discourse analyst Margaret Wetherell (2015), coding with an affective-discursive framework for analysis is extremely useful for orienting a feminist approach toward understanding the cognitive-sensitive complexity of subjective formation.¹⁷⁵ For Wetherell, discourse works as a vehicle through which affect is able to travel, for it has the capacity to incite specific kinds of affective responses. The reason why I introduced a visual component in drawing in this research study was to have a better grasp of the interplay between the cognitive and the sensitive as dimensions of human existence. A holistic approach is thus fundamental in navigating the complexity of expression as it manifests in plural and ever-changing forms.¹⁷⁶

Scholars in research are increasingly adopting analytical stances that are not accepting of the epistemological rift between discourse and affect, which I consider to be a result of the meta-discourse of the Cartesian mind-body dualism. As sociologist Donileen R. Loseke (2009) gathers, it is not possible to grasp the thought process without understanding how it is predicated upon a foundation of emotions and vice versa. Rather, in her view, "the personal experiences of emotion require cognitive appraisals and cognitive appraisals involve symbolic codes and their accompanying emotion codes" (Loseke, 2009, p. 501). Loseke is mindful that the cognitive

¹⁷⁴ Thus, an affective-discursive practice acknowledges the co-constitutive character of affect and discourse as both fluid and patterned (Venäläinen, 2021). Such a practice helps to trace the shaping and warping of meanings and their associated affects without discarding the non-linear, contingent, and performative aspects of both.

¹⁷⁵ There are multiple studies that demonstrate how a research approach that is attentive to both affect and discourse analysis opens the possibility for a deeper understanding of a given situation with attention to how people's impressions of reality are formed (Glapka, 2019; McAvoy, 2015; Wetherell, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ As Cromby and Willis contend, "analyses of the discursive structuring of subjectivity result in a dematerialised body, thus opening the space to propose affect as the missing analytic element which returns to the corporeal and material elements of experience" (Cromby & Willis, 2016, p. 478).

appraisals helping to structure emotion require language because they are part of a social process, and that is why the dialogic aspect of the drawing exercise is important in this research study. Furthermore, minding the social dimension of languaging and worlding, it is necessary to trace the connection between symbolic codes and the broader (cultural and personal) systems of meaning upon which their specific signification is inscribed.

Researchers have used a variety of names to refer to these systems of meaning to represent cultural ways of *knowing*.¹⁷⁷ However, I decided to rely on the more concise term ‘symbolic code’ to relate to Lugones’s conceptualization of ‘world-travel,’ (as a transformative change from person into another) with reference to the discursive part of the analysis. Symbolic codes refer to cultural ways of *knowing* impacting what and how participants understand and know, including what they value and what they consider to be convenient and appropriate.

In addition, the affective dimension of the data analysis of this study concerned participant expression of cultural ways of *feeling*— there are additional codes that help model what emotions are expected in terms of context and direction. Affect-oriented codes provide insight into “how emotion should be inwardly experienced, outwardly expressed, and morally evaluated” (Glapka, 2019; McAvoy, 2015; Wetherell, 2015).¹⁷⁸ I decided to choose the more direct and clear concept of ‘emotion codes,’ introduced by Loseke and that I’m as an overarching guide for my own work (Loseke, 2009). Emotion codes help map the paths that socially circulating ideas take as they dictate when and where it is appropriate to feel a certain way, namely sympathy, comfort, fear and/or anger, to give a few examples (Loseke, 2009). Subjectivity and culture dialectically determine each other, but material conditions set the main base upon which subject must actively react in the way they choose, in awareness of how they might be influenced by things other than themselves, such as the environment.

In tandem, symbolic and emotion codes are resources that structure and condition the way we express emotional states in response to our environment and others. Therefore, codes and

¹⁷⁷ These perspectives on ways to refer to symbolic codes include Zerubavel’s ‘islands of meaning,’ (O’Brien & Kollock, 1997), ‘semiotic codes’ (Karpukhina, 2017), ‘interpretive codes’ (Chandler & Munday, 2020) or ‘symbolic repertoires’ (Loseke, 2007). What all these terms have in common is that they refer to the systems of ideas that humans have about how the world works and/or how it ought to work. The structures of ideas and impressions that people have are culturally situated, complex, interlocking and according to Loseke, they help mobilize people’s sense of right and wrong, duties, rights, and expectations of others (Loseke, 2009).

¹⁷⁸ Concepts that refer to cultural ways of feeling include “emotion schemas” (Izard, 2007), “emotional repertoires” (Liliequist, 2012), “feeling rules, framing rules, and display rules” (Hochschild, 1979).

models are useful, for they help identify the main discourses that predispose one to act according to a given affective position about how spaces are shaped in terms of normative—usually implicit—and cultural ‘rules.’ As philologist Iryna Pinich contends, “the emotional factor of ideologically preconditioned social practices identifies dominant emotional communities with the determined ‘emotional repertoires’ [that are] coded in the models of social conduct and are exposed in the systems of emotion display rules” (Pinich, 2019, p. 217). These rules are assumed by individuals within their given cultural contexts. In paying attention to the processual rather than the static aspects of discursive-affective atmospheres, the analysis component of the practice drawing out attends to the embodied responses of participants in their composing of images and engaging in dialogue about them.¹⁷⁹

Working with arts-based research, specifically using dialogic drawing, was meant to help shed light on how both affect and discourse operated in participant ‘worlding’ of their pandemic burnout experience, specifically through the lens of creative practices.¹⁸⁰ A practice approach to analyzing affective-discursive meaning-making is concerned with how the influx of affect alters a given environment and therefore helps reveal the way power is distributed between agents/elements in that space. Such a practice can work dynamically in revealing the dialectical character that art has in relation to the world as expressed via patterns of concepts and felt

¹⁷⁹ Thus, an affective-discursive standpoint was crucial in the more thorough analysis of participant ‘worlds’ that led me to pay close attention to people’s decision-making process as they became shaped by the experiences that arose moment-to-moment throughout the drawing out encounters. To engage in a rich and complex understanding of how various semiotic discourses created the conditions that specifically led to burnout in my participants, (within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic), it was important to be able to analyze the affective impact that is always involved with respect to the social discourses that participants navigated when constructing meaning.

¹⁸⁰ For researchers who are focusing on the interplay between affect and discourse, such as Wetherell, embracing a more ‘capacious’ social psychology of embodied affect practice might help obviate/reveal many of the issues that she identifies with the field in contrast to the colonial legacies of Cartesianism, Darwinism, Objectivism, which structure the capitalist-patriarchal ideology of domination. She contends:

A practice approach positions affect as a dynamic process, emergent from a polyphony of intersections and feedbacks, working across body states, registrations and categorizations, entangled with cultural meaning-making, and integrated with material and natural processes, social situations and social relationships (Wetherell, 2015a, p. 145).

Wetherell is convinced that more elaborated qualitative accounts of embodiment, in tandem with a new kind of psychobiological perspective, might help to end the “old stalemate between universalist inherent emotions versus culturally constructed emotions” (Wetherell, 2015b, p. para 5). Her framing of bodies and entities as processes rather than static/immutable objects is at the core of her critique of psychologist Silvan Tomkins’ categorization of emotions as genetically determined into ‘affect programs,’ which I am conceptualizing within the prior notion of ‘emotional codes’ (Wetherell, 2014).

perceptions of individuals. Thus, by framing my dissertation as a practice-based, affective-discursive analysis of ‘Millennial’ burnout, I was able to focus on how various elements (e.g., agents, signifiers) operated simultaneously and at different levels—affecting one another—within a given space of contingency and power, as will be reflected in Chapter 6, where I present my findings. I will subsequently present a discussion on the main discourses (and their associated affects) that I analyzed for this study, including the figure of the ‘Millennial’ and the ‘adult.’

The ‘Millennial Adult’ Discourse

The discursive narratives placed on ‘Millennials’ allow for other people to judge individuals framed as such in terms of their so-called ‘inherent’ generational traits, in contrast to the expectations around production placed over them by society. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, I sought to understand the figure of the ‘Millennial’ as described by popular media sites in terms of mediocrity and in contrast to the discourse of the ‘adult’ (or of ‘adulting’) in the workforce, with respect to what is demanded of people in terms of productivity and mindset within the logic of the 2-OI. Some of the main headlines identifying ‘Millennial’s with burnout on the mainstream media include:

- How ‘Millennial’s became the burnout generation (Anne Helen Petersen, *Buzzfeed*, 2019)
- How ‘Millennial’s became the burnout generation (Sean Illing, *Vox*, 2020)
- How Boomer parenting fueled ‘Millennial’ burnout (Joe Pinsker, *The Atlantic*, 2020)
- The generation that was exhausted (Scott W. Stern, *The New Republic*, 2020)
- My generation is so burned out—But we don’t have to be (Vasundhara Sawhney, *Harvard Business Review*, 2021)
- Why ‘Millennial’ managers are burned out (Kate Morgan, *BBC*, 2021)

The first two titles are the same, albeit published on different sites—*Vox*, and *Buzzfeed*—suggesting a pathway that ‘Millennials’ took in becoming ‘the burnout generation.’ Meaning, that they were not burned out to begin with, but something happened along the way. The subsequent title from *The Atlantic* (2020) suggests that it was bad parenting that led to ‘Millennial’ burnout, while *The New Republic* (2021) stresses how a whole generation is out of energy. The article by *Harvard Business Review* argues that there is an alternative, while the *BBC* (2021) makes an explicit case involving ‘Millennial’ managers. Overall, the context in which ‘Millennial’ experiences have unfolded on the planet has been that of crisis: many survived the Great Recession of 2008 and now are currently surviving the coronavirus pandemic. According to

several websites that popped up after a quick search on the Internet, the most resonating ‘Millennials’ characteristics describe them as:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| -self-centered | -disloyal (‘youth run amok’) | -lacking self-determination |
| -unmotivated | -lacking a work ethic | -irresponsibly wasteful |
| -disrespectful | -brand-name obsessed | |
| -narcissistic | -frail/mollycoddled | |
| -commitment-phobic | -emotional and irrational | |
| -lazy job-hoppers | -entitled (expecting everything on a silver plate) ¹⁸¹ | |

These discourses help paint a picture of the overall negative regard that people have against ‘Millennials’ due to the constant exposure people have to these narratives as they hear them often in the media. These discourses are often interiorized by people and thus help them self-judge in a negative manner. However, there are some instances where people understand how discourses operate and are thus aware of their power and influence, which opens the possibility for resistance through anti-capitalist-oriented mindfulness, for example.

In contrast, the discourses surrounding ‘adulthood’ vary depending on the context of reference, which is shaped by socio-cultural, historical, and geographical markers and conditions. However, considering that North America has had the hegemonic hold in terms of culture and economic power (which are dialectically connected) since the end of World War II, there are some generalities that are worth considering. The point of deconstructing these discourses is to trace the underlying ideological power of the myths surrounding the contemporary regard toward ‘adulthood,’ when it comes to influencing people’s actions. Some of the main discourses surrounding contemporary notions of what adulthood involves describe such a period of growth in human beings as a “stable, irreversible stage in the life course characterized by the attainment of key time-graded benchmarks such as graduating from secondary school, gaining full-time employment, moving out of the home of origin, getting married or partnered, and building a family” (Hochschild, 1979). So, adulthood involves a sense of self-determination and self-sufficiency attained through hard work (invoking the Protestant Work Ethic) which seeks to create and sustain a family (the basic unit of the State) by securing employment that guarantees financial success (achieved through individualistic means). Mainstream understandings of adulthood have remained somewhat consistent over the years, yet academic literature has become more fluid, in response to the current difficulties that young people have in attaining such

¹⁸¹ (L. N. Clark, 2018, 2018; Illing, 2020; Levin, 2017; Petersen, 2020)

benchmarks due to “precarious labour markets, unaffordable housing, rising student debt, changing social norms regarding family building and partnering, and an increasing diversity of cultural preferences regarding intergenerational living arrangements” (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020, p. 215). Even though the material reality upon which the ‘adult’ discourse is meant to work has dramatically changed, public discourses surrounding ‘adulthood’ (the more popular term) in terms of attaining age-graded milestones are informed by a linear benchmark perspective that does not match the current context. Among the core themes that I used to organize the symbolic codes that participants employed to describe their experiences of ‘Millennial’ burnout in attempting to ‘adult’ (as a verb) I was able to detect influence of agonism enacted through the Enlightenment discourse of ‘Man,’ the war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*), Cartesian dualism, the death of nature, and the Protestant work ethic. In the discussion and findings section of Chapter 5, I present how these interacted with associated affects with regard to burnout and the workplace.

Affects Associated with the ‘Millennial Adult’ Discourse

Existing research shows that burnout causes cognitive and emotional damage. Individuals subjected to burnout in prolonged times suffer changes in their behavior that translate into negative perceptions and actions directed toward work, co-workers, users and the professional role itself (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p. 2). Burnout is defined as a gradual process of fatigue, cynicism, reduced commitment, reduced sense of professional efficacy, depersonalization. Although there were various pathways for me to organize my data, I decided to adopt authors Sergio Edú-Valsania, Ana Laguía and Juan A. Moriano’s proposal to approach the phenomenon of burnout through three main dimensions articulating subcategories that can be ascribed to each one, for nuance (see Figure 7). The three dimensions are: (a) emotional exhaustion (at the level of feelings), (b) cynicism of depersonalization (interpersonal component) and (c) reduced personal achievement (negative professional self-regard). I decided that this choice could yield more clearly articulated results, which was adequate, as I demonstrate in my findings.

Dimension	Definition
Emotional exhaustion	This dimension manifests in the form of feelings and sensation of being exhausted by the psychological efforts made at work. It is also described in terms of weariness, tiredness, fatigue, weakening, and the subjects who manifest this type of feelings show difficulties in adapting to the work environment since they lack sufficient emotional energy to cope with work tasks.
Cynicism or depersonalization	This dimension, the interpersonal component of burnout, is defined as a response of detachment, indifference and unconcern towards the work being performed and/or the people who receive it. It translates into negative or inappropriate attitudes and behaviors, irritability, loss of idealism, and interpersonal avoidance usually towards service users, patients, and/or clients.
Reduced personal achievement	This dimension is reflected in a negative professional self-evaluation and doubts about the ability to perform the job effectively, as well as a greater tendency to evaluate results negatively. It also translates into a decrease in productivity and capabilities, low morale, as well as lower coping skills.

Figure 7. Three dimensions of burnout (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022)

As I went through the different cycles of coding involved in this study, I began making important associations between expressed affects that I consequently compiled within each of the three dimensions that are shown in Figure 7, and that organized my analysis of ‘Millennial’ burnout. The main affective ‘codes’ that I found include: anxiety, fear, stress, sadness, pressure, frustration, confusion, defeat, disappointment, paralysis, betrayal, anger, shame, humiliation, embarrassment, compliance, resentment, hope, exhaustion, heaviness, lethargy, stupor. As I show in the discussion section of Chapter 5, I make reference to the broader themes under which these codes were placed to help with data interpretation.

Sample Size and Selection Criteria. For drawing out, the aim was to select a sample of around 20-30 participants. In the end I conducted a total of 22 sessions with participants from around the world. I interviewed people from North and Central America as well as Western and Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. My exploratory arts-based-affective-discursive study involved a small sample (22 people), which by nature makes the study not representative, nor exhaustive. I was still mindful of bias, and therefore attempted to be as respectful and ‘objective’ as possible, given the circumstances. However, since this study also centers care, I performed attentiveness to vulnerability as much and as well as I could. As findings show, participant responses to the experience of drawing out were mostly positive and I received constructive feedback for conducting future exercises that I am incorporating into this study’s discussion, which I am discussing as part of the findings section of Chapter 5.

The selection criteria concerned that the participants in this study met the requirements for answering the research questions. I was only including participants who fit the ‘‘Millennial’’ generational description (being from 20 to 40 years of age at the time of the interview) who had experienced and/or were experiencing burnout during the pandemic. A tentative ‘hypothesis’ (which are not mandatory for qualitative research) was that an affective-discursive exploration of ‘Millennial’s experiences of burnout would contribute relevant information to the growing body of knowledge on the relationship between identity, power-imbalances and mental health.

Preparing and Conducting Drawing Out

The process that involves in ‘drawing out’ consists of four main stages: (a) The Drawing Prompt (where participants respond in making a drawing), (b) Dialogic Encounter (where participants respond verbally to their experience in making the drawing, (c) Reconsideration of Drawing (where participants reconsider their own work as seen through the eyes of others), and (d) Affirmation of Multiplicitous Selfhood (where participants address aspects of their being that they discovered through drawing and incorporate those back into their being, from a stance built in multiplicity). I mapped out these stages in the diagram that I am displaying in this section (see Figure 8) to render a visual picture of the process as a metabolic flux (of introspection and projection) in itself.

In order to choose a topic, I decided to address what I considered to be the main urgencies surrounding me, as expressed by people that I interact with on a regular basis. I identified two main societal problems that needed addressing through research: the mental health crisis and the environmental crisis. Subsequently, I designed a prompted exercise in drawing that was meant to respond to those problems. Consequently, I disseminated a call on social media (see figure 9). I engaged with people who inquired about the exercise and selected suitable and willing participants. I provided selected participants with an audio file with instructions on how to complete a drawing exercise. After the drawing was finished, participants and I arranged a time to meet over Zoom. During each session I engaged with participants over dialogic drawing in sessions that I recorded with consent and that lasted from half an hour to an hour approximately. Throughout the virtual meetings for drawing out, I listened to participant testimonies mostly speaking about their experiences of burnout as ‘‘Millennial’s.’ However, I also learned about their relationship to art and about their considerations with regard to coalition-building, and political ways of enacting care. I consider the ‘drawing out’ interviews to mobilize art-making as a means for facilitating ‘mycorrhizal encounters’ (Mitchell & Vráblikova [forthcoming]) further

informed by a feminist approach to dialogism.¹⁸² Through this particular form of dialogic drawing I aimed to assist in the development of cognitively-informed sensibilities that otherwise would be rendered useless or irrelevant by the usual colonial standards.¹⁸³



Figure 8. Diagram that I drew representing the process of drawing out as a flow comprised of 4 main stages with internal processes each (Zuniga, 2022).

The preparation process that led to the development of drawing out required several stages of planning before I was able to engage with participants. From my experience in teaching

¹⁸² The work of feminist ethnomycologists Mitchell and Vráblíková leverages the art of feminist un/learning through mycorrhizal encounters as a creative practice that grapples with the ethical possibility of living and laboring both inside as well as outside the confines of educational and cultural intuitions. The authors offer create mycorrhizal encounters as a form to critically and collectively intervene a rapidly growing field interested in fungi, (such as this study's model for a politics of care based on mycorrhizal symbiosis) especially with regards to knowledge-production (or 'worlding') settings of scientific and humanities research, entrepreneurship, popular culture, activism, and, of course, art.

¹⁸³ Following the discourses of coloniality that I will disclose in Chapter 5 for the analysis of the coded interviews of drawing out.

drawing both in formal as well as informal settings, I was aware that a prompt or a pretext could allow people undergoing the drawing experience to relax and suspend their self-judgment in artmaking.¹⁸⁴ Since the model that I designed was inspired on nature, I thought of a metaphorical scenario where people could relate to the feeling of being confined as a result of mandatory lockdown. Consequently, the image of a potted plant became central to the exercise. I prepared two audio pilots to experiment with colleagues of mine before polishing the final version of the prompt that I ended up sharing with participants. The feedback I received from those initial mock interviews helped me hone a narrative that allowed listeners to feel comfortable in using their imaginations without feeling the threat of an aesthetic assessment or a grade. As I planned the initial stages of the research project, it was necessary for me to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the US, due to the participatory nature of my study and the research context. In order to obtain such approval, I had to submit a research proposal filling out a template form with the specifics and intentions of my drawing out project.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process. The following section addresses the process by which I was able to successfully submit my dissertation proposal for the Institutional Review Board committee to review, since my study involved human subjects and therefore needed prior approval for me to be able to legally conduct it. I began the IRB process on June 21st, 2021, and, after a few exchanges with the agent that was assigned my case, I received their approval in August via email (refer to Appendix C). However, when consulting my file on their website, the official date stated appears to be November 8th, 2021 (refer to Appendix C).

There were a few minor details that I had to clarify with regard to participant consent and recruitment, however, the study did not run into any major issues, and it was approved in the end. Thus, with permission to conduct my study by the IRB, I was free to carry on with the interview phase for drawing out. As I stated on my approved IRB form, I used judgment sampling to recruit around 20 participants aged between 21 and 39 years; a sample that would be consistent with the age range that frames the ‘Millennial’ generation (with respect to the change of century as well as the advent of the Internet). The inclusion criteria addressed ‘Millennial’s from around the world (individuals born between 1982–2000, including residents as well as nonresidents of EEA

¹⁸⁴ Having people suspend their self-judgment is paramount, considering that most people feel self-conscious about their artmaking abilities (specifically with drawing) due to having had bad experiences in formal education, which, as my findings show, leave a small imprint of displeasure as trauma. I was able to note a repetition of the discourse of “I am not an artist” in such findings, as I will discuss in Chapter 6.

countries), who had been experiencing burnout throughout the coronavirus pandemic and who had a decent proficiency in English (just to be able to go through an interview and respond accurately).¹⁸⁵ That meant that, in contrast, the exclusion criteria addressed people who were born outside the 1982–2000 range, as well as people who had not experienced burnout before and during the coronavirus pandemic. Namely, such individuals were not made part of this study.

Recruitment of Study Participants. The call that I sent out to recruit participants was designed in terms of clarity of intent and visual appeal, considering that the fact that if people were undergoing burnout, that meant that they probably had little time, energy, and interest to spare to engage in an activity that was not mandatory or absolutely necessary for their survival in the second order metabolism placed over nature by capitalist heteropatriarchy. Thus, the call showed vivid colors meant to draw attention to it via its composition and dynamism. I posted the image as a poster on Facebook and as a gif on Instagram (refer to Figure 9) in both Spanish and English, to catch the attention of bilingual speakers in my networks. After posting the call, I obtained a reasonable number of responses inquiring about the process and aims of the study.

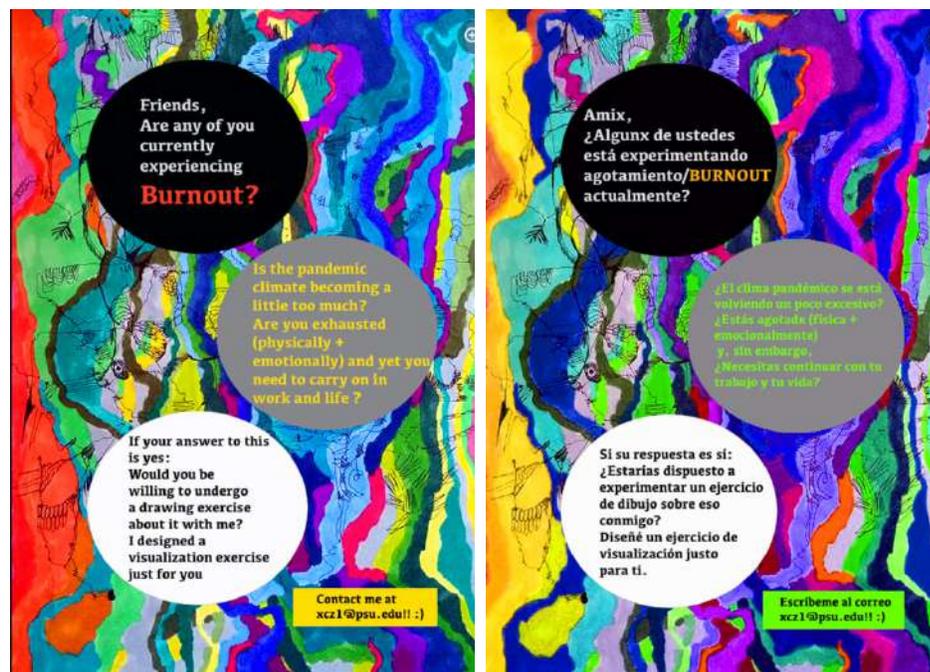


Figure 9. Recruitment posters (in English and Spanish) for drawing out (Zuniga 2020)

¹⁸⁵ I made this decision on the basis of time restrictions and my own burnout. However, under more accommodating circumstances, I am considering engaging in translation to open the inclusion criteria.

The call for participants in English that I posted in December 2021 on social media offered my contact information and read as follows:

I'm still looking for participants for my doctoral thesis project!

Are you a 'Millennial' and currently experiencing burnout? If so, shoot me an email at xcz1@psu.edu and I'll send you a visualization exercise that might help you feel things through and we can talk about it later during an interview session that I've prepared for the occasion.¹⁸⁶

I relied on social media primarily for pragmatic reasons: I had already been exposed to numerous accounts by people within my networks and beyond expressing their thoughts and feelings around burnout (in the form of memes, gifs or textual rants) throughout the duration of the pandemic. Consequently, I considered that such people who I knew had expressed feelings of burnout could reach out to me in case they wanted to participate or in case they knew about others who matched the description and could also be interested in participating, which was the case. Once I received sufficient initial responses from people within those networks, I relied on judgment sampling to assess each case and to schedule a time to conduct interviews with chosen participants.

I drafted an official email to send out as an invitation for drawing out. I made sure that only people that fit the description received the prompt, following this study's inclusion and exclusion criteria (being 'Millennials' with burnout). The email text read as follows:

Hi friend,

If you are getting this message, it is because you responded to a post of mine where I stated that I was looking for people who were or have been experiencing burnout as a result of the many multi-dimensional byproducts of the current pandemic climate (but mainly due to affective and labor-based pressure and stressors or a combination of factors).

I am now sending you a recording with instructions for a visualization exercise that is meant to guide you in the creation of a drawing. Link to audio recording on SoundCloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/xalli-zuniga/drawing-exercise-devenir-planta/s-t6MsESvFfAG>

¹⁸⁶ And the Spanish version stated a translation of the message posted above (translated by myself, since I am bilingual): "Sigo buscando participantes para mi proyecto de tesis de doctorado. ¿Eres de la generación 'Millennial' y estás experimentando burnout actualmente? Si sí, escíbeme a xcz1@psu.edu y te puedo enviar un ejercicio de visualización para luego entrevistarte al respecto, si crees que te pudiera ayudar 😊"

Once the drawing is completed, I will need you to document it preferably using a scanner (for quality purposes, etc.). If scanning is too complicated for you, another option is to take a picture of the drawing to send back to me via the following address: xcz1@psu.edu.

After I receive your drawing reproduction by email, I will write back so that we can schedule a virtual meeting to converse about your experience in drawing. I will ask for your consent before proceeding to record the conversation. Once the recording is finished, I will edit it and share the final product with you, so that you are made aware of exactly what is to be used in the project regarding your image and input. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. And finally, if you happen to know of anybody who might be a suitable participant for this research project, please let me know. This exercise was designed just for that.

Thanks so much for being a part of this experience :)

Best,

Xalli

Participants often replied directly and sent their digitized image of the drawing they made. The next step was to schedule a meeting, which happened without much trouble, since people were in quarantine for most of the time during which I was conducting interviews. After interviewing my first round of participants, I employed a snowball sample relying on my participant base to look for additional participants, which also granted me a few more interviews. The growth pattern of participants was meant to loosely follow that of mycelia, namely an organic and non-linear search, such as with slime molds. Snowball sampling allowed me to assess whether or not I could reach more people that I did not have access to from within my immediate social media spheres of influence, and that could be interested in partaking if following a recommendation from someone they trusted (namely, someone I had already interviewed).

The second round of sampling allowed me to expand my reach for participants internationally, and, as such, I was able to engage with people from Eastern and Western Europe, North America, Central America, and Southeast Asia, which helped enrich the study in terms of variety of voices finding interesting commonalities that I present in Chapter 5. Although I already had an international audience, because of having lived abroad in different places throughout my life. Reaching people from all over the world was an advantage granted by the fact that I was able to engage with participants online and via the cloud-based, peer-to-peer software platform known as 'zoom,' which is a service provided by the university (Penn State) as part of my enrollment as a graduate student there.

Data Collection Process. I collected data from three main sources: participant transcripts, the audio and visual recording of interviews, and the drawings that participants produced. I contacted participants throughout the process to involve them in the process as much as possible, especially with regard to what I was interpreting from coding. Once I had the materials and stages ready for conducting drawing out, and after the initial pilot sessions, I sent out a call on social media to seek out potentially interested people. As a requirement for participating, people were asked to listen to an audio file containing a narration for visualization (refer to Appendix A) that invited them to produce a ‘self-portrait in metamorphosis,’ as a sort of creative mushroom-fruit around which to conduct the drawing out session. The main purpose was for participants to playfully visualize themselves as becoming potted plants in response to what I referred to as a ‘meta-pandemic’ or a fictionalized scenario in which a ‘spore leakage’ caused such symptoms in people, transforming them into plants and disconnecting them from their usual surroundings and networks. They were instructed to compose an image reflecting their specific transformation, as a self-portrait (they were free to draw themselves as they pleased).¹⁸⁷ I designed the prompt in such a way to produce a necessary dislocation of context of reference in participants with an emphasis on their affective and energetic standing. The purpose was to grant enough reflective space for people to establish a disjunctive synthesis between their imagined situation as plants and their present state of living as burned-out ‘Millennial’s. The special indications contained in the guided visualization prompt were meant to assist participants in completing their drawing exercise as comfortably and safely as possible, given the pandemic circumstances.

¹⁸⁷ I produced a prompt that I turned into a narration that I recorded for participants to have sonorous guidance as they went through the drawing exercise. In seeking to create a relaxing, almost meditative, space for participants to express their thoughts and feelings freely, I used a soft tone of voice and paced myself as I described the purposes of the exercise. As my findings show, the colonial gaze in artmaking causes people to often shy away from engaging in exploratory artmaking under the pretense that “they can’t draw.” I consider that a discursive effect of ‘aesthetic’ coloniality that is imposed in people as they enter formal education.



