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Performing Specters of Imperialism: Affect, Terror, and the Body in Naveed Mir's The Cinco Sanders Show

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ABSTRACT

Examining the work of Pakistani-American performance artist Naveed Mir's *The Cinco Sanders Show*, this thesis explores Mir's work as conjuring the specters of the terrorist, tortured, and targeted bodies of the U.S. war on terror and unpacks ghosting/haunting as a primary technology of U.S. imperialism. Through close readings of Mir's characters Party Mummy and Mohammed the Plumber, I argue that Mir's affective performance style evokes and complicates what I refer to as the three decorporealizing logics of the war on terror: the body-made-threat, the body-made-target, and the body-made torture. Understanding these processes as violent forms of racialization that take shape in the construction of the terrorist other, the tortured Guantánamo Bay detainee, and those brown bodies targeted and killed by U.S. drone strikes, I explore the relationship between these forms of decorporealizing racialization and everyday forms of racialization, which call into question modern understandings of the body itself.

INDEX WORDS: War on terror, Performance studies, Affect theory, Anti-imperialist feminisms

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1 INTRODUCTION

With a bed sheet fashioned into a turban, held up by a tall beehive wig, Mohammed the Plumber silently ascends onto the stage at Coffee Underground's Comedy Open Mic Night in Greenville, SC. The audience giggles in nervous discomfort and anxious anticipation. "Well, goddamn," he says through a large fake mustache in a heavily affected Southern accent. "As-salaam alaikum, motherfuckers."[1] Sitar music plays in the background, reminiscent of that of Orientalist representations of snake charmers. As the music ends, Mohammed the Plumber tells his first joke: "If you wipe your behind with your bare hand but consider bacon dirty, you might be a towelhead." In the edited footage of the night, an episode of Pakistani-American performance artist Naveed Mir's *The Cinco Sanders Show*, [2] sitar music rings out again as the scene cuts to the episode's introduction. Suddenly Mir appears on the screen as himself, a slightly disheveled hipster in skinny jeans and a homemade Sadie Mae Glutz t-shirt smoking a cigarette against the backdrop of a camel in the desert. Mir gazes into the eyes of his presumed viewer as he coaxes up the translucent spirit of Mohammed the Plumber with his hands. Slowly, Mohammed rises on the screen until he appears to cover Mir's body, almost inhabiting it. Neither figure can be distinguished from the other. They both appear as ghostly outlines, a spectral entanglement of Orientalized Muslim and South Asian masculinities.

This is not an uncommon image on the website for Mir's *The Cinco Sanders Show*, a web series that consists of nine episodes beginning in June 2011. Inhabited by a wide array of characters, the show features the racially ambiguous Cinco Sanders, Zeppo the Clown, Mohammed the Plumber/Officer/Patriot, and Party Mummy; and it chronicles events such as the 2011 South Carolina Republican primaries, Occupy Portland, and many of Mir's musical performances of thrashy psychedelic punk rock. Both implicitly and explicitly, the episodes of

The Cinco Sanders Show explore the complex relationship between racialized bodies, the U.S. war on terror, American nationalism, pop culture, and mainstream U.S. politics. Relying on a style of performance art that cultivates intense affective experiences for audience members and viewers, Mir's work becomes a point of collision—temporal, spatial, and discursive—deploying that intensity to implode the geographic and corporeal distance between terrorist and patriot, the U.S. and those places and people with whom it is at war, and constructions of innocence and complicity in the perpetration of racialized violence in the U.S. war on terror.

It is in the racial landscape of a post-9/11 U.S., wherein the brown male body is always already coded as representing Muslim terrorist threat,[3] that my exploration of Mir's work is situated. Drawing on Orientalized configurations of Muslim masculinity as mystical, monstrous, and inherently dangerous, *The Cinco Sanders Show* explores these processes of racialization for the brown male body in the U.S. war on terror. This thesis engages Mir's work to interrogate racialization as an affective, embodied, and intercorporeal process in both its everyday instantiations for brown male bodies in the U.S. as well as in extraordinary practices of racialization such as detention, torture, and targeted killings in the U.S. war on terror. Mir's deployment of affective intensities highlights embodied experience and self-perception as intercorporeal processes asymmetrically shaped by both race and gender, wherein through intercorporeal exchange perceived bodily boundaries break down to reveal a body radically and dangerously open. By disrupting processes of racialization for the white American bodies with which he interacts, wherein those bodies seek to ground themselves through intercorporeal interactions with the racialized other, Mir both evokes and calls into question modern understandings of the body as a closed and autonomous system. Specifically, Mir's performances point to what I refer to as the decorporealizing logics of the war on terror—the body-made-

threat, the body-made-target, and the body-made-torture—imperialist logics reliant on constructions of a racialized enemy who perpetually exceeds the limits of corporeality to haunt the metropole. Examining the affective and spatial similarities between Mir's performances and practices of detention, torture, and targeted killing in the U.S. war on terror, this thesis asked how Mir's work connects everyday forms of racialization to extraordinary forms of racialization in the war on terror and what work Mir's performances do toward intervening in these processes on the level of affect and sensation. In exploring these questions, it became clear that the dual processes of ghosting/haunting function as a persistent and salient mechanism deployed as a technology of imperialism in the war on terror. Here, understandings of the racialized body and its spatiotemporal locatability are deconstructed through perpetual processes of de- and reterritorializations in the name of empire, calling the very meaning of modern corporeality into question.

