CHAPTER 5

Surplus Lyric
Poetics of Riot in Bhanu Kapil and D. S. Marriott

Introduction

Chapter 4 on canon formations considered how Bernardine Evaristo, Lemn Sissay, and Daljit Nagra have engaged with cultural institutions and their poetry's public functions to address race and Britishness. In different ways, their artistic productions uncover ongoing forms of violence and exclusion for Black and Asian British peoples and, in the process, seek to reconfigure conceptions of Britishness in public discourses and the poetry publishing scene. From my perspective, their respective projects advance a progressive politics, in so far as they seek to improve existing cultural institutions and to create pathways for greater participation and recognition among artists of color.

This chapter turns to two comparatively lesser-known but highly accomplished US-based British artists, Bhanu Kapil (b. 1968) and D. S. Marriott (b. 1963). In Kapil's collection *Ban en Banlieue* (Nightboat Books, 2015) and in Marriott's *Duppies* (Commune Editions, 2019), both poets make explicit reference to real and imagined instances of riot and racialized violence, whether in April 1979 in West London, 2005 in Paris, or August 2011 in Tottenham after the police murder of Mark Duggan. Like many other thinkers invested in critical race theory and Afropessimism, Kapil and Marriott, in quite different ways, share an overarching preoccupation with the vulnerability of Brown and Black bodies to racialized violence in Britain (and around the world). But beyond writing about social violence, uprisings, and the precarity of surplus populations, their experimental works pattern and perform what I call a "poetics of riot," whose particular forms work to abolish the conditions that give rise to their writing, *tout court*.

It has by now become a commonplace to note that the past few decades have seen more deaths of people of color at the hands of police, more state-sanctioned immiseration of entire populations living on next to nothing,

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and, as a result, more riots as people seize power for themselves. Joshua Clover's *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings* (Verso, 2016) provides an especially sophisticated critical study of collective protest, from the "Golden Age of Riot" in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries to the labor strikes during the industrial boom of the nineteenth to mid twentieth century and continuing through the new era of global uprisings due to the economic downtown since the 1970s. What distinguishes this late period (what he calls "Riot Prime") concerns "the logic of racialization" (11) such that economic immiseration and state violence overwhelmingly affect specific social groups, largely although not exclusively along racial divisions (12). Riots become the structural expression of surplus populations suffering from, and collectively organizing against, what David Harvey names "accumulation by dispossession" (137), or what Clover calls the "production of nonproduction" (155), or what Chris Chen dubs "the racialization of wageless life" (quoted in Clover, 27). However "illegitimate" or "illegal" the violence of a riot may appear, for Clover such claims belie the truth of "the illegality of the racialized body" when seen before the violent conjuncture of capital's domination over, and the state's policing against, racialized surplus populations excluded from labor and without access to social reproduction (27).

Understood in this way, the term "race riot" is a clear misnomer, in so far as it denotes that "race" is the cause of "riot." Citing *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (1978) by Stuart Hall et al., Clover similarly thinks through the dialectical interrelation between race and class. "Race is the modality in which class is lived," write Hall et al. (347). As I have previously discussed in Chapter 1 on Linton Kwesi Johnson's poems on policing and Black youth, race becomes the marker of having been ascribed a category ("poor Blacks"), of those who have become systematically excluded, and in this way race becomes the outward visible sign of class. And yet, if race and racialization – specifically anti-Blackness – serves as the rationale for structural exploitation, Hall et al. also claim that "it is primarily in and through the modality of class that resistance, opposition and rebellion *first* expresses itself" (347). For Clover, Hall's original emphasis on "*first*" and his uses of the word "modality" signal the entanglement of race and class in coterminous relation with one another in ways that "reveal racialization as both feature and engine of class recomposition," as both cause and effect (Clover, 169). The word "modality" further opens onto more flexible apprehensions of riot through surplus. Rather than race causing riot, it is more accurate to understand the ways in which riot expresses processes of racialization through the

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production of surplus populations due to economic collapse, the state's inability to provide adequate resources to economically subordinated groups, and the policing and surveillance of Brown and Black bodies made vulnerable to physical violence at every turn (168).

With this in mind, Clover updates and expands Hall's famous formulation in the following way: "riot is the modality in which surplus is lived" (170). Riot, then, is a politics of surplus: surplus immiseration, surplus state violence, surplus discharge, surplus vulnerability, one in which "surplus life is riot, is the subject of politics and the object of ongoing state violence" (170). One way in which the politics of surplus can take shape, for Clover, is by setting "an agenda for total disorder" (a resonant phrase he borrows from Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*) and furnishing "a politics without program" (181) that would absolutize violence as a preliminary step towards abolishing the hierarchies and categories perpetuating violence, especially for those peoples most vulnerable to the ravages of racialized capitalism (181).

Poetry, and lyric poetry especially, has long been theorized through surplus, although in quite different ways. Writing on early modern lyric, Roland Greene, for instance, describes the arrangement of letters and lineation, sound effects and rhythm, "graphic patterns," and the "sheer materiality" of "artifice" (220) as the excessive substance through which shifting forms of subjectivity come into view as they are perpetually "under construction," composed out of the indeterminacies of language (227). Jonathan Culler across his career has maintained an emphasis on the specific features distinguishing "lyric" through typologies and taxonomies. Here, too, surplus saturates lyric modes. The "intensity" of language, the "characteristic extravagance of lyric" (202), and "hyperbolic forms of address" through apostrophe, prosopopoeia, and performative speech acts comprise the linguistic substance through which poems create the semblance of the "lyric present" and "the formation of subjectivity" entangling embodied, psychic experience and the social world (205). The surplus of lyric, then, signals the materiality of language as the medium for creating conceptions of persons, personhood, and persona.

The now not-so-new "New Lyric Studies," advanced by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, called into question the tendency to subsume a wide array of poetic genres, modes, and types into "lyric" as "the genre of personal expression," from the nineteenth-century Romantics to conceptual artists in the twenty-first century (Jackson and Prins, 2). As Jackson argued in *Dickinson's Misery* (2005), scholars mistakenly read through the omnipresent lens of lyric and its expressive theory of language, creating a

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"hermeneutic circle" that dehistoricizes poems and reading practices and thereby unwittingly reproduces "lyric" as a totalizing, abstract genre and critical method (11).

And yet this tendency to read lyric through personal expression can also be productive for signaling deeper, material relations shaping poetic production and, with it, models of lyric personhood under late capital. For instance, Jennifer Ashton has examined how a diverse body of contemporary American poetry "makes visible as never before the degree to which lyric and antilyric poetries have remained committed to the liberal (and now neoliberal) value of self-expression" (219). For Ashton this tendency to equate lyric with "personhood and recognition" is symptomatic, in the best way (222). In the context of economic decline and scarcity combined with the rise of market control leading to the commodification of everything (including and especially poetry), the critical task for Ashton becomes seeing how poetry's discursive inventions of "personhood" arise through grounding conditions of scarcity, scarcity being its own kind of surplus, as in surplus misery (222).

Renovating lyric becomes particularly acute for artists who take for granted how the "subjects" of their cultural productions are rendered nonpersons to begin with, particularly because "race" signifies the surplus of commodified life for surplus populations living social death. Still, the category of surplus can also be mobilized in ways that are politically oppositional, if not transformative, in poetry studies. In his study of Black experimental writing, Anthony Reed has studied poets from the US and Afro-Caribbean who deploy a wide array of poetic strategies for disfiguring and reconfiguring the politics of Blackness through what he calls "unrecognizable speech" (1). Here, too, the aesthetics and politics of surplus is key. For Reed, the "dense textual surfaces and surplus of meanings" in Black experimental poetry "disrupt a politics of expression, stressing the contingent, textual nature of race and the different simultaneous meanings it can have or not have" (22). Walt Hunter has also examined how Claudia Rankine renovates "lyric" to question the limits of citizenship, precisely "when the possibilities of being a subject are delimited and foreclosed" (45). Consequently, Rankine stretches lyric conventions leading to "a profound multiplicity and indeterminacy, one that threatens to burst into new forms" in *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) (Hunter, 46). And Romana Huk similarly maintains that self-critical, self-reflexive rewritings of "lyric" and their surplus significations have been especially productive for "neglected subjectivities" in her readings of experimental Black British poets such as Patience Agbabi, Anthony Joseph, and Marriott (225).

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Overall, this chapter examines the ways in which Kapil's and Marriott's experimental writing makes legible its material entanglement within the violent forces of racialized capitalism through which their poetry emerges. That is, the nonidentical relationship between racialized poetic forms and social realities of racialized violence *is* the driving force of their work in that they make deepening crisis and its violent effects upon Brown and Black bodies the very material of their aesthetics of violence. In this way, Kapil and Marriott seem to extend LKJ's poetics of resistance, but even resistance is no longer tenable. Rather, their cultural productions perform an outright refusal and abolition of existing social structures perpetuating the death of racialized peoples without redemption. I further pursue how "surplus," as the distinguishing social-political feature of uprisings, becomes mediated in aesthetic form to instantiate their respective "poetics of riot." To do so, these poets require a very different set of aesthetic procedures to absorb, transmute, and disrupt lyric conventions altogether.

In *Ban en Banlieue*, Kapil composes a monstrous text that straddles lyric and narrative modes for mediating social violence, especially as inflicted by state power, patriarchy, and sexual violence against Brown women in the UK and the Asian subcontinent. Through her continual preoccupation with embodied violence and artistic performance, *Ban* constructs a persona of disembodied, fragmentary abjection, one informed by the writings of Julia Kristeva. In my reading, Kapil's writing patterns the physical dehumanization of surplus peoples and further invests her art with an anarchic power to performatively over-write instances of death that the text approaches, reenacts, and self-annihilates through her aesthetics of violence.

In *Duppies*, D. S. Marriott lyrically renovates the London underground musical genre of grime, whose word origin signifies dirt, filth, and mask. Reading Marriott's grime poems in tandem with his critical scholarship on Blackness in Frantz Fanon, I demonstrate how his writing invents a poetics of riot as a generalizable structure and perpetual process without program. Even as he thoroughly acknowledges the ways in which Black life has been and continues to be relegated to social death, Marriott's writing performs critical conceptions of Blackness, whose excessive surplus humiliates, surpasses, and seeks to abolish the social world that shapes and conditions his intellectual and artistic creations.