Figure 10. Image of one of the first drawing out encounters I had over Zoom with a participant from the US, while conducting research in Mexico (Zuniga, 2022)

Participants were invited to pay close attention to the mental images that came to them as they listened to the prompt, for these were meant to guide their process of drawing. The prompt suggested that people make the drawing in their own time and prior to our first formal digital drawing encounter. During each drawing out session, I looked into the embodied, meaning-making ways in which participants and myself developed important connections of mutual understanding (mycorrhizal sensibilities through affective mycelia) through sharing memories and engaging in humor, solidarity and an actualizing understanding of our own metabolic-sympoietic meaning-making-as-self-and-other-making.¹⁸⁸ I sought to relate people's shared impressions with an emerging world of meaning that my co-artists (participants) and I were creating through dialogue. Drawing out was meant to assist people in coming to mindfully explore some of the structural causes for the difficulty of performing/experiencing life in utmost vulnerability to labor and affect-related forms of pressure and stress (that, as a result, produce burnout).¹⁸⁹

After finishing with the interview stage of the study, I proceeded to compile the transcripts obtained from the drawing out conversations to format them for coding. Zoom has a

¹⁸⁸ I consider this description to perform the pedagogical aspect of this arts-based practice in dialogic drawing.

¹⁸⁹ In total, I was able to interview 22 participants who successfully completed their drawing and had much to share about their experience in making it in relation to their state of burnout.

listened to the recordings prior to this step. I was able to establish a general frame that helped me structure my initial findings as I became more and more acquainted with the information. I relied on notes that I produced during interviews to help me navigate the transcription process (see figure 11). As a reminder, study considered the case of burnout is a symptom of metabolic rifting at a personal level. Most of the mycorrhizal encounters that happened during the drawing out exchanges were friendly and insightful, and I received a considerable amount of positive feedback, which I am including in this study in Chapter 5.

The reason why I engaged in this particular kind of study is to fill a gap in the literature. In my view, although there are existing studies that provide a quantitative analysis of the rates at which ‘Millennial’ experience burnout with relative attention to gender (Hamm et al., 2020; Jiang & Yang, 2016; Tyan et al., 2019; Worly et al., 2017, 2019), these studies do not center of the affective and discursive aspects that lead to ‘Millennial’ burnout, especially from a materialist-intersectional-Latina/x perspective that implements artmaking as a means to obtain data. Extant studies also do not frame burnout as dialectically related to the crisis of care (Fraser, 2016) or to the metabolic rift theory, which are central concerns for this study. The proposed claim around which this study focuses alternatively suggests that an affective-discursive analysis on the crisis of care can help disclose the inherent and underlying conditions in modern society that lead to burnout (as a manifestation of rifting). Shedding light on these issues is paramount, as Knight (2006) explains:

to restructure social systems of power and privilege, we must recognize their out of sight or hidden dimensions. Silence and denial surrounding [systems of domination] maintain and perpetuate inequality by making these topics of discussion taboo, leaving no site for new forms of discourse that define the nature and scope of our work, in general and more specifically towards developing culturally responsive curricula. (p. 330)

Furthermore, the current published research on burnout relies on studies that have been realized concerning the specific work-life condition of groups of people before the declaration of the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic, starting in March 2020 and onwards. Therefore, it is necessary to produce knowledge concerning the impact of the pandemic with regard to ‘Millennial’ experiences of burnout.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ I provide a chart that provides a timeline of the pandemic’s main events as documented by the US cable news network CNN (minding the context of emission).

Charting Coded Data

Coding affects and discourses from participant transcripts required that I direct attention (via sentipensar) to various dimensions of human expression and communication. This section addresses the methods and formats that I selected to organize my data into categories that allowed me to establish thematic connections and differences between what I was interpreting, from a holistic standpoint. I relied on the verbal components at hand in the form of transcribed audio tracks, and I also had digital reproductions of the drawings that participants made and sent to me prior to our encounters. I created several versions of participant transcripts so that I could print and code them manually as well as have them online for comparison.¹⁹² In order to consult and display the data, I designed a table showing the main identifiers that provided me with background information about participants to help contextualize their testimonies while coding (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participant identifiers placed in reference to the dates of participant interviews which are also placed in relation to pandemic stages in 2020 and 2021, according to an article published by CNN Health (CNN Editorial Research, 2022).

No.	Drawing Code	Political Positioning	Education	Gender (F/M/T/N)	Age	Date	Pandemic Stage
1	Potted Plant, Color (PPC)	Center-Left	MA CORP HUM	F	37	Feb 18th, 2021	A second person in California's Santa Clara County dies of coronavirus, but the link is not confirmed until April 21. (Feb 17th)
2	Pencil Drawn Celery (PDC)	Center-left	BA CORP HUM	F	31	Feb 25th, 2021	The NIH announces that a clinical trial to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the antiviral drug <i>remdesivir</i> in adults diagnosed with coronavirus has started at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. The first participant is an American who was evacuated from the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Japan.

¹⁹² I named the first version 'FIRST,' then I formatted another version for coding in columns that I titled 'CLEAN' and finally I removed my contribution to the conversation to be able to map participant input separately using online resources that are available for data visualization such as word maps.

3	Color Pencil Cocoon (CPC)	Left	MA HUM	F	34	Feb 25th, 2021	""
4	Pencil Pine Palm Bird (PPPB)	Apolitical 1	AA ARTS	M	33	Sept 1st, 2021	The first peer-reviewed results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials of Russia's Covid-19 vaccine are published in the medical journal The Lancet. The results "have a good safety profile" and the vaccine induced antibody responses in all participants, The Lancet says.
5	Pencil Family of 3 (PF3)	Left	BA HUM	F	40	Sept 1st, 2021	""
6	Digital Drawing of Many Lives (DDML)	Left	PHD STEM	M	32	Oct 1st, 2021	Trump announces that he and first lady <u>Melania</u> Trump have tested positive for Covid-19. He spends three nights at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center receiving treatment before returning to the White House. (Oct 2nd)
7	Book Intervention Mycorrhizae (BIM)	Anti-colonial	PHD STEM	M	40	Oct 21st, 2021	<u>Drugmaker</u> Johnson & <u>Johnson</u> announces it has paused the advanced clinical trial of its experimental coronavirus vaccine because of an unexplained illness in one of the volunteers. "Following our guidelines, the participant's illness is being reviewed and evaluated by the ENSEMBLE independent Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) as well as our internal clinical and safety physicians," the company said in a statement. ENSEMBLE is the name of the study. The trial resumes later in the month. (Oct 10th)
8	Bonsai (B)	Left	MA STEM	F	35	Oct 19th, 2021	""
9	Mushroom Vaginal Roots (MVR)	Left	BA HUM	F	24	Nov 24th, 2021	-Omicron variant discovered (Mallapaty, 2022)AM
10	Small green marker Plant (SGMP)	Center-Left	BA ARTS	F	24	Dec 13th, 2021	US officials announce the first doses of the FDA authorized Pfizer vaccine have been delivered to all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. (Dec 14th)

11	Sunflower (S)	Left	BA (MA track) HUM	N	28	Dec 18th, 2021	The FDA authorizes a second coronavirus vaccine made by Moderna for emergency use. "The emergency use authorization allows the vaccine to be distributed in the U.S. for use in individuals 18 years and older," the FDA said in a tweet.
12	Red Mushroom (RM)	Left- Marxist	MA (PhD track) HUM	F	34	Dec 21st, 2021	-
13	Digital Drawing 3 Stages (DD3)	Right	MA (PhD track) CORP	F	34	Dec 21st, 2021	-
14	Green Roots Spores (GRS)	Center- Left	BA HUM	F	35	Jan 3rd, 2022	The WHO team tasked with investigating the origins of the outbreak in Wuhan arrive in China. (Dec 14th)
15	Orchid (O)	Center- Left	MA CORP HUM	F	34	Jan 4th, 2022	-
16	Colors Bursting (CB)	Left	MA HUM POL	F	31	Jan 9th, 2022	-
17	Big Color Pencil Tree with Red Stars (BCPTRD)	Center- Left	MA HUM POL	M	34	Jan 9th, 2022	-
18	Fruiting Shrub (FS)	Left	PHD HUM	F	32	Jan 11th, 2022	-
19	Plant Dress (PD)	Decoloni al	BA HUM	F	29	Jan 13th, 2022	-
20	Pencil Tiny Plant (PTP)	Moderate -Liberal Mormon	MA HUM	F	33	Jan 18th, 2022	Newly elected US President Joe Biden halts the United States' withdrawal from WHO (Jan 20th) Two days later the presidency of Donald J. Trump came to an end.

21	Pencil Willow Tree (PWT)	Center-Right	PHD STEM	F	35	April 7th, 2022	-Omicron variant was detected but subsided
22	Vortex Plant City Colored Pencils (VPCCP)	Left	MA HUM	F	34	April 14th, 2022	

The table presents the information that I gathered from participants without revealing too much of their identity, for the purpose of confidentiality. As subject variables, the content in each category aided me during the coding process by offering a contextual framing that allowed me to keep focus as I entered into their ‘worlds.’ I did my best to use these pointers to perform an accurate interpretation of participant input (as drawings and their verbal queues) with regard to aspects of their identity that inevitably came into play. The categories included: (a) the codes of identification I used for each participant,¹⁹³ (b) their political inclination, their level of education (differentiating degrees in humanities and arts from STEM), (c) their age, and (d) and the date of our drawing out encounter, which I discuss these in Chapter 5. In addition, I provided an extra column with information drawn from a timeline published by the US cable news network CNN (CNN Editorial Research, 2022) where specific stages of the pandemic are shown, to more or less contextualize the ‘global’ situation happening around each drawing out sessions. For example, the first participant I interviewed, participant PPC mentioned that the pandemic had been already going on for around a year.¹⁹⁴ Correlating data from the various sources I counted on was key in order to dig into the deeper layers of meaning that became evident as participants and I discussed the content and formal aspects of their drawings, which became enriched as we engaged in dialogue. I shared some of my own interpretations with participants during the drawing out sessions. The aim was for participants to correct or use my interpretations as pretexts to keep exploring their thinking around what they had created and in relation to their current state of being. I also paid attention to the accuracy of my own interpretation, which helped with the

¹⁹³ In order to assign each participant with a code ‘name,’ I looked at their drawings and described the main traits, from which I created specific acronyms that would not repeat and that would not disclose the actual name of participants, to respect the confidentiality agreement that I had with them. For instance, for the participant who drew a ‘pencil willow tree,’ I assigned the acronym PWT, and so on.

¹⁹⁴ Participant PPC expressed: “During the whole, uh, pandemic season that is, is about to go for one year.”

coding process later on. For instance, during a conversation with one of my last participants, participant PWT (for ‘Pencil Willow Tree’), I asked if the tree they had drawn was a willow tree (I also asked them to correct me if I was wrong), and they responded the following:

Wow, you identified it! [...] The thing is, I do admit that when I did show this drawing to my boyfriend, and my boyfriend told me, “I don't know which tree this is,” and I said “Oh, then, I'm very bad at drawing!” [laughs genuinely]. But yeah, it's a weeping willow, yeah.

This passage was revealing in several ways, but the main point I am taking is that sometimes people interiorize negative feedback that they receive from others when their work is being judged (without considering other people’s capacity of producing accurate interpretations). Partly due to insecurity, people then come to the wrong conclusion that ‘they cannot draw,’ oftentimes confirming a fear that individuals tend have when it comes to their art-making abilities. However, in trying to keep an openness in terms of addressing emerging impressions, I sought to take this into consideration to make the process about exploration and discovery, rather than ‘getting something right.’ In this particular instance, participant PWT realized that their drawing was in fact well depicted in terms of subject matter, which I further discuss in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, participants were surprised at the depth at which they were able to explore aspects of themselves that they would have otherwise not been made aware of, if not for the verbal exchanges that we had. For example, participant FS (for ‘Fruiting Bush’) expressed surprise at the amount of content that we were able to draw out from their self-portrait. They said:

I didn't think that there *would be so much from drawing* a drawing [...] that’s what *creativity* is. I didn't see the creativity in me during that really... I see it in this. That's what I was trying to say earlier like it's way *beyond*, you know. So I think that's the *beauty* that that is the *drawing conversation leads to something like this*.

Co-interpreting becomes a playful and fun endeavor in making-meaning together, as opposed to trying to prove a point, which is generally done agonistically (in attempting to ‘win’ at a conversation). Participant FS was thus happily surprised around the content that emerged out of our encounter, which shed light on more aspects of what they had drawn.

Throughout coding, I was attentive to the appearance of affects and discourses framing participant expression (I focused on moments of laughter or doubt, for example to enrich my own

interpretations).¹⁹⁵ The purpose was to identify patterns and meta-patterns in the data concerning the appearance of symbolic and emotion codes in dialogue. The first cycle stage for coding allowed me to have a more general encounter with the data after having interviewed participants. I sat with each transcripts and conducted several readings, with the purpose of developing a provisional set of codes to harmonize the study's conceptual frameworks in terms of providing initial guidance for identifying patterns of meaning (Saldana et al., 2011). Furthermore, after the first cycle coding of the drawing out interview transcripts that I conducted manually, I was able to correlate the interview questions with themes that I saw emerging from patterns of code correlations that participants expressed. Themes helped summarize what was happening and helped explain why the way things were done in a certain manner (Saldaña, 2021).

Themes such as 'no end in sight,' 'values conflict with authority,' 'disenchantment with labor environment,' 'lack of proper nourishment and rest,' and 'roots breaking through the container' appeared as I was able to relate the main issues that participants expressed with regard to issues such as performing the 'Millennial' identity, dealing with money, enduring labor while experiencing burnout, and lacking proper care, to mention a few examples. These patterns reflected the influence that specific ideological discourses had on them (such as with the discourse of 'individual success,' 'work-life balance,' and 'productivity,' as I will discuss in Chapter 5) and that impacted them affectively. As my findings show, it became clear how specific agon-driven discourses affected participants in terms of shaping their self-regard with reference to broader social and political expectations of how they ought to live.

Identifying an emergence of patterns in coding in such a way, I created a number of categories that I considered to be broad enough yet specific enough to convey similarities and differences in participant expression of their burnout experience as 'Millennial's in the workforce. Examples of such categories included participant experience in artmaking, content related to their self-portrait drawing as plants, participant representations of burnout, the 'Millennial' condition, and issues related to care (and its absence in participant lives, see figures 12 and 13). I expand on each category in Chapter 5 using nexus quotes for reference.

¹⁹⁵ Attention to affects and discourses was also helpful in the sense that it did not fragment information into separate sections but rather created a more cohesive picture of what was being expressed.

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
ID	Subject	Code	Input/Comments	Affect	Discourse	THEMES	
26	Barraout	Lacking nutrients but don't know exactly what Meeting necessities is and/or Representational Browning	What nutrient is in the soil, which to me seems like, you know, what is my environment? When I was doing the plants, I was like, I don't, my soil is kind of dry. Um, it's kind of, it's feeling something, some moisture, uh, more than I don't know what it is exactly, but it's Lacking nutrient something, it could be better	Lacking nutrient Hungry	Infinite labor Infinite endurance	LACK OF PROPER NOURISHMENT	
27		Isolation An imagined future where this could end (Or end in it)	The pandemic is the way that it's still being manifest in all parts of our lives, there's no end to this there's no this an imagined future or where it would end. Right. Like there's no cause this is now almost the second year that we've lived like this so here I think at the beginning pandemic, right. I SAID "it's over the whole thing is over and one day", but now to that that kind of possibility thinking to becoming a lot more difficult or maintainable. Although I if it will have ended, but, you know, in that another two years is that could be another five. I'm not sure how my parents would feel if I just moved back home, but you know, like, uh, no but you know, that's not, I really want to do so.	Disappointment	Infinite work in isolation	NO END IN SIGHT ISOLATION FUTURE POSITIVE THINKING DRAINS ENERGY	
28		Millennial Identity Experiences Takes identity -White women from the US -Gardener evident -Has structure, read PA? Browning Mentor like, back at parents' house, her plant was BROWNING Back in the city it was easier to do things Doesn't identify with the Millennial "identity" She remembers advent of internet	Can't rent is rent is unaffordably expensive. And so in order to share that with people or fill house, it is now a lot more difficult than it was even like when my, my parents bought a house I don't, I never really, I don't like super identify with Millennials if that makes sense. Like the I often like claim for myself (and I think it's because) house, well, I wanted if it it because I'm the oldest. So like, I feel like my childhood was a lot more extended because I still got to live, the little sound it made and that I remember there's one particular memory I have of going and he would go to have to eat lunch, like just to be my parents know that like I was there, and someone's on the internet, I can't use the phone. Right. So like, I remember that being a cost of that like my academics, like most of my schooling with the internet and with all that I don't know.	Disappointment	Infinite work in isolation	BOOMERANG TIMES HAVE CHANGED (Discourse) HIGH COST OF LIVING MILLENNIALS WITH MILLENNIALS	
29	Millennial Representational	Dependent on stipend	Without continuing in my program, I ran out of money. Right? So, physically, uh, that's Confined in the last few years... I think one thing that I think about as being a Millennial is just the, a money. Um, and I'm thinking specifically of this, and I was talking with some friends... also I have financial independence, but you know, I know like I'm still on my parents car insurance. Like I pay that that covers me, but like I don't have my own insurance plan because it's easier than to be with my family. Same thing with cell phone. Right. Like I pay my portion of that. So I think that's, for me, one thing that kind of sticks, uh, being a Millennial or this sort of all these about financial independence of like, you know, I everyone I know are everyone, but most people have some kind of shared finances. Right... whether that's like a phone or it	Financial Confined	Self-determination Self-governance Stipends	DEPENDENT ON STIPEND	
30							

Figure 12. Screenshot of the template that I created using Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel to organize the data for second cycle coding (Zuniga, 2022).

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
ID	Subject	Code	Input/Comments	Affect	Discourse	THEMES	
22	3. AS Art Experience	Imaginative necessary for coping Lack of imagination = makes exhaustion worse Mental health need for creativity Quickness	-I drew it quite quickly and was like "I guess that's it." I thought of other things I could do, but I was like, no, I think that's all I want to represent. -whatever that transcendence is. No it's just like, I think, that, that kind of back of it, guess, like maybe, or like imagination also makes it makes the exhaustion worse for some.	Love Stipend same Imagination Exhaustive work = mental health		CREATING = HEALTH	
23	Art Relevance	Artist without time to practice Art is thus consuming Maker: Effort drawing to whiting for Xmas Knot as an important part of the creative process in art Doing art requires "being nothing" for inspiration Open state	I think with all... with all art, even like this, the material ones, but also like writing or things like sharing that, you need just a bit of time to just sit and do something someone before you get the creative process. And that "the nothing space" has sort of been, has stretched a bit because, Calmness I don't know, I think just one in ten percent time we are sort of like time is money... of creative Every... always the acting. Right. And um, there's not a lot of time to just sort of like rest but I think that can be part of the creative process too. Fugate was a word that came to me. I was trying to represent a lot through the lightness of it. But truth maybe, um, simplicity, uh, yeah, definitely. The Beagle? Um, and yeah, I know this too about like the depth of the roots that they're there, there's a lot of them, but they don't go deep. Um, but like, you know, one, one had thing could really knock this little plant out, it is definitely how I think. There has been growth and maybe more that you can, there's a more growth that the start that just on the surface shows us. Right. Like the bud, but, um, it's still not a lot, um, it's still [My] roots are small. There's nothing else around it. Um, it's kind of isolated. It doesn't, it can't draw strength from other sources except what it's currently in.	Love through Calmness of creative Liberal/progress reimagining art	Love surrounding hard with art (partners)	REST (NOTHINGNESS)/LACK AS A NECESSARY PART OF THE PROCESS TIME IS MONEY TIME IS MONEY	
24		Fragile Shallow roots Hope (read: for some) (Although) cannot draw the strength it needs, it can only take what's available, which is not ideal BROWNING = LACK	It's not something actually of my own house plants, which... when I drew this, when I was a particular moment, it was at my parents' house, with at the, kind of at the end of my break when I had left my house, it's the size of my leaves were Browning. Um, and I was think right. So that's what I was kind of trying to represent in that kind of, um, I think I think it goes back to maybe this idea of, of a lack? Right? There's something that plant needs, something that it's not getting, which is the sort of "cut" drawing of its edges.	Fragility Vulnerability (or: Inability to draw from PARENTAL DEPENDENCE)		GROWTH/HOPE SMALL-ROOTS SOIL DEPLETION BROWNING = BURNOUT (read something that one is not getting)	

Figure 13. Screenshot of the template showing categories such as ‘pandemic,’ ‘Millennial’ identity experiences,’ and ‘‘Millennial’ representation,’ which were used for the second cycle coding phase of the study (Zuniga, 2022).

The tables display the organization of information that allowed me to code in terms of identifying affects, discourses and themes. Furthermore, charting the transcripts using Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel was helpful for organizing the data in a visually practical manner. Even though the document became rather large in the end, I was able to navigate the sheet with the specific content that I filled out within each cell. Consequently, the formatting that structured the data was readable and manageable. Using the ‘search’ option, I was able to jump back and forth between sections in looking to find specific places where dialogues between data could be established, since my manner of approaching information is non-linear. I had the advantage of

that were also an integral part of the conversation. I include a discussion of their connective relevance with regard to participant expression in the following chapter.

Discussion, Limitations, and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the data that I was able to code and interpret in response to this study's research questions. As a means to shift from the personal into the political, I decided to focus on two contemporary 'buzzwords' that are usually referred to in relation to one another: 'Millennials' and 'burnout.'¹⁹⁷ The aim was to use these terms as a hook from which to then draw attention toward the deeper structure of parasitic-agonistic production pertaining to the second-order imposition actively rifting nature's metabolism. Framing burnout as an example of metabolic rifting at the level of the personal (affecting the bodies of the workers) was meant to establish the grounds from which to begin to envision a response to the broader crisis at hand: that of the environment (affecting the larger bodies and processes of the Earth). Furthermore, I decided to approach the 'Millennial' generational identity from a critical-sensible perspective, identifying such a categorization as inscribed within the ideological domain of the 2-OI. My goal was to learn and document how participants shaped their experiences of burnout in relation to the discourses that labelled them as Millennials (consciously or unconsciously) through the stereotype of the 'adult,' masking the exploitation of workers. Using a critical-sensible perspective, as *sentipensar*, I was able to mobilize mycorrhizal sensibilities and theoretical knowledge in discerning agonistic thought patterns in participant expression. Thus through a dialectics of *sentipensar*, I was able to detect key discourses and associated affects that participants used in performing their subjectivities around modern/colonial discourses of adulthood and productivity, in their structuring of their experiences of exploitation. I am subsequently presenting a discussion of the patterns of codes that I observed from participant transcripts and recordings in my findings section, at the end of this chapter.

¹⁹⁷ A 'buzzword' is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as "a word or expression from a particular subject area that has become fashionable by being used a lot, especially on television and in the newspapers" I

Discussion

The process of fleshing out and interpreting the data involved in this study responded to the research questions that I designed to investigate participant perceptions around their experience of burnout as ‘Millennials’ while undergoing a projective dialogic drawing exercise. My research questions oriented the general analysis toward understanding how participants grappled with the ‘Millennial’ generational label as a discourse (of cultural identity) when experiencing burnout. I was interested in learning whether or not participants showed resistance or if they appeared to have interpellated¹⁹⁸ key discourses such as ‘adulthood,’ ‘young worker’ (‘Millennial’) and ‘burnout’ (also, discursively). For the data analysis and in preparation for its discussion, I compiled subject variables into descriptive categories including those of gender, race, age, level of education (STEM or humanities), and the kind of plant they drew (as displayed in table 1).

I later compared these descriptors with the categories of analysis that I created to be able to organize the data collected from transcripts, drawing images and recordings of drawing out sessions with participants. For example, from analyzing categorical data I was able to notice the following: from a total of twenty-two interviews, thirteen were conducted throughout 2021 (starting February 18th and ending on December 21st) and nine during the course of 2022 (from January 3rd to April 14th). Only the last three interviews were conducted under the presidency of Joseph Biden—who, as shown in table 1 halted the US’s withdrawal from the World Health Organization, revoking Trump’s prior agenda— while the first nineteen happened during Donald J. Trump’s administration, at the time. For context, and as Washington Post journalist Aaron Blake explains,

Since Biden took over, the world as a whole has seen more deaths in his 10 months (3.07 million) than the preceding 10 months (2.14 million), but the United States has seen fewer. In Biden’s 10-plus months, the United States has accounted for less than 12

¹⁹⁸ Interpellation refers to the process by which people encounter cultural values imposed by ideology and internalize them (rendering them ‘natural,’ ‘normal, and even ‘inevitable’). It can be considered an effect of indoctrination, or even its method. Developed by Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser as part of his theory of Ideological State Apparatuses, interpellation evinces the process by which “all the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the ‘professional of ideology’ (Marx) [become] ‘steeped’ in this ideology in order to perform their tasks ‘consciously’” (Lewis, 2017, p. 305). Production, or the 2-OI demands a support function to be assumed by subjects who recognize themselves as having the role of performing that function. As art educator Tyson E. Lewis contends, “It is ideological interpellation that subjectivizes subjects into this support function by granting a “reason-to-be-a-subject” (Lewis, 2017, p. 305).

percent of worldwide deaths, which is down from 19.9 percent under Trump. That's a decline of more than 40 percent in our proportion of the worldwide death rate (Blake, 2021, para. 19)

For context, and relying on the categorical organization of labels presented in table 1, I was able to correlate participant accounts with important moments and events that happened as the pandemic unfolded worldwide. An important marker, for instance, was its first appearance in December, 2019 in Wuhan, China, but the first recorded death happened on January, 11th, 2020. The pandemic reached the US around January 20th, 2020, approximately a year before I began with interviews (Taylor, 2021). Subsequently, the WHO declared a global health emergency on January 30th, 2020, and it officially entered Mexico in February, 2020. Thus, the first three participants that I interviewed in February, 2021 had already been experiencing a new form of 'pandemic life' for about a year.¹⁹⁹ I was consequently mindful that the types of testimonies expressed by participants had to be interpreted and analyzed in consideration of their contextual contingency.²⁰⁰

Another issue I was paying attention to was that of gender, since my work is informed by decolonial feminisms. As the displayed on Table 1, I interviewed a total of 17 women, 1 non-binary person, and 4 men. Most of the people that were willing to share about their pandemic affects were women, which also makes me reflect on the influence of gender when it comes to talking to men, considering that within the discourse of the Enlightened myth of 'Man,' emotions are regarded as inferior to reason and thus closer to women and nature (due to their so-called 'chaotic' and irrational nature).

On the topic of class and privilege, I was attentive to people's level of education, 7 participants had completed a bachelor's degree (BA), 10 had a master's degree (MA), 4 had finished a doctorate degree (Ph.D.), and 1 person had an Associate's degree (AA). I also noted whether people's degrees came from the humanities, sciences, or the arts. After conducting calculations and correlating with the data that further I obtained from interviews, I found that a total of 15 degrees were completed in the humanities, with 3 of them ending in the corporate

¹⁹⁹ Participants included in this description were a) PPC from Mexico, b) PDC from the US, and c) CPC from Austria.

²⁰⁰ For example, I noticed that the first participants showed anxiety at the fact that they did not see an end to the pandemic, which affected their experience of burnout as a result. As the pandemic developed, responses became more varied in terms of showing a combination of playful, hopeful and cynical views on participant expectations and opinions of what was happening at the time.

sector. Only 4 degrees were from STEM related disciplines (all employed in the corporate sector), 2 degrees were done in the arts and 1 degree was framed just as ‘corporate.’ I was additionally attentive to the relation between gender (and the construction of masculinity, in specific) and the hard sciences, as a result of women’s exclusion from these disciplines in the past.

My inclusion criteria for participant recruitment concerned individuals who fell within the 20-40 age group, according to the standards delimiting the ‘Millennial’ age range informing my study. Most people I interviewed were in their mid-thirties (the largest number being six, aged 34), while two of my participants were 40 years old (at the limit) at the time of interviews, and the youngest was 24. The rest were more or less spaced out in-between the decade between 30-40 years of age. For example, I had one participant who was 29, one that was 28, two that were 31, two that were 32, two that were 33, three that were 35, and one that was 37. Overall participants’ experience of burnout as ‘Millennials’ was described through similar lines of expression, regardless of participant’s ages, as I will show in this chapter, and also in spite of where they stood in the timeline. Such nuances did not appear to affect participant testimonies significantly, except when comparing the very first participants to the very last ones (these last ones happened at a time when the Omicron variant had already subsided and people were less anxious in general). However, I did notice some differences that I am adding to the discussion that follows this section.

Furthermore, the geopolitical positionalities of participants were varied. As I have mentioned before, I had people participate from different continents, yet most of the people I interviewed were either from Mexico (9 participants) or from the US (6 participants). Subsequently, 5 participants were from Europe (4 from Western Europe and 1 from an Eastern European country). Finally, I had 1 participant from Central America and another from Southeast Asia, representing other geographies belonging to the Global South. The variety of nationalities of the people that I interviewed meant that I would have to deal with different kinds of fluency with respect to the handling of the English language. Participant fluency depended on the native language of each participant, and on how many languages they spoke. In the case of participants from Europe, most spoke at least 3 languages (as well as my participant from Southeast Asia), while most Latinxs were at least bilingual (it was a requirement for them to participate), and most people from Anglo countries only spoke English. This observation led me to think about how geography played a significant part in people’s knowledge and proficiency in terms of handling different languages.

