RHETORICS OF LIFE AND DEATH:

TOWARDS A ZOERHETORICAL THEORY

by

ALLISON LOCKWOOD ROWLAND

B.S., James Madison University, 2006

M.Res., University of Bath, 2009

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Rhetorics Of Life and Death: Towards a Zoerhetorical Theory

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Abstract

This dissertation develops a theory that accounts for the rhetorical practices that constitute living entities as sacred, expendable, or somewhere in between. I forward a concept of *zoerhetorics*, defined as legible, consequential, public, and partisan discourses or practices that raise or lower the status of entities along lines intelligible to biopolitical regimes of living. These biopolitical trenches of difference include gender, race, and ability. Joining biopolitics and posthumanist rhetorical theory, zoerhetorical theory attempts to understand how lives come to matter along the status-laden thresholds of humanity and citizenship. The theory of zoerhetorics forwarded here draws on the biopolitical/necropolitical production of unequal populations in order to explain the processes by which some living entities obtain higher or lower statuses than other living entities.

In order to ramify zoerhetorical theory, I analyze the trajectories of zoerhetorics across three field-assemblages in the contemporary United States. The first case study explores the ways in which rhetorics at the National Memorial for the Unborn in Chattanooga, Tennessee inflate the status of fetal entities. By employing the zoerhetorical tropes (or *zoetropes*) of naming, apostrophe (en-voicing), and prosopopeia (en-facing), the Memorial for the Unborn

inflates the status of the fetal entity, with resulting consequences of livability distributed across various groups of entities. The second case study explores the zoerhetorics of CIA drone strike targets in Pakistan, as represented in the *New York Times*. Across dichotomies of innocence (militant/civilian) and social belonging (U.S. citizen/Other), American-identified drone rhetorics produce racialized bodies for targeting in Pakistan. The third case study explores zoerhetorics of populations encouraged toward "life" as they exercise in upscale athletic clubs in Boulder, Colorado. Through zoe/rhetorics of training and whiteness, vitality-performing biocitizens maintain and justify accumulated embodied privilege through practices of vitality. At each of these sites, zoerhetorics operate in prescriptive, iterative ways for entities with a contested relationship to humanity: the fetus, the drone target, and the vital biocitizen. The final chapter concludes with a series of *topoi* (topical resources), *horoi* (boundary markers), and qualities of zoerhetorics, as well as recommended future directions for building zoerhetorical theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction:

What are Zoerhetorics?

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

— George Orwell[1]

How do some lives come to matter? Why do some lives fail to matter? That some lives are valued more than others is a phenomenon observed across a range of popular and scholarly writings. Here is just a small sample. For starters, an old saw of journalism states that "a hundred Pakistanis going off a mountain in a bus make less of a story than three Englishmen drowning in the Thames."[2] This line has been attributed to American author Mort Rosenblum, and here he observes that, in major American-identified newspapers, some deaths get reported with more frequency and attention than other deaths. George Monbiot of *The Guardian* wrote in response to the Newtown killings, "In the U.S., mass child killings are tragedies. In Pakistan, mere bug splats."[3] Monbiot was comparing the American public outpouring of grief in response to the killing spree in a school in Connecticut with the minimal American response to the deaths of Pakistani children by CIA-issued drone strikes. In a similar journalistic spirit, Glenn Greenwald

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[1] George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 1945/2009).

[2] Jack Shafer, "The Rise and Fall of the "Bus Plunge" Story: What Killed this *New York Times* Staple?" November 13, 2006, *Slate*, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/press_box/2006/11/the_rise_and_fall_of_the_bus_plunge_story.html.

[3] George Monbiot, "In the U.S., Mass Child Killings are Tragedies. In Pakistan, Mere Bug Splats," *The Guardian*, December 17, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/17/us-killings-tragedies-pakistan-bug-splats.

recently observed, "It's as though there are two types of crimes: killing, and then *the killing of Americans*."[4] Here Greenwald was addressing the conservative outrage over the deaths of Americans in Benghazi, Libya. Darling of the critical left that he is, Greenwald, like his former *Guardian* colleague Monbiot, was quick to indict the United States for enforcing what he called a "hierarchy of life." Indeed, as I will show later, across human societies there exists something like a hierarchy of life, despite the myriad pronouncements we may make against it. The popular Pope Francis recently made such a pronouncement. In an address to Catholic medical professionals at the Vatican, Francis beseeched those present to

> …bear witness to and disseminate this 'culture of life'… remind all, through actions and words, in all its phases and at any age, life is always sacred and always of quality. And not as a matter of faith, but of reason and science! There is no human life more sacred than another, just as there exists no human life qualitatively more meaningful than another.[5]

Although this declaration by Francis is underwritten by a Catholic theology and political agenda, his contention that all lives are equal is one that is generally repeated throughout much of the so-called civilized world.

Journalists and popes are not the only people noticing that some lives seem to be attributed more value than other lives. A number of scholars across a range of academic disciplines have also discerned (and critiqued) these differences in life status. Perhaps most famously, Paul Farmer, a respected Harvard anthropologist, coined a quotable quote. He wrote,

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[4] Glenn Greenwald, "The Tragic Consulate Killings in Libya and America's Hierarchy of Life," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/sep/12/tragic-consulate-killings-libya.

[5] "Francis: No Human Life is More Valuable Than Another," September 20, 2013, *Vatican Information Service*, http://visnews-en.blogspot.com/2013/09/francis-no-human-life-is-more-valuable.html.

"The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world." In its virally infinite web redistributions, this quote is often accompanied by a close-up image of a teary young boy, sometimes Asian, sometimes black. In this moment, Farmer not only acknowledges the unequal distribution of value for human lives, but also centers this inequality as the "root" of all global problems. In 2011, historian David Livingstone Smith published a book that argued that all human societies dehumanize other humans, debasing them in a way that resembles the treatment of non-human animals.[6] In a similar observation, philosopher Judith Butler wrote that some lives seem to possess more "grievability" than others.[7] In my own field of rhetorical theory, in his award-winning book *Prisoners of Conscience*, Gerard Hauser observed of the Abu Ghraib torture memos that "contrary to human rights accords, under conditions of war, some lives are more precious than others, and therefore are more deserving of protection than others."[8]

This is just a small sampling of the many examples of these moments that I have gathered over the recent years. These collected observations let me know that I am not alone in acknowledging that some lives seem to have more value than others in the contemporary world, but rather that this phenomena has been documented over and over again. Even the most cursory sweep of both U.S. and international conditions of living (or dying) would demonstrate what both common sense and critical theory also dictate to be true—a hierarchical series of cultural valuations drive distributions of livability. Despite much official and vernacular attention paid to equal human rights, and a technical legal equality dictated by International Humanitarian Law,

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[6] David Livingstone Smith, *Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate* Others (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011).

[7] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

[8] Gerard Hauser, *Prisoners of Conscience: Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 357.

human lives are not equal.[9] At the same time that rhetorics of global human rights proliferate, many humans, as George Orwell quipped of his titular farm animals, "are more equal than others."[10]

How do these differences in status, value, and livability come to happen? Arguably, we do not have a good understanding of the rhetorical patterns by which some lives achieve more value than other lives. In this dissertation, I give a name to the rhetorics that inflate or deflate the value of lives: *zoerhetorics*. By "rhetorics," I mean the meaningful, consequential, partisan, and legible discourses and practices that circulate in various publics.[11] *This dissertation develops a theory that accounts for how zoerhetorics, or discourses or practices that modulate the status of living entities, operate in contemporary regimes of living.*

Why are zoerhetorics important? Zoerhetorics are literally a matter of life and death. Depending on how we rhetorically frame groups of persons, their lives may be more or less livable. Consider the inflationary value of a document/event like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which arguably granted sweeping legal protections to persons across the globe. Alternatively, consider the deadly deflationary effects of repeatedly referring to a group of persons as subhumans (like the Nazis did of the Jews—they were literally called *Untermeschen*, or "under men") or animals (like Rwandan government radio broadcasts that characterized the

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[9] For a critique of the international human rights movement, see David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). The complex history of notions of human equality is more than I have space for here, but suffice it to say that the shift from a "natural" hierarchy to the world (a concept that subtends, for example, the Great Chain of Being) to a universal human rights did not automatically level sociopolitical hierarchies of privileges and resources. Not only are humans not equal now, but they have never been equal.

[10] Orwell, *Animal Farm*.

[11] For this definition of rhetoric, I am inspired by: Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott, "Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, eds. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

Tutsis as cockroaches).[12] Both of these latter examples attempted to justify mass slaughters, but plenty of dehumanization rhetorics result in less spectacular suffering.

Thus far I have been using the word *dehumanization*, but the zoerhetorical effects I seek to understand are much broader than just lowering the status of humans. In fact, zoerhetorical processes both *make* and *unmake* humans. One of the major problems with theories of dehumanization thus far—a problem that this project intends to correct—is that they assume that what it means to be "human" is stable, transhistorical, and essential. David Livingstone Smith, for example, assumes throughout his recent book on dehumanization that all humans are just, well, obviously human. It is important to remember—as Smith himself has pointed out— that who gets to "count" as human is a culturally specific and contested thing. In fact, many of the "people" that count as "people" now were not considered real people throughout history. Yet by focusing only on how humans are rhetorically *unmade*, Smith never stops to think about how they are rhetorically *made*.[13] With the concept of zoerhetorics, I attend to both processes of *humanization* and *dehumanization*. Furthermore, I argue that these processes must be understood in tandem.

Because of the sociohistorical ambiguity around who gets to count as human, I understand humanity both as a performative practice (yes—you are "performing" humanity right now) and as a discursive resource of human exceptionalism. In other words, following posthumanist theorists, humanity is an artificial boundary that we have constructed to create an "us" and a "them." We could define animals as exactly those who have been excluded from

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[12] I get this latter example from Smith, *Less Than Human*.

[13] Ibid.

humanity, and humans as the animal for whom being called human is important.[14] Rather than an ontogenetic species-marker, humanity is defined by its cultural fissures, divisions, exclusions, gray areas, and states of exception.

For that reason, we need to talk about zoerhetorics across a range of living entities. By a range of living entities, I mean anything that is "alive" or can be "lively"—humans, primates, insects, plants, bacteria, and even things (I will talk about the vibrancy of things more later). I am especially interested in zoerhetorics around liminal entities whose status is contested. For example, what about potential humans, like stem cells and fetuses? What about animals? The animal kingdom perhaps experiences the widest range of zoerhetorical attributions (something I will define later as "zoerhetorical swing"). Animals can be either recognized as legal persons, as dolphins are in India, feted and cared for as cherished companion animals, or force-fed the feces of their brethren as they are raised for slaughter in intensive meat farming operations.

In what follows, I aim to forward a theory of zoerhetorics in order to explain the process by which some living entities obtain and maintain higher or lower statuses than other living entities. Zoerhetorics are discourses, objects, events, or practices that *raise* or *lower* the status of a life or lives along biopolitically intelligible regimes of living. Biopolitics is the branch of critical theory that makes sense of the way that "life itself" is regulated. Integral to the operation of zoerhetorics are the status-laden thresholds of animality, humanity, and citizenship, which are striated by biopolitically entrenched lines of difference: species, gender, race, etc. In fact, the *zoe* prefix of zoerhetorics derives from an important book in biopolitical theory: Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*. According to Agamben's contested etymology, *zoe* (ζωὴ) is an Ancient Greek

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[14] These definitions are inspired by: Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).

word for "life" that describes the spectrum of all living entities, including humans, animals, and plants.[15] It is the source for our modern-day words like "zoo" and "protozoa." I take the prefix of *zoe* not for its claims to etymological accuracy, nor to reproduce Agamben's categorical ontology of bare life, but for its capacities to index biopolitical theory and plumb the depths of living entities beyond the human.[16]

This dissertation explores these rhetorical practices that constitute living entities as sacred, expendable, or somewhere in between. I will focus on contemporary zoerhetorics in the United States. A life can be raised to properly and fully human, or lowered and dehumanized to subhuman or unworthy status. Over the course of studying and writing about zoerhetorics, I have fabricated a number of terms. I provide this mini-glossary as a resource for readability:

Zoerhetorics: Meaning-laden, consequential, legible, public, and partisan discourses, objects, or practices that inflate, deflate, or maintain the status of an entity or group of entities, especially along the biopolitical fault lines of species, race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.

Zoerhetorical theory: A series of suppositions that posit general patterns to which zoerhetorical modulations of status conform.

Zoerhetorical modulation: A demarcated inflationary or deflationary rhetorical event; the consequential result of a series of successful zoerhetorics.

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[15] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[16] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 187.

Zoerhetorical hierarchy: A sociopolitically ranked arrangement of entities who, proportional to their contested position on the hierarchy, experience partisan distributions of livability (adapted from linguist Mel Chen's concept of "animacy hierarchy").[17]

Zoerhetorical swing: The range of status attributions for a group of entities across a given public. Animals and fetal entities, for example, have a wide zoerhetorical swing; the vitality-performing white biocitizen has a narrow zoerhetorical swing.

Zoetrope: Zoerhetorical trope; a figure of speech that inflates, deflates, or maintains the status of an entity or group of entities. I will later identify how naming, metonymy, apostrophe, and prosopopeia operate as zoetropes.

How to Read this Dissertation: Organizational Rationale

In the first chapter, I situate zoerhetorical theory within an interdisciplinary body of conceptual and methodological literature. I argue that the European rhetorical tradition's history of complicity with hierarchy is longer than its history of providing tools for leveling these hierarchies. At the same time, rhetoric's intersection with the fields of posthumanism and biopolitics provide exciting openings for understanding sociopolitical hierarchies in new ways. The goal for this chapter is to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for the ensuing three case studies.

In the next chapters, I analyze zoerhetorical patterns across three sites. The first case study explores the ways in which rhetorics at the National Memorial for the Unborn in Tennessee inflate the status of fetal entities. The second case study explores the zoerhetorics of

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[17] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.

populations targeted for drone strike death in Pakistan, as represented in the *New York Times* and its ancillary rhetorics. The third case study explores zoerhetorics of populations nourished toward life and vitality as they exercise in athletic clubs in Boulder, Colorado. I chose these diverse case studies because I wanted to demonstrate and analyze a wide array of zoerhetorical modulations. At the memorial for the unborn, I was interested in the fetus as a contested, liminal entity. How do zoerhetorics operate around an entity whose status is so essentially contested? Similarly, how do zoerhetorics operate around a group of entities who are labeled as enemy targets under conditions of war? This is why I chose to analyze the way the *New York Times* framed CIA drone strikes and their resulting "collateral damage."

Whether it was an actual "place" like the NMU, or material/text/place like the *New York Times*, I conceived of all of these case studies as field-assemblages, or heterogenous collections of materialities and signs with emergent properties. My guiding research question at each field-assemblage was, "How are entities being inflated or deflated here? What are the patterns? What are the consequences?" In order to answer these questions, I employed rhetorical field method work (such as participant observation), informed with feminist qualitative reflexivity.

When I was originally choosing the case studies, I wanted one case study that was explicitly trying to raise the status of contested living entities (the NMU), one case study with explicit deflation of entities (*New York Times* drone targets), and another case study where already high-status entities worked to maintain their privilege (the upscale gym). The funny thing that I found, however, was that I could identify both inflationary and deflationary zoerhetorical effects at all of these sites. One of the insights of this dissertation is that status inflations and deflations typically go hand-in-hand. Each of the case studies in this dissertation zoerhetorically critiques an issue of contemporary exigence, contributing both to the rhetorical theory

scholarship particular to the case as well as the broader ramifications of zoerhetorical theory. I will elaborate more on each field-assemblage below.

Rhetorics at the National Memorial for the Unborn, and pro-life fetal rhetorics more broadly, attempt to raise the status of the fetus—one of the most contested entities in the world. This site allows me an opportunity to dissect zoerhetorics that aspire to jump across the threshold of humanity. The public fetus is subject to a sweeping range of status assignations—from "a clump of cells" to full human citizen—a zoerhetorical contestability that can be at least partially attributed to its silence as an entity. Silent entities for whom we speak, such as fetuses, stem cells, and brain dead persons, provide an opportunity for rhetors to "zoetrope" these entities into personhood. In other words, they rhetorically become humans. In this study, I use rhetorical field methods and an assemblage theory frame to identify "zoetropes" as rhetorical devices that raise or lower the status of a life at the NMU. I identify three zoetropes in effect at the NMU: naming, en/voicing (*apostrophe*), and en/facing (*prosopopeia*). As the status of fetal entities inflates at the NMU, in turn, the status of fecund women whose reproductive practices to do not match those prescribed at the NMU necessarily deflates.

Following this focus on the unborn, I turn toward a distant Other that the United States has targeted for death: the often anonymous Pakistani military-aged male rendered as a "signature strike" target via surveillant drone technology in the War on Terror. Understanding the *New York Times* and official governmental drone rhetorics as material-discursive assemblages, I identify the rhetorics of innocence (across the faulty, eroded militant/civilian dichotomy) and the rhetorics of belonging (across the citizen/non-citizen dichotomy) in operation around drone targets. Parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of North Waziristan exemplify what we might call deathworlds, and the rhetoric of the *Times* and the U.S.

government collude in the racialized marking of populations for death. This case study tracks the ways in which zoerhetorics have consequential effects for the livability of lives.

If death words help create deathworlds, as we see in the case of the War on Terror, life words help create lifeworlds. The third case study employs participant observation to explore the everyday vitality-performing habits of privileged bodies at pricy athletic clubs in Boulder, Colorado. In this chapter, I introduce the vitality-aspirant biocitizen and critique the ways in which bodies targeted for vitality accrue and store privilege. Through rhetorical practices of training and whiteness, vital biocitizens justify this accumulation of privilege and therefore their high-status positions on the zoerhetorical hierarchy.

In the conclusion, I make a series of observational comparisons across these cases in order to locate possible propositions of zoerhetorical theory. Each case study offers a zoerhetorical reading of an entity with special or unique status vis-à-vis humanity, belonging, and citizenship: the fetus, the terrorist, and the vitality-performing biocitizen. Taken together, the three case studies provide a broad-ranging overview of zoerhetorics in the contemporary United States. It is my hope that the insight gleaned from each of these chapters justifies the introduction of the concept of zoerhetorics and validates these first stabs of understanding how these zoerhetorics work. The final chapter concludes with a series of *topoi* (topical resources), *horoi* (boundary markers), and other qualities of zoerhetorics, as well as recommended future directions for building zoerhetorical theory.

Chapter One

Zoerhetorics: Theory and Methods

How would you predict the outcome of this classroom activity? The instructor supplies a group of university students with a series of ten index cards. The cards say things like gold, tree, man, God, dirt, child, fish, ape, and woman. There are no other directions but this one sentence: put the cards in their *proper order*. What happens? Reliably, the students arrange the cards in an order that resembles the Great Chain of Being, or the ranked "natural" order of the world we have inherited from the Middle Ages.[1] I relay my experience of this pedagogical activity for two reasons. First—and this should come as no surprise—students, like anyone else, have absorbed and can recreate a so-called "natural" hierarchy to the social world. Second—herein lies the teachable moment—this activity makes students intensely uncomfortable. They immediately want to challenge the natural hierarchy that they themselves have recreated, especially along lines of gender, race, or age. They say things like, "We can't rank humans because all humans are equal," and arrange the cards depicting different human identity-markers laterally. At its best, this activity opens into class discussions that grapple with hard questions. How do we come to "know" that there is a hierarchy to the world? How come we accept some elements of the hierarchy more than others? How do we resist the hierarchy? The shortest, if vague and noncommittal, answer to these questions is "rhetoric." This dissertation is an attempt to provide a somewhat longer answer.

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[1] I am indebted to Professor Jenell Johnson at the University of Wisconsin, Madison for this pedagogical activity.

I like to tell this story because it demonstrates the persistence of hierarchical thinking in the social world. In everyday vernacular and official contexts, ordinary U.S. Americans absorb, recreate, and challenge zoerhetorical hierarchies. Even as we collectively try to bulldoze social hierarchies with movements like socialism, universal human rights, feminism, and anti-racism, hierarchies endure. Even at a time when it is no longer possible to say seriously, in a public context in the United States, that men are superior to women, or white people are superior to black people, hierarchical social arrangements persist.

Why do hierarchies matter? Because they have serious consequences for how livable someone's life can be. Bodies are nourished or malnourished, appreciated or attenuated, succored or scored, distinguished or extinguished, martyred or murdered, soothed or doomed, cured or curtailed, and triaged or truncated, based on their position in a given sociopolitical hierarchy. In this dissertation, I am interested in the rhetorical dimensions of these hierarchies. How does the current hierarchical arrangement come be accepted as il/legitimate, un/necessary, or im/proper? What are the rhetorical dimensions of regimes of living and dying? By what rhetorical means are lives encouraged toward life or targeted for death?

In order to answer these questions, I draw from two fields, or more accurately, one discipline and one branch of critical theory: rhetorical studies and biopolitics. Though conversations have started between these two bodies of thought, I contend that they still have a lot to say to each other. Rhetorical studies helps us make sense of the various circulating public rhetorics that legitimate the kind of unequal distributions of livability I have been talking about. Biopolitical theory gives us a framework for understanding how contemporary regimes of living produce these inequalities.

This chapter situates zoerhetorical theory in the existing rhetorical studies and biopolitical literature. First, I review rhetorical theory's gambols into understanding hierarchy, which center on the work of Kenneth Burke. This will lead to a critique of the ways in which the rhetorical tradition has colluded in hierarchy-making. Next, I argue that any thorough exploration of contemporary hierarchies must take into account biopolitics and necropolitics, as populations are recommended for life, deterioration, or death along deep biopolitical trenches. Although some biopolitical theory germinates in rhetorical studies venues, which I briefly review, the articulations between these fields have been impoverished. Finally, I collate the ethical and conceptual commitments that inspire my methodological approach, which relies on rhetorical field methods as a practice and assemblage theory as a conceptual frame, infused with a prudent dose of feminist reflexivity.

<div align="center">The Rhetorical Tradition…of Hierarchy</div>

Whether considered sacred or killable, the status of all lives is modulated by hierarchy-driven rhetorical practices. Which tools, concepts, or *topoi* from the rhetorical tradition can be pressed into the service of discussing these modulations? This is a tricky question, because our forefigures both provide tools for understanding hierarchy while also justifying a natural hierarchic order to the world. But the latter precedes the former, as I will show. For most of its long history, the European rhetorical tradition labors to justify a natural order to the world. The development of the rhetorical tradition was, as Terry Eagleton claimed, "utterly inseparable from

the social relations of exploitation."[2] In this section I will provide a historical gloss of the ways that rhetoric has grown around hierarchy like a tree growing around a wire.

Before I embark, let me clarify what I mean by *hierarchy*. One of the first documented uses of the term occurred in the sixth century by Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. He used it to properly divvy up the angels, developing the word from the Greek *hierarcha*, "rule by priests" or "sacred rule."[3] Historically there have been celestial, ecclesiastical, imperial, and any number of other kinds of hierarchies, but when I use the term I am referring to a consequential sociopolitical hierarchy that ranks living entities: a zoerhetorical hierarchy. A "zoerhetorical hierarchy" is a ranked arrangement of entities who, proportional to their contested position on the hierarchy, experience partisan distributions of livability. In this dissertation, I am interested in the contemporary zoerhetorical hierarchies in the United States.

In one sense, theories of hierarchy start where rhetoric starts, at least according to the standard narrative—in Ancient Athens. From Plato we inherited the seeds of what would grow into the Great Chain of Being in the Middle Ages—a sense of a natural order of the world, with Go(o)d at the apex. In Plato's narrative, the cookery craft of rhetoric consistently failed to realize the true nature of this hierarchy, compared to her Platonic twin, dialectic. For Plato, all possible kinds of things existed in the world—the world was complete, or demonstrated plenitude. (Here we can distinguish between hierarchies of value and social hierarchies, related but analytically distinct). To the full *plenitude* of Plato's hierarchy, Aristotle added *continuity* and *gradation*. For instance, Aristotle's pathbreaking zoology contributed a natural gradient order to the world with

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[2] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or, Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), 101-2.

[3] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "hierarchy."

his linear taxonomic classification of animals, that, of course, placed humans above the rest.[4]

Ever since, as Arthur Lovejoy has shown, narrative systems of natural orders often feature these

three qualities of plenitude, continuity, and gradation.[5]

Selectively the Western rhetorical tradition lassoes in or ignores scholars of the Middle

Ages in its grand narrative of rhetorical history. With Saint Augustine, Albertus Magnus, and his

famous student, Thomas Aquinas, we get the most sophisticated version of the Great Chain of

Being, which is worth recounting here for its tenacious persistence in Western thought. At the

apex of the Great Chain resides God, representing the highest degree of perfection. After God

and angels (archangels, seraphim, then cherubim) come humans, apes, other animals, plants, and

minerals. Humans occupied a unique position in the *scala naturae* (Latin for "nature's ladder"),

because they shared qualities with divine creatures above them, such as an eternal spirit, but

were also condemned to lives of enfleshed desire like those of the animals below them.

The Great Chain described the complete universe. Augustine's aphoristic response to

why God created all things good and bad, was "*Non essent omnia, si essent aequalia*," or, "If all

things were equal, all things would not be."[6] In other words, in order for God's world to be

perfect, all possible diversity of kinds must be in the world—this is the notion of plenitude that

Augustine inherited from Plato. An entity's essential status in the natural order of the world

determined its position on the ladder. In his writing on the duty of the Christian orator,

Augustine's commitment to eloquence and truth also bespeaks a nascent natural order to the

world. Like all kinds of species-types, humans were expected to strain for perfection, and it was

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[4] Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002), 23.

the primary duty of Christian orators to teach the way of this perfection, and not to let words themselves obscure truth.[7] In the *Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke picked up on the verbal hierarchies at work in Augustine's *Confessions*. As a preacher of the "The Word," Augustine mined the linguistic power reserved in God terms (and the term *God*).[8]

Great Chain of Being narratives from the Middle Ages prefigure the contestation and boundary work of human-making that I will discuss later. For example, as David Livingstone Smith explained, medieval scholars

> …divided humanity into a series of subtypes ranked from "highest" to "lowest." Unsurprisingly, considering their origin, most of these schemes modestly placed Caucasians at the pinnacle of humanity and relegated Native Americans and Sub-Saharan Africans to the bottom, only a hair's breadth away from apes.[9]

The phrase "hair's breadth" is important here, because it demonstrates another key feature of the Chain: continuity. According to Albertus Magnus, borrowing from Aristotle, everything on the ladder was substantively linked, in uninterrupted enchainment, to the entities between which it was sandwiched. In the example Livingstone cites above, Sub-Saharan Africans, then, were considered to possess overlapping qualities with both the apes above them and the humans below them. The crucial point here, besides the despicable imperialist superiority justified by the Chain, is the imbricative fluidity between entities. This fluidity or fungibility, as I will argue in the third chapter, provides a discursive resource by which it becomes possible to metonymically shift entities up and down the hierarchy.

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[7] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Here I reference Book Four, "On Christian Orators."

[8] Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

[9] David Livingstone Smith, *Less than Human* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011) Kindle Loc. 40.

Although the Great Chain of Being sounds absurdly antiquated now, its core ideas persist as both rhetorical resources and as elements that operate on people through contemporary cultural valuations. The Great Chain of Being aspired to legitimacy based on a "natural" order to the world, and necessarily privileged the elite few as a result. In medieval versions of the Great Chain, the highest ranking human was the divinely ordained king, followed by land-owning lords and peasants. Not surprisingly, men as heads of household were placed above women and children. We could say that the Great Chain of Being was an incredibly convincing way to justify unequal distributions of livability in the Middle Ages and beyond. It offered a coherent, cohesive, overarching narrative that validated and perpetuated inequalities. While it seems like only white supremacists directly reference the Great Chain of Being today, the features of social hierarchy of the Chain carry to the contemporary world, albeit in different forms.[10]

The idea of an ordained hierarchy to the world continued in the Western world through the early modern period, Renaissance, and into the nineteenth century. The European colonization of the Americas, Asia, and Africa in the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries depended on an ascribed "natural" order to the social world. The resulting subjugation of native people has been extensively documented in postcolonial scholarship. The history of rhetoric itself more than once served as platform to justify these hierarchical relations. According to Walter Mignolo, "[t]he authority of alphabetic writing and its "natural" links with history and rhetoric furnished sufficient proof for the Spaniards to look at other cultures as inferior."[11] Furthermore, the subjugation of Amerindians, African Americans, and women through the

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[10] Here is an example of a white supremacist referring directly to the Great Chain of Being on the *Occidental Quarterly* website: http://www.toqonline.com/blog/heidegger-race-destiny/.

[11] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 112.

nineteenth century was often underwritten by Christian hierarchies. Susan Romano provided an example of Christian rhetoric in the service of hierarchy work in the New World in her discussion of bilingual sacrament handbooks for the Catholic conversion of Amerindians.[12] Don Paul Abbot further extends this inquiry in his analysis of José de Acosta's work. Acosta, a Spanish missionary, argued that conversion rhetorics aimed at native peoples must be fundamentally different from those aimed at Europeans because of the diminished capacity of native peoples.[13] In his *Rhetorica Christiana*, Diego Valadés included for his native audience engravings elaborating multiple hierarchies, including ecclesiastical and imperialistic ones.[14] The persistence and durability of the Great Chain of Being is evident through the early modern period.

It was not until Kenneth Burke, however, that the rhetorical tradition was provided with a systematic theory for how language both attends and tends towards hierarchy. Prior to Burke, rhetoricians were concerned with rhetoric as a productive art—an art often used to maintain social hierarchies. Not only did Burke define man [*sic*] as the symbol-(mis)users "goaded by a spirit of hierarchy," but his system of *socioanagogic criticism* depended on a series of hierarchies. A great example of Burke's eccentric idiolect, the word "socioanagogic" forged together "social" and "anagogy." Burke borrowed "anagogy" from theology, where it referred to a hermeneutic search for ultimate mystical relevance, often in Biblical texts. From the term's first appearance in *Permanence and Change* through the socioanagogic reading of Shakespeare's

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[12] Susan Romano, "Rhetoric in Latin America," in *The Handbook of Communication History*, eds. Peter Simonson, Janice Peck, and Robert T. Craig (New York: Routledge, 2013), 397-411.

[13] Don Paul Abbott, *Rhetoric in the New World: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in Colonial Spanish America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

[14] Ibid., picture inset.

"Venus and Adonis" in *Rhetoric of Motives*, socioanagogic criticism provided ways of reading the world through secular appropriations of divinity. A theological employment of anagogy would involve reading, say, the Old Testament for ways in which eternity was represented. Burke's secular, social anagogy pursued the characteristics and consequences for language's range of social, political, and religious hierarchies. Of "Venus and Adonis," he said, "[O]ur major concern is to discuss the poem in terms of hierarchy." The principles of continuity, identification, God terms, and social order are evident in Burke's socioanagogic analysis, wherein he reads the goddess Venus, the mortal Adonis, and the murderous boar as representatives of three different levels of social class. Later in the same passage, he outlined his vision for socioanagogic criticism:

> Even the world of natural objects, as they figure in poetry, must have secret "identification" with the judgments of status. […] The veil of Maya is woven of the strands of hierarchy, and the poet's topics glow through that mist. By "socioanagogic" interpretation we mean the search for such implicit identifications.[15]

Burke's legacy of socioanagogic criticism, or his ultimate advice to read for the "enigmatic signature of the hierarchic motive," has not received as much attention as Burkean ideas like identification or dramatism. At the same time, many of Burke's most crucial concepts, like scapegoating and God terms, necessarily rely on hierarchical structuration to make sense.[16] God terms, for example, achieve their rhetorical force from God's position at the top of the hierarchy.

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[15] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 219.

[16] Ellen Quandahl pulled a quotation from *Rhetoric of Religion* that aphoristically connects scapegoating with hierarchy: "If order, then a need to repress the tendencies to disorder. If repression, then responsibility for imposing, accepting, or resisting the repression. If responsibility, then guilt. If guilt, then the need for redemption, which involves sacrifice, which in turn allows for substitution." Burke, 314. Cited in Quandahl, "'It's Essentially as Though This were Killing Us': Kenneth Burke on Mortification and Pedagogy," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1997): 5-22.

Rhetorical agency permeates from the apex of the hierarchy, where resides God, the "title of all titles."[17] Just by mere metonymic association with the pinnacle of the hierarchy, an entity's status can inflate. Burke is at his most hierarchy-sensitive in the epideictic closing passage of *Rhetoric of Motives*, where he notably names Aristotle as a builder of metaphysical hierarchies:

> The mystery of the hierarchic is forever with us, let us, as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements, both with dismay and in delight. And finally let us observe, all about us, forever goading us, though it be in fragments, the motive that attains its ultimate identification in the thought, not of the universal holocaust, but of the universal order—as with the rhetorical and dialectic symmetry of the Aristotelian metaphysics, whereby all classes of beings are hierarchically arranged in a chain or ladder or pyramid of mounting worth, each kind striving towards the perfection of its kind, and so towards the kind next above it, while the strivings of the entire series head in God as the beloved cynosure and sinecure, the end of all desire.[18]

In the *Rhetoric of Religion*, when Burke introduces his five-part definition of (hu)man, he further explains the importance of hierarchy to human creatures. By definition, according to Burke, humans are symbol mis/using animals, inventors of the negative, separated from their natural conditions by instruments of their own making, *goaded by the spirit of hierarchy*, and rotten with perfection. In a footnote, he apologized for the rhetorical flourish inherent in "goaded by a spirit of hierarchy" and suggested the more neutral phrase of "moved by a sense of order."[19] His comment on hierarchy references social stratification and the ownership of property. Later in the book he returned again to Augustine, referencing the Saint's equation of God's love with ascendance. "By thy gift we are inflamed and borne upward," Burke quotes Augustine—and in

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[17] This is but one example from Burke's multi-page list in *Rhetoric of Motives* of all of the secular things for which God metonymically replaces, 299.

[18] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 333.

[19] Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 42.

attaining our "proper" level on the hierarchy, we rest.[20] Secularly speaking, the inflationary capacities of God's love persist.

Burke's socioanagogic criticism and his concept of god terms gave us some tools for understanding hierarchies and how a "natural order" is maintained as a rhetorical resource. Unfortunately, the rhetorical tradition's history of colluding with hierarchies is longer than its development of the tools and practices to understand and critique these hierarchies…by thousands of years. Furthermore, the dominant Western rhetorical tradition is *still* in many ways accomplice to social hierarchy. For example, when we instruct our upper-middle class public speaking students on the best ways of accruing *ethos*, we forward a hierarchy that unreflexively privileges class-striated norms of speaking and ad/dressing.

While groundbreaking, Burke's socioanagogic methods alone aren't quite enough to understand how populations are governed, how individuals are mystically positioned for certain regimes of living or nonliving, or how humanity pushes off animality as the condition for its being. One of the primary ways in which the rhetorical tradition is an accessory to hierarchy is its insistence on the exceptionalism of the human. To comprehend these things, we need theories of the posthuman, as well as the biopolitical and necropolitical to continue to build a pathway to understanding contemporary hierarchies. The steep social and value hierarchies embedded in the secular and sacred humanisms that underwrite the rhetorical tradition require posthuman analysis.

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[20] Ibid., 160.

Posthuman Rhetorical Theory: Rhetoric Does Not a Human Make?

Rhetoric has been situated firmly in the humanities since the trivium of medieval education, a location maintained through the Renaissance and the present time.[21] Cicero used *humanitas* to describe the learning required to cultivate a hu/man for a life of public service. Rhetoric's consistent designation as a discipline in the humanities underscores both the subject and object of traditional rhetoric: humans. Identifying the "embedded encomia" to the metaphysics of Western thought inherent in the rhetorical tradition, Nathan Stormer described the individual as speaking agent as the cornerstone of the traditional rhetorical theory.[22]

It would be thoughtless to critique humanism topically while using rhetorical theories implicitly or explicitly grounded in the very same humanism. The number of rhetoric scholars working with non-humanist, ahumanist, anti-anthropocentric or posthumanist theories has increased in the past ten years. Still, despite the development of theories of rhetoric that decenter or deny the rational liberal subject, the literature has not yet congealed into a coherent conversation. To wit, "posthuman* rhetorical theory" as a phrase yielded zero results in Google Scholar as of mid-April 2014, although there are some disparate hits for "posthuman rhetoric."

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[21] Although, we can always go back earlier, for example, to Isocrates. In his "Antidosis," humans "escaped the life of wild beasts" because of the powers of speech and persuasion. Isocrates and George Norlin (Trans), "Antidosis." In Thomas Benson and Michael H. Prosser (Eds) *Readings in Classical Rhetoric* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), 47.

[22] Nathan Stormer, "Articulation: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Taxis," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 3 (2004): 257-284.

Within the field itself, the classic definitions of hu/man include rhetoric (Burke's symbol-using and mis-using animal, for example) and the classic definitions of rhetoric include human.[23] Aristotle's definition of rhetoric revised to enunciate a former silence would read, "the best available means of persuading (other humans)." There is even a term that roots rhetoric right in the binomial nomenclature of the human species: *homo rhetoricus*. In 1976, Richard Lanham contrasted the rhetorical man [*sic*] with *homo seriousus*, and posited *homo rhetoricus* as the role-playing figure responding to his contingent world with Sophistic agility, a fantasy of human agency that formed the basis of European Renaissance.[24] Osterreich was moved enough by *homo rhetoricus* to use it as the title of a book chapter, where he offers this definition of human: "Humans are rhetorical beings who use persuasive speech not only to influence others but also to shape themselves."[25] The unspoken presumption in the standard rhetorical formula of the speaking agent seizing *kairos* in order to produce change is that the agent is human and change is produced for other humans. "Rhetoric" and "human" often bind together tautologically: rhetoric is what makes the human and humanity's defining feature is use of rhetoric. Rhetoric was the art for governing the exclusive faculties of speech and reason—capacities at various times withheld from women, slaves, and new world savages. Traditional rhetorical theory is not just myopically

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[23] Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

[24] Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976). Stanley Fish picked up these two subspecies from Lanham and used them to rehash the agon between philosophy (*seriousus*) and rhetoric, which he cast as the animating quarrel of Western thought: *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989). Dwight Conquergood mapped the similar plights of *homo rhetoricus* and *homo performans* in their opposition to ontological fixedness: "Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no 1 (1992): 80-97.

[25] Peter Osterreich, "Homo Rhetoricus," in *Culture and Rhetoric, Vol. 1*, eds. Ivo Strecker & Stephen Tyler (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 49.

focused on but also ontologically bound to the entities that call themselves human, or the entities for whom being human is important.

In Ancient Greece, stone markers called *horoi* delimited the geographic boundaries of the Athenian *agora*.[26] A *horos* marked the place where a territory began and ended, often in the first person. "I am the *horos* of the agora," declared a slab stele recovered by archeologists in Athens. *Topoi* are defined by the *horoi* that mark their edges. Although the *horoi* of Ancient Greece were very literally border rhetorics, they can be employed metaphorically as well. Like *horoi*, the boundary between the human and nonhuman is re/inscribed in acts of re/territorialization. Humanity has a "stake" in what counts as human—again, literally. Posthumanist theorists are best described as scholars who, instead of stopping at the *horoi* of humanity, keep going. Rhetoricians have turned to posthumanist theorists for just these boundary-pushing capacities.[27]

One scholar wrote that the posthuman is "one of the most important concepts in contemporary literary theory, science studies, political philosophy, the sociology of the body, cultural and film studies, and even art theory."[28] Critical introductions to posthumanism, like Hayle's 1999 *How We Became Posthuman*, followed ten years later by Wolfe's excellent synthesis *What is Posthumanism?* reflect the broad influence of posthumanist theory in the humanities and social sciences.[29] While humanism maintains, with Protagoras, that man [*sic*] is the measure of all things, and that humans should be the guiding object of inquiry,

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[26] Josiah Ober, "Greek *Horoi*: Artifactual Texts and the Contingency of Meaning," In *Methods in the Mediterranean: Historical and Archeological Views on Texts and Archeology*, ed. Davis Small (Boston: Brill, 1995).

[27] Thank you to Jenell Johnson for pointing me towards *horoi*.

[28] Nicholas Gane, "Posthuman," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 431-434, 431.

[29] Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

posthumanism attempts to move beyond both the ontological primacy of the human.[30] Human

exceptionalism is the idea that humans are categorically distinct from all other animals.

Perturbations of human exceptionalism are at least as old as Darwin's 1859 *Origin of*

Species, although posthumanism didn't cohere into the eponymous movement until the last

twenty years. In 1873, Freidrich Nietzsche's essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense"

famously called out the anthropomorphisms that humans mistake for truth, which served as a

precursor to both Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault. As Diane Davis catalogued, Freud listed

the Darwinian and other threats in to the human ego in a 1917 essay that prefigured posthumanist

thought.[31] According to Freud, modern science delivered three blows to human pride, displacing

our egos cosmologically (through the work of Copernicus), psychologically (through the

importance of the unconscious via Freud), and evolutionarily (through Darwin's idea that

humans descended from apes). Martin Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" precipitated

posthumanism in 1947 because it critiqued Sartre's defense of Descartes's Cogito in place of the

thrownness of being-in-the-world.[32] Foucault's body of work, especially his argument on the last

pages of *The Order of Things*, predicted that this thing called man (or *anthropos*, in his words)

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[30] For some scholars like Joshua Gunn ("Review Essay: Mourning Humanism, or, the Idiom of Haunting," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2006): 77-102), posthumanism underwrites postmodernism: "This common commitment to displacing the masculinist, self-same rational agent as the center of the known universe is the hidden premise of the postmodernist enthymeme and in most instances the accusatory rhetoric of the postmodern (that is, the uses to which the postmodern foil is put) is a reaction to the post-humanism that underwrites various, differing understandings of postmodernity…that which has passed as postmodernism is actually posthumanism." (78). Other scholars prefer the term nonhuman to the posthuman, as witnessed by the 2012 conference called, "The Nonhuman Turn," hosted by the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts.

[31] Diane Davis, "Creaturely Rhetorics," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44, no. 1 (2011): 88-94.

[32] Robert H. Cousineau, *Humanism and Ethics: An Introduction to Heidegger's Letter on Humanism* (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1972).

was nearing its end.[33] Even though it has only been named during my lifetime, posthumanism casts a long shadow. Posthumanist movements began outside the rhetorical tradition, although Diane Keeling revises a history of rhetoric that finds posthuman impulses since antiquity.[34] In perhaps the most-quoted line in posthumanist theory, Katherine Hayles overstated, "We have always been posthuman."[35]

Posthumanist rhetoric dovetails with the project of pushing beyond what Greg Dickinson called the "cult of the symbol."[36] One of the distinguishing features of rhetorical theory after the Wingspread conference, Carole Blair asserted, is the ubiquity of the symbol and symbol systems. She wrote, "While one can still catch a post-Wingspread rhetorician defining rhetoric without the term symbol somewhere, it is more than a bit unusual."[37] If humans and rhetoric are indeed tautologically bound, it is symbol use that provides the glue for this binding. Humans crown themselves with symbolic achievement; humans are distinct from (and, implicitly, better than) animals because they use symbols. Further, self-awareness and complex cultural worlds also separate humans from animals. Parenthetically, all of these claims of human exceptionalism have been consistently rebuffed in the last twenty years as scientists found evidence of self-awareness,

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[33] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971). I am pointed in this direction by Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism?*

[34] Diane Keeling, "Posthumanist Rhetoric: Theory and Rhetoric for the More-than-Human" (PhD Diss., University of Colorado-Boulder, 2012).

[35] Hayles, *Posthuman*, 291.