Kapil and Marriott hold in common a spiraling movement of descent. In two contrasting but related ways, the lyrical and anti-lyrical surplus energies of their writing register ongoing negations of "personhood" for racialized nonpersons and further mobilize a literary politics of refusal and

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non-sovereignty. The "personae" distinguishing their work, then, are best understood as placeholders not for subjectivity and personhood but, on the contrary, for the downward movement of impersonal forces of crisis, leading their respective lyric projects to pursue their own annihilation in the name of inventing anarchic forms of sociality that remain unruly and beyond the reach of the given parameters of deepening crisis.

"The Riot Is the Charnel Ground": Bhanu Kapil's *Ban en Banlieue*

"I wrote the organ sweets," Kapil says regarding *Ban en Banlieue*, "the bread-rich parts of the body before it's opened then devoured" (19). At its core, *Ban* revolves around several instances of violence, both real and imagined, that animate Kapil's artistic project. The first concerns a "fictive" instance of a young Black/Brown girl, Ban, walking home from school at 4 pm on April 23, 1979, in Hayes, Middlesex, in West London. Upon hearing the sound of broken glass and the beginnings of what would later be termed a "race riot," Ban strips naked and lies down in an L-shaped position, either feigning her own death to protect herself from an approaching group of white supremacists or (and?) submitting to the death that she knows is inevitable due to her own powerlessness before forces beyond her control.

This was also the day of the actual death of Blair Peach, the New Zealand emigrant and teacher who protested a gathering of the National Front in front of the town hall in Southall, Middlesex. Peach was knocked unconscious by the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group and died the following day in Ealing Hospital; however, the causes of his death were not made public by police until 2010 (14). Kapil dedicates the collection to Peach, and he serves as a haunting presence across *Ban* of an anti-racist who lays down his life at the hands of white nationalists and state power in order to protect those most vulnerable to racial violence.

Another historical instance recurring across the collection concerns the very real death of another young girl, Jyoti Singh Pandey, in December 2012. After watching *Life of Pi* in a cinema in New Delhi, Pandey boarded a bus and was gang raped before being ejected, gutted with a metal pipe, and left on the side of the road for forty minutes with her entrails strewn upon the ground. According to Kapil, Pandey was later named "The Fearless One" by witnesses (25).

Yet another instance of violence appears through Kapil imagining a young Indian woman who commits widow sacrifice, or sati, as she ascends her deceased husband's funeral pyre and becomes engulfed in flames. At

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the end of the collection, Kapil envisions the woman leaping into the Bay of Bengal before being carried away by dolphins and consumed by sea creatures that decompose her body – only for her later to become fantastically transformed into a mermaid. I will return to the mermaid figure towards the end of my discussion. Across *Ban*, Kapil encircles these instances of violence through, as she says, "the form of negation … a negation that wasn't erased – as a way of marking, too, the violence received by the bodies of women in the place that I was [am] from" (90).

Throughout, *Ban* deploys cross-genre experimentations, straddling – and at times collapsing – narrative and lyric modes in patterning what she calls an "aesthetics of violence" (71). In one respect, Kapil casts *Ban* in the mode of "historical fiction," in so far as it seeks to examine the rise of far-right white nationalism in Britain between 1965 and 1983 with the concurrent mobilization of "Black" as a political term for encompassing diverse ethnic groups (Afro-Caribbean, African, and Asian) (96). Kapil also describes her work as "intense autobiography," even noting that her childhood nickname was "BAN" (94) and that she herself was nearby in her family home when the 1979 riot erupted, huddled "safe beneath the blankets on the floor of my bedroom in Hayes" (88). Her narrative verse is further informed by critical theory through references to Giorgio Agamben, T. W. Adorno, Georges Bataille, Donna Haraway, and Elizabeth Grosz. In a moment, I will propose her aesthetic strategy of "over-writing" as the formal mechanism through which Kapil instantiates her poetics of riot in *Ban*. Over-writing becomes her poetic procedure for patterning a scattered, disembodied persona based in abjection, at once "half-dead" and "half-alive," thereby figuring forms of systemic violence against racial others and women, whether in Britain or the Indian subcontinent (87).

Before delving into my discussion, though, it may be useful to explain briefly the organization and structure of *Ban* for those new to the text. The collection opens with a section titled "Contents," comprising seven subsections that serve as an overture to the longer central movement titled "Auto-sacrifice (Notes)," followed by "End-Notes," where Kapil acknowledges the numerous writers, artists, institutions, and personal affiliations that contributed to the conception and production of *Ban*. The collection concludes with "Butcher's Block Appendix," where she describes how she initially composed *Ban* between 2009 and 2012 by writing sentences and fragments in a series of physical notebooks. She later transferred these notebooks to a butcher's block in her home and encased them in wire cages (101). For her, the butcher's block is not "a static object" but a dynamic transmitter of energy contained in the sentences of her notebooks, akin

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to "bibliomancy" and "divination," by summoning the dead. Later, the material from the notebooks became the central section, titled "Auto-sacrifice (Notes)," of the finished collection, *Ban en Banlieue*, which you would hold in your hand.

Most poetry collections include a table of contents, individual poems, acknowledgments, and occasionally a statement from the poet. In this case, however, each section – "Contents," "Auto-sacrifice (Notes)," "End-Notes," "Butcher's Block Appendix," and the visual images and photographs appearing across the pages of *Ban* – is given equal weight. Paratext and main text converge in *Ban*, such that each section becomes necessary for readers to reassemble the parts to create the "body" of the text, flipping back and forth by handling the book as a physical object. The final words that close the appendix – and the book as a whole – read: "Write: the findings. Write what never ends" (109). In many ways, it remains uncertain whether *Ban* is perpetually in the process of "beginning" or if it is a collection that finally refuses to "end," held in indefinite deferral. As we will see, Kapil provokes a sense of readerly uncertainty – "Where and when does the text begin?" "Where does it actually end?" – to comment on persistent forms of social violence that continue unabated, with no end in sight.

Across the collection, the text draws comparisons between the physical dismemberment of human bodies in the streets and the text as charnel ground through *Ban*'s formal structure: The surplus discharge of riot becomes reencoded through the surplus of syntax. "The riot is the charnel ground," she writes, "overlain – in the present – by concrete – poured right down – over the particular spot on the sidewalk I am speaking of – as well as – migrations – from Eastern Europe – and beyond" (22). In content, the sentence figures the riot as at once situated in a specific time and place, in the "present" in this "particular spot," and as the outgrowth of forces and vectors from elsewhere. Syntactically, the series of hyphens split the sentence into fragments that at once divide and connect, alerting the reader to the intractable differences between units as they are brought into relation through grammatical order. In the appendix, she compares the matter of language to "meat" butchered in a charnel house, the laying down of each syntactic unit "like a nerve or tendon – extracted, still living, for a few moments: in the air" (101). Elsewhere, she writes, "I want a literature that is not made of literature" (32). In these ways, Kapil attributes to her writing its basis in dehumanization, at once decomposing the category of "literature" into its basest material and further recalling how the privileged sociolect of "literature" and "the literary" themselves serve as a

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tool and ideological weapon upholding race and class power through the acquisition of cultural capital.

But what kind of "writing" is this? On the page, *Ban* visually appears not through left-justified lines that typically distinguish "lyric poetry" but in "blocks" of sentences resembling paragraphs. The blocks of text also evoke the urban space of the neighborhood block. The "banlieue" of the title, which were the former hunting grounds of Henry VIII, thus serve as the historical backdrop to persistent forms of violence in the outskirts of London, now home to many "immigrant" and ethnic communities (30). Kapil refuses the category of "stories" – *Ban* is not an immigrant novel about representation, identification, "disclosure," or "where you are from" – by instead appealing to textual "discharge" on the level of the sentence (9). On the first page, she cites the influence of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* (1982), whose central figure, Laura Ann, speaks not through her own "voice" but through external "pressure" forcing her mouth open (7). Later, she takes as her mandate: "To write a sentence with content more volatile than what it contains" (65).

In these ways, Kapil constructs *Ban* through discursive "discharge." The discharge of poetic language opens up a rupture in the text through her poetry's *nonidentical* but *corresponding* relationship to the volatile forces and pressures unleashed through the resurgence of white nationalism inflicted upon and, for her, held within the bodies of Brown and Black peoples, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These forces are replayed, in different ways, when she is writing *Ban* at the time of the 2005 Paris race riots through to the 2011 England riots after the murder of Mark Duggan at the hands of police (24). So rather than writing a "novel of the race riot," Kapil instead composes "a monstrous form" (20) out of "local mixtures of organic and inorganic materials, repurposed teeth, selenium, lungs, pink lightening, public health concerns" (21). In the process, the narrative propulsion forward in *Ban* is thwarted by instances of lyrical suspension. The overlaying of units as they are *laid down* on the page reinscribe the violence the text approaches and over-writes.

In my reading, the process of "over-writing" – that is, the textual activities of laying down side by side through juxtaposition, apposition, overlaying, and reenacting – serves as Kapil's central aesthetic procedure for instantiating her poetics of riot through the persona of "Ban." In the opening section of "Auto-sacrifice (Notes)," the speaker reflects upon how "my creature (Ban) is over-written by a psychic history" extending beyond any one individual and into disjunctive entanglement with other histories, spaces, and realities of violence (27). As Amy De'Ath similarly

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observes, Kapil's "fragmentary scattering" of "people and events" across the text "spells out the ways in which the violence of a system produces – and is experientially absorbed by – the bodies of racialized and feminized individuals," to the extent that Ban becomes transposed, "grammatically and syntactically," into "an opaque thing herself" (3). Extending De'Ath's insights, Ban does not, for me, refer only to the "mask" Kapil invents for the titular figure (Kapil, 29). "Ban" – which I here place in quotation marks – also refers to the nonidentical forces and pressures of social violence that coalesce through discursive "discharge" in form and language as it becomes unevenly registered across various figures, geographic locations, and temporalities in the text.