Finally, when it came to political inclinations, most participants fell under the category of ‘leftwing,’ (11), while 5 declared leaning toward a ‘center-left’ description. I had 1 participant identify as conservative or ‘right-wing,’ 1 ‘apolitical’ and 2 identified as ‘anti-colonial’ (meaning that they did not support the current political system enough to identify with any of its factions). After reviewing the data for discussion as categorically organized in my data sheets, I realized that most of my participants were women from North America in their mid-thirties who had been studying a degree in the humanities at the time of our interview. However, the input that participants granted for the conduction of this study became more insightful when placed in context. I am therefore using this next section to present a discussion of participant statements according to the themes that I used to categorized the data.

Content Analysis of Verbal Input

Information can be woven into webs of meaning that have different kinds of affective impact depending on the context. Consequently, as a means to prepare for the content analysis and coding cycles of this research, I compiled the data into four main categories, in reflection of the main topics discussed throughout the interviews I had with participants. These categories also helped me structure the interview questions that I asked following a semi-structured format. The four main categories were: a) Art and Drawing, b) Burnout, Alienation, and Exploitation, c) ‘Millennial’ Condition and ‘Adulthood,’ and d) Nature and Care. A categorical organizing of the data, in the manner that I just described, helped me orient this study toward identifying the way in which patterns of meaning woven in dialogue about a drawing reflected the colonial substance of agonism. I was attentive to the use of agonism in the form of affects and discourses employed by participants in their descriptions of their experiences of burnout. However, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that most participants managed to engage with some sort of playfulness or loving perception regarding their self-regard and their drawings throughout our conversation.

Understanding the ‘Millennial’ identity tag as performed between mainstream media representations of the ‘snowflake’ and the ‘modern adult,’ I specifically looked into aspects of data projection that revealed either unconscious interiorization or conscious awareness of the artificial nature of the ideological domain of the 2-OI. The symbolic code, ‘snowflake,’ for example, describes ‘Millennials’ as lost, confused fragile, broke, indebted, commitment-phobic, brand-name-obsessed and irresponsibly wasteful (Illing, 2020; Levin, 2017; MSCI, 2021; Petersen, 2020). While the ‘adulthood’ discourse involved expectations placed onto young worker

‘Millennials’ such as with codes of ‘successful adulthood,’ ‘financial independence,’ ‘economic success,’ ‘marrying,’ ‘partnering,’ ‘having children’ (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020, p. 220).²⁰¹ I will discuss the observations that I made as a result of carefully studying the data according to each of the categories I designed and that I used to organize the information that I am presenting in my findings at the end of this Chapter.

Art and Drawing Experience. The first category that allowed me to begin the dialogue with each participant, following the semi-structured interview template that I had prepared involved participants’ relation to art. I was careful to let people know that they should answer this question in whatever way they deemed best, for I was not evaluating nor expecting anything necessarily. Artmaking has different implications for different people, mostly depending on each person’s experience in having others negatively judge their abilities, which happens often to young adults as they go through formal education. I was appreciative of how participants were open about their vulnerability in artmaking despite their self-judgment and added levels of insecurity. Most participants were brave in attempting to create something that they would have otherwise not expected. Having a prompt helped them. For example, for participant PPC, the experience of drawing was soothing but they did not feel as if they did a ‘good job’ at it. They expressed:

I really like to draw, but I'm not good at it. I mean, I don't, I don't have a... proportions right. I don't have, uh, uh, the, the, the, the, the shadows, right. I don't know. I I'm, I'm not good at doing it, but, uh, but I, but I like it. I really find it, uh, relaxing.

I took note of the description of finding drawing ‘relaxing,’ which is a code that appeared with relative frequency throughout my analysis process of participant transcripts, also in relation to ‘peace’ and ‘calm.’ Especially when combined with the anxiety shown by the repetition of ‘the’ in terms of finding the right description about what exactly makes their work ‘not good,’ for which the codes were ‘unsure’ and ‘hesitant.’ I also coded ‘apologetic’ when it came to their positive regard toward artmaking despite not feeling particularly ‘skillful’ at it. These expressions reflected the affective impact that colonial standards have on people’s notion of aesthetics as dictating the rules of art, which inspire fear and intimidation. Another participant’s testimony

²⁰¹ I complemented these discourses with an additional set also pointing to similar discourses ‘boomerang kids’ (returning to the nest), ‘living with parents,’ and ‘delayed launch,’ as indicators of an agonistic sense of failure.

emphasized this idea of intimidation in the sense that it reflected an awareness of implicit aesthetic ‘rules.’ For example, CB expressed that:

it's also bit like, far away from like, like what I do, like what, you know, it's like, I don't know, *sometimes I feel like there's like a lot of like, rules about like, what is art? What is good [...] well, I don't know, I like some things that I don't know if they're good. And then there's some things that I don't like. So I don't know, that's my religion. I like it, I enjoy it.* It's something that I like to be close to. Without, but like, *feeling that I don't have any expertise about it.*

This account was particularly insightful in the sense that it reflected a negative perception of colonial aesthetics in their imposing of ‘rules’ defining what art is and how it should be made, even if not made consciously or explicitly. These impressions were described as being ‘far away’ from what this participant did on a daily basis (meaning, working on the housing market). They reflected having an inner sense (which I am interpreting as *decolonial aisthesis*) about what they felt close or connected to, which allowed them to draw joyful affects from such kinds of impressions. Feeling a ‘lack of expertise’ made people feel vulnerable to the knowledge of others (especially when referencing an authority of intelligence). Another participant (FS) described a similar experience in drawing without experience of knowledge of aesthetic ‘rules:’

And so I started drawing, and *I've never really done life drawing before.* And I really, really *enjoyed it and was really bad at it.* And we would just make, you know, and *laugh at these terrible faces.*

Implicit rules make people self-judge in a negative manner through interpellation. I was able to note how expressions such as ‘I was really bad at it,’ reflected such interiorization of said ‘rules.’ The main theme that emerged as I went on coding similar passages (that reflected intimidation toward art as a discipline) was that of ‘enjoyment of artmaking while feeling bad at it.’ I later connected this theme to another broader topic of ‘creative labor as replenishment,’ that I am discussing further along in the findings section of this chapter.

Negative effects and descriptions associated with amateur or naïve approaches to artmaking also tended to be accompanied with humor and a sense of playful self-deprecation. For example, in the previous passage, participant FS showed a sense of playfulness in their process of learning how to engage in life drawing, by expressing ‘I really enjoyed it and was really bad at it,’ and laughing at ‘terrible faces.’ Life drawing, even over the Internet, can be very different from the kind of drawing that is done in isolation, because the experience of sharing one’s art with

others involves vulnerability that, in participant FS's case, was metabolically compensated with laughter (with attention to affect).²⁰²

Lockdown in general translated into a general change in rhythms which led people to engage in exercises of introspection, such as with writing and drawing (invoking *autohistoria teória*, autoarte and their self-making as well as healing properties). For example, participant FS engaged in drawing with their mother and sister as a means to stay in touch (connect) and 'hang out' at a distance. They shared that "I started doing like Zoom life drawing with my mom and my sister. And that was a great way for us to *connect*." Pandemic drawing became a means for FS and their family to deal with the different kinds of 'inconvenient' affects caused by the pandemic: centering the codes 'boredom' and 'disconnection from others.' Their account revealed the following:

And so I managed to get my mom who just doesn't really do Zoom, and my sister to kind of participate, it is something to try and kind of bring the *connection* [...] Still, *when we're together, we started trying to do drawing*. So it's kind of a *new practice* that we've started with just within the three of us, my little family. But apart from that, like I yeah, I haven't done much of it. But then when your invite came, I was kind of quite *excited to have an excuse*. And I think that's maybe I just I often need these excuses of like being with my, you know, my mom and my sister or like your invite as to make myself sit down and do something that I actually *enjoy*, because it feels quite *indulgent* otherwise, *but actually, I really enjoy it*.²⁰³

The emotion code of enjoyment was prevalent throughout my coding of participant transcripts in their description of what they felt whilst drawing, which was heartening to notice. FS engaged in artmaking through curation and theorizing, so they were appreciative of having an 'excuse' not to 'feel indulgent' in taking time to engage in drawing for themselves. I paid specific attention to

²⁰² I am inclined to think that negative affects deplete people from emotional energy, while positive affects and experiences increase people's energetic levels accordingly. Thus, a state of psychoaffective homeokinesis can also be reached via social interaction.

²⁰³ With regard to mental health in isolation, participant FS shared that they started drawing virtually with their mother "It was in response to my mom have not been in a great place because of her work. She was she's, she's retired now. But she's a social worker, and just, but also not being near her. So trying to think of something that she was off on sick leave, and just thinking, Okay, I want to keep her occupied [...] My mom wasn't working. And I was working but working from home and so we were trying, I was just trying to kind of it was actually drawing, now I hadn't thought about it until you asked but drawing became something to try to, you know, like combat feeling, feeling, you know, lost or depressed during that moment. So yeah, it was really a really good discovery." Drawing became a means to 'combat' (agonism) feeling lost or depressed, which was something that this participant discovered as a positive strategy.

this remark, which I found interesting for it revealed a sense of hidden shame when it comes to performing tasks for the sake of enjoyment, as opposed to that of productivity. Considering that some of the more common descriptors of ‘Millennials’ frame them as ‘lazy’ and entitled, it is not surprising that some people such as this participant opt to not even engage in activities that could be judged as leisurely in a manner that reinforces such a stereotype.²⁰⁴ FS’s account helped disclose the potential beneficial relation between drawing, ‘hanging out’ (*convivir*, in Spanish) and rapport (building meaningful connections with others). Through the shedding of affective mycelia, people engaged in creative activities can therefore learn more about themselves and each other, especially if there is dialogue involved.

There were other who participants also shared having started to engage in drawing, in specific, as a result of the pandemic. Learning that the pandemic became an excuse for people to start drawing is something that does not surprise me, considering that drawing tends to be an activity that people begin doing when they have the time to be alone with themselves. For example, participant BIM also expressed having taken up drawing (even more so than before) during the pandemic, ever since they moved to Europe from the US recently to work in a corporate institution that conducted research in the plant sciences. In BIM’s words:

I've been drawing more since I've been in France at least [...] You know, 'cause when you draw, you know, there's so much when you're painting or drawing, you know, with, with how hard you're pressing with the type of strokes you're using like little like scribbles or like waves or you know, whatever sort of textures and like strokes you're trying to use. So you can it's it is kind of cool to be aware of that.

In considering playfulness, for example, participant BIM established a comparison between drawing and yoga through the concept of mindfulness, which is considered a popular activity in the world of stressed out ‘Millennials.’ BIM considered both meditation and drawing to be “a way to ask those questions or access that space.” The use of *those* and that creates the sense of a tacit understanding from which to build communicational rapport, as with ‘things that the other can relate to or understand’ without there being much need to specify.

Another participant, (B) also mentioned practicing yoga as a means to cope with the pandemic “I’m also a yoga teacher when I also feel burnout. So that’s another thing that has saved

²⁰⁴ In my experience as a racialized person, it is important that I constantly show people from other countries that I am not ‘lazy,’ because that reinforces the stereotype of Mexicans being anti-work. Therefore, I was able to relate to this participant’s regard toward idleness and artmaking through my own experience of feeling as if I am being constantly being judged on the basis of laziness.

me [...], the practice of yoga meditation, mindfulness in most activities and also, well, gardening as my job [...] but mostly regenerative agriculture.” Participant B’s main coping mechanisms involved meditation and yoga, which were also ‘side gigs’ (to make money from) that they have as a trained yoga instructor. These expressions helped stress the existing connection between artmaking and healing.

Playfulness. Playfulness and laughter were frequently and directly invoked in participant descriptions around artmaking. For example, one of my younger participants (MVR) expressed a more playful regard toward engaging with art:

I like how people can just put legs and tail of a serpent and horns... ‘tatata!’ something that’s alive, that’s *I enjoy that*. When I draw [...] I usually just put things in, that’s all. And *that’s not academic and is nothing*. But every part of my drawing is something [...] a *symbol of something else*. I started drawing with all the *intention* of [...] having all the *control* of the process: I know *this information of me, of myself and I’m gonna convert it into a drawing*.

The onomatopoeia in repetition ‘tatata’ in tone made their expression feel sporadic in attempting to make something appear as if by magic, in terms of their capacity to ‘bring to life’ imaginary elements (the *tailed serpent*, in this case) which is consistent with their description of ‘just putting things in.’ In contrast, their expression of ‘that’s not *academic* and is *nothing*,’ again demonstrated an awareness of the agonism involved in colonial aesthetics, which I marked under the code ‘apologetic.’ Participant MVR had some difficulty in expressing some ideas, but they were not the only one, for some of my participants felt better expressing themselves in English than others (depending on their context of origin and their level of privilege). In light of this, I made sure to assist people in whatever way I could to make them feel at ease when it came to sharing their perspectives according to the manner that they deemed suitable. Although most participants were not directly involved with artmaking as a formal or regular (personal) practice, other participants expressed having engaged art in their own time out of their own volition, especially at a younger age. For example, participant DDML expressed:

I used to draw a lot as a kid. Actually, in my early *teens*. So during high school, I was drawing comics for about a year, year and a half. Uh, it doesn’t exist anymore, but *I really enjoyed that*. Um, it was quite fun and *just making silly puns all the time* [...] I did that during high school and *as I’ve transitioned, the university just had less and less time*. Um, *and energy*.

The code ‘enjoyment’ appeared once again in relation to art, which suggested that artmaking can become a pleasing experience regardless of people’s present abilities or previous connections to the practice. In this case, participant DDML expressed having abandoned artmaking (a digital comic project in specific) as a result of having gotten more involved with their studies. This revealed another theme: ‘abandonment of art due to lack of time/energy,’ which mostly had to do with school or work, which are the two main occupations of young people in the 2-OI these days.²⁰⁵ For instance, participant PD expressed something that was akin to participant DDML’s account in expressing having had to abandon artmaking as a result of ‘adult’-based, time and energy consuming responsibilities. In past times, artmaking had been something that they felt good at and that others appreciated. They account established that:

I am *very sad* to say that I [that] throughout my childhood, *I used to draw every day, all the time*. I would be the person in classroom who all of my classmate would say, ‘Hey, can you draw me this map?’ Or ‘Hey, can you draw me this cartoon?’ [...] But [...] after, like when I was in *college* or maybe when I started *working*, *I stop drawing and I feel very sad* because yeah, it's kind of like something that I really like, *but I haven't given the time to it because of these other things that I want to do*. For example, I was working since 2013, So I've been working for like nine to nine years. And then before that I was in college and I think *in college I didn't draw because I was studying in the US and it was my second language* and I really had that kind of like *pressure* yeah. *Pressure* to have a *good grades* because I was a full scholarship. Um, so I mean, *I didn't have the time to draw because I had to study*.

Going from drawing every single day as a child to not being able to engage in such a practice at all when growing up is a significant change, especially when the reason is not out of one’s volition but rather as a means to survive in a system based on forced-wage-labor, in response to the demands of the 2-OI. The key affects that I coded from this passage were ‘sadness,’ ‘pressure,’ ‘lack of time due to work/study,’ ‘ESL,’ which were the main factors that impeded participant PD from engaging in drawing due to a lack of time, in a context where time and energy have to be directed toward productivity and developing one’s professional career. Not every participant had the same relation to art-making than those who considered themselves to be creators of some sort. Most other participants also shared that their involvement with art was mainly as consumers and appreciators (passive spectators). Participant BCPTRD expressed that:

²⁰⁵ It’s a common thing to be asked ‘do you work or study?’ as if those were the only two options people had in life, which nowadays often happen simultaneously because of (structural) economic precarity.

there's two very distinct ways in which I relate to art. One is as a *consumer* of art. Um, which I enjoy it, many different types of art, maybe the one that I'm most related to is *music*. I love music and I listen to a ton of music, all different, genres, um, and that's something *I really enjoy and that I've been doing for long as I have memory*. Um, I also enjoyed it more visual arts

The codes that I retrieved were that of 'consumer' and 'entertainment,' involving a sense of distance and passivity with regard to the creation of art, yet maintaining an appreciation of it. Another participant (CB) shared a similar regard toward their relation to art. They expressed the following:

I really like art. I really like visiting museums, but also just going to galleries or seeing things seeing like, art markets [...] I really like it. I like when I find something that I can connect with. I like it when I see something and I can 'linger' and find different layers and different things.

Participant CB's awareness of their own taste reassured their own judgment capacities as empowering. The expression reflected the presence of decolonial aisthesis, meaning that, as long as there was something that they could 'connect' or interact with in a piece of art, they were able to enjoy it, in terms of being willing to time to 'linger' and appreciate its alluring complexity. In general, participant input became even more insightful when referring to each person's capacities and experiences of artmaking (which involved vulnerability) as evinced in their drawing exercise, which highly contrasted their regard toward the art made by other people. Another dimension to the drawing experience that participants shared was that of mental health, specifically through their descriptions regarding undergoing burnout.

Burnout, Exploitation, and Mental Health. When I asked participants about their experience concerning pandemic burnout, most expressed having experienced a rise in the affective toll of their everyday activities in terms of pressure. Some participants explicitly expressed feeling a weight and feeling slower than usual in relation to their current state of precarity. For example, participant BIM responded that "that topic definitely resonates like precarity is, um, is, [...], real and, you know, like kind of a *weight*." However, each person's situation differed mostly due to the effects of their geopolitical situation, which were contingent on the different attitudes and measures that different countries took in response to the pandemic at different times (and not necessarily in the most favorable of ways with what concerned workers). The drawings participants created also helped them hold on to visual referents for rendering a

pictorial depiction of what they were going through while conversing. I was happily surprised at the way images and referents of different kinds were used to describe abstract ideas and affects, which are not necessarily easy to grasp using conventional or normative terms. Descriptive accuracy also relied significantly on imagination. For example, participant GRS shared the following:

When I was drawing the, the *roots, outside*. I was feeling kind of *frustrated*, also, and *desolate*. And, and I was feeling the sensation of going *como, como* [as if]²⁰⁶ hauling down in something *deep and dark*. And I relate it with the topic that I work with, which is torture. And survivors from torture *como* [like], sometimes when I do the ‘dictámenes oficiales’ [official reports]. It's hard to me to come on to *end* it. Because *there's a point in the infinite violence in the infinite and suffering of the people who narratives that makes me fall [me hace caer] in something very infinite and very deep*. Then, *I need to be able to come back out again*.

Centering the topic of pandemic burnout as producing a ‘roller-coaster’ of emotions and thoughts in people allowed me to depict expressions such as the one offered by GRS in their describing of what they felt when dealing with burnout. Namely, the violence that this participant had to face on a regular basis (in having to type reports of torture victims) became heightened during the pandemic. Their verbal and visual description was alluring in the sense that they were able to represent the sensation of falling through the roots that they drew as being shed by their plant avatar, and that broke through their container in order to spread all over the drawing area. The roots coming out of the pot symbolized the ‘frustration’ and ‘desolation’ that this participant experienced as a result of the planetary crisis they were living. I coded such affects and noted that they also were present in other accounts with respect to the sensation of confinement in specific. For example, the sensation of burnout, as lived by participant GRS meant a lack of oxygen, was also descriptive of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, in terms of causing shortness of breath in people, which alarmed a lot of individuals. They expressed the following:

So I felt that I lost a certain capacity for breathing or oxygenating or I dunno. I think it was *when I was falling down this vortex*. *I need to take rest, breathe*, and then, come on, keep on the journey.

²⁰⁶ I am using square brackets to translate to English words and expressions uttered by participants that they did not know how to translate, so they expressed in Spanish (for those of whom Spanish was their first language). I invited bilingual participants to do so, so that they would feel more comfortable engaging with a conversational flow, rather than judging every moment according to their speaking abilities (which reflects agonism, in my view).

The vortex image was particularly insightful, especially in relation to their need to ‘take rest’ and ‘breathe,’ which were markers that emphasized the importance of replenishment in the manner that this study understands, namely as part of the metabolic health of bodies. Different people expressed being affected in different ways, but I was always attentive to potential disorders that participants shared about having, which also affected their experience and their subsequent description of it. For instance, some participants mentioned having being diagnosed with mental health disorders, for which they took prescriptive drugs. For example, participant PPC shared the following:

And so I, um, uh, *I suffer from depression and anxiety*. Uh that's uh, uh, clinically diagnosed and *I take medication for it*, but obviously these times have been *way more trying than*, than *what I had before*, you know, so, so I, I found it interesting because *I tried to focus on the whole period* and not just the moment that I was drawing the picture.

Participant PPC’s thought patterns were interesting in the sense that they expressed feeling more pressure than usual as a result of the pandemic (as being challenged). That is why they decided to represent their whole experience rather than a single moment, but emphasizing that their experience is mediated by prescriptive medication, which alters people’s perceptions of events depending on the chemicals involved. Insomnia, for example was something that participants shared having, and which is also a mental health disorder that can be developed in times of stress (I suffer from chronic insomnia, which makes working hard on a schedule, so I was able to relate to participants in this specific regard). For example, participant CPC shared feeling an increase in pressure when it came to sleep as a result of the pandemic. They expressed that:

I’ve never slept well, but this year sleep has been like [pth!] out of the window. So I am *really done with everything*. So I was really curious when you were looking for people who are exhausted. I’m like ‘Hey! I’m an exhausted pigeon, talk to me!’ [Laughs] like “Woop, woop! Me here!” Uhm. So I think that really resonated with me.

Even though participant CPC self-described as lacking energy, their description was itself positively energetic. The onomatopoeia ‘woop, woop!’ denoted a surge in energy, as if cheering or celebrating (inviting) something in a playful manner. The expression [pth!] also added a humorous accent to the description, when sharing that their sleeping patterns had worsened as a result of the pandemic. Participant CPC’s transcript was rich in information in the sense that they shared a playful regard toward their unfavorable condition from the point of view of silliness, yet they also revealed having a profound understanding of the process of exploitation from the perspective of class, which is central to this study. Their account expressed that:

I guess *I think the reason why a lot of us are really exhausted and really just worn out is because we have to sell our labor in order to live.* So I work 5 days a week so that I have 2 days of things I enjoy in a week. And, *most of us don't get to figure out how to do it differently.* So there are people who are really lucky and maybe they have a fantastic idea or whatever, where they somehow end up doing the things they enjoy doing, even though if they don't enjoy them 100% all the time, which is totally normal, nothing's always super-duper positive, that's fine, but uhm, most of my friends, people my age who don't have money in their families. Like *the ones of us who have to work for what we have*, it's just *there's a lot of fucking energy that goes into making your life stable and safe* so that you, *if your boiler breaks* it doesn't break your whole financial planning for the next ten fucking years, you know. *I mean, some people, you know, are not lucky at all and they have these setbacks and you just never get out of this [...]*

Class consciousness implies understanding the amount of labor (and energetic expenditure) required to perform a given task, depending on the level of structural privilege that one has. In that sense, class consciousness helps nurture an important sense of empathy toward people with regard to the levels of exploitation that they go through, and according to their class position. Members of the working class are forced to sell their labor power to survive, and, in the present situation, those experiencing the direst of circumstances under this economy live paycheck to paycheck. That means that they cannot afford to take time to consider their situations for they are too busy working to put food on their plates. In addition, participant CPC's description of the boiler breaking reflected an understanding of the fact that some people have to go through enormous amounts of effort paying to fix things that they need to live well. The idea that a boiler breaking can also break one's entire financial planning is meant to illustrate the precarity of the situation that most people live under. A class analysis allows for there to be an assessment of privilege that is not meant to activate agonism, but rather solidarity in realizing that in order for some people to be free, all have to dismantle the systems of oppression affecting everybody.

'Millennial' Condition and 'Adulthood.' Participant testimonies provided descriptions that contained specific queues about each person's coping mechanisms when it came to facing labor-based exploitation (and psychological abuse) at both a personal as well as a political level. Their transcripts revealed a latent tension between having to perform 'adult' (as a modern figure tied to concerns stability in terms of productivity) in the face of increasing structural precarity (as a result of downward mobility), while being subjected to identity-based forms of inferiorization.

Such a tension can help shed light on the reasons why burnout is so prevalent in the present. Even though burnout may be perceived as an added dimension to the coronavirus pandemic, it actually preceded it. As I discussed on Chapter 1 in the section that corresponds to class-based exploitation and the gig economy, I presented a contextual analysis of the current working conditions upon which ‘Millennials’ are forced to sell their labor power to capitalists within a hyper precarized economic setting. Meaning that, wages have remained more or less the same while worker productivity (the amount of effort as labor that is demanded of workers) has doubled since the advent of neoliberalism in the 70s (Mishel et al., 2015). The most direct response to the adulting discourse was emitted by participant PPC, who expressed having to juggle between being a mother and performing salesperson at a transnational corporation based in Mexico. While talking about the individualization of the ‘blame’ (cause) for burnout, PPC stated that:

I think that's part of, uh, the, the *positivity toxic culture*. “You can do everything if you set your mind to it.” No, it's not true, because *I have set my mind of being a fucking millionaire and I'm not*, and I've set my mind to be an Instagram tick-tock influencer, but I'm not. I love because I don't have the *talent*. I don't have the *skills*. I don't have the editing *expertise*. I don't have, I don't, I don't, well, I, I don't actually want to be that, but I mean, if I was, if I was striving to, to do, um, another thing, there's this, uh, idea that you, you have to do it if you can't, if you, *if you just set your mind to it, that's, that's bullshit*.

From this passage, I was able to code the terms ‘positivity toxic culture,’ ‘talent,’ ‘skill,’ and ‘expertise.’ Their account is revealing in several ways. My interpretation of this passage led me to focus on the supposed sense of ‘agency’ (what Lugones refers to as active subjectivity) that people believe they have with regard to setting their minds toward ‘choosing to succeed’ which is a reflection of the discourse of meritocracy, which is tied to the idea that if only one is responsible enough with their efforts, they can consequently attain economic success. The myth of meritocracy suggests that it is by working hard and discipline that one can become a millionaire (a current marker of ‘success’), without any attention to the underlying and surrounding conditions upon which ‘success’ actually depends. As authors Dijk, Kooij, and Karankina-Murray explain, “the conventional view of workplaces as meritocracies suggests that work is a conduit for social equality” (Dijk et al., 2020, p. 240), when in reality workplaces and their conditions in terms of rates of exploitation contribute to the increase of social inequality. These authors find that initial differences in opportunities and rewards that people have determine their performance and subsequent opportunities and rewards, in a sense that “those who receive

more initial opportunities and rewards tend to receive even more over time” (Dijk et al., 2020, p. 240). The first thing that I coded from Participant PPC’s testimony, as shown above, was their emphasis on “positivity toxic culture,” which is consistent with my discussion of how the ideological domain of the capitalist system uses rhetoric to mask exploitation (Chapter 1 under crisis of care). For example, an existing study contends that:

Toxic positivity is indicated by encouraging words spoken in difficult situations that force someone to feel good about themselves. It becomes a current issue around the Generation Z because of the realization that toxic positivity could have a negative impact on mental health and individual social relationships (Pangestu et al., 2022)

Generation Z is another way to refer to the ‘Zoomer’ generation, which follows after Generation Y, or ‘Millennials.’ This fact is interesting because it reveals that even younger workers (from ‘Gen Z’) are also aware of how burnout and mental health are related with regard to the toxicity of liberal thinking in its enforcing of positivity even when there are other useful emotions that need to be mobilized for enacting care (as the replenishment of energy). Whenever younger individuals labelled as either ‘Gen Y’ or ‘Gen Z’ complain to their superiors (who need their labor) about being overworked, they are usually told that they should look at the ‘brighter side,’ or silver lining, for these efforts are made for their own ‘good’ in terms of career development and that they should demonstrate that they deserve what they have out of ‘love’ and gratitude for their employment situation. Consequently, participant PPC’s reaction to the toxic positivity discourse was done with an emphatic attention to context. For example, they used their self-portrait as a plant prompt to further state that:

I’m sorry. That is because there's a lot of things like, like why doesn't my plant grow, because she hasn't said her mind or his mind, or their mind [laughs] to growing and warming while? Well, no, because it's a plant and *it depends on a lot of things*. And we have the, the, the, the, we have the consciousness to do some things and we have a willpower, but, but not *all willpower* [...] Like we have to set some like, like *realistic goal*. Like I am going to have dinner today. This is my goal for today. And I am going to try and sleep early. I mean, that, those are my goals right now. Like I am seeing things at a very, very short-term level because we have, I mean, *I know we have a future and I would like to see that future, but maybe not*. I mean, it's just, it just, I, I have, I have adopted a very day by day basis, like in my mental health and, and I think that that's okay.