[36] Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 5-27.

[37] Carole Blair, "Rhetorical Bodies," in *Rhetorical Bodies: Toward a Material Rhetoric*, eds. J. Selzer and S. Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

culture, symbols, and tool use in animals.[38] Posthuman rhetorical theorists find that *logos* (variously construed as speech, language, and rationality) is no longer an adequate answer to the question, "What makes a human?"

This persistence of symbolic exceptionalism is the reason it shocked the field when George Kennedy posited a rhetoric beyond symbols in the famed 1992 essay "A Hoot in the Dark," which was revised and republished six years later in his book *Comparative Rhetoric*.[39] Kennedy redefined rhetoric as prior to language, as a generalized form of energy present not only between humans but also among animals, and situated his study within evolutionary biology. In his account, an "assembly caw" amid a murder of crows was an example of rhetoric operating in the animal world.

As the previous section showed, the rhetorical tradition, especially in its human exceptionalism and status-saturated attributions of agency, collaborates in hierarchy building. Humanism is another hierarchic feature of the European rhetorical tradition. A nuanced zoerhetorical theory would critique many of the impulses of humanism, especially the kind of humanism that leads the United States and other nations to call contemporary acts of war "humanitarian interventions." To understand these contemporary morphologies of humanism, and to continue to assemble the toolbox needed to build a theory of zoerhetorics, we need posthumanist rhetoric to open into biopolitical and necropolitical theories.

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[38] Tom Tyler and Manuela Rossini. *Animal Encounters* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=467771. Also of interest here work published in a new interdisciplinary journal *Humanimalia*.

[39] George Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 1 (1992): 1-21.

Biopolitical and Necropolitical Regimes of Living

Often the differences that matter—the differences that make a difference for livability—occur across the biopolitical trenches of citizenship, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, or physiological normativity. Race (sometimes construed as caste or ethnicity), is the line of difference along which biopolitical imperialist regimes were originally built. Reaching more deeply into the zoo of living entities as posthumanist theorists would encourage us to do, we might add species to our list of differences that matter. Across humans and nonhumans alike, consequential distributions of livability follow the grooves of these fault lines. But where do these fault lines come from?

We can roughly group human-identified living entities into three categories. Some bodies experience nourished vitality, some deteriorate slowly in conditions of deprivation, and others are targeted distinctly for death. For example, lives deemed worthy of life are encouraged to participate in a culture of vitality, engaging in practices of exercise, nutrition, and a "healthy lifestyle." The most ascendant of these lives will have the biographical availability, excess capital, and agentic willpower these lifestyles require. Prisoners on death row might exemplify the second category. They have been judged unworthy of "free" life due to alleged criminal activity. Lauren Berlant would add the obese poor in the United States to this category as well, arguing that they are targeted for a kind of "slow death."[40] The third category, the subhuman, is less readily identifiable in the contemporary U.S., although certainly exists. Nowadays the withholding of humanity from a person or group of persons is rarely explicit. The obvious historical example is the dehumanization of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Calling them dogs,

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[40] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

vermin, parasites, and an infestation "unmade" them as human and worked to justify their annihilation. As I will argue later, a similar "unmaking" is currently in effect in rhetorics regarding military-aged males in drone strike zones in the War on Terror. Living entities come to matter (or fail to matter) through a series of rhetorical processes. I use these three categories as shorthand to discuss these processes, but I also acknowledge the poverty of such a simple schema. To demonstrate how complex these zoerhetorical movements can be, consider that one entity or group of entities could be nourished for life along one vector and targeted for death along another.

Biopolitics, as a branch of critical social theory, studies the multiple strategies by which life is regulated and optimized, and is considered the primary apparatus of governmentality that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. (Governmentality refers to the way that governments create citizens that are best suited to fulfill their policies). All discourses regarding the management of life, including but not limited to quality of life, distribution of risk, life insurance, health (care), mortality, disease, life chances and environment are rendered intelligible through a logic of biopolitics and controlled through biopolitical *dispositifs* (Foucault's word for apparatuses). Biopolitical theory provides an explanatory lens for a dizzying range of topics: animal care; nurse and physician practices; physiological, mental health and medical issues more generally; disability studies; lifestyle studies; and environmental or ecological issues.[41] What the

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[41] This list exemplifies the range of biopolitical studies: Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Amélie Perron, Carol Fluet, and Dave Holmes, "Agents of Care and Agents of the State: Bio-power and Nursing Practice," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 50, no. 5 (2005): 536-544; Simone Fullagar, "Sites of Somatic Subjectivity: E-scaped Mental Health Promotion and the Biopolitics of Depression," *Social Theory & Health* 6, no. 4 (2008): 323-341; Shelley Tremain, "The Biopolitics of Bioethics and Disability," *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 5, no. 2 (2008): 101-106; Federico Boni, "Framing Media Masculinities Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Biopolitics of the Male Body," *European Journal of Communication* 17, no. 4 (2002): 465-478; David Goodman, "Agro-Food Studies in the 'Age of Ecology': Nature, Corporeality, Bio-Politics," *Sociologia Ruralis* 39, no. 1 (2002): 17-38.

concept enjoys in theoretical traction, however, it lacks in specificity. Matthew Coleman and Kenneth Grove are disdainful about the extent to which "biopolitics" is an unreflexive umbrella term for any kind of post-sovereign conception of power. Following Paolo Virno, they agree that "life breaks through the center of the public scene;" that is, that life emerges as a major regulating concept of the contemporary social world, but they reject the way the term gets deployed as a vague catchall.[42] In the spirit, then, of deploying the concept of biopolitics responsibly, I offer a brief overview of the major tenets of biopolitical theory. After laying groundwork, I'll focus on necropolitics, and then move into scholarship that explores the rhetorical dimensions of biopolitics and necropolitics.

Biopolitical theory crystallized in France via Michel Foucault in the 1970s, and remains a vibrant and European branch of critical social theory. Many major biopolitical theorists are Italian—Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, Roberto Esposito, and Rosi Braidotti.[43] Thomas Lemke is German and Achille Mbembe is from what is now Cameroon and took his PhD from the Sorbonne in France.[44] The U.K.-based cultural studies journal *Theory, Culture & Society* publishes more biopolitical essays than any U.S.-based cognate journal. Prominent American thinkers like Judith Butler and Michael Hardt address biopolitics, and although there is transatlantic collaboration (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* trilogy, for example), the

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[42] Paolo Virno as quoted in Matthew Coleman and Kevin Grove, "Biopolitics, Biopower, and the Return of Sovereignty," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27, no. 3 (2009): 489-507, 489.

[43] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[44] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press. Kindle Edition 2011); Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15 no. 1 (2003): 11-40.

thrust and focus of academic dialogue on biopolitics remains European as U.S.-based scholars work with less receptive audiences and slow English translations.

All biopolitical scholars today contend with Foucault, even though biopower proliferates in ways it would have been impossible for him to imagine when he introduced the concept in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976 (English translation 1978).[45] Foucault's major insight was that "life itself" increasingly informed political decisions. This volume and the two that followed forwarded three axes of biopower. The first axis was the historical rupture from sovereign power (characterized by the phrase "taking life and letting live") to biopower (characterized by the phrase "making live and letting die"). This axis elaborated a significant shift in political orientations to death with the advent of biopolitics. Prior to biopolitical regimes, it was the king's prerogative to revoke life. During the eighteenth century, the sovereign's role shifted to become the protector, prolonger, and maximizer of life. The second axis situated biopower as the basis of modern racism. For Foucault, the discursive formation of race (and its accompanying mythology as consisting of phenotypic biological categories) was a biopolitical production. The consequences of biopolitical race-making are among the most lethal of biopolitical power effects.

The third axis maintained that biopower is a distinctive art of governmentality that emerged historically with liberal forms of social regulation and individual self-governance. This final axis created the famous distinction between the two interlocking poles of biopower: the disciplinary control of the individual body ("anatomo-politics," enumerated best in *The Care of*

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[45] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

the Self, Volume 3)[46] and the regulatory control of the population en masse. Because of

sexuality's position between these two poles—as both personal/disciplinary and open to

measures of surveillance like population control—it served as the perfect first biopolitical case

study. In order to develop his idea of self-discipline, Foucault borrowed from Jeremy Bentham's

sketch of a prison. From the guard's position in the middle of this prison, she could see

everything—it was a *panopticon*. This architectual arrangement encouraged the prisoners to

internalize the gaze of the guard and regulate their own behavior. Foucault used this as a

metaphor for contemporary disciplinary society. We now all live in the panopticon, and as a

result, we have internalized the panoptic gaze. Good biopolitical subjects no longer require a

sovereign or prison guard to keep them in line—instead, we do it ourselves. I will develop some

of the implications of this internalized disciplinary gaze in the fourth chapter, where I discuss the

embodied daily habits of people working out at the gym. Biopolitics continued to surface in the

series of lectures Foucault delivered at the Collège de France through the late seventies and early

eighties. *Society Must be Defended*, delivered in 1975-76, especially because of its racialized

reading of modern war as an attempt to make a population biologically stronger, was an

important addition to the Foucauldian biopolitical canon.[47] *The Birth of Biopolitics*, delivered in

1978-79, elaborated inextricable links between biopolitics and forms of liberalism.[48]

In 2007 Thomas Lemke published perhaps the most ambitious synthesis of biopolitical

theory to date, which was translated from German to English in 2011 and re-titled *Biopolitics:*

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[46] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

[47] Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003).

[48] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

An Advanced Introduction.[49] He usefully categorized two biopolitical follies: the overemphasis on the first half of the word (*bio*politics) and the overemphasis on the second half (bio*politics*). *Bio*politics forwarded a concept of a political body that is considered a natural living organism (here Lemke cited Rudolph Kjellén, a Swedish philosopher who likely coined the term "biopolitics" in 1916, in an essay that Foucault deconstructed), whereas the bio*politics* explanation maintained that politics regulates biology (here he cited the work of E.O. Wilson and similar others who attempted to ground unequal distribution of resources in a biological "natural" hierarchy).[50] The dangers overemphasizing *bio* resulted in naturalistic explanation of life as the stable organic basis beneath politics; the dangers of overemphasizing *politics* resulted in an understanding of politics as a stable and pure form of biology. "However," Lemke explained, "both conceptions fail to explain the instability and fragility at the border between life and politics."[51] Following Foucault, Lemke mediated these two poles with a relationally and historically contingent notion of biopolitics. Lemke affirmed the value of biopolitics in its "ability to make visible the always contingent, always precarious difference between politics and life, culture and nature, between the realm of the intangible and unquestioned."[52] In Lemke's narrative, Foucault was the first biopolitical theorist to break with naturalist or politicist interpretations of biopolitics. For Foucault, "life" emerged as the center of politics as a historical process and symptom of modernity.

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[49] Lemke, *Biopolitics*.

[50] Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

[51] Lemke, *Biopolitics*, 3.

[52] Ibid., 31.

Both in Lemke's narrative and in the numbers game of citation frequency, the most influential interpreter of biopolitics was Giorgio Agamben (especially the *Homo Sacer* trilogy). Agamben's famous intervention was the state of exception. In Agamben's version of biopolitics, he omitted Foucault's disciplinary power and incitements towards life. Rather, Agamben introduced us to *homo sacer*, the figure around which the modern state becomes possible. *Homo sacer*, an obscure figure from Roman law, was the "sacred man" who may be killed (his murder was not punishable) but not sacrificed (his life was not worthy of sacrifice). As bare life, *homo sacer* could be excluded from the political realm. This exclusion grounds the state of exception, Agamben's basis for Western politics. This groundwork allowed Agamben to famously declare at the end of *Homo Sacer* that the concentration camp is the biopolitical paradigm of modernity.

As mentioned earlier, the *zoe* prefix of zoerhetorics derives from the Ancient Greek word that describes the spectrum of all living entities.[53] While I use *zoe* from an encounter with Agamben's work, I do not use *zoe* to mean exclusively bare life. In Agamben's version of biopolitics, he positioned *zoe* against the other Attic Greek word for life, *bios* (βιος), which referred to the way of life proper to a group. *Bios*, life that meets a certain set of conditions and qualifications, is restricted to but not guaranteed for humans. Among other scholars, Laurent Debreuil dismissed Agamben's *zoe*/*bios* etymological distinction as fictional.[54] At the end of *Homo Sacer*, Agamben backed away from the strict *zoe*/*bios* definitions he established in the beginning of the book. In the conclusion, he stressed, "we no longer know anything about the classical distinction between *zoe* and *bios*."[55] Again, I must emphasize the my uptake of *zoe* is

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[53] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

[54] Laurent Debreuil, "Leaving Politics: *Bios*, *Zoe*, Life," *diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 83-89.

[55] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 187.

not to reproduce Agamben's categories of conditioned versus bare life, but instead to gesture towards biopolitical theory with a term that describes entities across the species divide.

Necropolitics: The Dark Side of Biopolitics

Privileged citizens in the contemporary Western world are likely to experience the biopolitical optimization of their lives, and most of the scholarly work on biopolitics reflects this. The preponderance of essay-length biopolitical studies focus on health, nutrition, and exercise as modes of encouraging the creation of citizens that are suited to a particular government's policies. But biopolitical regimes host seedy underbellies. Scholars Foucault, Agamben, Esposito, Achille Mbembe, Monica Casper, Lisa Moore and Jasbir Puar attend to the dark side of biopolitics. What Foucault and Stuart Murray called thanatopolitics and Achille Mbembe called necropolitics describe the way in which regimes of power target populations for *both* life and death.[56] The inflate/deflate double modulation of zoerhetorics relies on this double movement of bio/necropolitics.

When he described *homo sacer* and positioned the concentration camp as the paradigm of modernity, Agamben articulated something like a necropolitics (although he doesn't use the word—he uses the Foucauldian thanatopolitics). He wrote that the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life. According to Agamben, it is bare life, surprisingly, that is in the most intimate relation with the sovereign during the state of exception.

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[56] In this dissertation, I choose to follow Mbembe's necropolitics rather than Foucault's thanatopolitics for two reasons. First, the emphasis on *necros* (physical death) over *thanatos* (spiritual death; death personified) drums home Mbembe's attempt to make physical death and suffering more visible. The second reason is by sheer numbers; necropolitics has thousands more Google hits. People are using it more.

Just as the sovereign is included in the community as able-to-kill, *homo sacer* is included in the community as kill-able. The sovereign is the person to whom anyone may be *homo sacer*, and *homo sacer* is the person to whom anyone may be sovereign. Agamben wrote that if there is no obvious figure of *homo sacer* today, it's because we've all become *homines sacri*. For Agambem, the concentration camp was one of the most dangerous instantiations of thanatopolitics we have ever seen, because of its inclusion of bare life into the mechanisms and calculations of power.

Like his fellow countryman Agamben, the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito contributed to bio/necropolitics, using the concept of immunity to discuss the ways in which modern biopolitics always carry the threat of deathly reversal. Seeking a middle ground between what he described as the negative tonality of Agamben's biopolitics and the celebratory tone of Hardt and Negri's biopolitics, and, for the first time, positioning Nietzsche as the precursor to modern biopolitics, Esposito asserted that immunity is the point of contact between the "affirming" and "lethal" modes of biopolitics. He contrasted immunity with community: "If *communitas* is the relation that binds members to an obligation of reciprocal donation, then *immunitas* is the condition of dispensation from that relation."[57] In other words, Esposito's immunitary paradigm describes a condition of relation where *immunitas* protects the one who bears it from risky contact with the one who lacks it, thereby restoring his own jeopardized borders. For Esposito, sovereignty and other institutional forms of modernity exist to protect the logic of the immunitary paradigm.

The most powerful contribution to necropolitics is Achille Mbembe's essay that bears the title. Mbembe wondered why scholars endlessly discuss the optimization of and incitement

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[57] Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

towards life when, complicit and always present with biopolitical regimes, are populations targeted for death, living in "deathworlds." Whereas Foucault and Esposito thought that some sort of rupture had to occur before biopolitics became lethal, Mbembe maintained that the preservative and lethal functions of biopower were continuous with each other. He asked, "Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, or of resistance, or the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective?"[58]

For Mbembe, modern examples of deathworlds, where subjects are targeted for death rather than nourished toward life, are South Africa under Apartheid and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Here Mbembe suggested that biopolitics b(l)inds us to the violence of warfare—a violence inextricable from the notion of the sovereign state. Recasting Foucauldian biopower as the "domain of life over which power has taken control," Mbembe asked after the conditions by which the practice of the right to kill, the right to allow to live, and the right to expose to death are exercised. Foucault considered Nazi Germany to be the only complete conflation of politics and war. Mbembe, however, would have us think that the conflation of war and politics is a defining mark of late modern biopolitical/necropolitical regimes.

The bio/necro tension is further elaborated by Monica Casper and Lisa Moore (in their book *Missing Bodies*) and Jasbir Puar (in her book *Terrorist Assemblages*).[59] "Haunted" by the living dead in necroworlds, Casper and Moore seek to codify a politics of corporeal visibility. In a research question similar to my own, they ask, "What can account for the fact that certain bodies are hyper-exposed, brightly visible, and magnified, while others are hidden, missing, and

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[58] Mbembe, *"Necropolitics,"* 12.

[59] Monica Casper and Lisa Moore, *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), Kindle Version.

vanished?"[60] Puar, one of Mbembe's most visionary readers, used the bio/necro tension to forward a theory of homonationalism, which describes the normative demands of the "good" (implicitly white and appropriately consumption-driven) gay or lesbian subject. In making sense of the complex bio/necro relationship, Puar elaborated, "The latter makes its presence known at the limits and through the excess of the former; the former masks the multiplicity of its relationships to death and killing in order to enable the proliferation of the latter."[61]

Biopolitical theory, on its own, then, is not enough. Rather than being merely the *unfortunate* casualties of nation states clashing, bodies targeted for death are the *necessary* casualties of the political war machine. Some bodies are unevenly absorbed into biopolitical regulation while bodies targeted for death remain ignored, excluded from biopolitical and general political collectivity. Many studies interrogating the maximization and regulation of life entirely ignore the dying body or the body targeted for death; Nikolas Rose's affirmative biopolitical work can be considered an example of this.[62] While attending to biopower's machinations of encouraging vitality is a worthy activity, neglecting the politics of death threatens to re-forget and re-ignore necropolitical bodies. Necropolitical theory, then, is an attempt to look at the globalized constellation of bodies across various distributions of livability, with the understanding that populations targeted for life are both discursively and materially sustained by populations targeted for death. Zoerhetorical theory investigates rhetorics that both raise and lower the status of life based on an understanding of this structural imbrication between the biopolitical and the necropolitical.

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[60] Ibid., Loc. 116.

[61] Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 35.

[62] Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Biopolitics and Rhetoric

In contemporary regimes of living, one of the primary modes of assigning zoerhetorical status is what Didier Fassin called biolegitimacy. Biolegitimacy is the extent to which a society is considered to value "life itself." A recent development in biopolitical theory, Fassin's concept of biolegitimacy explores exactly this logic of capital-L Life. Instead of Foucauldian biopower, Fassin contended that contemporary regimes of living are best characterized by the *imposition of biolegitimacy*, or the recognition of the sacredness of life itself. The shift from biopower (power over life) to biolegitimacy (power of life) explains the extent to which capital-L Life has become "a crucial issue in the moral economies of contemporary societies."[63] In other words, societies gain a rhetorical currency from espousing a commitment to life itself. When George W. Bush declared America as having a "culture of life," he exemplified the exigencies of biolegitimacy. Similarly, when the U.S. wages war on terror "in the name of life itself," we valorize a performance of biolegitimacy.

Although Fassin never expressed it in these words, his concept of biolegitimacy is enacted as or animated through *rhetorical performance*. Nation-states (or organizations or entities) can perform, or fail to perform, biolegitimacy. A successful performance of biolegitimacy hinges on a range of rhetorical considerations, of which the rhetor's classic audience, purpose, and context are only the beginning. Perhaps most importantly, a given organization's successful performance of biolegitimacy is not proportional to that organization's lethality. For example, the Obama administration has done an excellent job of discussing

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[63] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society 26*, no. 5 (2009): 44-60, 50.

weaponized drones *biolegitimately*—they saves the lives of servicepersons, they save the lives of civilians abroad, they save the lives of Americans threatened by the terrorists they target. At the same time, as I will develop in the third chapter of this dissertation, drones are lethal weapons. As a rhetorical performance, biolegitimacy lets us see that whoever controls the narrative of "life itself" can often monopolize attributions of virtue. The concept of biolegitimacy rendered as rhetorical performance is but one moment where rhetorical studies can articulate fruitfully with biopolitical inquiry.

Although Foucault attended to discourse, and Agamben's and Esposito's work relied on etymology, semantics, and philology, the biopolitical heavyweights paid little attention to the rhetorical tradition. As a result, their ways of dealing with the discursive meaning-making of the production of inequality along lines of population is deficient. Biopolitical logics are rhetorical accomplishments that permeate publics in legible and consequential ways. One of the primary rhetorical dimensions ignored by biopolitical theorists is this: How do biopolitical logics come to be convincing? That is, how do we come to practice our own vitality or tacitly agree to another's exclusion? We need a way to interrogate the operation of biopolitical incitements towards life and necropolitical banishments towards deathworlds *as they occur rhetorically*. This is the contribution I intend for zoerhetorical theory to make to biopolitical theory.

While a lot of biopolitical work focuses on meanings as they circulate in public culture, there is little that directly addresses rhetorical theory or rhetoric scholarship. A handful of special issues on biopolitics or related issues have been published in rhetoric, media, or communication journals, and rhetorical theorists such as Nathan Stormer, Megan Foley, and Stuart Murray discuss the intersection of rhetoric and biopolitics. I find my own zoerhetorical project also buttressed by a thinker (formerly) professionally positioned in a Rhetoric department yet not

traditionally associated with rhetorical studies: Judith Butler. Rhetorical scholars have tended use biopolitics as a theoretical lens with which to critique some public text.[64]

In 2011, *MediaTropes*, an open-access online journal, published a special issue on bioconvergence, or the "capillary trajectories" of converging living bodies, media, and technology with Foucauldian biopower.[65] In this forum Lisa Diedrich published an analysis of Terri Schiavo and Hurricane Katrina as instances of "mediated medicine" in the biopolitical sphere. In the same forum Cary Federman and Dave Holmes explained the biopolitical and rhetorical status of the Guantánamo prisoner, locating points of convergence in the media, sovereignty, and the War on Terror.[66] Google Earth, brain imaging software, and global financial industries are also topics under interrogation in the special issue on bioconvergence.

Jerry Hauser's work is notable for its mobilization of biopolitics within rhetorical theory to understand the particular plight and opportunity of the prison of conscience. Hauser used the example of political prisoners of conscience enacting *parrhesia*, or fearless frank speech, to challenge the fated pessimism of Agamben's state of exception.[67] This book located moments where bodies targeted for slow life or death (such as the prisoners at Robben Island in South Africa) were able to generate a rhetorical agency that persuasively intervened in the

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[64] Giorgio Agamben, "No to Biopolitical Tattooing," trans. Stuart J. Murray, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2008): 201-202. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* published special fora on biopolitics in 2008 and 2012. The 2008 forum featured the first English translation of Agamben's editorial "No to Biopolitical Tatooing" and featured essays from Stuart Murray, Kelly Gates, Erik Doxtader, and Rajeswari Rajan. The 2012 forum, called "Biopolitics, so to speak," collected a series of essays focused on the potential redundancy of the "bio" in biopolitics. In the introductory statement, Biankle Chang wondered, "Inasmuch as bio is political, the reverse is no less true." "Introduction: Bio-Redundancy (?) in Biopolitics," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 215-216, 216.

[65] Deborah Lynn Steinberg and Stuart J. Murray, "Editorial Preface Special Issue on Bioconvergence," *MediaTropes* 3, no. 1 (2011): i-iii.

[66] Cary Federman and Dave Holmes, "Guantánamo Bodies: Law, Media, and Biopower," *MediaTropes* 3, no. 1 (2011): 58-88.

[67] Gerard A. Hauser, *Prisoners of Conscience: Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2012).

contemporary regime—thereby, in some instances, modulating the effects of the biopolitical regime. Although I am hesitant to grant these political prisoners the same heroic status that Hauser does, Hauser's work chronicles a series of moments where rhetors, often successfully and counter to the assessment of Agamben, buck regimes of dying. This celebration of rhetorical power of the resistant agent on the individual level serves as an important limit case to this dissertation, which seeks after the rhetorical forces that legitimate persons targeted for death or nourished toward life.

Stormer's main contribution is an essay where he attempted to inform biopolitical analyses with a mediating logic of articulation theory using prenatal space as a case study.[68] This essay, one of the few explicit attempts to reconcile biopolitical theory with rhetorical theory, warned against reading biopolitics as merely representational and text-based. Biopower, as distributed through what Conley and Dickinson called "regimes of living," articulates both an order of life (Stormer gives the example here of a healthy pregnancy) and an order of discourse about life (for example, discourses of nutrition that humans and nonhumans can intelligibly address).

In Megan Foley's biopolitical essay on Terry Schiavo, she identified a contemporary inversion in the classic movement of democratic franchisement.[69] Historically, speaking subjects campaigned for their own rights, such as the suffrage for women or civil rights for persons of color. However we are now faced with a strange inverse. Even in the face of continued disenfranchisement for many speaking subjects, we have movements that campaign for the rights of non-speaking entities, for example, environmental rights, animal rights, and the rights of

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[68] Nathan Stormer, "Mediating Biopower and the Case of Prenatal Space," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 8-23.

[69] Megan Foley, "Voicing Terri Schiavo: Prosopopeic Citizenship in the Democratic Aporia between Sovereignty and Biopower." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 7 no. 4 (2010): 381-400.

incapacitated persons. Foley calls this phenomenon prosopopeic citizenship. *Prosopopeia* is the

tropological attribution of voice. For Foley, prosopopeic speaking-for mediates the aporetic gap

in the democratic order between sovereign logics and biopolitical logics. The speaking subject is

expected to comport themselves with sovereignty over their own bodies. When this breaks down

in non-speaking entities, it requires prosopopeic mediation, which Foley documented by looking

at popular mass-mediated responses to Schiavo's plight.

Murray's body of work centers on Agambenian biopolitics, rhetoric, and media. In

addition to translating Agamben's "No to Biopolitical Tattooing" into English, Murray tackled

the dark side of biopolitics.[70] Using the suicide bomber as a case study, he suggested that the

suicide bomber is frightening, and even unintelligible, to us exactly because she operates outside

of the dominant biopolitical logic. For Murray, the thanatopolitics of the suicide bomber is both

response and resistance.[71] Murray also offered a rejoinder to biopolitics of life and death as co-

belonging, one that appreciates in death a "pre-political community ethic."[72]

Judith Butler's recent work took a biopolitical and rhetorical turn. In the last ten years,

Butler expanded the scope of her research from sexual marginality to the margins of Western

liberal norms of inclusion. In *Precarious Lives*, Butler inquired after frames or narratives that

permit or fail to permit the representability of the human.[73] Throughout this book and 2009's

Frames of War, she is concerned with depictions of Palestinians or Al-Qaeda-associated "enemy

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[70] Agamben, "Biopolitical Tatooing."

[71] Stuart J. Murray, "Thanatopolitics: On the Use of Death for Mobilizing Political Life," *Polygraph* 18 (2006): 191-215.

[72] Stuart J. Murray, "Thanatopolitics: Reading in Agamben a Rejoinder to Biopolitical Life," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2008): 203-207.

[73] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso Books, 2006).

combatants" in the War on Terror that fail to represent their humanness.[74] Butler's distinctly

rhetorical move forefronts the constitutive power of frames, narratives, and visual imagery such

as photographs in the consequential public representations of Islamic Others. These questions are

important not only to answer the question of whether we can respond effectively to suffering at a

distance, "but also to formulate a set of precepts that might work to safeguard lives in their

fragility and precariousness."[75] In particular, Butler wants to understand how the frames that

allocate the recognizability of certain figures of the human are themselves linked with broader

norms that determine questions of humanization or dehumanization. Like this dissertation

project, the normative goal of *Frames of War* is to interrogate the radical inequality that

characterizes "the difference between grievable and ungrievable lives."[76] Butler's suggestion is

to attune us to our primary condition as vulnerable bodies, and to critique the way in which we

are not invited to understand the Other under the sign of the Human.

In sum, communication, media, and rhetoric scholars employing biopolitical lenses have

gained ground in the last ten years. From Hauser we get a pushback on Agambenian cynicism

with prisoner of conscience as rhetorical agent. From Stormer we get an analysis of biopolitical

space that attempts to go beyond the textual. From Foley we get a critical rhetorical analysis of

popular mass-mediated messages informed with a biopolitical framework. From Murray, we get

a corpus of rhetorical work sensitive to both bio- and necropolitics. Finally, from Butler we get

an etho-political orientation suffused with biopolitical theory that questions the "grievability" of

lives as they cluster within or outside of the sign of the Human.

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[74] Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London: Verso, 2009).

[75] Judith Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951-966, 951.

[76] Butler, *Frames of War*, xxii.

Despite these gains, few rhetoric scholars have explicitly asked how biopolitical regimes come to be created and sustained rhetorically. Even fewer have approached the dark necropolitical side (Murray and Butler excepted), and no rhetoric scholar has yet worked the bio/necro tension while pushing rhetoric past the "merely" discursive. Biopolitical regimes come to be persuasive in both classically rhetorical ways—via the mediation of symbols in various configurations in a series of mostly public texts—and in ways unmediated by symbols as well.

While I have been skewering, perhaps unfairly, the rhetorical tradition for maintaining a human exceptionalism, I want to briefly point out that biopolitics, too, falls into this paradigmatic modernist logic of privileging the human. As Nicole Shukin argued in *Animal Capital*, when scholars like Agamben or Esposito focus on the flows of *bios* over those of *zoe*, they are committing a kind of speciesism. Scholarship by Shukin, Carey Wolfe, and Mel Chen not only focuses on animality explicitly, but also recognize "the animal" as exactly that whom the human pushes against for exclusion. Wolfe even argued that speciesism provides a rhetorical resource for dehumanizing humans. He wrote,

> as long as the automatic exclusion from animals remains instant simply because of their species, such a dehumanization by means of the discursive mechanism of "animalization" will be readily available for deployment against *whatever* body happens to fall outside the ethnocentric "we."[77]

Biopolitical logics permeate regime of living in expansive, wide-ranging flows. It will be in particular settings and the broader assemblages of which they are a part that we will see rhetorical work that raises and lowers the status of entities' lives. These zoerhetorics, in turn,

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[77] Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), Kindle Edition, loc. 21.

maintain necropolitical regimes with their characteristic disciplining, targeting, and privileging of populations. What methods of inquiry are needed to locate, examine, and critique these zoerhetorics?

Methodological Inquiries for a Zoerhetorical Theory

In this section, I will aggregate the hodgepodge of tools, sensibilities, hunches, and ethical commitments that form my methodological approach to this dissertation. I will articulate the benefits of rhetorical field methods with a feminist qualitative reflexivity informed by Deleuzian assemblage theory as conceptual frame. Assemblage theory provides one of the many possible pathways by which traditional rhetorical analysis can open into posthumanism. Fittingly, posthumanism is a necessary commitment for zoerhetorical analysis, which understands species assignation as an important zoerhetorical marker, threshold, and resource.

To use the language of web 2.0, rhetorical field methods (RFMs) are trending right now. What makes a field method like participant observation "rhetorical"? Are RFMs simply the appropriation of time-tested anthropological methods for distinctly rhetorical questions, or are we doing something entirely new? How do I build credibility as a scholar of rhetoric while using RFMs? In their essay that coined the term, Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres undertook to synthesize the dispersed and varied efforts by rhetoricians to take to the field.[78] They situated RFM amid ongoing disciplinary activities at the nexus of critical rhetoric, ethnography, and

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[78] Michael Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 386-406.

performance studies. Defining RFM as the method of "everyday rhetorical experience," they privileged the "processual form of rhetorical action that are accessible only through participatory methods."[79]

In this essay, the authors offered the first coherent codification of RFM and forwarded three reasonable commitments to its developing practice: 1) Rhetoric is best understood as a social practice, 2) Rhetorical texts and lived experience are dialectically related, and 3) Participatory epistemology supplements critical knowledge. This essay is important because it starts official focused disciplinary conversation on what have come to be known as RFMs. Because of this, it also serves as a legitimizing force for RFMs—now rhetorical field workers have something to cite in the methods sections of their essays. However, I think there are some major problems with this piece. Primarily, the authors do not hold rhetorical fieldworkers responsible for the reflexivity that feminist qualitative research training entails. I will try to amend this omission in my own use of RFMs.

Site of protest, consumption, public memorials, museums, and tourist destinations are amid the panoply of "fields" interrogated by rhetoric scholars. But it's important to acknowledge that a number of rhetoricians studied rhetoric "in the field" long before the codification of RFMs. Carol Blair, Ralph Cintron, Greg Dickinson, Phaedra Pezzullo, and Bryan Taylor are among the many rhetoric scholars for whom the broader rhetorical experience of "being there" mattered in some way before "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods" was published in 2011. They each deal with the exigencies of qualitative reflexivity and methodological accountability in different ways. On one side of the spectrum, Greg Dickinson disavowed the need for ethnographic participant-observation, even as it is clear from his thick descriptions that he spent considerable

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[79] Ibid., 387.

time in the places about which he wrote, such as Starbucks and the Old Pasadena mall.[80] On the other side of the spectrum, Ralph Cintron's multi-year immersive participant observation in an industrial town near Chicago (which he calls *Angels' Town*, after which his book is named) is exemplary in its commitment to ethnographic reflexivity. At the same time, he still brings a critical rhetoric sensibility to the homes, streets, grocery stores, back alleys, and front porches of Angels' Town. For example, he calls the claim to understand a culture or community a "trope" or ploy of ethnography.[81]

From the range of rhetorical scholarship that has taken to a "field," it is clear that traditional text-based critical rhetoric wasn't enough. But this leaves scholars trained as rhetorical critics in confusing territory. How do I perform an ethical interview? What "counts" as enough time in the field? What counts as data? How much of my own narrative voice should make the final cut? Are rhetorical field methods qualitative research with a rhetoric lens, or an altogether different animal? Furthermore, rhetorical field workers are charged with making claims about a much larger (sometimes incoherently large) set of data, ("the experience") when compared with critical rhetoric. Because of this, they are also charged with a different relationship to accountability. If I wanted to write a rhetorical analysis of Obama's most recent national address, the video and text would be there at whitehouse.gov, tying me tightly to a range of evidence-based claims I might make about Obama's speech. Researchers would all agree on

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[80] Dickinson says he is not "methods driven," and in one set of footnotes explained that ethnographic research would in fact be an obstacle to his rhetorically-informed research. Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (1997): 1-27, 23.

[81] Ralph Cintron, *Angels' Town* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

the bounds and dimensions that compose the "speech," and that the speech is essentially a piece of data or text that is (considered) always the same, every time we review it.[82]

But the rhetorical field worker's data is more than a gathering of texts: the particular experience they have in a place, the particular interactions with other folks there, as well as their particular embodied practices, habits, and privileges all contribute to a text that cannot be replicated. Therefore, the rhetorical fieldworker needs to do more work upfront explaining his or her relationship to the field. This different relationship to accountability, combined with the explosion of available data, gives the rhetorical fieldworker more room for the reflexivity that qualitative researchers have been practicing for years. Responsible qualitative researchers have addressed questions about the "politics of the gaze" and have turned to reflexivity as a means to acknowledge that *how* knowledge is gathered as deeply related to the claims made.[83]

If we are to think of traditional rhetorical criticism as beginning with a coherent, discrete set of data ("the text"), RFM's explode this notion of data/text. Everything part of the experience of "being there" becomes potential data: any symbol use; sensory data from any of the five senses (or six if you count intuition, which has its own range of rhetorical considerations); behaviors, affects, and talk of the researcher and all present persons; all material aspects of the site: architecture, décor, the way bodies move through it; its purpose; the way people act within and towards the space; the way the site operates as discursive node (centrifugally?

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[82] Of course, McGee's fragments of texts that the critic must create herself troubles this idea. Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 274-289.

[83] Wanda Pillow, "Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 2 (2003): 175-196. At the same time, reflexivity can fail. As Pillow noted, conversations around reflexivity often turn to a heightened focus on the researcher's subjectivity, which at its worse can slip into self-centered narcissism. Daphne Patai is critical about the extent to which reflexive practices (such as the rote listing of the researcher's demographic characteristics that imply a particular subject position) actually make qualitative research better. Patai, "(Response) When method becomes power," in *Power and Method*, ed. A. Gitlen (New York: Routledge, 1994), 61–73.

centripetally?); the transitory versus permanent nature of the site; its ghosts and hauntings; its relationship to the city or broader space; any consumption (ideas, food, retail products) that occurs there. According to Greg Clark, who is in turn working from John Dewey and Burke, an experience "always does rhetorical work."[84] The "rhetorical experience," then, is a vibrant, throbbing, dynamic complex of parts. How to make sense of it?

One possible way of making sense of this complex of parts is through Deleuzian assemblage theory. I appreciate the ethical commitments of assemblage theory, whose anti-phallic, rhizomatic ontological structure is more fascicular than fascist. Mel Chen, in her volume *Animacies*, groups Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages with Donna Haraway's dismantling of "naturecultures," Latour's "hybrids," and Karen Barad's "agential realism," as fairly recent movements that push back against the problematic social constructionist move that the world is entirely "segregated to the realm of the subjective." These developments help us rethink how matter might contribute to the "ongoing discussions about the conceptual, cultural, and political economies of life and death."[85] After a brief overview, I will argue that assemblage theory affords me, in this dissertation, modes of sense-making for rhetorical experiences in an explosive assembled field while also accounting for objects.

Assemblage derives from the French word *agencement* (which translates roughly to "arrangement"), and refers to the connectivities between vibrant, heterogenous components in emergent, articulative congregation with one another across material and discursive realms. In fact, assemblages are the precondition for the mingling of these material and discursive

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[84] Gregory Clark, "Rhetorical Experience and the National Jazz Museum in Harlem," In Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, eds. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

[85] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition, loc. 184.

modalities: "Assemblages are necessary for states of force and regimes of signs to intertwine their relations"[86] As Deleuze and Guattari described them, assemblages have a number of dimensions. Assemblages territorialize whenever their boundaries are sharpened or when there is an internal increase in homogeneity; assemblages deterritorialize (lines of flight) whenever their boundaries are blurred and when there is an internal increase in heterogeneity. We can think of territorialization and deterritorialization generally as making and unmaking processes that assemblages are constantly undergoing.[87] At the same time, assemblages are emergent insofar as an the assembled components together can "do" something—they can make something happen— that is different from the capacity of its individual components.

Especially as Jane Bennett articulates it, assemblage theory as a frame allows for an opening into objects. Posthumanist theory demands we revise both the subject and object of the oft-quoted Protagorean claim that *man* is the measure of all *things*. Posthuman rhetoric is just beginning to explore this thing-ness—although Richard McKeon feinted towards the thing in the early seventies in his famous essay on architectonic rhetoric.[88] In 2008 Richard Marback used the vandalization of the Monument to Joe Louis as a call for rhetorical studies to give objects their due. "Objects are more than the featureless repositories of consequential responses," he wrote.[89] Things, in culture-forming articulation with discourses and people, become important for Stormer's reformulation of rhetoric that attempts to dislodge myopic focus on the individual.

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[86] Deleuze & Guattari, *1000 Plateaus*, 71.

[87] Rosanne Kennedy, Jonathon Zapasnik, Hannah McCann and Miranda Bruce, "All Those Little Machines: Assemblage as Transformative Theory," *Australian Humanities Review* 55, no.2 (2013). http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-November-2013/kennedy_etal.html.

[88] He gently nudged rhetoric beyond logos by emphasizing "things and arts" as productions of rhetoric. Richard McKeon, "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts," in *Professing the New Rhetoric*, eds. Theresa Enos and Stuart C. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 126-44.

[89] Richard Marback, "Unclenching the Fist: Embodying Rhetoric and Giving Objects Their Due." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 38 no. 1 (2008):46-65, 52.

Rather than individuals articulating a society through words, Stormer employs the secondary

meaning of articulate—distinctly jointed—to describe the way in which things, practices, and

people form culture.[90]

Although some rhetorical theorists, as we have seen, have hailed the thing, it remains a

promising but largely untapped area for rhetorical theory. Materiality, thing, object, and actant

overlap as components of "assemblages" or "imbroglios" as rhetorical theorists attempt to make

sense of the world pushing back. Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which

originated in sociology of science studies, inspired a number of rhetorical scholars to

provisionally attribute agency to actants like things.[91] Sarah Hallenbeck used ANT in an essay on

feminist rhetorical agency that dispersed agential power to bicycles.[92] In this essay, agency was

dispersed within networks of humans and nonhumans like objects and discourses. Similarly, in

his *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* article on counter-regions in Kansas, David Tell called on ANT in

order to develop a method of articulation accountable to things.[93] In this dissertation, for

example, assemblage theory becomes indispensable in its capacity to account for the fetus as an

object in the chapter on fetal memorialization. It allows me to attribute a vibrant agency to the

fetal object while simultaneously avoiding the humanist imperative of attributing Life and

Humanity to it as well.

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[90] Stomer, "*Taxis*."

[91] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[92] Sarah Hallenbeck, "Toward a Posthuman Perspective: Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies and Everyday Practices," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 15, no. 1 (2012): 9-27.

[93] David Tell, "The Meanings of Kansas: Rhetoric, Regions, and Counter Regions," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 214-232.

Jane Bennett's book *Vibrant Matter* explored the vital power of material formations, or what Kenneth Burke would call recalcitrance. Her second chapter, in particular, developed an agency of assemblages. Every entity simultaneously consists of assemblages, is an assemblage itself, and is a component of a number of larger assemblages. For Bennett, the point is to distribute agency—a healthy rejoinder to rhetoricians for whom rhetorical agency is synonymous with human agency. Within rhetoric scholarship, Bennett's project dovetails with Thomas Rickert's conceptualization of the *chora* (via the theorists Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, and Greg Ulmer) as a mode of invention that doles out agency to nonhumans.[94] Jasbir Puar's book on *Terrorist Assemblages* was instructive here, as an assemblage frame allowed her to shift a focus from what terrorist bodies *signify* to what they *do*.[95]

Zornitsa Keremidchieva articulated one way for articulating assemblage theory with rhetorical theory. The emergent properties of assemblages make possible different trajectories of thought. Although her assemblages are much larger in scale than my field sites, Zornitsa Keremidchieva's work highlighted a qualitative shift in "race-gender-alienage-war" assemblage that formed ("assembled") a body politic oriented away from social justice. In this piece, Keremidchieva is concerned with tracking various "flows" of discrimination or jurisdictional authority.[96] When I borrow her insights for my own methodological inquiry, I am interested in the trajectories of amplification or deflation of status—the zoerhetorical flows—for particular groups.

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[94] Thomas J. Rickert, "Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no. 3 (2007): 251-273.

[95] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

[96] Zornitsa Keremidchieva, "The Congressional Debates on the 19th Amendment: Jurisdictional Rhetoric and the Assemblage of the US Body Politic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013): 51-73.

Of course, assemblages are not panaceas. The general posthumanist framework they require can make it difficult to, for example, make humanist social justice claims about the world. Similarly, attributing agency to things is conceptually difficult to sustain, and modernist humanism smuggles itself in, and has certainly left more than traces on this dissertation. As a conceptual frame for rhetorical field methods, posthumanism and assemblage theory is best considered a guiding heuristic, touchstone, or topos, rather than strict law.