1.1 Literature Review

This literature review explores constructions of terrorist subjectivities in the war on terror, processes of racialization, and the ways in which affect and performance studies, as well as anti-imperialist feminisms, can be used to further understand processes of racialization and subjectification. Before proceeding, it is necessary to more fully define affect, described by José Esteban Muñoz as "the variation that ensues when surfaces, often bodies, come into contact. . . . the field of interaction between bodies."[4] To this definition I add that Muñoz's "variation," following the work of Brian Massumi, is interchangeable with intensity.[5] Affect then is characterized by degrees of unqualified intensity in zones of contact between surfaces and bodies.[6] And if affect is unqualified intensity, emotion here is "qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically

formed progressions."[7] Emotion becomes the attempt to make affect intelligible, though it is important to note that there are necessarily disjunctures that occur and nuances lost as a result of this translation. This distinction will become infinitely important as I explore Mir's work and his interactions with audience members to craft a process-oriented understanding of the construction of racialized others in the context of the U.S. war on terror.

1.1.1 Racialization and the Construction of the Terrorist Other

Processes of racialization and subjectification for brown male bodies have been of particular interest to theorists working in Arab American and South West Asian and North African (SWANA) cultural studies, feminist and queer studies, and theorists exploring diasporic and postcolonial identity formation in the U.S. war on terror. Though the United States' complicated relationship to the Middle East and brown racialized others did not begin with the events of September 11, 2001, the implications of a post-9/11 backlash were extensive. In addition to increased racialized violence against those perceived to be Muslim or of Middle Eastern descent, the U.S. war on terror and legislation such as the Patriot Act (2001) and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (2011) have authorized the indefinite detention of suspected terrorists and expanded the grounds upon which governmental surveillance and action can take place.[8] Implicit in this increased governmental (and civilian) surveillance and policing of those suspected to be terrorist has been the coding of brown bodies, particularly brown male bodies, as inherently suspicious and potentially terroristic.

The shift toward adding "Muslim" to constructions of the Middle Eastern or Arab terrorist" was greatly accelerated after 9/11. Junaid Rana describes this functioning as a "corporal essentialism" in post-9/11 U.S. political discourses, wherein the potential for terrorism is viewed as inherent to male Muslim bodies: "terror and its ideology are understood as socially

and culturally learned and simultaneously internalized in the body."[9] These essentializing discourses necessitate that the male Muslim body must constantly disavow the subject position into which he is interpellated; he is positioned as always having to prove his status as non-terrorist. This need for perpetual renunciation of one's ascribed identity echoes Mahmood Mamdani's configuration of the "good Muslim"/ "bad Muslim" binary, whereby "unless proved to be 'good', every Muslim was presumed to be 'bad'. . . [and must] prove their credentials by joining in a war against 'bad Muslims'."[10] The brown male body must prove himself to be a loyal American while being constructed as having already internalized the potential for terrorism.

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Jasbir Puar defines "terrorist masculinities" as also always constructed to be queer masculinities: "failed and perverse, these emasculated bodies always have femininity as their reference point of malfunction, and are metonymically tied to all sorts of pathologies of the mind and body—homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, madness, and disease."[11] The terrorist, then, embodies not only the threat of danger, but also those qualities that are deemed generally undesirable within normative society. It is helpful to employ Michel Foucault's discussion of racism as it operates within biopower to better understand how it is that the male Muslim body comes to stand in as representative of these pathologies. Foucault defines biopower as "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die," wherein the state is concerned not strictly with the discipline of individual bodies but also with the regularization and management of populations. [12] Racism, according to Foucault, becomes the primary technique through which biopolitical goals are met.[13] Those rendered as other are endowed with criminality, madness, and "various anomalies," a practice that allows for

the regeneration of the state through mechanisms of purification.[14] Racism becomes the basis for both war and population management under the biopolitical regime.

Foucault further addresses the relationship between biopower, pathologization, and the racialized other in his discussions of abnormality. Invoking Foucault's "abnormals," Puar and Amit Rai connect the figure of the terrorist to that of the monster in their 2002 article "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots." Puar and Rai argue that monstrosity's relationship to the war on terror is part and parcel of "monstrosity as a regulatory construct of modernity that imbricates not only sexuality, but also questions of culture and race."[15] They note that "the monster is not merely an other; it is one category through which a multiform power operates. . . [and] if the monster is part of the West's family of abnormals, questions of race and sexuality will have always haunted its figuration." [16] Taking up articulations of the "terrorist-monster" in the war on terror, my research explores Mir's work as directly engaging the processes of racialization through which these subject positions are constructed. The characters Mir inhabits articulate and unravel notions of monstrosity and abnormality in the construction of racialized others, including the threat of contagion at work in logics of miscegenation and the relationship between pathologization and disability in the construction of terrorist masculinities and tortured bodies. In my research, I interrogate the complex relationship between affect, corporeality, and logics of contagion and abnormality in Mir's work, which explores biopower's monstrous figures and provides for a nuanced way of understanding the processes by which they become mapped onto bodies.