The contextual reality of interconnectedness (and complexity) defies the discourse of the rationality as creating the myth that if one is able to have absolute control over one's surroundings one can therefore prosper (in the sense of agonistic domination). Participant PPC's subsequent coping mechanism against toxic positivity, a mindset that is meant to encourage workers to constantly give their best and be grateful regardless of what happens to them, was to approach one thing at a time. In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed (which usually comes as an effect of burnout), PPC shared that they decided to actively take things slowly as a means to gain a little control over their life on a daily basis. In addition, it was interesting to hear and read about their idea (and expectations) of the future as being something to suppress for the sake of survival in the present. PPC's statement made me think that the idea of the future in general can bring anxiety to people suffering from labor-based burnout as 'Millennials,' especially in facing the prospect of ecological collapse. I imagine it must be even harder to have to think of the future when one is raising children, for they are the ones who will have to deal with an even more exacerbated scenario of projected disaster, if humans do not change the production paradigm before it becomes too late. Social reproduction becomes even more arduous in terms of its psychological toll. For example, another participant ('B') who was also particularly impacted by social reproductive labor during the pandemic expressed the following:

last year when pandemic started it was kind of hard now because my son was here and every day all the time so it was kind of hard to be by myself. No, the only time I got to be by myself was shopping. So *that was not satisfying at all*. Not at all. [because] *suddenly everything is stopped and I'm not allowed out because I have a son and I can't take leave him at home. No. So because I'm a single mom. And so it was very, so I feel I felt very trapped in that sense. In reality I did not want to experience and it took me a long time to accept it. So in this sense, I draw I yeah, I drew this bonsai tree as myself and because—hardened [...] because I was well, yeah, thriving in a new environment, which was the virtual environment, but not feeling actually satisfied with my life? With my with my new conditions? No. So I felt like that, in this sense no like, Yeah, well, somebody was taking care of me I was not starving. And in any sense no. But I was felt trapped. Mostly no. So that's why I drew myself in a very small pot,*

The repetition of lacking satisfaction was duly noted, in the sense that replenishment became a challenge when they had to direct most of their attention to raising their son as a single mom (without help) in the absence of schooling or other kinds of distractions, which were suspended during lockdown. But participant expressions were also nuanced in the sense that they focused on

the negative aspects of the pandemic, but also mentioned more positive realizations that came with creating the drawing. For example, participant B complemented their account by stating that:

I also felt love in many situations now at home with my son with my pets. So I drew myself in a flowering state, because it's like, the last flowering when plants are usually very stressed. They tend to flower once more to keep their species alive.

Participant's B's self-portrait as a bonsai plant was excruciating in the sense that it graphically represented the constraints they felt at being literally trapped within walls with their children. The drawing was made to project a sense of entrapment, as it was barely able to contain the tree's entire body, leaving little room for flexibility (see Appendix B, drawing G.). Participant B seemed to be aware of the discourses that help mask mothers' exploitation through constructed notions of love (or 'hope' labor). However, they did not seem to be able to do much about their circumstance in terms of changing it from an individual standpoint.

There are many ways in which labor-related discourses are circulated to help mask the underlying conditions leading to energetic depletion. Generally, the way in which the 'Millennial' discourse is mobilized is to ridicule people's complaints about their state of exploitation. A respond to this kind of treatment is usually done through a combination of humor, cynicism, and denial.²⁰⁷ For example, at one particular moment during interview with participant CPC, they shared a cultural fact that helped them explain their affect with regard to the current state of the world and their own state in burnout:

You wanna know a good word for it in German? It's called *Weltschmerz*. It's called the pain of the world. And it's something... so you say "through the *Weltschmerz* I feel the pain of the world" You literally, you have the pain of the world on your shoulders, you're, like, *overwhelmed by all the shit that's going on*. And it's a bit of a [...] it's a term you maybe use to make fun of someone who's a bit down. It's not really serious most of the time or not used like that anymore. Myself and my *Weltschmerz*.

Participant CPC's description made us both laugh when they shared it first. I was not aware that there existed a descriptor for 'feeling the pain of the world on one's shoulders' which I coded and thought was a fantastic way to express the affects that 'Millennials' feel when it comes to being subjected to abuse and then when their complaints are ignored and dismissed as dramatic. The codes that were highlighted in this passage included 'pain' and 'overwhelmed.'

²⁰⁷ An example of this is the popular retort: 'Ok boomer' that 'Millennials' use to defend themselves against judgmental expressions from older people whenever they tell them they are being too soft, and dramatic to complain about a situation that is not as bad as it is being framed.

Alien Identities. When it came to coding transcripts from international students living in the US, I was able to relate to their experiences, since I myself count as one (as a graduate student). For example, participant SGMP's testimony helped disclose the particularities affecting students like them with regard to navigating the pandemic between continents. SGMP shared the problems they had in the US but also back home in Malaysia, as a result of their multiplicitous identity:

during the interviews, they will ask me, oh, what is this? This part of the essay, so I will have to explain, but why do I have to explain... It's almost like *having to explain myself so many times. And it's also very hard.* Also, having to work with people *not from your background is kind of harder to express how you're imagining*, because they don't have those imagination. It's almost like, I'm trying to explain something, but it doesn't go through ... they kind of understand what I'm saying. But then, [...] I'm not in Malaysia, so I cannot, I cannot expect that. And then when I come back here, it's like, I'm trying to share my imagination that I have from there from the US, right. But also... but I guess, yeah. Okay. It's, but I do feel more home here. Because I think my imagination is most suited for the people here because I think when it gets materialized, it's more what I wanted, more so than in the States. And also, secondly, I think *identity plays a huge part in all this. Like, I'm Malaysian but I'm also Chinese. And I'm also Fuzhou (Foochow) and I'm also Saraki. So when I go there, I get I become Asian.* And I think that also comes with that *burnout* of like, how do I explain all these identities? In my art? Yes.

Participant SGMP's account was revealing in the sense that it tied the burden of identity directly to burnout. In their case, and as they explain, being reduced to the homogenizing identity of 'Asian' flattens their multiplicitous heritage in the US, when back home they can fully flesh out their different identity-related dimensions related to their Chinese, Saraki, and Fuzhou background, which is legible in Malaysia but becomes occluded in the American continent. I was led to think about how the "Millennial" identity bears a similar weight on people precisely as an identity, namely as a format through which other people are made to perceive one, regardless of how one feels on the inside (with regard to one's invisible complexities). I had my trans friends in mind when thinking about this particular realization, with regard to the artificial senses of identity imposed by gender.

Disenchanting Precarity. Apart from issues related to identity, there were other participant accounts that related burnout to their economic standing. For instance, participant BIM's stance on 'Millennial' is that of unexpected precariousness. They shared that:

I didn't think things would be this *precarious* you know, like, I guess it has had the impression that, you know, you get, like, get a lot of education and then like, you pretty much like [...] have a steady job and, and, you know, you have to work hard of course, but there's like a level of like *certainty*, over like, you know, *guaranteed* that you'll be able to find work that pays decently and that you can feel good about doing. You know, that's, that's what I thought was the point of higher education in a way, you know, like, get to a point where you, like, *make a good contribution to the world* and, and also have a level of comfort, you know, like, financial comfort. But yeah, I don't know, if I was just *naive* about that, or if things have changed, or what, I think a little bit of both, probably. You know, there's just a lot of people with PhDs, like, now. And, and there's less fewer jobs, and, you know, the jobs that seem to, so there's more competition for those jobs. And the people that are most competitive are the ones that can make most money for the institution. Rather than, you know, perhaps more or like, humanist sort of ideas about making contributions for the general welfare and like, you know, small farmers and helping, helping the world etc.

Participant BIM's testimony helped me frame the 'Millennial' experience according to previous suppositions that I had from my own experience and from delving in literature regarding the topic of generational precarity. BIM reflected having been prepared for a scenario that was no longer functioning in the way they were trained to navigate it. It was as if the systems guaranteeing support suddenly were not there anymore. The 'Millennial' condition is thus best expressed as the experience of reality through the disappointment of not reaching the goals one had originally expected to obtain in terms of securing a livelihood by achieving certain markers, such as a degree in education and having a family.

Although the 'Millennial' experience varied from participant to participant, there were notable patterns that I recorded in the sense that people felt a general sense of confusion with regard to the present conditions they are forced to navigate, mostly against their will. For instance, participant BCPTRD expressed the following when asked about his feelings toward being a 'Millennial':

how do I feel like a 'Millennial?' I feel *trapped* between two different scenarios. Like the young one, and we, all the ones that are like in charge of things, but, and there, but not

quite, but, um, but we're still like struggling to find our startup. Yeah, positionality. I want to say like, in those kinds of every now and then, like when we're obviously not young, because there's a *huge divide* between us and them, like the generation that is coming up. Um, but aside from that, I see other 'Millennials' like myself and I, I feel that we're none [...], we have a ton of different, like heterogeneity within ourselves. There's a lot of I mean. Like I don't see myself like. I dunno, like anything of that,

BCPTRD's account was revealing in the sense that they did not feel young anymore, rather, they felt caught between two scenarios, which pointed to the theme 'double bind' that I will discuss in the next section. Their tone made me think about the disappointment that comes with expecting to succeed by doing one's very best, but instead encountering change for the worse in terms of lack of employment opportunities and rewards for productive efforts. In that same line of thought, participant BCPTRD shared:

I know what my kind of 'Millennial' is are, um, And then, and we're a very particular kind. And I also know that my me and my friends, you, us, we're very different than many other people in many ways. [...] there's also this [...] lack of common-geneity that I find in other generations, like when I think of boomers and yeah, I know. And I've experienced a ton of different boomers, right? There's, there's a lot of them in. They might *share certain qualities*, but in general, they, I dunno, it's easier for me to project the image of a boomer. If I have to think about it or whatever of whatever it was called, the generation X generation, like the people who are just above us or even the people who are younger. But when I think of a 'Millennial', maybe because I'm just a 'Millennial', I know there's many 'Millennial's, so it's difficult for me to, uh, to think of a particular type.

It's hard to actually pin down what is meant behind the 'Millennial' label, since most is imposed from above (power). And there is a certain heterogeneity that marks the 'Millennial' generation. For this participant, it was easier to imagine the stereotype of a boomer than it was to think of someone of his own generation, since the examples fluctuate across many lines.

Nature and Care. It was encouraging to learn that some participants were conscious of the inherent connection that nature and care have with regard to the conception of life as art. I am particularly inclined to use such a comparison in inviting people to make art as a form of curating their own lives, where the materials at hand are also relational and processual and involve the Earth, or Gaia. Participant PD, for example, demonstrated having developed a heartfelt awareness

around the connection between art and nature as a form of expression of replenishment and gratefulness for being alive. They shared that:

Well, for me, *art is everything*: it is expression [...] of *who you are*, eh, art, it's *part of our nature*. I think, um, it's just as birds sing, we draw and our ancestors did it like since thousands of years, as you can see in the caves in everywhere. So for me, art is life.

Conceiving art as a part of nature is an idea with significant *decolonial* and *differential aesthetic* potential that defies colonial aesthetics as an idea that reduces art to the manifestation of *anthropo-eurocentric* greatness as ego, which directs an agonistic and individualistic approach to creation. Decolonial aisthesis thus becomes a means to reveal the underlying first order mediation connecting humans to nature via art (as a form of performing care, in celebrating life) through the many manifestations of symbiopoiesis. As participant PD reflects upon a belief that they have, it becomes possible to understand the relation between selfhood as 'artistic' creation that is not set apart from the metabolic processes sustaining life. In a similar vein, another participant (B) established an interesting relation between their own labor as a 'gardener' (permaculturist) and artmaking in nature. They expressed that:

I think one of the *deepest expressions of art can be also gardening*. So how do you how do you express yourself through gardening through *taking care of other beings*, but mostly also in the *design of your land or your project*? Right? So there, there's lots of opportunities of creativity and art in the sense. So which *colors* you choose where to put each flower? What kinds of *insects or birds you want to attract* with some herbs or plants or flowers even not. So or even the smells. I think, that's one of the most satisfying things for me is in gardening are the smells, and *the textures and the well breathing the air that these plants are making*? So *I love it*. No, this is one of the most creative relationships of human beings on earth.

This depiction was as rich in details as it was full of love. I was particularly struck at their profound understanding of the interconnection that exists between caring and creating in relation to nature. I was reminded of the purpose of having humans becoming more consciously and sensibly embedded within the webs of life that carry on their own cycles of production following a metabolic logic of creation that allows for life to reproduce on the planet. There is a way in which people can work alongside nature for survival without eating away at the foundations that allow for us to remain alive. However, a shift of paradigm from agon to love entails understanding that there is a second order imposition that actively thwarts nature's metabolism, creating rifts of all kinds, such as burnout. As a result of the 2-OI, the current demand for

replenishment, for example, and in terms of care, according to participant GRS is that: “I think all human beings need this. Like stops.” As participant drawings show, they are exhausted and in need of recovery, which takes time and loving experiences of creation and bonding. In that sense, participant CPC shared that:

I guess you can also see it in the picture I drew [laughs]. It’s not necessarily brimming with energy, it’s more like, you know, ‘just leave me alone for a bit. Just let me recharge’ you know. *Just let me be in my little cocoon, plug my USB in and just recharge these batteries that are really low right now.*

By using the metaphor of a phone or an electric gadget with a USB port in need of ‘recharging,’ participant CPC painted a picture of their own ways of signaling a need to replenish and recover. Their self-portrait depicted themselves as little cocoon with poisonous threads that was in repose (sort of hibernating calmly) or waiting for its body to rebuild itself from within (see Appendix B, drawing M.). The metaphor of plugging and unplugging was used in different ways by different participants. For instance, during the same interview, at one time participant CPC expressed needing to plug their USB in terms of gaining back energy account. Whereas at another instance, they expressed the need to ‘unplug’ from the stream of connectivity that is the Internet. They shared that:

Uhm, so I, I’m not, I don’t know. I’m like “I need to *unplug*.” I’m like “oh what, yeah maybe I need to unplug” but also I feel like I have an *obligation to keep reading and keep getting information* and keep *sharing* the information and *not dropping the ball*. Like. You know? *There are people out there who cannot unplug from it*, it’s their fucking reality so... [sighs].

This passage made me realize that feeling guilty about resting is also part of the ‘Millennial’ condition. Resting involves the threat of being perceived as lazy, and therefore reinforces the stereotype that ‘Millennials’ are incompetent in their labor and rest habits. The phrase ‘not dropping the ball’ was particularly arresting, since it established the way participant CPC understood their privilege in terms of being able to choose to ‘unplug,’ from work. ‘Unplugging’ is a modern-day metaphor that compares human bodies to electronic appliances. The discourse of the *body as machine* becomes invoked through these kinds of expressions.

Unplugging in this context implies being able to rest, or to not engage in productive work, specifically, which feeds electricity to the larger ‘machine’ system of capitalism. ‘Rest’ for participant CPC, depicted as ‘unplugging,’ became a form of betrayal against less fortunate people in the world. The obligation participant CPC felt was of spreading information about the

conditions under which people are forced to work, which are far from ideal and need to be changed. Furthermore, I was appreciative of another participant's (PPC) reaction against the discourse of body as machine when they expressed that "Uh, we'll be towards a goal and we cannot be setting goals all the time because *we're not machines*, we're not production machines." They tied this discussion to their inability to 'choose' or 'self-program' to be as productive as their jobs and superiors expected them to be. After all, productive activity necessitates a material base upon which to operate in terms of cycles of energetic sustenance.

Furthermore, as I established earlier in Chapter 1, in my discussion of Vandana Shiva's and Carolyn Merchant's critique of the death of nature, framing nature as a machine is part of the discourse that projects an understanding of the environment and women as subservient to the figure of the Enlightenment myth of 'Man.' Namely, under this perspective, nature is framed as a debased and lifeless background to human activity. I was pleasantly surprised to hear Vandana Shiva's work mentioned directly by participant B, who expressed the following:

I was also remembering why I brought Vandana Shiva to the conversation now and reading her, and I think that's the connection with how I have been feeling less and less burned out. It's because of the explanation she makes in her book, "Who really feeds the world." So [...] Shiva explains how we have got to this point, nowadays, and explaining this and eco feminist sense perspective. And she says, it's because of the... Well, it's always happened like this nonsense *private property* and more recently, and special specially because *women were not allowed to make science and science became positivity positivist reductionist way of explaining the world in a patriarchy* so reading this, and knowing the reality in which women are feeling the world and our current concentrating species and cultures, traditions and passing them on. I think *this sense of understanding gave me much more confidence in the world know of knowing that it is in us women that we are going to save the world from stupid men that have brought the world to destruction*. And in this sense, women, we know about life, *we know about nurturing, about how to work with nature know how to heal communities, people, our children*.

I was particularly struck by the clarity of understanding that participant B's interpretation of Shiva's account reflected. Although I would add a class perspective (attentive to historical power configurations and emphasizing the way men also suffer under gender) to their analysis to help not generalize in terms of framing all of men as inherently blameworthy for the current crisis. However, participant B's mention of the exclusion of women due to heteropatriarchal positivism in science is on point, for it allows to place the focus on interlocking systems of domination

(heteropatriarchy being one of them). Hearing that this participant derived a sense of confidence from this knowledge was enlightening in the sense that it proves that it is possible to reduce burnout by developing an understanding of how systemic oppression operates from a structural perspective.

Yeah, and keeping the seeds now alive. And that thing of the thing that keeps me more confident now know how *women are in charge*. In that sense, and it's all of course very well unjustified know all *the violence that we, we get as women, and well, all the lack of respect*. Now, because *this has led to the destruction of the world*. You know *I think burnout, is that symptom now of how society wants so much of women and especially of mothers, no? And especially of single moms, when it should have always been a community thing, to raise children, to move on in the direction of the community's goals, which is permanent survival of the family of the of the community*.

As a fellow Mexican woman who is concerned about femicides in our country, I also hurt in knowing that there is an undeniable connection between the debasement of women and nature and the destruction of our livable landscapes. Wanting more and more from mothers performing care in sustaining communities without giving anything back is what has ultimately led us to the current metastasis of entwined crises that are heating up the planet as we speak. Developing a sense of profound respect in terms of replenishment would seem crucial from my interpretation of this participant's insightful reflection, which became even richer through an analysis of their artwork, which I will delve on in the following section.

Content Analysis of Visual Input

The drawings that I received from participants were mainly used as sources to guide the conversations that I was able to engage in during the 22 drawing out sessions that I conducted for this study. I have placed edited samples of each in Appendix B for reference. The challenge of having people imagine that they suddenly morphed into a plant led to the creation of twenty-two self-portraits that showed a richness in variety of content as well as in patterning of specific signifiers (both visual as well as verbal). Participants self-represented as different kinds of plants, as one can observe in Appendix B. Example included a clover (participant GRS; image V.), a bonsai, a weeping willow (participant PWT; image U.), an orchid (participant O; image B.), a cocoon (participant CPC; image M.), a sunflower (participant S; image F.), house plants (participants PF3, PDC, SGMP, and GRS; images I., L., O., and V.), cement plant (participant PTP; image Q.), wild plants (participant DDML; image H.), trees (participants BCPTRD, DD3,

and BIM; images D., E., and H.), sci-fi creations including a vaginal mushroom, and a vortex-city plant, and an eagle palm tree (participants MVR, PPPB, and VPCCP; images C., S., and T.), celery (participant PDC; image L.), an anthropogenic leaf dress (participant PD; image J.), colored abstract roots (participant CB, image K.), fungi (participant RM, image P.) and fruiting bushes (participant FS; image A.). The media that participants used to make their drawings ranged from colored pencils, interventions of books, markers on napkins, pen or pencil on paper, and digital drawings. Only five drawings were made entirely in black and white, while the rest involved some sort of color intervention, even as a monochrome but using a different color from black (an example is image O., which was drawn with a green marker on napkin paper). The materials used reflected important aspects regarding the physical and mental spaces where participants created their drawings. Most were done during lockdown, and some were completely imagined in contrast to others that were based on real plants that participants had around in their living spaces.

With regard to the content, some participants had already established a symbolic repertoire from which they drew to shape their descriptions of their creative process. For example, participant MVR shared that they had studied anthropology and languages and therefore they frequently and deliberately made use of symbols to express their inner world. They expressed: “I’m in right now studying linguistics [so] every part of my drawings is something, it’s a symbol of something else.” Participant expression varied from person to person, but there were aspects that were more or less shared by people in attempting to represent certain abstract notions or ineffable affects. For example, participant GRS drew themselves as a green and silver clover plant inside a rather small and blue pot. However, their roots took up most of the drawing from halfway down the page (see image T, in Appendix B). Their explanation of the drawing was dynamic and insightful:

I think the lines, como [like], going up, falling down and then up. It’s my como [like] aspiration and my attempt to go to the top, and not know not getting the in the land or in the soil, the soil. But in the sky. Get oxygen from the soil. And then from atmosphere, from arriba [up].

The passage shown above describes participant GRS’s experience of going through a movement of falling and then rising, as a sort of rhythmic hamartia, where they touch ground and get nourished by the soil in terms of oxygen. Their description involved a general lack of oxygen from the usual places where one would obtain it in order to breathe. They represented the sensation of asphyxia using little green and golden dots that spread from the main body of the

plant (a clover-like figure) into the root-system overtaking the bottom half of the page (see image V. in Appendix B). The movement that they represented helped me code the notion of ‘rollercoaster’ that I will later on develop with regard to other participant’s responses to their state of burnout, as I explain in the next section.

Even though most participants felt self-conscious regarding their artmaking or drawing abilities (stressing the discourse of ‘not being an artist’), after entering deeper into the conversation, it was possible for them to relax in seeing that I was not commenting anything regarding technique or supposed ‘implicit’ rules about artmaking. People would comment similarly when explaining the harder aspects that they encountered while going through drawing out. For instance, participant BCPTRD told me that it was “difficult for me to translate, like what it's in my head and I don't have a training hand to it.” A ‘lack of skill’ theme emerged after noting the frequency by which participants justified their inability to engage with artmaking even though they would like to do it more often. They lacked the time and energy.

Furthermore, once participants realized that I was not being judgmental about their abilities and rather was more interested in what they had to share, I was able to engage with what I consider Lugones to mean when she talks about ‘loving perception’ and playfulness, since the point was for people to explore the kinds of meanings that emerged from our dialogue in drawing. Most participants shared that they had an enjoyable time in expressing and talking about how they felt without the fear of being judged. I did my best in terms of performing care through *sentipensar* to avoid making them feel inadequate or undeserving, which is what people usually face whenever having to complete a task before an authority of intelligence, and for a grade.

Most people drew themselves as plants attempting to break through the pot that was restraining them, which I felt was relevant and reflected their affective state of being with regard to lockdown (in Appendix B; letters F., O., and R.). Some participants even refused to draw themselves as potted plants and rather made compositions of them living freely in the outdoors as trees or hybrid beings (in Appendix B; letters C., and D., specifically). The materials people used were also relevant, for people were allowed to use whatever tools they had at hand. It was heartwarming to witness seeing participants use a variety of tools in their crafting of images, as people experimented with ideas and means that they were not necessarily conventional. Some people took a day to complete the drawing, while most finished quite quickly, yet the conversations that we had over each drawing were rich and full of data that I was able to retrieve and code for analysis as a result of the dialogic component. Overall, I obtained positive feedback

from the experience and I have new ideas to improve the exercise for the future, which I have written about in the section concerning ‘future steps’ in Chapter 6.

Thematic Findings

The aims of the project ‘Drawing Out Fungal Care’ as specifically, as expressed through the research questions involve investigating the manner by which participants identified as ‘Millennials’ shaped their experiences of burnout. Through an affective-discursive approach to coding, enacted through a dialectics sentipensar for analysis, I paid rigorous attention to hints in participant expression that revealed aspects of the factors representing their perspectives or worldviews. Through a combination of critical discourse analysis with values coding, I was able to tap into the inner cognitive-sensitive ‘worlds’ of participants, as worlds of sense, in the sense envisioned by Lugones. Enacting playfulness and loving-perception in my interactions as well as interpretations of input, I was able to engage in an in-depth reading of participant transcripts and drawings: the purpose was to identify the values, attitudes and beliefs systems that participants reflected in their recounting of both their experience in drawing and in their experience of burnout. My interpretation of the data, as I present in this chapter, suggests that ‘Millennial’s are trapped in a double-bind situation where they find themselves in a conflict of interests between having to do what they are told while their ‘inner’ sense tells them that it’s wrong, and that they should behave differently. This points to the paradoxical character of the 2-OI that I discussed in Chapter 1. The following sections develop the findings that I am presenting for this study and that were organized according to the themes that I was able to detect and use to structure the concluding section of this final Chapter of the dissertation. The main five themes were: ‘Facing Creative Vulnerability,’ ‘Drawing In, Drawing Out,’ ‘Trapped: Pandemic ‘Potted’ Confinement,’ ‘Affective-Discursive Depictions of Burnout.’ These themes are followed by four main assertions that I drew from such thematic findings, which include: ‘Conflict of Values,’ ‘The “Millennial” Double Bind,’ ‘Gaslighting,’ and ‘Art as Care.’ I will explain each in the following section.

Facing Creative Vulnerability. Participants showed a general level of vulnerability with regard to artmaking in terms of ‘lacking expertise’ or knowledge of the implicit rules involved in such a practice. My interpretation of these kinds of expressions was that most participant felt intimidated as a result of colonial (agonistic) aesthetics, which are exclusionary and categorically reductive. However, regardless of their levels of insecurities and self-judgment, many of the people that I interviewed gave themselves the opportunity to try and experience the drawing

differently from how they usually engaged with art, as a result of the visualization prompt's role of easing people into the exercise. I consider this to be a move toward playfulness via aisthesis.

For instance, I noted how the discourse of 'proper artistry' or 'having talent' (namely, what is required to 'be an artist') was often linked to affects of vulnerability, (with expressions such as "I'm not good at, I don't know how") in terms of self-doubt and in preparation for negative judgment. Protectiveness and a lack of confidence in creative expression often result from the experience of having one's abilities judged negatively by others in the past. Therefore, when asked about their experience in drawing themselves as a plant, several participants shared having felt uneasiness toward that request. For example, participant DD3 expressed having repeated the drawing (which was the only time this happened) due to having felt dissatisfied with the original result, which gave them the sensation of being 'potted' in a way that was too much to bear. They wrote:

So when I start the first drawing, *I didn't send it to you because it was awful*. I, I told you that, uh, the week before, uh, but it was on *una maceta* [a pot] so that doesn't maybe [...] that's the way I feel. *I feel in a pot. I cannot move of place*. That's yeah, yeah. Yeah. And when, when I saw the, the drawing, *that's what I don't want to*, uh, I, I listen to the, the audio you sent me. I listen, listen it to it again. *I don't want to come to, to be that*. So *that's why I made, again, the drawing*: I made this big, uh, tree with roots, but with a lot of, uh, leaves and the other trees are like the evolving [growing]. It's a little seed then with the leaves. And then it grew up all the, a big tree. That's, that's the, the whole idea.

DD3's description of the manner by which they were made to reconsider what they had drawn was unconventional and revealing at the same time in many ways. For instance, they expressed not being able to cope with a heightened sensation of entrapment that came with representing themselves as potted. They disliked their original drawing so much that they decided to draw themselves all over again. This reaction made me realize that sometimes drawing can be healing in terms of allowing people to fantasize and 'escape' their present reality. Conversely, if the representation reiterates and aggrandizes negative affects already existing in people's lives, this same process could lead to the worsening people's state of mental health. I did not judge the DD3's choice of starting over, but rather paid attention to the process and what it revealed, in this case creative potential in freeing people from having to experience an undesirable moment.

In contrast, when it came to talking to people who were no strangers to artmaking, such as participant PTP, I learned that most had to abandon creating art due to a lack of time. For example, PTP shared that:

I like art. I like all kinds of art making, but yeah, *it's something that it's really time consuming*. And so with, with the time that I have, *I don't often get to practice it very often*. Um, and yeah, I love like surrounding myself with art. Um, I like looking at art. I love going to museums and things like that. Um, I like traditional kinds of like paintings, but I also like weird things. Um, and so, yeah, I think I have a broad taste of art that, and yeah. And I like to make things like that as well.

Most people who actively engaged in drawing or artmaking of any sort as children were gradually forced to abandon their practices as a result of becoming immersed in school and work (simultaneously and in terms of people's transition into 'adulthood'). However, others who did not have the same experience shared that the prompt made it easier for them to try and explore their creative dimensions without feeling too exposed to negative criticism.

Drawing In, Drawing Out. The practice of drawing out was meant to activate a dialectical process of exploration for participants to travel inside themselves and encounter impressions that they would otherwise have trouble identifying and coming to terms with. The purpose was to surface these in order to draw meaning from a co-constructed perspective. In those terms, I was pleased to encounter participant BIM's particular regard toward artmaking, which established a comparison between artmaking, yoga and healing. Their description of the creative process was insightful, they wrote:

And it's like a good way to, I don't know, good way to like, you know, disconnect from like the random distractions that we all have, but also to connect to, you know, your own, my own feelings and, and kind of be aware of habits.

The description above, in my opinion, caught the spirit of what drawing out was meant to perform as a dialectical process (see figure 8). Within an oscillatory movement of transformation (with attention to inner contradictions), one is meant to plunge deep within oneself first (which requires a proper space for concentration to do so) as an initial form of introspection, where one draws from the well of their own multiplicitous being. Subsequently, one rises to the 'surface' of one's consciousness and exteriorizes information that emerges from the process of internal reflection. Exteriorization is an inherent part of the process of artmaking; it is a dance of energy in celebration of life (and art began like that, as ritual in gratitude for nourishing harvests). The drawing out of form is a central component in the oscillatory movement of back and forth that happens in people's consciousness (also drawing from the unconscious) that mirrors the pulsations that happen inside the heart: diastole and systole. A dialectic transition of movement

between moments of tension and release is what literally makes drawing out a heartfelt experience. A revolution becomes a dance of opposites moving forward as if by the motion of a wheel (which involves rolling back in order to move forward, in a circular course through timespace).²⁰⁸ Fascism, in contrast, upholds homeostasis (a balance attained out of fixity, sameness, and immobility, namely death). As Latinx scholar Juan Mah y Busch explains what the ‘aesthetic dimension of language’ is for Anzaldúa, stating that it “is the way for her to represent with words the nature of the heart, which is embodied and interconnected” (Mah y Busch, 2014, p. 105). In direct discursive relation to Anzaldúa’s notion of *la facultad* and *conocimiento*, Mah y Busch contends that the heart’s perceptions are enacted through a fully embodied and often wordless repertoire of sensations that are involved in what Lugones refers to as loving perception and world travel (Mah y Busch, 2014). Mah y Busch considers that through Lugones’s account of loving perception enacts Sandoval’s discursive punctum in the sense that, “love enables a person to open him or herself to [...] creating the possibility of sharing in that person’s world, and thus seeing through [their] own eyes brand new perspectives along with the worldviews that give them shape and meaning” (Mah y Busch, 2014, p. 102).²⁰⁹ Drawing for them has a pull-and-pull effect in terms of disconnecting from external ‘distractions’ and connecting to one’s inner world, in an effort to understand oneself better (which requires time and attention as a form of self-care). Homeokinesis is sustained in terms of a balance of ‘dancing’ (in a dialectical play with the notion of ‘opposing’) forces in movement that lead to wellness. But there needs to be a rhythmical sense

²⁰⁸ The term etymological origin of the term revolution lies in the “early 15c.” and denotes ‘a cyclical reoccurrence, a round or recurrent changes or events;’ also ‘the revolving of a wheel,’ emphasizing circularity in movement (Harper, n.d.-c).