Zoerhetorics inflate and deflate the status of various entities across a range of settings. In this dissertation, I focus on three particular field-assemblages, which is not to suggest that zoerhetorics only occur at these places. At each of these sites, rhetorics reterritorialize and deterritorialize the zoerhetorical hierarchies. My hermeneutic task is to read these diverse field-assemblages for the trajectories that make the amplification or diminution of life status possible. The first field-assemblage is the National Memorial for the Unborn, where I will pay attention to the trajectories of inflation of life status for the fetal entity across the site and its accompanying texts. The second field-assemblage is the *New York Times* and its ancillary rhetorics of drone warfare, where I attend to the lines of deflation for drone targets in the War on Terror. At the third field-assemblage, which consists of Boulder, Colorado's fancy athletic clubs and the vital biocitizens who enact self-care there, I attend to flows of vitalization and status-raising.

Chapter Two

The Zoerhetorics of Fetal Memorialization:

Rhetorically Making Babies at the National Memorial for the Unborn

My precious babies in Heaven—I will be your voice!

— Hannah Rose Allen, on a letter at the National Memorial for the Unborn

At the center of one of the most intractably deadlocked public debates—abortion—the

fetus floats silently. As the target of political, legal, medical, vernacular, and religious

communicative practices that encourage its flourishing as well as its termination, the fetus may

be the most publicly contested entity of the twenty-first century. The fate of the fetus has

occupied controversial political space in the United States since at least the 1800s,[1] but the

debate's more recent instantiation as a chronically recurring issue of the "culture wars" since the

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[1] According to Linda Gordon in her comprehensive history of birth control in the U.S. *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002). But we can cast the net back even further: Aristotle's writing on the "potency" of human embryos and their chronological acquisitions of "sensitive" and then "rational" souls are an early but critical marker of oscillation around fetal becoming. See C. Cameron and Robert Williamson, "In the World of Dolly, When Does a Human Embryo Acquire Respect?" *Journal of Medical Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2005): 215-220, 215.

1980s drew lines in the sand that divide political factions today on the issue of abortion.[2] The struggle over the substantiality of the fetus continues. In just the last two years, over one thousand provisions have been introduced at the state level to ban abortion, grant embryos or fetuses legal personhood, defund Planned Parenthood, or restrict the efforts of abortion providers.[3] At the same time, millions of American women pursue abortions. Twenty-one percent of all pregnancies in the U.S. end in abortion, and over one million legal abortions occur in the U.S. every year, even though abortion rates have dropped over the last two years.[4] More recently, fetal rights have been absorbed into a broader right-to-life movement that includes within its purview not only embryonic and fetal entities but also stem cells and brain-dead persons.[5]

Amid this fray, in the past twenty years, pro-life communities have developed and embraced fetal memorialization, or the commemoration of aborted or miscarried "unborn babies," as a component of their movement. Epicentral to these fetal memorial practices is the National Memorial for the Unborn (NMU) in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The NMU is not only the largest and oldest facility in the United States dedicated to unborn memorialization, but is also the only one to declare a relationship to the nation in its title. Since 1994, the NMU has been open twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, to provide a space where the nation's unborn can be remembered and grieved. Meanwhile, an adjoining office in the crisis pregnancy

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[2] We can look to Pat Buchanan's famous "culture war" speech at the Republican National Convention in 1992 as an important event in this division.

[3] "State Attacks on Women's Health," Planned Parenthood website, last modified 2014, http://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/state-attacks-womens-health/types-attacks/. Most of these provisions are defeated.

[4] "Induced Abortion in the United States," *Guttmacher Institute*, last modified February 2014, http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html.

[5] For example, the large National Right to Life organization includes "health care rationing" and "euthanasia" among its issues.

center next door provides an online presence and logistical support for at least fifteen smaller memorials to the unborn scattered across the country.[6] Installed on the NMU's imposing fifty-foot granite Wall of Names are hundreds of inscribed brass nameplates, each dedicated to an "unborn baby."

The NMU ventures consequential stakes in the status of the fetus. As a rhetorical artifact, biological entity, and part of a cultural assemblage, the fetus' vacillating, contested status demands inquiry. This fractious clamor over the fetus stands to tell us something important about how rhetorics make life and humanhood. In this chapter, I seek to understand the rhetorical practices that modulate the cultural status of various entities as they occur within the National Memorial for the Unborn assemblage—that is, I seek to understand the NMU zoerhetorically. Biopolitical regimes demand the production and destruction of populations. At the NMU, the "unborn" are biopolitically produced and rhetorically accumulate or solidify humanhood in iterable, prescriptive, tropological ways that I will detail below.

The chapter will proceed as follows: After dispensing with a brief note on terms, I will elaborate the theoretical framework with which I approach the NMU, centered around complementary threads of feminist and biopolitical/necropolitical scholarly inquiries into the fetal entity. This will be followed by a description of benefits of conceiving of both the fetal entity and my fieldsite as assemblages, calling on the posthumanist movement towards "things" in contemporary rhetorical theory. After a chronospatial tour of the NMU, I offer three ways in which fetal entities are humanized at the NMU. I call these three movements of *naming*, *en/voicing*, and *en/facing* "zoetropes" that inflate the status of the fetal entity at the NMU.

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[6] The NMU lists 15 affiliates on its website, but there are hundreds of memorials to the unborn across the country.

Zoetropes, or rhetorical devices that inflate or deflate an entity's status along biopolitical lines, carry important implications for zoerhetorical theory.

A Note on Terminology

In order to dispense with the scare quotes I have enclosed around the "unborn" thus far, I want to acknowledge the high stakes of using *any* of the available public names for the particular entities commemorated at this site. The myriad terms for the fetal entity each arrive with their own zoerhetorical status investments; in fact, there is no publicly circulated term for the fetal entity void of status investments. Consider the status-inflating and -deflating forces at work in the following ranked list of public names for alive or dead fetal entities: zygote, embryoblast, embryo, fetus, aborted baby, unborn baby, baby, child.[7] The plurality of available names for the embryonic/fetal entity is made possible by the conceptual elision, or what John Lynch called the "metonymic reduction," of all embryonic/fetal entities.[8] This conceptual collapse provides the foundation for a wild vacillation of status assignations for the fetal entity. This vacillation is evident in the range between, on one end, the term "zygote" (a single diploid cell, often considered the beginning of life in pro-life rhetorics) and, on the other end, referring to the embryonic/fetal entity with a first name or even nickname.

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[7] Zygotes become structures called blastocysts about five days after fertilization, the inner cell mass of which is referred to as an embryoblast. In humans, the formation is technically called an embryo from the first cell division until eight weeks after fertilization (or roughly ten weeks after last menstrual period). After this period, embryologists refer to the structure as a fetus. Thomas W. Sadler, *Langman's Medical Embryology* (Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2011).

[8] John Lynch, *What are Stem Cells? Definitions at the Intersection of Science and Politics* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 54.

Public assignations of the fetus span humanhood.[9] As I will develop below, humanhood is perhaps the most consequential, yet also the most furiously debated, zoerhetorical threshold. Fetal entities, especially, are rhetorically contested around the threshold of humanhood. While attributions of humanhood come to fuller fruition when a fetal entity is given a name like Annie or Christopher, as is the encouraged practice at the NMU, attributions of human-ness are also evident in terms like "aborted baby" and "unborn baby." In order to be a baby, of course, one must be human. Depending on a public's or individual's orientation to life's beginnings, "unborn babies" or "aborted babies" are either sacred children, oxymorons, or somewhere in between. Throughout this chapter, I will follow the standard ethnographic practice of using the terms emic to my site when making references within the NMU assemblage—all while fearing the political consequences of the word *unborn*. However, for approaching fetal memorialization writ broadly, I find more analytical and political traction in a term that feminist reproductive theorists have been using since the eighties: the public fetus.

Necropolitics of the Fetal (Memorial) Assemblage

The public fetus refers to the ways the fetus has become an intelligible, identifiable icon and index of cultural values around innocence, medical risk, femininity, maternity, and childhood. In tandem with the concept of biolegitimacy, the public fetus provides a useful configuration around which to build the theoretical framework of this chapter. Next, I will make a pitch for an assemblage-driven approach to the NMU as a rhetorical field site tuned towards the

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[9] I use the term "humanhood" rather than "personhood" for its species specificity. Personhood is now elastic enough to span species. In 2013 the Indian government granted dolphins legal personhood. The Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies nominates great apes, cetaceans, parrots, and elephants for personhood and call for an extension of human rights to these species: http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/RNHP.

vibrancy of "things." In doing so, I identify the inherent fungibility of the fetus as a zoerhetorically contested entity, and explain why the fetus offers a crucial case study to advance zoerhetorical theory.

The concept of the public fetus reminds us that fetal photographs, ultrasound images, and even the mutilated fetuses pasted on anti-abortion billboards have not always saturated the national stage in the immediately identifiable ways they do now. As Donna Haraway observed, "It is almost impossible to get through the day near the end of the Second Christian Millennium in the United States without being in communication with the public fetus."[10] While some scholars suggest that the increase in visualization technologies such as ultrasound and intrauterine photography contributed to the creation of the fetus as a public figure,[11] others argue that the saliency of the fetus as an entity more important than and separate from the mother has been a trend long before ultrasound or other technologies.[12]

As a national figure constructed through a variety of representational forms, the public fetus is indelibly linked with women and power. Lynn Morgan and Meredith Michaels observed that *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision upholding the legality of abortion in the United States since 1973, was based on the constitutional right to *privacy*, which makes a notion of the *public* fetus a rather ironic post-Roe development.[13] Feminist reproductive theorists have

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[10] Donna Haraway, *Modest−Witness@Second−Millennium. FemaleMan Meets OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Psychology Press, 1997), 201-2.

[11] Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 263-292; Carol A. Stabile, "Shooting the Mother: Fetal Photography and the Politics of Disappearance," *Camera Obscura* 10, no. 1 (1992): 178-205.

[12] Nathan Stormer, *Articulating Life's Memory: U.S. Medical Rhetoric about Abortion in the Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

[13] Lynn Marie Morgan and Meredith W. Michaels, "Introduction," in *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions*, eds. Lynn Marie Morgan and Meredith W. Michaels (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

interrogated permutations of the public fetus through the practice of ultrasounds,[14] fetal surgery,[15] medical risk,[16] vehicle advertisements,[17] maternal responsibilities around nutrition and exercise,[18] racialized maternal innocence,[19] and rights-bearing heteronormative subjects.[20] In sum, feminist scholarship around the fetus observes that when the fetus is foregrounded to become what Susan Bordo called a "super subject," the gestating woman is backgrounded.[21]

Further, framing the public fetus as an awe-inspiring (or aww-inspiring) national figure in need of protection not only omits gestating women from the public view, but even serves to vilify them as faulty, selfish incubators.[22] Deployments of the public fetus as an intelligible national figure in the United States paved the way for the construction of the nation's "unborn" as they occur at the NMU. While the site rarely forwards or circulates common visual representations of the fetus such as ultrasound images, the development of an identifiable public

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[14] Lisa Mitchell, *Baby's First Picture: Ultrasound and the Politics of Fetal Subjects* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

[15] Monica Casper, *The Making of the Unborn Patient: A Social Anatomy of Fetal Surgery* (Chapel Hill, NC: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[16] Deborah Lupton, "'Precious cargo': Foetal Subjects, Risk and Reproductive Citizenship," *Critical Public Health* 22, no. 3 (2012): 329-340.

[17] Janelle Taylor, "The Public Fetus and the Family Car: From Abortion Politics to a Volvo Advertisement," *Public Culture* 4, no. 2 (1992): 67-80.

[18] Anne Balsamo, "Public Pregnancies and Cultural Narratives of Surveillance," in *Revisioning Women, Health and Healing: Feminist, Cultural, and Technoscience Perspectives*, eds. Adele Clark and Virginia Olsen (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[19] Angela Davis, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003), 353-367; Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997).

[20] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

[21] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), 80.

[22] Gena Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

fetus in the last forty years is crucial to the NMU's conception of the unborn. The NMU not only adopts but also intensifies the ascriptions of innocence, appeals to maternal protection, and attributions of sacredness typical in popular representations of the public fetus.

When feminist scholars approach the fetus with a biopolitical lens, they often critique the imperatives of self-care mandated for pregnant women. Popular representations of the fetus as inherently vulnerable circumscribe women within what Deborah Lupton called an "intense ascetic regime of self-regulation and discipline of their bodies."[23] In the same vein, scholars have also noted the similarity between the entrepreneurial, self-regulating ideal neoliberal subject with the ideal maternal risk-adverse "reproductive citizen."[24] Explicitly necropolitical approaches to the public fetus are less common, although Monica Casper and Lisa Moore used a necropolitical frame to inquire after deaths that are typically hidden from the public view—the 28,000 preventable newborn deaths that occur each year.[25]

Given the obvious centrality of reproduction for the importance of re/producing populations, it is jarring that most of the flagship pieces of biopolitical scholarship fail to substantively address reproductive politics. Ignoring reproductive (bio)politics—which include processes that necessarily inhabit the bodies of women more than men—is equivalent to ignoring women. Penelope Deutscher attributes this omission to an endemic male bias in biopolitical theory. While Deutscher finds Foucault's treatment of women "passable," she decreed

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[23] Lupton, "Precious Cargo," 329.

[24] P. Lealle Ruhl, "Disarticulating Liberal Subjectivities: Abortion and Fetal Protection," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 37-60; Lorna Weir, *Pregnancy, Risk, and Biopolitics: On the Threshold of the Living Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[25] Although they cite Mbembe, they take liberties with his definition of necropolitics. Berlant's slow death would be a good rejoinder to their claims.

Agamben's "gender fissure" a "nonaccident."[26] Reproduction, she argued, as the creation of

future individuals, should occupy a central place in biopolitical theory, especially amid

contemporary anxiety around the quality and quantity of human reproduction. She is concerned

at the extent to which the "defense of the future of the "people" through an intensified

biopolitical focus on women as reproductive" shortchanges women as a whole by suturing them

to an essentialized femininity.[27] This study, then, can be understood partly as a response to

Deutcher's call for feminist biopolitics of reproduction.

Scholars of rhetoric have also addressed the fetal entity, most often through the lens of

abortion rhetorics. Celeste Condit's *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric* tracked the rhetorics of pro-life

and pro-choice movements from 1965-1985 within a social movement framework—an important

volume at a time when rhetorical studies was just starting to concede that women and their leaky,

fecund bodies constituted worthy objects of study.[28] Following Condit's lead, scholars of

communication and rhetorical studies have addressed abortion rhetorics, such as the rhetoric of

Roe v. Wade,[29] the ideographs of life and choice,[30] sex-selective abortion in transnational

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[26] Penelope Deutscher, "The Inversion of Exceptionality: Foucault, Agamben, and 'Reproductive Rights,'" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 1 (2008): 55-70, 57. Also of interest here is that many major biopolitical theorists (Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Antonio Negri) hail from Italy, a country famous for its public anxieties around a disappearing ethnically Italian population.

[27] Penelope Deutscher. "Reproductive Politics, Biopolitics and Auto-immunity: From Foucault to Esposito," *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (2010): 217-226, 224.

[28] Celeste Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994). This book is commendable for its cross-disciplinary readership unusual for rhetorical studies publications. Most of its 300-plus citations are in feminist theory and sociology journals.

[29] Katie L. Gibson, "The Rhetoric of Roe v. Wade: When the (Male) Doctor Knows Best," *Southern Communication Journal* 73, no. 4 (2008): 312-331.

[30] Sara Hayden, "Revitalizing the Debate Between <Life> and <Choice>: The 2004 March for Women's Lives," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 111-131.

contexts,[31] arguments in the constitutional disputes around abortion,[32] the analogous arguments

of fetal rights and animal rights movements,[33] and the rhetoric of philosophical arguments around

abortion.[34] As is evident, most of these studies focus on the arguments employed by both pro-life

and pro-choice movements. However, there has been less emphasis on rhetorics of the public

fetal entity itself, minus some important exceptions. Recently, John Lynch described the public

fetus as a demonstration of biorhetoric. "Biorhetoric" is John Lyne's term for the discursive

strategy that smuggles culturally specific moral injunctions into statements of apparent biological

fact. In the case of the public fetus, which Lynch, following Condit, identified as a "metonymic

construction borrowed from the abortion debate," the allegedly neutral and value-free language

of science is mobilized to make claims for the substantiality of the fetus as a person.[35]

At the intersection of biopolitics and posthumanist rhetoric, Nathan Stormer built a

considerable body of work exploring constructions of the public fetus. Arguing for articulation

theory as a mediating logic, Stormer discussed the biopower materially and discursively divested

in what he called "prenatal space." His distinction between when an embryonic or fetal entity

shifts from "becoming-alive" to "being-alive" is instructive for zoerhetorics of the fetus:

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[31] Christine Garlough, "The Risks of Acknowledgment: Performing the Sex-Selection Identification and Abortion Debate," *Women's Studies in Communication* 31, no. 3 (2008): 368-394.

[32] Edward Schiappa, "Analyzing Argumentative Discourse from a Rhetorical Perspective: Defining 'Person' and 'Human Life' in Constitutional Disputes Over Abortion," *Argumentation* 14, no. 3 (2000): 315-332.

[33] Jason Edward Black. "Extending the Rights of Personhood, Voice, and Life to Sensate Others: A Homology of Right to Life and Animal Rights Rhetoric," *Communication Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2003): 312-331.

[34] Chris Kaposy, "Proof and Persuasion in the Philosophical Debate about Abortion," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43, no. 2 (2010): 139-162.

[35] John Lynch, "Stem Cells and the Embryo: Biorhetoric and Scientism in Congressional Debate," *Public Understanding of Science* 18, no. 3 (2009): 309-324, 322.

> Prenatal space configures a zone "before life" and is a fundamental consequence of the diverse articulations that mediate biopower. Ironically, the space of becoming-alive is coeval with all of life and is not "before life" except relative to a specific event that marks a beginning or birthing. I use "birthing" cautiously because I refer not to the first moment of a newborn, but to a life threshold when an organism or entity changes status from becoming-alive to being-alive. Where that threshold lies depends on the prevailing regime of living that constitutes what is and is not "life" and is no longer dependent on the pregnant body for its measure.[36]

As Stormer observed, the reigning biopolitical regime of living will make the distinction between "becoming-alive" or "being-alive," a distinction that used to ontologically reside within the body of the gestating woman (often in the moment of "quickening").

Although Stormer positioned abortion through a lens of cultural amnesia,[37] few scholars have tapped the underdeveloped rhetorical canon of *memory* to understand constructions of the public fetus. Even the recent collected volume *Places of Public Memory*, which explores various museums, monuments, and memorials, does not offer a systematic theory of contemporary memorialization practices. For that, I turn to art historian Erika Doss. In her authoritative book on the subject, Doss calls the recent increase in memorializing activity in the United States *memorial mania*, or "an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts."[38] As she catalogued, the list of memorials built in the last twenty years includes not only hundreds of memorials dedicated to unborn babies, but also memorials for organ donors, executed witches, astronauts, victims of lynching, victims of terrorism, murdered teenagers, tragic roadside accidents, cancer survivors,

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[36] Nathan Stormer, "Mediating Biopower and the Case of Prenatal Space," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 8-23, 16.

[37] Nathan Stormer, "In Living Memory: Abortion as Cultural Amnesia," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 3 (2002): 265-283.

[38] Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.

soldiers in any number of wars, and a number of persons famous for medical, technological, or generally humanistic advances. According to Doss, the performances of public feeling in the U.S. crystallized in memorialization practices stem from heightened anxieties about who and what should be remembered, and are often accompanied by larger assertions about citizen rights and representation—as is clearly the case at the NMU.

Despite the pervasive public visibility of the fetal entity, and the serious consequences for women's reproductive practices the public fetus carries, a robust rhetorical literature has not yet formed around the fetus. This omission, I believe, goes beyond a male bias in the rhetorical tradition or the overdetermined intractability of the abortion debate. Rather, the fetal entity is undertheorized because of its capacity to confound boundaries dear to the rhetorical tradition, such as human/nonhuman, life/thing, and speech/silence. The fetus troubles even the most inclusive posthumanist rhetorical theories that attempt to enfold all corporeal entities, including animals, within their bounds. For example, in *Inessential Solidarity*, Diane Davis described a fundamental rhetoricity inherent in the vulnerability of corporeality, a rhetoricity ostensibly available to humans and animals alike. Yet unlike even an animal, the fetus is both corporeally exposed (that is, it has the capacity for injury, just like my liver or my heart) but also completely corporeally enfolded within another corporeality. In addition to disrupting the almost universal assumption that one human body equals one human person, the fetus is also poised to trouble deep rhetorical questions such as who constitutes a speaking subject and the ethical obligations we have towards silent others.

The fetus also poses conundrums for biopolitical theory. The re/production of the population is intimately tied to biopolitical mandates. The state needs to regulate the population to ensure its continued sustenance, because the state is only as strong as the health of its people.

However, there are competing biopolitical pressures on reproductive practices from different factions. I will use the example of a pregnancy to illustrate these rival logics. On one side, the neoliberal market logics that underlie regimes of living pressure women to delay or limit childbearing based on the financial stability of the family unit. Within this orientation, a pregnant woman might be encouraged or even applauded for choosing to delay childbearing with an abortion prior to the achievement of, for example, career security. On the other side, the pro-life movement pressures women to choose "Life." Within this orientation, a woman might be encouraged or even applauded for carrying a pregnancy to term, regardless of financial, familial, relational, or even health exigencies. Of these competing biopolitical rhetorics—the logic of the market and the logic of Life—the NMU espouses the logic of Life.

A recent development in biopolitical theory, Didier Fassin's concept of biolegitimacy explores exactly this logic of Life. Instead of Foucauldian biopower, Fassin contended that contemporary regimes of living are best characterized by the *imposition of biolegitimacy*, or the recognition of the sacredness of life itself. The shift from biopower (power over life) to biolegitimacy (power of life) explains the extent to which capital-L Life has become "a crucial issue in the moral economies of contemporary societies."[39] In other words, societies gain a rhetorical currency from espousing a commitment to life itself. It is important to distinguish here between a society's commitment to Life through actions and policies versus commitment to life through word alone. In the War on Terror, for example, the United States seems to have mastered the rhetorical maintenance of biolegitimacy while pursuing asymmetric, ruthless, and bloody acts of war. Because the United States at least somewhat convincingly performs biolegitimacy, it literally gets away with murder. Although Fassin never expressed it in these

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[39] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 5 (2009): 44-60, 50.

words, his concept of biolegitimacy is enacted as a *rhetorical performance*. Furthermore, Fassin's biolegitimacy is a rhetorical resource available not just to nation-states, but to organizations (like the NMU) and individuals as well.

The benefits of public performances of biolegitimacy are observable at the NMU. The pro-life movement and its ancillary extensions tend to accrue the credibility that derives from expressing a commitment to the sanctity of life itself. Comparably, Fassin's examples of appeals to biolegitimacy include the rhetorics of humanitarianism and global human rights. One of the most important implications of biolegitimacy for Fassin is that biopolitical regimes *produce inequalities*, a movement that Fassin felt was intimated but never fully realized in Foucauldian biopolitics. In other words, to "make live" supposes mostly implicit choices about who gets to live what kind of life, and for how long they get to live it. Zoerhetorical theory tries to codify the rhetorical dimensions of these processes of inequality production. The NMU's attempt to discipline and control reproductive practices (or at least orientations to these practices) is better explained by the contemporary rhetorical force of performing biolegitimacy than the Foucauldian state-driven concept of biopower.

Now that I have established the scholarly literature that guides my conceptual approach to the NMU, how do I go about actually making sense of the site? The past fifteen years have witnessed the beginning of attempts to codify rhetorical field methods,[40] which have centered mostly around sites of museums and memorials.[41] Scholars have found rhetorical field methods advantageous in terms of going beyond traditional text-based rhetorical criticism in the areas of

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[40] Michael Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 386-406.

[41] For example, see Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museum and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Thomas Dunn, "Remembering "A Great Fag": Visualizing Public Memory and the Construction of Queer Space," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (2011): 435-460.

addressing materiality, accessing vernacularity, fostering a sophistic aesthetic, and accounting

for embodied movement in spaces.[42] While practitioners of rhetorical field methods have yet to

confirm a standard set of field practices, my field method practices seem to align with what is

typical. I took two trips to Chattanooga, each lasting three to four days, in the space of a little

over a year. I supplemented this time in the field with three in-person interviews and two phone

interviews with volunteers or visitors at the NMU, as well as a range of texts available at the site

and the website.

A practice of rhetorical field methods allows the researcher to be present to the throbbing

congregation of material-discursive components at the NMU. The NMU can be thought of as an

assemblage, or a

> …heterogenous, historically particular collection of parts whose interactions and
> dispersed agencies produce a range of emergent qualities and consequences.
> Assemblages come into organization but move, change, discharge, and attract
> components, and sometimes disperse. They have both material and signifying
> dimensions, traverse human and non-human realms of being, and include persons,
> networks, language, cognitions, concepts, techniques, habits, organizations and all modes
> of physical matter and materiality.[43]

Like any other place, the NMU is a material-discursive assemblage, the material objects of which

include not only the physical site itself, but an array of geographically dispersed elements.

Comprising these dispersed components are: the brass plaques parents receive by snail mail; the

website displayed by pixel on scattered computers and hand-held devices; the culturally

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[42] See above citations, as well as: Carole Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, eds. J. Selzer & S. Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999): 16–57; Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (2011): 127-152; Peter Simonson, "The Streets of Laredo: Mercurian Rhetoric and the Obama Campaign," *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 1 (2010): 94-126.

[43] Allison Rowland and Peter Simonson, "The Founding Mothers of Communication Research: Toward a History of a Gendered Assemblage," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31, no. 1 (2013): 3-26, 5.

inscribed bodies of international participants; and the varied zoerhetorical effects of its meaning-making practices. An assemblage can be understood as the thing that makes the mixing of material and discursive modalities possible. In turn, these material and discursive components are subject to assemblage territorialization and deterritorialization. As Delueze described it, assemblages "territorialize" whenever their boundaries are sharpened or there is an internal increase in homogeneity; assemblages "deterritorialize" (lines of flight) whenever their boundaries are blurred and there is an internal increase in heterogeneity.[44]

An assemblage theory approach provides an additional benefit for this rhetorical field methods study in particular. Namely, it allows me to sidestep a debilitating tension in feminist approaches to the fetus. As Linda Layne, Helen Keane, and others have argued, feminists are typically hesitant to lend *any* substantiality to the fetus because they fear the political consequences of doing so. As a result, feminist scholars often fail to adequately address women's negative experiences with reproductive loss. For example, some second-wave feminists have attributed a false consciousness to women who grieve or regret abortions or miscarriages.[45] Because of the substantiality these feelings imply for the fetal entity, feminists have belittled the reality of these emotional responses. This has resulted in impoverished feminist approaches to abortion. Because assemblage theory, however, attributes a vibrant agency into all objects and matter, it allows us to conceive of the fetus as an actant in an assemblage without falling into discourses of humanist obligations such as "rights" towards said assemblage component. In the NMU assemblage, the fetal entity is a potent actor indeed.

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[44] Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York: Continuum, 2006); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *1,000 Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

[45] Helen Keane, "Foetal Personhood and Representations of the Absent Child in Pregnancy Loss Memorialization," *Feminist Theory* 10, no. 2 (2009): 153-171; Linda Layne, *Motherhood Lost: A Feminist Account of Pregnancy Loss in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Under the rubric of assemblage theory, we can understand the fetus as possessing what Jane Bennett called a "thing power."[46] The fetal entity is often attributed the similar characteristics as the child entity. Claudia Castañeda's work on the potentiality of the child as a perpetually unfinished entity ascribes a certain kind of thing power. She asserted:

> What is distinctive about the child is that it has the capacity for transformation…This implies that the child is also never complete in itself. It is precisely this incompleteness and its accompanying instability that makes the child so apparently available: it is not yet fully formed, and so open to re-formation. The child is not only in the making, but also malleable—and so can be made.[47]

Castañeda's claims about the qualities of "the child" as a component of the assemblage—its malleability, its incompleteness, its instability—are true of fetal entities as well. Further, the fetal entity's essential malleability is a double-edged sword to the successful establishment (re/territorialization) of the NMU and its affiliate pro-life organizations. On one hand, the fetal entity's fungibility and silence territorializes the NMU, because the NMU can repeatedly "speak for" one particular homogenous iteration of the fetal entity—in this case, the holy child. On the other hand, the fungibility of the fetus also deterritorializes the NMU, especially when the visitors at the site fail to match their authorial narrative of the fetal entity onto the prescribed narrative (resulting in multiple heterogenous characterizations of the unborn).[48] Paradoxically,

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[46] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

[47] Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 2-3.

[48] I witnessed an NMU volunteer remove a note from the Wall whose flippancy and irreverence did not conform to the prescribed narrative. The postcard said, "I am sorry to have aborted you. But I guess that's life. Or not life, in your case."

then, one of the major threats to the NMU's ongoing successful self-establishment is the contestable and malleable nature of the unborn itself.

All living entities, even those who are members of multiply-privileged groups, are zoerhetorically modulated, but there are some entities for whom impassioned zoerhetorical contestation is central to their public representation. These include not only fetuses but also animals, brain dead persons, the environment, and historically oppressed groups of human-identified entities. Yet among all of these entities, the fetus alone enjoys an almost maximum amount of "zoerhetorical swing," or range of attributions of status and value for a group of entities. The fetal entity ranges from either nothing (a clump of cells, a blob of tissue) or a supercitizen (an unborn child deserving human rights and protection that supersede those of the mother, who may be a legal citizen) depending for the most part on how we talk about it. Because of this stupendous span of status assignations, and because each of these status assignations demands different ethical obligations to the fetus, the fetus furnishes a crucial case study to advance zoerhetorical theory. The range of possible value assignations attached to the fetus span the zoerhetorical hierarchy, or the implicit biopolitical ordering system, in the contemporary United States. In order to elaborate the contours of these status assignations at the NMU, I will first provide a description of the physical site of itself.

Touring the National Memorial for the Unborn

This is how I "discovered" the NMU. Familiar with my interest in fetal rhetorics, Professor Jerry Hauser, a member of my doctoral committee, alerted me to a pubic controversy ignited by a local church. Boulder's Sacred Heart Memorial Wall for the Unborn (located at

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic church) came under scrutiny in 2005 when it was discovered that

their pro-life committee had been secretly burying fetal abortion remains surreptitiously stolen

from a local mortuary by a Catholic-identified employee of the mortuary. When the secret burial

ceremonies were revealed in 2005, the left-leaning Boulder community reacted with outrage. Dr.

Warren Hern, a famous pro-choice activist, medical scholar, and one of the few late-term

abortion providers in the country, called the church's actions a "macabre death ritual."[49] Many of

the fetal ashes buried at Sacred Heart came from his clinic. To this day, the Sacred Heart of Mary

Church maintains a website for its Memorial Wall for the Unborn and lists the NMU as an

affiliate on its website. The website boasts, "Since 1996, the ashes of approximately 5,500

aborted babies have been buried at the Memorial Wall for the Unborn located at Sacred Heart of

Mary Cemetery at 6739 South Boulder Road in Boulder, Colorado."[50]

I found the NMU through a link from Sacred Heart's abortion memorial website, in the

relatively mindless act of clicking on one of the "Relevant Web Links." I remember sitting up a

little at my desk when I landed on the NMU's homepage—*how interesting*, I thought. It wasn't

until much later that I would fully understand the friendly and financial connections between

Sacred Heart and the NMU. One woman I interviewed at Sacred Heart said that all plaques

requested from the state of Colorado are both displayed at the NMU and Sacred Heart's Wall.

Sacred Heart's website instructs viewers to use the resources of the national body while also

keeping it local:

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[49] David Kelly, "Church Plans to Bury the Ashes of Fetuses from Abortion Clinic," *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2005, http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jan/22/nation/na-fetus22.

[50] "Welcome," Memorial Wall for the Unborn, http://www.sacredheartofmary.org/wall/index.html.

> If you are ready to order a plaque for the Memorial Wall for the Unborn, please click on the link below to connect to the National Memorial for the Unborn website and order form. If possible, please note you would like the plaques sent to Sacred Heart of Mary Church.[51]

Nestled in the suburbs east of Chattanooga and gated with minimal signage, the National Memorial for the Unborn doesn't get much incidental foot traffic. I certainly did not stumble upon it while cruising the suburbs, but rather, it came to my attention as I imagine it does for most people: through web-browsing affiliated sites. To this day, Sacred Heart's Wall is one of at least fifteen memorials to the unborn across the United States with which the NMU has a formal relationship of support. Many of these memorials display the customized bronze nameplates, it is my understanding that the NMU is the only manufacturer of these nameplates, demonstrating its status as a central hub in the unborn memorialization community.

Although the NMU's website and social media presence have matured in the past two years since I have been a regular web visitor, many core components have remained in place. It is likely that the website mediates most people's first experiences (and perhaps only experiences) with the NMU, as it did mine. At the same time, visitors and volunteers at the NMU I spoke with also heard about the NMU through their church or friends. For the local Chattanooga community, the NMU holds a series of events such a sing-alongs, memorial ceremonies, or pro-life rallies. A series of photographs of the site cycle along the homepage's banner, and the opening text welcomes visitors:

> A Burden Lifted. The National Memorial for the Unborn, located in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is dedicated to healing the generations of pain associated with the loss of

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[51] Ibid.

aborted children. On this site where 35,000 babies have died, the memory of unborn children is honored.[52]

As the website details in depth, the NMU is located on the site of a former abortion clinic. In addition to being featured at the actual site and on the website, the admittedly incredible story of the NMU's provenance is retold in two recently published Christian books: *101 Stories of Answered Prayers* and *Empty Arms: More Than 60 Stories of Hope from the Devastation of Abortion*. The story is as follows.

The Pro-Life Majority Coalition of Chattanooga (ProMacc) was engaged in a "fight" against the "lucrative" abortion-providing Chattanooga Women's Clinic. By dint of luck and a certain heroic "Christian Realtor," ProMacc discovered a last-minute opportunity to purchase the building that the clinic occupied. In less than forty-eight hours, ProMacc raised $294,000, which allowed them to outbid the "abortionist" by just a few thousand dollars and take possession of the building. Later, a reporter asked ProMacc's Patricia Lindley why they overpaid for a building worth only $189,000. Lindley's reply condensed the classic pro-life stance that zoerhetorically amplifies the fetus at the expense of the gestating woman: "You can never put a price tag on the value of even one human life."[53] This 1993 take-over of an abortion clinic would later serve as the template for other pro-life communities shutting down or taking over clinics.[54]

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[52] This text is taken from an iteration of the website that occurred prior to the site's overhaul and redevelopment in December 2013.

[53] Wendy Williams and Ann Caldwell, *Empty Arms: More than 60 Life-Giving Stories of Hope from the Devestation of Abortion* (Chattanooga, TN:Living Ink Books, 2005), 6.

[54] For example, a clinic in Kansas detailed in this 2007 editorial exemplifies such a take over. The editorial also mentions an abortion clinic in Baton Rouge, Louisiana taken over by a pro-life group and renamed the "American Holocaust Memorial." See Josh Harkinson, "The Exorcists: Pro-Life Activists Take Over an Abortion Clinic and Cast Out the Demons Within," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 10, 2007.

As a result of these events, proponents of the NMU understand the site as a landmark victory in God's battle against abortion. "We prayed and the Lord answered," is a common refrain.[55] NMU founders estimate that 35,000 babies died on site. The website claims that each of these babies are now remembered by the 35,000 rocks in the "rock garden." As another woman told me, "God's hand is all over this place." A plaque in the rock garden states: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts, and in this place will I give peace. Haggai 2:9." Founders and proponents call the site a holy ground of America, "as much as a Civil War battlefield is holy because of the lives lost there."[56]

The most salient feature of the NMU's website is the Virtual Wall, where a user can search for the plaque for their baby or the baby of a loved one. Although it is impossible to ascertain online how many brass nameplates honor unborn babies at the NMU, searches for common Christian names can yield tens of results. The website also features a photo gallery, a document that offers a "tour" through the NMU, a contact page, a video that takes the viewer on a tour (linked from the "Godtube" website), an online store, and an order form for a $40.00 brass nameplate or brick paver. In addition to links from affiliated memorials to the unborn, the NMU is also digitally available via hyperlinks across the broader Christian media assemblage, which includes a number of websites addressing issues of abortion, miscarriage, and infant loss.

The homepage of the website sells a book called *Empty Arms: Over 60 Life-Changing Stories of Hope from the Devastation of Abortion* by Wendy Williams and Ann Caldwell.[57] Williams and Caldwell were involved in the formation of the NMU in the mid-nineties and still

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[55] Williams and Caldwell, *Empty Arms*, 6.

[56] Ibid., 7. This is but one of the handful of moments where the Wall's intertextuality with war rises to surface.

[57] Ibid.

maintain seats on its governing board. Free copies of their book are distributed to women who

seek pregnancy care at the Choices pregnancy center next door to the NMU. Most of the stories

feature a young woman who chooses abortion when faced with an unplanned pregnancy. As she

gets older, she realizes with the help of a Bible Study or abortion recovery group that she is

dealing with the symptoms of Post-Abortion Syndrome. She grieves her abortion (often with the

help of folks at the NMU), and God gives her peace of knowing she will see her baby in heaven.

Each story begins with the NMU nameplate dedicated to that particular woman's unborn baby,

and ends with a Bible quote. In the narratives offered in this book, the NMU "stepped in to bring

hope and healing" to the multitudes of women with "deep wounds and unresolved emptiness in

their heart [*sic*]."[58]

In the book, abortion is portrayed as an event that often results in deep grief, drug abuse,

infertility, depression, divorce, and heartache. Ann Caldwell confirmed her anti-abortion stance

clearly in the book's preface: "One purpose of this book is to show that all women who have had

abortions suffer afterwards."[59] As a committed pro-choice feminist, I was troubled by the

misinformation this book promoted about abortion. I was further disturbed that the book

threatened women with Post-Abortion Syndome, a "disease" widely discredited by the

psychological establishment.[60]

Guided by instructions from the website, I sojourned to the Wall in May of 2012 and

August of 2013. Each visit was a radically different experience. My first visit serendipitously

coincided with Mother's Day, and I arrived at the NMU that Sunday during when I thought

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[58] Ibid., back cover.

[59] Ibid., xviii.

[60] Eva M. Dadlez and William L. Andrews, "Post-Abortion Syndrome: Creating an Affliction," *Bioethics* 24, no. 9 (2010): 445-452.

would be the prime post-church rush. Much to my surprise, there was no one there. Dressed in my nearest approximation of Sunday best, I paced (read: sulked) around the site for hours waiting for people to arrive. There was one guestbook entry from the entire week prior in addition to my own—a woman from nearby Chickamauga, Georgia. Looking back now, it seems absurd that I expected women to celebrate Mother's Day there! As much as I felt like an interloper while I was there alone, those few hours of solace at the site gave me an opportunity to look around and take pictures.

The NMU promotes active subsidiary branches all over the country, a fact that belies the quietness of the actual physical site. In fact, I've never seen more than two cars in its eight-car parking lot. But this quietness, rather than suggesting obsolescence, contributes to what one visitor described as an "aura of holiness" at the NMU. A person entering the gates is greeted with a sign that says, "Welcome…The gates and doors of the National Memorial for the Unborn are always open…please enter in peace." An Ebenezer Rock of Deliverance as big as my compact rental car circumvents passage to the main built structure. According to its placard, the rock is an Old Testament symbol of victory in the progression of God's plan. As former NMU Executive Director Carol Martin explained of the massive rock, "It represents the deliverance of this property from death and despair to hope and life."[61]

Inside the NMU, the most commanding feature is the fifty-foot marble Wall of Names, which consists of hundreds of small plaques, each dedicated to an aborted baby. The oblong shape of the built structure invites bodies to mill back and forth across the space in front of the Wall. As I walked to and fro, I let my eyes run over the hundreds of nameplates on the Wall, stopping to read the ones that caught my attention. With each iteration of this alternating

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[61] "A Place of Hope," Memorial for the Unborn, http://www.memorialfortheunborn.org/about-us/a-place-of-hope.

movement, I "discovered" new nameplates. It became clear to me with this initial "skimming" reading that the following words appeared over and over again on the Wall: angel, baby, John, love, mommy, and sorry. Interestingly, I was much more comfortable reading the Wall when walking left to right, mimicking the direction in which I have been trained to consume text for years, rather than walking right to left.

Above the Wall, the King James version of Psalms 51:17 is quoted in large black print: "…a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise." (Not unimportantly, the first sentence of the passage omitted in the quotation reads: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit"). Crowded together colorfully across the shelf under the Wall are hundreds of gifts, letters, and other "remembrance items" for the unborn. Hand- and typewritten notes on ripped loose-leaf, Hallmark cards, postcards, bespoke stationery, and even the backs of abortion receipts are among the many epistolary vehicles for textual communication with the unborn. Among the notes pressed stuffed animals, plastic figurines, candles, jewelry, baseball gloves, dolls, Mylar balloons, and other objects intended as gifts for the unborn babies at the Wall. For a few minutes, I tried to triangulate nameplates on the Wall above with names on the gifts and notes below, but that became a tiresome labor. Sometimes gifts were placed directly under their corresponding nameplate, but other times there was no nameplate in sight that matched the names on the notes and letters below.

With a ten-foot wooden cross suspended from the ceiling and thoughtfully placed tissue boxes on a half-circle of chairs around a lectern, the indoor space felt simultaneously like a church and a funeral home. To the right side of the Wall hangs a pair of plaques signed in 1997 by Norma McCorvey (the anonymous "Roe" of Roe v. Wade) and Sandra Cano ("Doe" of Doe v. Bolton). Seventeen years ago at this site, McCorvey and Cano publicly recanted their involvement in their respective high profile abortion rights court cases and committed themselves to the sanctity of life. This was one stop in a national pro-life tour for the seasoned plaintiffs-turned-activists.[62] Both women claimed that their attorneys manipulated them and that the pro-choice movement used them as pawns. The declaration on McCorvey's plaque acknowledges the restorative and sacred properties that many people experience while visiting the NMU: "In this place of healing, the National Memorial for the Unborn, I stand with those who honor the worth of every unborn child as created in the image of God. I will strive, in the name of Jesus, to end this Holocaust."

Although there are a few generic or nameless plaques that repeat themselves throughout the Wall (such as "Our Baby, Mommy's Sorry," and "My Beautiful Baby"), a number of nameplates rise to this uncanny rhetorical situation with panache. Many plaque writers choose

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[62] Gayle White, "The 25th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade: Two Women Remember Why," *The Atlantic Journal and Constitution*, January 17, 1998.

not to provide a first name or a surname: "Fourth Baby Newton," "Eighth Baby Newton," "Sibling of Brian and Megan." Some plaques supply surnames, most of which sound European, like the plaques in remembrance of "Angel VanDyke" or "Abigail Grace Rothgery." A handful of plaques are in Spanish, like "Siempre sere tu primer amor," which translates to "I will always be your first love." Some plaques are not from mothers or parents but other family members, such as "Irma's Grandbabies/ I cried for you together/ now in heaven." One plaque's paratext offers a cryptic statement of absolution, that hints perhaps at a coerced abortion: "Baby Ernst/ 1974/ I forgive my ex-husband."