1.1.2 Subjectification, Affect, Orientation

This research is particularly interested in the affective and relational registers of subjectification. Though he does not specifically refer to the affective processes that result from

subjectification, Homi Bhabha describes the colonial other as being constructed through *productive ambivalence*, "that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity."[17] Bhabha explains that through the work of ambivalence, the colonizer and colonial other are co-constitutive. The colonizer's identity is reflected, reaffirmed, and at times disrupted by the productive ambivalence of the colonial other. In defining subjectification through these intersubjective circulations of emotion and history, Bhabha implies that subjectification is also necessarily an affective process. Although Bhabha grazes the role of affect in subjectification, his analysis functions solely in a discussion of the discursive construction of identities. Bhabha fails to account for the ways in which these identities are embodied and how these bodies experience the affective processes toward which he gestures. My research takes up Bhabha's productive ambivalence and considers its spatial and environmental implications. Figuring ambivalence as affective excess—whereby a space becomes saturated with intensity in ways that render difficult and disorienting attempts to qualify that intensity—I argue it becomes possible to see the transformative possibilities to which Bhabha gestures when he describes that this productive ambivalence "reveals the boundaries of colonial discourse and. . . enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness."[18]

Similarly, Amber Musser provides an exploration of affect as an integral component of racialization and subjectification but does so without fully accounting for the relationality of affect in these processes.[19] Building on Muñoz's discussion of affect as it can be used to rethink psychoanalytic theory and Oedipalization, Musser discusses the role of affect in the racialization of black bodies.[20] Reading Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs alongside Frantz Fanon's description of the bursting moment of racialization for the black body, Musser asserts that, "we

can understand the affective work in the making (and unmaking) of subjects."[21] Following Fanon, Musser articulates the ways in which the affective realm of subjectification produces affinity-based structures of "radical solidarity" that serve as "an important model for theorizing affiliation beyond the boundaries of nation and race."[22] While Musser provides a nuanced and exciting way of examining the role of affect in processes of subjectification, I expand on her work to more fully delve into the intercorporeality of affective processes, taking up that toward which she gestures but does not fully explore in Fanon's "radical solidarity."[23]

Uncovering the affective dimension of subjectification is a major project of Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.[24] Ahmed describes subject construction as a process of affective circulation:

> The hybrid work of identity-making is never about pure resemblance of one to another. It involves a dynamic process of perpetual resurfacing: the parts of me that involve 'impressions' of you can never be reduced to the 'you-ness' of 'you', but they are 'more' than just me. The creation of the subject hence depends upon the impressions of others, and these 'impressions' cannot be conflated with the character of 'others'. The others exist within me and apart from me at the same time.[25]

Subjectification becomes a process achieved through the impressions made by others—in other words, through the affective relationship of and between two or more bodies. In this way, the relationship between subjects in the construction of identities involves an affective economy similar to Bhabha's discussion of the productive ambivalence in the construction of the colonial other.[26] Subjects are co-constituted through affective circulation in processes of subjectification. Ahmed's work becomes particularly helpful in interrogating processes of racialization and subjectification in relation to the U.S. war on terror. Though much work has explored the affective qualities attached to popular configurations of the terrorist patriot and terrorist masculinities, little has been said regarding the affective processes at work in the construction of

these racialized identities.[27] Not only reflecting the larger discursive frameworks from which they emerge, how are these racialized constructions generated through the iterative, intercorporeal encounters of bodies and everyday experience? In my research, I argue that these intercorporeal affective processes themselves warrant considerable attention. It is only through cultivating an understanding of these processes that we can better explore the affective registers of subjectification and, thereby, the potential to disrupt, subvert, and transform these processes in meaningful ways.

One way to rethink processes of racialization is through the framework of critical phenomenologies and spatial theories. These theoretical approaches insist on considering the relationship between bodies and the spaces those bodies inhabit/create, foregrounding the relational and experiential in ways that allow for a nuanced consideration of affective circulation. In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed builds on her earlier discussions of affect through a queer phenomenological approach, "show[ing] how bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced by how they extend into space. . . . a model of how bodies become orientated by how they take up time and space."[28] It is in thinking through the relationship between bodies' orientations, spatialities, and embodied sensations in processes of racialization and subjectification that my work expands on that of Ahmed. My research reads Ahmed's theories of racialization alongside the explorations of intersubjectivity and bodily spatiality in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and Elizabeth Grosz's *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Real and Virtual Space* to explore racialization as an affective and spatial process in the post-9/11 U.S and in practices of detention and torture in the war on terror.[29]

Bringing this analytic framework to bear on both everyday racializations and extraordinary processes of racialization such as detention, torture, and targeted killing in the war on terror, my research sifts through the complex relationship between embodied and affective processes of racialization, discourses of war and terror, and the spatiotemporal dimensions of contemporary imperialism, characterized by its diffuse and often covert practices of violence and expansion. In exploring processes of racialization as affective and sensational phenomena, it is possible to begin to understand the connectedness between everyday instances of racialization and the affectively intense and intensely violent instances of racialization that occur in the systematic detention, torture, and targeted killings of brown bodies in the war on terror. By understanding these processes as distinct yet deeply related phenomena within imperialism's technology of ghosting/haunting, it also becomes possible to conceive of productive ways to disrupt these processes on the level of affect and sensation, rendering perceptible that which empire works tirelessly to obscure and invisibilize.