In particular, Kapil invents a form of persona through disembodiment, fragmentation, and abjection that we can see in three ways: first, through the textual construction of the figure of Ban; second, through the artist's self-portrait of her staged performances of lying down in commemoration of Ban and of Jyoti Singh Pandey ("The Fearless One"); and third, through the lyrical interweaving of the imagined Indian widow who performs sati with the self-immolation of *Ban* as a whole. When taken together, Kapil's over-writings comprise the multiplicity of discursive layers through which "Ban" comes into view as a "persona," here understood not as an individual impersonated subject nor even as a mask for the poet but as a series of violated bodies that become mobilized in the text and remain incommensurable, nonidentical with one another even as the text mediates, reenacts, accelerates, and aspires to abolish both the discharge of social violence confronting vulnerable peoples and, by extension, the text itself.

Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection has been well rehearsed in critical discourses across the humanities and beyond. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), Kristeva memorably conceives of the abject through bodily fluids and matter – food, excrement, blood, vomit, filth, and so forth – as well as through forms of exteriority that both threaten and constitute the stability of the "I." Kristeva uses the example of the corpse or cadaver (from the Latin, *cadere*, to fall) as witnessed by the "I" and without the consolation of any system of meaning, be it religious, social, political, or otherwise (3). To view the corpse as corpse hurtles the "me" towards the border between life and death, as if the "me" might "fall" [cadere] over "the limit of signification (3) and plunge into a vortex "toward the space__where meaning collapses" (2). Beyond being physical matter, the abject also entails a structural ambiguity that "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). The unruliness of abjection sets in motion a dialectical tension between, on the one hand,

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the violent rejection of that which threatens to dissolve personal and social boundaries and, on the other, the reconstitution of insides and outsides, precisely because the abject, however partially "rejected," nonetheless persists as that to which one still clings, from which "one does not part," precisely because it constitutes one's very being: "It is death infecting life" (4).

For Kristeva, abjection derives from a foundational "want," originating for her in the relation between the *infans* and the maternal, prior to subject formation and the entrance into language (5). For her, abjection results, biologically, from human beings having been born prematurely: that is, the *infans* depends upon the nourishment of the maternal before it can physically support itself as an autonomous, bounded being. While Kristeva theorizes abjection through the *infans*–maternal relation, her thinking has broader consequences for challenging, reconstituting, and potentially dissolving the social-political boundaries demarcating insides and outsides.

In *Ban en Banlieue*, though, abjection results not from premature life but from premature death: of human persons who, by mere circumstance of birth and entrance to symbolic sociopolitical structures of racialization and gender/sexual violence, become exposed to social death without the support of collective – and not only individual – being. And if, for Kristeva, abjection preserves a form of "immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10), for Kapil abjection signifies the primary "want" and endless mourning for failed social being: of lives that, in other conditions, would not have become marked for death.

In the most immediate way, the very title of the collection overlays several forms of significance to "Ban" through paronomasia, metonymy, and antanaclasis (or multiple repetition of the same word, "ban," with different senses). In the section titled "Inversions for Ban," Kapil quotes Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, where "Ban" stands for a figure of sacrifice upon which biopower depends, the one who is both radically excluded and yet sacred and untouchable: "to ban someone is to say no-one can harm him" (41). She further mobilizes the word as a verb, "banned from the city," and, switching languages, "*en banlieues*: a part of the perimeter" (41). Using the infinitive, "to ban, to sentence" – here as in to proscribe and to prohibit – the one banned is thus abandoned by the state and polity. Kapil further twists these multiple senses into her own artistic project by punning on "sentence": "to abandon is thus to write in prose." If the figure of "Ban" is the one abandoned and sentenced, both interdicted by and absorbed before the state, the part that is not a part, all these valences and significances demand a disjunctive aesthetic form that "abandons" the

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conventions of "lyric" even as their figural and rhetorical energies hemorrhage in the sentences of *Ban*.

The central section of the collection, "Auto-sacrifice (Notes)," comprises twenty-three "notes" largely focusing on the textual construction of "Ban" that become overlaid by the artist's performative reenactments of physically "lying down." Concerning the composition of Ban, early in the collection, under the note titled "What is Ban?," she is simply "a girl" and then "A black (brown) girl encountered in the earliest hour of a race riot, or what will become one by nightfall" (30). In the middle section, titled "Five Fictions for Ban," the speaker briefly fills her out by furnishing biographical details, as if these descriptions might portray Ban as a realized human subject, with physical presence and psycho-emotional depth. For instance, we read that she "lived the first nine years of her life at 76 Lansbury Drive, Hayes, Middlesex" (53). She sits on a bench with a friend eating KFC, "still in uniform, one of the girls" (54). And, the speaker says that Ban ultimately desires "to carve out her body from her body, to conceive herself with a human life in mind," as if she might imagine a form of subjectivity before or beyond her racialization, with her own aspirations of alternate pasts and futures.

These impulses towards portraiture, representation, and character construction – typically the provenance of narrative fiction – are, however, quickly undercut when the speaker declares, in a rhetoric of refusal: "Whatever. I can't bring myself to do much more than tell how she lived. Then died" (54). Ultimately, she says, "Ban fails portraiture. … It is something more than this" (55). In failing portraiture and positioned as something "more than this," Ban veers towards the figural dimension – that is, the poetic dimension – of language, whose surplus exceeds mimetic representation and self-reflexively foregrounds the materiality of linguistic figuration: "this." Kapil's "more than this" – a perhaps deManian theory of poetic language – is fully politicized, particularly as she calls into question her writing's capacity to figure subjects deemed as nonpersons, systematically foreclosed from the dignity of a human life.

Ban instead appears through disembodied abjection and fragmentary decomposition. Early on, she comprises "dog shit and bitumen (ash) scraped off the soles of running shoes" (30). Elsewhere, "she is a kerosene patch set on fire with a careless match" (36). By the middle of the collection she becomes "a puff of diesel," "a smudge, already dispersing. A warp of smoke looping around the orbital road surrounding London," which Kapil compares to "the page" itself as "smudged" and "smeared" with "soot" (50). And towards the end of "Auto-sacrifice," Ban is reduced to nothing more than "a spine," as if her backbone, convulsing "in the dying process, the spasms

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before death," becomes reencoded in the spine of the book (74). As these examples show, Ban figures though division, as that which is simultaneously violently excluded and necessarily incorporated but in excess.

In Kapil's rendering, Ban's divided status – "both dead and never living" (30) – is itself the symptomatic outgrowth of internal racial divisions structuring Englishness, particularly in the 1970s. Ban occupies the arbitrary position of a racial subject "born in England, but is never, not even on a cloudy day, English" (30). When hegemonic forms of racialized Englishness reach their discursive and political limits, Black and Brown bodies become especially vulnerable, whether due to white nationalism or ethnic fundamentalism. And so upon hearing "the sound of breaking glass" on her walk home, Ban considers whether it originates "from her home" or "from the street's distant clamor" (31). In the face of oncoming violence, Kapil writes: "Ban lies down. She folds to the ground. This is syntax" (31). In these three short declarative sentences, Kapil interweaves Ban's physical act of lying prone – making herself vulnerable to physical harm, likely surrendering herself to violence and committing "auto-sacrifice," while also claiming agency by enfolding herself into herself – with the processual activity of syntax. The deixis "this" conducts a double movement, referring to both Ban's physical act of laying down and the text's processual activity of over-writing on top of "her," enveloping her in syntax and performatively attributing to her an aesthetic-political action of doing something in the face of crisis, which the text aspires to retrace in outline form.

Ban's act of lying down becomes further over-written through the internal self-portraits of "Kapil" – here placed in quotation marks to signal her figuration as text – who "lies down" in homage to Ban and to Jyoti Singh Pandey through real-life performance pieces and public readings, which occurred prior to the publication of the book. The section titled "Installations and Performances" in the opening "Contents" lists these events as they have taken place, for instance, in Hayes, England, in 2012, at the Pratt Institute, New York, in 2013, or in New Delhi, India, in 2014. Kapil expresses several motivations for her performance pieces. One is that of commemoration, as when she lies down on the spot in the road where Pandey died in New Delhi and performs a "memorial ritual" by pouring red powder on the ground (18). She also invests her art with acts of political protest and public intervention against acts of racial and sexual violence, as when she strips naked and asks eleven white-identified men in the audience to beat and hit her at the Dikeou Collection in Denver in 2011 (17). Still another is one of sheer proximity and "being with," as when she lies down in Hayes and West London, propping small mirrors against a bank of ivy where Ban would have fictively

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died as the artist "extend[s] my own tongue to the ivy that curls down to the sidewalk with its medicine and salt: so close to my own mouth" (21). In these ways, Kapil invests her art with a capacity for touch and embodiment, by bringing disparate times and places into relation without merging them into commensurability nor erasing their differences and radical particularity. For her, it is as if her "re-enactments" are not reenactments at all but the performative enactment of absence, circling around the non-lives who were proleptically "dead," all the while seeking to summon Ban and Pandey in spectral form to create an aesthetic space in which the dead might "speak," if only through red powder or the curl of ivy.

At each and every turn, though, Kapil comes up against the radical insufficiency of her performance ventures and writerly projects as they stall, flail, and fail. "The project fails at every instant," she writes "and you can make a book out of that and I do" (22). Later, in the section titled "London (2)," we read:

> A girl lies down on the sidewalk. Tiny mirrors are balanced in the ivy next to her face. I never complete this work; instead, I keep balancing and tilting mirrors. I travel to the U.K. and set a circular mirror in the nest of daffodils in Regent's Park, far from the street of the scene. Returning home, I lie down.
>
> It is so excruciating to write about these subjects that I take years, months: to write them. (77)

Mirror upon mirror upon mirror. In this passage, it is as if Kapil's "I" seeks to mirror Ban's movements, both in action (lying down) and in image (propping mirrors). But the "I"'s staged proximity to Ban remains incomplete, off-balance, and plunged into a mise en abîme, vertiginously spiraling the "I" – and the project itself – to "excruciating" failure. To be sure, it is not that the "fictive" Ban and once alive Pandey were never "real." On the contrary, there are, have been, and will be – tragically – far too many Bans and Pandeys born to death. In the face of this, Kapil takes up a poetics and politics of refusal: Her project refuses to add up in accounting for the radical imbalances of power that produce social violence against the vulnerable – and that create the material conditions for her art too. She is caught in the seemingly endless paradox of the necessity of "writing" an event (or series of events) that demands ethical attention and the utter impossibility of doing so precisely because its volatile content exceeds any form of symbolic figuration. The false starts and dead ends in her work cannot but further mirror, in aesthetic form, the absence of meaningful alternatives: The pathways towards progressive transformation are here denied and foreclosed.