²⁰⁹ I would like to use playfulness in theoretically foraging Mah y Busch’s regard toward dialectics, which I think is inscribed within the colonial discourses of agonism and dualism. They consider that “a healthy heart is not dialectic” (Mah y Busch, 2014, p. 113). Although his account of dialectics is negative, I would like to invite a theoretical foraging of his text in order to understand the heart as performing precisely a dialectical movement through contradiction by which one thing self-produces as different (allopoiesis in terms of symbiopoiesis) as I have explained on Chapter 3 with regard to how sentipensar operates. For Mah y Busch, dialectics entail an erasure of difference, but only if approaches through fixity, for there are moments within the transformative flux that occurs through a series of contradictions in which extremes are reached, albeit momentarily, if the balance is done correctly, in terms of letting change follow its own metabolic logic (Mah y Busch, 2014). For example, I would argue that a change in perspective would allow to recognize (through the foundational arguments that this study presents in reference to the metabolic rift theory) that Mah y Busch’s consideration of the heart as having a “second-order awareness” are in fact referencing the first-order mediation that people care attuned to (as post-fungal beings, or animals) in terms of having an inner sense that orients them in life (the heart as a compass). The first-order awareness of the heart (enacting sentipensar) pierces through the second-order imposition’s ideological gaze of capitalism—which is rooted in agonism—thus enabling more genuine affects and thoughts to surface and become more consciously evident.

to the movement, therefore the metabolism of labor requires rest and replenishment to keep moving. The use of the heart can be considered a key element in sentipensar for its capacity to direct loving perception toward others as a means to ‘world’ travel via drawing out.

Trapped: Pandemic ‘Potted’ Confinement. In noting a frequency of repetition of the theme ‘trapped,’ for instance, I was attentive to the way several participants self-represented as plants breaking through their constraining containers. I interpreted these kinds of representations as a form of refusal posed against the thought of letting oneself become entrapped (signified by the code ‘pot’). Pandemic confinement, as forced immobility, increased a sense of claustrophobia in people, which the prompt made even more evident in its invitation to have people draw themselves specifically as potted plants. As I mentioned before in the discussion section that concerned people’s artmaking experiences, most participants expressed having felt uneasy about the task of having to represent themselves as being stuck inside a pot. Even in fiction this thought became too much for people, since it overemphasized an already unbearable reality of confinement.

For example, during our drawing dialogue, participant DD3 shared a thought that was extremely insightful, since they made a direct and conscious comparison between their plant self and their current state in terms of (self-imposed, petty-bourgeois) labor exploitation. They exclaimed that the prompt’s fake entrapment actually made them

The actual feeling that I have today that it's, I'm feel, feeling trapped to trapped in this adult life working and working and working. And I don't wanna, if I had to transform, to evolve into a plant, I don't want to be on a pot.

The relation between the codes ‘pot,’ ‘plant’ and ‘don’t want to be’ depicted the participant’s working life through the discourse of ‘adult life’ and ‘working and working and working.’ Their utterance gave me the impression that they are involuntarily paralyzed within a vicious cycle of labor-based entrapment with regard to the affects DD3 experienced while completing the drawing exercise. They implicitly reflected the values that most participants showed in attributing importance to their own lives as workers who are directing efforts in contributing to the working of society, which is something for which they ought to be (appropriately, meaning materially) credited for.²¹⁰ The art-themed questions often revealed aspects that participants shared with regard to their experience of burnout, for the drawing was meant to be done in reflection of that.

²¹⁰ As a side note, I was also aware of how two of the three participants who self-represented as large trees (BCPTRD and DD3) expressed having an employment role of leadership. Meaning that, they were in

I was struck by realizing that at least six of my participants drew themselves as either attempting to or actually breaking free from their container. From these observations, I came up with the theme of ‘breaking through constraints,’ which reflected the way most participants draw themselves in specific relation to that instruction. For example, participant S expressed wanting their pot:

to be shattered on purpose because like, it represents like, freedom and breaking free and the roots like just [Yeah], and going where they want to go. Because to me, my image represents me healing to me, my, my, my, my, my plant self-portrait represents healing. Breaking the container had several connotations, which in the case of S referred to their process of reaching freedom through healing, which highly resonated with this study’s aims. At other times, I was able to read other similar kinds of gestures crafted in terms of defiance: meaning that, some participants depicted themselves as large trees on purpose, while others did so as a result of having misunderstood to visualization the prompt, which was also allowed.²¹¹ For example, participant BIM shared that they were made extremely uncomfortable by the idea of being potted as a plant:

I was like, *ah, man, I don't want to be a potted plant.* Like that's not, that's not how I want to like exist in the like end times. *No one wants to be trapped or stuck.* And that's how I kind of think about potted plants. You know, they're, they are trapped in there in their little pot. And they're like, uh, they're just an *ornament*, you know, it's, it doesn't seem like, um, you know, real plant. Like real plants are somehow supposed to be free living or wild or independent, you know, even though plants can't move, obviously. *But if you're in a pot you're not free to enter into relationships!*

This participant’s account was insightful in the sense that it allowed me to identify the code ‘trapped’ and ‘ornament,’ which led to the themes of powerlessness and entrapment (with the image of a straightjacket). Considering that this participant had extensive knowledge about nature (having a doctoral degree in plant science) their observation was even more profound, for they made a direct allusion to the mycorrhizal image that I originally had in mind when designing the

charge of providing other people’s wages. I thought this pattern striking in the sense that it translated as them drawing their plant bodies as having a larger body in reflection of their responsibility in ‘caring for others’ in the sense that capitalism determines, meaning in the form of a wage.

²¹¹ For instance, participant BCPTRD expressed having started drawing before the mark that was stated in the prompt, for which they chose to continue with their original freer and ‘pot-less’ sketch, which I thought was a suitable response and led to additionally interesting findings.

prompt. I was thinking about how potted plants are not connected by the mycelial underground network that links and nurtures other plants in the forest. The phrase “*if you're in a pot you're not free to enter into relationships!*” was key, for it reflected exactly what also happens to humans whenever facing isolation for extended periods of time. Human need for connection varies from person to person, but the fact remains that humans are by nature social animals, as many other beings, they rely on each other to survive even if they like to pretend that they do not. An awareness around the human need for connectivity also appeared in another participant’s response to the prompt, who actually expressed themselves quite positively in terms of having taken up the challenge of being placed inside a container. Participant PD, for instance, expressed

I really like one part where you said that, uh, that we would be like plant in a pot because I always felt like that. I always felt like, okay, look at nature, look at how free animals are. And we are like, so dependent on many things in society. We are dependent. We are dependent on like electricity and other things. Um, and it's nice. It's nice actually. I mean, it's, it's nice to have a little house and like a shelter and a roof, but, but compared to the animals, we're kinda like sometimes very restricted to, to a lot of things. Yeah. So, and also like, now that we have invented, well, the colonizer have invented the borders [it makes it] even more restricted because that makes it even more difficult to travel. So definitely, definitely. We are kind of like plants in a pot.

PD’s initial reflection around the prompt surprised me in the sense that they reflected the exact sentiment that I had when creating the prompt. The potted plant signifier was meant to elicit reflections with regard not only to the pandemic, but the institutionally normalized confinement that rules over human lives in the present. That is what I refer to as the 2-OI, an artificial and dysfunctional system created by the confluence of colonization (as globalization), modernity and capitalism. The coronavirus pandemic is, after all, an exacerbation of a situation that people were already in. ‘We are kind of like plants in a pot,’ said PD, which I appreciated in terms of their comparison of humans to other animals who are less restricted in their way of social organizing (which refers to another level in which metabolism works).

As PD accurately explained, the figure of the colonizer (representing humans performing under the discourse of the Enlightenment myth of ‘Man’) was responsible for having created a regime of social control based on agonism (which is self-agonism in the end, as capitalism is cannibalism, eating at its own foundations). Participant PD’s response was also enlightening in the sense that they mentioned in their account that they had their indigenous ancestry in mind when drawing themselves as having a dress made out of leaves (see Appendix B, image J.). They

spoke about how their ancestors had created and cared for forests²¹² in the Amazon or in the great forests of North America)

I've been reading Chronicles where they say that *our ancestors used to wear beard clothes and they used to wear flowers in their hair and used to wear, um, feathers, things like that*. And I dunno, *I really feel connected to that*. So it's, *it's been a process of embracing, uh, kind of like beautiful way of being*. So, yeah, it's been a process of reconnecting to my ancestors through, through *spirit*, I guess.

Embracing the genuine aspects that people feel in terms of their self-regard and that shape their multiplicitous being seems like another way in which they were able to 'break through pots' of confinement, meaning the ideological constraints that they face in terms of identity. This self-embracing is a fundamental process of building the self, back together again as with Anzaldúa's Coyolxauhqui (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015)²¹³ when it comes to restorative justice in healing from the lingering effects of colonization-as-coloniality. I read participant PD's journey in reconnecting with their indigenous roots in Central America as their own personal means to explore their 1-OM. After all, the first order mediation constitutes people's sense of self in suspension of the 2-OI, which is what the 'pot' signifier is meant to stand for.

An additional example of a strong response against being the pot prompt involved participant O's self-depiction as an orchid. The reason why they chose to do so is fascinating for many reasons. They expressed the following:

I have these, this orchid that *I was so obsessed with it, and I love that the exercise made me realize about the complexity and how orchids are seen*. So, if you realize when you see an orchid, you always think about, you know, it's, um, it's, *it's perfect*. [...] I have, um, uh, an orchid that I got, I think, like four years ago. And. For me, *it's a survivor and it's a fighter because* it just, you know, it, it, so as you see it in the picture, in the picture

²¹² Several existing studies are currently debating over the hypothesis of Pre-colonial Anthropogenic forests. This theory suggests that the way forests that seem to people in the present as 'untouched by humans' were actually once tended by communities of people living in them. The Amazon, for example, is thus a giant human-altered garden with pockets of specific trees that were cultivated for human consumption (as a first order appropriation with attention to replenishment) and there is increasing evidence of historically positive anthropogenic interventions that led to the present shape that forests have in North America. To think that humans and nature once lived in homeokinetic relations is energizing, in the sense that current research shows that anthropogenic forests existed before colonization (Levis et al., 2017; Panko, 2017).

²¹³ I would like to write a paper in the future about the relation between drawing out and Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of 'Coyolxauhqui Imperative,' which I was not able to do at this time due to constraints in terms of time and length of the dissertation.

and the drawing, *you see all the roots going everywhere. [...] But the reality, if you let the orchid be, the roots are going to go everywhere. Like they are just trying to find a way of, you know, existing and, and finding their place, you know, wherever they are. [...] And so I got it. And then all the flowers were out and I thought, well, he's dead, but I didn't want it to throw it because it was still there. No, I just left it. And then a year later, suddenly it starts blooming again, but I was not given water or anything like that. [...] I'm like, wow. So then I started putting water again, because I'm seeing that, you know, it's alive.*

Their self-representation as an orchid was done in dedication to an actual plant of theirs who showed amazing resilience in remaining alive after a long time without water. There were a number of factors to consider in this passage. Participant O shared having a deep regard toward orchids, describing them as intricate and even ‘perfect.’ The drawing exercise allowed them to observe deeply and notice the textures and more subtle aspects of their plant, for which they were thankful (I considered this to be positive feedback). The plant represented survival through fighting (agonism) in a ‘beautifully perfect’ manner, which was interesting to analyze for content in terms of this participant’s values (what they deemed important). I related their representation of survival with the subsequent attitudes they showed with regard to the orchid’s ability to bloom after a long time of arid repose, which was what I interpreted from this piece of text.

Furthermore, alongside the theme of agonism there was also a movement—a shift—toward a more playful regard toward endurance. Meaning that, O’s description implied a sense of hope in expressing that “*if you let the orchid be, the roots are going to go everywhere. Like they are just trying to find a way of, you know, existing and, and finding their place, you know, wherever they are.*” I consider this particular phrase to be incredibly powerful in the sense that it reflects what I refer to as the first-order mediation that is Gaia’s metabolism. Meaning that, bodies have self-regulating systems that need rest and replenishment to be able to work properly. If they are let to do what they are naturally designed to, they are able to restore themselves in time (the orchid is a perfect example of this). What I have theorized around the concept of homeokinesis, is precisely what this participant voiced through their self-depiction as a being in their lives that they admire (as opposed to considering it inferior to them, via anthropocentrism).

The attempt to find a place where one can exist and perform themselves in peace is a dream that has motivated a lot of people in the present, because there has been so much tumult happening (disproportionately distributed) due to the many crises that the planet currently faces. People are being told that they are too entitled to even think of that possibility, which is not true.

It is every people's right to strive to live as fully and meaningfully as they can. There is hope in understanding that humans are not 'wrecked' by nature (which is an illusion proclaimed by ideological domain of the 2-OI through the discourse of the 'struggle for existence'). Instead it is vital to remind people they have a natural ability to act as mediators in restoring the balance of transformative forces in play that sustain life, specifically through the notion of making-with as becoming-with (from autopoiesis to sympoiesis) which I am conceptualizing as *symbiopoiesis*.

Affective-Symbolic Depiction of Burnout. Participants described their pandemic burnout experiences in a manner that spoke to the difficulty of navigating spaces and states of mind concerning high levels of intensity. Codes that referred to similar ideas such as 'dark spiral' and 'up and down' appeared frequently in participant accounts, revealing the theme of 'rollercoaster of intensity' which, according to my interpretation, gave the impression of a rush or a kind of force trapping people within (like a hurricane). The image of a whirlwind of affective intensity impacting participants' whole being was frequently invoked, as they self-described as being caught within a vortex of emotions and impressions. For example, participant PPC stated that "So I have had highs and lows and very, very lows and stressful and anxious." In another occasion, participant BCPTRD shared that "my father-in-law had cancer, which was not easy and at the same time, um, and again, in general, just living through, *up and down*, because you're very aware, it's always challenge. So, yeah." These descriptions match the discursive sensation of lacking control over one's immersion within a rapidly changing situation in terms of levels of intensity. The sensation and affects associated with 'falling' were also employed by participant GRS who described their burnout experience as if "going up falling down and then up," as if being trapped inside a roller-coaster against one's will. This led to the theme 'roller-coaster' and 'vortex.'

The general shaping of participant experience of burnout invoked symbolic and affective codes led me to identify the themes of 'infinite strain,' 'no end in sight,' 'work, work, work,' and 'vicious cycle.' The themes I drew from these descriptions reflected an almost Sisyphean or impossible challenge in having to work constantly without rest. The ideology of 'adulthood' appeared to weigh heavily on people's minds with regard to the expectations that were placed on their 'shoulders.' I noticed that the affects related to a state of frustration became enhanced when people spoke about being unable to envision or contemplate an end to the harshness (which implied the depletion of energy without the option to replenish). For example, participant FS shared that:

when *I didn't see the end of it* would [it] became really difficult, but then I think now we're starting to learn to live with it but it kind of means changing, we'll all cut we're kind of coming out as different people and like learning who that is as part of this...

From this passage, I was able to infer that an inability to replenish or even see the possibility of it in the future is a major cause of burnout. Although they also shared having grown and learned from such an experience, which is a positive reflection. Furthermore, participant FS reflected on some of the main aspects leading to their burnout:

I didn't have enough work or add too much work or, you know, jumping from one to the other. But over that the pandemic was the kind of main *anxiety* that was *burning out*. What you know my feelings of burnout within that so that makes sense I guess I yeah I guess that was my interpretation of *burnout is like dealing with these, the trauma and grief and the work and the precarity that life throws at you* and different, and different people have different kinds of experiences of that

The description of burnout as explicitly involving an engagement with trauma, grief and precarity helped paint a clear picture of the setting upon which they are being drained of their energy.

Coping Mechanisms. Participants shared different strategies that they had for dealing with exhaustion and pressure. For example, participant FS described coping mechanism against burnout was the practice of 'wintering' which is a concept that refers to the power of rest and retreat, invoking the process of hibernation that some living beings engage in as a natural means to replenish energy in times of coldness to be able to come back to life along with the sun.²¹⁴ Another coping mechanism that was shared by participants was taking the time to deliberately cry, even as a routine activity.

In the case of participant B, who is a mother of a young boy (and thus engaged in social reproduction in addition to looking after their own selves), their coping mechanism was crying and letting out all their sadness as a part of their daily routine. They expressed that:

Yeah, I think *the mornings are kind of harder, because I tend to cry, no? I get really moved* by some things or by the news. *The worst news ever?* No. So yeah, well, it's a bit

²¹⁴ They expressed, "wintering [...] it's about how you deal with, you know, how you deal with things like grief, and depression and kind of big trauma in your life through processes of wintering and so even though there's, I'm not engaging in that in like a really, you know, nothing. I've not had. It's just like the small traumas and the small bits of grief have built up that have meant that I've just been fighting that concept really interesting." I coded 'apologetic' in the sense that participant FS was being careful with their way of referring to trauma in light of other people's experience.

of time that I can cry by myself when the kid is not there and then move on with my day.

No, so maybe a sad song or a very moving song and then I go on with my day.

B's description involves facing hardship at the very start of their day, when they let themselves react to the intensity of world news or of the present in terms of crying. As a form of catharsis, crying allows this participant to 'move on with their day,' meaning performing functionality with regard to social reproduction (in raising a six-year-old boy, specifically). On a similar note, participant PWT also shared that they also cried as a coping mechanism:

Well, I felt I feel that that *when I'm releasing that stress that I anxiety* when crying when doing workout when doing my daily activities, I, I tried to give some credit to myself I tried to give value to myself. and I said, even though you might touch ground, you can also pick yourself from that ground with just small draft.

The code 'crying as catharsis' emerged as I noticed that the accounts shared by both participant PWT and FS included a description of their burnout through affective vulnerability. Both our conversations led to their describing of the coping mechanisms that they relied on when things became particularly difficult. I was able to relate those coping mechanisms to their drawings, which led me to other fascinating discoveries.

For example, my interpretation of participant FS's drawing (see Appendix B, drawing A.) was that the berries that their shrub produced were a manifestation of what FS had been doing throughout the pandemic, meaning taking care of their family at a distance and using their academic credentials (PhD) for curating art spaces for other people to engage in and show their work (they expressed that their main engagement with art was orbital, namely not directly approached but from the sides). Their response to my interpretation was that:

you could read the berries is like, you know, what do you put your energy into producing that will then allow because berries are for reproduction actually I didn't even think about that *but you reproduce yourself through, through the berries* but, um, yeah and and it's really lovely that you talked about those things as they are I guess they are my berries as well, because, I mean, I guess when I did them I wouldn't want... I don't know something to be useful in the bush, something that is doing something that's not just you know *overwintering* and *lifeless* [...]. So the berries were important but yeah, I think that's a really lovely way that you've put that these kinds of. There are loads of them I mean there are quite a few actually on that bush.

While interpreting FS's self-depiction (see Appendix B, image A.) as a fruiting bush in winter, I noticed a resemblance between their account and the general process of symbiopoiesis that

structures this study's critique of the metabolic rift. Namely, participant FS's rendition of the berries representing 'putting energy into producing' led both of us (at the same time, through dialogue) to think of berries as representing the process of 'reproduction' (in terms of autopoiesis as sympoiesis). I thought that their specification of not wanting their bush to be engaged in anything 'productive' addressed the 2-OI, while their regard toward wintering in the production of berries referred to the 1-OM that is Gaia's metabolism. The 1-OM is what secures metabolic homeokinesis, which is what people's 'hearts' are in synchronicity with, as Mah y Busch's understanding of Lugones's loving perception in terms of 'world' travel. Furthermore, participant FS's depiction of burnout through the figure of the berry is insightful, they shared that:

But these things I've been, I've managed to do, you know, on the berries. Yeah and you had to pick carefully like when you're kind of at *the generation that we are you know what you put your energy into* and it's that's, I think it can be it's a kind of question of energy but also, I think, for you, me, we also think about what's politically important to put our energy into So, yeah,

I interpreted FS's thought process involving the management of energy as tied to the discourse of 'work-life balance,' yet approached through a metabolic understanding. Meaning that, FS's suggestion was that the generational 'situation' for people like her involved having to make careful choices with regard to where they choose to spend/direct their energy, which I considered to be a political matter. Through this discussion I realized that a shift from a paradigm built in agonism to another structured through care, would require that the distribution and spending of energy became more congruent and compatible the system's needs and capabilities (in reference to the productive capacity of Gaia).

In the case of participant PWT's representation of their-self-as-plant, the figure of the weeping willow predominated in its more literal sense (as crying). Looking deeply at the drawing, (see Appendix B, drawing U.) I was able to notice the weeping aspect as the author meant to, there use of soft lines made with pencil reminded me of the tenderness that is (sometimes) involved in weeping, specifically. The leaves looked like tears themselves, as if drawn in water. I told them that read their drawing as being about a tree that produced tears as leaves, and that I thought that that was incredibly beautiful and poetic. Furthermore, the representation was powerful as it projected the effect of letting things out, in terms of catharsis, and as a means to (homeokinetically) replenish one's (psychoaffective) metabolic order.

Oppressive Double Binds. From analyzing the data that I retrieved from the drawing out encounters and that I worked through different cycles of coding, I was able to realize that the general situation that affected participants could be described as what Sukaina Hirji (2021) called an oppressive double bind. As Hirji explains: “double binds are choice situations where no matter what an agent does, they become a mechanism in their own oppression” (Hirji, 2021, p. 643). By definition, double binds limit an individual’s agency while leaving other dimensions of their autonomy fully intact, which creates a dislocation between a person’s own sensorial certainty (in pointing toward what they deem is ‘the right thing to do’) and what they are told to do by virtue of an authority. This contradiction presently aggravates people’s experience of stressful situations, in considering the consequences of defying orders on the one hand (and in compromising their livelihood in terms of food and resource security), and the consequences of not following what they know is right (in terms of becoming compliant and adding efforts to the forces currently causing environmental destruction) on the other.

There were three major examples that evinced the way double binds shaped participant reactions to choices that they are forced to make on a regular basis and that contradict their own values and principles (which I consider to be tied to their personal 1-OM). For example, at the end of the interview that I had with participant CPC, they revealed a fascinating account that, in my opinion, synthesized up most of what had been the central critique of this study with regard to burnout and the metabolic rift theory. They expressed the following:

most of the people I spend time with the right talk to [...] have pretty much have the same views as me at the moment, you know, that the government is fucked up, that we are really tired and disappointed. And, you know, things have happened that shouldn't have happened. And [...] I actually haven't had to discuss this with anyone, [...] who is, you know, saying this is real or anything? That's great. No conspiracy theories so far. But yeah, so I guess where I positioned myself is always the one or one of the people because I'm not alone. Obviously, I'm one of the people who is actively engaging in conversations that are just, you know, putting out there that this is not okay. For certain things on our case, on this case, it's not okay. That the government has just stopped caring about how many people die every day. And then we're just worried about the economy, and we're just worried about, you know, the economy, I mean, dead people cannot buy shit [Laughs].

I was particularly impacted by the expression ‘putting out there that this is not okay,’ which could be another explanation of what ‘drawing out’ is ultimately meant to do: meaning,

literally to have people pull ideas from within for external analysis in dialogue. From their account, participant CPC demonstrated sharing values, beliefs and attitudes with people that they usually interacted with when it came to identifying and discussing the causes that led to the present planetary crisis. This was my third interview, and, at the time (February 2021), the pandemic had been happening for about a year, at least in Europe. Already, participant CPC shared feeling really ‘disappointed’ and ‘tired’ of their government’s response to the pandemic.

Within just a year, governments around the world had demonstrated a blatant inability to perform ‘care’ for their people (a significant amount of whom were dying from the virus and its indirect effects), in contrast to the efforts that country leaders directed to ‘saving’ the economy. As participant CPC observed, with cynicism, ‘dead people cannot buy shit,’ meaning that they were cognizant of the irony in expressing that the economy was made a priority, when it was people that ran and made work such an economy in the first place. The economy, as a concept and system, that cannot exist outside the sphere of human action, it is not a separate entity, and rather depends on the actions of people as producers and consumers of commodities, otherwise there is no economy. This contradiction points to the paradoxical nature of the 2-OI, which self-cannibalizes and is therefore self-destructive.

An additional participant (PDC) expressed a similar regard concerning a conflict of values around the same pandemic period in which I interviewed CPC (February, 2021). PDC described how they experienced the pandemic within the corporate world, which they resigned from. They shared that:

in the corporate world, the early pandemic created chaos for everyone. Right? No employers felt that they had stability in their businesses, so a lot of them responded in ways that were attempts to create a profitable business. With that being the focus, is how do I maintain profitability in this uncertain time. Because, you know, in the beginning no one knew how long this was going to be what was gonna happen, what the impacts were gonna be, how to navigate it. Because it's not the beginning, I was like "This is hell" on a daily basis. It was hell. But thinking we're gonna pull through it, we're gonna find the end of it, we're gonna find stability, we're gonna find strategy, intention, we're gonna work on stability for our employees and then at one point none of those things became the priority and that caused stress that I could not sustain because I could not see progress in anymore, in my personal environment, I could not see an effort towards strategic decision-making, or stability for employees or even, even enough consideration for the wellness of employees, which of course is hard and I'll give employers credit for just

trying right now, because it is hard to know how to navigate completely an environment, *but I did not even see an effort*. Yeah, I felt that none of it became sustainable for me to continue. *I can find sustainability in things as long as I can see hope in them [laughs]*
And I did not.

Participant PDC's account, which provides the context for their resignation, came as a result of their disapproval of the negligence that their superiors showed with regard to how they were not able to properly protect their employees and clients at the very start of the pandemic. In capitalism, maintaining profitability is the main objective of businesses and corporations, which participant PDC demonstrated understanding. They even tried showing empathy toward people with power making decisions by expressing that properly caring for people 'of course is hard and I'll give employers credit for just trying right now.' The main difference between participant PDC and participant CPC is that the former worked for a US corporation (a co-working space), while the latter was employed at a progressive, European newspaper. I consequently found it relevant that regardless of the 'kind' of workspace involved in these two cases, the general sentiment of participants was akin, with regard to their values and principles as individuals.

Furthermore, the main issue that participant PDC shared was that they did not see a real effort, progress or consideration (which are markers of personal values) toward issues of stability and wellness of people creating wealth through their surplus labor for such kinds of establishments. When PDC stopped sensing 'hope,' (which takes affective energy to sustain) they decided to abandon the situation in order to find a different and hopefully better one by moving from Chicago to Denver during the pandemic. PDC's account led me to the assertion that one of the conditions that lead to burnout is that of not seeing an end to an unpleasant situation, which I coded as 'no end in sight.' The prospect of being trapped in a situation that was frequently described as 'hell' without being able to perceive an end to it increases the level of negativity (as affective immersion) involved in what was already a situation of exacerbated exploitation, making this even worse for people to endure. With regard to the pandemic timeline, and as participant PDC shows, the beginning stages were chaotic due to the vast uncertainty that people had in terms of how to best to navigate a scenario of disaster such as the present one. However, and in relation to another interview that I conducted much later in the pandemic, (January 18th, around the time when Biden took Office, which happened around a year after the first round of interviews that I had), participant PTP shared that:

[The pandemic is] still being manifest in all parts of our lives, *there's no like immediate end or like there's no like an imagined future or where it would end*. Right. Like that's

harder to, because *this is now almost the second year* that we've lived like this where I think at the beginning of the pandemic, right. I felt like “I can do this! This is hard, but it will end one day,” but now two years into it. But that kind of *positive thinking is becoming a lot more difficult to maintain*. Although I imagine one day it will have ended, but, um, you know, is that another two years is that could be another five.

From the interpretation notes that I took from coding participant PTP’s transcript, I realized that there was a change of the source of anxiety as the pandemic unfolded. Namely, participants at the beginning showed anxiety over not knowing how to best navigate what has happening (lacking something to guide them). However, my later interviews revealed that most people began feeling anxiety over an inability to perceive an end to the confinement and to the virus (having had already endured a year of constant disappointments on behalf of leadership).

Conflict of Values. The pressures that most participants shared having seemed to derive from a conflict of values that often took place in contexts related to employment or study. As my findings show, there was another dimension to the burnout experience which had to do with the pressures imposed by discursive expectations such as the ones associated with ‘Millennial’ ‘adulthood.’ The discourse of the “Millennial” as a generational label serves to regulate how labor is conducted according to the 2-OI’s production needs. Such a discourse is thus mobilized in order to frame people’s reactions and resistance to exploitation as a reflection of personal failure, which is not always the case. This concealment of exploitation on the basis of contradicting rhetoric creates a conflict of interest that feeds into people’s sensation of burnout in terms of enhancing the pressure (as weight) that participants expressed feeling while being forced to make choices with regard to their labor conditions and general wellbeing. The increase in the sensation of burnout further impedes individuals categorized as ‘Millennials’ from restoring their bodies’ metabolic homeokinetic balance via replenishment (and dignified forms of reciprocity).