1.1.3 Rethinking the Politics of Performance

Building on the work of queer and critical performance studies, this research will engage the limits and possibilities of performance art as a way of intervening in dominant discursive formations. One of the ways I explore the political efficacy of Mir's work is through José Esteban Muñoz's formulation of disidentificatory performance. Muñoz defines disidentification as "a mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it. . . that works on and against dominant ideology."[30] Disidentificatory performances are those that operate from within dominant ideologies while pushing against and reworking them. Muñoz theorizes disidentification as a political strategy by drawing from Norma Alarcón's analysis of identities-in-difference as "sites of emergence,"

describing disidentification as "identities-in-difference emerg[ing] from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere. . . contribut[ing] to the function of a counterpublic sphere."[31] Disidentification occurs in moments of misrecognition; the subject does not recognize herself as being hailed, disrupting the interpellative process. In this way, the disidentificatory performance not only works on the disidentifying subject, but also on those spaces that subject inhabits. Particularly if we understand processes of subjectification as intercorporeal and embodied phenomena, disidentification becomes a way of reorganizing and reorienting spaces in what Muñoz identifies as decidedly utopic ways.[32]

Muñoz takes disidentification a step further in his discussion of *terrorist drag*, the deployment of which provides a useful analytic when examining the political potential of Mir's work to reveal and dismantle notions of race operative in the war on terror.[33] Using the example of the queer drag performance artist of color Vaginal Creme Davis and her embodiment of the white militiaman Clarence, Muñoz describes terrorist drag as "performing the nation's internal terrors around race, gender, and sexuality. . . us[ing] ground-level guerrilla representational strategies to portray some of the nation's most salient popular fantasies. . . . involv[ing] cultural anxieties surrounding miscegenation, communities of color, and the queer body. . . conjuring the nation's most dangerous citizen"[34] The queer body of color intentionally disidentifies in ways that strategically dislocate conventional racial stratifications in the biopolitical imaginary. The meaning and implications of terrorist drag also bear rethinking in light of the U.S. war on terror and the changing landscape of what terrorism has come to mean since the publication of Muñoz's *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Politics of Performance* in 1999. This call to reconsider Muñoz's uses of the word "terrorist" has also been suggested by Puar, who notes that Muñoz conflates the terrorist and the guerilla. [35] However, she does not explicitly take up the

implications of a post-9/11 U.S for disidentificatory performances of terrorist drag as a political strategy. This research builds on Puar's reworking of Muñoz by considering Mir's performances as political deployments of terrorist drag in order to craft an understanding of the potential of this strategy in a post-9/11 context.

One way that Mir's work expands Muñoz's original definition is through his use of ambush in the artistic process. In "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," Coco Fusco describes the use of ambush-like surprise as a key feature of her project with Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit…*:

> We chose not to announce the event through prior publicity or any other means, which it was possible to exert such control; we intended to create a surprise or "uncanny" encounter, one in which audiences had to undergo their own process of reflection as to what they were seeing. . . . In such encounters with the unexpected, people's defense mechanisms are less likely to operate with their normal efficiency; caught off guard, their beliefs are more likely to rise to the surface.[36]

I argue that the provocation of affective responses described by Fusco constitutes a form of tactical ambush within the disidentificatory performance. Audience members' experiences are wrought by ambivalent emotions and impulses – confusion, anger, disgust, amusement, fascination, attraction, repulsion. Precluding normative processes of intercorporeal subjectification, whereby the white American audience member's self-perception and subjecthood are grounded in and through the racialized other, the tactical ambush allows for an unpredictable proliferation of affective responses that prevent these iterative processes from occurring normatively.

Another line of thinking prevalent in performance studies particularly relevant to this project is that which is indebted to a Deleuzian and Spinozist framework, premised on the affective, temporal, and movement-based registers of performance. In his analysis of video art in

"Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect," Nigel Thrift argues that "the move to affect shows up new political registers and intensities, and allows us to work on them to brew new collectives in ways which at least have the potential to be progressive."[37] For Thrift, the affective registers of art are that which make it most politically salient. Thrift also identifies affect as a means for reorganizing spaces, referring to it as a form of "landscape engineering," and notes that the turn to art in reevaluating the urban "can show something about the energetics of movement and emotion and how that relationship is formed and made malleable in cities."[38] In Thrift's configuration, affect is already being modulated in the service of concentrating and distributing power within the framework of biopolitics and has become a commonplace way of organizing subjects' individual experiences as they navigate urban and commercial environments. In this way, it is then imperative to interrogate affect's transformative and political potential as a means of working on and against dominant societal frameworks.