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There is, however, a highly qualified recuperative impulse towards ritualistic healing in her work, which labors towards the reconstitution of insides and outsides through an immersion into abjection. In one performance piece, Kapil describes a collaboration with Sharon Carlisle, "earth artist and anti-fracking activist" (17), in which she digs a rectangular spot of earth in the poet's garden in Loveland, Colorado. Kapil lies down as if to bury herself and *Ban* in mud as a way of questioning "what happens to bodies [and books as textual objects, we might add] at the limit of their particular life" (87). From this performative event, she and Carlisle also produced a drawing of the "Garden/mud Ban installation," which appears on page 83 of the collection. In this case, her installation ritualistically buries itself, as if to restore the text to mud, out of the very abjection which "Ban" has been produced. In another instance in "Butcher's Block Appendix" of *Ban*, Kapil refers to Elizabeth's Grosz's conception of the "edge" of the fragment through which "it adheres to other fragments, not through historical or phatic means: but through the force of attraction. I place the fragments in a chrysalis: to recombine" (103). Here, her art's chrysalis – from the Latin, literally "the gold-coloured sheath of butterflies" (*OED*) – would become a hard-shell protective casing for attracting the fragments, remainders, and residues of violence, all the while holding them for an indefinite time until, potentially, they might reemerge in full form, whether returning in iridescent beauty or vengeful terror.

The third instance, which brings my discussion of Kapil's over-writing to a conclusion, corresponds to the lyrical interweaving of the imagined Indian widow who becomes transformed into a mermaid with *Ban* and the text as a whole. In the concluding "Note" to the collection, "Mermaid Series for Ban," the speaker takes on the "I" of a young Indian woman who commits widow sacrifice, or sati, as she ascends her deceased husband's funeral pyre and becomes engulfed in flames. In Kapil's imagining, the woman then leaps into the sea and is carried away by dolphins into the Bay of Bengal, where she is consumed by sea creatures that decompose her into "a mixture of dead and living things," "affixed to the circuitry of the non-living world" while "almost but never quite dead" (82). From the depths of the sea, the woman "washes up" on shore and becomes transformed into a mermaid who bathes herself, prepares a meal, and ritualistically "pour[s] a glass of milk into the sea" (82). In this sense, the fabulous figure of "the mermaid" may designate the impossible imagining of a world before or beyond racialization, which the text at once proffers yet quickly retracts.

In the final lines, the mermaid's "I" suddenly becomes indistinguishable from the poet's "I" and, by extension, the text's "I." These "I"s

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collectively address an unnamed "you," which vacillates back and forth between the implied reader and the numerous deceased "you"s – all of the "Bans" – which the text accumulates, commemorates, and ultimately self-immolates:

> Now drink the water.
>
> I drink the water for Ban.
>
> I write these notes for Ban.
>
> Why? I feel bad for you, having read this far into the nothing that these notes are.
>
> And must be.
>
> Neutral.
>
> Stupid.
>
> Bland.
>
> Just as the skin is bland and eases off the bones at the least touch.
>
> Or tongue.
> Of flame. (84–85)

The staccato compression of these short-clipped lines, their uses of apostrophe and failed commemoration, and the speaker's undercutting of the text's entire artistic project: These elements comprise longstanding lyric conventions, which Kapil both extends and evacuates. Still, Kapil's resolute commitment to auto-sacrifice and lyrical failure is no mere rhetorical gesture. However fantastic or far-fetched, it is as if Kapil's multiple projects for *Ban* – whether in curatorial installation, performance art, notebooks on a butcher's block encased in wire cages, or transposed and rearranged into "Notes" on the page – would become reduced to soil, to meat, to water, to fire, and to ash.

Kapil's recurring preoccupation with "being with" and "laying down" next to the convulsing bodies of Ban, Pandey, and the unnamed Indian widow – all figured at the limit of life and death – clearly corresponds to Kristeva's meditation on the corpse as viewed in the absence of meaning. In one of her notebooks from "Butcher's Block Appendix," she writes in 2012: "The immigrant from Brazil is shot by a British police officer one evening and even this news turns into a kind of dirt. … To approach Englishness as the thing that decays and to have watched it decay" (102–03). In one sense, *Ban*'s over-written form embodies the ways in which dominant discourses of white Englishness "over-write"

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Black and Brown bodies, reducing human subjects to shit, dirt, and soot. This much is obvious. In patterning the racial formation of Englishness through abjection, Kapil further metaphorically signals how the racialized body, as discarded matter, in certain conditions can also become the fuel – the kerosene patch – for riot, inflaming violence. Because the abject occupies the double position of being at once inside and outside (whether the physical body or the body politic), it further comports an anarchic energy capable of disrupting the discursive hierarchies that seek to subdue it, thereby refusing a unified, coherent subject, nation formation, or even poetry collection. In these ways, Kapil registers how her textual composition of *Ban* is itself produced out of racialized abjection, thereby self-implicating the artist in the violence her text patterns and performatively enacts.

Ban's disembodied personae further extend to the materiality of the text: the smudged page smeared in soot, the spine of the book convulsing in spasms before death, or the nonsignifying elements of fire, loops of smoke, and broken glass. *Ban* lays bare the bodies left to die that Kapil's writing recurrently encircles, aesthetically approximates, and performatively impersonates but cannot touch. Ultimately, the scattered personae of "Ban" refuse to coalesce: "the different parts of 'Ban' do not touch. They never touch at all" (100).

If political structures upholding state power and attendant racialized discourses of Englishness continually render surplus populations disposable through conditions of abjection, Kapil's project aggressively enacts and thereby accelerates the decay by becoming the abject, as if to give back to Englishness its own rot in inverted form. Like Kristeva, Kapil experiences abject corpses as "a vortex of summons," haunting her and placing her "literally beside [herself]" as she lays down with the dead (Kristeva, 1). It is for this reason that her writing clings to bodies jettisoned on the side of the road, investing her writing with an "alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, a new significance," however uncertain or fantastical (15).

"Igniting Fires in the Streets": Blackness, Riot, and Grime in D. S. Marriott's *Duppies*

Whereas Kapil explicitly addresses real and imagined instances of riots in *Ban*, Marriott conceptualizes his poetics of riot through what I will argue is a *generalizable structure* that moves through the disorder of Black knowledge and Black being under racialized capitalism and the insurgency it produces in social and aesthetic form. In particular, his collection

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Duppies adapts the London-based underground musical genre of grime as an aesthetics of revolutionary violence, one that gives specific expression to forms of social deprivation for Black peoples living in the outskirts of the capital (as elsewhere). The collection's title derives from Jamaican patois: "Duppy" refers to a ghost, signaling Black life that has been killed but persists in spectral form as haunted life. In grime, to duppy is to lyrically "kill" or slay a rival. Duppying also becomes the mechanism for a grime artist to gain prominence in the scene – as well as to extend the relevance of one's antagonist, as if to wait for payback through lyrical counterfire. (As Marriott "duppies" famous grime artists, he also sends them, paying homage to avant-garde Black cultural productions.) Marriott further glosses "grime" at the start of the collection, linking the genre's historical basis in abjection (dirt, filth, soot) and aesthetic persona (mask): "Middle English grim (dirt, filth) from Middle Lowe German grem (dirt), and from Middle Dutch grime (soot, mask)." His grime poems similarly perform Blackness through social abjection but reach further back to recall how sordid aesthetic impersonations of the anti-Black world derive from fifteenth-century European colonialism onwards. I'll briefly situate *Duppies* within the context of the musical genre's social history, aesthetic conventions, political preoccupations, and attitudes. Then I will explain how Marriott's writing on Frantz Fanon has shaped his critical conception of Blackness through its creation from the disorder of the white world. From there, I will examine how his lyrical adaptations of grime invent a poetics of riot by performing Black knowledge and being in and through its internal abyss and nonbeing – and its disavowed abundance and plenitude, which wreaks havoc on the totality of whiteness. If for Kapil "surplus" appears through textual discharge at the level of syntax, for Marriott grime becomes his way of mediating surplus through anarchic, nonidentical forms of Blackness.

In *Inner City Pressure: The Story of Grime* (2018), Dan Hancox explains how grime has become widely recognized as a British cultural form, crossing over from the underground in the early 2000s to the mainstream by the mid 2010s. In 2016, Skepta won the Mercury Prize for *Konnichiwa* – the same musical award, I hasten to add, that Dizzee Rascal won for his landmark album *Boy in Da Corner* in 2003, during grime's first wave. Wiley, the widely recognized and self-dubbed "godfather of grime," has received prizes at the NME Awards and Q Awards and was invited to Buckingham Palace to receive a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) from Prince William in 2018. That same year, Stormzy's debut album, *Gang Signs & Prayer*, shot straight to number one on the UK album charts and went on to win the British Album of the Year at the 2018 Brit Awards

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(which has overwhelmingly gone to white rock and indie bands). And when Theresa May announced the 2017 snap election in the lead-up to the UK's negotiations with the EU following the 2016 Brexit vote, several MCs and DJs took to social media encouraging members of their communities to vote Labour, even spawning the hashtag #grime4corbyn, an accompanying website featuring music videos, and a live musical performance (Hancox, 284). Still, despite grime's mainstream success through album sales, tours and festivals, fashion and commercial contracts, and promotion of electoral politics, it is not lost on grime artists how this initially underground musical form derives from conditions of social violence. Indeed, the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, just days after the election, made all too visible the stark realities of political elites and property developers prioritizing market values over human beings left to burn in North Kensington, less than two miles from Kensington High Street.