Participants have the option to determine 75 characters of text distributed over three lines on their baby's brass nameplate. While a few choose to acknowledge an unborn baby with one line (such as the nameplate that says only "Baby Martinez"), most participants engage the opportunity to supply more text. Quoting Biblical passages is one of the most common textual practices for nameplates. Among the hundreds of passages quoted include Luke 1:50, Matthew 5:9, and Psalms 27:3.[63] Some plaques are intended to represent the combined abortion loss for a family ("Mendy's two babies") or even an entire institution ("In memory of the babies/ of Maryland General Hospital/ 1965-1972 – a nurse"), while some families maintain a distribution of one aborted baby per plaque. The Roy family, for example, commissioned separate plaques each for Brian Andre' Roy, Rebecca Christina Roy, Joshua Roy, and Gabriella Roy. If most plaques stand for one aborted baby, quilting these plaques together on the Wall gestures to the millions more aborted babies whose lives remain unacknowledged and whose stories remain untold.

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[63] Here are these Bible passages in the King James version that the NMU favors: Luke 1:50 "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation;" Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God;" Psalms 27:3 "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." This is just a sampling from the hundreds of Biblical passages reference on the nameplates at the Wall.

Except for me, no one visited the Wall during that Sunday afternoon on Mother's Day of 2012. Profoundly disappointed, I wondered if there was enough going on at the site to justify devoting an entire chapter of my dissertation to it. I felt misled by what now seemed like the self-aggrandizing title of "National" Memorial for the Unborn. The NMU's founders wanted the American-identified cultural cache that indexed the biggest and most influential memorial for the unborn with the word "national," a word that I naïvely thought would deliver as many daily visitors as other "national" memorials that I have visited. To be fair, the NMU assemblage is "national" in the extent to which the spokes issuing from its hub reach across the United States. The NMU provides resources for smaller state-affiliated memorials to the unborn, such as the Kentucky Memorial for the Unborn, as I have mentioned earlier. Said former director Carol Martin, "It's our prayer that one day we will have affiliates in every state in the nation." They even offer an affiliate site package to start a memorial "in your own area." Despite these facts, at that particular moment, the self-bestowed title of "national" seemed more hopeful than actual, and even a little disingenuous.

On that day, I read hundreds of public letters and guestbook entries, many of which were addressed to the unborn. Later that evening, I composed the following bitter fieldnote:

> I find myself judging the people who mourn here. If I lost or aborted a baby, I would never write a public letter that said, "Dear baby, I'm so sorry. REAL SORRY :(Love, Mommy." Frowny faces!? Capital letters? Who are these half-literate twits? I'm pretty sure I dropped both of those textual conventions prior to menarche. Ethnographic methods: cynicism, ivory tower snobbishness, liberal feminist superiority.

I share this fieldnote—of which I am rather ashamed—partially to perform reflexive vulnerability and partly as a narrative device to demonstrate the ways in which my understanding of rhetorics at the NMU developed over the course of my second visit, just over a year later.

During this follow-up visit, I arranged for a number of interviews with the director of the NMU and with various volunteers. It was not until these interviews that I was able to "see" the NMU from a different perspective, and exit my own judgmental headspace. Hearing the stories of the site that these women shared with me allowed me to understand the extent to which the NMU is tied to its "sister ministry," the pregnancy center next door, the shift in the pro-life movement these women were trying to foment, and even the affective intensity of the site.

Barbara June,[64] a long-time volunteer at the NMU and the Choices pregnancy care center next door, sat with me for about an hour on a weekday inside the NMU during my second visit. She explained the relationship that the NMU shares with its sister ministry, the Choices Pregnancy Resource Center next door. Although they are located in the same building, they have separate entrances, mission statements, 501(c)3 statuses, websites, executive directors, and parking lots. At the same time, the administrative offices for the NMU are housed on the Choices side of the building and the volunteers for each site overlap considerably. To reach the NMU from the pregnancy center, you have to walk outside and around the large gated yard. The Choices Pregnancy Resource Center, like many pro-life pregnancy centers, is "fake" because they advertise guidance about "choices" but with a hidden political agenda to counsel against or discourage abortion. Reproductive health activists condemn these institutions for using deception and misinformation that threaten women's health.[65] According to the volunteers I interviewed, if a woman seeking pregnancy care at Choices consented, it is standard procedure to bring her next door for a tour of the NMU. The volunteers I interviewed identified this practice as particularly

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[64] This is a pseudonym, which University of Colorado human review board policy obligates me to use, even though many of the women I interviewed encouraged me to use their real names.

[65] Julie Mertus, "Fake Abortion Clinics: The Threat to Reproductive Self-Determination," *Women & Health* 16, no. 1 (1990): 95-113.

moving and persuasive for women considering abortion. They also disclosed that many women still considering abortion declined the invitation to take a walk next door to the Wall.

I asked Barbara June and a number of other volunteers about their relationship to the broader pro-life movement. They were tired of being associated with an angry, shaming, and even violent pro-life movement that used shock-and-awe tactics like images of bloody fetuses. They wanted the NMU to embody what they saw as an important shift towards *caring* for all women. "We are pro *every* life, and that includes the mother," one visitor at the Wall told me, in an interesting appeal to biolegitimacy that maintains the zoerhetorical status of both woman and fetus. As the director explained to me, the NMU's mission evolution away from *shaming* and towards *caring* is reflected in the juxtaposition of its old logo and new logo, pictured below.

Finally, it was only with speaking with women at the NMU that I was able to briefly experience an affective commingling that allowed me to see, just for a moment, how other women may experience the Wall. When one volunteer was talking about how often the siblings of unborn babies can really "see" and "feel" their lost brothers and sisters, I briefly "caught" her emotional intensity. Her wide, wet eyes and eager grip on my arm showed me that many people experience the Wall as wondrous and mysterious. When she told me that some women report

seeing fleeting glimpses of the ghosts of their babies in its spacious reflection, I found myself checking the Wall for fugitive shadows out of the corners of my own moist eyes.

Zoerhetorical Theory at the National Memorial for the Unborn

Because of the fetal entity's sweeping scope of contemporary zoerhetorical swing—that is, because of the fetal entity's ongoing and essentially contested status as human—it provides a unique case study for advancing zoerhetorical theory. If zoerhetorics make and unmake humans, the fetal entity is poised to show us a lot about how, exactly, humans are rhetorically made. In this chapter, I have zoomed in on one particular zoerhetorical movement: the inflation of the fetal entity as it occurs at the nation's premier fetal memorialization site. Although the fetus is certainly a special case, attuning to the zoerhetorical processes by which the fetus is made into a human (and indeed, a gendered human) can shed light on how we are all made into humans.

Zoerhetorical theory is an attempt to map the rhetorics of inflation and deflation of status for groups of living entities, especially as this status corresponds to livable or unlivable lives. But what relationship does the NMU have with biopolitics? Unlike the state, the NMU does not directly benefit from the rendering of bodies both useful and docile. The NMU is not part of the state's governmental apparatus, nor does it traffic with the neoliberal market logics that contract around most state-driven discourses of reproduction. At the same time, I insist that the NMU and its affiliate memorials to the unborn are engaged in a biopolitical project. For starters, the NMU milks the rhetorical power of biolegitimacy. Their mission, and the pro-life mission writ large, is animated by and lent force through the rhetorical performance of a commitment to "life itself."

In addition, the prohibition of abortion they seek would control and discipline female reproduction.

Earlier in this dissertation I discussed the vestigial presence of the Great Chain of Being as it manifests in the contemporary zoerhetorical hierarchy. An entity's position on the zoerhetorical hierarchy largely determines the extent to which that entity experiences nourishment toward life, neglect towards deterioration, or targeting towards death. Its position on the hierarchy also bears a correlation to the extent to which it is granted rhetorical agency or "animacy."[66] The most salient, status-laden threshold on the zoerhetorical hierarchy is humanhood—and it is precisely this threshold around which zoerhetorics of the fetal entity concern themselves. It follows, then, that the most patent zoerhetorical movements at the NMU are those that address precisely this burden of establishing the unborn as a human "person" or "life."

Humanity, an identificatory marker and performance, is one of the stickiest thresholds of the zoerhetorical hierarchy. Like Judith Butler's "congealed" performances of gender, humanity, too, sticks to us like a thick pelt. The threshold of humanhood can be considered a stratum, or "thickening" within the NMU assemblage, that locks and territorializes.[67] If the NMU is a place committed to making humans out of fetuses, precisely how does this happen? I argue that humans are partly made in a series of tropes—iterable turns, movements, displacements—that function to raise or lower the status of a particular entity. We might call these "zoerhetorical tropes" *zoetropes*, or rhetorical or material devices that raise or lower the status of a life. I intend the term trope as an expansion of the typical use of the word that means rhetorical device. Tropes

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[66] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[67] Deleuze and Guattari, *1000 Plateaus*.

are not merely verbal ornamentations, but rather, in Richard Lanham's words, "part of our original evolutionary equipment."[68] My tropology follows the vein of Paul de Man (himself extending Nietzsche's theory of tropes), who in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* attempted to define broad philosophical implications for tropes. Referencing Nietzsche's "army of tropes" marshalled in the service of anthropomorphic personification, de Man hinted at the life-giving qualities of tropes for animals and objects.[69] Inflationary zoetropes territorialize the NMU in three primary movements: naming, *apostrophe* (en-voicing an absent other), and *prosopopeia* (en-facing an absent other).

There are two reasons why the Victorian-era zoetrope toy, pictured above, serves as a useful metaphor for zoetropological rhetorics. First, just as the optically illusive device creates animated "life" in the moment of its turning, life is also "created" in the turning/troping movement of zoetropological rhetorics. Also like the toy, zoetropological rhetorics involve a sleight of hand or misdirection. Often publicly sanctioned zoerhetorics draw attention to a particular movement (such as the inflation of fetal entities) as a means to draw attention from

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[68] Richard Lanham, *A Handbook of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 80.

[69] Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 241.

another movement (the deflation of a less visible Other). In the case of the NMU, these Others are often women whose reproductive practices do not conform to dutiful maternity prescribed there.

Naming

Within pro-life narratives of healing from an abortion, giving your baby a name is often cited as one of the first steps of repentance that will ultimately lead to healing. The back matter of *Empty Arms* states: "Healing is possible through claiming one's child, naming one's child, and honoring one's child." Naming is not only one of the first acts that inaugurates a newborn into human society, but for Kenneth Burke, naming (as an act of summation or condensation) is one of the central rhetorical acts of language. Naming is always an interpretive act that shapes profoundly the significance of the thing named. Each of the brass nameplates on the Wall (or the brick pavers reserved for miscarried babies in the garden outside) represents an opportunity for NMU's publics to engage in or observe this powerful act of bequeathing a name. Searching for any popular name on the NMU website's "Virtual Wall" yields many "hits." For example, a search for "John" yields 54 search results of nameplates with babies named John (or plaques that quote from the Biblical book of John).

Similarly, McKerrow centers the power of naming on the "power of language to constitute subjects."[70] Here we can make a linguistic distinction between naming a common noun and proper noun, the latter of which are reserved for subjects. Participants at the Wall engage both types of nominalizations. Fetal entities are "named" common nouns such as "my baby" or

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[70] Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communications Monographs* 56, no. 2 (1989): 91-111, 105.

"angel," as well as proper nouns such as Charles, Joseph, or Elizabeth. As Mel Chen wrote of nominalizations, "They function to fix, stabilize, and most crucially, enable bounding…and hence—this is no minor consequence—to render identities finite."[71] When participants of the Wall name the unborn, they engage in these subject-forming, identity-bounding acts of nominalization.

Arguably, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial inspired the particular commemorative practice that permanently inscribes the names of the dead on a wall, a practice that Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci described as uniquely attentive to the *individuals* commemorated.[72] The names of the veterans were physically engraved in granite, lending them a permanence and importance. This commitment to the unborn as individuals is exactly the effect that the NMU intends to achieve. A further commonality between the two walls is that they are both reflective and thus, "quote" whomever is in their reflective range.[73] At the NMU, confronting your mirror image at the Wall bears the additional significance of "confronting yourself" with the consequences of (your) singular abortive act or the cumulative abortive acts of the nation. Intertextuality with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not lost on the volunteer staff at the NMU. A quoted testimonial on the website asserts that the NMU is "as significant as the Vietnam Memorial."[74]

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[71] Chen, *Animacies*, Location 1505.

[72] Carole Blair, Marsha Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr., "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 3 (1991): 263-288.

[73] Ibid., 273.

[74] A testimonial by Carol Everett supports my argument that the NMU gains at least some of its intelligibility and rhetorical force from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: "As significant as the Vietnam Memorial, it gives women who lost children to abortion a place to mourn." This quotation is available in a document linked to NMU's website: http://www.memorialfortheunborn.org/Portals/0/NMU_ministry.pdf.

Regarding the literature on tropes, the trope of naming as it operates at the NMU dovetails with a handful of traditional rhetorical devices. Writ broadly, the zoetrope of naming at the NMU is metonymical, insofar as something is given a new name in order to convey additional meaning. The meaning conveyed in giving fetal entities names is that, of course, they are human babies. More narrowly, we can call the naming zoetrope at the NMU *antonomasia* or *pronominatio*, "the use of an epithet or patronymic, instead of a proper name, or the reverse."[75] I would playfully suggest that we might also call the naming zoetrope at the NMU a *catechresis*, a deliberate misnaming or strained use of an already existing word or phrase. Calling the nameplates catechrestic would invite an absurdist, critical orientation to them.

Zoerhetorically speaking, just as fetuses are raised, family members appropriately performing contrition are raised as well. Rather than just constituting the unborn as subjects, the brass plaques and the naming practices associated with them also constitute subjects interacting with the Wall as mothers, fathers, and general heaven-bound protectors and guardians of the unborn. Following the necropolitical insights of Mbembe and Fassin, we must remember the heuristic that zoerhetorics move dynamically. An inflationary zoerhetoric often has deflationary consequences elsewhere. As the unborn and their families at the NMU are named and inflated, the absent deflated Other includes families who are not publicly grieving abortions.

It is not just the plaques that nominalize. According to one woman's testimony, the effects of naming were also realized during a memorial service at the NMU:

> You see, when you have an abortion, you want to deny that your baby exists, and you
> don't want anyone to know about him. The memorial service was one way I could

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[75] Lanham, *Handbook*, 17.

recognize my child was a real person with a name and identity, and restore him to the dignity that I had taken from him."[76]

Because many names are gender-specific, naming an entity often goes hand-in-hand with gendering the entity. A human is not zoerhetorically identifiable as such until *she* or *he* has not only a name but also a gender. To be fair, pragmatically, participants at the Wall need a gendered pronoun to avoid the clunkiness of the periphratic "he or she" construction, or the objectification of "it." Yet I argue that there is more invested in gendering than just linguistic ease of use at the level of sentence building. Rather, at the NMU, hegemonic gendering is also an inflationary zoerhetoric by which the fetus/unborn attains status. This is particularly fascinating because most abortions occur before ten weeks, when the embryo has no distinguishing genitalia, but rather develops (especially around six weeks) what is called a "genital tuber," or a tiny protrusion that will eventually become a labia majora, a penis, or something in-between in the case of intersex presentations of genitalia. Therefore, for the majority of abortions, it would have been impossible to receive any kind of medically sanctioned confirmation of fetal sex.[77]

Some parents manage this tension by choosing gender-neutral names (such as "Jordan") while others simply provide two names for one unborn baby, like the plaque that reads "Melody Ellen or Noah." One woman I interviewed said that it came to her in deep prayer that her baby was a boy. Indeed, this prayer-driven or dreamlike intuitive "knowing" seems to be the most common way of sexing the unborn baby. As transgender studies scholars Sandy Stone and Susan Stryker have noted, a chief part of being recognized as "human" is being recognized as

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[76] Williams and Caldwell, *Empty Arms*, 43.

[77] I use the word fetus generously here. Given the most abortions occur before ten weeks prior to last menstrual period, most abortions technically abort embryos, not fetuses.

normatively gendered. Further, reflective of a worldwide preference for male babies, there are more traditionally masculine than traditionally feminine names on the Wall.

Of course, across U.S. culture, gendering operates in more zoerhetorically complex ways, both inflationary and deflationary. Often to emasculate a man who identifies as a man—to gender him as woman—is zoerhetorically deflationary. The attribution of gender may not always be inflationary, but the attribution of a normative, hegemonic cisgender often is, as most trans-identified persons know. Entities near the top of the hierarchic social order, the same entities that are most likely to be targeted for health and vitality in regimes of life, perform hegemonic gender. Indeed, the "binary phallocratic founding myth by which Western bodies and subjects are authorized" is in full cry at the NMU.[78] These distinctions are also evident in the gender-specific toys left under the Wall. Dolls and pink stuffed animals are left for baby girls and baseball gloves and blue stuffed animals are left for baby boys. But naming is but a mere baby step in the accumulation of personhood, given that we name pets and even vehicles. Often the next step is to address the named entity with an apostrophic act.

Apostrophe: En/Voicing the Unborn

> "The province of apostrophic address is invocation, calling into being entities that are not present (Kacandes 1994, 331), *such as the unborn*, as well as invisible, suprahuman entities like infinity, eternity, or life (Johnson 1986; Franklin 1991)."
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> —Nathan Stormer, emphasis mine[79]

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[78] Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006): 221-235, 231.

[79] Nathan Stormer, "Looking in Wonder: Prenatal Sublimity and the Commonplace 'Life,'" *Signs* 33, no. 3 (2008): 647-673, 663.

To the fetus' mutability we can at least partially attribute muteness. Or, the fetus is mute at least regarding the classic definitions of speech. Because of this silence, the fetus requires rhetorical mediation if it is to become a social actor—mediation that no shortage of willing parties have supplied. As Megan Foley observed of Terri Schiavo, a clamor of voices was willing to speak *for her* in an attempt to fill the silent void left by her brain death.[80] The clamor of voices willing to speak for the fetus and for brain dead persons like Schiavo fall into similar zoetropic genres. I suggest that apostrophe, or the tropological address to an absent or distant other as if they had a voice with which to respond, operates at the Wall as a way of zoerhetorically inflating the fetal entity. Often described as fractured address, etymologically apostrophe "turns away" to address an absent entity as a way of addressing a broader public.

We can observe apostrophic address at the NMU in a number of distinct forms. First, the unborn are addressed on hundreds of the plaques affixed to the Wall. Underneath the aborted baby's name is additional text that often hails the unborn directly, such as these: "Dance with Jesus until I come;" "Forgive me angel for robbing you;" "I hold you in my heart;" "Your sister loves you;" and "I do love you now." Some of this additional text also addresses the wider public, often in ways that manage responsibility for the uncondoned nature of abortion as an action: "I didn't have Jesus then;" "1946 was a tragic time;" "Foolishness of our youth." Second, the unborn are apostrophically addressed in the hundreds of open letters strewn underneath the Wall. What Brandon Ibanet called the "hybrid form" of the open letter,[81] these epistolary rhetorics are addressed directly to the unborn, but by virtue of their public placement, also "turn

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[80] Megan Foley, "Voicing Terri Schiavo: Prosopopeic Citizenship in the Democratic Aporia between Sovereignty and Biopower," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (2010): 381-400. For Foley, this speaking-for was constitutive of citizenship itself.

[81] Brandon Inabinet, "When Pastors Go Public: Richard Furman's Public Letter on Slavery," *Southern Communication Journal* 76, no. 3 (2011): 169-190, 170.

away" to address the broader public audience of NMU visitors. The following excerpts from

letters underneath the Wall exemplify the genre. The first is from a stepmother, the second from

a father, and the third from a sister of different unborn babies memorialized at the Wall:

> This letter is to let you know we all think about you. We love you. We (Laura, Corbin, Brendon, and I) came to Chattanooga to see Chandler, Sydney, & Tyler and you. Well, your name & plates & stones. You are all in Heaven with God. Your father is very sorry for what happened and I have not talked to your mother but I know by her actions she is sorry as well. All children are precious and we would love to have you here with us. That choice can not be changed unfortunately but we know we will see you and the other 'babies' in heaven.

> Hey little one, this is your dad. This might be the hardest letter I've ever had to write… You would've been the apple of my eye, whether I was showering you with all the things a little princess could ever want to teaching you to hunt and fish. All the things a little boy could want…I also know deep in my heart I would have been the greatest dad ever. It kills me inside to know that you are not here. But god needs all the angels he can get. I also know that your mother would also have loved you very much. We were very young and I was fool of vinegar [*sic*]. I'm so so sorry. I guess things weren't going so well between us. I was very blind and pretty ignorant too. We had boy and girl names picked out and had big plans…Love, your daddy Josh 7/14.

> Dear Jer,
> I don't even know what to say…I love you, I miss you. I miss all the silly little arguments we would get in. When you taught me how to drive because mom and dad were too afraid. You would love dad, I picture you just like him, strong, laidback. I'm about to have a boyfriend, sure wish you were here to chase him off. I miss you….a lot. I need you…more. I don't know why mom kept me and not you. 5 years later she was in the same spot but chose me…why? I ask God that a lot. Well whatever the reason don't worry I'll make you proud! Living for the both of us…miss you. Love, you little sis Jess 6-27-12.

Immediately remarkable in all of these letters is their informal chattiness combined with strict

gendered and familial roles. The unborn are not only apostrophically addressed as human

persons, but more specifically as hegemonically gendered boys who go fishing and intimidate

their little sister's (imaginary) boyfriends. Taken together, the three excerpts demonstrate the

instability of this relatively new rhetorical practice of memorializing the unborn.

Understandably, they seem unsure how exactly to address the unborn baby. The closest narrative

resource would be funeral rhetorics, but they immediately offer a dilemma, insofar as funeral

rhetorics derive their content from a person's *lived* life. This content would obviously be

unavailable to rhetors memorializing the entities who have never "lived."

This narrative instability is observable not only in the first excerpt's confused placement

of "babies" in scare quotes (as if to ask, "are you all actually babies?"), but also in the vacillating

attributions of omniscience to the unborn. The first letter patiently explains who is visiting "you"

today at the NMU. The Unborn are also addressed in guestbook entries at the Wall. One couple

visited the NMU and signed the guestbook a few times a month for most of 2013. They

addressed their entries to Eli, their unborn baby. In these entries, their repeated requests for

forgiveness juxtaposed with almost quotidian details of their lives is striking. These parents

attribute a near-omniscience to their child, the candid moments of which I have italicized for

emphasis below:

> 1-13-13. Hello Eli, *As you know* it is mom and dad. We came on the bike it is very cold outside. Eli I am sorry I have not talked to you at home a lot of the last few weeks or have not been able to come see you a lot. Your Aunt Jackie has been down, then we drove to Kentucky with her which was a nightmare (*but I know you already know all of this as you know I still miss you everyday*).

A few months later, Eli's father wrote: "Hey Eli, Sorry for being so Long in coming. Mom is

sick and I miss you a lot. Jesus forgive us for not allowing a bright new life upon this earth."

Two weeks after that, he signed the guestbook again, updating Eli on his mother's health: "4/13

My Dear Eli, Mom is better. I miss you. I have had to forgive myself for what I did to you."

There is veritable refrain at the Wall that conforms to the mode of apostrophic address, and it occurs so often across a range of media that it deserves its own analysis. Some close variation of "I will hold you in heaven" not only appears on over two hundred nameplates on the Wall, but it is also the name of a large, well-lit and centrally featured painting at the NMU and the name of a book distributed for free at the pregnancy center next door. The zoerhetorically interesting thing about the phrase "I will hold you in heaven" is that it implies an inflation in status (matched by a literal physical ascendant upward movement, towards heaven) for both the addressed fetal entity *and* the speaker. The implication is that by asking for forgiveness, the persons who committed the act of abortion will be redeemed and forgiven. Just as is true with the naming zoetrope, the apostrophic act raises not only the fetal entity but also the speaker.

In a brilliant 1986 essay, Barbara Johnson explored the political consequences of apostrophically addressing the fetus. For Johnson, addressing fetal entities was a way to animate them into being: "Apostrophe is a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form onto the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness."[82] More recently, Lauren Berlant picked up on the potential of apostrophic address to "conjure other [subjects]" in her volume *Cruel Optimism*. Berlant called apostrophe a "phenomenologically vitalizing movement of rhetorical animation" but she remained critical of its political implications for subject-ifying fetuses. Referring to it as "fake…intersubjectivity," she was wary of the suspended optimism of speakers who engaged in apostrophic address. Berlant's ultimate condemnation of the apostrophically-engaged speaker can also read as an ungenerous psychoanalytic description of participants at the NMU. Here she describes those speakers while playing with the "turning away" Greek meaning of apostrophe:

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[82] Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," *diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 29-47, 30.

The present is made possible by a fantasy of you, laden with *x* qualities I can project onto you, given your convenient absence. Apostrophe therefore appears to be a reaching out to you, a direct movement from place *x* to place *y*, but is it actually a turning back, an animating of a receiver on behalf of the desire to make something happen *now* that realizes something *in the speaker*, makes the speaker more or differently possible, because she has admitted, in a sense, the importance of speaking for, as, and to, two—but only under the condition, and illusion, that the two are really (in) one.[83]

Just as the oft-repeated phrase "I will hold you in heaven" suggests, an apostrophic address of the fetal entity hails into being not only the fetal entity as a human but also the speaker as an ethical subject (and heaven-bound protector). Importantly we might note that this apostrophic address excludes parents who fail to publically perform ritualized apologies to their aborted babies.

In a wholly different engagement with apostrophe, Johanna Hartelius argued that apostrophe and prosopopeia are tandem rhetorical operations. Importantly, Hartelius defined apostrophe as a trope of thought in which an absent or deceased entity is addressed "as though it had a voice with which to respond."[84] The epigraph with which I opened this chapter demonstrates a quite literalized apostrophic en-voicement: "My precious babies in Heaven—I will be your voice!" Although her object of study was representation of immigrants in the *New York Times*, Hartelius' tropological analysis of the en-voicing properties of apostrophe can be extended to the constitution of rhetorical subjectivity on a wider scale. Following Paul de Man, Hartelius described the two tropes of apostrophe and prosopopeia as inextricable operations, so I will focus next on the zoetropological effects of prosopopeia.

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[83] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), Loc 339, Kindle Edition. Emphasis in the original.

[84] Johanna Hartelius, "Face-ing Immigration: Prosopopeia and the "Muslim-Arab-Middle Eastern" Other," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2013): 311-334, 314.

Prosopopeia: En/Facing the Unborn

>That which has been "faced"—or that which has experienced enfacement, can be acted on and toward in the social world.

>—Johanna Hartelius[85]

The classic definition of prosopopeia is "an animal or inanimate object is represented as having human attributes and addressed or made to speak as if it were human."[86] What this definition misses, however, is the importance of *face* for prosopopeia. Paul de Man enchained apostrophe with prosopopeia as the tropological attributions of voice and face, respectively, through etymological evidence: "[V]oice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*)."[87] For de Man, the face as the "locus of speech" is necessary to the constitution of the speaking subject.[88] In *Inessential Solidarity*, Diane Davis comments on de Man's figural linking of apostrophe with prosopopeia. Like de Man and Hartelius, Davis recognized prosopopeic enfacement as necessary to the constituting of subjects: we don't exist until we are "troped as enunciating subjects."[89]

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[85] Ibid., 11.

[86] Lanham, *Handbook*, 123.

[87] Paul de Man, "Autobiography as Defacement," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 76.

[88] Ibid., 89.

[89] Diane Davis, *Inessential Solidarity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, Loc 598. François Cooren covered similar terrain in the field of communication theory. In his 2010 book *Action and Agency in Dialogue*, he posited ventriloquy as the constitute event of all communication, thereby exposing the

The double-punch of apostrophe and prosopopeia carries with it human-izing zoetropological effects. I have arranged the order of these tropes in the logical order of accumulation. First a name, then voice, then face. Although each of these three tropes occur in a slow iterable processes, prosopopeia is the most advanced form of human-making. Or more accurately, an entity is rendered as most human when mediated prosopopeically.[90] The difference between a human component and a non-human component of an assemblage is that the former has been enfaced as a social actor and the latter has not. We attribute more rhetorical agency (usually in the form of the trope of voice) to these enfaced human components of a particular assemblage. Zoerhetorics at the NMU exemplify a clear moment when an entity is zoetropologically given voice and face, and the result is a human-ized social actor.

Evidence of prosopopeic enfacement at the NMU includes not only the existence of the memorial to the unborn in the first place, but also any rhetorical event at the NMU in which the unborn have faces, bodies, or are generally considered social actors. When Jessica Renee wrote of her unborn baby in the *Open Arms* book, "In her very short lifetime, she changed my life," her unborn baby is prosopopeically enfaced as an agentic, change-making human actor.[91] The common practice of leaving gifts at the NMU can also be understood as prosopopeic, especially insofar as many of the gifts imply not only absent voices and faces, but also absent bodies. The embodied, iterable habits of play that these gendered gifts entail, of throwing and catching a

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illusion of the rational, speaking agent as the originator of speech. See *Action and Agency in Dialogue: Passion, Incarnation and Ventriloquism* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2010).

[90] Hartelius, "Face-ing Immigration," 311-334. Hartelius observed that despite prosopopeia's etymology as the Greek word for face or mask, rhetorical scholars have historically linked it to voice (c.f. Megan Foley), which her essay intended to redress.

[91] Williams and Caldwell, *Empty Arms*, 57.

baseball with a baseball glove, of dressing and cuddling a doll or stuffed animal, further enface the unborn as social actors.

There is an uncanny acceleration and cessation of time that occurs at the NMU that can partially be explained by prosopopeic mediation. Ray Harvey's original painting, pictured below, is encased in glass on the left side of the indoor area, and is called "I will hold you in heaven." The painting depicts an alabaster woman holding a large baby. It is the size of this "baby" that best represents the temporal acceleration/cessation at the NMU. Most abortions occur before ten weeks, at which point the embryo/fetus is roughly the size and shape of a cocktail shrimp.[92] In the mythology of the NMU, sometime between the abortifacient event and the fetal entity's arrival in heaven, the baby balloons to over 500% of its original size, growing into a fully developed, even large, infant. Then, it stays this size—conveniently, the size of an intelligible baby—as it waits to rejoin his or her family in heaven.[93] This intense and rather logic-defying one-time "growth spurt" occurs because it is impossible to enface the fetal entity at its actual size when aborted. Because we do not have a frame for recognizing shrimp-sized entities as enfaced human actors, prosopopeic mediation is required.

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[92] "Fact Sheet: Induced Abortion in the United States," *Guttmacher Institute*.

[93] In a famous 1984 essay that linked the "cult of fetal personhood" to mass anxieties around human extinction in the face of nuclear war, Zoe Sofia compared the temporal distortions mobilized by the pro-life movement to the trope of temporal distortion in science fiction. "Exterminating fetuses: Abortion, disarmament, and the sexo-semiotics of extraterrestrialism," *diacritics* 14, no. 2 (1984): 47-59.

If these are the prosopopeic inflations at the NMU, what are the corresponding deflations? Davis recognized the duality of prosopopeia when she rhymed that it "*de*faces and *ef*faces precisely to the extent that it *en*faces."[94] This affords with the interdependent modulations of status I propose in zoerhetorical theory. In the case of the NMU, as the unborn are enfaced, women whose reproductive practices do not conform to the NMU's regime of living are defaced or effaced. These women are effaced at the NMU by means of exclusion from a life-loving public sphere. They are robbed of the credibility accrued through the rhetorical performance of biolegitimacy that the NMU monopolizes. Further, because of the Wall's shiny surface, visitors can see their shadowy reflections in it. Therefore, visiting the Wall means "facing yourself"— and therefore the murderous effects of your reproductive decisions. As the unborn, then, are prosopopeically en/faced at the Wall, visitors to the Wall also "face" themselves.

As we saw with the hegemonic gendering practices at the NMU, the unborn are not just zoetropologically inflated towards enfaced humanhood. Rather, they are also raised towards a prescriptive American-identified hegemonic humanhood. The fetal entities at the NMU are not *just* babies, infants, children, or persons. They are more than that; they are, in various texts and modes across the NMU, "Holy Innocents," "martyrs," "soldiers," and "angels." The NMU does

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[94] Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, Loc 621.

not just remember the unborn; the NMU is an encomium to the unborn. When participants at the Wall make humanizing attributions to the unborn, they reappropriate a zoerhetorical hierarchy when they do so, hitching fetal entities to those entities, objects, or practices with higher statuses, such as angels. When Susan Squier observed that the public fetus seems to be understood as "white and male," she remarked on this exact practice.[95]

As I have shown, a series of zoetropological practices gender, en/voice, and en/face the unborn as "persons." These seem to occur in an order of necessity—a slow building of status accumulation. First, most primally, naming calls them into being. Gendering makes them one of "us." While apostrophe addresses them as if they have a voice, prosopopeia gives them a face. Toys like baseball gloves lend them gendered, embodied, American-identified, habitual practices like playing catch. One inflationary zoerhetoric does not a human make. Rather, at the NMU, it is a process that happens across a range of repeated tropes.

It is important to recognize here that the NMU is by no means the first organization to inflate fetal entities using these tropological strategies. In fact, merely the existence of a memorial to the unborn suggests we are well into an historical period of fetal inflation, of which the NMU is a only a late but critical marker.[96] Still, the NMU, as the nation's premier abortion memorial, brings to the table the zoerhetorical practice of memorialization. On the one hand, fetal memorialization can only be possible once the unborn have already been troped into being through naming, en/voicing, and en/facing. On the other hand, fetal memorialization further shores up the accumulated humanity of the fetal entity.

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[95] Susan Squier, "Fetal Subjects and Maternal Objects: Reproductive Technology and the New Fetal/Maternal Relation," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 21, no. 5 (1996): 515-535, 530.

[96] Thank you to Nathan Stormer for helping me see this.

Conclusion: The Slow Zoerhetorical Accumulation of Humanhood

I opened up this chapter with a cursory outline of the many voices attempting to speak for the fetal entity, perhaps the most contested and zoerhetorically saturated entities in the contemporary United States. One of these public voices that "speak for" the fetal entity is the National Memorial for the Unborn, an arm of the pro-life movement. The NMU is deeply invested in the rhetorical construction of the fetal entity as a sacred unborn life. In order to territorialize this particular construction of the fetal entity as a sacred human, the NMU relies on a series of strategies that I call zoetropological rhetorics, or zoetropes. Zoetropes are rhetorical devices that inflate or deflate the status of a life or lives.

In this chapter, I analyzed three zoetropes as they occur at the NMU: naming, apostrophe (en/voicement) and prosopopeia (en/facement). These rhetorical devices are the means by which the slow, iterable accumulation of humanhood is achieved for the unborn at the NMU. My hope has been that the series of zoetropological enfacements I have identified here can be used to understand the en-facing, or rhetorical "making," of humans more broadly. All human-identified entities are embedded within accumulations of the effects of zoetropological gestures. At the same time, not all human-identified entities share the feature of the fetus that makes it so "available" for zoetroping; namely, silence. The ways in which other human-identified entities are zoetroped as subjects would be a great direction for future research.

One tentative proposition of zoerhetorical theory supported by the literature of necropolitics would be that zoerhetorics are interdependent. Inflations result in deflations, just as all inclusions result in exclusions. Rather than conforming to the strict equations of zero-sum games, it serves as a useful heuristic to be attuned to the deflations in the face of inflations. I

have tried to be attuned to the group excluded from and deflated by the NMU over the course of this analysis: fecund women whose abortifacient reproductive practices inspire in them no regret or mourning.

While the NMU has not yet manifested an entire world, or even a dominant public, where its proposed regime of living must be observed, it is important to note here that its zoerhetorics have effects for the livability of lives. For women, one thing that makes life more livable is control over their body's reproductive capacities. When ProMacc took over the Chattanooga Women's Clinic, Chattanooga became one of first cities of its size to not have an abortion clinic. Because of the pro-life movement's efforts, there are now large geographic areas in the U.S. that we might call "abortion deserts."[97] The vision for a regime of living that the NMU forwards—a regime of living that includes compulsory pregnancy—is hardly a livable life for women of child-bearing age. Zoerhetorics *matter*.

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[97] There are only a few abortion clinics left in the huge swath of land between Idaho and the Dakotas. Robin Marty, "America's Abortion-Free Zone Grows," *The Daily Beast*. April 14, 2014. http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/14/america-s-abortion-free-zone-grows.html. Depending on where you live in the deep South, as well, you may have to travel up to ten hours in a car to get obtain a legal abortion. The one remaining abortion clinic in Mississippi, for example, is constantly under siege.

Chapter Three

The Zoerhetorics of Drones:

Manufacturting Strike Targets in the CIA's War on Terror

On any given day, an average U.S. citizen might come into contact with a multiplicity of representations of drones. Drones have achieved a buzz in the popular imagination in the United States—albeit a very different buzz than the omnipresent one heard over Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan since 2009.[1] Indeed, Pakistan, the United States, and the rest of the world now live in what some pundits call a "drone moment," although national and locoregional experiences of this moment differ immensely. Conspicuously absent from my own relatively secure U.S.-based drone encounters, for example, is any sense of threat, awareness of my own vulnerability, or contact with weaponized drones. Like other folks in biopolitically privileged classes, my drone experiences are radically incongruent with those of persons living in any of the recognized or unrecognized theaters of the Global War on Terror over which my country's combat aerial vehicles fly—a list that currently includes areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, and Yemen. It is precisely these incongruities—of security, of vulnerability, of livable worlds—that I'd like to rhetorically ask after in relation to drone warfare.

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[1] *New York Times* journalist David Rohde, kidnapped by the Taliban in 2008, said in a documentary interview with *Al Jazeera* that American drones "are circling overhead all the time" in North Waziristan. "Attack of the Drones," http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2012/07/201271872041648814.html; Human rights activist Sarah Knuckey said of persons living in Waziristan, "I was struck by how afraid people are of the constant presence of drones," Margaret Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still," *New York Times*, October 13, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/public-editor/questions-on-drones-unanswered-still.html.

Our technologically mediated world produces a lot of handwringing, but perhaps no single weapons technology since the atomic bomb or chemical weapons has resulted in as much contention as the Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), or weaponized drone.[2] The remote, disembodied nature of "flying killer robots" captured the imagination of the American public, even as there's little novel about remote, asymmetric, or so-called push-button warfare.[3] In the last five years, citizens of the United States have had the opportunity to consume drone rhetorics in news media and popular culture. Like some kind of Jungian manifestation of repressed collective shadow guilt, it seems that the longer the Obama administration declined to officially acknowledge our climbing drone strike civilian death toll abroad, the more representations of drones saturated popular culture at home.

I read the appearance of drones in U.S. public culture as the dyspepsia that results when we collectively attempt to swallow the ethically dubious drone war we wage. The logic of the drone campaign extends from the agarose matrix from which it arose: the U.S.-led Global War on Terror.[4] Classic characteristics of the War on Terror intensified in the current drone campaign include technological asymmetry, disingenuous political maneuvers,[5] a justification for violence

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[2] Although scientists and military officials rarely use, and occasionally detest, the word "drone," I'll continue to use the word here because that's what the public most commonly uses, and this essay focuses on drones in mass media rhetoric.

[3] Arguably, the Gulf War was the first war fought like a video game. See Robert Stam, "Mobilizing Fictions: The Gulf War, the Media and the Recruitment of the Spectator," *Public Culture* 4, no. 2 (1992): 101-126. See also Rachel Plotnick, "Predicting Push-button Warfare: U.S. Print Media and Conflict from a Distance, 1945–2010," *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 6 (2012): 655-672.

[4] I'll resist Obama's rebranding attempt of the War on Terror as the "Overseas Contingency Operation."

[5] Compare, for example, John Brennan's claim that the number of civilians dead from CIA drone strikes was "zero" or "single digits" with Bush's disingenuous WMD rhetoric, as documented by Douglas Kellner, "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Terror," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2007): 622-645.

in the name of "life itself,"[6] and abysmally entrenched transnational corporate interests.[7] Like the broader War on Terror, the drone campaign relies on what Barbara Beisecker described as the melancholic post-9/11 rhetoric of patriotism, a rhetoric that allowed the remilitarized state to defend a logic of preemption—"let's get them before they get us."[8] Further, like the War on Terror at large, the drone campaign is marked not by public assent and civic engagement but rather an acquiescence that "now powers the war machine."[9] Thus as the drone campaign offered "more of the same," it also offered the U.S. public something fresh about the long War on Terror. Mediated representations of drones capitalize on their sex appeal. "Flying killer robots" sound like the stuff of science fiction, and the names "Predator" and "Reaper" cater to these hunter-killer entertainment fantasies. The sex appeal of drones is not unexploited by the global media industries.[10] For example, the media's insistence on the word "drone," despite pleas from military leaders and scientists for the more technically accurate phrases like "remotely piloted aircraft," kindles notions of independent and autonomously controlled flying machines. Ironically, it just may be the sexiness of drones that brings social justice issues like dead civilians and due process to the national stage—although in problematic ways for distributions of livability, as I'll develop below.

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[6] Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live*, Vol. 8 (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[7] Solomon Hughes, *War on Terror, Inc: Corporate Profiteering from the Politics of Fear* (London: Verso, 2007).

[8] Barbara A. Biesecker, "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of the Melancholic Citizen-subject in the War on Terror," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no. 1 (2007): 147-169.

[9] Jeremy Engels and William O. Saas, "On Acquiescence and Ends-Less War: An Inquiry into the New War Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 2 (2013): 225-232, 226.

[10] For more on the intersection between the entertainment industries and the War on Terror, see: James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-industrial-media-entertainment-network*, (New York Routledge, 2009; Ian Shaw. "Playing War." *Social & Cultural Geography* 11, no. 8 (2010): 789-803; Roger Stahl, "Have you Played the War on Terror?" *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 2 (2006): 112-130.

Drones are the new face of the seemingly endless (and ends-less, according to Engels and Saas[11]) War on Terror. In addition to investigative journalism and opinion pieces in news outlets, weaponized drones have been treated seriously (*Homeland*) and jocoseriously (*Nikita*; *Arrested Development*) across television shows, pervaded satirical news websites like *The Onion*, entertained in videogame franchises like *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield*, and congested social media sites. Cinematic ventures into drone politics include the controversial blockbuster *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) and Marvel's *Captain America: Winter's Soldier* (2014), while Jerry Bruckheimer and Tom Cruise are rumored to be in talks about a sequel to *Top Gun* that asserts that virile necessity of pilots in the age of drone warfare.[12] Videos of drone wreckage in Pakistan flood YouTube, a popular Twitter feed assumes the first-person role of an intoxicated drone,[13] and Rand Paul's recent filibuster, called one of the longest in history, protested drone strikes on U.S. citizens at home. Last year, Amazon.com, the nation's largest online retailer, floated the notion of home-delivery drones, and both Facebook and Google have recently invested in drone-capable aerospace technology companies.[14] In short, drone rhetorics abound in contemporary American popular culture, (de)sensitizing publics towards certain conceptions of U.S.-led drone warfare.

Towards a Zoerhetorical Theory: How to Make a Human

This mass percolation of drone rhetorics in news media and popular culture influences cultural meanings regarding humanity, belonging, and innocence. Contemporary U.S.-based public rhetorics of drone warfare suggest some bodies as worthy of protection and demand other

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[11] Engels and Saas, "Ends-Less War."

[12] Ibid.

[13] @drunkenpredator.

[14] Maureen Dowd, "Game of Drones," *New York Times,* April 15, 2014.

bodies as targets. That is, rhetorics of drone warfare are zoerhetorical. As I've defined them, *zoerhetorics* are discourses, objects, events, or practices that raise or lower the status of lives, targeting some populations for vitality, slow deterioration, or death. The worth or value of someone (or something, in the case of nonhuman living entities like animals) is subject to zoerhetorical construction and modulation. My contention is that the rhetorical inflations and deflations of status for various living entities conform to discernible patterns for a given sociohistorical milieu. I will attempt to make sense of these patterns of lives zoe/rhetorically constructed as more or less livable using the contemporary U.S.-led drone campaign as a case study.