Furthermore, heightened burnout precludes people from organizing to effectively remediate Gaia’s own multi-systemic homeokinesis in facing the metabolic rift at the level of ecological destruction. Thus, the 2-OI’s ideological domain creates a vicious cycle of labor-in-precarity, from which it is practically impossible to escape from an individual standpoint; it is barely bearable with privilege, luck, and connections (in terms of power). For example, one of the most insightful moments while interviewing participants happened while I was listening to participant CB describe what they thought was the current ‘Millennial’ condition with regard to dealing with conflicting values in the face of adversity. They shared that

It sucks, it sucks, everything is harder for our generation. Because the previous generations, just like, I mean, like, I don't want to be unfair to them, they, for a while, they weren't aware of the damage, they were leaving behind. At some point, they realized that they were like, oh, fuck, we're on our way out. But at some point in, you know, you know, they didn't know how much they were destroying the housing market, the environment. Just, well, I do housing so that's my main thing. But so yeah, I look at like, my, my dad and my, my grandparents and like, that generation, like baby boomers plus, and they made perfectly reasonable decisions for the information they had at their youth.

Participant CB's expression was particularly colorful in emphasizing the inherent negativity of the present situation in which they were trapped in. As a form of epizeuxis, the phrasing of 'it sucks, it sucks,' helped establish a sentiment of frustration before plunging into a description that pretty much grasped the punctum of what this dissertation was meant to help address. Namely, many people in the present feel as if they are forced to live in a manner that no longer makes sense. However, they are still obligated to follow anachronistic and contextually-detached rules and methods that they inherited from previous generations that lived at a time when environmental collapse was still in the horizon. I appreciated the specific apologetic regard that they showed having toward older generations making 'perfectly reasonable decisions for the information they had at the time.' Such a statement echoed participant PDC's empathic kindness toward their former employers with regard to the difficult decisions they were also forced to make (and which impacted people under them negatively). CB's account followed with more insightful commentary that affirmed some of the assumptions that I had originally made from the literature informing this study. They shared that:

But now I live with the consequences. And, you know, sometimes my dad is like, oh, but like, 'Oh, if you buy a house, and that's like, you know, investment,' he doesn't understand, like, *none of this works anymore*. Everything that you thought, and everything they taught us about, like how you get by, like, oh, you go to school, and you get a career, and then you go get a job, and then stay in that job for a long time and you got like insurance, and you buy a house, and [...] well, none of that is a thing anymore. So it's also kind of like, *I feel we're all collectively as a generation figuring out how to exist in a world that was not made for us*. And that so often, *we're not allowed to design for our needs, because a lot of people from other older generations are still clinging to power and decision making*, and you watch so many presidents around the world, and they're 60 plus, and like, you know, they're citizens, they have opinions that I respect as

people. But it's also a bit frustrating that it's like, well, you know, *you're gonna die relatively soon. And everyone that is gonna stick around with the consequences of your decisions you're not listening to.*

As I listened intently to this participant's 'rant' against what they observed was the situation they were trapped in from a generational standpoint, I realized that their reflection spoke to the Gramscian interregnum presently impeding a new world from emerging in the rubble of a system that 'was not made for us.' This revelation pointed to the fact that part of the burnout that people experience is tied to a sensation of powerlessness against nefarious decision-making that will inevitably impact the future of younger people living on the planet. The negativity is heightened with regard to people's inability to make proper decisions based on what they deem urgent and necessary for their survival. Rather, as CB continues describing as leaders "*making decisions based on circumstances that do not exist anymore.*" They described the example of Mexico, where our current president is "making decisions based on oil and like, things are just like, incredibly stupid. Like, oil hasn't been a sustainable investment in decades. Why are we back to this?!" which I entirely agreed with.

Gaslighting. From the discussion presented at the beginning of this Chapter, I was able to engage in threading the literature review presented in the introductory chapters of this dissertation (specifically Chapters 1 and 2). In these Chapters, I present the argument that the 'Millennial' generational label, as inscribed within the ideological domain of the 2-OI creates the effect that is best described as gaslighting: a mechanism through power is able to individualize the blame for structural problems. In this case, 'Millennials' are made responsible for what actively harms them (in this case burnout) whenever they complain about experiencing such harms. Discourses of work-life balance, mindfulness, and discipline, which reinforce the morals and values of the Protestant Work Ethic,²¹⁵ help to place the focus on the individual's capacities for coping, when, in reality, individuals are reacting to structural situations that they find themselves in and over which they have little control. For example, according to the Demands-Resources Theory explained by authors Edú-Valsania, Laguía, and Moriano (2022), burnout is not the result of personal shortcomings. Rather, burnout occurs as a result of an imbalance between the demands and resources derived from work. Employment demands require sustained physical and mental efforts and have consequent psychological costs "due to activation of the

²¹⁵ discussed in Chapter 2 under the section that corresponds to the discourses of the Enlightenment myth of 'Man'

hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis” (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p. 6) which performs a crucial role in the body’s response to stress. In addition, there are psychological costs to strenuous work demands, which include “subjective fatigue, reduced focus of attention, and redefinition of task requirements” (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p. 6).

The reality is that burnout happens as a result of people’s exposure to certain (unfavorable) working conditions, and therefore it should not be understood as an inherent trait of individuals, as authors Edú-Valsania, Laguía and Moriano contend burnout is caused by a (dialectical) combination of factors mainly organized according to two axes involving: “organizational factors such as [...] the workload or the emotional demands involved, and individual factors such as [...] worker’s personality or coping strategies (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p. 7). As I previously discussed in Chapter 1, gaslighting in the case of ‘Millennials’ mobilizes negative effects in order to distract and convince those already suffering from burnout to interiorize the blame for their own situation. The result is a masking of the underlying conditions of exploitation whose effects include burnout, for which people naturally complain.

Art as Care (Healing). In analyzing participant responses to artmaking, I noticed a specific manner in which most shaped their relationship to art, specifically in terms of healing. For some participants, art-making constituted not only a means of creative enjoyment but rather worked as a mechanism for recuperation that helped them cope with the harshness of reality. For example, participant PPPB shared that their engagement with art had to do with self-reconnection while facing challenging situations in their life. They shared that “art has always been there to kind of keep me from losing who I am in a really tough time.” My reading of participant PPPB’s reflection on how tough times made me realize that art saved them from misplacing who they thought themselves to be in times of struggle. Art, for PPPB worked as a mechanism by which people like them could become more in touch with their ‘core selves’ as a means to face whatever adversities were causing their lives to be difficult in terms of labor, stress and their associated negative affects.

PPPB’s account mirrored participant S’s relation to artmaking as explicitly healing. For example, B expressed that “For me, um, art is therapy. Like in the simplest terms, to me, art was always the way that I dealt with my pain.” I was particularly amazed to find a recurring connection between art and healing that I am theorizing through the notion of decolonial drawing that I am developing in response to the main Latina/x feminist frameworks structuring this study. With regard to research (also with the purpose of healing, albeit from a structural perspective) my

findings point to the fact that a decolonial approach to drawing research as queer autoarte and differential aisthesis can be extremely insightful through the notion of self-making as self-healing. The aim is to incorporate such an approach into what art educators produce through analysis of the way participants wield affects and discourses to create impressions around prompted situations and topics. For example, Ortega explains her understanding of queer autoarte as an instance of what she calls ‘differential aisthesis.’ She writes:

With this notion, I further illuminate the path that Anzaldúa has forged—an opening to multiple ways of sensing. A queer aisthesis of self-making does not put queerness in a box but rather allows the queer subject to name and transform themselves by intertwining with material and spiritual worlds. Queer autoarte stands for an aisthesis of self-making that carries with it multiple decolonial possibilities (Ortega, 2020, p. 209)

My connection between queer autoarte and the notion of symbiopoiesis as the production of selves by the many became central to the development of drawing out, especially from the perspective built by Latina/x feminisms in the sense of theorizing in the flesh.²¹⁶ I was pleased to find that this notion made sense to participants, for some of them already demonstrated having an understanding of the connection between art, care and nature as entangled, life-producing processes.

Furthermore, a focus on burnout was central in allowing me to emphasize the healing, introspective, creative, and projective aspects of this kind of drawing research performing queer autoarte. On the one hand, I was able to create a space where participants felt confident and relaxed enough to vent freely as a means to release tension while feeling listened to. The relaxation aspect also contemplated the artmaking exercise meant to help participants exteriorize qualitative descriptions around their current state that they themselves might not have considered before and without undergoing this kind of experience in dialogic drawing. I am subsequently adding some of the feedback that I received, which further emphasizes the autoarte qualities involved in drawing out.

²¹⁶ I would like to write, at a later time, specifically about the potential connection between the meaning of teonanacatl (sacred mushrooms of the Mexicas) and Anzaldúa’s theory in the flesh, since the meaning of teonanacatl is that of the ‘flesh of the gods,’ which creates an interesting point for investigation (Pitts et al., 2020)

Chapter 6

Future Steps and Conclusion

Introduction

This Chapter concludes the study “Drawing Out Fungal Care,” which was conducted as a research-informed means to uphold the importance that replenishment has for health and wellbeing of working bodies. Replenishment and reciprocity are central to metabolic health, yet they are seen as unnecessary and devalued in capitalist production, which is what causes rifting. Therefore, it is urgent to promote a profound understanding the laws that secure the precious processes by which life is produced, if the goal is to arrest and ameliorate the current environmental crisis (which encompasses burnout at a personal level). Chapter 1 provided important theoretical tenets that needed to be articulated in order for the main identified problem involving energetic depletion to make sense to readers. In disclosing my problem statement, I needed to clarify what a material analysis entailed from the perspective of decolonial Latina/x feminisms as a means to articulate possible alternatives envisioned—through this study—to the present mode of production (and reproduction). I am considering using different formats to explore with more aesthetically stimulating presentations of the information that has been woven into a dissertation for this study. I was specifically thinking about playing with a literal mycorrhizal model which could be sculpted physically or virtually as a means to organize the concepts surrounding the metabolic rift for people to grasp clearly without having to engage with text-based, challenging theory. As an art educator versed in critical theory with a decolonial agenda, I felt that it was necessary for me to create bridges (following the legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrié Moraga)²¹⁷ between the theoretical and practical aspects of this kind of decolonial, arts-based work. My intention was to create a holistic project that could invite people to engage in transdisciplinary thinking via creativity when dealing with a problem as complex as is the environmental crisis. The expansive work that I am currently involved in has a strong practical component relating to artmaking and political activism, yet it is also theory-informed and seeks to rely on a dialectical balance (homeokinesis) of concepts and exercises. Artmaking, in my experience teaching art in informal settings, can help translate theories and concepts into

²¹⁷ (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015)

impressions that are sometimes easier to understand without previous knowledge or training. Drawing can help make information more accessible to the mind through the sketching of diagrams or the tracing of shapes that can visualize abstract ideas for people to grasp them better. I have been conducting experimental drawing workshops throughout my life around the world and have found that it is easier to use drawing to help people grapple with complex ideas about the world that are usually conceptualized in a very intricate manner. The purpose of this kind of work is to strengthen the impact that projects such as this one can have in terms of helping to produce actual change, not just criticism. Furthermore, I am using this concluding chapter to present the problems and limitations that I had to overcome and take into consideration before and after conducting this study. I have taken note of important aspects that I need to further problematize and change in order to make the process easier in the future. I delve on these aspects in the next section. Subsequently, I engage in a theoretical foraging and conceptual composting of Donna Haraway's work in relation to Malthusianism and Jason Moore's problematic concept of the web of life. The next section reflects on future steps that can be taken to continue the work that has been started by this dissertation and to be able to permeate into the realm of political action, which is one of the main aims of this study. Finally, I include a conclusion section, where I reflect on the greater lessons attained as a result of having become involved with this theoretically-informed, arts-based process with an eco-socialist agenda.

Problems and Limitations

There are several issues that need to be raised with regard to the process and aims of this study. Firstly, my sample was too small to be representative, and I would like to include more identifiers in the future to be able to enrich the data analysis and interpretation. I intended to present a 'spore-print' sample of the current historical moment as lived by 22 people labeled as 'Millennials' and experiencing complete energetic depletion while undergoing labor-based stress.

When presenting fragments of this study as part of conference presentations around the world, I have been frequently asked why I chose to use a mycorrhizal model rather than Deleuze's 'rhizome.' The main reason why I chose not to make the rhizome a central figure in my work is that I am seeking to maintain consistency with the spirit of anti-coloniality that gave way to decolonization as a movement (not just a critique). Anti-coloniality is what led me to base my analysis in the teachings of decolonial Latina/x feminisms, which already perform what I would deem useful in Deleuze's theories (in terms of de-centering the figure of 'Man,' and advocating for nonlinear and horizontal kinds of interrelations). The rhizome theory is meant to provide a

metaphorical alternative to the conventional structuring of power systems in terms of verticality, or what they call ‘arborescence.’²¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari describe, (for example, referring to Noam Chomsky’s linguistic system) arborescent systems as predicated on linearity, codification, and centrism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In contrast, through the model of the mycorrhizae, I am detecting the core affective-discursive substance (agonism) that structures the conditions of global, colonial domination that shape the ‘root-systems’ of theories belonging to the postmodern philosophical tradition (especially in France) from which Deleuze speaks.

Postmodern theories do not necessary delve into the actual, material causes leading to the metabolic rift, for they suspend the important analysis of material-class relations on the basis of decontextualized relativism, whose aesthetic project follows the (rhetorically occluded by means of idealism) logic of the market.²¹⁹ After all, the rhizome stops at the etymology of root, whereas the term mycorrhiza includes the prefix *myco* (meaning ‘fungus’) adding to the suffix *rhiza* (meaning ‘root’), thus reaching further both metaphorically as well as physically; because mycorrhizal structures connect entire forests from underground operating even at microscopic levels. Borrowing Deleuze’s vocabulary, I mean to contribute to the production of knowledge from a stance that is enacting *reterritorialization-cum-deterritorialization*²²⁰ in terms of decolonization; what I mean is that my decolonial approach to reterritorialization is not meant to work as a reassertion of dominance by power, but rather as the building of a new (mycorrhizal, anti-colonial) paradigm, in the sense that Maturana would describe as *allopoietic*, or what

²¹⁸ I regard this critique of institutional arborescence as a tendency toward aesthetic fascism.

²¹⁹ For example, postmodernists go against the theory of the foundations upon which the metabolic rift is elaborated in rejecting the Marxist notion that the interests and worldview of the working class (or any other group under domination) constitute the basis for liberation of everyone. Postmodernism is also incompatible with aisthesis, as Terry Eagleton writes: The productivist aesthetics of the early twentieth-century avant garde spurned the notion of artistic ‘representation’ for an art which would be less ‘reflection’ than material intervention and organizing force. The aesthetics of postmodernism is a dark parody of such anti-representationalism: if art no longer reflects it is not because it seeks to change the world rather than mimic it, but because there is in truth nothing there to be reflected, no reality which is not itself already image, spectacle, simulacrum, gratuitous fiction. To say that social reality is pervasively commodified is to say that it is always already ‘aesthetic’—textured, packaged, fetishized, libidinalized; and for art to reflect reality is then for it to do no more than mirror itself, in a cryptic self-referentiality which is indeed one of the inmost structures of the commodity fetish (Eagleton, 1985, p. 62).

²²⁰ For reference, deterritorialization can be broadly understood as a “decoding” of flows, a dismantling of the codes of control that regulate the courses of human action, liberating them. Subsequently, reterritorialization is considered as a “re-coding” or “over-coding,” conducted primarily by the status quo or state, of what was previously decoded and deterritorialized, that is, a reassertion of domination over those courses (Ares et al., 2017).

characterizes difference-producing-systems.²²¹ Guattari, for example, refers to allopoiesis through his concept of the line of flight.²²²

Another issue that needs raising is that, without attention to impact and material conditions, the mycorrhizal model of care that I am envisioning can be co-opted and reoriented to perform the opposite of what this study intends.²²³ An example of a co-optation of a ‘mycorrhizal’ care is a monopsony. As discussed on Chapter 1, under the section that corresponds to alienation, monopsonies occur when large companies join together to protect their interests as capitalists against those of their workers. Meaning that, companies create a large labor pool to raise the demand for work (such as with the case of programmers working for Tech companies) while offering meager salaries to those who agree to perform such labor (Naidu et al., 2018).

Moreover, there is a troubling history to the way modern societies have approached the concept and practice of care in following the interests of domination. As Cotten Seiler explains (2020), empathy was once conceived as racialized whiteness’s characteristic evolutionary achievement (Hobart & Kneese, 2020).²²⁴ Agonistic at its core, Social-Darwinism, as an evolutionary theory exemplifies parasitism disguised as ‘care,’ which is an idea that I develop on Chapter 2, where I discuss the main discourses structuring the ‘Enlightenment myth of ‘Man.’’ Seiler contends that whiteness was conceptualized in the nineteenth-century as having an acquired disposition to care, as both noun and verb, giving rise to a statist, ameliorative new liberalism.

²²¹ Allopoiesis, for Maturana, in contrast to autopoiesis, refers to the capacity of systems that have as the product of their functioning something different from itself, for “allo” means other in Greek, and “poiesis” means production (Maturana & Varela, 1980).

²²² Félix Guattari (2016), conceptualizes the ‘line of flight’ (or line of deterritorialization) around the infinitesimal possibility of escape that one has to change from one paradigm to a different one: for example, from the capitalist-patriarchal paradigm to the decolonial one. Consequently, lines of flight delineate the coexistence of two asymmetric movements that project the possibility, for example, of generating a sociopolitical order different from the current one (Guattari, 2016).

²²³ One of the main arguments sustaining this study is that a material analysis attentive to class relations (with regard to exploitation) is the necessary complement to any analysis concerning systems of domination. The purpose is to resist and potentially avoid co-optation by power, which is what Guy Debord’s concept of *Spectacle* is meant to highlight (Debord, 1983).

²²⁴ The idea of white care therefore led to the creation of “institutions and infrastructure dedicated to the education, health, security, mobility, and comfort of the white citizenry,” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 18) via what Foucault referred to as the biopolitical model of ‘state racism.’

‘Care’ at that time was therefore rhetorically re-conceptualized to mean ‘white supremacist care,’ which is what happens when people are not attentive to the actual impact and interest (namely, who becomes affected and in what manner) behind what power claims to be doing. In a similar vein to Lugones’s critique intersectionality, is consequently fundamental to consider the relations of exploitation involved in labor; paying close attention to the dialectical interplay between rhetoric and impact (actual material effects) can help people and movements (coalitions) avoid having efforts that strive toward structural change become reduced to the level of critique. The mycorrhizal caring purpose (as a material standpoint) is thus to make changes in the way humanity approaches production to work in favor of the metabolic logic of Gaia. A dialectical approach to sentipensar is meant to assist in assessing whether or not ideas and actions are done in favor of the 1-OM or the 2-OI. The key concept is replenishment (through which we can avoid rifting in terms of burnout as well as ecological collapse). Metabolism is key as the first-order mediation that depends on safeguarding the laws that secure energetic replenishment in bodies of all kinds. Whether or not these laws are being respected (and who they impact) determines the level and kind of care being enacted. I would also like to continue this project with the help of other people working on similar topics on with regard to the main dimensions structuring this study: decolonial Latina/x feminisms, feminist ethnomycology, decolonial aisthesis, and ecosocialism. The reason is that I think the point of these kinds of efforts is to leverage collective empowerment and labor through holistic and transdisciplinary forms of learning-together. Finally, I have been asked to explain why it is that I have chosen to pursue the path of connection as opposed to difference when referring to the building of coalitions among people with varying background and experiences in oppression. My answer is that there is enough separation in the world already (thinking about borders and categories that establish difference between people and the environment), and, if people are to take the principle of homeokinesis seriously, it is important that they come to understand that in order to attain a dynamic balance of wellness, it is necessary to identify the adequate quantities of certain forces or processes that are present in a given system or metabolism. In this case, there is an excess of separation (linking back to the Cartesian discourse of coloniality) between people and therefore it is important that people also (not as a replacement, but as an addition) pay attention to the factors that connect them to each other and to the Earth in terms of matter and energy. The point is to expand the argument that centers on issues related to identity in order to also acknowledge the deeper evolutionary and material aspects that bind us as creatures made from the same substance than the stars. The evolutionary pathway and direction that life has taken in terms of developing mammals

from fungi can lead to different ways of thinking about how to come together in dismantling the causes that are doing away with the planet's foundations for life.

Theoretically Foraging Moore and Haraway

The main problem that I have with postmodernism, as I have discussed in the previous section, is that postmodern theories linger in the idealist plane more than they refer to a material plane of existence. For example, environmental historian Jason Moore, rather agonistically claims that the metabolic rift theory is not as suitable as a tool in describing the causes of the current environmental crisis. Instead, he promotes to replace that with his own theory of the web of life. Moore's claims, according to renowned ecology scholar Andreas Malm (who helped coin the term 'Capitalocene') assert that the metabolic rift theorists repeat the original sin of Cartesian dualism in establishing separations between interrelated spheres such as nature and society. However, their judgment of Foster's theory as dualistic reveals a lack of understanding of the main (Marxist) concepts articulating it from underneath, as Malm himself establishes:

Foster [and company] would be Cartesian if they thought that labour and nature consisted of different substances or inhabited separate spheres, so that the one could be analysed without reference to the other — a very common perception in the history of capitalist modernity but precisely the opposite of what the metabolic rift school teaches. As Foster himself retorts, 'there is no contradiction in seeing society as both separate from and irreducible to the Earth system as a whole, and simultaneously as a fundamental part of it. To call that approach 'dualist' — in the Cartesian sense — 'is comparable to denying that your heart is both an integral part of your body and a distinct organ with unique features and functions.' What Moore does here is simply to succumb to the temptation of substance and property monism (Malm, 2018, p. para 5).

In claiming the monist stance that nature and society are one in the same, and that they consequently should not be addressed as 'interacting,' Moore completely misunderstands and misrepresents the logic of Marxian dialectics (which are fundamental for Marxist thinking). Moore's misinterpretation consists in its reiterating of the postmodern critique against dialectics that is based on discourse of 'economic reductionism,' which is in itself dualistic. As I have been discussing throughout this dissertation, Marxian dialectics mirror the first order mediation of Gaia's principle metabolic homeokinesis as a dynamic balance, as opposed to a fixed/static tension between opposites (homeostasis). Transformative movement on the basis of internal contradictions is paramount for this kind of analysis, which is something that Moore blatantly

lacks.²²⁵ Furthermore, it is important to mention that Donna Haraway's thinking around the Cthulucene is grounded in Moore's work, for the latter even appears in her acknowledgment section introducing her book *Staying with the Trouble* (2016). Therefore, people engaging with Haraway's work are responsible for conceptually composting the more problematic aspects of its contents. An example of something in Haraway that needs to be composted is her stance in favor of kin over babies due to 'overpopulation,' which could be read as Malthusian and tilting toward ecofascism, as I have explained in Chapter 2. The purpose is to reorient Haraway's work toward the struggle that acknowledged exploitation under globalization (on the basis of class) that the metabolic rift theorists highlight as the main reason why there is current environmental degradation.

Future Steps

This study of 'Millennial' experiences of burnout through artmaking was not meant to be exhaustive, but rather pursued the humbler yet important aim of providing a picture—a spore print—of the current moment (throughout the duration of the COVID pandemic) as lived by individuals navigating the workforce through increasing amounts of stress that the modern/colonial 'adult' life involves. The situation that the problem statement addresses, and that involves the presence of capitalist and colonial structures of exploitation, is not new. And this is not an attempt inspired by 'Oppression Olympics' (when oppressions fight one another to see who is impacted the most) elevated to the level of generational strife, where I'm making the argument that 'poor 'Millennials' have been treated the worst.' Rather, the point is spread awareness around the logic behind the ideological domain of capitalism to be able to collectively develop critical—mycorrhizal—sensibilities (as sentipensar) to employ affects and discourses that can help existing dismantle mechanisms of agonistic domination. For example, through ideology, identity labels (such as "'Millennial'") create social divisions so as to prevent people from coming together and enacting proper structural changes to abolish the present class system regulating production so it does not entirely consume the planet.

In light of the positive feedback that I received from participants who underwent drawing out, I am thinking about possible ways in which to propose these kinds of exercises to institutions

²²⁵ Another (i)logical incoherence that Malm finds in Moore is that "Moore faults Foster and colleagues for using the word "interaction" to describe the relation between nature and society, since this wrongly presupposes that the two can be separated to begin with — for two things to interact, they must first be apart — and proposes that we should instead ask how the two 'fit together.'" (Malm, 2018, p. para 4).

involved with education and culture. From what my findings demonstrate, it becomes clear that people are missing spaces and opportunities where they can genuinely attain replenishment through creative or restful activities. These spaces need to become part of the structures by which people are made to labor in exchange for a wage, for, as this study's introductory chapters demonstrate through a rigorous articulation of relevant theory: production forcefully necessitates reproduction in order to work. For example, participant GRS's case was incredibly enlightening in terms of what they shared with me during our interview. Their burnout resulted from the specific line of work they were involved in, which exposed them to large amounts of stress and trauma. They were basically in charge of writing reports for torture victims around the Cancun area in Southeastern Mexico. For them, this type of exercise granted an ideal space to suspend the rising negative effects—in the form of pressure—that they were forced to deal with as a result of bearing witness to multiple narratives of violence of other people on a daily basis. They consequently shared that:

That's why I really, *I am really grateful with your job*. With your effort to bring [...] these possibilities to people with these difficulties with the pandemic and the job stuffs. Because *in my job, we don't have these spaces to process*, (como para procesar) or digest on the violence we hear and have to still reviewing, doing research writing, and analyze, and it's, *it's too much for human being*. And *we need these spaces, in this job you do to bring us mental health*. (Como una necesidad) Like a need so strong, [because] other people work, *especially with these very dark jobs*.

It was difficult to imagine the kind of heaviness that people like GRS usually faced on the regular, and that became heightened during the pandemic. I was content to receive this positive feedback, yet I also felt that it was not enough, because it wasn't. It was frustrating not able to do anything more than share an hour of my time with this particular participant, given their circumstances. I could sense the helplessness and stress from the drawing GRS made in terms of self-representing as having roots that maniacally took over most of the space in the page (refer to Appendix B, drawing V.). I was therefore compelled to reflect on the possibility of implementing these kinds of dialogic drawing exercises within already established curricula of various institutions that are involved in social caregiving. The aim would be to push to make it a structural and material reality that therapists, counselors, social workers and people involved with very strenuous and intense matters are granted precious time to replenish and restore their mental health levels (considering psychoaffective metabolic functionality), to be able to keep going without succumbing to the effects of the metabolic rift in the form of burnout.

I am consequently considering the possibility of developing this line of research in the future to offer different modalities of drawing out that can accommodate different needs. The main purpose being to have workers (and people in general) engage with creative-replenishing practices not just as a performative means to avoid blame for exploitation, but rather as integral aspects of the labor process. I know that not every person has the same attention span nor they share the same interests, but they all require creative replenishment of some sort for their general wellbeing. For instance, I was appreciative of participant B's suggestion for conducting drawing out in a person-to-person manner, they shared that "I'm not sure if I would engage in a course or maybe a few therapy sessions or something like that. Four sessions or for drawing like that I'm think small with you." This response seemed reasonable in the sense that there can be ways in which drawing out could be molded to work in shorter and longer periods of time, depending on the specific needs of the people involved (with an emphasis on context). The point is to spread awareness of the fact that structural problems require structural solutions that center collective, interconnected action and praxis.

One of the main lessons that this study found is that generations constitute yet another marker for creating division, or rifts in the social fabric. Nevertheless, also centering the situation of 'Millennials' is meant to address the fact that, even though the structures of exploitation have been 'the same,' in terms of affecting previous generations under similar circumstances and similar periods of crisis in the past, the current situation is unprecedented because the destruction rate at which capitalism operates in the present (aided by technologies that incentivize predatory and destructive extraction). In a nutshell, people have gone from 'keeping up with the Joneses' to 'Keeping up with the Kardashians' (from middle class representations of economic aspiration to that of the billionaire classes). Namely, the situation has worsened as time has gone by, meaning that the current labor context, and its effects, are not exactly the same as they used to be ten years ago, let alone fifty or more. And the threat of ecological destruction is nearer than ever, fueling the anxiety that many young people feel over having to find ways to survive in the future. I would like to continue working in this line of research to provide even more information about how we can come to form care webs that are oriented toward actual liberation in terms of action, not just as rhetoric or criticism.

Consequently, since this project is meant to be open and ongoing, further research is needed for attaining important nuances that require additional research methods to be included in this kind of study. For instance, although this is not an art therapy practice as such, it mirrors some of the projective and interpretive methods and aims on the basis of retrieving participant

impressions and perceptions—mediated through language— around drawings they make in response to prompts for analysis (Lin et al., 2020). I would like to further connect this kind of research with an institution that performs transdisciplinary work as research, for it would be fascinating to add a neurobiological component to the analysis of drawings in dialogue.

A larger sample could convey even better results, but it would also demand more time and better conditions for conducting research with more time and energy. ‘Drawing out,’ after all, is meant to be performed both intimately as well as in a collectivity, for what is implied in terms of forming care webs and coalitions is that it is vital that people begin to organize in coalitions to be able to wield enough power to dismantle the structures that create and manage domination. A single individual’s efforts count, but they are not enough to materialize a proper mode of resistance against the institutionalized social order that configures the second-order imposition of capitalism.