For a genre that has become an international sensation, it was intensely local, grounded in "The Ends": the council-owned high-rise tower blocks, estates, and manors located in inner East London (including Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Newham) and in North London (such as Tottenham and Walthamstow). Grime's musical genealogy can be traced to reggae and Caribbean sound system culture from the 1970s and 1980s through the collaborations between the DJ spinning tracks while MCs lyrically spar and rouse the audience into participation through "toasting." Grime also has its basis in mid 1990s garage, particularly through a strain that features irregular two-step rhythms and break beats in contrast to the more popular, melodic garage sound polished for flagship night clubs enforcing dress codes. And grime has its roots in UK jungle by combining darker descents into the underground through hard, driving sounds with lyrical moments upwards through "transcendent glimmers of joy," as Hancox phrases it (46).

In contrast to its musical antecedents, however, grime is MC-led, placing emphasis on linguistic dexterity and rapid delivery, "spitting bars" and passing the mic from one MC to the next in under twenty seconds. Grime MCs spit their eight, sixteen, thirty-two, or sixty-four bars to aggressive beats set at a frenetic speed of 140 BPM, laid down by a DJ mixing and reloading tracks. The digitized, Afrofuturist sounds of grime were initially created on low-end, cheap technology: using secondhand decks, downloading tracks from Napster and Limewire, arranging music on software on gaming consoles such as *Music 2000* on PlayStation1, and practicing bars on karaoke machines before recording them onto MiniDisks and only then pressing them to a white label record, sold at local record shops such

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as Rhythm Division or, in the case of Wiley, out of the boot of his car (61–63). Grime was illegally broadcast on pirate stations such as Déjà Vu FM and Rinse FM from tightly enclosed spaces such as bedrooms, kitchens, and rooftop boxed rooms, even as pirate radio was monitored and eventually shut down by Department for Trade and Industry.

The music of grime was also an active participant in and respondent to the London uprisings in 2010 and 2011. For instance, in 2010, David Cameron's government increased tuition for universities, effectively blocking low-income people from enrolling, and further slashed New Labour's Education Maintenance Allowance, which dispersed weekly allowances of £10–13 a week to qualifying teenagers (209). As Hancox himself witnessed, riots erupted in November and December 2010 as tens of thousands of students rose up, subsequently organizing four major demonstrations and protests in Parliament Square. Kettled and hemmed in by the Met's riot police ("Territorial Support Group"), students nonetheless set up ad hoc sound systems, occupying space and blaring grime tracks such as Lethal Bizzle's "Pow!" (212–15). The riots of 2011, partly in response to the police killing of Mark Duggan (who was known personally to several grime artists from Tottenham), spawned numerous grime tracks, including "They Will Not Control Us" by 2KOlderz, "Castles" by Skepta, and "Ill Manors" by Plan B, to name a few (222).

The tabloid press such as the *Daily Mirror* and politicians have often blamed grime MCs in particular, and Black culture generally, for inciting and celebrating violence. Grime meets violence with violence by lyrically mediating the all too familiar experiences of living under aggressive policing, racial profiling, political neglect, and wageless life (225–27). Many of the most recognized MCs and DJs – Wiley, Dizzee, Skepta, Kano, among hosts of others – came of age in the mid to late 1990s. These were the years when New Labour put into place mass surveillance through CCTVs, arbitrary overpolicing of "delinquent behavior" through Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), the criminalization of public gatherings or "hanging out," and "Urban Renaissance" schemes through wide-scale gentrification and "pricing out" – that is, economically forcing – poor communities further and further to the perimeters of the city. Grime was born out of these fires.

When Marriott turns to grime in *Duppies*, he recalls the genre's undeniable basis in collective Black pain, violence, and revolt without redemption. His lyrical adaptations likewise embrace a downward movement towards abjection as a refusal of social climbing, particularly because channels of upward mobility have been so resolutely foreclosed to Black peoples. For

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instance, *Duppies* opens with "Preface: 16 Bars," replicating grime's lyrical structure and serving as a manifesto to the collection. "Grime is late shift, zero hour, it makes a beeline for bare life, but what / it lays bare leaves everyone cold" (13). His bars distill many of the genre's core contradictions, such as its emphasis on speed and newness and its historical basis in Black suffering:

> Grime is post-work and post-brexit, its riddims respond to the necessity in which I exist – see these wheels, they may be brand spanking new, but under the bonnet there is fever and anguish. (13)

Through the conceit linking the "I" to the status symbol of "these new wheels," it is as if the lyric subject becomes the commodity form itself. Do not be distracted by the "I"'s apparently shimmering sheen because underneath, it contains the open secret of "fever and anguish" distinguishing the fungibility – and theft and disposability – of Black life as surplus value. Lyrically "duppying" the structures of systemic racism and the policing of Black life, Marriott writes: "Grime is payback for n-words and asboes," looting what has already been stolen through "a mugging made up by thefts, / an evocation stripped down to the bone." The "Preface" concludes:

> Grime is the medium of the *unknown*, it refuses everything but *possibility*: its violence is one without immunity, but its real is dispossession, and is inconsolable without knowing it. (13)

"Grime" for Marriott "is the medium" for exploring critical conceptions of "Blackness" premised in dispossession but one that nonetheless holds out an as yet *unknown possibility* of transformation through revolutionary violence. In the face of Black death, grime joyfully negates the social world that has produced this music and this poetry of Black experience in the first place: This is grime's sole consolation and, perhaps, self-delusion and why it "is inconsolable without knowing it." Like Kapil, Marriott writes a poetry that pursues its own destruction "without immunity," in the name of a world that would no longer need an aesthetics of social death.

Taken as a whole, the poems in *Duppies* explore the ways in which Black life has been – and continues to be – extinguished as a perpetual process. These poems are produced from, work within, and performatively annihilate (duppy) the antagonisms perpetuating social death. At the same time, though, the performative dimension of duppying – putting on the persona deliberately in nonidentical, discontinuous relationship to social death and abjection – further enables Marriott to give poetic expression to the psycho-political dimensions of Black experience through his

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writing's purposeful and inventive pursuit of its own failure. In what follows, my readings examine the ways in which Marriott lyrically innovates grime and several of its most famous artists, such as Wiley, Kano, and Stormzy, to invent forms of Black knowledge and being that, as I hope to show, unflinchingly acknowledge the forces producing – and reproducing over and over again – conditions of social death in order to activate an insurgent politics of life premised in riotous non-sovereignty, however uncertain.

Before delving into Marriott's very complex poetry, I'd like to situate his writing and thinking within his critical study of Frantz Fanon in *Whither Fanon: Studies in the Blackness of Being* (2018). Marriott's version of Afropessimism aligns, to an extent, with the writings of Jarrod Sexton and Frank Wilderson. He similarly situates the radical particularity of Blackness and Black experience within Western political, economic, and social structures of domination and the foundational event of slavery and its continuing legacy in every aspect of experience and social-political life. Like Sexton, Marriott maintains that "the social life of black social death acts as a kind of index, or grammar, that defines both the possibility *and* the limit of black speech and existence" (329). He further extends Wilderson's performative theory of Afropessimism: a form of thinking that does not so much describe as enact the dispossession and violence founding Blackness across Western discourses including political sovereignty, civil society, culture, philosophy, and so forth.

In his readings of Fanon, Marriott changes tack from Sexton and Wilderson by proceeding, instead, to take on the totalizing structure of anti-Black social death and, from there, to question whether a Fanonian Blackness can produce "non-epitaphic discourse" to affirm a politics of life but on altogether different terms (327). Put another way, what might a poetics and politics of Blackness look like when it embraces collective death and dispossession, performs and enacts Black death deliberately, but does so not to invent another form of the human, nor to "redeem" Blackness through the fitness of representation, nor to speak from beyond the grave as a haunted life that would reanimate the already socially dead, but instead to perform Blackness as a descent into the abyss, plunging us into forms of language and discourse that remain irreducibly opaque, illusory, and even unreadable but that compel us to take responsibility for the "death-in-life" shaping our subjective and social world (332–33)? It is this question – which comprises and distinguishes Marriott's nonidentical form of Blackness – that will animate my readings of his grime poems.

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In the process, I will track and unfold what I perceive as Marriott's generalizable structure of Blackness and his poetics of riot, which moves through three processes. The first process is what he calls "petrification," or the dark knowledge that Blackness has been imposed from without by whiteness and that the state of Black being is defined thoroughly in relation to the Black body that is perpetually stuck, frozen, and petrified in being made for death, forever foreclosed from the possibility of achieving "subjectivity" or the trappings of the "human" before the white social world. Petrification comports masking, of always wearing the mask of Blackness as given from whiteness. In wearing the mask of (white) Blackness, however, Marriott further locates in Fanon the concept of "corpsing": as I will explain later, a term from theater for when an actor flubs a role on stage and breaks the spell between character and actor. For Marriott, the dark knowledge of petrification (of always wearing a mask) creates the opportunity for Blackness to fail its assigned roles *on purpose*: "Black corpsing" fails to perform the roles of Blackness that whiteness has assigned to Black being, whether that is upward mobility and assimilation, or progressive political transformation, or docility, or criminality. Marriott sees in Fanon a performative Blackness that perpetually fails and, at times, can do so on purpose as a form of agency in enacting the social death to which it is assigned. From the performative dimension of Blackness, though, Marriott further identifies in Fanon the possibility of a "leap" of "invention," one that plunges Blackness into the abyss of nonbeing (*Whither*, 238). The inventive leap into the abyss, for him, is generative of revolutionary politics that would abolish the conditions that have produced Blackness in and for death in the first place in the name of a renewed politics of life. It is this generalizable structure – petrification, corpsing, the inventive leap into the abyss – that my ensuing discussion unpacks in delineating the contours of Marriott's poetics of riot.

To begin, Marriott takes from Fanon the psycho-political structure of Blackness. For Fanon, Blackness is "shattered" from the outset because it is introjected from without, that is, from whiteness and the entire social world of racialized capitalism (Fanon, *Black Skin*, 114; Marriott, *Whither*, 235). The process of introjection – whereby, Marriott says, "*Black skin skins itself*" by having been inscribed by whiteness (207) – petrifies Blackness with "anguish" and radical "misrecognition" (235). In Marriott's reading, Blackness, then, is not the other to whiteness because it was already imposed in advance. In having no Other to secure itself, Blackness is distinguished through what Marriott calls "the vertiginous Blackness of being" (xiv).