Rhetorics of drone warfare allow me to explore particular features of zoerhetorical hierarchies. Specifically, rhetorics of weaponized drones exemplify how a particular entity's opportunities for a livable life—in this case, military-aged males coded as targets in Pakistan— are disrupted and maintained by zoerhetorical inflations and deflations. The gradient nature of zoerhetorical hierarchies produces a fungibility that is used as a resource for rhetorical status modulation via a process of metonymic sliding. Metonymic "sliding" is perhaps the most common mechanism of zoerhetorical modulation. In the contemporary regime of living, *biolegitimacy* becomes a powerful resource for this metonymic sliding.

In Albertus Magnus' iteration of the Great Chain of Being, the principles of *continuity* and *gradience* are established clearly. According to Magnus, borrowing from Aristotle, everything on the *scala naturae* was substantively linked, in uninterrupted enchainment, to the entities between which it was sandwiched. For example, Sub-Saharan Africans, were considered to possess overlapping qualities with both apes and "full" humans, just as "full" humans possessed qualities of both angels and animals, and so on. The imbricative fluidity between

entities buttresses the logic of, or becomes the possibility for, metonymic shifting up and down the hierarchy.

The shifting mechanism works like this. Rhetorics that associate an entity with an entity, quality, or object *higher* on the hierarchy tend to inflate the status of that entity. For example, the rhetorical hitching or tethering of an entity to a god term (at the apex of the hierarchy, the "title of all titles"[15]) would "buy" that entity a currency with which it could ascend the ladder. Inflationary zoerhetorics mine god terms like dignity, humanity, personhood, and rights. When zoerhetorics inflate, they are quite literally bringing a group of entities closer to god. This lumping movement of inflationary zoerhetorics is evident in zoerhetorically rich phrases like "universal human rights." Similary, the opposite is also true. Rhetorics that associate an entity with an entity, quality, or object *lower* on the hierarchy tend to deflate the status of that entity. Rather than a God term, for example, deflationary zoerhetorics often stick an entity with an animal term or a devil term. In line with the making of enemies in the War on Terror, Sara Ahmed noticed that when we metonymically slide "lower" figures together, it "constructs a relation of resemblance between figures. What makes them 'alike' may be their 'unlikeness' from 'us.' […] The sliding between signs also involves 'sticking' signs to bodies: the bodies who 'could be terrorists' are the ones who might 'look Muslim.'"[16]

Metonymy is the rhetorical figure that calls a thing or concept not by its own name, but by the name of a similar thing or concept. For Ahmed, it is exactly this "metonymic proximity" that saturates signs with stickiness. In other words, the uninterrupted enchainment of entities in

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[15] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: New York Press, 1950), 252, 306; *A Grammar of Motives* (University of California Press, 1969), 351. Richard Weaver borrowed and extended Burke's ultimate terms into concepts like charismatic terms and universal terms, while maintaining the strong thread of hierarchy and ranking in Burke's treatment in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

[16] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 44.

our vestigial Great Chain of Being is what allows for entities to be fluidly and continually grafted onto one another.

These lumping/splitting zoerhetorics carry two important logical extensions. The first is that zoerhetorics are dynamic and interdependent. Often, an inflation for one group results in the deflation of another, and vice versa. Even the most explicit split (you're not part of our group) implies a grafting somewhere else (you're part of another group). I suggest here neither that zoerhetorics conform to some kind of natural equilibrium, nor do they feature the rigidity of a zero sum game. Rather, an important and pragmatic guiding heuristic would be to look for the shadow of deflation in the light of inflation, especially given that the resources of livability—material or otherwise—are limited. So while it might be tempting to say that inflationary zoerhetorics create consubstantiality and deflationary zoerhetorics promote division, disidentification, and scapegoating, the larger picture is more complex than that. That human privileges require populations excluded from those privileges is a central insight of biopolitics that Cary Wolfe teased out from Hannah Arendt to Roberto Esposito.[17] Inclusions beget exclusions, or as Jeremy Engels wrote, "Naming—or identifying—the enemy is a prerequisite for the political."[18] From this we may infer that U.S. drone rhetorics not only lower the status of lives for "militants" and other "targets" in Pakistan, but also raise the status of lives for American-identified persons deserving of protection and security.

The second logical extension of the framework I have proposed is that attributions of agency for a given entity are determined by that entity's position on the hierarchy. Entities at the zenith of the hierarchy are attributed the most agency (again, think of God) or potentiality to

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[17] Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 7.

[18] Jeremy Engels, "Friend or Foe?: Naming the Enemy," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2009): 37-64, 56.

affect, whereas entities at the nadir are attributed the least agency. For example, mere dirt is below nutrient-rich soil in the Great Chain. Mel Chen captured this dynamic well in her concept of animacy hierarchies. In recent pathbreaking work, Chen upcycled a mainstream idea in linguistics, *animacy*, defined as the "grammatical effects of the sentience of liveliness of nouns" into a concept whose queer and necropolitical affinities complement zoerhetorical theory. At the level of sentence building, speakers across languages prefer some nouns as subjects and others as objects. Using this and other linguistic indicators of hierarchy, Chen redeveloped animacy hierarchies to demonstrate the sexualized and racialized means of "conceptual and affective mediation between human and inhuman."[19] Like zoerhetorical hierarchies, animacy hierarchies carry broad implications for nationality, security, "lifeliness," and ecology, given that they create and constrain zones of im/possible agencies. These hierarchy-driven attributions of agency have enormous implications for rhetoric—who is allowed to speak?

In contemporary regimes of living, one of the primary assignators of status is what Didier Fassin called biolegitimacy. Biolegitimacy is the extent to which a society (or an entity) is considered to value "life itself." Fassin intended the concept of biolegitimacy to replace biopower, and further described it as the recognition of life as supreme good.[20] When George W. Bush declared America as having a "culture of life," he exemplified the exigencies of biolegitimacy. Similarly, when the U.S. wages war on terror "in the name of life itself," we valorize biolegitimacy. Weaponized drones, at least as they get circulated in hegemonic rhetorics in the U.S., are biolegitimate weapons *par excellence*. They accrue biolegitimacy through rhetorics of life-saving (the lives of service-persons, the lives of innocent Americans, the lives of

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[19] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

[20] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 5 (2009): 44-60.

civilians abroad) and through rhetorics of life-saving medicine (drones have the "surgical proficiency" to remove the "cancerous tumor" of Al-Qaeda, according to John Brennan).

The New York Times *Assemblage*

To focus this investigation, I analyze *New York Times* coverage of drone warfare during the Obama administration years, up until the first few months of 2013. This includes but is not limited to the post-2008 articles curated into a "*Times* Topics" page collection on "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles." I pay special attention to *Times* coverage of covert CIA strikes. The CIA executed the majority of the strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. The timeline of 2009 through early 2013 is justified because almost all of the *Times* coverage of covert drone warfare occurs within this time frame. While focusing on the *Times* necessarily renders the wide swath of popular culture representations of drones as secondary to this investigation, a number of factors recommend the *New York Times* as the primary site of inquiry for a manageable study. Along with its status as the U.S.-based newspaper of record, the *Times* has taken a leadership role among news agencies in investigative journalism on covert drone attacks. Laureled journalists Jo Becker, Scott Shane, Mark Mazzetti, and David Sanger—who have all published influential breaking articles or well-researched books on contemporary drone warfare—work for the *Times*. In a piece in April 2013, the *Times* editorial board condemned the lack of transparency in drone strikes abroad, and, along with the ACLU and other reporters, the *Times* was a litigant in at least

one Freedom of Information Act suit seeking documents related to the targeted killing of U.S. citizens in Yemen.[21]

Although the *Times* website is reportedly the most popular online news source for Americans in general, its demographics skew towards white, educated, older, middle-to-upper class liberals, a target group in which I mostly fit.[22] Like most of its readership, I look to the *Times* as a reputable national and international news source. Simultaneously (channeling anarchist friends here), I try to retain a reflexive awareness of the *Times* as an establishment newspaper. For example, despite the courageous investigative journalism activities listed above, the *Times* delayed publishing information on a drone base in Saudi Arabia at the behest of the Obama administration, to much criticism.[23] To be clear, what is particularly interesting about drone coverage in the *Times* is not that life gets valued and devalued in war talk—in fact, that seems rather obvious—but that these zoerhetorical modulations happen within the allegedly neutral and objective space of "all the news that's fit to print." This is why I chose the *New York Times* over, say, Fox News Channel, where the zoerhetorical movements of drone campaign coverage more obviously privilege American-identified persons.[24]

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[21] The Editorial Board, "The Trouble with Drones," *New York Times*, April 7, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/opinion/the-trouble-with-drones.html?_r=1&.

[22] Quantcast offers rankings of major publishers: https://www.quantcast.com/nytimes.com.

[23] To be fair, the Obama administration cited security concerns. See Margaret Sullivan, "The *Times* was Right to Report–at Last–on Secret Drone Base," *New York Times*, February 6, 2013. http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/06/the-times-was-right-to-report-at-last-on-a-secret-drone-base/.

[24] For example, consider work by Sean Aday that finds Fox News Channel was more likely to adapt the Bush administration's characterization of enemies. Fox news used the more zoerhetorically powerful term "terrorists" than more neutral (although still loaded) terms like insurgent, Taliban, or Al Qaeda. See Sean Aday, "Chasing the Bad News: An Analysis of 2005 Iraq and Afghanistan War Coverage on NBC and Fox News Channel," *Journal of Communication* 60, no. 1 (2010): 144-164.

Although I receive daily deliveries of the newspaper at my doorstep, most of my research was conducted in *Times* online archives and the LexisNexis database. I understand *Times* drone coverage as a place where I can engage in ethnographically-inspired *in situ* field methods in order to analyze my rhetorical experience as a U.S. citizen concerned and curious about my country's practices of drone warfare.[25] Like any other "place," the *Times* is a material-discursive assemblage, the material objects of which include the gray printed newspaper, the website displayed by pixel on my laptop computer, the headquarters in midtown Manhattan, and the culturally inscribed bodies of its dispersed readership.[26] Journalistic and source bodies, emplaced habits of field reporting, media technologies, and organizational hierarchies and relationships also constitute the *Times* as a field-assemblage.

More broadly, the *Times* assemblage is a journalistic node, accessible to the average person of privilege (willing and able to pay for a subscription or affiliated with a university), connecting persons to information regarding drone warfare, in a profit-driven and journalistically principled space. Spokes issuing from the hub of the *Times* coverage on drone warfare include not only the investigative articles and op-ed pieces published in the *Times*, but also work by *Times* journalists on drone strikes published elsewhere, readers' comments on nytimes.com fora, videos and other media available on the website, and drone news and analyses hyperlinked by the *Times* to another publisher—all text-places through which a solicitous citizen (like myself) would likely perambulate through the forest of personalized adaptive hyperlinks when she started to see news coverage of drone strikes increase in frequency in early 2009. I would not claim that

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[25] Michael Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 386-406.

[26] Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

my drone-related browser history conforms to that of the prototypical citizen interested in drone strikes, but it certainly represents a perfectly likely rhetorical experience, which I use partly as narrative device and partly to call attention to experiences more than simple texts.

Further, the *New York Times* assemblage collates rhetorics around drone strikes that the public uses as a resource as bloggers, institutions, and everyday persons contend, defend, or neutrally forward these material-discursive fragments. In addition to the primary text of *Times* drone coverage, I also occasionally consider, as components of the larger *Times* assemblage, White House rhetoric concerning CIA drone strikes, CIA drone strike discussions in the blogosphere, marketing material for corporations with Department of Defense contracts, and everyday vernacular talk about CIA drone strikes, as represented in reader comments, for example. The agenda-setting public rhetorics of the *Times* and its nodal ancillaries are rife with explicit and implicit zoerhetorical assignations and form part of the homeostatic biome of zoerhetorical distributions of the Obama-led War on Terror. Here, I analyze these central and ancillary rhetorical experiences of *Times* coverage of CIA drone warfare, paying special attention to trajectories of amplification or deflation of status for particular groups.

Drone Warfare and Obama's War on Terror

Technically a drone is any aerial vehicle flown remotely, so anything from a hobby plane to a hand-launched reconnaissance device (like the military's Wasp III) falls under the Remotely Piloted Aircraft umbrella. Of specific interest to me here, however, are the weaponized drones used for surveillance and targeted execution in the War on Terror—the drones that have become the Obama administration's signature weapons, as demonstrated by former CIA leader Leon

Panetta's oft-quoted line that drones are "the only game in town."[27] Although George W. Bush

authorized military deployment of a handful of these drones to Afghanistan before he left

office,[28] Obama and his national security advisors not only increased the number of lethal drone

missions, but also shifted the responsibility of the targeted killing drone campaign away from the

military and towards the Central Intelligence Agency. Obama authorized his first CIA drone

strike three days after his inauguration, on January 23, 2009. The first of what now number over

four hundred, this strike (which killed five civilians) targeted a Taliban hideout in Pakistan.

Since then, drone attacks issued by the Air Force found and missed targets mostly in

Afghanistan, while the CIA's secretive drone program found and missed targets in Pakistan,

Yemen, Libya, the Philippines, and Somalia. An estimated 4000 people have been killed by CIA

drone strikes since Obama took office.[29] The Obama administration credits drone warfare for

effectively decimating Al-Qaeda and debilitating the Taliban.

These weapons have household names: the MQ-1B Predator and the MQ-9 Reaper. The

CIA and the Air Force predominately fly the Predator drone (first flown in the mid-nineties) or

the more advanced Reaper, both manufactured by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems. These

models can be identified by their bulbous dorsal nose, a signature feature of drones that they

share with Northrop Grumman's Global Hawk, a high-altitude remotely piloted surveillance

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[27] Noah Shachtman, "CIA Chief: Drones are the 'Only Game in Town' for Stopping Al Qaeda," *Wired:
Danger Room* blog, May 19, 2009, http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/cia-chief-drones-only-game-in-
town-for-stopping-al-qaeda/.

[28] George W. Bush's last year in office saw a spike in drone strikes, according this report by *The Bureau of
Investigative Journalism*: "The Bush Years: Pakistan Strikes 2004-2009," April 10, 2011.

[29] These numbers are radically different depending on the reporting body. In this study I generally cite data
from the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (Covert War on Terror: The Datasets," accessed May 4, 2014), because
Stanford and NYU's exhaustive joint study "Living Under Drones" recommend them as the superior source for
accurate drone data (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, Stanford Law School, and Global
Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law, "Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from U.S. Drone
Strikes in Pakistan," September 2012).

vehicle. In addition to scouting and surveillance, the Predator and Reaper drones are engineered specifically to "engage targets." As an Air Force fact sheet boasted of both the Predator and Reaper, they provide "a unique capability to autonomously execute the kill chain (find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess) against high value, fleeting, and time sensitive targets."[30] Drones are manufactured and employed in response to a particular construction of the enemy—in this case, the insidious Islamic fundamentalist with terrorist tactics that hides among civilian populations in remote areas.

The reasons that drones proliferated in the last ten years are complex and span real and manufactured exigencies of self-defense, economics, and politics. For the sake of providing background, I'll name five reasons that drones are now a primary facet of the War on Terror. The most obvious is convenience. Not only do drones cost less than "boots on the ground," but also they can be deployed faster and without the logistical problems of housing and supplying servicepersons, especially in remote or non-internationally recognized theaters of war. The second reason is the nature of the "War on Terror." Rather than a conflict between defined nation-states, the "enemies" in the GWOT are non-state actors in loose networks like Al Qaeda that may "hide" among civilians. Predator and Reaper drones, as their manufacturers insist, are uniquely equipped to engage these border-spilling "targets." The complex re-election politics of Obama's first term must also be considered in an investigation of drone proliferation. An imperative to be tough on terror, coupled with the lack of a long-term detention policy and a desire to avoid Bush-era scandals regarding illegal capture and detainment policies like those at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay, created what journalist Daniel Klaidman called a "perverse

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[30] Official website of the U.S. Air Force, "MQ-1B Predator," published April 29, 2013. http://www.af.mil/information/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=122.

incentive" for killing over capture or release options.[31] The fourth reason for drone proliferation is money; drones are big business in the United States. The weapon owes at least some of its present use to informational and political campaigns funded by the military-industrial complex, which includes organizations such as the Congressional Unmanned Systems Caucus. Finally, drone warfare creates more drone warfare. The anonymity and violent wreckage of drone strikes, some of which have been claimed to target civilian residences and funerals, fuel anti-American sentiment and, some studies say, aid Al Qaeda recruitment efforts.[32] And of course, proliferating "terrorists" translate into a need for more RPAs with which to target them.

The base model of the Predator drone was not weaponized, but in the last decade, they've been equipped with Lockheed Martin's laser-guided ATM-114 Hellfire missiles and increasingly advanced sensors such as the "Gorgon stare" and ARGUS-IS, which are citywide multi-camera surveillance systems. Most Air Force-published information regarding these aerial vehicles stresses that they are part of a larger aerial combat system that requires a number of skilled personnel to maintain. In fact, the Air Force stopped calling drones Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) or Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) because they thought the term "unmanned" was misleading given the number of people required to maintain, operate, and process the intelligence from these aerial vehicles, which is upwards of 150 per twenty-four hours of flight.[33] To match this personnel demand, there are now more drone pilots and sensor

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[31] Daniel Klaidman, *Kill Or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

[32] Leila Hudson, Colin S. Owens, and Matt Flannes, "Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War," *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (2011): 122-132.

[33] Medea Benjamin and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control* (New York: OR Books, 2012).

operators being trained in the Air Force than there are combat pilots,[34] while the Air Force currently operates with a shortage of drone pilots.[35] A Predator system consists of four aircraft, a ground station, a satellite link, and a maintenance crew.[36] There are about thirteen bases in the U.S. that operate drones, along with a number of public or secret CIA or military drone bases in countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.

The earliest *New York Times* reference to modern military drones, published in 1999, described NATO forces using surveillance Predators in Kosovo in tandem with manned aircraft.[37] In 2001, a few isolated articles about the Predator's first remote-control kills in Afghanistan cropped up in the *Times*; one asserted that drones were a central part of Donald Rumsfeld's "revolution in military affairs."[38] *Times* coverage of drone warfare trickled from a handful of articles per year during the George W. Bush administration to hundreds of articles per year during the Obama administration, an increase that corresponded to Obama's more aggressive drone campaign, which reached its peak activity in 2010. While Bush-era *Times* articles reported the surveillant capacities of drones in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama-era *Times* articles are more likely to report the "engagement," or killing, capacities of drones. Similarly,

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[34] Peter W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

[35] Lolita Baldor, "Air Force Works to Fill Need for Drone Pilots," *Salon*, August 9, 2012, http://www.salon.com/2012/08/09/air_force_works_to_fill_need_for_drone_pilots/.

[36] Ian Shaw, "From Baseworld to Droneworld." *Antipode*, online.

[37] Elizabeth Becker, "Crisis in the Balkans: They're Unmanned, They Fly Low, and They Get the Picture," *New York Times*, June 3, 1999, http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/03/world/crisis-balkans-drones-they-re-unmanned-they-fly-low-they-get-picture.html.

[38] Joseph Fitchett, "Once Spurned, Drones Gain Host of Suitors," *New York Times*, June 18, 2001, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/18/news/18iht-rdrone.html.

Bush-era reports were more likely to discuss the technical problems and high crash rates of the

Predator, whose fragility seemed to disappear in Obama-era *Times* articles, when drones are cast

as technologically sleek and superior, although there are exceptions to this pattern.[39] It's not until

later in the Obama administration that we start to see investigative journalism about the "covert"

drone programs in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. My analysis of drone rhetorics in the *Times*

ranges from 2009, when CIA drone attacks increased in non-traditional theaters of war, and is

bookended by Obama's speech at the National Defense University in May 2013, which had a

quieting effect on *New York* Times drone rhetorics in the ensuing months.[40] As I compose this

chapter in mid-2014, the number of drone strikes per year has fell consistently since 2010 highs.

A chronological list of significant events in the semi-covert CIA drone campaign, as

reported in the *New York Times*, from 2009, include: U.S. provided Pakistan with surveillance

data from drones (May 2009); the White House authorized expansion of drone program in

Pakistan to parallel burst of troops in Afghanistan (December 2009); 2010 named "year of the

drone" as strikes reach all-time high for that year (December 2010);[41] a drone attacked U.S.

citizen Anwar Al-Awlaki in Yemen (September 2011); John Brennan gave a speech about the

"rigorous standards" of drone strikes (April 2012); Becker and Shane broke the story of the

"secret kill list" and the prevalence of covert CIA drone attacks (May 2012); the Department of

Justice leaked a white paper on targeted killing (February 2013); Rand Paul filibustered Obama's

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[39] For exceptions, see: Christopher Drew, "Drones are Weapons of Choice in Fighting Qaeda," *New York Times*, March 16, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/17/business/17uav.html?pagewanted=all.

[40] One important exception to this is an op-ed by Nasser Al-Awlaki, father to Anwar and grandfather to Abdulrahman. Perhaps to support his lawsuit against Leon Panetta of the CIA, Al-Awlaki published an op-ed that condemned U.S. action that would kill teenagers. Nasser Al-Awlaki, "The Drone that Killed My Grandson," *New York Times*, July 18, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/18/opinion/the-drone-that-killed-my-grandson.html.

[41] Peter Bergen, Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone," *New America Foundation*, February 24, 2010. http://www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/the_year_of_the_drone.

nomination of John Brennan to head CIA (March 2013); Obama's counterterrorism speech acknowledged the deaths of U.S. citizens by drones for the first time and called for an end to the "perpetual" War on Terror (May 2013).

Perhaps the most heavily circulated *Times* article on drones was published in May 2012 and titled, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will."[42] With information acquired from interviews with unnamed top officials, Jo Becker and Scott Shane broke the story about Obama's "secret kill list" and his administration's reproachable protocol for counting civilian deaths. In addition to the robust exchanges of reader commentary on the website, this article influentially structured the ensuing debates. The "secret kill list" terminology originating with the article surfaced repeatedly in online news media outlets like Reddit, in the work of op-ed columnists like Glenn Greenwald with the *Guardian* and Conor Friedersdorf at the *Atlantic*, and in scholarly work like geographer Ian Shaw's academic book review on drones.[43] Further, the lengthy article is currently the top-billed "highlight from the archives" on the nytimes.com "*Times* Topic" page devoted to UAVs, so I'll summarize its major features here.

The article depicted Barack Obama as the "pragmatism over ideology" realist deciding the fate of hundreds of alleged terrorists on a top-secret government kill list. In the drone wreckage calculus of the Obama administration, any male over the age of fourteen whose life is extinguished in a drone strike is considered a militant, unless exculpatory evidence emerges *ex post facto*. Even more controversially, Becker and Shane were among the first to claim that the CIA targets people without knowing their identities. In something called a "signature strike," the

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[42] Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "'Secret Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will," *New York Times*, May 29, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all.

[43] Ian Shaw, "Review Essay: Life and Death in the Droneworld," *Critical Asian Studies* 44, no. 4 (2012): 651-658.

CIA conducts "pattern of life" analyses, collecting geographical and behavioral information to determine the alleged militant status of persons of interest. Unlike a concept like "surgical strike," which has been a component of military strategy for some time, "signature strikes" are a tactic epiphenomenal to the drone age. Parenthetically, the word "signature" functions on a figurative register as a stamp, imprint, or impression, as well as literally, "Any typical physical or behavioral characteristic…by which an object may be identified," while at the same time accruing the authority of "signature," as in signing one's name to a formal document.[44] Although signature strikes have not ended, as Obama (somewhat) promised in his counter-terrorism speech in May of 2013, the CIA decreased the number of signature strikes in the last few years.[45] The criteria regarding signature strike data collection still remains secret, so the precise behaviors observable by drone surveillance that implicate an anonymous person in terrorist activity are still unknown to the American public.[46] The ensuing quip is that any three men doing jumping jacks together in Pakistan are CIA targets.[47]

A crucial factor regarding *Times* coverage of drone strikes is that the covert CIA war was widely known to the public for years but not officially acknowledged by the Obama administration until May 2013. Even as hundreds of drone strikes in Pakistan, for example, were publically reported, the Obama administration spent years avoiding the word "drone." Journalists, including editors of the *Times*, accused the White House of purposefully "leaking"

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[44] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "signature."

[45] The Editorial Board, "The Perpetual War," *New York Times,* May 23, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/opinion/obama-vows-to-end-of-the-perpetual-war.html?pagewanted=all.

[46] "Emerging From the Shadows: US Covert Drone War Strikes in 2012," *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, January 3, 2013, http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2013/01/03/emerging-from-the-shadows-us-covert-drone-strikes-in-2012-2/.

[47] The "3 guys doing jumping jacks" line originated in Becker and Shane's 'Secret Kill List' article and was picked up by hundreds of commenters, pundits, and bloggers.

drone strike successes in order to shore up public approval. Further, the Pakistani military quickly feigned responsibility for drone strikes conducted by the CIA as part of a secret deal, which helped keep the CIA drone campaign clandestine.[48] As Trevor McCrisken noted, the first time Obama acknowledged the drone campaign was in a joke during the White House Correspondents Dinner in 2010, where he warned the boy band the Jonas Brothers to stay away from his daughters: "Two words for you: Predator Drones. You will never see it coming."[49] The Obama administration didn't officially admit to a covert CIA drone campaign or the drone deaths of four U.S. citizens until May 2013—years after these events were widely reported in the *Times* and beyond. This government double-dealing prompted the *Times* editorial board to condemn the way the Obama administration manipulated the press, while calling for a transparent legal framework for future drone strikes.[50] In April of 2014, a bipartisan bill calling for transparency around covert CIA drone strikes and deaths was put before the House of Representatives.

The *New York Times* and its ancillary drone rhetorics are organized around two zoerhetorically significant dichotomies: the citizen/non-citizen and the civilian/militant. These two assignations of *social belonging* and *innocence*, respectively, serve as allocators of zoerhetorical status and interlocking systems of domination in the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. Both organizing dichotomies of CIA drone strikes in the *New York Times* demonstrate the metonymically shifting zoerhetorical distributions of status described above. These zoerhetorical processes serve as proxies for racialization that ultimately legitimize unjust distributions of livability.

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[48] Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth* (New York: Penguin, 2013).

[49] Trevor McCrisken, "Obama's Drone War," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 55, no. 2 (2013): 97-122, 98.

[50] Editorial Board, "Trouble with Drones."

"What's separating us from the terrorists now?": Drones and the Zoerhetorics of American Citizenship

After 2011, public drone rhetorics in the United States swerved towards the topic of citizenship. Within the complex politics of drone warfare, the issue that provokes some of the most passionate public responses in the United States is the targeting and execution of U.S. citizens without trial. And for good reason—the CIA's drone program targeted and executed one American citizen, Anwar Al-Awlaki, without due process in 2011, and killed at least three others as collateral damage or in signature strikes since then. The Obama administration didn't officially confirm the rumors of these attacks until two years later. Ever since the *New York Times* broke the story of a drone attacking the New Mexico-born Anwar Al-Awlaki in Yemen in 2011, energetic public voices have taken a range of positions regarding Awlaki's assassination and drone attacks on citizens more generally. Perhaps the most famous of these responses is Senator Rand Paul's thirteen-hour filibuster in March of 2013. Paul protested Obama's nomination of John Brennan as head of the CIA because, as Obama's counterterrorism advisor at the time, Brennan was largely credited with the creation of the covert drone program. As reasons against Brennan's nomination, Paul cited lack of government transparency around drone strikes, especially the potential of citizen strikes on U.S. soil. In this section, I'll analyze *New York Times* news coverage, op-eds, and reader responses in conjunction with Paul's filibuster in order to understand how citizenship functions zoerhetorically in the CIA's drone campaign. I contend that in the context of the drone campaign, American-identified rhetorics of U.S. citizenship zoerhetorically re/distribute status towards U.S. citizens and away from Islamic Others.

Four of the 2636 to 4730 people killed in covert CIA drone strikes overseas were U.S. citizens: Anwar Al-Awlaki and his son, Abdul Rahman Al-Awlaki, as well as Samir Khan and Jude Kenan Mohammad.[51] The elder Al-Awlaki served as the director of external operations for Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). He was known for his gift of persuading youth towards a life of *jihad*, and was linked to foiled terrorists like the shoe bomber and the Christmas Day bomber. Samir Khan, creator and editor of *Inspire*, Al Qaeda's English language magazine, was killed in the same blast in Yemen that killed Al-Awlaki. Sixteen-year-old Abdul Rahman Al-Awlaki was killed two weeks after his father, in a strike allegedly targeting Ibrahim al-Banna, an Al Qaeda propagandist. Jude Kenan Mohammad was also killed in a signature strike, along with twelve other "militants," in South Waziristan, Pakistan. Attorney General Eric Holder asserted in a 2013 letter to Congress that these last three American citizens—the junior Al-Awlaki, Khan, and Mohammad—were "not specifically targeted," a claim that, as many analysts have already noted, is substantively different from claiming that these deaths were accidental.[52]

When American-identified persons speak or write about these citizen attacks, they often start from the assumption that the U.S. government targeting and attacking its own citizens is outrageous. My plan is not to dispute these presumptions, but to push on them with the lever of critical citizenship studies. A range of scholars have discussed citizenship as a system for distributing privilege,[53] while others have pointed specifically to 9/11 as a moment where

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[51] These statistics are from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The *Long War Journal* also collates a drone kill count. The numbers are from aggregating, on May 4, 2014, the ranges of reported drone strike deaths in Pakistan (2296-3719), Yemen (330-482, plus unconfirmed 315-505), and Somalia (10-24).

[52] "Holder Letter on Counterterror Strikes Against US Citizens," *New York Times*, May 22, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/05/23/us/politics/23holder-drone-lettter.html.

[53] See Terri Gordon-Zolov and Robin Rogers, "Introduction: Citizenship," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2010): 13-24; Sunaina Marr Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

practices and discourses of security changed modes of belonging in relation to citizenship.[54]

Scholars argue that contemporary norms of citizenship reinforce an ideal image of U.S. citizens

as being white, financially laboring, appropriately consuming, and reproductively heterosexual.[55]

Among the host of legal privileges associated with U.S. citizenship is due process, or a right to a

fair trial. According to the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, due

process acts as a safeguard from arbitrary denial of life, liberty, or property by the government

outside the sanction of the law. Some *Times* journalists, and many *Times* reader comments, along

with Senator Paul, argued that the targeted execution of U.S. citizen Anwar Al-Awlaki in

September 2011 was illegal because he was stripped of his Constitutional right to a fair trial.

Others have responded that Al-Awlaki surrendered his American citizenship when he engaged in

treasonous activity, thereby rendering his targeted execution not only legal but also just. Here it

may be useful to make a distinction between the legal and cultural aspects of citizenship. Rather

than making a claim regarding the legality of Al-Awlaki's assassination, my aim here is to

investigate the cultural meanings attached to citizenship and the advantages of performing a

citizenship that approximates those of the idealized citizen. Citizenship, as it operates in U.S.

drone attacks rhetorics, must be understood both as a materially productive legal apparatus and

as a zoerhetorically distributive apparatus.

 The *New York Times* and other major news sources have covered the deaths of U.S.

citizens in drone attacks extensively. Al-Awlaki has been the central feature of at least two major

Times articles, one directly after his assassination in 2011 and another two years later,

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[54] Karma R. Chávez, "Border (In)securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010): 136-155; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[55] Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Megan Morrissey, "With(in) U.S.: Resistive Accommodation and Cultural Strangers' Discourses of National Belonging" (PhD Diss., University of Colorado-Boulder, 2013).

provocatively titled, "How a U.S. Citizen Came to Be in America's Cross Hairs." This article, published in 2013, obliquely addressed Paul's filibuster, stating, "Some wondered aloud: If the president can order the assassination of Americans overseas, based on secret intelligence, what are the limits to his power?"[56] Samir Khan is mentioned in these articles as also dying in the same strike that killed Al-Awlaki, and later he gets an article of his own, titled: "2ND American Killed in Strike Waged Qaeda Media War." This piece depicted Khan as a quiet, web-savvy radical from a respectable middle-class family. Notably, Khan and Al-Awlaki have a "*Times* Topics" page dedicated to each of them, both of which billboard their citizenship or American-born status. The *Times* also covered the ACLU-assisted lawsuit the Al-Awlaki and Khan families brought against Leon Panetta for failing to offer due process to citizens. Jude Kenan Mohammad was the victim of a signature strike, so his identity was unknown for some time afterwards. Eventually he got his own 2013 article, titled "One Drone Victim's Trail from Raleigh to Pakistan." The article traced his development from a young man living in the U.S. to a fugitive in Pakistan. The article does not contain discussions of signature strikes or the legality or ethics of targeting U.S. citizens.[57] Although we can ascribe the frequent mention of Al-Awlaki's name in *Times* coverage to his infamy before the drone strike that killed him (he was featured in a *Times* "Room for Debate" forum that invited experts to speculate on how dangerous he was five months before he was targeted),[58] he is thus far the only person killed in a drone strike to receive

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[56] Mark Mazzetti, Charlie Savage, and Scott Shane, "How a U.S. Citizen Came to Be in America's Cross Hairs," *New York Times*, March 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/world/middleeast/anwar-al-awlaki-a-us-citizen-in-americas-cross-hairs.html?pagewanted=all.

[57] Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "One Drone Victim's Trail from Raleigh to Pakistan," *New York Times*, May 22, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/us/one-drone-victims-trail-from-raleigh-to-pakistan.html?ref=anwaralawlaki.

[58] "How Dangerous is Anwar Al-Awlaki?" *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/05/31/how-dangerous-is-anwar-al-awlaki.

multiple full-length reports from the *Times*, including one whose headline and content emphasized his citizen status.

Importantly, concern for drones attacking U.S. citizens is one of the organizing public discourses of drone rhetoric *within the United States*. From a global perspective, public outrage in the United States over the targeting and execution of U.S. citizens by drone strike seems myopically disproportionate, given the total number of people killed in CIA drone strikes. To phrase this a different way, consider that for every *one* American citizen killed in covert CIA drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, or Somalia, roughly 658 to 1081 non-citizens are killed.[59] Perhaps the most obvious zoerhetorically significant differences between *Times* coverage of citizens/non-citizens are practices of naming and recognition. The Obama administration admitted to killing four U.S. citizens in drone strikes conducted by the CIA. Not unexpectedly, the names of these men are stated with more frequency than the names of non-citizens killed in strikes. A few intervening factors complicate the rate at which these names are mentioned. First, these names are not American-identified names, but rather these names encode racialized bodies of Islamic Others. This must attenuate, at least somewhat, American-identified outrage to these strikes. The journalistic practices of juxtaposing an American place with one of these names (for example, "North Carolina-born Jude Kenan Mohammad") can be read partially as a mediating response to these already-racialized names. Of course, the discrepancy in naming frequency in citizens versus non-citizens killed in strikes is partially explained by the fact that, in the case of signature strikes, not even the CIA knows the identities of their targets. Still, it's not difficult to see that the *Times* and similar nationally focused news outlets privileged reporting and recognizing citizen drone casualties over those of noncitizens.

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[59] Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "Covert War on Terror: The Datasets."

Here we must not forget that silence serves a zoerhetorical function as well. Unlike the drone attacks on U.S. citizens, much of the American-identified drone rhetoric of attacks on non-citizens *does not* start from the same assumption that these deaths are outrageous. Senator Paul's filibuster is a powerful example, because his concern for the hundreds of non-citizen drone deaths was only cursory, while the bulk of his condemnation of the drone program centered on the hypothetical threat event of U.S. drones striking U.S. citizens on U.S. soil. These drone zoerhetorics reflect and create a clear preference for recognizing some deaths—and therefore some lives—over others. Judith Butler made similar observations about the discrepancy between sanctioned American performances of mourning in response to 9/11 in comparison with the nonsanctioned, absent, invisible, or even condemned performances of mourning in response to deaths as a result of the Iraq War. Like the discrepant practices of American-identified post-9/11 grief, rhetorics of citizens killed in drone strikes are acts of nation building. What Butler called "grievability" is an important indicator of zoerhetorical status.[60]

At the same time, the *Times* rhetoric of U.S. citizens targeted and killed in drone strikes doesn't squarely match typical reportage rhetorics of memorialization, mourning, or grief. While citizen deaths in drone warfare are certainly named and recognized, epideictic eulogies these are not. The post-death rhetorics of U.S. citizens killed in drone strikes maintain a strange ambivalence, as these persons are remembered as both citizens and enemies, as both "us" and "them." There's an inherent dilemma in these rhetorics, because in order to qualify for distinct remembrance, these men require American citizenship, yet at the same time, these men pursued harm to the United States in affiliation with a group that has declared war on the United States. Even their names mark them as ethnically Other. As a result, while these deaths are often

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[60] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso Books, 2006); Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London: Verso Books, 2009).

condemned in *Times* reader comments, they are rarely condemned with prototypical appeals to the sanctity, dignity, or intrinsic value of human life—the standard inflationary zoerhetorics. Rather, their deaths are condemned in appeals to law, the American Way, or in a way that constructs their deaths not as grievable *but as marked threats for all American-identified persons*.

Said one commenter, whose objection was couched in legal language, "I'd rather live in a country with the legal system than with a lawyer politician who has abandoned the law." Said another commenter, "A government that murders its citizens is no different from a criminal gang with Obama as the godfather," suggesting that all of "us" (that is, American-identified persons) are at risk. Often, the comments identify a threat to American-identified persons explicitly, such as this one: "[Obama] has killed fellow U.S. citizens without trial. The war on terror is really practice for the war on you and me." Similarly, a commenter with the username of Robert Cicero wrote:

> Al-Awlaqi may have been a seditionist and an enemy of the state, [but] he was nevertheless, a US citizen and therefore was entitled to [the] same protections and the same due process to which the rest of [us] are entitled…Even Jeffrey Dahmer, an admitted cannibal, was afforded due process. If this crime is allowed to stand without prosecution, the United States Constitution is dead…Doesn't anyone understand that if this becomes precedent, any administration will be able to execute any of us who they deem to be their enemies?

This comment juxtaposed the racial Otherness of cannibals with that of terrorists to demonstrate that even the most primitive and murderous of actors should be afforded fair trials. Further, Obama is attributed the utmost rhetorical agency as a necropolitical sovereign—a tyrant to be feared by all Americans, a depiction on which ensuing *Times* headlines capitalize for sex appeal,

like this one: "The Rise of the Drone Master: Pop Culture Recasts Obama."[61] As we can see from *Times* coverage and reader comments, the deaths of the Al-Awlakis, Khan, and Mohammad are named and recognized more than the deaths of non-citizen victims of drone attacks. However, the *Times* rhetorics around these deaths do not conform to classic rhetorics of mourning. Rather, in American-identified rhetorical outlets, their deaths are used to construct a threat to American-identified persons. Their deaths, in Butler's terms, are not grievable.

This qualifies Plato's dictum that it is not difficult to praise Athenians in Athens.[62] In the case of drone warfare, it *is* difficult to praise Americans in America—because the Al-Awlakis, Mohammad, and Khan are "not real Americans." In the rhetoric involving these deaths in the *Times*, readers and participants take time to distance these men from their American citizenship. They do this along legal lines, citing the deprivation of citizenship as a legal and just response to treason, or do this along more racialized lines, whereby these men were never understood as true Americans in the first place. Many reader comments cheer hurrah for Anwar Al-Awlaki's death, like this animalizing zoerhetoric: "This death dealing insect got all the process he was due." Here the specter of the ideal citizen starts to lurk in the corners—a specter we see most in Rand Paul's filibuster.

Rand Paul took the Senate floor in an old-fashioned Jimmy Stewart-style filibuster in March 2013. Although after the fact he self-servingly framed his filibuster as an unequivocal victory for government transparency in drone attacks, he does deserve some credit for getting drone attacks on citizens on the national stage. Paul's primary message was that U.S. citizens should not be attacked in drone strikes without first being charged with a crime and offered a fair

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[61] Michael D. Shear, "The Rise of the Drone Master: Pop Culture Recasts Obama," *New York Times*, April 29, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/us/politics/pop-culture-puts-spin-on-grim-realities-of-obama-presidency.html?_r=0.

[62] Plato represents Socrates as the author of this phrase in the *Menexenus*.

trial. Deep into the fifth hour of the filibuster, he compared Obama to the Red Queen in Alice's

Wonderland, who makes a verdict before the trial. The two most zoerhetorically productive

things about Paul's filibuster are his constructions of ideal citizenship, and his condemnation of

U.S. citizen drone deaths by appealing to American citizenship and American-identified

belonging rather than broader human rights. The filibuster not only privileged U.S. citizens but

also depicted them as the most innocent amid everyday performances of consumption and

whiteness. Although Paul never ceded the floor, he allowed other senators to ask him questions,

like this one by Texas Senator Ted Cruz:

> …the United States government killing a U.S. citizen on U.S. soil who is not
> flying a plane into a building, who is not robbing a bank, who is not pointing a
> Bazooka at the Pentagon but who is simply sitting quietly at a cafe, peaceably
> enjoying breakfast. Is the Senator from Kentucky aware of any precedent
> whatsoever for […] the United States government, without indicting him, without
> bringing him before a jury, without any due process whatsoever, can simply send
> a drone to kill that United States citizen on U.S. soil?[63]

In fact, the words "café" or "restaurant" are mentioned at least ten times just in the first three

hours of the event.[64] For Paul, American-identified innocence is located squarely in everyday

moments of consumption: "They're in a car, they're in their house, they're in a restaurant,

they're in a café."[65] Not only did Paul's filibuster reify an appropriately consumptive subject

drenched in whiteness, but it also echoed a White House message to the American people as old

as 9/11: Business as usual. As Jeremy Engels and William Saas asserted in response to George

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[63] I used the transcript of the filibuster supplied by DailyPaul.com: "Rand Paul Filibuster Entire Transcript," Daily Paul, March 7, 2013. http://www.dailypaul.com/277205/rand-paul-filibuster-entire-transcript.

[64] See Greg Dickinson's analysis of Starbucks for a fuller explanation of coffee consumption, cafés, and postmodern consumer culture in "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 5-27.

[65] "Rand Paul Filibuster," Daily Paul.

W. Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric, "To contribute to the war effort, Americans needed only to go about their daily routines and maybe enjoy a nice vacation."[66] Politician rhetoric that suggests appropriately acquiescent responses to the War on Terror isn't limited to Bush or Paul. In Obama's May 2013 speech that called for an end to the War on Terror, he praised the resilience of "the New Yorkers who filled Times Square the day after an attempted car bomb as if nothing had happened."[67] Here Times Square serves as a redolent symbol of entertainment, consumption, and display—a fact certainly not lost on the Al Qaeda operatives who targeted it.

In addition, Paul's rhetoric never explicitly couches a right to due process as a *universal human right* (as it does, for example, in Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Instead, the repeated phrase "our rights" refers to the rights of Americans. In his filibuster, Paul discussed "rights" in relation to the Constitution, the Bill of "Rights," American democracy, our "limitless rights," "rights" to privacy, the government "taking our rights," and Miranda "rights," but not once do his myriad invocations of rights ever imply rights for anyone outside of American-identified social belonging. As such, Paul's filibuster exemplifies the ways that cultural citizenship and social belonging—especially as indexed by whiteness, filtered through the racialization of the War on Terror—act as zoerhetorical distributors of status.

When U.S.-based rhetorics emphasize the unjust, illegal, or "un-American" aspects of drones executing U.S. citizens, we bury the gravity of, or even implicitly sanction, the killing of non-citizen "Others." This rhetoric marks a moment where the global biopolitical product and project—humanity—recedes into the background as the nationalized version of a superhuman, the U.S. citizen ascending to whiteness, deserving of absolute protection and security, comes to

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[66] Engels and Saas, "Ends-Less War," 226.