Brian Massumi offers the concept of potential as a way of beginning to understand the political efficacy of art as action, defining potential as "the space of play—or would be, were it a space. It is a *modification* of a space. . . Each such modification is an event."[39] Following Massumi, potential is the unpredictable modifications that happen as a result of performance. In *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, Massumi reflects more directly on the way that potential functions in the context of political art. He builds on the term "relational architecture" to discuss what he describes as the *techniques of relation* in interactive art's *aesthetic politics*:[40]

> The technical staging of aesthetic events that speculate on life, emanating a lived quality that might resonate elsewhere, to unpredictable affect and effect. Stagings that might lend themselves to analogical encounter and contagion. That might get involved in inventive accidents of history. It's about architectures of the social and political unforeseen that enact a relation-of-nonrelation with an absolute outside, in a way that is carefully, technically limited *and* unbounded.[41]

It is the very unpredictability of art that generates its transformative potential. For Massumi, the political effectiveness of artistic work is based on the art's *event-value*[42] and the space of potential allowed for through the artistic staging. Massumi frequently refers to this potential as "creative contagion," a sort of radical open-endedness.[43]

Though the literature by Thrift and Massumi is exhaustive in their analyses of the ways Deleuzian frameworks can be used to understand the importance and political efficacy of art, their research does little to attend to issues of race, coloniality, and the experiences of bodies that inhabit their theoretical landscapes. To more fully explore the relationship between non-object philosophies, race, colonialism, and differential bodily experiences of sensation and intensity, I turn to the affective theories of performance in André Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*.[44] Here, Lepecki situates the performing body within a spatio-affective landscape whose very ground is contoured by histories of racist and colonialist violence: "The ground of modernity is the colonized, flattened, bulldozed terrain where the fantasy of endless and self-sufficient motility takes place. . . The kinetic spectacle of modernity erases from the picture of movement all the ecological catastrophes, personal tragedies, and communal disruptions brought about by the colonial plundering of resources, bodies, and subjectivities."[45] Through strategic political performances, the racialized other's body-in-movement raises the specters of colonialism, at times unwittingly, from beneath the "bulldozed terrain" and challenges the very frameworks of motility that guide imperial processes.[46]

Lepecki's exploration of the dancing body's ability to enact a transformative politics also provides an avenue by which to consider intentional bodily movement more broadly. Extending Lepecki's readings of the political possibilities of the performing body outside of the realm of dance, I consider Mir's bodily performances in *The Cinco Sanders Show* as participating in a

similarly disruptive choreography in the affective and spatializing processes of racialization. Considering the implications of Lepecki's work in the context of Mir's performances also allows for an expansion of his work to account for the intercorporeal registers of processes of racialization. Mir's body not only interacts with the colonialist topography upon and with which his body performs, but his body also interacts with other bodies—specifically, white colonialist bodies. In this way, Mir's performing body enfolds and implicates colonizing bodies in his dynamic restructuring of the performance's spatial field, not only conjuring the specters made invisible by imperialism but also exorcising the specter of the innocent civilian who exists apart from and ignorant to U.S. imperialist violences.

1.1.4 Toward an Anti-Imperialist Feminist Affective Approach

In adopting an affective theoretical framework that attends to the specificities of American imperialism and the production of racialized others, I situate my analysis of Mir's work in the discursive interstices of anti-imperialist/decolonial feminisms, queer and critical performance studies, and non-object philosophy. In working to articulate an anti-imperialist affective theoretical approach, I draw from the work of feminist scholars such as Nadine Naber, Anne McClintock, Amira Jarmakani, Amy Kaplan, and Ann Laura Stoler.[47] In *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*, Nadine Naber describes a "*diasporic anti-imperialist feminist critique*" as one that accounts for the complex historical and place-specific nuances of power and identity "without losing sight of the larger picture, the empire and imperial war—a critique that succumbs neither to privileging the homeland over diaspora nor to a privileging of anti-imperialism over feminism."[48] Naber's diasporic anti-imperialist feminism encourages the researcher to hold taught multiple and competing alliances and tensions, not least of all those that arise from attending to issues of gender and imperialism simultaneously. In this research, I draw

on Naber's diasporic anti-imperialist framework to acknowledge the importance of interrogating U.S. imperialism at the same time that I acknowledge the necessary centrality of gender to this project. I expand on Naber's attention to diaspora to critique the function of distance, both physical and symbolic, in the context of imperialist expansion and in the construction of discourses that would elide empire's very existence. A key issue this research seeks to address is the multiple and dynamic ways that distance as a construct is used in the service of empire.

Toward this end, I build on the work of feminists who explore spatio-temporal distancing as a crucial technology in maintaining the legacies of Euro-American imperialism. Anne McClintock refers to this as "the invention of anachronistic space," wherein "the agency of women, the colonized and the industrial working class are disavowed and projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity. According to the colonial version of this trope, imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory."[49] Imperialism's construction of anachronistic space not only produces a progress narrative used as justification for imperialist projects (the evolutionarily advanced society working to bring up to speed the backwards colonial other), but it also works more insidiously in the ways in which it permits a physical and temporal distancing by the colonial society as it pushes the colonized other away and back. This distancing creates an endless cycle of deferred accountability in which the occupied peoples and the violences of imperialism are perpetually displaced elsewhere and, ultimately, nowhere.

I plan to address empire's spatiotemporal distancing in chapter one of my thesis to discuss how processes of de/reterritorialization operate as a prominent feature of the war on terror, though suffice it to say that this project necessitates engaging imperialist spatio-temporal

distancing, considering the ways in which it functions both as a technology of imperialism and as it occurs within the context of this research. In the spirit of Puar's admission that her work in *Terrorist Assemblages* necessarily reifies September 11 as event, I must be cognizant that my own references to events in the war on terror such as September 11 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq contribute toward the reification of an imperialist spatio-temporality.[50] Bearing this in mind, I proceed cautiously, realizing that even as I attempt to pull distances closer and unthink linear time in favor of its feedbacks and feedforwards I do so while running the risk of more deeply inscribing the breadth of those distances and durations and speeds of those temporalities I call into question.