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Marriott's notion of vertigo derives from two sources. First, Black being is constituted by the literal violence of anti-Blackness as it is inscribed on the body and in the psyche, leading to the traumatic knowledge of never having known oneself, of being a stranger to oneself, and of "never-having-had" (225). The second source concerns the necessary but potentially self-destructive political desires for liberation such as Black Lives Matter, precisely when the coordinates of liberation have already been established by Western humanist discourses of liberalism that are themselves nourished by and reproduced through anti-Blackness (228). From an Afropessimist perspective, "Black lives matter" in liberal, humanist, progressive politics as the matter of commodified life made for death. Blackness, then, is plunged into a vertiginous spiral of fear and anxiety: of being commanded to negrophobic (white) Blackness from within and without, all the while anxiously awaiting the moment of unfulfilled freedom, itself marked by failure, violence, and death (3).

Marriott goes on to theorize how Fanonian Blackness is identical neither to itself nor to the whiteness that sustains it and therefore is not reducible to the anti-Black world that produced the imago of "Blackness" in the first place. Because for Fanon Blackness has no Other, it is therefore marked by "a rupture that is both exterior and *radically* intimate," what Marriott calls "an abyss that is situated at the limit of judgement, thought, and desire" (225). For instance, Fanon repeatedly articulates Blackness through the "*n'est pas*" (the not, the nothing, the negation) in *Black Skin, White Masks* (203–05). In *A Dying Colonialism*, he conceives of Blackness through a violent struggle in what he calls "*mort à bout touchant*" or an omnipresent "death-in-life" everywhere enveloping the colony (128). For Marriott, this foundational, abyssal rupture and death-in-life resets the category of "Blackness" through a generalizable structure of what he calls a "non-negated negativity" (or, for my purposes, the nonidentical), which exceeds processes of racialization and yet is without redemption or reparation (223).

It is precisely through the generalizable structure of abyssal Blackness – here reconceived through "death-in-life," "non-negated negativity," the nonidentical – that I perceive Marriott as advancing a "poetics of riot," both in his scholarship and in his poetry. In doing so, he identifies in Fanon a generative model for reinventing social being and a politics of life, but one that requires a radical break from white discourses of Blackness and a leap into the abyss: the non-negated negativity, the death-in-life, and the revolutionary violence constituting Fanonian Blackness. The inventive leap, which both breaks from history and yet remains entrapped within

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it, proceeds through the dark pathway of illusion – which explains why Fanon and Marriott repeatedly turn to Orpheus as their poetic model.

How does this work? Marriott takes from Fanon how a critical approach to "Blackness," here understood as a violent movement from Black knowledge (epistemology) about the white world towards Black being (ontology), must first unveil and discover the ways in which racialization and the imposition of (white) Blackness produce anxiety and fear, the experience of constantly being "hemmed in on all sides" and "on guard" – against others and oneself – for being exposed as "negre," and therefore subject to psychic, bodily, and political violence (237). The experience of unveiling (white) Blackness produces "petrification" and, potentially, the numbed resignation that there is no way out of the cycle of having been condemned to living social death – and being relegated to death – under the edicts of colonial sovereignty (242). As we will see, Fanon nonetheless furnishes Marriott with a way out of the cycles of social death that hinges upon the "performative corpsing" of the roles assigned to Black being and hold out the possibility of new forms of "invention," which too are not without struggle, conflict, and violence – and to a significant extent remain undecidable and without guarantees.

For Marriott, the first step in confronting – and potentially dismantling – the prison house of negrophobic Blackness is to recognize the mask of whiteness and, from there, to apprehend that "*to know oneself as black is to know that one is never not wearing a mask*" (167, italics in original). For him, one cannot disentangle "mask" from "persona," or as he says "the life performed from the life lived as performance" (167). The inescapable mask of whiteness is the price to be paid to say "I," which induces a spiral of self-hatred, guilt, and shame. If the "I" comes to the dark knowledge of its own petrification, it leads the "I" to become even further redoubled as both actor and spectator (167), under constant interrogation and exposure before the powers of whiteness that have been psychically implanted and politically enforced.

Marriott's poem "Eskimo (after Wiley)" gives aesthetic expression to the knotted complexities of negrophobic petrification: the slow knowledge of the mask of (white) Blackness, the inducing of self-hatred, shame, and anxiety, the redoubling of the "I" as it spirals into non-knowledge. The poem's title refers to the landmark 1999/2000 instrumental track by the widely regarded (and self-dubbed) "Godfather of Grime." "Eskimo" exhibits grime's signature sounds: rapid machine-gun snares, video game bleeps, and an unmastered sound initially created by producers such as Wiley without "formal musical training" on low-end, cheap technology

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(Hancox, 63). What's more, Wiley's "eskibeats" and arctic lyrical content, as Marriott knows, further put on the mask of cold, hard indifference as a protective shield against those who perceive Black masculinity and the Black body as a threat and therefore subject to harm. Indeed, behind his cool persona simmers an incendiary rage, or what Wiley calls "blazing fire" against the anti-Black world ("They Should Know").

In "Eskimo (after Wiley)," Marriott pays homage to Wiley's foundational significance to the genre. His poem also indirectly alludes to a moment in grime history when Wiley and Dizzee Rascal were set to perform at an event in Ayia Napa on the southeast coast of Cyprus in July 2003. Briefly, Dizzee and Wiley had a physical altercation with their rivals, So Solid Crew. Wiley escalated the conflict the following day and, while Dizzee was on his own, members of So Solid stabbed Dizzee, who was then placed in police custody, which led to a police investigation across the island.[1] Marriott silently embeds Wiley and Dizzee's backstory to write a dramatic monologue that takes place on an unnamed island, where an anonymous speaker is subject to police interrogation, forced confession, and beatings before an unnamed "you." The poem begins in italics:

> *And once again this wedge is my*
> *hypothesis, for what is denied isn't*
> *a true beginning, and what you*
> *see below isn't an answer,*
> *or a final step, but truth's living*
> *flesh being hacked to pieces.*
> *But then that's poetry's falsehood.* (28)

Grime slang for a well-shaped human frame, "this wedge" may also refer to the shape of the poem as the speaker begins again, as if for the millionth time, to confess to the "truth" of Blackness as "living / flesh being hacked to pieces," a statement that is quickly redacted as little more than the duplicity of artifice. In the absence of truthful confession, the speaker proceeds "*to take you to / the grey zone where all the bones are buried*" (28). Over the course of the following eight stanzas, Marriott's "Eskimo" "drags us down into darkness," towards "a slag-heap of the endlessly perishable" (29) where "all that will be saved are dungheaps" (30).

In its Orphic descent, Marriott's "Eskimo" conducts a probing meditation on the ways in which Blackness becomes petrified by whiteness, entrapped in a psychic and physical cell from which there seems to be no escape. Across the poem, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the "I" and "you." Initially, the "I" seems to speak through the voice of the

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detained Black speaker confessing to an interrogating "you": "*I will tell you / the proof of what happened*" (28). At other moments, however, the roles reverse, such that the "I" interrogates and tortures the "you": "And I will hear you scream again, / during the beatings" … "and your lips will seek another hearing, / and you will listen to the tapes, silent but horrified" (29). By the middle of the poem, the "I" and "you" become frozen in arrest and blind to themselves: "And all of us blinded as we head back to the blue, / the ice-fall and snows, / the avalanche and glaciers that bury you also" (30). "Eskimo," up to the middle of the poem, ensnares the "I" and its *semblable* into a vertiginous feedback loop of false accusations, forced confessions, and empty expiations for the "crime" of an imposed, unasked for Blackness.

In the final three stanzas, though, the poem shifts in tone and scene from the glacial arctic to the beach of the island, especially through the motifs of the "sun" and the "sea." The speaker reflects: "Man knows he will never escape / and so walks on the beach anonymous: was this the intricate, blank sun?" (30). A few lines later, he comments, "each incident [of violence? of mere Black experience?] must be met with a chill / forbearance in the noonday sun." And, in his psychic descent "down there" into the depths of Blackness, he becomes "sun-blinded" before the glaring illusions of an all-encompassing whiteness: "The sun is fate," he reflects, leading to "the thought that life is but a shadow" (30). The motif of the "sun" – and its (false) illuminations of clarity, meaning, the white light of reason, even and especially the category of "Man" – blinds the speaker, of never having known himself as if he were "the body of a dog petrified once more" (31). Any knowledge the speaker may have leads to the fate of negrophobic "Blackness," the catastrophe already awaiting him, or as he aphoristically phrases it, "the thing that never happens but always will" (30).

Indeed, the final stanza further reinforces how the all-pervasive power of whiteness is buttressed by state power: "The police take up their places. Near but far and always waiting" (31). In the final lines, however, the poem takes yet another imaginative leap from the "sun" to the "sea," as if the category of the sea might proffer another apprehension of Blackness before or beyond the processes of petrification entrapped within the processes of the white social world:

> And a new song emerges from all the rapturous things on earth,
> the bars, the cafes, the grey stucco houses and storefronts
> the sanious delirious bruise of an island, and all the waves
> versions of waves flattened under the sea's immense weight.
> The tides taking us farther and farther out,
> where we flounder, lost in what we will & don't know, that no
> sea dispels. (31)

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These final lines seem to perform an interruption to everything that has come before. Only having entered the icy depths of negrophobic Blackness can "a new song" come into being, one not belonging to any "I" or any "you," or any individual at all. Rather, it "emerges" spontaneously from "all the rapturous things on earth," each held in paratactic equivalence and apposition: beginning with the physical structures of private property (the bars, cafes, houses, and storefronts), which are themselves the puss-like secretion of racialized capitalism – "the sanious delirious bruise of the island," which becomes engulfed by "all the waves / versions of waves." Do the sea and the waves symbolize the immense weight of negrophobic Blackness arising from their deep history in slavery, such that the sea might serve as the literal and metaphorical repository of Black death, such as we have seen in David Dabydeen's *Turner* in Chapter 3? Or is the sea just, well, the sea: a real, physical entity wholly indifferent to human affairs and therefore a mark of freedom from any determinate "meaning" of anything at all? Either way, the "us" and the "we" become bereft and abandoned, rhythmically undulating with the rise and fall of the tides and now freed to flounder between knowledge and non-knowledge. This then is a Blackness premised in aberrant movement: Untranslatable and ungrammatical, it is nonetheless generative for new ways of singing and signifying the "us," leaving a ruin of corpses in its wake.