Furthermore, through an analysis of the importance of symbiogenesis in humanity’s evolutionary becoming (as the production of life in togetherness), this study aimed to stress the importance of inter-relationality as a natural fact and as the necessary condition for trans-species survival. Although what this study identifies to be the main problem with the way humans organize production in the present is the affective-discursive substance of agonism, the point is not to absolutely do away with all agonism in the world, for that would promote a reductive and dualistic way of thinking. Rather, following the principles of metabolic homeokinesis in terms of healing, as I discussed with regard to a Hippocratic approach to curing the body, I argue that the ultimate objective is to restore a dynamic balance between agonism and care (as playfulness and loving perception).²²⁶ Reciprocity is thus fundamental, and signals a need for a new politics that actively embraces the natural sense and logic to the way things are produced (appropriated, extracted, and transformed), distributed (shared) and replenished (reproduced, and sustained), with attention to the way mycorrhizal fungi perform care ‘politically’ in nature, not just from an ethics point of view. The first order mediation is not just metaphorical, for it has a material basis that relies on specific laws that humans need to respect in order to reestablish the metabolic

²²⁶ To explain my work to others, I usually employ the metaphor of a salad having too much vinegar in its dressing. What I explain is that the presence of vinegar is important for the optimal flavor and should not be omitted entirely, but if there is an excess of it, its acidity ruins the experience in terms of taste saturation. Therefore, it is important to know how much honey (care, for substance compensation) is needed to be counter the corrosive effects of ‘vinegar’ (agonism) in order to restore homeokinesis. Agonistic vinegar needs to be reduced in order for Gaia’s metabolism to replenish itself naturally, as it does, following its own metabolic logic in the absence of human-made impositions that alter its life-producing processes.

balance (homeokinesis) that is necessary for its health. Thus, by pursuing a change of paradigm with regard to production and reproduction, this study intends to have human-animals reinsert themselves into the cycles and systems of life that produced them and that they need to survive, regardless of what their constructed narratives and myths of economic ‘excellence’ portend. A reinsertion into the metabolic mycorrhiza (instead of ‘web’) of life is what indigenous groups are calling for when they act against the predatory power of industrial agriculture. Anthropogenic forests can be activated again, if only humans learn to work in collaboration as opposed to (solely and infinite) competition/agonism.

An additional purpose of this study is to advance the development of an emerging discipline called ‘decolonial, feminist ethnomycology,’ which is presently being shaped by the work of scholars Elspeth Mitchell and Lenka Vrábliková in Czechia and in the UK. The aim is to create a new space for knowledge production that raises awareness around the fundamental work that women and nature are performing in sustaining communities in specific relation to the production and consumption of fungi. The role that fungi have in nature, as community-sustainers, needs to be celebrated and made widely known, especially with regard to the history of mycological studies. This is what local mycologists from my area in Querétaro are saying: there are not enough people doing taxonomy and the vast majority of extant species have barely been grazed due to lack of research and funding.²²⁷ I intend to use this study to help with the building of an ecosocialist-inspired, community project in the area of Amealco in Querétaro, where I grew up, and where I am currently involved with a family of Indigenous women of Hñähñu origin who are mushroom foragers engaged in attempting to make a living out of sharing their profound knowledge on the benefits of using fungi for sustenance (as medicine, food and spiritual gift) for health.

Finally, I would like to add that my own experience of pandemic burnout as an international student studying in the US has considerably limited the scope of possibilities in terms of research accomplishments given the circumstances, for I have had to prioritize my health and the safety of my family in Mexico, in order to avoid hospitalization, which has happened already twice in the past year. As other scholars who also experience chronic pain due to invisible

²²⁷ I learned about the appalling lack of research that exists in mycological studies by taking a course on Mexican ethnomycology with Dr. Daniel Robles, an expert mycologist from the Autonomous University of Querétaro (UAQ) in Mexico. Dr. Robles and I are presently collaborating with the Flores family (who include three generations of Hñähñu women who are mushroom growers and foragers) in Xajay, Amealco. Dr. Robles has dedicated his research to combining Eurocentric methods for research with ancestral and Indigenous knowledge about mushrooms and mycelia in Mexico.

disabilities know, it is not easy to concentrate in the face of physiological adversities (which become active through stress), so I hope that this research also contributes to ongoing efforts in ending ‘overextension’ in the words of Rodino-Colocino. Doing so would definitely help alleviate the burnout pandemic.

Conclusion

In response to the multiple, intertwined adversities that humanity faces in the present, this dissertation study offered a qualitative examination of ‘Millennial’ burnout, framed as a personal-level expression of the metabolic rift. Approaching the phenomenon of energetic depletion from a complex vantage point allowed to frame examples such as burnout (at a personal level), or environmental collapse (at a global level), as symptoms of the same phenomenon, albeit acting at different levels. Through a carefully drafted tracing of the main concepts that help explain the metabolic rift theory from the perspective of Marxist dialectics, I framed the introductory Chapters of this dissertation as the base from which to build an argument in favor of the construction of a new politics of care based on mycorrhizal fungi. Identifying agonism as the main substance fueling coloniality on the basis of its reassertion of problematic discourses related to the idea of The Enlightenment Myth of ‘Man,’ this study promoted a paradigmatic shift toward loving perception and playfulness as a way to politically enact and secure care (replenishment and reproduction). In order to navigate these theories, I designed a dialogic drawing exercise called drawing out, that I conducted with twenty-two participants (burned out ‘Millennials’) whose interviews I transcribed and coded to learn about the particular ways in which they described their state of burnout with regard to their identity as ‘Millennials.’

From the findings presented in this study, I am stressing the urgency that scholars concerned with environmental justice and ecosocialism have in orienting a materially coherent, action-based critiques to stress the material and structural causes that are actively destroying the networks of support that living beings need to survive. The mission concerns firstly addressing the second-order imposition that is the capitalist system of production, and that is what ultimately jeopardizes Gaia’s metabolism, thwarting the fundamental underlying processes upon which life depends.

The aim of this study was partly to shed light on previously unacknowledged understandings of the causes leading to the metabolic rift and its effects: both in terms of energetic depletion lacking replenishment at the level of the planet and at the level of human workers. The point was not to establish grounds from which to justify a war between generations,

but rather I sought to paint a picture of the present in terms of signaling the urgent need to finally change the structures that have been leading to unhappiness because of their inherent hostility (in terms of their production of death as necropolitics) disguised under the language of faux ‘love’ and ‘progress.’ The situation is that people desperately need care in the face of an exacerbation of crises. Reiterating a fact mentioned by Harris that I discussed in Chapter 1, “The average young person under 18 today scores (in terms of levels of anxiety, depression, and fear) in the same range as the average child psychiatric patient did in the 50s” (Strelka Institute, n.d.). This fact shows that people’s mental health has severely declined over the years, pointing to the situation that the even though the structure is the same, time has exacerbated its effects on younger people.

From the themes that I presented in the findings section of this final Chapter, I contend that individuals labelled as ‘Millennials’ are subjected to forms of gaslighting that fuel their state of burnout. Gaslighting works, in this case, in terms of instructing people told to do the impossible (to face an impossible task) and expecting them to succeed. The discourses that individualize labor hide the fact that the current state of production could be handled differently, in looking to respect the natural order of the world, if not for systems of domination. A change of paradigm from agonism to metabolic, loving care would involve a fairer distribution of labor roles and effects, such as in making sure that the produced values are recognized and repaid accordingly as opposed to be left as invisible and unwaged surplus labor.

Drawing and living as self-constructing activities can be oriented to pay attentive care to the metabolic standing of living beings regarding their necessary mediations with nature. I am framing this change as a process of developing new mycelial threads (loving rapport) in existing, and other-than-human, active subjectivities. For Alain Badiou, this entails the building of a new political dwelling, where the light/perception is changed to realize that “being together is enough” (Badiou, 2011, p. 33). Badiou proposes that the goal of pure drawing is “to institute a new world, not by the strength of means, like images, painting, colors, an(sic) so on, but by the minimalism of some marks and lines, very close to the inexistence of any place.” (2011, para 34). He considers drawing to be, on the one hand the intensity of weakness and on the other, the victory of vulnerability qua femininity (energetically speaking). I thus focus on the aspects of drawing as an expansive praxis that invoke the energizing process of life as an event of collision and fusion, in terms of evolutionary symbiopoiesis. Invoking metabolic energy in coalition-building implies plunging deep into the level of contradictions, to delve into the discursive aspects of coloniality that people’s affective capacities can detect via the body or the sensorium.

The process of thinking through drawing shares characteristics common to many domains

in the arts and sciences. Improvisation, analogy and metaphor, exploration and invention have their place in a variety of creative pursuits. Yet, the simplicity of marks on paper as a direct externalization of thought makes drawing a particularly good case study of the human imagination at work. The act of drawing can be understood as the creation of a physical space to play with thoughts outside the confines of the mind, to see and manipulate ideas and perceptions in visible form.²²⁸ As the biologist Emiliano Salvucci suggests:

Autopoiesis, symbiopoiesis, and evolution of biological systems by integration of complex systems are emergent theories that take into account facts and biological properties instead of economical transactions and are plausible explanations to understand biological diversity and evolutionary process. This could make possible more accurate interpretations of biological processes as well as a new perception and attitude toward nature. It is necessary that biology allow the emergence of other points of view and alternative analysis, otherwise it is a dogmatic discipline of unique thinking and with a great deal of faith (Salvucci, 2012, p. 9)

I am energized by the idea of drawing as symbiopoiesis, and I use these as examples of what can be done with the drawing-thinking-sensing mindset that I am exploring; while distilling the substance of my imagination into lines of texture and patterns on any surface, bringing me closer to the structures of my own fluid sense-perception. The lines that I draw seem to traverse through my body like threads of intensity, bringing life into my being. These threads also leave a trace for others to be able to jump into that other co-emerging world in order to play and keep creating through togetherness. Through exploring the sensible power of lines and images, people can distinguish facets of their being that come out spontaneously, in stark contrast to the categorical, normative role each person is supposed to perform. Decolonial drawing can help people come in touch with their own metabolic logic, in terms of physiology as well as psychology. In conclusion, drawing out is meant to help us envision a model for a new politics of care that grounds its values around the principle of symbiopoiesis as the metabolic production of life or ‘worlding,’ through togetherness. This concerns shifting from a paradigm structured by agonism toward another forged

²²⁸ Having been impacted throughout my life by the way other artists have played with drawing and performance has influenced my own regard towards drawing. Among my greatest notable influences, I consider Louise Bourgeois’ insomnia drawings, both Trisha Brown’s and Carolee Schneemann’s drawing performances, Liliana Porter’s drawing sculptures, Francisco Toledo’s drawing imaginary, William Kentridge’s charcoal animations, David Oliveira’s and Anthony Gormley’s wire sculptures, Monika Grzymala’s tape installations, Ana Mendieta’s earth sculptures, Nicolas Paris’ pedagogical drawing exercises, Richard Long’s lines of walking, and Claudia Bernardi’s walls of hope, just to name a few examples.

in loving collaboration, inspired by the way mycorrhizae perform care in nature. Drawing out how each person thinks-feels about the relation between care and crisis is a start.

References

- Anderson, J. L., Sellbom, M., Ayearst, L., Quilty, L. C., Chmielewski, M., & Bagby, R. M. (2015). Associations Between DSM-5 Section III Personality Traits and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory 2-Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF) Scales in a Psychiatric Patient Sample. *Psychological Assessment, 27*(3), 801–815. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000096>
- Anderson, K. B., Durkin, K., & Brown, H. A. (Eds.). (2021). *Raya Dunayevskaya's intersectional marxism: Race, class, gender, and the dialectics of liberation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands: La frontera: The new mestiza* (1st ed.). Aunt Lute Books. <https://go.exlibris.link/szK6mxxH>
- Anzaldúa, G., & Keating, A. (2015). *Light in the dark: Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality*. Duke University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/wZP3NbR7>
- Ares, N., Buendía, E., Helfenbein, R. J., & SpringerLink (Online service). (2017). *Deterritorializing/reterritorializing: Critical geography of educational reform*. SensePublishers. <https://go.exlibris.link/hGtt367b>
- Badiou, A. (2011). Drawing – The Symptom 12. *Lacanian Ink*. <https://lacan.com/symptom12/?p=65>
- Barad, K. (2014). Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax, 20*(3), 168–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927623>
- Bastian, M. (2006). Haraway's lost cyborg and the possibilities of transversalism. *Signs, 31*(4), 1027–1049. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.1086/500597>

- Bauer, D. M., & McKinstry, S. J. (1991). *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the dialogic*. State University of New York Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/tN4sDpdb>
- Beerbohm, E., & W. Davis, R. (2021). Gaslighting citizens. *American Journal of Political Science, Journal Article*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12678>
- Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke UP. <https://go.exlibris.link/VBFvC3dv>
- Blake, A. (2021, November 30). How Biden and Trump actually compare on coronavirus deaths. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/11/30/biden-trump-compare-covid-deaths/>
- Bohrer, A. J. (2020). Toward a decolonial feminist anticapitalism: María Lugones, Sylvia Wynter, and Sayak Valencia. *Hypatia*, 35(3), 524–541.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2020.20>
- Borger, J. (2021, May 4). CIA forges unity in diversity: Everybody hates their ‘woke’ recruitment ad. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/04/cia-woke-recruitment-ad>
- Brooks, D. (2000, November 5). What’s the matter with kids today? Not a thing. *The New York Times*.
<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/00/11/05/reviews/001105.05brookst.html>
- Butler-Kisber, L., & Poldma, T. (2010). The Power of visual approaches in qualitative inquiry: The use of collage making and concept mapping in experiential research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(2), M18. <https://go.exlibris.link/BhFTHPz9>
- Capous-Desyllas, M., & Morgaine, K. (2018). *Creating social change through creativity: Anti-oppressive arts-based research methodologies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://go.exlibris.link/qb4d5zTj>

- Capra, F., & Luisi, P. L. (2014). *The systems view of life: A unifying vision*. Cambridge University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/Mj3nZD0S>
- Carignan, S., Deihl, J., Harris, J., Jones, J., & Rothman, R. (1981). *Burnout: Multi-dimensional study of alienation among social service workers in the Willamette Valley* [MA Dissertation, Portland State University].
https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4508&context=open_access_etds
- Carter, M. (2003). *Where writing begins: A postmodern reconstruction*. Southern Illinois University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/HbFMnpZp>
- Charen, T. (1951). The etymology of medicine. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 39(3), 216–221. <https://go.exlibris.link/p5f3VQTp>
- Chasman, D., & Cohen, J. (Eds.). (2020). *The politics of care*. Boston Review and Verso Books.
- Chatzidakis, A., Hakim, J., Littler, J., Rottenberg, C., Segal, L., & Care Collective. (2020). *The care manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. Verso Books.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785–810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- Clark, B., & Foster, J. B. (2010). The dialectic of social and ecological metabolism: Marx, Mészáros, and the absolute limits of capital. *Socialism and Democracy*, 24(2), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2010.481447>
- Clark, L. N. (2018, May 16). Why millennial precarity should change the way we think about class. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/the-establishment/why-millennial-precarity-should-change-the-way-we-think-about-class-1cde377caf0>
- CNN Editorial Research. (2022, March 30).
<https://www.manchesterhive.com/view/9781526121912/9781526121912.xml>. *CNN*

Health. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/09/health/covid-19-pandemic-timeline-fast-facts/index.html>

Combahee River Collective, -. (2019). A Black feminist statement. *Monthly Review (New York. 1949)*, 70(8), 29–36. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-070-08-2019-01_3

Connolly, J. (2019). Generational Conflict and the Sociology of Generations: Mannheim and Elias Reconsidered. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(7–8), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419827085>

Costa, X. (2021). In girum revisited: From Guy Debord's *dérive* to the situationist view of history. *European Review (Chichester, England)*, 29(1), 78–82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720000599>

Curiel, O., & Galindo, M. (n.d.). *Descolonización y despatriarcalización de y desde los feminismos de Abya Yala*. Scribd. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from <https://es.scribd.com/document/384167709/Descolonizacion-y-despatriarcalizacion-de-y-desde-los-feminismos-de-Abya-Yala-Ochy-Curiel-Maria-Galindo>

Dai, H., Much, A. A., Maor, E., Asher, E., Younis, A., Xu, Y., Lu, Y., Liu, X., Shu, J., & Bragazzi, N. L. (2022). Global, regional, and national burden of ischaemic heart disease and its attributable risk factors, 1990–2017: Results from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *European Heart Journal. Quality of Care & Clinical Outcomes*, 8(1), 50–60. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehjqcco/qcaa076>

Dawson, D. (1996). The origins of war: Biological and anthropological theories. *History and Theory*, 35(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505515>

Debord, G. (1983). *Society of the spectacle* (K. Knabb, Trans.). Rebel Press.

DeCaroli, S. (2020). Arendt's "krisis". *Ethics and Education*, 15(2), 173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2020.1732121>

- Delaney, B. (2016, October 17). Baby boomers have already taken all the houses, now they're coming for our brunch. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/17/baby-boomers-have-already-taken-all-the-houses-now-theyre-coming-for-our-brunch>
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Dijk, H. van, Kooij, D., Karanika-Murray, M., Vos, A. D., & Meyer, B. (2020). Meritocracy a myth?: A multilevel perspective of how social inequality accumulates through work. *Organizational Psychology Review, 10*(3–4), 240–269.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386620930063>
- DiPietro, P. J., McWeeny, J., & Roshanravan, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Speaking face to face: The visionary philosophy of María Lugones*. Albany State University of New York Press.
- Distribution of household wealth in the U.S. since 1989*. (2022). Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.
<https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/chart/#quarter:129;series:Net%20worth;demographic:generation;population:all;units:levels;range:1989.3,2021.4>
- Doherty, A. S., Mallett, J., Leiter, M. P., & McFadden, P. (2021). Measuring burnout in social work: Factorial validity of the Maslach burnout inventory – human services survey. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment : Official Organ of the European Association of Psychological Assessment, 37*(1), 6–14. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000568>
- Dolber, B., Rodino-Colocino, M., Kumanyika, C., & Wolfson, T. (2021). *The gig economy: Workers and media in the age of convergence*. Routledge.
<https://go.exlibris.link/vcXjctR>

- Dyett, J., & Thomas, C. (2019). Overpopulation discourse: Patriarchy, racism, and the specter of ecofascism. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 2019;18;(1–2), 205–224. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341514>
- Eagleton, T. (1985). Capitalism, modernism and postmodernism. *New Left Review*, No(Journal Article), 60–73. <https://go.exlibris.link/0w9Qcljn>
- Edú-Valsania, S., Laguía, A., & Moriano, J. A. (2022). Burnout: A review of theory and measurement. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1780. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031780>
- Eigler, F. (1995). Feminist criticism and Bakhtin's dialogic principle: Making the transition from theory to textual analysis. *Women in German Yearbook*, 11(1), 189–203. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wgy.1995.0016>
- Elliot, S. (1997, January 21). As Pepsi regroups, it strikes a generational note once again. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/21/business/as-pepsi-regroups-it-strikes-a-generational-note-once-again.html>
- Escobar, A. (2014). *Sentipensar con la tierra: Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia*. Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana UNAULA. http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Colombia/escpos-unaula/20170802050253/pdf_460.pdf
- Exploitation rate*. (2020). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. <https://archive.unescwa.org/exploitation-rate>
- Farjoun, M. (2019). Strategy and dialectics: Rejuvenating a long-standing relationship. *Strategic Organization*, 17(1), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127018803255>
- Foster, J. B. (1999). Marx's theory of metabolic rift: Classical foundations for environmental sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(2), 366–405. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210315>
- Foster, J. B. (2000). *Marx's ecology: Materialism and nature*. Monthly Review Press.

- Foster, J. B. (2018). The expropriation of nature. *Monthly Review (New York, 1949)*, 69(10), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-069-10-2018-03_1
- Foster, J. B., & Burkett, P. (2000). The dialectic of organic/inorganic relations: Marx and the Hegelian Philosophy of Nature. *Organization & Environment*, 13(4), 403–425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026600134002>
- Foster, J. B., & Clark, B. (2018). Women, nature, and capital in the industrial revolution. *Monthly Review (New York, 1949)*, 69(8), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-069-08-2018-01_1
- Foster, J., B., & Clark, B. (2020). *Capitalism and the ecological rift: The robbery of nature*. Monthly Review Press.
- Frank, P., & Shorr, P. (1937). The Mechanical versus the mathematical conception of nature. *Philosophy of Science*, 4(1), 41–74. JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/184581>
- Fraser, N. (2016). Contradictions of capital and care. *New Left Review*, 100, 99. <https://go.exlibris.link/4cKB6Gmv>
- Garner, S., & Ebrary, I. (2008). *Writing on drawing: Essays on drawing practice and research: Vol. 6*. Intellect. <https://go.exlibris.link/rN6LIGTW>
- Gaztambide-Fernandez, R. (2014). Decolonial options and artistic/aesthetic entanglements: An interview with Walter D. Mignolo. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(1), 196–212. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0>
- Geerts, E., & Van der Tuin, I. (2021). Almanac: Diffraction & reading diffractively. *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, 2(1), 173–177. <https://doi.org/10.1344/jnmr.v2i1.33380>
- Gill, L. (2004). The school of the Americas: Military training and political violence in the Americas. In *Duke University Press, 2004. xviii+281 pp* (p. xviii+281). Duke University Press.

- Gimenez, M. (2019). *Marx, women, and capitalist social reproduction: Marxist feminist essays: Vol. 169;169.*; Brill. <https://go.exlibris.link/PVSCy710>
- Glapka, E. (2019). Critical affect studies: On applying discourse analysis in research on affect, body and power. *Discourse & Society*, 30(6), 600–621.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519870039>
- Goldstein, J. (2017, January 19). *The surprising history of “snowflake” as a political insult.*
<https://archive.thinkprogress.org/all-the-special-snowflakes-aaf1a922f37b/>
- Gross, J., Hayne, H., & Drury, T. (2009). Drawing facilitates children’s reports of factual and narrative information: Implications for educational contexts. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 23(7), 953–971. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1518>
- Guattari, F. (2016). *Lines of flight: For another world of possibilities.* Bloomsbury Academic, An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. <https://go.exlibris.link/BHQDvfer>
- Hamm, B., Karafa, M., Yu, P. C., Rose, S., & Neuendorf, K. (2020). Comparison of burnout and empathy among millennial and generation x residents and fellows: Associations with training level and race but not generation affiliation. *Academic Psychiatry*, 44(4), 388–393. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-020-01226-9>
- Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities*, 6(1), 159–165. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene.* Duke University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/SZ2C4NVL>
- Harper. (n.d.a). *Metabolism.* Online Etymology Dictionary. etymonline.com/word/metabolism
- Harper, D. (n.d.-b). *Etymology of *dhghem-.* Online Etymology Dictionary.
https://www.etymonline.com/word/*dhghem-#etymonline_v_52659
- Harper, D. (n.d.-c). Etymology of Revolution (n.). In *Online Etymology Dictionary.*
<https://www.etymonline.com/word/revolution>

- Harris, M. (2017, November 9). The Costs of Being a Millennial: Adapting to the new economy has made young people drastically more worried and dissatisfied than their parents' generation. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/145734/costs-millennial>
- Harvey, F. (2021, August 9). Major climate changes inevitable and irreversible – IPCC's starkest warning yet. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/aug/09/humans-have-caused-unprecedented-and-irreversible-change-to-climate-scientists-warn>
- Helguera, P. (2011). *Education for socially engaged art: A materials and techniques handbook*. Jorge Pinto Books. <https://go.exlibris.link/Bl8GZKQs>
- Hippocrates. (1978). *Hippocratic writings* (G. E. R. Lloyd, Ed.). Penguin Books. <https://go.exlibris.link/6RP633BK>
- Hirji, S. (2021). Oppressive Double Binds. *Ethics*, 131(4), 643–669. <https://doi.org/10.1086/713943>
- Hobart, H. J. K., & Kneese, T. (2020). Radical care. *Social Text*, 38(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-7971067>
- Hohne, K. A., & Wussow, H. (1994). *A Dialogue of voices: Feminist literary theory and Bakhtin* (N-New). University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctttsn34>
- Holstein, M., & Mitzen, P. (2001). *Ethics in community-based elder care*. Springer.
- Hoppania, H.-K. (2019). Politicisation, engagement, depoliticisation: The neoliberal politics of care. *Critical Social Policy*, 39(2), 229–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018318772032>
- Iberall, A. S., & McCulloch, W. S. (1969). The organizing principle of complex living systems. *Journal of Basic Engineering*, 91(2), 290–294. <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.3571099>
- Illing, S. (2020, December 3). *How millennials became the burnout generation*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/21473579/millennials-great-recession-burnout-anne-helen-petersen>

- Jagodzinski, J., & Wallin, J. (2013). *Arts-based research: A critique and a proposal*. Sense Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-185-6>
- Jiang, X., & Yang, H. (2016). Impacts of optimism and job characteristics on job burnout among the millennial generation: Evidence from a survey of community service workers in Shaanxi, China. *Revista de Cercetare Şi Intervenție Socială*, 53(Journal Article), 185.
- Kantrowitz, A., Angela Brew, & Michelle Fava (Eds.). (2011). *Thinking through drawing: Practice into knowledge*. Columbia University.
- Karen Keifer-Boyd, P. D. (2011a). Arts-based research as social justice activism: Insight, inquiry, imagination, embodiment, relationality. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2011.4.1.3>
- Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph. D. (2011b). Arts-based Research as Social Justice Activism. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 3–19. JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/10.1525/irqr.2011.4.1.3>
- Kearney, K. S., & Hyle, A. E. (2012). Drawing out emotions: The use of participant-produced drawings in qualitative inquiry. In Jason Hughes (Ed.), *SAGE Visual Methods* (Vol. 4, pp. v4-239). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104047234>
- Keifer-Boyd, K., Knochel, A. D., Patton, R. M., & Sweeny, R. W. (2018). Posthumanist movement art pedagogy: Geolocative awareness and co-figurative agency with mobile learning. *Studies in Art Education*, 59(1), 22–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2017.1406227>
- Kenny, C. (2011, September 20). Foreign policy: The myth of the middle class. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2011/09/20/140625457/foreign-policy-the-myth-of-the-middle-class>
- Kentridge, W. (2014). *Six drawing lessons*. Harvard University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/Qw22F2p5>

- Kininmonth, K. (2016). Weber's protestant work ethic: A case study of Scottish entrepreneurs, the Coats family of Paisley. *Business History*, 58(8), 1236–1261.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2016.1172569>
- Knight, W. B. (2006). E(raced) bodies in and out of sight/cite/site. *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 26, 323. <https://go.exlibris.link/S73ZNYd5>
- Kolb, B. M. (2008). *Marketing research for non-profit, community and creative organizations: How to improve your product, find customers and effectively promote your message*. Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann. <https://go.exlibris.link/wtlwYmzD>
- Letzter, R. (2019, September 26). *Are we really running out of time to stop climate change?* Livescience.Com. <https://www.livescience.com/12-years-to-stop-climate-change.html>
- Levin, S. (2017). Millionaire tells millennials: If you want a house, stop buying avocado toast. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/may/15/australian-millionaire-millennials-avocado-toast-house>
- Levis, C., Costa, F. R. C., Bongers, F., Peña-Claros, M., Clement, C. R., Junqueira, A. B., Neves, E. G., Tamanaha, E. K., Figueiredo, F. O. G., Salomão, R. P., Castilho, C. V., Magnusson, W. E., Phillips, O. L., Guevara, J. E., Cárdenas López, D., Mendoza, A. M., Nuñez-Vargas, P., Zartman, C. E., Anade, A., ... ter Steege, H. (2017). Persistent effects of pre-Columbian plant domestication on Amazonian forest composition. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 355(6328), 925–931.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aal0157>
- Lewis, T. E. (2017). A Marxist education of the encounter: Althusser, interpellation, and the seminar. *Rethinking Marxism*, 29(2), 303.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2017.1358498>

- Lin, Y. S., Hartwich, P., Wolff, A., Golesorkhi, M., & Northoff, G. (2020). The self in art therapy – Brain-based assessment of the drawing process. *Medical Hypotheses*, 138(Journal Article), 109596–109596. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mehy.2020.109596>
- Loseke, D. R. (2009). Examining emotion as discourse: Emotion codes and presidential speeches justifying war. *Sociological Quarterly*, 50(3), 497–524. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2009.01150.x>
- Lugones, M. (1987). Playfulness, “world”-travelling, and loving perception. *Hypatia*, 2(2), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1987.tb01062.x>
- Lugones, M. (2003). *Pilgrimages: Peregrinajes: Theorizing coalition against multiple oppressions*. Rowman & Littlefield. <https://go.exlibris.link/68B6tcPS>
- Lugones, M. (2006). On Complex Communication. *Hypatia*, 21(3), 75–85. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hyp.2006.0030>
- Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, 25(4), 742–759. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x>
- Lugones, M. (2014). Radical multiculturalism and women of color feminisms. *JCRT*, 13(1).
- Lykes, M. B., & Crosby, A. (2014). Creativity as an intervention strategy with Mayan women in Guatemala. *Intervention (Amstelveen, Netherlands)*, 12(1), 30–42. <https://doi.org/10.1097/WTF.0000000000000021>
- MacDonald, F. (2010). Relational group autonomy: Ethics of care and the multiculturalism paradigm. *Hypatia*, 25(1), 196–212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01091.x>
- Mah y Busch, J. D. (2014). The importance of the heart in Chicana artistry: Aesthetic struggle, aisthesis, “freedom.” In *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture* (Vol. 1–Book, Section, p. 97). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://go.exlibris.link/kPkVLVyk>
- Malatino, H. (2020). *Trans care*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv17mrv14>

- Mallapaty, S. (2022, March 4). COVID-19: How Omicron overtook Delta in three charts. *Nature*.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00632-3>
- Malm, A. (2018, March 16). In defence of metabolic rift theory [Publisher Blog]. *Verso Blog*.
<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3691-in-defence-of-metabolic-rift-theory>
- Margulis, L. (1971). Symbiosis and evolution. *Scientific American*, 225(2), 48–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0871-48>
- Marx, K. (1955). *The Communist Manifesto* (S. H. Beer, Ed.). Appleton-Century-Corfts, Inc.
- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital volume I* (B. Fowkes, Trans.). Penguin Books.
- Marx, K. (1993). *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy (rough draft)*.
Penguin Books, in association with New Left Review.
- Marx, K., Engels, F., & Arthur, C. J. (2001). *The German ideology*. Electric Book Co.
<https://go.exlibris.link/5HQ7VXzp>
- Maturana, H., & Varela, F. (1980). *Autopoiesis and cognition: The realization of the living*. D.
Reidel Publishing Company.
- Maybee, J. E. (2020). *Hegel's Dialectics* (E. N. Zalta, Ed.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of
Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/hegel-dialectics/>
- McAvoy, J. (2015). From ideology to feeling: Discourse, emotion, and an analytic synthesis.
Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12(1), 22–33.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.958357>
- McCoy, A. W. (2003). *The politics of heroin: CIA complicity in the global drug trade, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Colombia* (Rev., 2nd rev.). Lawrence Hill
Books. <https://go.exlibris.link/KKxBDprP>
- Merchant, C. (1980). *The death of nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution* (1st ed.).
Harper & Row. <https://go.exlibris.link/fr6FbR35>

- Merchant, C. (1989). *The death of nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution*. Harper & Row. <https://go.exlibris.link/DvRb2YF1>
- Merchant, C. (2020). *The anthropocene and the humanities: From climate change to a new age of sustainability*. Yale University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/kLwykTJt>
- Mészáros, I. (1970). *Marx's theory of alienation*. Harper & Row.
- Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. Fernwood Publications.
<https://go.exlibris.link/HK8Xy92r>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). Aesthesis decolonial. *Calle 14 Revista de Investigación En El Campo Del Arte*, 4(4), 10–25. <https://doi.org/10.14483/21450706.1224>
- Mishel, L., Gould, E., & Bivens, J. (2015). Wage stagnation in nine charts. *Economic Policy Institute*. [<http://perma.cc/R2C5-QAH5>]
- Mitchell, B., & Lennox, R. (2020). “You gotta be able to pay your own way”: Canadian news media discourse and young adults’ subjectivities of successful adulting. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 45(3), 213–237. <https://go.exlibris.link/pGSNG97S>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). “Under western eyes” revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 499–535.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/342914>
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (2015). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (Fourth). State University of New York (SUNY) Press.
<https://go.exlibris.link/Mw276LXs>
- MSCI. (2021). *How millennials consume character trait or economic reaction?* MSCI.
<https://www.msci.com/documents/1296102/17292317/ThematicIndex-Millennials-cbr-en.pdf/44668168-67fd-88cd-c5f7-855993dce7c4>
- Mualim, M. (2021). A City Upon a Hill: Spirituality and Exceptionalism in the Founding of America. *British and American Studies: B.A.S*, 27(Journal Article), 85–305.