Similarly, it is necessary for me to specify that though I often speak of U.S. imperialism and the U.S. empire, I define empire as a flexible site of multi-directional asymmetrical exchange rather than a totalizing entity that always and only expands outward. In *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Amy Kaplan demonstrates the flexibility of U.S. imperialism to be a defining characteristic of the U.S. as nation.[51] Kaplan notes that "imperialism does not emanate from the solid center of a fully formed nation; rather, the meaning of the nation itself is both questioned and redefined through the outward reach of empire."[52] Kaplan's observations here provide for a more hopeful interrogation of empire, pointing to its anxieties and instabilities. Empire becomes a fluid process that Kaplan describes as "both expansive and contracting."[53] The metaphor of an organism that contracts and dilates is particularly useful here, as it helps to avoid reducing empire to existing within discrete eras or as "a steady state (that may 'rise or fall')."[54] Within this understanding of empire, borders are permeable even as they are characterized as impenetrable. The internal and external, homeland and foreign, are no longer separate realms, but are demonstrated to be co-constitutive of one another no matter how much it

may appear that power flows in a singular direction.[55] This understanding of empire will become increasingly important to this project as I explore the relationship between individual and national corporeality in the context of Mir's performances and the U.S. war on terror.

1.2 Method(ologie)s

In this project, I employ an anti-imperialist feminist affective approach to conduct an affective and spatial analysis of Naveed Mir's performance art in *The Cinco Sanders Show*. I analyze two of his performances, "Mohammed the Plumber" and "Party Mummy Interviews Occupy Portland Occupant (Extended Interview)," in both their live and digitized forms.[56] Before discussing the specific ways I engage with Mir's performances, it is necessary to clearly define what I mean by an anti-imperialist feminist affective approach. This approach is first ecological, [57] attending to the relationality of bodies to one another, their environments, and the discursive frameworks that interact with and inflect those environments; it is concerned with the fluidity of boundaries, the constancy of movement, and subjective becoming; and it explores the genealogies of power/violence/subversion that inflect individual and collective experience in the context of U.S. neoliberal imperialism. Emphasizing the uncertain and unpredictable webs of relation between bodies/subjects, locations, and discursive formations of power and meaning-making necessarily reframes what are historically viewed as static and fixed concepts within the liberal humanist tradition. Boundaries become blurry and fluid, apparent stillness is recast as constant motion, and accountability is situated in the play between multiple and shifting forces. This move toward relationality echoes Donna Haraway's charge that "feminist accountability requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not to dichotomy. Gender is a field of structured and structuring difference, in which the tones of extreme localization, of the intimately personal and individualized body vibrate in the same field with global high-tension emissions."[58] Haraway

locates feminist objectivity within these resonances, the interstices between the poles of structured difference. In this way, "objectivity" is always relational, always in motion, and must be accountable to the constancy of this movement. For the researcher, this means being accountable to the unexpected, the unforeseeable, and to a process-driven method that is attuned to its own becoming as it refuses any impulses toward crafting a prescriptive outcome.

An anti-imperialist feminist affective method as it is applied in this research also gleans much of its relational process-oriented approach from *activist philosophy*, defined by Massumi as "finding ways to understand any given mode of activity in these experiential terms, starting from an ontological primacy of the relational-qualitative and respecting the singularity of the activity's unfolding—although the word 'ontological' no longer fits. Process is only perishingly about being. But it is everywhere always about powers of existence in becoming. The concerns of activist philosophy are *ontogenetic* more than ontological."[59] This shift to an emphasis on ontogenetic rather than ontological concerns marks a shift away from ideas of being to those of becoming, which is critical in understanding racial and imperial formations as shifting and fluid webs of relation rather than ossified and monolithic structures. To better understand Massumi's configuration of activist philosophy, it is first necessary to explore what he means by a "primacy of the relational-qualitative."[60] For Massumi, experience is composed of two dimensions: the relational and the qualitative. He refers to these dimensions as simultaneous, "dual immediacies of process."[61] The relational register of experience refers to "bare activity," the "event under the aspect of its immediate participation in a world of activity larger than its own."[62] To return to my earlier discussion of affect/emotion, bare activity represents the realm of affect. It is unqualified felt experience, experience-in-becoming. Massumi describes the qualitative dimension of experience as "the feeling it has of participating in itself. . . . the feeling of its unfolding self-

relation."[63] The qualitative realm of experience, then, is the recognition of participation in the event. It is qualified felt experience, the feeling of being in the here and now even as that feeling must necessarily be virtual, a "lived abstraction."[64]

Taking the relational-qualitative dimensions of experience as the basis for an ontogenetic rather than ontological philosophy, it becomes clearer to see how it is that an affective framework is particularly helpful in exploring the political dimensions of performance. Ontogenetic philosophy makes room for an understanding of affective processes as they unfold in event-spaces. Ontogenetic philosophy also allows for a unique way of understanding processes of racialization and subjectification more fully, emphasizing the movement and complexities of process rather than working to create an ossified subject-as-object. In this way, it becomes possible to begin to sort through the circulation of affect and intensity in those processes in trying to understand exactly how it is they operate as technologies of imperialism.