Crucially for Marriott, Fanonian Blackness is irreducibly performative, carrying a transformative potential in ways that exceed Western discourses that seek to delimit it. In particular, he conceives of Black performativity through the theatrical notion of corpsing. To corpse is to upend the rules of script and direction: It is the death of theater (*Whither*, 321). Because the actor cannot anticipate having "messed up," corpsing also carries with it unpredictability, often leading to infectious laughter on the part of the audience and feelings of shame and inadequacy on the part of the actor. As Marriott explains, corpsing reveals a gap between the façade of "self-mastery" and the underlying truth of that which is "unmasterable and unrepresentable" (321). Corpsing then is defined by the "knowledge and loss of rules determining a subject" and further reveals the illegitimate foundations upholding the arbitrary rules of performance to begin with (325).

Marriott connects corpsing on the stage to corpsing in the social world. This takes especially complex form for Black peoples historically foreclosed from "successfully" performing the humanist subject of rights, from slavery to the present (325). In my understanding, Marriott provides two different

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but related forms of Black corpsing. The first form of corpsing delineates the ways in which, as soon as "Black life" aspires to play whiteness at its own game – to perform the rules of upward mobility, electoral politics, rights and representation, and all the discourses attending sovereignty through racialized capitalism, the state, and civil society – it becomes condemned to social death and given over to bodily harm under the edict of anti-Blackness. For those Black peoples who realize that the roles of whiteness were never for them to begin with – or who have sought to assume those roles at the threat of death – corpsing in this first sense is, he says, "*a fatal way of being alive*" (323, italics in original). This first sense of corpsing conceives of Black life as always already socially dead in advance because it is circumscribed by an all-totalizing whiteness, in ways that we have seen in "Eskimo (after Wiley)."

Marriott, though, offers another form of meta-corpsing that is underpinned by and yet surpasses the first sense. Here, Black corpsing appears through a deliberate "impersonation" and "performance of a corpse," shamelessly enacting a failed aesthetic performance of social failure (327). Marriott takes for granted Black life as a failed performance before whiteness, which is all too evident through the disposability of Black life through police killings, hate crimes, and dying while Black (326–27). But what of those Black cultural productions that purposefully corpse? By embracing the errors that distinguish the corpsed performance of whiteness in the social world, such artworks might clarify what makes Black life unlivable and delineate the ways in which Blackness can be appropriated and impersonated at any moment by anyone due to its fungible character. This second sense of Black corpsing corpses (that is, failingly performs on purpose) the deathliness of racial discourses, which, too, are shown to be illusory in their presumed mastery, and, even further, works towards abolishing attachments to structures of sovereignty through deathly *jouissance* (330).

Consider, for instance, his poem "Back in the Ends (after Kano)," which alludes to the grime artist's track "Endz" from *Made in the Manor*, winner of Best Album at the Music of Black Origin Awards in 2016. Marriott writes with a keen awareness that his poems, like grime tracks, risk affirming and reinscribing the violent conditions that produce these art forms in the first place, thereby extending the "life" of social death under racialized capitalism, as when he writes: "Each poem / an affront to the covered coffin. Nothing / happening" (19). Like Kano, Marriott fully realizes the radical failure of his art to approach the very real experiences of violence and death confronting Black peoples in the Ends as elsewhere.

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Grime knows and exploits its nonidentical relation to social realities of Blackness.

Marriott's self-reflexive corpsed performance of Black death becomes particularly poignant in the final stanza of "Back in the Ends" as the vatic speaker deictically encases "here, in these bars" the Black lives destined for extermination due to what I take to be the poem's signaling of anti-Black (police?) murder and asphyxiation. The poem concludes:

> the just born names
> pushing into
> even deeper extremities, contemplating
> codes
> spitten over the rim of broken teeth,
> like the choked air
> pushed through black mouths
> exhaling the gentle gusts
> and the gags through which we maintained
> our endless corpsing
> rising from too much ra ra
> to a dreadful exhalation
> itself choked by silence
> empty mouths
> full of nothing but echoless beginning,
> and a sound that is nameless
> that only hood niggas can sing. (21)

The progression of these lines creates particular difficulties in "meaningful interpretation," which depends, I think, on a central tension between lineation and syntax. This difficulty – what I take to be a blind spot, or something ineffable or irreducibly opaque – is crucial *both* for Marriott's project of writing collective Black death under whiteness, which his poetry encircles, *and* for activating forms of Blackness that must remain *untranslatable* and *unreadable*. Let me start with an attempt at paraphrasing these lines. It would seem as though, from the moment of birth, the "just born names" are pushed into "even deeper extremities" (of untenable conditions of social death?), which in turn becomes the source of lyrical innovation ("contemplating codes") and poetic inspiration ("gentle gusts") of grime bars. The codes of grime, however, seem to be little more than the proleptic expression of actual death. The hyperbolic expressions of lyrical breath – "rising from too much ra ra" – find their destined reality in the "dreadful exhalation" of last breaths. This careening movement towards death is further emphasized by the series of present participles ("pushing," "contemplating,"

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"exhaling," "corpsing," "rising," "beginning"), registering the "endless corpsing" against Black peoples as they are "choked" and "gagged," emptied out and full of nothing.

There is no question that these lines encrypt corpses, aesthetically approximating the exhalations of Black life under social death. At the same time, though, Marriott subtly overlays a redoubled Black corpsing of death, one that is not so much represented or even intimated but deliberately performed *in error* and at a remove. For instance, the poem implants a simile comparing "codes spitten over the rim of broken teeth" as "like the choked air." This simile creates a minimal but important distance – a nonidentity – separating actual instances of asphyxiated Black life and those that become encoded and "corpsed" in the poem. Extending the simile further, the poem's "gentle gusts" are, punningly, "the gags through which we maintained / our endless corpsing." Marriott's "gag" puns on choking and joking. As I see it, the gag's on us. The speaker invests endless ironic performance as a defiant form of survival and maintaining the collective "we," "rising from too much ra ra." That is, in purposefully failing to perform or approximate the very real instances of Black death, grime holds out its own space in which a "we" is "maintained" in "sound." Indeed, Marriott alludes here to the poem's grime source, Kano's "Endz":

> It's gutter inside, outside, rah rah rah
> Where too many man talk 'nuff blah blah
> That's just the endz though
> That's just the endz (Kano, 1:04)

Kano himself was quoting Dizzee Rascal's track "Hype Talk," as if his bars may well be nothing more than hot air ("rah rah rah," "blah blah"). With this in mind, I read Marriott – after Kano, after Dizzee – as staging an endlessly ironic performance of death that culminates in "silenced / empty mouths" that, however "full of nothing," nonetheless resound an "echoless beginning" without signification. Before the cultural imperative to "say their names," where the names in the poem are empty crypts for lives already consigned to becoming corpses from the moment of birth, grime purposefully fails even that edict, pointing to its own emptiness through the garrulousness of "rah rah rah." For him, this emptiness is not empty at all but paradoxically an already existing plenitude, in the positive sense: "a sound that is nameless / that only hood niggas can sing." Lurking behind these final lines, however, there is yet another, silent song "that only hood

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niggas can sing," a song intimated but not heard here in these bars, because it is the dreadful exhalation of last words. Something like "I can't breathe."

Marriott's vertiginous descent into the void of petrification and the failures of meta-corpsing open up the possibility for the "invention" of anarchic, nonidentical forms of Blackness, but here without blueprint and without guarantees. I place the word invention in quotation marks because it is another concept that Marriott borrows from Fanon and that informs his own poetic practice. "I must constantly remind myself," writes Fanon, "that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life" (*Black Skin*, 204). In Marriott's eyes, Fanonian "invention" interrupts, dislocates, and refuses the "political limits of racialization": It occurs through physical, embodied, and verbal acts of disobedience to instantiate "a new order of work and energy" (*Whither*, 244). Invention erupts due to untenable conditions that compel subjects to act in ways not reducible to will but through forces beyond their control. Invention, moreover, carries with it a "non-sovereign politics" arising from the non-sovereign position of the wretched themselves: what Fanon calls "the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination" (*Wretched*, 130). The politics of invention redoubles violence: Once social conditions have reached their breaking point, the wretched – "the part that is not a part," or those who occupy the impossible position of "included exclusion" (*Whither*, 259) – spontaneously intensify and accelerate violence, driven neither by desire nor by will but seized by forces that disarticulate and reinvent social relations and forms of collective being in ways that become illegible, cacophonous, disorganized, and without program (260–61). Invention, then, is the performativity of surplus that seeks to surpass and humiliate the totality of colonial control and the racialized state.

The surplus energies of lyric, for Marriott, are especially suited to giving poetic expression to the unruly politics of invention, which we can see especially prominently in "Murking (after Stormzy)." Like duppying, murking in grime constitutes a violent act of linguistic aggression against one's enemies, popping them off with the bullets of one's bars. The poem begins with a mordant atmosphere evocative of Stormzy's tracks, such as his hit single "Cold." The poem begins with "a moment exploding," suddenly frozen in "the unerring cold of a thousand cellular voices," with "walls bathed in sweat / Bodies in a heap in a forgotten basement" (17). From this claustrophobic scene, Marriott writes an off-kilter lyric "I," physically violated and detained by police:

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And here I am
barefoot bleeding
leaning against the po-po
so viciously off-key
from one imploding moment to the next
(the human orphaned
from its spirit),
where each thing granted is farther off (fenced)
(and each random zero
is beside itself with boredom)
still murking
still mired in the nevernever. (18)

Initially, the lyric "I" seems to assert itself as fully present (deictically "here"). The subsequent lines – through their abrupt indentation, heavy enjambment, and irregular rhythm – suspend and fracture the "I," as if the metrical feet of the poem were reduced to bleeding flesh and the jagged lineation were violently contorted to stanzaic shape, much as the "I" is forced to lean against the po-po. The lyric speaker is simultaneously held in perpetual detention without time ("from one imploding moment to the next"), divided from itself and forever abandoned ("the human orphaned / from its spirit"), and oscillating back and forth between a resignation of its complete confinement ("fenced") and its ceaseless desire for imaginative release through the performance of slaying ("still murking"), however chimerical ("still mired in the nevernever"). In these ways, the lyric "I" achieves an illusory presence only by being held in deferral and never reaching its mark (how could it when it is so consistently denied the capacity to perform let alone achieve fulfillment?), at once disembodied while also reduced to mere body: one "zero" among others, beside itself and unknown.