[67] I used the transcript of Obama's speech offered here: "Transcript: Obama Addresses Counterterrorism, Drones," *NPR*. May 23, 2013. http://www.npr.org/2013/05/23/186305171/transcript-obama-addresses-counterterrorism-drones.

the forefront. In the rhetoric of the deaths of U.S. citizens in CIA drone strikes, these men are not constructed as grievable. Rather, their deaths are positioned as threats—but not as threats to the Pakistani bodies already abjectly vulnerable to drone stares and strikes. Instead, they are positioned as threatening to aspirationally ideal U.S. citizens. More specifically, they threaten American-identified citizens occupying locations of white, heterosexual, re/producing-and-consuming ideal belonging. Therefore, even when the kairic moment opened when Americans could have mourned their own citizens, and questioned the constructions of enemyship in the War on Terror, this possibility was not seized.

Other drone scholarship complements an investigation of the way whiteness is operating here as an implicit mode of ideal belonging. In a study addressing the scopic regimes of drones, Keith Feldman offered a concept of "racialization from above" to supplement theories of racialization on the ground.[68] Feldman's is part a larger project to map the insidious vectors of racialization in the nominal antiracism of the so-called post-racial era. Focusing both on the killing of Osama bin Laden and drone warfare generally, he documented a number of moments where phrases like "homeland security" eclipsed and perpetuated Westphalian sovereignty, marking the transnational borders of the U.S. as everywhere. I would expand Feldman's analysis of the racialized bodies produced in the "drone stare." As Foucault noted, race is the primary means by which biopower exercises control, a kind of control that presupposes the distribution of the human species into groups.[69] These groups are zoerhetorically differentiated—in other words, these bio/necropolitical distributions of livability are created and sustained rhetorically. Racialized bodies are produced pervasively in the War on Terror, and especially in U.S.-based

[68] Keith Feldman, "Empire's Verticality: The Af/Pak Frontier, Visual Culture, and Racialization from Above," *Comparative American Studies* 9, no. 4 (2011): 325-341.

[69] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003).

journalism like the *New York Times*, in vernacular reader's comments, and on the Senate floor, as I've shown here.

Through these processes, the U.S.-based rhetoric of CIA drone strikes zoerhetorically re/distributes status along the potent dichotomy of citizen/non-citizen. In accord with the zoerhetorical principles outlined above, citizenship rhetoric around drones not only deflates non-citizens, but also inflates American-identified citizens. This is accomplished in a number of ways. Through a zoerhetorics of absence and presence, U.S. citizens are remembered and foreign bodies are not. Inflationary zoerhetorics hitch or tether one group or entity to another group or entity higher up on the zoerhetorical hierarchy. God terms like *American* and *citizen* achieve this aim. Finally, through a process of splitting, Islamic Others are zoerhetorically lowered. Further, movement in one direction for a group invite movements for another direction for a different group. As necropolitical theorists would concur, this process of raising, or human-izing, can only occur across the space of an excluded Other; in this case, the Islamic Other discussed extensively in critical War on Terror research.[70] As the title of this section suggests, the failure to adequately distinguish between U.S. citizens and non-citizens rhetorically aligns the U.S. with terrorists, as multiple reader comments linked targeted drone strikes to terrorist tactics.

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[70] In addition to Feldman's piece cited earlier, consider: Nathan C. Funk and Abdul Aziz Said, "Islam and the West: Narratives of Conflict and Conflict Transformation," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 1-28; Inderpal Grewal, "Transnational America: Race, Gender and Citizenship after 9/11," *Social Identities* 9, no. 4 (2003): 535-561; Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394-426.

The "Civilian Death Toll": Drones and the Zoerhetorics of Innocence

In addition to citizenship, American-identified drone rhetorics in the *Times* and its ancillaries organize around another problematic dichotomy: the civilian/militant distinction. *Times* coverage of the Obama-era drone campaign, as well as reader commentary, responds to the tension between the protection of civilians versus the targeting of combatants, and impassioned public voices add to the fray. Aggregating the tension of this dichotomy is that wildly different numbers of civilian deaths depending on who counts (and whose counting). The civilian death toll for strikes in Pakistan ranges from John Brennan's disingenuous "zero" or "single digits" to well into the hundreds—the Bureau of Investigative Journalism cites a range of 416 to 957 civilians killed by drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004.[71]

Under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the "principle of distinction" obligates nations to distinguish between civilians (persons who are not members of the armed forces) and combatants (persons authorized by a nation's military to engage in combat).[72] Although the principle of distinction wasn't officially codified into IHL until 1977 in Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, the notion that war makers should discriminate between militants and civilians is at least as old as the American Civil War, although protecting innocents during war

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[71] These figures don't include civilians reported killed in U.S. drone actions in Yemen or Somalia. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "Covert War on Terror: The Datasets," accessed May 4, 2014. http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drone-data/.

[72] There's a further distinction between lawful and unlawful combatant that gets activated with non-state actors like Al Qaeda or the Taliban. Once unlawful combatants, however, engage in hostilities, they become lawful combatants.

conflicts is a discourse seen through history. The U.S. military currently instructs servicepersons

that distinction is one of the foundational principles of the Law of Armed Conflict.[73]

Civilian deaths in drone attacks, especially those issued by the CIA, started to get press a

few years into Obama's first term. In 2011, the *New York Times* published two pieces on civilian

deaths in drone strikes. The first, by Salman Masood and Pir Zubair Shah, covered a drone strike

that killed a number of elders and community members while they were meeting with Taliban

mediators over access to a local chromite mine in Pakistan.[74] The second, by Scott Shane, called

"CIA is Disputed on Civilian Toll in Drone Strikes," challenged John Brennan's claim that there

had been zero civilian drone strike deaths "because of the exceptional proficiency" of drone

technology.[75] A piece the following year by Mark Landler identified the marked discrepancies

between the U.S. government's counting of civilian deaths in strikes and the much larger

numbers reported from other sources, such as the *Long War Journal* and the Bureau of

Investigative Journalism.[76] The *Times* also published a number of op-ed pieces that have

condemned civilian drone deaths, asserted their unfortunate necessity, or forged a path in-

between. One of the primary arguments that appears in op-ed pieces about civilian drone deaths

is that they inflame anti-American sentiment, especially in Pakistan, where CIA drone strikes

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[73] This document, for example, is written for soldiers in the Air Force: http://www.hanscom.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-100916-030.pdf.

[74] Salman Masood and Pir Zubair Shah, "C.I.A. Drones Kill Civilians in Pakistan," *New York Times*, March 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/world/asia/18pakistan.html.

[75] Scott Shane, "CIA is Disputed on Civilian Toll in Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, August 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/12/world/asia/12drones.html?pagewanted=all.

[76] Mark Landler, "Civilian Deaths Due to Drones are Not Many, Obama Says," *New York Times,* January 30, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/world/middleeast/civilian-deaths-due-to-drones-are-few-obama-says.html.

concentrate, and thereby aid Al-Qaeda recruitment efforts.[77] In November of 2012, political

scientist Avery Plaw published a short piece in a "Room for Debate" *Times* forum on how drones

save lives because they are less harmful to civilians than other means of reaching Al Qaeda.[78]

The headline of this piece is noteworthy for the zoerhetorical ranking in the title: "Drones Save

Lives, American and Other." This forum featured four other disparate voices on the utility of

drone attacks, and the bulk of *Times* reader comments on civilian casualties concentrate here. I'll

quote at length from the following comment, voted to the top of the "Reader's Picks" section,

because it's a vernacular critique of zoerhetorical hierarchies:

> I suppose that the logic of "more harm than good" does not quite mean for you
> that you would not object to the FBI (or other authorities) killing your entire
> family in a bombing raid against your apartment building because somehow it has
> been calculated that killing the target (who may or may not be in the building and
> may or may not exist) is "more good" than the harm of killing your family. Of
> course you find this analogy unthinkable and quite off the mark. Perhaps even
> unreasonable. That is because you have a deeply held belief, that you are largely
> unaware and would certainly deny, that the life of Americans needs to be
> analyzed with a different arithmetics than the life of those "who-cares-what-they-
> are-s" in far away places.[79]

In this message, a reader with an anonymous screen name identified the discrepant zoerhetorical

assignations in U.S. security policy in regards to drone warfare and innocence. In this section, I

will further this reader's nascent zoerhetorical theory. I contend that when American-identified

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[77] As argued, for example, in this piece: Ibrahim Mothana, "How Drones Help Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, June 13, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/14/opinion/how-drones-help-al-qaeda.html.

[78] Avery Plaw, "Drones Save Lives, American and Other," *New York Times*, November 14, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/09/25/do-drone-attacks-do-more-harm-than-good/drone-strikes-save-lives-american-and-other.

[79] Ibid.

persons reference the combatant or noncombatant status of a person in relation to the drone campaign, the perceived innocence connected to those terms acts as a zoerhetorical distributor of status.

Political scientist Helen Kinsella wrote in the introduction to her critical genealogy of the civilian/combatant distinction that the guideline has served as a "significant referent of engagement and standard of judgment guiding operational strategy" during ground operations in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.[80] Indeed, we see evidence of this in official U.S. government or military documents as well as White House rhetoric, and the U.S. public rhetoric, often through the prism of journalism, typically mirrors back a commitment to civilian protection. Official government discourse around drone warfare frequently references the principle of distinction, or its sister rule, the principle of proportionality, which states that military intervention must not exceed the force required to meet its objectives. Repeatedly, the Obama administration has assured the American people that every possible precaution is taken in order to limit civilian deaths.

The logic of discriminating between militants and civilians has become so central to our understanding of ethical warfare that it is during the moment of failing to meet the obligation of distinction that the Obama administration comes under the most sustained fire for its drone campaign. To be sure, the predominant left-leaning or liberal objections to Obama's drone campaign, second only to the targeting of citizens without due process, is the number of civilian deaths abroad.[81] Killing civilians is seen as a primitive and evil terrorist tactic, adamantly

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[80] Helen M. Kinsella, *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction Between Combatant and Civilian* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 1.

[81] For example, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd or Glenn Greenwald, formerly affiliated with the *Guardian*, counted dead civilians.

abhorred in post-9/11 American-identified public rhetorics. Within the purview of Global War on Terror logic, it is the stamp of virtue and civilization to distinguish between civilians and combatants and it is a stamp of primitive, backwards Islamic Others like Osama bin Laden to purposefully target civilians, as he did in the 9/11 attacks. This is evident in a bonanza of *Times* reader comments, pithily summarized by a reader screennamed Janet Ellingson, who wrote, "Drones are the tools of terrorists."[82]

But the omnipresence of the oversimplified civilian/militant dichotomy in U.S. official and popular logic disguises its convoluted nature. While the U.S.-led War on Terror marks a moment in which IHL is more central than ever in the terrain of popular, official, and human rights discourses, it also marks a time when the civilian/combatant dichotomy is more blurred and abused than ever. Legal scholar Gabriel Swiney described a contemporary world where the principle of distinction is violated all the time. The principle of distinction nostalgically hearkens towards the era of set battlefields, interstate conflict, and clearly uniformed servicepersons— none of which we see today in the War on Terror, where insurgencies rather than armies are the norm.[83] As Banu Bargu claimed, the civilian/combatant dichotomy is completely eroded in the contemporary world.[84]

Evidence of this erosion exists abroad in figures such as in/voluntary human shields, suicide bombers, "regular" people moonlighting as low-level Al Qaeda workers, and child soldiers, as well as domestically in institutions such as the non-military CIA and figures like the

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[82] This reader produced this comments in response to the *New York Times* Room for Debate forum on drones. http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/09/25/do-drone-attacks-do-more-harm-than-good/drone-strikes-save-lives-american-and-other.

[83] Gabriel Swiney, "Saving Lives: The Principle of Distinction and the Realities of Modern War," *International Law* 39, no. 3 (2005): 733.

[84] Banu Bargu, "Human Shields," *Contemporary Political Theory* 12, no. 4 (2013): 277-295.

telecommuting drone pilot. In Middle Eastern and North African countries, especially those that harbor violent Islamic groups like Al Qaeda or Al-Shabaab, militant and civilians blend in a mangled dance. Where would you place, for example, a Pashtun tribesman elder in the Federally Administered Tribal lands of Pakistan who meets with Al Qaeda operatives in order to establish boundaries of adjoining lands? Members of Al Qaeda use involuntary human shields often—for example, they'll locate a weapons cache or meeting site near a hospital or school. They often "hide" among civilians, such as among Pashtun tribespersons in Pakistan's semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), or among passengers on a commercial flight in the case of the 9/11 attacks. They are neither defined nor effectively contained by the borders of any nation-state, as they have or had strongholds in many Middle Eastern and North African countries. The particular nature of the war against Al Qaeda and similar groups lends itself to drone warfare—or more accurately, drones were developed in response to the need to surveil and execute "high value targets" that are also non-state actors in non-internationally recognized theaters of war.

Comparably, the civilian/militant distinction also has gray areas with the border of the United States. For example, is a drone operator still an internationally recognized combatant when she's at home lying in bed in the evening? Even more problematically, the bulk of the drone program in Pakistan is conducted clandestinely by the CIA, an executive agency staffed mostly by *non-military* personnel. Finally, privately employed contract workers proliferate in roles such as drone weapons development, training, piloting, sensor operations, and intelligence analysis. Private contractors often fulfill roles critical to unmanned aerial systems mission execution. This includes not only maintenance and repair (75-100% of the Air Force's maintenance and repair of unmanned aircraft is outsourced) but also intelligence activities

including tactical and imagery analysis, and sensor operation—activities incontestably situated along the infamous "kill chain."[85] According to *Times* reports, the vilified security firm Blackwater, renamed Academi for public relations purposes, enjoys an intimate relationship with the CIA.[86]

If the civilian/militant distinction was already problematic in the War on Terror, the complexities of drone warfare further muddy the waters. Yet the *New York Times* and other U.S.-based drone rhetorics are still organized around this distinction. This is problematic because contemporary humanitarian and legal values of assigned worth maintain a zoerhetorical distribution of status that goes unquestioned. Typical zoerhetorical distributions for Islamic Others run like this: Civilian = innocent = deserving of life; militant = guilty = deserving of death. Even journalists on the far left like Glenn Greenwald uphold this zoerhetorical distribution of status when they focus solely on decrying the numbers of civilians killed, without recognition of the deeply imbricated nature of civilians and militants (and therefore innocence and guilt) in the contemporary Way on Terror. As an example, Masood and Shah's March 17, 2011 article in the *Times* on civilian deaths in Pakistan reported competing claims of civilian/militant statuses for a group of persons, but never addressed the messiness of identifying civilians and militants.[87]

Predators and Reapers, with their advanced sensory systems, were developed, manufactured, advertised, and deployed as the weapons systems uniquely capable of making the distinction between civilians and combatants. Before they were weaponized, they were aerial

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[85] Keric D. Clanahan, "Drone-Sourcing? United States Air Force Unmanned Aircraft Systems, Inherently Governmental Functions, and Role of Contractors," *The Federal Circuit Bar Journal* 22, no. 1 (2012): 135-203.

[86] James Risen and Mark Mazzetti, "Blackwater Guards Tied to Secret C.I.A. Raids," *New York Times*, December 10, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/11/us/politics/11blackwater.html?pagewanted=all. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*.

[87] Masood and Shah, "C.I.A. Drones Kill Civilians in Pakistan."

surveillance vehicles, full participants in what Jasbir Puar called "surveillant assemblages" of the

War on Terror.[88] A pamphlet advertising Sierra Nevada's Gorgon Stare boasted a "full field of

regard" and "best-resolution tactical chip-outs." American-identified drone rhetorics assume that

if we find enough information—that is, if we execute intelligence, surveillance, and

reconnaissance (ISR), if we obtain "persistent wide area aerial surveillance systems" like the

Gorgon Stare or the Constant Hawk, if we develop DARPA's Mind's Eye program,[89] and if we

hire qualified analysts, then patent categorical differences between civilians and militants will

reveal themselves. The dichotomy of guilt/innocence imposes an epistemological naivety (if we

just have the right information…) over an ontological mistake (…it will be clear that

membership in these categories exists). This is exactly what Ian Shaw and Mahjed Akhter called

the fetishization of targeting—an excessive and irrational commitment to the capacities of drones

to target accurately.[90]

The same brochure selling the Gorgon Stare also advertised that "[h]igh resolution real-

time motion video of activities of interest are collected to supply pattern-of-life and post-event

forensics." Here the sales department of Sierra Nevada Corporations (an international purveyor

of integrated electronic systems) appealed directly to signature strikes, where the identity of the

target is unknown.[91] But signature strikes contradict the principle of distinction—if we do not

know someone's identity, how can we be sure he (I use the pronoun purposefully) is in fact a

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[88] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

[89] DARPA's Mind's Eye project develops "machine-based visual intelligence." See:
http://www.darpa.mil/Our_Work/I2O/Programs/Minds_Eye.aspx.

[90] Ian Shaw and Mahjed Akhter, "The Unbearable Humanness of Drone Warfare in FATA,
Pakistan," *Antipode* 44, no. 4 (2012): 1490-1509.

[91] The pamphlet described can be accessed here: http://www.sncorp.com/pdfs/isr/gorgon_stare.pdf.

combatant? Tyler Wall and Torin Monahan are concerned with surveillant aeriality of drones towards a similar end. In an analysis that accompanies not just drones in areas affiliated with the War on Terror, but also domestic drones patrolling the U.S./Mexico border, the authors contend that the violent articulations of U.S. imperialism enacted by drones "translate" bodies into targets.[92] As they argued, the "drone stare" abstracts people from context, while relying on a clothing, behavior, and location, in the case of signature strikes, to determine combatant status. This creates "security-scapes" in recognized theaters of war and domestic spaces. Perhaps the most problematic thing about the drone stare is its legitimation through discourses of technological superiority and scientific objectivity, so that the available images, despite the complex levels of interpretive work required to "see," are rendered as "accurate" and "correct"— even virtuously so. It is as if the "cosmic view" afforded by drones cannot lie. Wall and Monahan showed how drones "further normalize the ongoing subjugation of those marked as Other," interrogating the zoerhetorics of drone warfare in different ways.[93]

Although the United States has a right to self-defense, and the drone campaign can largely be credited with decimating Al Qaeda's "Af/Pak" stronghold, it seems problematic that the exact logic used to defend innocent American-identified humans can be deployed to destroy non-American-identified humans. The pernicious militant/civilian false dichotomy, further, currently operates as a platform for the U.S. to continue to push an asymmetric military agenda. While the bulk of analysts, pundits, bloggers, and op-ed writers criticize the way the Obama administration counts civilians, very few of these writers interrogate the decomposition of the militant/civilian dichotomy in the first place. As a result, the critical left leaves largely

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[92] Tyler Wall and Torin Monahan, "Surveillance and Violence from Afar: The Politics of Drones and Liminal Security-scapes," *Theoretical Criminology* 15, no. 3 (2011): 239-254.

[93] Ibid., 250.

unquestioned that so-called militants—a status determined by no more than the decree of high-ranking officials—should die in the first place. Therefore, even critics of the U.S. drone campaign play into its hands by implicitly sanctioning an ontological gap between civilian and militant. The result is what Achille Mbembe called a deathworld—the murder of an imperialized group of people legitimated by humanitarian logics.[94]

Through these processes, the U.S.-based rhetoric of CIA drone strikes zoerhetorically re/distributes status along the potent dichotomy of civilian/non-civilian. The zoerhetorical inflation of innocent individuals occurs through the operation of the god term *innocence*. Although not typically considered a god term, *civilian* is linked by semantic association and phonetic resonance to god terms like *civilized*, *civilization*, and *citizen*.[95] Lumping rhetorics typically inflate and splitting rhetorics typically deflate. Already an "othered" group, Islamic Others are further split along a spectrum of evidential guilt and innocence. Distancing and deflationary zoerhetorics condition this split, functioning as either devil terms ("terrorists") or euphemisms ("targets.") Finally, the creation of the enemy specific to the capacities of remotely piloted aircraft—the hiding Al-Qaeda member discoverable by excellent reconnaissance—demands specific types of persons targeted for death living in Mbembian deathworlds.

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[94] Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

[95] An important precursor to the contemporary principle of distinction, the 1863 Lieber Code, written under the Lincoln Administration during the Civil War, couched protecting civilians explicitly in the language of the progress of civilization: "As civilization has advanced during the last centuries, so has likewise steadily advanced, especially in war on land, the distinction between the private individual belonging to a hostile country and the hostile country itself, with its men in arms."

Conclusion: The Zoerhetorical Movements of Drone Warfare

In May of 2013, in honor of Memorial Day, Obama gave a speech that called for an end

to the boundless, perpetual War on Terror. This speech was notable because it was the first time

the strikes against U.S. citizens were officially acknowledged by the White House. The same

Times editorial board that just a few months earlier had castigated Obama over lack of

transparency in the drone campaign turned to sing his praises.[96] However, despite his promises,

the CIA continued (and continues) to employ the controversial practice of signature strikes, even

ramping up strikes in the following July.[97] During this speech, Obama responded to the outcry

against targeting U.S. citizens without due process by comparing Al-Awlaki and the others to

domestic snipers, which I'll excerpt here because it brings together zoerhetorically significant

spectra of citizenship and innocence discussed above:

> For the record, I do not believe it would be constitutional for the government to
> target and kill any U.S. citizen—with a drone, or with a shotgun—without due
> process, nor should any President deploy armed drones over U.S. soil. But when a
> U.S. citizen goes abroad to wage war against America and is actively plotting to
> kill U.S. citizens, and when neither the United States, nor our partners are in a
> position to capture him before he carries out a plot, his citizenship should no more
> serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down on an innocent crowd should be
> protected from a SWAT team. That's who Anwar Awlaki was—he was
> continuously trying to kill people.[98]

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[96] The Editorial Board, "Perpetual War."

[97] Mark Mazzetti and Mark Landler, "Despite Administration Promises, Few Signs of Change in Drone Wars." *New York Times,* August 2, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/03/us/politics/drone-war-rages-on-even-as-administration-talks-about-ending-it.html?src=recg.

[98] "Obama Addresses Drones," NPR.

In order to defend his disputed policy, the President constructed yet another threat to "the

American people." However, this was not a threat like Rand Paul's that relied on a

zoerhetorically deflated racialized foreigner or an inflated white supercitizen. Instead, Obama

located the threat right at home in the image of the domestic sniper, reminding us that, "[W]e

face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States."[99] The insidious,

concealed sniper resonates with the insidious, concealed Al Qaeda drone target. This speech,

then, marks a departure from the typical "disease" White House rhetoric of drones (Brennan

described drones as being the surgical, sterile way to remove cancerous tissue) while maintaining

the vague, vacillating threat to American-identified persons that has characterized War on Terror

rhetoric since its inception.

Over the course of this chapter, I've found it useful to create a character on which my

narrative voice is autoethnographically based: the solicitous, concerned citizen-subscriber to the

New York Times. I've tried to triangulate (or crystallize, following Ellingson's important

incursion into qualitative research methods[100]) between this more general experience and the

vagaries of my own rhetorical experience. What is decidedly alarming, however, is the extent to

which the characteristics of my imagined narrator (broadly based on the demographics of *New

York Times* readers) coincide with many of the characteristics of persons that the zoerhetorics of

drone warfare suggest for protection: whiteness-performing, appropriately consuming, law-

abiding, American-identified, residing outside of the targeted terrain, etc. How is it significant

for this study that readers of the *New York Times* are often successfully targeted for the good

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Laura L. Ellingson. *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008). Crystallization is Ellingson's intervention into qualitative research that privileges multiple perspectives and multiple modalities of researcher expression.

life? I also acknowledge other zoerhetorical gestures implicit in this essay, which run as deeply as the chosen "text" of study (an American-identified newspaper) and include exclusive pronouns like "we" when referencing American-identified persons.

Drone strikes and their accompanying mass mediated zoe/rhetorics show no signs of abating. Regarding social belonging and citizenship, drone rhetorics milk American-identified social belonging to refocus the public on American-identified persons, rather than already Othered vulnerable bodies. Regarding innocence, drone rhetorics in the *Times* tap the empty civilian/militant dichotomy in order to manufacture targets. Whether across the spectra of belonging or innocence, *New York Times* drone rhetorics produce and maintain populations nourished toward life and targeted for death.

To rhetorical theory, zoerhetorical theory offers a heuristic for understanding how *lives* come to matter. To biopolitics, zeorhetorical theory offers a framework for *how* rhetorical processes mark lives for life or death. Zoerhetorics continually lump and split groups of living entities along a hierarchy indexed by god and devil terms in order to maintain dominance. Rooted in necropolitics, zoerhetorical theory provides a rhetorical dimension for understanding how we come to accept and maintain unjust distributions of livability.

Chapter Four

The Zoerhetorics of Biocitizenship:

Vitally Building Lives at Athletic Clubs in Boulder, Colorado

Your body belongs to the Fuhrer.

—Nazi propaganda poster

Imagine this scene. A group of men and women gather for a regular Tuesday exercise-and-beer evening. On this night, five friends bring their carbon fiber racing bicycles and bike trainers to Blaine's house for a favorite activity: viewing the hit cable television show *The Biggest Loser* while racing each other for mileage.[1] This group of fit, white, attractive, professional thirty-to-forty-somethings, a few of them semi-professional athletes, call *The Biggest Loser* the "best fitspo." (Fitspo is a portmanteau of "fitness inspiration"). They all agree that host Jillian Michaels—famously known as the "mean" host—provides the most motivation. "I don't care if you both die on this floor. Let's go! You better die looking good," Michaels shouts at two obese contestants doing push-ups.[2] The friends pump their legs harder as they watch a large man project exercise-induced vomit over an arrangement of indoor foliage. After the ride, they chat about their PR (personal record) goals for their next races over locally brewed craft beer that tastes better "when you've really earned it." Before they leave, they make plans to

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[1] A pseudonym, a practice repeated throughout this chapter.

[2] This Jillian Michaels quote is immortalized in many DIY fan mash-up videos of *The Biggest Loser* on YouTube, like this one, called "The Wrath of Jillian": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovfW59st9xc.

meet at the outdoor pool at the local athletic club for a Masters swim class at 5:30 the following morning.

When I retell this story, it reliably produces grimaces. People say, "That's *so* Boulder," roll their eyes, and generally find something at least mildly objectionable about the way that the fit bodies *use* the fat bodies as motivation, or as a kind of audiovisually-mediated primetime fuel for enhanced exercise performance.[3] Further grounds for reproach include the ways that the fit bodies have the opportunity to experience the double pleasure of simultaneous identification with (Jillian Michaels is shouting at *me!*) and disidentification from (Look how much fitter *I* am!) the show's contestants. I began with this scene, as it was casually recounted to me in an interview, because it summarily imparts a number of themes that define the local Boulder, Colorado subculture in which I find myself half-way immersed: aspirations towards fitness, antipathies towards fatness, exercise-oriented socialization, flesh-gazing (that "gets off" towards cardiovascular arousal), orientations to "earning" food, and preoccupation with measurable personal performance, all wrapped inside class-specific performances of consumption, leisure, whiteness, and athleticism.

In an attempt to understand the consequential rhetorics of these fitness practices, I conducted field method research at two athletic clubs in Boulder, Colorado reputed to exemplify this subculture of vitality—one a full-service gym with a "country club feel," and the other a top-billed indoor climbing and fitness facility. The above anecdote exemplifies a central contention of this chapter, present in observations across both fieldsites—that populations encouraged towards vitality (here, the fit bikers) are in a hierarchical relationship with populations marked

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[3] I am at risk of furthering a harmful fit/fat dichotomy here. I acknowledge that many "fat" bodies are capable of scoring high on various types of biometric health and fitness tests. However, these terms are emic to my sites.

for deterioration (the obese contestants). Zoerhetorical theory attempts to understand the ways in which these unequal distributions of privilege and status are encouraged, enforced, and legitimated in biopolitical regimes of living.

It is a truism of biopolitical theory that regimes of living form ethical subjects. What (or who) counts as "good" or "ethical" ties intimately with biopolitical mandates. Didier Fassin named this phenomenon, as it operates on the level of the nation-state, *biolegitimacy*, or the recognition of the sacredness of life itself. According to Fassin, the imposition of biolegitimacy is crucial to the "moral economies of contemporary societies."[4] In other words, societies gain credibility from rhetorically performing a commitment to life itself. To Fassin's analysis we might add that organizations, entities, and things, in addition to nation-states, can perform biolegitimacy. In this chapter, I am concerned with the performances of biolegitimacy on the level of the individual. Persons engaging in successful performances of vitality (later I will make a pitch for identifying them as a particular type of vital "biocitizen") are marked by the cluster of qualities associated with properly internalized regimes of self-care—goodness, virtue, discipline, self-control, responsibility, and so on.

Of course, not everyone has access to life-building biolegitimate practices, and herein lies the problem. In *Pedagogies of Crossing*, M. Jacqui Alexander asked a question that provided me with a guiding heuristic for this chapter. She queried, "What do lives of privilege look like in the midst of war and the inevitable violence that accompanies the building of an empire?"[5] The daily practices of vitality at the nonpareil athletic clubs across Boulder, Colorado are poised to supply an answer to this question. In fact, it is difficult for me to imagine lives more dramatically

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[4] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 5 (2009): 44-60, 50.

[5] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-2.

embedded in the privileges of vitality and well being than these biocitizens. Alexander's question challenges the innocence and built-in virtue associated with vitality-building practices like going to the gym. Her question even indicts the daily habits of Boulderites like Blaine and his biking pals (who, of course, act as substitutes here for myself and my community). Following Alexander leads me down a terrifying road—what happens if we read American-identified vitality practices, as they are enacted by privileged populations, as crucially bound to the formation of empire?

In other words, what happens if we analyze vitality practices zoerhetorically? Zoerhetorics are discourses, objects, events, or practices that (attempt to) re/distribute groups of persons to particular biopolitical populations. That vitality practices, as enacted by privileged populations, operate to maintain biopolitical inequality will be a starting assumption of this chapter. As daily, embodied, life-building habits, vitality practices both perform biolegitimacy and accumulate privilege, such as the very tangible privilege of a body that more closely conforms to the fit, slender ideal. What are the qualities, constraints, and textures of the biolegitimating rhetorics available to persons in this subculture? Where do these biolegitimate rhetorics and practices cluster? How do the often intensely demanding regimes of self-care that range from encouraged to compulsory in this town become what Pierre Bourdieu called habitus?

The chapter will proceed as follows: First, I will elaborate the theoretical framework with which I approach vitality at the athletic clubs, centered around complementary threads of biopolitics and the growing scholarly corpus that positions itself "against health." From here I will extrapolate the figure of the vitality-performing biocitizen—the privileged person whose life-building zoerhetorically ascendant practices accumulate and store embodied privilege. This, to answer Alexander's question, is what lives of privilege look like in the formation of empire.

Next, I will describe how biocitizenship, via biolegitimacy, is articulated in specific modes and moments at each site. Rhetorics available to vital biocitizens include *training* and *whiteness*. These rhetorics encourage and justify the accumulation of embodied privilege—an accumulation that occurs at the expense of populations who are, in Lauren Berlant's words, slowly wearing out.

The Zoerhetorics of Vital Biocitizens: A Literature Review

In *Losing it with Jillian*, the short-lived reality television spin-off to *The Biggest Loser*, host and trainer Jillian Michaels temporarily moves in with obese families in order to help them establish the exercise and nutrition patterns they need to "recover their health" and lose weight. In a moment of exertion-induced exhaustion, Agnes Mastropietro says, "Jillian, you're killing me!" The grave-faced Jillian shakes her head. "No," she responds, "you're killing you."[6] This moribund exchange marks clearly the stakes of performing health in contemporary regimes of living. To be healthy is to move towards life; to be unhealthy is to move towards death. If you are not performing biolegitimacy, you are dying. This section explores scholarship around regimes of living that suture performances of vitality to what it means to be a "good" citizen.

According to Foucault's genealogy, biopolitics has been the primary mode of governmentality since the late eighteenth century. The two interlocking poles of biopower, the disciplinary control of the individual body ("anatomo-politics," or care of the self) and the regulatory control of the population en masse, collaborate to render bodies both docile and useful. Ethical subjects are formed by regimes of living, or what Andrew Lakoff and Stephen

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[6] Jillian Michaels, *Losing it with Jillian*, television program, NBC, Season 1 episode 1, 2010.

Collier call the "configurations of ethical elements—forms of practice, norms, modes of reasoning" concerned with the social and biological life of individuals and collectivities.[7] In our specific historical moment, regimes of living form ethical subjects through performances of vitality. In other words, we tend to attribute positive qualities to persons performing biolegitimacy, or persons who demonstrate a commitment to "life itself" through health practices.

Biopolitics is system of governing. When citizens internalize these practices of health and self-care, the state benefits biopolitically (that is, on the level of population) as well as economically. The "health" of a nation is rudely equated with the health of its worker-citizens, because sickness under capitalism means an inability to work.[8] The state, then, institutes a range of public programs and policies by which it encourages "health." Yet as a growing body of necropolitical scholarship shows, not all groups of persons are subject to these liberal modes of governance that nourish them towards vitality and longevity. To echo Achille Mbembe, it is not an *accident* of biopolitical governance that some populations are nourished toward vitality and others are targeted for death. Rather, it is a *necessity* for the maintenance of domination—a necessity in the building of empire. To summarize this aphoristically, and perhaps too simply: All health is stolen.

What Mbembe called necropolitics described the ways in which regimes of power create populations targeted for *both* life and death. While Foucault and other biopolitical theorists like Roberto Esposito thought that some sort of rupture had to occur before biopolitics became lethal, Mbembe maintained that the preservative and lethal qualities of biopower were continuous with

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[7] Andrew Lakoff and Stephen J. Collier, "Ethics and the Anthropology of Modern Reason," *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 419-434, 427.

[8] David Harvey, "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy," *Environment and Planning D* 16, no. 4 (1998): 401-422.

each other.[9] While persons of privilege are encouraged towards life in lifeworlds, dispossessed

persons are targeted for death in deathworlds. Like Jacqui Alexander, Mbembe demands we

consider the populations targeted for death upon which populations targeted for life both

materially and symbolically rely. Yet while a concept like Mbembian deathworlds might be

indispensable for a zoerhetorical analysis of, say, drone strikes in Pakistan in the War on Terror,

it is less useful for understanding populations that aren't being directly targeted for death. What

about populations encouraged towards life, living in lifeworlds? What about populations like the

obese working poor?

Enter Lauren Berlant and her theory of "slow death," which helps us make sense of the

less spectacular and more everyday biopolitical distributions of livability. In *Cruel Optimism,*

Berlant identified a conceptual blind spot in Mbembe's necropolitics. Specifically, she was

concerned with the extent to which Mbembe's examples of deathworlds were dramatic and

spectacular. What about, she asked, groups of people just slowly, unremarkably dying? She

appended Mbembe's event-ful necropolitical notion of murdering enemies with a theory of the

daily, slow neglect of populations towards deterioration. While Mbembe's deathworld occupants

were Palestinians living in Israeli-occupied territories, Berlant's slow deathworld inhabitants

were the obese working poor in the United States. Rather than the attention-grabbing spectacle of

murder, populations neglected towards slow death experience an unremarkable, daily

deterioration. Berlant then throws her hat in the ring of competing explanations as to why we

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[9] Didier Fassin provided an explanation for Foucault's perceived ambivalence toward deathly biopolitics. He wrote, "But there is another dimension of biopower included in his famous statement (1976: 180): 'One might say that the ancient right to kill and let live was replaced by a power to make live and reject into death' (I believe that in the official English version – 'a power to foster life and disallow it to the point of death' – the exact and profound meaning of 'faire vivre et rejeter dans la mort' is somewhat lost in translation). Biopower is not only about life: it is also about death. What 'to reject into death' means is not entirely clear in Foucault's writings…In other words, 'to make live' – which is how biopower is usually understood – is also 'to reject into death.' "Another Politics of Life is Possible," 52.

(Americans) are so fat. She imagines that persons dying slowly would use food to expand a momentary feeling of psychic well being, regardless of whether or not that food contributed to long-term physiological well being.[10]

If Berlant's obese working poor experience "slow death," we might think of the persons who work out at the Boulder athletic clubs as experiencing "slow life." While Berlant focused on the everyday movements of U.S. Americans who are slowly wearing out or "life-expending," I focus on the everyday movements of their counterparts: Americans who are slowly "getting better" or "improving" through what Berlant called "life-building" practices.[11] Indeed, rhetorics of self-improvement abound at the health clubs. Many people are attempting to improve their overall physical fitness, health, and well being. The minute, daily, slow accrual of various components of physical fitness stands in sharp relief against the frenetic work of exercise itself—exercise intended to enhance muscle endurance, muscle strength, agility, flexibility, and cardiorespitory fitness. These biometrically measurable indicators of vitality are forms of stored body privilege. This privilege can later result in culturally desirable pay-offs like longevity and attributions of attractiveness. If biolegitimacy is one of the rationalities by which a population is rendered governable, then one of the consequences of this mode of governmentality is an intense, resource-costly focus on the embodied self. Conveniently, a "properly" internalized gaze of self-care (paired with the time-consuming, salaried career and perhaps a heteronormative family life) leaves little time or energy for resisting these biopolitical mandates—or their necropolitical consequences.[12]

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[10] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

[11] Ibid., Loc. 586.

[12] Under the rubric of vital biocitizenship I will describe here, we can understand the general political apathy of U.S. vital biocitizens in a few ways. One way draws on Paul Lazarsfeld's and Robert K. Merton's concept

Critical Health Studies, Accumulated Body Privilege, and the Zoerhetorical Hierarchy

A healthy body of literature critiques vitality. Robert Crawford's coinage of the term "healthism" in 1980 crystallized an incipient critical health movement. Alarmed at the extent to which personal health had become a national preoccupation, Crawford denounced the elevation of health to a "super value" and metaphor for all that is good in life.[13] Similarly, philosopher Ivan Illich's lecture series in the eighties (provocatively titled "To Hell with Health") skewered health practices as leading towards a host of iatrogenic (doctor-caused) diseases while padding the pockets of the medical industries.[14] Subsequent scholarship took positions ranging from mild critique to outrage, such as Petr Skrabanek's 1994 treatise that located a nascent totalitarianism behind state coercions towards compulsory healthy lifestyles. Like Crawford, Skrabanek's primary objection was the preachy moralism accompanying health talk.

As a scholar of rhetoric, I would be remiss to not mention the anti-health thread running through Kenneth Burke's corpus. During one of his lengthy word association lists in *Counter-Statement*, he linked the following to a "healthy club-offer": efficiency, prosperity, increased

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of "narcotizing dysfunction," in which mass-media generated knowledge about an issue substitutes for action regarding that issue. (See "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," in *Media Studies: A Reader*, eds. Paul Marris and Sue Thornham (New York, NYU Press, 2000), 22-23). We can also understand the political apathy of biocitizens in terms of Richard Lanham's notion of an "economics of attention." As attention-grabbing rhetorics saturate public culture and the demands of a career, family, and intense self-care regime fill the day, this leaves an individual with scarce resources of attention remaining to engage in social justice actions. Richard Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[13] Robert Crawford, "Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life," *International Journal of Health Services* 10, no. 3 (1980): 365-388, 368.

[14] Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham, eds. *The Challenges of Ivan Illich: A Collective Reflection* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002).

consumption, higher standards of living, enthusiasm, faith.[15] As Debra Hawhee catalogued in her

chapter of *Moving Bodies* called "Welcome to the Beauty Clinic," Burke was critical of the

sterile, medical approach to health and believed that life "grows out of the rot."[16] Ellen Quandahl

nicely summed Kenneth Burke's Janus-faced relationship to health with this line: "Burke is best

known for his "comic" attitude, but his work is deeply riven, divided between the smilingly

hypochondriacal pursuit of health and wariness of the discursive regimes of order."[17]

In Skrabanek's account, in an analysis that Burke would probably agree with, "healthy"

automatically equaled moral, patriotic, and pure while "unhealthy" indexed the opposite poles:

immoral, unpatriotic or foreign, and impure.[18] The most systematic collection of critical health

studies to date, Jonathan Metzl and Anna Kirkland's edited book, *Against Health: How Health

Became the New Morality*, followed in this vein of health moralizing. Essays in this volume

identified health as a colonizing, stigmatizing, normalizing, medicalizing, and consumerist series

of discourses and practices.[19] In daily conversations and media representations, health operates as

a transparent, universal good employed to "make moral judgments, convey prejudice, sell

products, or even to exclude whole groups of persons from health care."[20]

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[15] I read "healthy club-offer" as a typographical error for "health club offer." Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 111.

[16] As quoted in: Debra Hawhee, *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 152.

[17] Ellen Quandahl, "It's Essentially as Though This were Killing Us": Kenneth Burke on Mortification and Pedagogy," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1997): 5-22, 20.

[18] Petr Skrabanek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1994).

[19] Jonathan Metzl, and Anna Kirkland, eds., *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality* (New York: NYU Press, 2010).

[20] Jonathan Metzl, "Introduction: Why "Against Health?" in *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, eds. Jonathan Metzl, and Anna Kirkland (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 2.

It was not until medical sociologists and other scholars incorporated Michel Foucault's work on biopolitics that focus shifted to an anatamo-politics of self-care where "good" citizens internalized the state's surveillant, panoptic gaze. The classic Foucauldian move from a top-down macropolitics to a bottom-up micropolitics, where citizens actively craft their pleasures, desires, and subjectivities, inspired Roberto Esposito, Nikolas Rose, Deborah Lupton, and others to address the micro-biopolitics of health regimes. In identifying one of Foucault's primary *dispositifs* of biopolitics, Esposito described the double enclosure of the body as occurring in two movements. First, the individual is conceptually chained to her body, and second, the body is incorporated into the state. The above epigraph of a Nazi propaganda poster exemplifies this double enclosure. The logical result of the premise that your body belongs to the Fuhrer is that you are beholden to care for it. Even though Boulder's vital biocitizens are not living in fascist Germany, failure to adequately care for your body still disavows an ethical relation to society.

In a similar turn to the biopolitical, British sociologist Nikolas Rose asserted that healthism is the ideological linkage between "public objectives for the good […] with the desire of individuals for health and well being."[21] Later, in *The Politics of Life Itself*, Rose examined biomedicine's "molecularization," the creation of a genomic body, and the concurrent shift from health as a practice of healing to a way of governing.[22] In an impressive body of work that a various times analyzed pregnancy, AIDS, food, fat, and fatherhood, Deborah Lupton identified *risk* as one of the pervasive health rhetorics that further encouraged the responsibilization of the

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[21] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 74.

[22] Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

individual and brought forth a new health consciousness in the polity.[23] Like Rose, Lupton

formed the foundation for a scholarly dialogue that examined risk and other moral imperatives of

health as modes of governance.

If health is a mode of governance, a number of rewards and punishments exist for those

who successfully perform health (or at least seem like they successfully perform it). A series of

social science investigations have captured the consequences of failing to successfully perform

health with empirical measurements. Body size is one dimension of health that has received

attention. Research shows that obese people are less likely to succeed a job interviews, be

acquitted by juries, or be attributed positive qualities in general when compared to their thinner

counterparts.[24] To a greater extent than men, women face penalties for deviating from the bodily

ideal, a phenomena that has been documented in the areas of employment, education, and

health.[25] Obese persons are not only excluded from a range of careers because of their body size

(such as those in the military, police force, or commercial aviation), but also face higher charges

for health care and health insurance. Even in mundane daily activities like moving through or

occupying public space, the larger body is at a disadvantage, at least partially because they are

persistently subject to what Nike Ayo called "gazes of repulsion."[26]

Conversely, we might infer that bodies that externally manifest the ideals of

biolegitimacy receive "gazes of approval." A successful biolegitimate performance of health,

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[23] Deborah Lupton, "Risk as Moral Danger: The Social and Political Functions of Risk Discourse in Public Health," *International Journal of Health Services* 23, no. 3 (1993): 425-435.