It is in this framework of understanding experience as necessarily phantasmatic, what Lepecki refers to as a "hauntological force"[65]—simultaneously actual and virtual, where past, present, and future collide through sensation and cognition—that I conduct my readings of Mir's performances. In my analysis of his performance of "Mohammed the Plumber," I rely on both the mediated episode that appears in *The Cinco Sanders Show* and my own recollection of the performance in the summer of 2011.[66] The webisode "Mohammed the Plumber" is a video collage of footage compiled and edited by the artist. Though I focus explicitly on Mir's character Mohammed the Plumber, Mir splices and sutures footage from three separate performances during the summer of 2011: "Mohammed the Plumber" in Greenville, SC, "Mohammed the Patriot" in Portland, OR, and "Mohammed the Officer," in Portland, OR. The performances'

locations and dates are never made explicit in the episode, making it impossible for the viewer to distinguish between time and place.

This deliberate editorial choice is significant in several ways, but not least of all because it highlights my own experiences of the mediatized and live performances as indistinct. It is impossible for me to accurately distinguish in what ways my experience of the past performance is inflected by my later experiences with the mediatized performances and vice versa. As a result, I choose not to distinguish in my readings between the mediatized and live experiences of Mir's performance of "Mohammed the Plumber." In addition to building on my previous discussion of how this research intends to disrupt linear understandings of time, my decision here also follows a line of thinking in communication and performance studies that questions "whether there really are clear-cut ontological distinctions between live forms and mediatized ones."[67] In this way, I consider the mediatized and live performances of "Mohammed the Plumber" to function dialectically, both inflecting the virtual experience of Mir's performances for me as viewer and researcher.

In both my readings of "Mohammed the Plumber" and "Party Mummy Interviews Occupy Portland Occupant (Extended Interview)," I will conduct an analysis of the affective and spatial registers of Mir's performances. To this end, I concern my readings with the following areas of Mir's work: Mir's embodiment of the characters Mohammed the Plumber and Party Mummy, the characters' motility and spatiality, the embodiment and motility of secondary figures in the performances, the interaction between Mir's characters and secondary figures, my own affective relationship to the performances, and race as one of multiple "environmental power[s]"[68] that inflect and interact with the spaces and bodies of Mir's performances. Though these areas of inquiry appear separate here, it is important for me to note that I understand them

as being coextensive within the context of my readings, functioning relationally and simultaneously to produce the experience of Mir's performances. Last, in understanding race and colonialism as affective and embodied processes, I necessarily conduct my readings of Mir's performances within the broader discursive context of U.S. imperialism and the war on terror to consider the politically disruptive possibilities of Mir's performances.

1.3 Conclusion

Analyzing episodes of Mir's *The Cinco Sanders Show*, my thesis explores processes of everyday and extraordinary racialization and subjectification as affective and embodied processes that occur in the context of the U.S. war on terror. Taking Mir's performance style to be a way of inciting, engaging, and intervening in those processes, my research considers his work as a means of uncovering how affect and intensity work on and through bodies and spaces. Rather than taking the subject positions of male Muslim other and "terrorist-monster" as stable products of racializing discourses, this research asks what are the affective, temporal, and spatial dimensions of the processes that produce these articulations? In better understanding the processes themselves, it becomes possible to begin to craft an understanding not only of how those processes contribute to and perpetuate racist discourses in the context of U.S. imperialism but also the extent to which those processes can or cannot be modulated or subverted. Finally, this research explores the relationship between shadowy practices that necessarily function as the modus operandi of the U.S. war on terror and the (de)corporealities upon and through which those practices are enacted. The covert and de/reterritorializing practices of detention, torture, and targeted killings become indistinct and deeply imbricated categories whose maintenance hinges on the construction of empire's black holes, elsewhere and nowheres that shift and morph in accordance with the ever-changing needs of the imperialist project.

1.3.1 Chapter 1: Party Mummy and the Decorporealizing Logics of the War on Terror: The Body-Made-Threat, Body-Made-Target, and the Body-Made Torture

Building from a phenomenological analysis of Mir's character Party Mummy, who conducts a non-verbal, affective interview with a white male Occupy Portland occupant, I explore Party Mummy's interview as productive of a sort of chaotic disorientation surrounding race, subject-object qualification, and understandings of the body as a discrete and autonomous formation that confounds the racialized dynamics of the interview space. I argue that Party Mummy's interview style evokes and complicates what I refer to as the three decorporealizing logics of the war on terror: the body-made-threat, the body-made-target, and the body-made torture. Understanding these processes as violent forms of racialization that take shape in the construction of the terrorist other, the tortured Guantánamo Bay detainee, and those brown bodies targeted and killed by U.S. drone strikes, I explore the relationship between these forms of disembodying racialization and everyday forms of racialization. Specifically, I explore these instantiations of race as deeply related to dialectical processes of de/reterritorializations in the war on terror, a hallmark of ghosting/haunting as a technology of imperialism.