In addition to its performative aggression, "murking" in grime also potentially leads the speaker to forms of realization and knowledge about oneself and one's world. In the final stanza, we can see a similar movement in Marriott's "Murking," but with a difference in that it proceeds towards what the poet has called "the abyssal" structure of Blackness, or the knowledge of non-knowledge and the being of nonbeing. The final stanza reads:

Me,
a man, singing in the circuits,
hearing
a voice bored by itself,
a voice reserved for nothing,
the smoked just too pure

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for what really matters
when the fix remains too fixed
for the expanses the distances
and passion is the least delirious
and what remains of the junk means
that what could not be made good
is the still point
of heaven.
(That's how it is – the infinite
always dissolving into leaven
like ash
in celestial fire,
the remainder
suddenly flooded with stars.) In me
a petrol-soaked carnage, its art
igniting fires on the streets. (18)

In a cascading movement downwards, the solitary "Me," held in suspension as if staring over an abyss, slides into simply "a man" (potentially anyone) "singing in the circuits." This latter phrase gathers all at once the "Me" entrapped within the tightly enclosed circuits of the Ends and under constant surveillance and policing, the "Me" performing on the itinerant circuits of the grime scene, the "Me" as mediated into electric current on a digitally recorded grime track, as well as "Me" singing the figurative circuits of revolution.

These lines carry the lyric "Me" towards two contrasting forms of Black poetic knowledge, which in truth eclipse one another. And these two trajectories towards Black poetic knowledge prove inseparable from the racialization of the universal/particular relationship. In *Whither Fanon*, Marriott describes the mutual eclipsing of universal whiteness/universal Blackness as "the abyssal." "To the extent that the black experience of the world is unknown to itself, lost in abstract self-delusion," due to the imposition of whiteness and a white social world, "the abyssal is both the summit of what is known and a path into the unknown, and as such everything enters into its tumultuous movement" (315).

Here's how I see it. If whiteness – and all its attendant metonymies in these lines including "man," "pure," "good," "heaven," "the infinite," and so on – masquerades as a universal category abstracted from its historical, material basis in anti-Black violence, in these broken, ungrammatical lines the "Me" fully realizes how universal structures of whiteness (as enforced by the po-po) depend upon Blackness as the radical particular that must be detained, controlled, and negated: or not entirely negated, just enough to

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exist as "the junk" and "the remainder." Bleeding and alienated, "a voice bored by itself / reserved for nothing," the "Me" sings the delirious song of "what could not be made good." He has reached "the summit of what is known": that Black life matters only in so far as it is made for death before white structures of sovereignty.

At the same time, however, it is precisely through its descent into radical particularity that the "Me" also enters onto "a path into the unknown," opening onto another, contrasting form of Black poetic knowledge that, however hazy, comports its own universalism. As difficult and opaque as these lines certainly are, it seems to me as though their unruly paratactic structure works to "unfix" the all "too fixed" racist discourses of whiteness and Blackness. Through its alienation and disembodiment, the "Me" speculates upon whether "what remains of the junk" and "what could not be made good" might metaphorically *be* "the still point of heaven." In other words, it is as if the "Me" intuits an obscure form of Blackness *unto itself*, but now seen darkly from below. Or, in the parenthetical lines, the speaker comes to momentarily glimpse how the apparent "infinite" of whiteness is but an illusion, "always dissolving," and "like ash / in celestial fire," leaving "the remainder" – an inassimilable difference of nonidentical forms of Blackness – which itself carries its own cosmic significance, "suddenly flooded with stars." Or, as Fanon lyrically expresses, "black consciousness is immanent in itself. I am not a potentiality of something; I am fully what I am" (*Black Skin*, 114). Along this second line, the wretched, Black "remainder" exceeds racial discourses and structures of colonial sovereignty. If we read these lines slowly, it is as if this "remainder / suddenly flooded with stars" becomes implanted "In me." The lyric "me" becomes flooded with immanent forms of Black meaning merging with itself: the ways in which Black life does in fact matter for itself and to itself through its political non-sovereignty and in the name of inventing the world anew in and through its own foundation.

In body, voice, and soul, the "Me" is caught in the impossible predicament of simultaneously recognizing the utter meaninglessness of Black life before the law *and* the cosmic significance of a Blackness immanent unto itself. This condition of impossibility explains why the poem spontaneously combusts in the final lines. Indeed, it is this anarchic remainder of a Blackness suddenly flooded with stars that ignites "In me / a petrol-soaked carnage." In the final lines, the "me" is no longer the solitary agent but rather the wretched vessel through which forces beyond its control become mediated into art, spitting bars of fire to incite riots on the streets. In excoriating irony, "Murking" revels in the ways in which Blackness has been

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and continues to be condemned to negation before the (very powerful) façade of white universality. By self-consciously embracing death and negativity, Marriott's "Murking" humiliates processes perpetuating social violence and affirms what is (for him) truly "Black" in life: an anarchic, albeit unknown form of Blackness whose cosmic immanence and irrepressible difference propel his speaker towards the fulguration of non-sovereignty, at once entrapped within yet annihilating racial antinomies by "set[ting] the anti-black world on fire" (*Whither*, 319).

Throughout my discussion, I have traversed the movement in Marriott's poetry from petrifying negrophobia ("Eskimo (after Wiley)"), towards self-reflexive corpsing of Black death ("Back in the Ends (after Kano)"), culminating in non-sovereign forms of Blackness whose anarchic energies would burn down the white social world to invent a politics of life from beyond the flames ("Murking (after Stormzy)"). The surplus energies of lyric – the masks of persona, the redoubling and splitting between the "I" and the "you," extended similes and metaphors through the violent yoking of tenor and vehicle, the creation of disjointed stanzaic shapes containing disembodied speaking subjects located (trapped) in ambiguous scenes of address, irreducible tensions between lineation and syntax, paronomasia and sonic reverberations, and the heightened verbal interplay between sound and sense to the point that coherent "meaning" and "interpretation" become almost impossible, leading his speakers and readers into a space of dark opacity and radical uncertainty – all of these qualities furnish the aesthetic material through which Marriott's writing invents a poetics of riot as a generalized structure by virtue of his critical conception of Fanonian Blackness and his lyrical adaptations of grime. Still, as much as his writing stares unflinchingly upon the endless cycles of social death without offering the false illusion of redemptive freedom, Marriott's messianic vision is nonetheless future directed, in what he calls "the future imperfect" (*Whither*, 312). For Marriott, the temporality of "the future imperfect" dwells in uncertainty. It embraces revolutionary violence – through the surplus remainder of Blackness as the true political agent of non-sovereignty – as generative for a total and complete transformation in social relations by embracing the death-in-life comprising the anti-Black world.

Conclusion: What Keeps Happening

As I have shown across this chapter, for Kapil and Marriott (as for many artists), the material, historical conditions that render certain populations less than human and condemned to living social death are one and the

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same as those that produce cultural productions mediating those realities. Their renovations of lyric writing, in turn, furnish two different aesthetics of violence to approach a politics of abolition. "In other early versions of the novel, Ban's death is a catalyst for the riot," Kapil explains in the appendix, "but when I asked who killed her – so many faces (both brown and white) came forward" (99). The multiplicity of discursive framings, performative stagings, and over-writings labors towards a recognition of collective, rather than only individual, responsibility for social violence, responsibility that is unevenly distributed across racial divisions and geographic boundaries – but that necessarily implicates Kapil herself, her many collaborators, and her audiences and readerships too. In the process, her poetics of riot performs an auto-sacrifice of her cultural productions, too. That is, if *Ban* is born out of the very same forces and discharge that subject certain peoples to death, this requires the annihilation of the text itself as one small step towards abolishing the "stupid," "bland" conditions that produce her art in the first place (*Ban*, 84). In the end, *Ban* may do no more than trace the outline of bodies whose "skin is bland and eases off the bones at the least touch" (85). And yet it is from that empty, hollow space that Kapil holds in reserve the capacity for her art, in its self-negation, to speak in tongues of flame, awaiting those, beyond the text, who may take up direct action.

For Marriott, the Orphic descent into the abyss may well amount to nothing more than an illusion, or as Marriott says, "the promise of illusion's afterlife" (*Whither*, 237). Black poetic knowledge – what he variously calls "the inarticulable or unimagined horizon," "without form and without mode," "the incarnation of an ungraspable demand" – is a necessary illusion that takes for granted its own deceits and deceptions. It nonetheless holds out the possibility for animating another politics of life from within and potentially beyond the existing coordinates of racial capitalism and social death. We can think of it as the negative image of "freedom" as seen through a glass darkly, one that requires, as he says, "the blackest leap of all" (237). The inventive leap plunges Blackness into violence, and if what arises seems to resemble "criminality," that is because it leads towards the political invention of non-sovereign forms of Blackness (229). Nonprescriptive and open-ended, his poetics of riot labors towards "an affirmation of the life that is *not*" (345), exulting in a "life lived in absolute heterogeneity" (313). Or, as Fanon says regarding the wretched confronting the enemy during revolt, "as for us, we sing, we go on singing" (*Wretched*, 135).

These artists remind us that, from an ethical standpoint, a politics of abolition carries with it a positive, even utopian lyrical expression for the

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desire of a world that affirms life through the sociality of persons, not things. In the meantime, theirs is a poetry that embraces death as the reality for those most vulnerable to racialized capitalism and state violence, which serves to protect private property and the ruling elite and nothing more. This poetry directs readers to the very real lives whose very real deaths have happened, are happening, and continue to happen, inciting raucous shouts, broken glass, and fires in the streets.

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