[24] Abigail Saguy, *What's Wrong with Fat?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[25] Ngaire Donaghue and Anne Clemitshaw, "'I'm totally smart and a feminist… and yet I want to be a waif': Exploring ambivalence towards the thin ideal within the fat acceptance movement," *Women's Studies International Forum* vol. 35, no. 6 (2012): 415-425.

[26] Nike Ayo, "Understanding Health Promotion in a Neoliberal Climate and the Making of Health Conscious Citizens," *Critical Public Health* 22, no. 1 (2012): 99-105, 104.

often externally manifested as a slender body, operates as a visible status cue. Like race, gender, sexuality, or ability, body size/shape comprises one axis of an interlocking system of domination. As communication scholar Kathleen Lebesco observed, "if African Americans and Latinos are fatter than whites and Asians, and women are more likely than men to be fat, fatness haunts us as a reminder of deteriorating physical privilege in terms of race and sex."[27] This spate of research establishes body size/shape as another biopolitical fault line along which zoerhetorical status is re/distributed. I want to emphasize that the privileges of conforming to a bodily ideal reach far beyond the exigencies of vanity—the extent to which a body conforms to the slender ideal results in real, tangible, material payoffs.

What is the link between privileged populations and privileged bodies? Here we can draw from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, or the embodied collection of everyday rules and norms that structure how we engage with the world.[28] A habitus is precisely what will seem invisibly, viscerally obvious to a community. Through habitus, privileged bodies accumulate what Bourdieu called "embodied capital," or resources manifested in the body. Bourdieu usually understood embodied capital under the rubric of cultural capital, but Chris Shilling's work labored to position embodied capital as its own stand-alone form of accumulated privilege.[29] In Shilling's conception, embodied capital was intimately tied to the production of social inequalities.

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[27] Kathleen Lebesco, "Fat Panic and the New Morality," in *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, eds. Jonathan Metzl, and Anna Kirkland (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 74.

[28] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For an analysis of social capital and its emergent privileges like trust as they developed in health clubs in Great Britain, see: Nick Crossley, "(Net)working Out: Social Capital in a Private Health Club," *The British Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 3 (2008): 475-500.

[29] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital." in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 258; Chris Shilling, "Educating the Body: Physical Capital and the Production of Social Inequalities," *Sociology* 25, no. 4 (1991): 653-672.

In the field of anthropology, David Harvey, following Donna Haraway, posited the body as an accumulation strategy. Bodies internalize the effects of the processes that "produce, support, sustain, and dissolve [them]."[30] Of course, a distinct unevenness persists as to how different bodies absorb capitalism's flows. According to Harvey, privileged bodies accumulate capitalism's rewards and less privileged bodies absorb capitalism's externalities, such as the consumption of nutritionally vacuous food or exposure to toxins. Regarding embodied social capital, geographer Louise Holt suggested other ways that bodies accumulate capitalism's flows. Persistent "material socio-spatial inequalities" were reproduced through the iterative movements of individual dynamic corporealities.[31] Leslie Kern, in turn, mobilized the concept of embodied social capital's iterative movements to analyze yoga's role in the gentrification of Toronto.[32] The vitality-performing biocitizen, then, is a figure whose body aggregates and stores the biopolitical privilege of embodied social capital. In turn, this figure is allowed to demonstrate this privilege daily with the performance of a physically fit, healthy, and even hyper-able body.

One further quality of the vitality-performing biocitizen is her durable association with virtue. A number of studies in the social sciences concur that we are more likely to make attributions of "goodness" and virtue to persons whose bodies conform to a thin, fit ideal.[33] If body size/shape is a biopolitical fault line along which consequential status is conferred or denied, then *virtue* is one of the primary discursive *topoi* for this particular zoerhetorical

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[30] Harvey, "Body as an Accumulation Strategy," 402.

[31] Louise Holt, "Embodied Social Capital and Geographic Perspectives: Performing the Habitus," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 2 (2008): 227–246, 237.

[32] Leslie Kern, "Connecting Embodiment, Emotion and Gentrification: An Exploration Through the Practice of Yoga in Toronto," *Emotion, Space and Society* 5, no. 1 (2012): 27-35.

[33] Christine Halse, "Bio-Citizenship: Virtue Discourses and the Birth of the Bio-Citizen," in *Biopolitics and the 'Obesity Epidemic': Governing Bodies*, eds. Jan Wright and Valerie Harwood (New York: Routledge, 2009); Annemarie Jutel, "Weighing Health: The Moral Burden of Obesity," *Social Semiotics* 15, no. 2 (2005): 113-125.

movement. Attributions of virtue here are deeply linked to another important zoerhetorical *topos*: biolegitimacy. Performances of virtue often draw on "life itself" to accrue the attributions of goodness and morality that render them virtuous. The occurrence of fat shaming renders this concept in more concrete terms. While persons whose bodies do not conform to the ideal are shamed with gazes of repulsion, gazes of approval attribute virtue to bodies that mimic idealized forms.

Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger: Becoming Vital Biocitizens

If an ongoing rhetorical suturing continually binds health with virtue, this produces populations of citizens that have the opportunity to align themselves with these wellsprings of associations with the good that a healthy lifestyle offers. I will refer to these persons as *vitality-practicing biocitizens* and their series of practices of social belonging as they pertain to self-care as *vital biocitizenship*. In 2002, anthropologist Adriana Petryna coined "biocitizenship" to describe the way in which Ukrainians affected by the Chernobyl disaster took radiation poisoning as a point of entry to demand redress from the state. For Petryna, biocitizenship referred to projects of health and well being articulated in terms of relationship to the state.[34]

While Petryna described a specific post-Soviet population as biocitizens, the concept developed traction across biopolitical regimes. Biocitizenship is valuable insofar as it links "the matter of the living (biological, whether as an irradiated or infected body) and the meaning of

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[34] Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

politics (citizenship, in terms of social as well as civil rights)."[35] Because of these and other

competing definitions for the term *biocitizenship*, Roger Cooter recommended it as a watchword

for twenty-first century scholarship.[36] According to a precept offered by Nicole Charles in her

study of HPV vaccinations, biocitizens are excellent figures by which to understand

contemporary neoliberal regimes of biopolitical governance.[37]

Evading the easy portmanteau, Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas offered the phrase

"biological citizenship" in 2003 to encompass all "citizenship projects that have linked their

conceptions of citizens to beliefs about the biological existence of human beings, as individuals,

as families and lineages, as communities, as population and races, and as a species."[38] For Rose

and Novas, biocitizenship offered a way for biosocial collectivities to develop, often through

new technologies such as the internet, and was linked to the promise of biomedicine. The

optimistic hope in their iteration of biocitizenship was that individuals would have recourse to

demand recognition from the state based on their capacity to self-organize in appropriate

groups—a group of citizens suffering from multiple sclerosis, for example, might use the

resources from an online social network to collectively demand medical coverage.

My mobilization of the term biocitizenship differs from Petryna's original definition in

two ways. First, Petryna's group of biocitizens made claims on the nation-state of Ukraine from

a place of biological *damage* after Chernobyl. In contrast, my group of vital biocitizens pursues

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[35] Fassin, "Another Politics of Life," 51.

[36] Roger Cooter, "Biocitizenship," *The Lancet* 372, no. 9651 (2008): 1725.

[37] Nicole Charles, "Mobilizing the Self-governance of Pre-damaged Bodies: Neoliberal Biological Citizenship and HPV Vaccination Promotion in Canada," *Citizenship Studies* 17, no. 6-7 (2013): 770-784.

[38] Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, "Biological Citizenship," in *Global Anthropology*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 2.

status recognition from a set of publics from a place of (purported) biological *improvement*. In

this way, my use of vital biocitizenship is similar to Christine Halse's, who described biocitizens

as taking (self-)control of markers of "health" in order to live as good, ethical civic subjects.[39] In

the contemporary figure of the biocitizen, Halse reads the birth of a "new species of human

being," living among narratives of escalating urgency and crisis around the so-called obesity

epidemic. Biocitizens can never be *too* industrious or *too* diligent engaging in health practices,

such as the maintenance of a normative body mass index.

In a similar fashion, LeAnne Petherick described the production of biocitizens in high

school physical education classes in Canada, especially as these young students used the

culminating fitness test of the mile run as an opportunity to evaluate and manage their own

fitness progress.[40] When Kathryn Henne described Olympic athletes as biocitizens, she also

trafficked in the notion of biocitizens as persons whose regimes of health and self-care intimately

tied them to the state. As a result of their exceptional physical prowess, Olympic athletes both

accrued transnational privilege (such as mobility) while also garnering heightened surveillance

(such as gender policing).[41] While most of the vital biocitizens at the gyms in Boulder neither

approach this level of internationally elite athleticism nor garner the kind of surveillance of

Olympian bodies, the concept of biocitizenship retains traction across this wide range of athletic

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[39] Halse, "Bio-Citizenship." At her most critical, Halse linked her notion of vital biocitizenship to a project of racial eugenics.

[40] LeAnne Petherick, "Producing the Young Biocitizen: Secondary School Students' Negotiation of Learning in Physical Education," *Sport, Education and Society* 18, no. 6 (2013): 711-730. Biocitizenship research tends to focus on biopedagogy in schools. Schools are increasingly sites where bodies are included within or excluded from good and virtuous biocitizenry. In a provocative move, Katie Fitzpatrick and Richard Tinning go so far as to call physical education in schools "health fascism," where particular messages of control and surveillance involve an imposition of truth. See "Health Education's Fascist Tendencies: A Cautionary Exposition," *Critical Public Health* 24, no. 2 (2013): 132-142.

[41] Kathryn Henne, "Tracing Olympic Bio-Citizenship: The Implications of Testing for Ineligibility," in *Problems, Possibilities, Promising Practices: Critical Dialogues on the Olympic and Paralympic Games* (Ontario: International Centre for Olympic Studies, 2012).

performances. In some ways, the athletes at the gym are demonstrate even more neoliberal biocitizenship than Olympic athletes because they maintain a level of conditioning at the elite amateur level while simultaneously being committed to some other full-time, successful, often high-status, career. Architects, professors, lawyers, city councilmembers, and corporate executives work out at either athletic club.

I will amend my discussion of biocitizens with this reflexive disclosure. While I critique biocitizens, I also recognize that I am a vitality-aspirant biocitizen. (And you likely are as well). In fact, I feel comfortable condemning practices of vital biocitizenship precisely because they are "my people." I aspire to be one of "them," and my curiosity about these populations has been piqued by moving through these circles—socially, athletically, and professionally. I even wish that my body would accumulate the privileges of vital biocitizenship more efficiently. Who would not want the promise of privilege that performances of vitality entail? It is precisely the affective attachment to this promise on which Boulder athletic clubs capitalize, so I turn my attention to them.

Biocitizens at Boulder's Premier Athletic Clubs

Smile, you're in Boulder!

—Sign in Whole Foods regional flagship store parking lot

I made most of my observations while participating at two facilities, although my observations easily spilled the boundaries of any physical site and infiltrated social time with

friends, amateur race events in which I participated, and my general lifestyle as a graduate student in downtown Boulder, Colorado. The first facility is an expensive athletic club with, according to its website, "a country club feel" tucked beneath one of the "nation's premier walking malls." In addition to other amenities, this gym offers a year-round saline outdoor pool and over one hundred fitness classes per week in spacious separate studios for spin cycling, bike training, Pilates, yoga, and group fitness. The second facility is a climbing gym in Boulder, which boasts a world-class clientele, as many professional climbers reside or train in Boulder for its proximity to challenging climbing terrain, and yoga, cycling, and fitness classes.

For the past four years, I have been a regular member of both of these facilities. At both sites, I collected fieldnote observations in dual roles, as participant (climber, belayer, treadmill runner, fitness class attendee, hot tub soaker) as well as observer (sitting in these spaces and taking notes). I spent roughly three to eight hours per week at the athletic club, where my membership has not lapsed in four years. (My membership started on a "nanny pass"—the perk of a regular babysitting gig that I was using to stretch my graduate assistance funds. Therefore it is accurate to say that I started as an outsider). My attendance at the climbing gym has been less sustained; I purchased membership in three-month increments once or twice a year. Local outdoor climbing sites, like Boulder Canyon, Chautauqua, Eldorado Canyon, and Flagstaff Mountain also served as places where I encountered biocitizenly practices on real rock. The systematic data collection and interviews for this project began when I received IRB approval in late 2012.[42] I interviewed a number of friends and acquaintances (and then their acquaintances) in a small snowball sample—in total there were three formal and about ten informal interviews. In many ways, I was immersed in Boulder's biocitizenly subculture even at home, as my partner

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[42] This study has received exemption from CU's Institutional Review Board, Protocol #12-0574.

at the time was a rock climber, ice climber, and ultrarunner regularly in training. Because both of these facilities are reputed to exemplify the subculture of fitness and athleticism that defines Boulder, Colorado, I will start with a description of Boulder itself.

Biocitizenship in Boulder, Colorado

Last summer, when my partner and I hosted a barbecue at a public park in Boulder, and we realized that everyone gathered around the grill was currently or had one point been a sponsored athlete in cyclocross, orienteering, or ultrarunning. A patch of triathletes chatted nearby. I have never lived in a place so inclined towards athletic endeavors, nor have I ever been invited to so many social gatherings that revolve around exercise in some way. Yet as if by inertia, I now regularly meet friends at cycling classes at the local gym in the evenings (for a few of them, it is their second workout of the day) and I completed my first sprint-distance triathlon in August of 2013. I trained in the climbing gym in the winter in order to "session my projects" in the summer, and I made regular use of the hiking trails, bike paths, and open green space for which Boulder is famous. Scores of professional cyclists, climbers, runners, and other athletes live in Boulder for access to these luxuries and to reap the hypoxic benefits of training at altitude.

Boulder is consistently ranked among the top cities for outdoor sports access, and is reputed to be the most physically fit and least obese city in the least obese state in the nation. One *GQ* poll honored Boulder as the "worst dressed city that looks best naked."[43] Of course, not

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[43] The *GQ* rankings of worst dressed cities can be found here, Nurit Zunger, "The 40 Worst-Dressed Cities in America," *GQ*, http://www.gq.com/style/fashion/201107/worst-dressed-cities-america#slide=1. As the *GQ* poll notes, the city is obsessed with its high performance in fitness and lifestyle rankings. Boulder's city council website lists hundreds of Boulder's general lifestyle accolades here: "Best of Boulder - Community Honors," City of Boulder Colorado. https://bouldercolorado.gov/newsroom/best-of-boulder-community-honors.

everyone in town is a well-conditioned athlete, nor does Boulder have the monopoly on status-oriented fitness practices. There is certainly a popular pushback against the "cult of the body" that feels compulsory here. It is telling that people will "out" themselves as "not Boulder enough" if they do not pursue, at least somewhat competitively, a gamut of outdoor sports. Not surprisingly, as property values have inflated around Boulder, what was formerly celebrated as a progressive hippie town has became a place where persons performing consumption-oriented whiteness gather and gentrify. What Jessie Stewart and Greg Dickinson called the "Colorado lifestyle" is inextricably linked to consumption, as many of the nation's boutique fitness apparel stores, such as Mont Bell, Prana, Go Lite, or Skirt Sports locate their flagship stores on Boulder's Pearl Street mall.[44] For these reasons, the city of Boulder furnishes an excellent geographical location at which build a theory around the embodied accumulation of privilege through practices of vitality.[45]

Boulder's self-identity as a fit city appears at the gyms, too, in personal interactions as well as promotional material. "Just don't start dieting and running three hours a day without telling me…believe me, it happens in Boulder," advised my personal fitness instructor, as she pinched a handful of fat from my abdomen to measure with calipers. Amid zero communication from me that I was unhappy with my current body weight, her insensitive advice was a subtle admonishment of my performance of vitality. Her subtext, as interpreted through my necessarily partial experience, was, "If you want to fit in here, you're going to have to change your current

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[44] Jessie Stewart and Greg Dickinson, "Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb: FlatIron Crossing and the Colorado Lifestyle," *Western Journal of Communication* 72, no. 3 (2008): 280-307.

[45] In focusing on upscale gyms, I do not mean to suggest that working class communities of Boulder (and the nature of their fitness practices) are unimportant. I focus on the privileged groups precisely because I am interested in bodily accumulations of this privilege—especially the kind of accumulations that have consequential zoerhetorical effects.

nutrition and exercise routine for a more demanding one." In a similar Boulder-worshipping

vein, the gym's website practically gushes:

> Even if you don't live or work in Boulder, you've likely heard how health and fitness is a major part of our lifestyle. Boulder consistently ranks among studies' and publications' fittest cities in America; walk into a grocery store and it seems like most of the shoppers just finished a trail run, a bike ride or a yoga class; internationally competitive athletes train in Boulder. Surrounded by so many positive influences, many of our Members don't need motivation to stay in shape; their focus is to simply work with a talented, knowledgeable professionals.

Members do not need motivation to stay in shape, because they have fully and appropriately

internalized regimes of vital self-care. The upscale local athletic club uses an affiliation with

Boulder's vital identity (while tapping the vague expertise of "studies and publications") to

promote itself as a competent venue. In this paragraph we can also see the link between

responsible fitness practices and responsible consumption ("walk into any grocery store"). In

fact, the undertone of Boulder pride is best exemplified at a grocery store. The regional flagship

Whole Foods market, just a few blocks from either gym, has signs in its parking lot that say,

"Smile, you're in Boulder!" After a morning group fitness class, clubgoers descend on the juice

bar and hot bar at the Whole Foods, perhaps consuming quality protein calories within twenty

minutes of strength training, as we are repeatedly advised by fitness instructors-cum-

biopedagogues. This awareness of Boulder's physically fit and athletic reputation permeated

both of my fieldsites.

Working Out at the Athletic Clubs

The glass triple-door entrance to the athletic club greets you with succulents and ferns. In order to advance into the main interior, you must show your membership card with photo ID to a person behind the counter, who welcomes you to the club and then says, "Have a good work out!" The large indoor space opens as you pass a large stone fountain, wide-screen television, comfortable couches, and a glorified snack bar called "Energy." Although I have been to the gym at about every time of the day, I like it in the late morning—past the pre-work rush. I call this the stay-at-home-mom time of the day to work out. Many middle-aged women use the facility at that time of the day, dropping their kids off at the childcare center called "Blast," a kid's "active play" space before their workout. One thing that makes Boulder different from other cities of its size is that a lot of people are freelance consultants, work from home, or have the flexible hours granted by some white collar professions. As a result, there are people in the gyms at all times of the day, but both gyms experience a post-5:00 p.m. rush.

The locker room at the athletic club is not one that you rush through. You want to linger. Sometimes after showering, even though I knew I should have started the labor of my day, it was hard to resist the saline hot tub, aromatherapized steam room, or sauna in the locker room. The "well-appointed" locker rooms include shampoo, conditioner, body wash, hair dryers, body lotion, styling gel, Q-tips, tampons, shaving cream, razors, cotton balls, an iron and ironing board, and cheap plastic combs in Barbicide. When I am dressing or undressing in the locker room, I like to listen to the backstage conversations that are invited in this kind of gendered space. The combination of the intimacy of nakedness, the proximity between lockers, and the luxurious surroundings invites complete strangers to start chatting with one another. (This is a

phenomenon that I have only experienced in this particular athletic club's locker room, but I have limited social experience with locker rooms in other gym cultures).

Mostly we chat about what is in front of us: the content on one of the flat screen televisions ("Are they always playing the Kardashians in here?"); the performance quality of different types of activewear ("Yeah, Gaiam's clothes are definitely for people who *move*;" "UnderArmour's sports bras are the best because you can shop by cup size."); the aesthetic quality of different types of activewear; ("That top is so cute—where did you get it?"); or the group fitness, cycling, or yoga class from which we recognize each other ("Oh my God, my butt is always so sore from Tracy's TRX class. Nothing makes you feel skinny when your put your jeans on more than a sore butt!"). The best line, in terms of class performance, I ever overheard in the locker room was one very buff, tan middle-aged woman asking another, "How do you work out when you're at *your* Aspen cabin?" The saddest line I ever overheard was one very thin middle-aged woman telling another, "I don't feel like myself until I exercise. That's when you know you have a problem, I guess."

The athletic club features an appealing interior "green" design. According to their website, their spacious square footage is "canvassed by earth-tone finishings, natural stone and energy efficient lighting." I am skeptical about this appeal to greenness being anything more than a marketing ploy. When you walk through the main fitness floor, tens of treadmills, elliptical machines, and Stairmasters each have a television in front of them that is usually on whether or not the machine is in use—what a waste of energy! When Greg Dickinson described a Starbucks, he linked the curved plant form, green colors, and wood paneling of the interior design to wide open spaces, a minimal environmental footprint, the greenness of nature, and the greenness of

money.[46] The climbing gym's attempt at a green image is more believable, but also certainly part of a careful marketing scheme. They feature solar panels and a real-time read-out display of the club's energy use in the lobby.

The climbing gym is not as beautiful or inviting as the athletic club, but it is vertically dazzling. The main foyer opens into wide carpeted stadium-style benches. Climbers are invited to watch people on the "gray wall," or the wall with the steepest terrain and most challenging set climbs. On any given evening, there are a handful of world class climbers "sessioning" or "seshing" their projects on the gray wall. The gray wall arcs out over the seating area like a wave about the crash, forming a kind of amphitheater shape. Because climbers use chalk on their palms and fingers for traction, the air in the climbing gym is often cloudy with fine white dust— a state that the building's designers tried to combat with an advanced ventilation system. Climbs are "set," (an art unto itself), marked with colored tape, and then rated for difficulty (on a scale from 5.5 to 5.15). It is not uncommon to see a plastic climbing hold with blood on it. No one seems to care. I have ripped open fingers and knees plenty of times on fake rock, and you don't always get the opportunity to clean off the hold.

Both gyms entertain a relationship with visibility, spectatorship, and display. Mirrors line the walls of the group fitness room, the cycling studio, the functional fitness floor, and the yoga studio of the athletic club. In classes, we are entreated by fitness instructors to use the side or front mirrors to check our alignment and to self-adjust if necessary. A handful of eager group fitness devotees arrive earlier to snag spots directly in front of the mirror (I have, at various times, been one of these people). At the athletic club, the more of a following that a particular fitness instructor has, the earlier you have to arrive. By positioning the steepest wall in front of

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[46] Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 5-27.

the stadium seating, the most skilled climbers are clustered together for the viewer's pleasure. The treadmills and stationary bikes that ring the upper level of the gym are also all pointed towards the gray wall. The level of climbing is so advanced at the gym that it almost serves as an advertisement for the gym itself. Next to these talented climbers, my climbing looks more like flailing—it was difficult to not be self-conscious in the arena-like viewing center.

A busy night at the climbing gym can turn into a who's who of the national or local climbing circuit. Friends in-the-know would whisper to me, "That's Jim Erickson, he had a ton of bad ass first ascents in Eldo!" or "That's Brooke Raboutou, she's twelve, she's a prodigy. Her whole family climbs fourteens." The opportunity to climb right next to these "celebrities," and even cheer them on, can be inspiring but also enervating. For months I avoided climbing on the gray wall because it felt like I was not allowed in "their" space. The most elite crop of climbers at the gym were often sponsored by a popular brand of climbing shoes (such as 5.11 or Sportiva) or outdoor apparel. Spotting Lynn Hill at the gym was not unusual but was always a treat. She was the first person—not just the first woman—to free climb The Nose on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. She is now a "Patagonia Ambassador," a fact that underscores the relationship between wearing the "right" clothes in the performance of vital biocitizenship.

Another feature of both gyms is the presence of skilled trainers roaming the facility. At the athletic club, these workers are available to spot you while you lift weights or answer questions about the use of a particular machine. At the climbing gym, these workers were more likely to be doing safety checks, to make sure people are belaying properly. One man I interviewed who worked at the climbing gym—a climber himself—had lots of stories to share about people taking life-threatening falls at the gym because of faulty equipment and incompetent belaying. For a few months, the climbing gym had a foot-shaped hole in the padded

carpet beneath the highest point on the gray wall. (Climbing is dangerous. I had too many close calls, and I do not do it anymore). Both facilities feature display walls with photographs and brief biographies of their certified trainers, and both facilities advertise and encourage paying for additional one-on-one sessions with a personal trainer.

As Dickinson noted of coffeeshop baristas, these trainers can be understood as "cultural workers," insofar as they interpret and "sell" the variety of goods available for the biocitizen's consumption.[47] These cultural workers are partially responsible for representing, and even branding, their respective gyms. During one revealing moment in a cycling class at the athletic club, I heard a particularly saucy fitness instructor say to a latecomer, "Oh, be careful, that bike it broken. Oh wait, I'm not supposed to say anything is broken. I am supposed to say that it 'requires maintenance.' Oops, I forgot!" She rolled her eyes, as if to suggest that kind of policing was ridiculous. In that moment, her break from the top-down imposed script revealed the highly structured nature of interaction between cultural worker and clubgoers. It reminded me that even after I had already purchased the membership, the "experience" of the club was still actively being sold to me. The employee at the climbing gym echoed this observation, by noting that he was provided a huge, top-secret manual that prescribed what *exactly* to say to climbers at the club in various situations.

Typically, bodies across both sites present as muscular, fit, and white. This is not to suggest that overweight bodies never frequent these places, but rather to emphasize the homogeneity of Boulder bodies, especially as they cluster and move at these athletic centers. This is embarrassing to relay, but one time while climbing with my former partner, we saw an obese person at the gym. "Wow, he must be really brave," we said. "It must be really hard for

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[47] Ibid., 18.

him to be here." I recognize that kind of talk to be superior and patronizing, but I share it as an important ethnographic datum. Bodies at both clubs tend to be hegemonically gendered. Typically, there are a few more men than women at the climbing gym. At the athletic club, there are more women than men (reflective of national rates of health care membership). However, male and female bodies cluster differently in the gym. What Shari Dworkin observed in her ethnography of a fitness club in 2003 is generally true of the fitness club in Boulder: more women tend to participate in group fitness classes and use cardiovascular equipment, whereas more men tend to occupy the area with weight-lifting equipment.[48]

The assumed level of fitness and mobility in group fitness classes at both sites serve as a good example of the homogeneity of bodies. Certified fitness instructors are typically trained to offer novice, intermediate, and advanced modifications for any one single exercise. For example, in Hot Yoga classes at the athletic club, I will often hear various modifications for a single *asana* (the Sanskrit word for pose). Yet often, through a series of visual cues, instructors "read" the fitness and mobility levels of the bodies present in order determine the modifications they need to offer. As a result, especially at the climbing gym, the group fitness instruction assumes that fitness levels and mobility range are remarkably high. Instructors often assume, for example, that participants are willing and able to partake in a range of fairly advanced activities, such as jumping rope, unassisted pull-ups, or rapidly switching from supine to standing to inverted positions.

In addition to homogeneity of body type, there are a number of social and capital privileges that vital biocitizens have. Here is a partial list of the economic, social, and other

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[48] Shari Dworkin, "A Woman's Place is in the…Cardiovascular Room? Gender Relations, the Body, and the Gym," in *Athletic Intruders: Ethnographic Research on Women, Culture, and Exercise*, eds. Anne Bolin and Jane Granskig (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).

privileges enjoyed by many of the biocitizens I have observed at these sites: a career that allows for extra physical energy before, during, or after work to exercise; the financial stability required to pay in excess of hundreds of dollars a month for sometimes multiple gym memberships, equipment, apparel, and race registration fees; access to the additional quality calories required to support a training regimen; social/familial networks who support or encourage time spent on "training;" an able-bodiedness that approaches hyper-ability; access to medical care in support of a training regimen; geo-spatial access to athletic training facilities; and a self-conception that one is capable of improvement or even superior performance across a range of fitness indicators. Clearly the vitality-performing biocitizen reaps the benefits of his or her economic and social capital.

Making Vital Biocitizens: Training and Whiteness

> Health today is not so much a biological imperative linked to survival as a social imperative linked to status.
>
> — Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*[49]

When Baudrillard wrote *The Consumer Society* in 1970, he had no idea of the proliferative ways in which performances of vitality would index social status in 2014. As they are performed across these two athletic clubs in Boulder, the biocitizen's self-inflationary practices draw from rhetorics of training and whiteness. In the contemporary regime of living, these two rhetorics allow vitality-performing biocitizens to do what Burke would call

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[49] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 139.

"mount[ing] the hierarchy" in publicly sanctioned, socially approved ways.[50] Each of these

overlapping rhetorics of training and whiteness illuminate characteristics of the slow, life-

building, accretive practices of the vitality-performing biocitizen. Further, each of these

zoerhetorics *hews* biocitizens *to* a range of positive qualities and *from* a range of negative

qualities. In the ongoing and dynamic zoerhetorical movements in the contemporary United

States, the set of positive qualities associated with properly internalized regimes of self-care

include goodness, virtue, discipline, self-control, responsibility, and autonomy. While adhering

to zoerhetorically ascendant practices of health and fitness, the biocitizen, who cannot help but

be materially and psychologically invested in the zoerhetorical hierarchy, reinscribes the

hierarchy while reaping its rewards.

One of the key logics buttressing vitality-performing biocitizenship is an affective

attachment to almost infinite body malleability. A plenum of rhetorics across both clubs forward

the idea that the only thing standing between clubgoers and the body of their dreams is hard

work. Shaping one's body is rendered as the equivalent of shaping one's life.[51] The extension of

this logic to its most brutal conclusion means that an imperfect body indicates an imperfect self.[52]

The infinite malleability of bodies suggests that the extent to which a body conforms to the

"ideal" fit athletic body acts is a reliable dipstick or indicator as to a person's social status.

Again, persons whose bodies conform to the fit, able, athletic ideal are attributed a range of

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[50] The sexual pun of "mounting" is not lost on Kenneth Burke, of course. See *William Rueckert, Encounters With Kenneth Burke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 75.

[51] Susan Bordo, in her incredible book *Unbearable Weight*, excerpts an ad that says exactly this. See *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[52] The promise of cosmetic plastic surgeries serves this myth of infinite body malleability. For a further discussion of the rhetorical limits of body changeability, see: John Jordan, "The Rhetorical Limits of the "Plastic Body,"" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 3 (2004): 327-358.

positive qualities in zoerhetorical ascendance; persons whose bodies fail to conform are attributed a range of negative qualities in zoerhetorical descendance.

The problem here is that bodies are not infinitely malleable, nor are they consistently reliable indicators of privilege. They are recalcitrant and stubborn things. Some bodies will accumulate biocitizenly privileges quickly, displaying fitness and athleticism with little to no prompting, whereas some bodies will paunch and pull idealized slender lines despite ascetic self-management regimes. Bodies have a vital agency all their own, separate from the top-down executive functions of willpower. They are mutable, but only to an extent. Like the fungibility of fetal entities at memorials to the unborn discussed in the previous chapter, the fungibility of bodies is both an opportunity and threat for the gyms. That some bodies can change sometimes fuels a (perhaps Berlantian cruel) affective attachment to the myth of body malleability, but that some bodies remain stubbornly immune to training threatens membership numbers at the gyms. In the contemporary regime of living, aspirational body malleability may keep athletic clubs in business. At the same time, the myth of body malleability also results in rhetorically descendant attributions to persons with imperfect bodies, because we assume that they have "earned" them through unhealthy, indulgent practices. The discourse of training anchors mythic body malleability to biolegitimacy.

Vital Biocitizens Train for Life

Various textual messages intended to inspire clubgoers decorate the interior of the athletic club as well as its website. One poster reads, "Athletes *eat* and *train*—they don't *diet* and

exercise."[53] Similarly, a personal trainer's tagline on the club website intones, "Train smart. Rest. Repeat." As I write these words, the club is running a "spring training" sale. A preference for discourses and practices of *training* over those of *exercising* mark an important movement across both fieldsites. The scoffing of an attractive white male ultrarunner with whom I am friendly first drew my attention to the bio/legitimating narrative of *training*. He groused, "I don't understand fitness. It's pointless. You're not doing anything. Fitness for *what*?" In this particular case, he was mocking middle-aged women doing step aerobics, but the barb stung me, too. Chris went on to clarify, "When I work out, it's because I want to accomplish or achieve something. I don't just work out to work out. I don't want to just spin my wheels." Besides asserting his masculinity, Chris wanted to make a distinction between "mere" exercise versus a carefully planned and meticulously executed training regimen in pursuit of some goal. Although he might be an extreme case, even for Boulder, Chris's preference for training over mere exercising aligns with many of the persons at the athletic clubs. In this subculture, palpable social approval is available for persons who *train* for a particular event. Although I am no serious athletic contender, I announced I would compete in my first sprint triathlon to much high-fiving and pats-on-the-back.

Clubgoers I encountered were in various stages of training for (or recovering from) a dazzling range of athletic events: Nationally famous or local foot races of varying length across the country (including the Leadville 100-mile, the Boston marathon, or the 10K Bolder Boulder); the gamut of triathlon distances at race events across the country (from the Coeur d'Alene Ironman in Idaho to the women-only Outdoor Divas sprint triathlon in nearby Longmont); geo-

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[53] Similarly, another quotable "fitspo" fragment that inspires identification with training is this one: "Joggers bounce up and down at red lights. Runners just stand there looking pissed."

specific climbing projects scattered around the world (whether traditional multi-pitch, sport

climbing, or bouldering routes); Muddy Buddy-type races; hiking each of Colorado's 14,000-

foot peaks; upcoming local aerial yoga, aerial dance, or partner yoga performances or

demonstrations; and local cyclocross and orienteering events. This impressive list is just from a

sampling of people within the relatively small social community of amateur athletes with whom I

am acquainted.

The range of events, across dispersed geographic locales, demonstrate a few things about

vitality-performing biocitizens. Perhaps most obviously, biocitizens who train have access to the

financial resources required not only to complete the training itself, but also to purchase a round-

trip commercial airline flight, a hotel stay, and race registration fees. (For longer races like the

IronMan, these fees can reach one thousand dollars). Second, competing at these events often

entails the consumption of tourist experience, especially as many of the events take place in

desirable locations. According to ironman.com, the Coeur d'Alene Ironman vies for the "most

breathtaking scenery" on the Ironman circuit, because it takes place "in the pristine heart of one

of Idaho's prettiest areas."[54] Here we see the conflation of *life itself* with *lifestyle*, as the

burgeoning race event management industry tailors to vitality-performing biocitizens.

More importantly, training for any of these events infuses the biocitizen's performances

of vitality with purpose and direction. Like the good neoliberal citizen, the vital biocitizen is

goal-directed and future-oriented. The biocitizen on a treadmill is not a hamster on a wheel; she

does not exercise for the sake of exercise. She does not nonchalantly determine the timing,

duration, or vigor of her exercise as it suits her mood. Rather, she is engaged in an organized,

charted, and planned self-disciplinary regime, which often includes multiple workouts per day

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[54] "IRONMAN Coeur d'Alene," Ironman.
http://www.ironman.com/triathlon/events/americas/ironman/coeur-dalene.aspx#axzz32Cw3SVH1.

and planned meals. Even activities that seem relaxing, such as "gentle" or "restorative" yoga classes (offered at both gyms) or massages, are justified through discourses of training. Biocitizens are encouraged to partake in these activities because they offer muscle recovery processes crucial to athletic training and performance. (The sign next to the chair massage area at the athletic club says, "You have a training plan. But do you have a recovery plan?") In this community, the proactive management of "life itself" requires diligence and forethought.

Rhetorics of training further serve the vital biocitizen in terms of bio/legitimizing the demanding and time-consuming practices of vitality. Many of the biocitizens with whom I interact at the gym expend large amounts of time, financial resources, and physical effort in these practices. At times, these resource expenditures run counter to commonsensical notions of what counts as wise or healthy. For example, there are people who have not (yet) achieved financial stability spend their limited monetary resources on multiple gym memberships, fancy road bikes and other equipment, or Whole Foods fare they cannot afford. I include myself among these vitality-aspirant fiscal fools.

On a surface level, the embodied demands of high-achieving amateur athletic performance contradict a commit to "life itself." Many vitality-performing community members sustain chronic, debilitating injuries. Climbers wrap injured hand and fingers in white medical tape in order to keep training, and stuff their feet into tiny, downturned, excruciating rubber-soled rock shoes. Because climbing performance is so integrally tied to bodyweight, even amateur athletes will drop weight to tackle a project. Stress fractures, blisters, dehydration, fatigue, and sprained or torn muscles are just a few of the common maladies suffered as a result of intense training regimes. One man I interviewed successfully completed a 100-mile run at altitude (the famous Leadville 100), an accomplishment for which he was proud despite a

resulting debilitating ankle injury. When I asked him if his training and competition resulted in a net gain for his overall health, he admitted that it probably did not. He agreed that there was probably more harm than good done to his body as a result of his exertions. (This man's certification as a physical therapist lent his assessment of his overall health some credibility). At the same time, he insisted that the glory of the completed achievement was absolutely worth it. From these sustained bodily injuries, we can see that sometimes the pressures of competition and achievement exceed the logics of biolegitimacy.

If this man or others like him were "merely" exercising, their multi-hour-per-day workout habits might raise eyebrows or fuel suspicions of pathological relationships with exercise. But the rhetorically (bio)legitimate rhetoric of training sanctions all sorts of behaviors that would otherwise be deemed compulsive, shallow, appearance-obsessed, or disordered. The statement, "I've got to keep up with my training schedule," will continue to carry more rhetorical punch than "I've got to keep up with my exercise routine." When the vital biocitizen is in training, we are invited to admire her vital fortitude and drive.

A commitment to "life itself" appears in other rhetorics of training. For two years, I regularly attended a group fitness class at the club called Bosu® Explosion.[55] The class combined agility drills, weightlifting, and balance training on the unstable inflated surface of a Bosu® Ball. During one class last year, I was moved by the instructor's energetic oratory during a "max effort" agility drill. I paraphrase here:

> Why are you doing this? Why are you here today? I can bring the energy, but you have to bring the effort. If you want what you've never had before, be willing to work like you

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[55] When I first started working out at the gym, the class was called Bosu® Blast. The name change reflected a club-wide decision to engage more male-identified persons in group fitness classes, which also included expanding the number of group fitness classes led by men.

never have before. This is *your* work out. What do you want from you life? Do you want to be around for the people you love? Do you want to be around a few more years for your kids? Then you have to *work* for it. You have to earn it, right here, right now.

In this exhortation, the instructor introduces a causal link between prolonged *life* (as mere existence, "be[ing] around") and the effort exercised in the agility drill. In order to motivate participants, he invoked biolegitimate rhetoric of life itself as the ultimate goal towards which we work. In his role as group fitness *instructor*, Walter operates as a biopedagogue, guiding participants towards performances of proper biocitizenship. In this example, biocitizenship requires vigorous physical effort in order to attain *life* itself. In response to Walter's invitation, a little voice in me cried, "I want to be around for my children!" I knifed my knees up to my chest to the loud beats of the music with vociferous effort. That I don't have children was beside the point. For a brief moment I was affectively suspended in the endorphin-supplemented joy of working towards my future life.

The rhetorics of training orient in different ways to a concept of earning. The first is way is by a banking metaphor—nothing ventured; nothing gained. Training is the vehicle by which aspiring athletes *earn* the speed, strength, endurance, or agility required to perform in their goal event, or required to earn "life." The second is a metaphor of earning calories from food. After a long run, ride, or hike, biocitizens like to discuss how they have *earned* the food or drink they consume afterwards. I have frequently heard vitality-performing biocitizens say something like, "The best part of training is earning calories. I work this hard so I can eat whatever I want." Similarly, members of this community often express that food tastes better when it has been "earned" through physical effort. I heard a female IronMan say once, "I am in training, so all calories taste amazing right now." It is not just clubgoers who espouse these rhetorics of earning calories—the instructors at both gyms do as well. One woman instructing a cycling class at the

climbing gym announced, "I am going to visit family in South Carolina next week—I better train hard today to earn my biscuits and gravy tomorrow!" Marathon runners often talk about how incredible beer tastes after running twenty-six miles.

I empathize with this rhetoric of "earning" calories, but I find it painfully arrogant as well. When I feel as if I have "earned" calories through vigorous physical labor, indulgent food is delightful. But there is a dark side to the idea of earning calories. Earning calories implies that persons who fail to train have not properly earned, and therefore do not rightly deserve, indulgent foods. It assumes that persons not engaged in regular, vigorous exercise have not *earned* the energy from food that they need to survive. In this way it indirectly accusatory to obese persons, who (we can only infer) must be consuming *unearned* calories. Perhaps even more problematically, a rhetoric of earned calories encourages vital biocitizens to avail themselves of the gentrified, high-end, organic specialty-item food industry in Boulder. The ironic problem here is that vital biocitizens training tens of hours per week *will consume more calories* in order to build muscle mass or maintain performance body weight. In this way, it seems that the rhetorics of training, especially those regarding earning food, allow for vitality-performing biocitizens to identify as superior to persons who fail to perform these performances of vitality. Ironically, in the very moment when vital biocitizens feel superior for having "earned" eggs benedict or foie gras, their bodies are demanding more calories (and therefore more of the world's resources like coal, fresh water, and topsoil intimately tied to global food production) than they otherwise would consume.

As a rhetorical resource, *training* allows vitality-performing biocitizens to do a number of things. First, rhetorics of training infuse performances of vitality with purpose and direction, aligning biocitizens with the positive qualities of disciplined neoliberal citizens. Second, training

provides a justification for biocitizens to exercise more often, at high intensities, and with more negative consequences (such as chronic injury) than would otherwise be socially sanctioned. Third, rhetorics of training insist on the *earned* privilege of biocitizens, averting or subverting a narrative around *unearned* privileges. As a result, it is all too easy for biocitizens to overlook the myriad set of privileges required to even begin a training regimen, such as access to the time, financial resources, energy, nutritious food, and the sports-specific knowledge required to start a training regimen.

Thus, any accumulated privilege that results in a higher status on the zoerhetorical hierarchy—such a leaner, more muscular physique or more adept and able-bodied physical movements in a public place—are couched as the result of something that the biocitizen has earned through hard work at the gym. In practice, this may or may not be true, but the emphasis on training, work, and effort forecloses the possibility for an accessible, popular, public narrative where we can identify vitality-performing biocitizens as likely members of a privileged populations. Even as Jacqui Alexander maintains that there is no innocence in the empire, it is almost easier to come to the biocitizen's defense than it is to indict her. After all, it required a lot of *work* for her body to accumulate that much privilege in the form of a strong, flexible, mobile, hyper-able athleticism.

Vital Biocitizens Perform Whiteness

A joke in circulation around the gyms hints at the vital biocitizen's complicated relationship with whiteness. Question: why are triathlons so popular in Boulder? Answer: because Kenyans can't afford $15,000 road bikes. This joke tells us a lot about Boulder's vital

biocitizens. Like the audience of this joke, for example, vital biocitizens are implicitly white.

Whiteness operates as both a mode of social belonging and an unmarked universal norm across

vital biocitizenly spaces. Further, the social and financial capital of vital biocitizens labels them

as appropriate neoliberal consumers that being "Kenyan" (that is, being racially and

economically othered) precludes. I first heard this joke in the climbing gym at Boulder, where it

takes on additional meaning among the very white, masculine, muscular, slender bodies that

assemble there. In this section, I explore the intersection of whiteness and vital biocitizenship as

enacted across my fieldsites.