- Nagle, A. (2017). *Kill all normies: The online culture wars from Tumblr and 4chan to the alt-right and Trump*. Zero Books. <https://go.exlibris.link/Jy5NWqXs>
- Naidu, S., Posner, E., & Weyl, G. (2018, April 6). More and more companies have monopoly power over workers' wages. That's killing the economy. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/4/6/17204808/wages-employers-workers-monopsony-growth-stagnation-inequality>
- Nancy, J.-L., & Armstrong, P. (2013). *The pleasure in drawing* (First). Fordham University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/LQ7qbjFK>
- Onori, L., & Visconti, G. (2012). The Gaia theory: From Lovelock to Margulis. From a homeostatic to a cognitive autopoietic worldview. *Atti Della Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei. Rendiconti Lincei. Scienze Fisiche e Naturali*, 23(4), 375–386. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12210-012-0187-z>
- Ortega, M. (2001). “New mestizas,” “‘world’-travelers,” and “dasein”: Phenomenology and the multi-voiced, multi-cultural self. *Hypatia*, 16(3), 1–29. <https://go.exlibris.link/NxtDVLZJ>
- Ortega, M. (2006). Being lovingly, knowingly ignorant: White feminism and women of color. *Hypatia*, 21(3), 56–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810951>
- Ortega, M. (2016a). *In-between: Latina feminist phenomenology, multiplicity, and the self*. SUNY Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/PTX58xnv>
- Ortega, M. (2016b). *In-between: Latina feminist phenomenology, multiplicity, and the self*. SUNY Press.
- Ortega, M. (2020). Queer autoarte: A differential aesthesis of the limen. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 41(1), 207–230.
- Ortega, M. (2021). Altars for the Living: In S. Sullivan (Ed.), *Thinking the US South* (pp. 113–132). JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1f884f2.10>

- Owens, V. S. (1983). *And the trees clap their hands: Faith, perception, and the new physics*. Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Pangestu, Y. P. D. A., Aliifah, J., Jati, P., Amalia, C., & Situmorang, D. D. B. (2022). Analysis of the generation z's viewpoint from the faith-based educational institutions on the toxic positivity phenomena: How and why? *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 15423050221090860. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423050221090861>
- Panko, B. (2017, March 3). The supposedly pristine, untouched Amazon rainforest was actually shaped By humans. *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/pristine-untouched-amazonian-rainforest-was-actually-shaped-humans-180962378/>
- Patterson, T., & Hayne, H. (2011). Does drawing facilitate older children's reports of emotionally laden events? *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 25(1), 119–126. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1650>
- Pérez Miles, A. (2010). Dialogic encounters as art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 51(4), 375–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2010.11518815>
- Pestre, D., & Krige, J. (2013). *Companion encyclopedia of science in the twentieth century*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015606>
- Petersen, A. H. (2020). *Can't even: How millennials became the burnout generation*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. <https://go.exlibris.link/sjpY51qp>
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018). *Care work: Dreaming disability justice*. Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Pitts, A. J. (2016). Gloria E. Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría as an epistemology of self-knowledge/ignorance. *Hypatia*, 31(2), 352–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12235>
- Pitts, A. J., Ortega, M., & Medina, J. (2020). *Theories of the flesh: Latinx and Latin American feminisms, transformation, and resistance*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190062965.001.0001>

- Press, A. N. (n.d.). We're being worked to death by capital. *Jacobin*.
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/05/overwork-underwork-unemployment-underemployment-workers-boundaries-unionize-post-work>
- Prins, S. J., McKetta, S., Platt, J., Muntaner, C., Keyes, K. M., & Bates, L. M. (2020). "The serpent of their agonies": Exploitation as structural determinant of mental illness. *Epidemiology (Cambridge, Mass.)*, 32(2), 303–309.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/EDE.0000000000001304>
- Purvis, T., & Hunt, A. (1993). Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 44(3), 473–499. <https://doi.org/10.2307/591813>
- Quick, P. (2015). Marx's "universal class," relations of production, and relations of sex-gender-age. *Science & Society*, 79(1), 114–116.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/24583629>
- Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015002005>
- Radford Ruether, R. (1992). *Patriarchy and creation: Feminist critique of religious and scientific cosmologies*.
- Rancière, J., & Zakir, P. (2013). *Aisthesis: Scenes from the aesthetic regime of art* ([First English]). Verso Books.
- Reflections on the plantationocene: A conversation with Donna Haraway & Anna Tsing*. (2019). Edge Effects Magazine. https://edgeeffects.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PlantationoceneReflections_Haraway_Tsing.pdf
- Reynolds, S. (1906). Autobiografiction. *The Speaker: The Liberal Review*, 15(366), 28–30.
<https://go.exlibris.link/93gL0G4D>
- Robertson, G. (1996). *FutureNatural: Nature, science, culture*. Routledge.
<https://go.exlibris.link/sbPnvXWY>

- Robins, C. (2005). Engaging with curating. *The International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 24(2), 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2005.00435.x>
- Rodino-Colocino, M. (2021). A pand(acad)emic plea for self-care and shorter hours. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 14(2), 315–319. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab018>
- Rogers, J. A. (1972). Darwinism and social darwinism. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33(2), 265–280. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708873>
- Rosario, I. (2020, April 3). When the “hustle” isn’t enough. *NPR*.
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2020/04/03/826015780/when-the-hustle-isnt-enough>
- Saito, K. (2020). Marx’s theory of metabolism in the age of global ecological crisis. *Historical Materialism*, 28(2), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206x-20202802>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4E.). SAGE.
<https://go.exlibris.link/ZyZkxDg4>
- Saldana, J., Leavy, P., & Beretvas, N. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/S3NGrMGx>
- Salvucci, E. (2012). Selfishness, warfare, and economics; or integration, cooperation, and biology. *Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology*, 2(Journal Article), 54–54. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcimb.2012.00054>
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed* (Vol. 18). University of Minnesota Press.
<https://go.exlibris.link/pM57ZX5l>
- Saunders, F. S. (2013). *The cultural cold war: The CIA and the world of arts and letters*. New Press. <https://go.exlibris.link/TYfhjmNS>
- Shakespeare, W., Raffel, B., & Bloom, H. (2003). *Hamlet*. Yale University Press.
<https://go.exlibris.link/fQLtyXpH>

- Shambaugh, J., Nunn, R., Liu, P., & Nantz, G. (2017). *Thirteen Facts about Wage Growth* (The Hamilton Project). Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/thirteen-facts-about-wage-growth/>
- Sheldrake, M. (2020). *Entangled life: How fungi make our worlds, change our minds & shape our futures* (First US). Random House. <https://go.exlibris.link/sC4xfpD>
- Smith, A. (2017, April 5). Pepsi pulls controversial Kendall Jenner ad after outcry. *CBS News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/pepsi-ad-kendall-jenner-echoes-black-lives-matter-sparks-anger-n742811>
- Smith, M. E. G. (2009). Against dualism: Marxism and the necessity of dialectical monism. *Science & Society (New York. 1936)*, 73(3), 356–385. <https://doi.org/10.1521/isis.2009.73.3.356>
- Sontag, S. (2001). *Against interpretation, and other essays* (1st Picador USA). Picador U.S.A. <https://go.exlibris.link/tYwdH2Jr>
- Strelka Institute. (n.d.). *The making of millenials. Malcolm Harris* [Audio]. <https://strelka-institute.simplecast.com/episodes/the-making-of-millenials-YXod0vfP>
- Taylor, D. B. (2021, March 17). A timeline of the coronavirus pandemic. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-timeline.html>
- The Care Collective*. (n.d.). Verso. <https://www.versobooks.com/authors/2499-the-care-collective>
- Theron, L. C., Mitchell, C., Smith, A., Stuart, J., Dr., & SpringerLink (Online service). (2011). *Picturing research: Drawing as visual methodology*. SensePublishers. <https://go.exlibris.link/pZzm756P>
- Thieme, T. A. (2018). The hustle economy: Informality, uncertainty and the geographies of getting by. *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(4), 529–548. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517690039>

- Tsing, A. (2016). Earth stalked by man. *Cambridge Anthropology*, 34(1), 2–16.
<https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2016.340102>
- Tsing, A. L., Swanson, H., Gan, E., & Bubandt, N. (2017). *Arts of living on a damaged planet: Ghosts of the anthropocene. Monsters of the anthropocene*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Tyan, P., Wei, C., & Moawad, G. (2019). 99: The difference in burnout between millennials and non-millennials among gynecologic surgeons. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 220(3), S765–S765. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2019.01.129>
- van den Heuvel, E. (2016). We are made of stardust; Timescales of the universe and of life. In *The Amazing Unity of the Universe* (Vol. 1–Book, Section, pp. 171–187). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23543-1_11
- Varela, F. J., & Maturana, H. (1980). *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (R. S. Cohen & M. W. Wartofsky, Eds.). D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Wallach, O. (2020, December 2). *Charting The Growing Generational Wealth Gap*.
- Weber, M., Parsons, T., & Giddens, A. (2001). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203995808>
- Wetherell, M. (2015). Tears, bubbles and disappointment-new approaches for the analysis of affective-discursive practices: A commentary on “researching the psychosocial.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(1), 83–90.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.958399>
- Wexler, A., & Sabbaghi, V. (2019). *Bridging communities through socially engaged art*. Routledge.
- Wisner, W. (2017). *Treat yo self*. Urban Dictionary.
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=treat%20yo%20self>

- Woodly, D. R. (2021). *Reckoning: Black lives matter and the democratic necessity of social movements*. Oxford University Press USA - OSO. <https://go.exlibris.link/3hqX5XPg>
- Worly, B., Verbeck, N., Walker, C., Clinchot, D., Keder, L., & Steinauer, J. (2017). Gender differences in medical students' experience of burnout, perceived stress, and empathic concern. *Obstetrics and Gynecology (New York. 1953)*, *130*(1), 61-61S.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/01.AOG.0000525777.75605.4e>
- Worly, B., Verbeck, N., Walker, C., & Clinchot, D. M. (2019). Burnout, perceived stress, and empathic concern: Differences in female and male Millennial medical students. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, *24*(4), 429–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2018.1529329>
- Yu, C. (2021). Rising scholar: An examination of the institutionally oppressive white savior complex in Uganda through Western documentaries. *International Social Science Review*, *97*(2), 1–28. <https://go.exlibris.link/Mh919hk6>
- Yuill, C. (2005). Marx: Capitalism, alienation and health. *Social Theory & Health*, *3*(2), 126–143.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.sth.8700046>
- Zdorovtsova, N. (2021, January 1). What is life? A crash course to autopoiesis. *Varsity*.
- Zukauskaitė, A. (2020). Gaia theory: Between autopoiesis and sympoiesis. *Problemos*, *98*, 141–153. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Problemos.98.13>
- Zwolinski, M., & Wertheimer, A. (2017). *Exploitation* (E. N. Zalta, Ed.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/exploitation/>

Appendix A

Visualization Prompt Audio Transcript

Hi Friend,

Thanks so much for agreeing to take the time to engage in a little bit of weirdness, and by weirdest I mean artmaking and by artmaking, I specifically mean drawing. So, first of all at we're not starting right away I'm going to talk to you a little bit so if you want to just make sure that you're sitting from see where you can probably lean on to draw and maybe have some materials anything to make marks with but, I mean, I recommend pen and paper, or pencil if you want, or a marker and crayon whatever and you can sit somewhere comfy with proximity to light and proximity to light! If you have plants around or if you're able to go outside of whatever you're able to do that will not put you at risk. If you need to pause this recording we can do that, and don't worry I'll let you know when the drawing exercise is starting. There's no rush and there's no pressure. So, again, I'm really grateful for having people agree to engage in art even as adults, right? Because sometimes the weirdness in art is when you're an adult you see it as an impenetrable hyper-sophisticated realm of like snobs, and yes it can be like that, unfortunately, because of the colonization of aesthetics but there are other dimensions of artmaking that I really enjoy.

I think art is very transformative as an experience and it can be incredibly insightful and perhaps even healing. So I would like maybe for you to think about it this way, you know, this drawing exercise is not for me to judge your drawing abilities. It's not about evaluating anything. It's more about sharing, and more about learning about ourselves and about each other. Or about, again, transformation. So I hope you don't feel anxiety on behalf of me looking at whatever it is that we're going to be doing. If anything, this is an anti-homework, so I'm just very excited to see what comes up. And that's the thing about artmaking, it allows for us to maybe not unfold, but dislocate or create a weird warping of reality for us to be able to understand that reality from a different perspective. And I'm in this sense it has allowed for me to think about this pandemic in various ways and I would like for us to maybe start thinking about that, you know, thinking that we're suddenly trapped in what could be referred to as a 'mother of crises,' right? And I was reading how the term crisis comes from the Greek and it's a medical term and it was used by Hippocrates back in the day and I meant a critical point in an illness, where there's a judgment of whether or not you're going to heal or die.

So basically that's it, and we're kind of facing that together as a globe right now: a decisive moment that has to do with judgment. But whenever judgment is involved like there needs to be some time for that decision, right? And I was thinking about the tension between crisis and care, right? When there's a moment of crisis then there's also an alternative of care. But I feel that in this particular time we're not necessarily being allowed to engage in forms of communal care that we would need to heal and to get out of this situation. And by that I mean, I'm reading about how in the olden days, if there was a situation similar to this one, people would

endure lockdown by sharing songs and stories, and engaging in craft and cooking together and nurturing each other. But that's something that is not necessarily allowed in here because we're meant to keep a separation between everybody, for the sake of not engaging in contagion and things like that. So it's hard, because then it seems like the remedy is not even an option and that breeds a lot of problems for a lot of people especially those of us that are trapped in our production cycles and we have expectations of other people, and deadlines, and responsibilities. In that sense, I was thinking through my own situation in confinement and I'm surrounded by a lot of plants and so I got me thinking and this is where the drawing exercise starts [Hang Drum Toll].

So, I was specifically thinking about networks of care and how plants care for one another and they're all connected in the soil through these lattices made by a fungal connections in symbiosis with the plants and they form these mycorrhizal structures through which plants communicate with each other in terms of sharing nutrients or warning about danger and so forth and it's an internet for our green friends. And it got me thinking about more-than-human ways of performing care, and more-than-human ways in which also humans can perform care within broader networks of living beings. So I don't know why I just thought 'wow, there's kind of like a meta-pandemic in a sense or this is kind of like what I would like to imagine. So, this is us, opening up, uncorking [makes popping sound] our imaginations to think about... just trip with me, if you will: What if there was a meta-pandemic. So, okay there's a pandemic but there's also a weird spore leakage of sorts and then everybody becomes infected by the spores and all of a sudden we all turn into plants. So this is a task: I want you to try and imagine what would happen to you if this happened. But let's just try to go deeper because the point is to visualize it. To try and use all of our senses to see what would happen. What kind of plant would you turn into? If you were suddenly turned into a plant, doing a body-scan exploration:

What kind of plant are you?

What's your context?

What's the texture of your structure?

What do your roots look like? What's the extension of them?

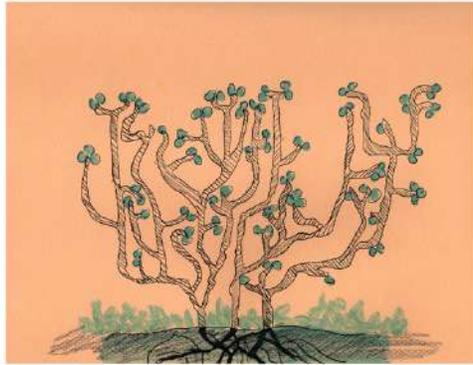
What's the color of your stem? What's the height? What's the smell?

If you were to feel the texture of your leaves—that is, if you have leaves, because you could not have them—you could be a cactus. So, that's the deal: the point is now for you to try and visualize yourself turning into a plant and maybe translating a little bit of what you're going through. What would you go through as a plant? As a potted plant because then within this meta-pandemic we're all also very much separated from our support systems and networks and all of a sudden were potted.

How does that feel? So that's the drawing exercise, and please take as much time as you need to complete it. Again, it's not about the looks, it's about the information and the sharing and the meaning that arises. So I'm looking forward to our conversation and thanks again. This is the end of this recording and you can start drawing. I hope you enjoy it! See you soon.²²⁹

²²⁹ Link to Soundcloud audio track: <https://soundcloud.com/xalli-zuniga/drawing-exercise-devenir-plant>

Appendix B
Participant Drawings



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



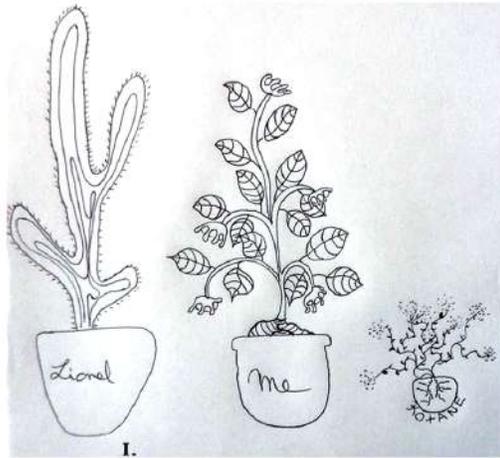
F.



G.



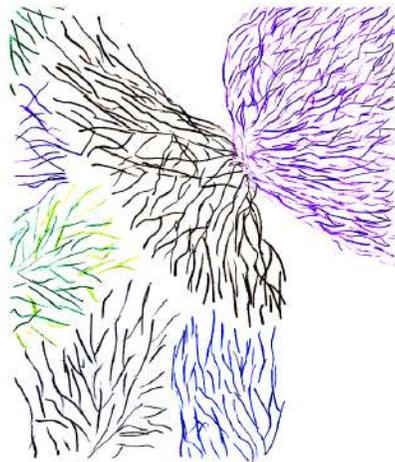
H.



I.



J.



K.

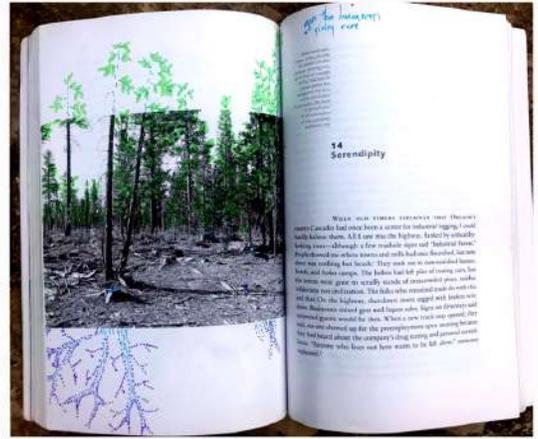


L.

lets
fan
ivy
height
slight
scorn
wax /
Shine
thick
2000
staky
strong
New



M.



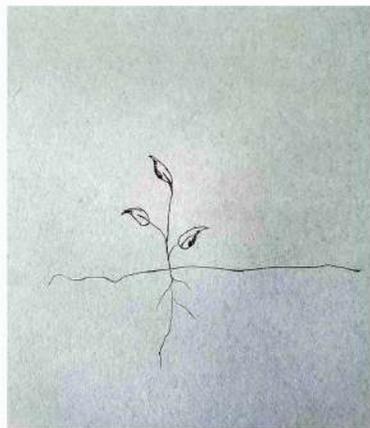
N.



O.



P.



Q.



R.



S.



T.



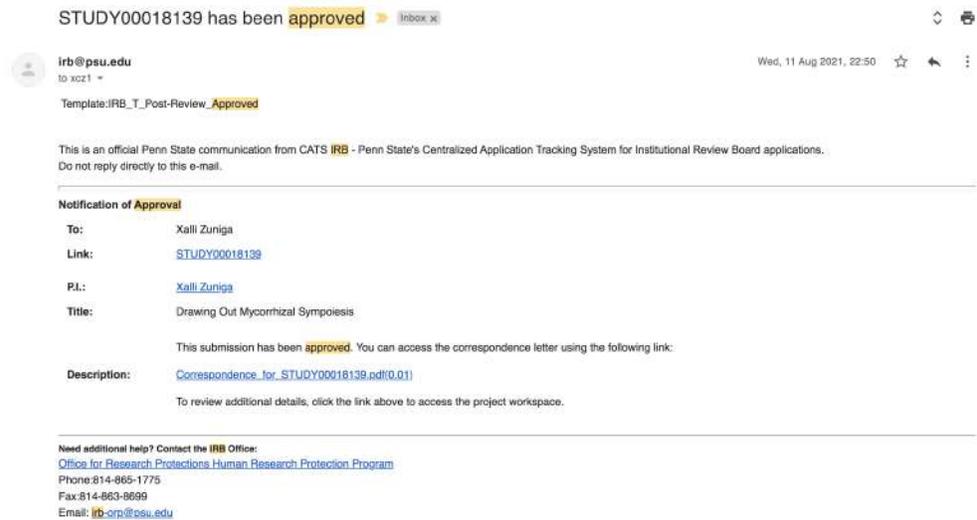
U.



V.

Appendix C

IRB Approval



Screenshot of the email that I received informing that the IRB had approved my study (Zuniga, 2020).

PennState IRB Centralized Application Tracking System Hello, Xalli Zuniga

My Inbox IRB IRB Metrics

Submissions Meetings Library Reports Help Center

Approved

Administrative Review

Entered IRB: 6/21/2021 2:30 PM
Initial approval: 8/11/2021
Initial effective: 8/11/2021
Effective: 8/11/2021
Admin Review Due: 8/10/2022
Last updated: 8/11/2021 11:50 PM

STUDY00018139: Drawing Out Mycorrhizal Symbiosis

Principal investigator: Xalli Zuniga
Submission type: Initial Study
Primary contact: Xalli Zuniga
PI proxies:

IRB office: Office for Research Protections
IRB coordinator:
Letter: [Correspondence_for_STUDY00018139.pdf\(0.01\)](#)
Regulatory authority: 2018 Requirements

Next Steps
[View Study](#)

Pre-Submission → Pre-Review → IRB Review → Post-Review → Review Complete

Clarification Requested (between Pre-Review and IRB Review, and between IRB Review and Post-Review)

Modifications Required (between Post-Review and Review Complete)

Screenshot of the approved status of my proposal on the IRB portal where I made my submission (Zuniga, 2020).

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Thank participants for their time. Review the consent form and ask permission to video-record the interview that follows their drawing.

Warm-up Questions (with the goal to build rapport with participants and for baseline context).

1. How are you feeling today?
2. What is your relationship with artmaking and how has it changed over time?
3. What do you think is the relation between artmaking and care?
4. How often do you engage in artmaking?

Questions about the Drawing Experience, Drawing Prompt, and Visualization

1. Tell me about your experience in creating the drawing.
2. How did the audio recording affect your drawing process?
3. How did you choose to begin drawing after listening to the visualization exercise?
4. How did the drawing process reflect your experience during the pandemic?
5. Were you trying to reflect something more literal or abstract? How did that play out?

Questions about Burnout

1. Thank you for responding to the call to participate. Why did you respond to the call to participate?
2. How has stress affected your life in the last couple of months?
3. How does this burnout (drainage/exhaustion) affect you physically as well as mentally?
4. What are some of the reasons behind this drainage of energy (burnout)?
5. What are some of the ways in which this drainage of energy (this situation that we call 'burnout') has impacted your life? In the different spaces that you navigate on a daily basis? (Work, personal relationships, family, acquaintances, etc.).

Questions about Pandemic Experience:

1. How has the pandemic changed the way you interact with other, non-human living beings? Plants, fungi, animals, etc.

EDUCATION

-2016-2022

Doctor of Philosophy dual-title Ph.D. in Art Education and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (in progress)
The Pennsylvania State University

-2013-2015

Master of Arts Crossways in Cultural Narratives

Erasmus Mundus Multiple Degree Awarding EU funded Master's Program in Interdisciplinary and Humanistic Studies on World Culture, Modern Languages and Critical Theory. Thesis: "Performativity as auto-sculpture in the works of Joseph Beuys and Matthew Barney: Heterological hermeneutics in contemporary art"
University of St. Andrews, Scotland, UK, Universite de Perpignan via Domitia, France, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Home University)

-2008-2012

Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts

Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas (FAD), Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). GPA of 3.87
Department of Fine Arts, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City

AWARDS

- Global Programs Graduate Student Travel Grant Award of \$750.00 for travel to Ghana for the CHALE WOTE Street Art Festival, presenting "Bruxas Bruxas: An Analysis of Performative Methodologies", 2018
- The Dorothy Hughes Young Endowed Scholarship in Art Education, 2017
- Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, 2016

PUBLICATIONS

- Zúñiga, X. (2021, November 22). *Líneas en Fuga*. Espacio Fronterizo. <https://espaciofronterizo.com/espacio-fronterizo/lineas-en-fuga/>
- Sperry-Garcia, C., Rodriguez, F., Zúñiga, X., and Carpenter II S. B. (2019). Thinking in Water: The Process of Collaborative Craft as Social Practice, in E. Garber, L. Hochtritt & M. Sharma (Eds.), *Makers, Crafters, Educators; Working for Cultural Change* (pp. xx-xx) Routledge: New York
- Lin, Y., Wei, Y., Hajesmaeili, E., Zúñiga, X., Bailey, I., Hicks, V., & Sotomayor II, L. (2021). Precarity in Conversation. *Visual Culture & Gender*, 16, 41-51. Retrieved from <https://vcg.emitto.net/index.php/vcg/article/view/167>

DIPLOMAS

Attendance Certificate for The Economy + Society Summer School, run by the Centre for the Study of the Moral Foundations of Economy + Society at UCC and WIT at Blackwater Castle, Co. Cork, Ireland, on May 14-18th, 2018. TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course Certificate. Ban Phe, Rayong, Thailand, January 2010

Certificate of Academic Achievement in Visual Arts, having obtained an average of 9.9 on a scale of 10.0 for the year 2010, Top Third Percentile, FAD, UNAM. March 2017.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES / ART RESIDENCIES

- Zúñiga, X., Calvente, A. (2022, June 1-3). *Seven Billion Slow Exploding Seeds: A Holistic, Ecological-Epistemological and Aesthetic Approach to Healing Our Home* [Conference presentation]. Modern Language Association Symposium, held virtually in Glasgow, UK.
- Zúñiga, X., Sahagún, A. (2022). *Drawing gender justice in color through threads of indigenous resistance: Doña Mace*. Art + Feminism WikiStorming [Online], Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
- Zúñiga, X (2022). *Drawing fungal care within Latina/x feminisms: Arts-based shifts from agonism to loving-collaboration* [Conference presentation]. [Re]Emergence: [Re]imagination, [re]vision and revolution. Hosted virtually by the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, PA, USA.
- Zúñiga, X. (2021). *Mycorrhizal encounters II: A conversation with Xalli Zúñiga*. [Festival Presentation]. The Descendants of Fungi Festival, organized by Woods – Community for Cultivation, Theory and Art in collaboration with Are and the Institute of Anxiety. Held virtually in Czech Republic.