What Joseph Pugliese called "infrastructural whiteness" identifies the ways in which

whiteness both structures everyday life while paradoxically remaining invisible.[56] While there is

no true "essence" to race, phenotypically or otherwise, race is constantly restaged as an

ontological truth written on the body, usually in the form of skin color.[57] As Megan Foley

showed in an analysis of media coverage regarding O.J. Simpson, the durable dominion of

whiteness persists in popular media representations both chronically (in sequential time) and

kairically (in episodic moments).[58] Performances of whiteness as a strategy of social belonging

are not limited to persons with white skin. Whiteness deeply structures the practices and

experiences of vital biocitizens at the gym. For example, as scholars have shown, the curve-free,

slender female idealized body (toward which we may imagine the female vital biocitizen labors)

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[56] Joseph Pugliese, "Biometrics, Infrastructural Whiteness, and the Racialized Zero Degree of Nonrepresentation," *boundary* 2 34, no. 2 (2007): 105-133.

[57] Nadine Ehlers, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Defying Juridical Racialization in Rhinelander v. Rhinelander," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 4 (2004): 313-334.

[58] Megan Foley, "Serializing Racial Subjects: The Stagnation and Suspense of the OJ Simpson Saga," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96, no. 1 (2010): 69-88.

is an implicitly white body.[59] Furthermore, white bodies are already culturally linked to the temperance, restraint and good judgment that athletic performances of biolegitimacy require.[60] It is no accident that the now defunct blog "Stuff White People Like" included entries related to performances of vital biocitizenship, such as "Yoga," "Marathons," and "Outdoor Performance Clothes."[61]

In June of 2014, the implicit whiteness of the Boulder vital biocitizen was recently underscored and made momentarily visible. In a letter to the editor of the local *Daily Camera*, citizen Shannon Burgert aired her concerns regarding a large, fence-high banner that rings the pool of one of the upscale athletic clubs in town. (This club is owned by the same company that owns the one at which I participant-observed). Her complaint? All fifty of the "larger than life…fun in the sun" people on the banner were white.[62] Burgert argued that the banner was not representative of the diverse community in which we live. Activating her identity as a schoolteacher, Burgert challenged the athletic club to help "establish environments that make diversity natural for our kids." We can read this letter as a moment of critical, vernacular pushback against the implicit whiteness of the vital biocitizen. However, the implicit whiteness of Boulder's vital biocitizens is not always so visible or so publicly critiqued.

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[59] Margaret Duncan and T. Tavita Robinson, "Obesity and Body Ideals in the Media: Health and Fitness Practices of Young African-American Women," *Quest* 56, no. 1 (2004): 77-104.

[60] Helene Shugart, "Ruling Class: Disciplining Class, Race, and Ethnicity in Television Reality Court Shows," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 17, no. 2 (2006): 79-100.

[61] See http://stuffwhitepeoplelike.com. Of white people and marathons, the (white) author wrote: "If you find yourself in a situation where a white person is talking about a marathon, you must be impressed or you will lose favor with them immediately. Running for a certain length of time on a specific day is a very important thing to a white person and should not be demeaned." "#27 Marathons," Stuff White People Like, January 26, 2008. http://stuffwhitepeoplelike.com/2008/01/26/27-marathons/.

[62] Shannon Bugert, "Banner is Not Representative of Our Diversity," letter to the editor, *The Daily Camera*, June 14, 2014. http://www.dailycamera.com/Opinion/ci_25956842/Shannon-Burgert:-Banner-is-not-representative.

There is a choreographed dance exercise class offered at the athletic club called Zumba®. Usually whiteness as an unmarked norm is something that stays right below the surface, but in one particular moment of rupture, it made itself present in a crowded Zumba class. Through its format, Zumba provides a tourist experience without having to leave Boulder. Each song hails from a different country, and the choreographed dance that accompanies it mimics the native style of dancing (or the stereotype of the native style of dancing) for that particular country or ethnic group. Randy Martin described a similar racial appropriation in this ethnographic work taking hip-hop aerobic classes in California.[63] While Zumba, as a brand, has more of a focus on weight loss (its tagline on the website is "Shake, Shake, Shrink") than is usually the norm for the athletic club, it is still a popular class, especially for middle-aged women.

In a very uncomfortable moment in Zumba class, the instructor once shouted, "Let's see those African arms, ladies!" In a song coded as "tribal," we were invited to perform a dance also coded as tribal and racially other. In a homologous moment, during a song coded as "Latin," we were invited to shimmy, or move our shoulders back and forth quickly. The fitness instructor, whose shimmy is admittedly remarkable, said, "Some people ask me if I am Latina because I can shimmy and shake so well! Nope, not a single drop!" In this group fitness class, the instructor promotes a commitment to race as an ontological essence while also providing (mostly) white women an opportunity to consume racial otherness as exotic and fun. The group fitness instructor's shimmy is operating in analogous way to Helene Shugart's description of Jennifer

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[63] Randy Martin, "The Composite Body: Hip-hop Aerobics and the Multicultural Nation," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 21, no. 2 (1997): 120-133.

Lopez's bottom. The "Latina butt," like the Latina shimmy, authorizes seemingly authentic proof of cultural diversity while, again, shoring up a white norm.[64]

In a similar way, the "Total Body Bootcamp" group fitness classes also offer a touristic glimpse into the working-class lifestyle of military preparedness. Clubgoers are invited to consume this experience of class otherness—without, of course, any of the high stakes or danger of actually going through military bootcamp. What practices of Zumba in white, upper middle-class spaces do across race, Total Body Bootcamp does across class. Fitness instructors blow whistles, yell at us, and explain the merit of side straddle hops. Depending on the proclivities of the instructor, participants may be asked to "military crawl" under imaginary barbed wire and swing heavy ropes. As we are invited to identify with soldiers, Diane Keeling would argue that we are also invited to identify with masculinist ideals of strength and bodily invulnerability.[65] Total Body Bootcamp offers another lifestyle experience at the athletic club available for consumption by the implicitly white vital biocitizen. There is an interesting irony operating when upper middle-class clubgoers mimic the exercises of soldiers.[66] Recall Foucault's docile bodies, ready to accept control and submission from the state. Vitality-performing biocitizens, at their most warrior-like, strengthened, stretched, cardiovascularly efficient, hydrated, and protein-fueled, are simultaneously at their most submissive and useful to the state.

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[64] Helene Shugart, "Crossing Over: Hybridity and Hegemony in the Popular Media," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007): 115-141.

[65] Diane Keeling, "His/tory of (Future) Progress: Hyper-Masculine Transhumanist Virtuality," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29, no. 2 (2012): 132-148.

[66] Like the racial appropriations mimicked in the Zumba class, mimicking soldiers involves stereotyping embodied soldierly habitus. That our idealized image of a transhumanist soldier crawls under the tripwire and is resilient in the face of fatigue is symptomatic of the same national anxiety and disapproval that circulates around soldierly bodies who act as sedentary "video-game warrior" drone pilots.

Whiteness also operates as a mode through which vital biocitizens can align themselves with American-identified social belonging. In any instantiation of the concept, biocitizenship is always about *citizenship*—about relating the materiality of the body, broadly construed, to projects of social belonging and recognition. In a landmark essay, Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek identified whiteness as an everyday rhetoric of belonging. In one of the strategic rhetorics of whiteness they described, whiteness was conflated with nationality—a move that they suggest territorializes the assemblage of the nation by sharpening the national borders.[67] The body-improvement projects of implicitly white vital biocitizens often inflect national identification. As Kathleen Lebesco has observed, questioning the scheme of vitality-building in the U.S. is "downright unpatriotic, which explains our former Surgeon General Richard Carmona's equation of obesity with the September 11 terror attacks."[68] Vitality-performing biocitizens are enfolded into American-identified social belonging through the prism of whiteness. Importantly, Kathryn Henne linked citizenship, whiteness, and social belonging to distributions of privilege:

> While citizenship can take on a myriad of configurations including imagined, global, sexual, biological and even genetic dimensions, there is a common tenet: citizenship entails a form of boundary work that delineates insiders—those who enjoy a particular status and benefits—and outsiders—those who may desire such privileges but are denied.[69]

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[67] Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995): 291-309.

[68] Lebesco, "Fat Panic," 77. There are further links between fitness and combat training. President Eisenhower first mandated physical fitness in schools because the United States would need fit bodies to come to its defense (against foreign Others). See also: Petherick, "Young Biocitizens."

[69] Henne, "Olympic Biocitizenship," 83.

The biocitizenly boundary work that Henne referenced here is necessarily zoerhetorical as it partakes in status re/distributions.

In sum, whiteness as an infrastructural, strategic, yet invisible mode of social belonging operates across performances of vital biocitizenship. While biocitizenly clubgoers rarely (except in moments of bawdy humor like the joke that opened this section) reference their race, whiteness structures the experiences of the vital biocitizen in a way that reflects the dominance of whiteness in the zoerhetorical hierarchy. The slender, fit ideal for which biocitizens labor is essentially white. Furthermore, an implicitly white vital biocitizen consumes racial (and class) otherness in a variety of experiences offered at the athletic club, such as Zumba and Total Body Bootcamp. Finally, whiteness is a mode of social and national belonging. In the strategic rhetoric of whiteness, the *citizen* part of biocitizen becomes important. Levy-Navarro asserted, "the fat body…obstruct[s] what should be our manifest destiny—to progress as a nation or civilization."[70] We can also assume the opposite: the slender, athletic, white body manifests our exceptional destiny as a (white) nation.

Conclusion: Towards a Critique of Life-Building Practices

I opened this chapter with this question from feminist studies scholar Jacqui Alexander: "[w]hat do lives of privilege look like in the midst of war and the inevitable violence that accompanies the building of an empire?"[71] I have generated a critique of vitality-aspiring performances of health and physical fitness as they circulate at two athletic facilities in Boulder,

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[70] Elena Levy-Navarro, *The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity: Body Image in Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Skelton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

[71] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 1-2.

Colorado. The zoerhetorics of training and whiteness combine to encourage and legitimate these unequal distributions of social status.

What does this add to zoerhetorical theory? Populations can be nourished toward vitality, neglected toward attenuation, or targeted for death. A particular subset of populations nourished toward vitality—the fit, vital biocitizens on whom I have focused—engage a range of biolegitimate rhetorics to justify their accumulation of privilege. Returning to Didier Fassin's claim that biolegitimacy *produces inequalities*, Fassin identified the ways in which "technologies of government produce inequalities of life but simultaneously erase their traces."[72] Although in that moment Fassin was referring to the inability of population statistics practices in South Africa under apartheid to identify wide gaps of inequality, his insight is useful for broader zoerhetorical theory concerns. We can read the practices of the vital biocitizen as a means by which these inequalities are produced just as the traces of these inequalities are erased in rhetorics of training and whiteness. In the oscillation between the blurred modes of accruing and enjoying privilege that occur at these athletic clubs, vital biocitizens are consistently invited to understand their privileges as earned (rather than an accident of geospatial location, birth family, race, etc.). Through training and through proper consumption, these bodies congeal the performances of both biocitizenship and whiteness.

The working poor, the chronically ill, the illegally detained, the moderately to severely disabled, and the obese constitute populations whose performances of vitality cannot possible aspire to match those of the inimitable vital biocitizen, who "exercises" his or her hegemonic capacity for a full range of "functional" physical movement and labor. As aspirant vital-biocitizens, we (I use the inclusive pronoun shamefully now) do not tell each other that we are

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[72] Fassin, "Another Politics of Life," 55.

going to raise our social status, or that we are going to accumulate embodied privilege, or that we are on the lucky side of capitalism's mean flows. Rather, we tell ourselves that we are working towards our health, our future, our life. But even as we work towards life, we still require an/other to bound or delineate this social belonging. (Inflations required deflations). Practices of vitality might accrue attributions of virtue, but as these practices are obsessively internalized in the gyms at which I made observations, these attributions of virtue have nothing to do with practices of social justice.

The rhetoric of training funnels focus towards biocitizenly privilege as *earned* rather than *unearned*. In doing so, it strengthens a system that attributes rhetorical agency to entities higher on the zoerhetorical hierarchy and rob agency to entities lower on the hierarchy. In other words, as vitality-performing biocitizens are attributed agentic qualities of self-control, discipline, autonomy, and strength, their high position on the hierarchy is legitimated and sedimented. They are granted more rhetorical agency, in the traditional sense. That is, people are more likely to listen when they speak; establishing *ethos* is less difficult for persons whose privilege-accumulating bodies conform to a normative ideal.[73] The rhetoric of whiteness acts as a strategy of social belonging—and therefore exclusion—for biocitizens. Through performances of whiteness, clubgoers shore up zoerhetorically ascendant attributions of national belonging.

I opened this chapter with a vignette about Blaine and his friends watching *The Biggest Loser* while racing each other on their stationary bike trainers. Their story allows me to remark on another feature of the zoerhetorical hierarchy as it operates across my field sites. Entities not only aspire towards "mounting" the hierarchy, but they also fear sliding down the hierarchy. In

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[73] We concede this truth when we instruct our public speaking students to attain credibility by dressing and speaking "professionally." The performance of public professionalism indexes hegemonic race, gender, and class mandates.

racial terms, scholars have identified not just an aspiration towards whiteness but also repulsion by "anti-blackness."[74] Within the world of the vignette, Blaine and his buddies were both aspiring towards vitality but also literally *racing away* from something (or some Other) low on the zoerhetorical hierarchy. In this case, the "blackness" metonymically slid into fatness. Yet note that the socially sanctioned, publicly visible zoerhetorical trajectory was the upward one: the pure becoming. Privileged persons near the top of the hierarchy have material and discursive investments in maintaining the hierarchy. From this tenet we can infer that attempts at zoerhetorical ascendance are as much about rhetorically grafting to higher entities/qualities on the hierarchy as they are about rhetorically separating from lower entities/qualities. The word *hew* is useful here, with its two contradictory meanings of both "to split from" and "to adhere to." Zoerhetorical movements *hew*, in both senses of the word, as all splittings are graftings somewhere else.

Finally, one take-home message of this chapter is a caution against the bland valorization of health that we see across a range of social sciences, including my home discipline of communication. In these studies, health automatically equals good. We should especially be skeptical of the social approval we attribute to privileged bodies accumulating more privilege in the form of vitality and well-being. A host of zoerhetorics work to distribute social status to this particular entity of the vital biocitizen in ways that structurally exclude and other large groups of persons.

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[74] Jared Sexton and Elizabeth Lee, "Figuring the Prison: Prerequisites of Torture at Abu Ghraib," *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): 1005-1022.

Conclusion:

What Can Zoerhetorical Theory Do?

Zoerhetorical theory offers pathways for understanding how some lives come to matter and some lives fail to matter. If biopolitical and necropolitical regimes function as machines for producing bodies nourished towards life, neglected for deterioration, and targeted for death, then zoerhetorics are the means by which these inequalities are publicly justified and legitimated. In this conclusion, I make brief observations across my case studies, in the effort of sketching some propositions for a zoerhetorical theory of the contemporary United States. Specifically, I offer a series of *topoi*, *horoi*, patterns, and qualities of zoerhetorics. Following this, I identify limitations of this project and outline areas for potentially fruitful future research.

Each case study offered a zoerhetorical reading of an emplaced entity with special or unique status vis-à-vis humanity, belonging, and citizenship: the fetus, the terrorist, and the biocitizen. Taken together, the zoerhetorical patterns and trajectories in these three field-assemblages provided a broad-ranging overview of zoerhetorics in the contemporary United States. They traversed realms of privilege, markers of humanity, and attributions of vice and virtue. Across case studies, we saw the durability of privileges like whiteness, citizenship, social belonging, and innocence. Zoerhetorics produce, legitimate, and maintain radical cleavages in livability.

Zoerhetorical *Topoi*

We can think of zoerhetorics as a branch of rhetoric analogous to Aristotle's epideictic, deliberative, or forensic rhetorics. For each of these branches, Aristotle offered accompanying special *topoi* for invention, or templates for discovering new arguments. For deliberative oratory, by way of example, Aristotle offered four *topoi*: the good and the unworthy, and the advantageous or disadvantageous. Like classical deliberative rhetoric, zoerhetorics also draw on the good and the unworthy as topics by which to invent arguments. In the War on Terror, the worthy/unworthy topical dichotomy gets rehearsed as the civilian/militant dichotomy. In the world of Boulder's vital biocitizens, the worthy/unworthy *topoi* take the permutation of fitness/fatness. Other *topoi* of zoerhetorical invention would include binaries like the citizen and the foreigner.

Perhaps the topics of invention that supply the most arguments for contemporary zoerhetorics in the contemporary United States would be the biolegitimate and the bioillegitimate. Although this strains Didier Fassin's original definition of the term, we can think of *biolegitimacy* as the rhetorical performance of a commitment to sacred "life itself" or capital-L Life.[1] The opposite, *bioillegitimacy*, would be a failure to rhetorically perform this commitment. Nation-states like the U.S. plumb the *topos* of biolegitimacy when we call ours a "culture of life" and theirs a "culture of death," like George W. Bush has done. I am not arguing that zoerhetors use the word *biolegitimacy* itself—they clearly do not—but rather that they use the words like Life and Death, and these appeals to Life bring powerful results.

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[1] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 5 (2009): 44-60, 50.

Rhetorics of biolegitimacy appeared repeatedly across the case studies. At the National Memorial for the Unborn, life is king. The pro-life movement, as their name suggests, performs a commitment to life itself. In this case, "Life" manifests as the innocent unborn baby full of human potential. The rhetoric of CIA drone strikes in the *New York Times* also draws on biolegitimacy. Drones are mis/understood as weapons that save lives (of servicepersons, civilians, and all Americans). In the official Obama administration rhetorics of "precision," "sterile" drones, drones sound more like a brain surgeon's tools than deadly weapons. If drones became the biolegitimate weapon *par excellence*, then we can think of suicide bombers as their bioillegitimate antipodes. Suicide bomb attacks are disavowed in dominant U.S. public rhetorics as terrorizing and portrayed as the result of a backwards, Islamic "culture of death." In Boulder's nonpareil athletic clubs, vital biocitizens perform biolegitimacy when they couch their training in terms of life itself. Shaping the body is rendered as the equivalent of shaping life itself. Working towards vital Life is clustered with a host of positive associations—goodness, virtue, self-discipline, etc. Across the case studies, entities like women who practice abortion, the "death-dealing insects" drone targets, and obese people are discredited along lines of bio(il)legitimacy.

From here we can draw some preliminary observations regarding biolegitimacy as a topical resource for zoerhetorics. First, as I have been insisting, it is best understood as *topos* animated through rhetorical performance. Second, biolegitimacy can be rhetorically performed by organs of nation-states, organizations, and individuals, an expansion of Fassin's original use of the term. Third, we can get the same theoretical and political traction out of the corollary opposite term of *bioillegitimacy*. The biolegitimate needs the bioillegitimate against which to define itself; self-identified "cultures of life" require "cultures of death." If a successful performance of biolegitimacy accrues credibility, a failed rhetorical performance of

biolegitimacy accrues discredit. Finally, and most importantly, hegemonically successful and convincing rhetorical performances of biolegitimacy bear no relation to the lethality of a particular nation-state, organization, or entity. The United States cautiously guards its monopoly on biolegitimacy in order to forward a security agenda that "kills to make life live."[2]

The *Horoi* of the Zoerhetorical Hierarchy

In Ancient Greece, stone markers called *horoi* delimited the boundaries of Athens and the *agora*. In similar ways, the zoerhetorical hierarchy is sectioned off with boundary markers or thresholds. To be inflated or deflated across one of these boundary markers produces consequential results for livability. Humanity is perhaps the most salient of these *horoi*—and as a result, one of the most zoerhetorically contested of these boundary markers. In addition to species, the other biopolitically entrenched markers of difference that operate as zoerhetorical *horoi* include citizenship, race, gender, sexuality, and ability. So structurally integral are these boundary markers that we can even say zoerhetorics are only consequential when they traverse a *horos*. In other words, zoerhetorics influence livability in the very moment that an entity's status changes across one of these *horoi*.

We can think of these *horoi* as the bottlenecks of the zoerhetorical hierarchy. It generally takes more rhetorical force to jump over (trope) or slide (metonymically shift) an entity across one of these bottlenecked boundaries, just as it takes more force to push matter through an actual bottleneck. Across the field-assemblages under consideration, different *horoi* became important. Humanhood (articulated as personhood or "life") was the threshold that obsessed the NMU.

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[2] Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Through memorialization, naming, en/voicing, and en/facing, NMU rhetorics energetically

troped the unborn upwards through the bottlenecked *horoi* of humanity. Of course, they did not

stop at humanity. As I showed, the NMU understood the unborn not only as people, but also as

hegemonically gendered people with American-identified embodied habits.

A different set of *horoi* became the focus for CIA drone rhetorics as they appeared in the

New York Times. American-identified drone rhetorics revolved around the *horoi* of social

belonging (as indexed by citizenship) and innocence (as indexed by civilian/militant status).

Excluded from the territory of citizenship and innocence, CIA drone targets inched down the

bottleneck of social belonging. For Boulder's vital biocitizens, whiteness became an important

horos in the slow accumulation of embodied privilege. There is a simple test to determine the

important *horoi* for a given hierarchy. If an entity's inflation above or deflation below a certain

watermark results in differences in livability, we can think of this threshold as a *horos* of the

zoerhetorical hierarchy. Another way to locate *horoi* is in the moment of defining "us" against an

"other." Judith Butler may as well have been referencing *horoi* when she remarked that "the

inhuman, the beyond the human, the less than human, is the border that secures the human in its

ostensible reality."[3]

Zoerhetorical Forms: How Zoerhetorics Meet Language

Through this dissertation, I have identified a number of means by which zoerhetorics

"meet language" or get uttered, practiced, or performed into being. There are a handful of

zoerhetorical forms or patterns that I have explored in the case studies: metonymic sticking

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[3] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30.

(sliding), naming, en/voicing (apostrophe) and en/facing (prosopopeia). Following an intellectual lineage from Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul de Man, Megan Foley, Diane Davis, and Johanna Hartelius, tropes are moments when language does things. If tropes (*tropos* in Greek means "turn") are moments when discourse "turns" from its "straight" usage, zoetropes are instances where such "turns" inflate or deflate the status of a life or lives. As Paul Ricoeur observed of them, in the moment of their turning, tropes *deviate* from their prescribed meanings.[4] According to Christian Lundberg, reading Jacques Lacan, "the economy of tropes and investments constitute the subject and its discourses."[5] We are all rhetorically made in these movements of deviation from "straight" discourse. We all have a queer birth.

Following Sara Ahmed's work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, which suggests that Others get stuck together on a kind of metonymic slide, I identified a lumping/splitting of living entities along a hierarchy indexed by god and devil terms.[6] The associational and dissociational movements of entities were made possible by the fungible, gradient nature of the zoerhetorical hierarchy—qualities that it inherited from Ancient Greek hierarchies and the early Christian Great Chain of Being, along with modern regimes of patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and ableism. Mel Chen's notion of animacy hierarchies, what she called their transsubstantiations and transmatterings, was also key in bringing forward this idea.[7] By employing metonymy, drone

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[4] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (Routledge, New York, 2003).

[5] Christian Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 73.

[6] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[7] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.

rhetorics in the *New York Times* were able to mobilize the eroded militant/civilian dichotomy in order to manufacture racialized targets for drone strikes.

At the National Memorial for the Unborn, we saw a series of zoetropings in full effect. In order to territorialize their particular construction of the fetal entity as a sacred human, the NMU relied on a series of strategic zoetropes. In the second chapter, I analyzed three zoetropes as they occurred at the NMU: naming, apostrophe (en/voicement) and prosopopeia (en/facement). These rhetorical devices were the means by which the slow, iterable accumulation of humanhood was achieved for the unborn. At the same time, I acknowledge that not all human-identified entities share the feature of the fetus that makes it so malleably "available" for zoetroping; namely, silence.

My hope has been that the series of zoetropological enfacements I have identified at across the case studies can be used to understand the en-facing, or rhetorical "making," of humans more broadly. All human-identified entities are embedded within accumulations of the effects of zoetropological gestures. In the third chapter, I argued that drone rhetorics in the *New New York Times* feature a metonymic reduction that "creates" terrorists. Across the case studies, I have been thinking of the zoetropological effects of *metonymy*, *naming* (arguably a subdivision of metonymy), *apostrophe*, and *prosopopeia* with the following metaphor. Metonymic sliding or shifting—the gesture of calling something by a different name—is like the simple, light pressure of a foot against the pedal of a bicycle. You aren't going to make much progress in one stroke, but repeating the movement over and over might get you somewhere. The other tropes, apostrophe and prosopopeia, are a little bit more powerful than metonymy's light pressure. They can be compared to the changing of the bicycle's gears. Like riding up a hill, a more mechanically efficient movement is required to "shift" an entity over a contested *horoi* like

humanity. The ways in which other human-identified entities are zoetroped as subjects would be a great direction for future research.

Qualities of Zoerhetorics: Four Propositions

1. Zoerhetorics are interdependent and dynamic.

One of the interesting things to note about the zoetropological enfacements at the NMU is that naming, apostrophe, and prosopopeia inflate explicitly. The metonymic lumping/splitting downshifting trope is more likely to do the work of deflation. If there is a pattern here of certain zoetropes inflating and other zoetropes deflating, it is not yet identifiable. What is identifiable, however, is this: all inflations probably involve deflations elsewhere. When tropes "turn" to inflate one entity they likely "turn" away from another group of entities. From this observation we can infer that attempts at zoerhetorical ascendance are as much about rhetorically grafting to higher entities/qualities on the hierarchy as they are about rhetorically separating from lower entities/qualities. As I have identified earlier, the word *hew* is useful here, with its two contradictory meanings of both "to split from" and "to adhere to." All zoerhetorical modulations *hew*, in both senses of the word, splittings entities off from some group and grafting them on to another. Lumpings necessarily split and splittings necessarily lump. Again, I will reiterate that these movements are not zero-sum games, but rather conform to general patterns of consequential status modulation.

Kenneth Burke ends a likely original snippet of poetry in *Rhetoric of Religion* with "What God or Devil makes men climb/ no end?"[8] The God or Devil part is important here, because it is not just ascendance that moves us, not just the aspiration towards Go(o)d or perfection or goodness or other things on top of the hierarchy (as he implied at the end of *Rhetoric of Motives*).[9] Rather, we are also moved by the Devil, which, logologically speaking, stands in for a host of repulsions. We can think about this another way. Entities are not interested solely in pure, ascendant, upward movement. They are also motivated by repulsion from what is at the bottom of the hierarchy. Some scholars have called this repulsion anti-blackness—we don't just aspire to whiteness; we run from what we might call "blackness."[10]

I opened the fourth chapter with a story where Blaine and his friends were racing each other for mileage on stationary bikes while watching *The Biggest Loser*. This vignette is helpful for understanding the double affective movement of repulsion/aspiration. Within the world of the anecdote, Blaine and his buddies were both aspiring towards vitality but also literally *racing away* from something (or some Other) low on the zoerhetorical hierarchy. In this case, the "blackness" metonymically slid into "fatness." Yet note that the socially sanctioned, publicly visible zoerhetorical trajectory was the upward one: the pure becoming. In fact, the Blaine vignette is reproachable exactly to the extent we identify the bikers as recognizing themselves as superior to the *Biggest Loser* contestants.

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[8] Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 42.

[9] In his much-quoted line on hierarchy in *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke implies a desire for ascendant aspiration but not repulsion from below: "…each kind striving towards the perfection of its kind, and so towards the kind next above it, while the strivings of the entire series head in God as the beloved cynosure and sinecure, the end of all desire." Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: New York Press, 1950), 333.

[10] Jared Sexton and Elizabeth Lee, "Figuring the Prison: Prerequisites of Torture at Abu Ghraib," *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): 1005-1022.

Each field-assemblage exhibited trajectories of both inflation and deflation. At the National Memorial for the Unborn, women whose reproductive practices do not conform to those sanctioned by the NMU—that is, women who abort—were deflated. Official government drones rhetorics and drone rhetorics in the *New York Times* consistently invited American-identified persons into an in-group deserving of protection (a "hewing" to), and disinvited military-aged male Islamic Others (a "hewing" from). In the world of Boulder's vital biocitizen, persons with absent or unsuccessful performances of vital biocitizenship were deflated. Inflations tend to be more biolegitimate; deflations tend to be bioillegitimate. The biolegitimate rhetorics, in turn, are more likely to be visible and publicly sanctioned, which presumes my next point on zoerhetorical in/visibility.

2. Zoerhetorics are visible and invisible.

One of the patterns emerging from these case studies and zoerhetorics writ broadly is that ascendant zoerhetorics are typically socially sanctioned and hypervisible, whereas their corollary descendent zoerhetorics are often concealed, denied, invisible, or euphemistic. We see this at the NMU, where the descendent zoerhetorical vector (that excludes women with different reproductive practices) is absent or silent. We also see this with drone rhetorics, as the descendent trajectory targets persons marked with euphemisms like "combatant" or Devil terms like "terrorist." At the gym, the practices around the "cult of the body" are just about the most socially sanctioned, generally approved, unequivocal "good" operating in the contemporary United States. It should be no surprise that one of the most hypervisible and socially sanctioned ascendant zoerhetorical narratives—the will to health—would drag the largest shadow. The descendent vector excluded persons who did not perform vital biocitizenship.

Similarly, zoerhetorics are both present and absent. Sometimes silence serves a zoerhetorical function—as when, for example, the *New York Times* spends minimal above-the-fold inches on the deaths of civilians in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, but the deaths of American citizens get pages and pages. We can think of this as a kind of ironic *paraleipsis*—a moment where, in the very gesture of saying little, what is omitted is emphasized. The take-home message here is that zoerhetorics need not always speak loudly to have an effect.

3. Zoerhetorics are directed at both self and other.

Consequential status modulations may be the result of a zoerhetoric addressing a self (or a group that includes the self) or addressing another (or a group of others). In the case of drone warfare as mediated in the *New York Times*, journalists and online comment forum participants *spoke for* drone targets, with identifiable deflationary zoerhetorical effects. In the case of fetal memorialization at the National Memorial for the Unborn, volunteers and visitors *spoke for* unborn babies, with identifiable inflationary zoerhetorical effects. In this project I have chiefly explored how the status of a group of entities can be mediated through other-directed zoerhetorics, while spending less time exploring how entities can and do zoerhetorically modulate their own statuses (drone targets and the unborn, conceivably, among these entities).

Vital biocitizens were the exception to this pattern. In the case of rhetorics of fitness practices at the athletic club, participants *speak for* themselves—with, again, identifiable zoerhetorical effects for both selves and others. In their zoerhetorical exertions, vital biocitizens attempted to inflate their own status. Perhaps because of this "auto-zoerhetorical" movement (that is, zoerhetorics acted on the self), vitality-aspirant biocitizens at the gym had to do some interesting maneuvering in order to justify their intensely self-obsessed gazes. The rhetorics of

training, "earning" accumulated body privilege, "earning" calories, the mythology of infinite

body malleability, the virtue of health practices—all of these things served to rationalize and

justify an "economy of attention" where "self" is the chief agent, substrate, and workstation.[11]

Further, I will propose that there is a more general manifestation of privilege here. Self-directed,

upward-troping zoerhetorics are more likely to "stick" to high-status entities, who then

potentially gain another dimension of rhetorical agency in their self- and life-affirming

performances.

4. Zoerhetorics are extra/ordinary.

The zoerhetorical hierarchy is built and rebuilt in both spectacular, headline-making

moments as well as in everyday habits and practices such as going to the gym. Drone strikes are

marked, striking, spectacular events. When I planned the case studies for this dissertation, I

intended the everyday mundanity of working out at the gym as a counter the spectacularity of

drone strikes and fetal memorials. Lauren Berlant offered a theoretical foothold for making sense

of this with her theory of "slow death." This dissertation project has been largely inspired by

Achille Mbembe's vision of necropolitical deathworlds, where populations targeted for death are

crucial to (and not merely a sad accident of) biopolitical regimes of living. Pivotal to Berlant's

slow death is an everyday ordinariness for which Mbembe's extraordinary crises failed to

account. Arguably, consequential shifting of an entity's status occurs in small, everyday, iterable

movements. The daily minutiae of activities constitutes the zoerhetorical makings and

unmakings of self and other.

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[11] Richard A. Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Berlant was interested in tracking the livability of life for people who were not spectacularly murdered in the War on Terror, but rather just neglected for a slow deterioration. The working class obese represented this population for her. In my chapter on the vital biocitizen, I extended Berlant's concept of "slow death" with a concept of "slow life." Vital biocitizens were engaged in daily, repeated, zoerhetorically consequential habits of life-building. Drone strike rhetorics cover both poles of the ordinary and extraordinary. The actual missile strike itself can be read as a spectacular zoerhetorical event. At the same time, the zoerhetorical symbolic practices around drone strikes (as collected, for example, in the *New York Times*), accumulate force in slow, daily iterations. Memorials to the unborn are also extra/ordinary. Most people are shocked to hear that they exist—they are out of the ordinary, in that sense. At the same time, they are also ordinary in that visitors and volunteers participate in slow, daily practices of fetal life-building. Interesting questions for future research include: do ordinary zoerhetorics take different forms, or perform different operations, than extraordinary ones? What are some examples of consequential one-off zoerhetorical events?

Limitations and Future Directions

Mapping a zoerhetorical theory has been an ambitious project—a project in whose value I firmly believe. Given the time and genre constraints of a dissertation, I have only begun to complete such a project. My radical hope is that zoerhetorical theory will someday be a sustained research topic in rhetorical theory whose polyvocal reverberations respond to, and terrifically exceed, my own voice here. To that optimistic end, I offer a series of limitations of this dissertation, each of which open out to promising future directions. Zoerhetorical theory could be

refined and expanded with the following premises in mind. First, the commitment that I have made here to a liberal pluralist (and especially pro-life) politics is in tension with the posthumanism I also push. Second, my study of zoerhetorics has been limited geographically and culturally to fairly hegemonic rhetorics in the United States. Third, I fall short of articulating an affirmative zoerhetorical practice—a zoetechnics, if you will. Fourth, an entity-assemblage, rather than a field-assemblage, might be a more productive unit of zoerhetorical analysis. Fifth and finally, zoerhetorics need to be understood longitudinally—especially if, as I claim repeatedly, zoerhetorical effects often slowly accumulate over a series of rhetors, publics, venues, and time frames. Let me elaborate briefly on each of these opportunities.

One inconsistency in this project would be glaringly obvious to anyone who believes that abortion is murder. While I rail at length on behalf of populations targeted for death, living in deathworlds, I do not identify fetal entities as populations targeted for death. By employing the same theoretical lens of necropolitical deathworlds, a pro-lifer could identify fetuses as populations targeted for death—indeed, this has already happened—the so-called "war on the unborn" has been repeatedly compared to the Holocaust. It is well documented that the pro-life movement, as well as its generational offshoots who argue for the sanctity of life for stem cells and brain dead persons, have harnessed the language of the progressive left for their own purposes.[12] That there have been arguments for the rights, voices, and freedoms of the unborn are but a few examples of this. I can even imagine the pro-life movement identifying the zoerhetorically deflationary subtleties in rhetorics of reproductive freedom.

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[12] For example, this essay find analogues in fetal rights rhetorics with animal rights rhetorics: Jason Edward Black, "Extending the Rights of Personhood, Voice, and Life to Sensate Others: A Homology of Right to Life and Animal Rights Rhetoric," *Communication Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2003): 312-331.

I will not pretend, in this moment, to solve the abortion debate, nor will I even make a pitch for the pro-choice side. However, I want to be clear that I have chosen my political orientation, and I will adhere to the zoerhetorical demands of this orientation (i.e. avoiding inflations of the fetal entity). As I disclosed in the chapter on the NMU, I am a pro-choice feminist. This has been both a strength and weakness of the study. Insofar as it has led me to identify ways that the NMU's zoerhetorical actions foreclose certain reproductive practices, a feminist orientation has been a boon. But the fact remains that the chapter on the NMU would be enraging, even incomprehensible, to a person for whom the fetus is a full human deserving of citizenship. Therefore, I approached the fetus with my own zoerhetorical lens, even as I worked to expose the zoerhetorical lens of the NMU. Further, I recognize my stance here for a woman's right to choose as squarely humanist, as it calls on familiar liberal narratives of freedom, choice, and autonomy. I am aware that this leaves me open to the criticism that I shift from a humanism to a posthumanism as it suits my needs, but I would call this more of an unapologetic collage than a devastating contradiction. Humanism leaves me with an impoverished ontology, as well as a history of collusion with colonialism. At the same time, the shifting posthumanist grounds for ethical commitments keeps demanding that I refer back to the solid ethical grounding of humanism.

Commitments to Western liberal pluralism have squirreled their way into this dissertation in other areas as well. For example, I have only looked at fairly hegemonic zoerhetorics, as they appear in standard English, in the United States. Would zoerhetorics meet language in other ways in other languages and across other cultures? Certainly people in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, against the incessant background noise of flying Predator drones, inflate and deflate differently than hegemonic zoerhetorics in the United States. What

topoi and *horoi* would territorialize zoerhetorical inflations and deflations in other cultural milieus? What does hierarchy-building look like for groups that do not occupy its upper echelons? What do zoerhetorics of resistance look like? Biolegitimacy, for example, as a ubiquitous *topos* of zoerhetorical invention in the contemporary United States, would clearly have more or less traction in different sociohistorical contingencies. Cross-cultural mappings of zoerhetorics would enrich zoerhetorical theory. If I don my posthumanist hat, I wonder if cross-species mappings of zoerhetorics would be even more interesting. Do great apes manufacture Otherness amongst themselves the same ways that we manufacture Otherness? Do cetaceans zoetrope?

Speaking of great apes—what is their "proper" place in the hierarchy? Where do humans go in the hierarchy? Who/what should count as human? These are all questions that zoerhetorical theory cannot directly answer. I have tried to resist any reification of the current arrangement of the zoerhetorical hierarchy. I have also tried to resist making any claims for an entity's "proper" place in the hierarchy, even the proper place of the human. Because of the shifting ground of exclusionary inclusions, I would not even claim that all zoerhetorics that inflate humans are good. (All the while, I have smuggled in my own zoerhetorical lenses, which host ethical commitments to, for example, fecund women, War on Terror targets, and the obese poor). Zoerhetorical theory, as I have outlined it here, falls short of dictating any guidelines for zoerhetorical practice—a zoetechnics, if you will. It is not my project here, but it would be worthwhile to imagine a deliberative craft of zoetechnics operating in the service of a justice beyond human justice. At the outset of this dissertation, when I was discussing methodology, I wrote that one of the challenges of using frameworks like assemblage theory or posthumanist theory is that it becomes difficult to make normative claims about what humans should do—

about how we should live together. Zoerhetorical theory employed in the service of a human rights project, for example, would be counter-intuitive to the way I have outlined it here. From a posthumanist frame, universal human rights movements exhibit what Damien Pfister would call "speciesist hubris."[13] At the same time, I am jazzed by the openings between posthumanism, bioegalitarianism, and deep ecology. The editors of the journal *Humanimalia* wrote in their "Humanimalifesto" that "for deep ecologists, Gaians, and other naturalists, post-humanism means dissolving humanity back into a super-organic natural world-system, where it will be one kind of animal on a level with others."[14]

Another strength-cum-limitation of the current study is its unit of analysis. I delved into specific field-assemblages in order to gather the rich, status-modulating data that occurred at particular sites. This was not a mistake, as these sites proved to be replete with consequential zoerhetorics. However, it would also be germane to zoerhetorical theory to take a certain group of entities—fetal entities, aspirant biocitizens, drone targets, what have you—and track the matrix of intersectional and conflicting zoerhetorics for one particular group of entities. We could call this potentially productive unit of analysis an entity-assemblage, and it could potentially replace the field-assemblages with which I have worked here. Along these lines, in this project, I chose to focus on entities with complex, contested relationships to the *horos* of humanity: the fetus, the drone target, the vital biocitizen. What about the zoerhetorical modulations of regular, everyday, average folks? Sarah Palin's mythical Joe six-pack would make a provocative entity-assemblage for zoerhetorical analysis.

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[13] Damien Pfister, ""A Short Burst of Inconsequential Information:" Networked Rhetorics, Avian Consciousness, and Bioegalitarianism," *Environmental Communication* 8, no. 4 (2014): 1-19, 2.

[14] The "Humanimalifesto" lists no authors other than the editors of the journal *Humanimalia*, which published its first issue in 2009. http://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/humanimalifesto.html.

Along the lines of expanding the scope of a potential zoerhetorical theory, it would also be productive to track zoerhetorics longitudinally for a given group of entities. I have repeatedly stated that zoerhetorics are slow accumulations or slow depletions. One zoerhetoric does not a human make. While zoerhetorical modulations can occur in a quick, one-off event, they are more likely to occur over a long sweeping period of time. In her work on companion species, Donna Haraway made a gesture in this direction.[15] The (often humanized) status of companion animals like dogs is remarkably different today than it was hundreds of years ago. Similarly, Nathan Stormer's corpus of work identifies various modes and discourses of fetal inflation over a range of historical periods in the United States.[16]

One possible objection to this study would be that it borrows from the interpretive frames of Burke's hierarchy and Mbembian biopolitics/necropolitics to coin a set of terms that fail to actually assert an original theory. The Jamesian "cash value" of zoerhetorical theory goes beyond a biopolitically-sensitive Burkean analysis and a rhetorically-sensitive necropolitical analysis. While this dissertation is transparently deeply indebted to those frameworks, the way in which I have stitched them together here has produced an emergent product—a useful configuration for understanding the world, a set of tools—that neither Burkean hierarchies or necropolitics could supply on their own, without the lens (or terministic screen) of zoerhetorical theory. "Zoerhetorics" identify the rhetorical processes by which the status of entities are modulated along sociopolitical hierarchies—a "naming" of a concept through which both Burke and biopolitical/necropolitical scholars traffic but never dwell. The identification of this category (it

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[15] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003); Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*. No. 224. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

[16] Nathan Stormer, "Why Not? Memory and Counter-Memory in 19th-century Abortion Rhetoric," *Women's Studies in Communication* 24, no. 1 (2001): 1-29; Nathan Stormer, *Articulating Life's Memory: U.S. Medical Rhetoric about Abortion in the Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

is too diverse to be a genre) of contemporary public rhetorics provided the opportunity to map a series of general topics from which it draws, boundaries it traverses, and patterns to which it typically conforms—the *topoi*, *horoi*, forms, and propositions I elaborated above.

Despite these limitations to the current study, I can firmly conclude that zoerhetorics matter. Across the case studies I have enumerated the way in which zoerhetorics produce consequential distributions of livability for fetal entities, drone strike targets, and vital biocitizens. I have also tried to discuss the ways in which the zoerhetorics around fetuses, drone targets, and biocitizens affect the group against which they push for boundedness: women who abort, American citizens in need of protection from terrorists, and slowly deteriorating working class obese Americans. Zoerhetorics matter not just for these folks, but also for all living entities, from amoeba to celebrities, from puppies to Barack Obama, from heirloom vegetables to persons in persistent vegetative states. At the risk of sounding dramatic, zoerhetorics are a matter of life and death, of lives livable and unlivable. (Of course, even as I make that very humanist claim, I draw on the very *topos* of biolegitimacy that zoerhetors turn to again and again). The entities for whom zoerhetorics matter traverse the *horos* of humanity.

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