1.3.2 Chapter 2: Live Ammunition: Weaponizing Affect in Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber"

In this chapter, I return to the opening scene of my introduction to examine Mir's character Mohammed the Plumber. Focusing on the decorporealizing logic of the body-made-threat, I examine Mir's deployment of viral affect to theorize what I refer to as militant psychasthenia, an ecologized form of weaponized affect that works intercorporeally to radically reorganize the artistic event-space at once toward and away from the spectacle of the racialized other. Specifically, I examine the role that ambivalence plays in this context, wherein the event-space becomes saturated by proliferating and often incompatible forms of emotional and

sensatonal responses. Delving more deeply into decorporealization as a racialized phenomenon within contemporary imperialist practices, I explore the relationship between logics of defense, corporeality, and racialized otherness to examine the efficacy of Mir's performance as a form of what Amit Rai has called "molecular revolutions," a form of political intervention occurring in the realm of affect and sensation to effect political change through ecologies of intensity.

2 PARTY MUMMY AND THE DECORPOREALIZING LOGICS OF THE WAR ON TERROR: THE BODY-MADE-THREAT, THE BODY-MADE-TARGET, AND THE BODY-MADE-TORTURE

On October 06, 2011, an estimated five thousand Occupy Portland protestors descended on Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon in response to the growing Occupy movement sweeping cities across the United States.[69] Also descending on Pioneer Square that day was Party Mummy, a correspondent of *The Cinco Sanders Show* tasked with interviewing Occupiers for Mir's episode "Occupy Portland."[70] Covered in gauze from head to toe, wearing dark sunglasses and a red plastic beer-dispensing hat, Party Mummy commences his interview with a white middle-aged male standing near an Occupy encampment and drum circle. Moaning in pain, Party Mummy lumbers toward his interviewee, who responds by drawing back in sharp discomfort. Party Mummy continues to move closer and closer to the interviewee with only brief pauses in his loud wails. The field between the two bodies is saturated by a tension that seems almost palpable—their bodies form two poles held taut by the affective intensity building in their interaction. For a moment, Party Mummy is so near to his interviewee that the man reaches out to embrace him in an attempt to ease his despair. Party Mummy leans into the man's chest, resting his head there briefly before shrieking in horror and pulling back, a move reciprocated by the startled interviewee. The interaction continues as the two bodies begin to engage one another more antagonistically. Party Mummy grows increasingly frustrated, his cries transitioning into angry grunts and screams. The interviewee laughs and dances in awkward response. At one point, Party Mummy leans in dramatically toward his interviewee, whose body bends backward as if forced over by the power of Party Mummy's screams. The interview ends as Party

Mummy's cries trail off and he shrugs exhaustedly; the interviewee appears decentered and disoriented, looking around as if for something with which to ground himself.

Exemplary of Party Mummy's style, the interview demonstrates, and perhaps exaggerates, the primacy of bodily interaction and affect/sensation in processes of everyday racialization. Most importantly, the bodies' interactions denote what appears to be a dialectical tension between forces of attraction and repulsion. Though the interviewee is confused and uncomfortable throughout most of his engagement with Party Mummy, he also clearly exhibits degrees of fascination and curiosity about Party Mummy. He does not hesitate to agree to the interview when approached at the beginning of the video. By the end of their interaction, after a series of failed attempts to comfort, cajole, and antagonize the inconsolable Party Mummy, the man appears to treat Party Mummy as if he is truly a relic from a distant pharaonic past. The interviewee dances aggressively close to Party Mummy in a fashion that mimics an orientalized Egyptian style of movement. Despite his apparent discomfort, the interviewee cannot help but engage with Party Mummy. He is drawn into an affective exchange whereby both bodies come to be defined by their interaction. This nonverbal intercorporeal exchange between Party Mummy and his interviewee provides an embodied example of Homi Bhabha's discursive "*productive ambivalence* of the object of colonial discourse—that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha's emphasis).[71] Through the interviewee's ambivalence toward Party Mummy, his body simultaneously draws near and attempts to pull away as he appears both attracted to and repelled by him. The interviewee's bodily movements demonstrate the embodied process of othering described by Bhabha, whereby through his colonizing gaze and spatial orientation the man situates Party Mummy as racialized other.

However, rather than iterations of racialization wherein whiteness coheres through its relationship to racialized otherness, Party Mummy's interaction with his interviewee produces a sort of chaotic disorientation surrounding race, subject-object qualification, and understandings of the body as a discrete and autonomous formation. Critical in understanding the complexity of Party Mummy's interaction with his interviewee is the fact that the intensity of the situation is heavily amplified by the miscommunication that occurs between the two bodies. Though the two are mutually engaged in the circulation of affective intensity, they are simultaneously disconnected through their inability to understand and be understood. It is helpful to understand this as a form of *dis*communication, a term I use to build on Muñoz's disidentification.[72] If performances of disidentification are those wherein subjects experience and are experienced through moments of discursive misrecognition, operating from within dominant ideologies while pushing against and reworking them, discommunication occurs in those moments where intercorporeal affective and sensational interactions fail to cohere into normative embodied subject-object relations. If we apply Merleau-Ponty's theorization of intercorporeality to processes of subjectification, one might say that in order to maintain an understanding of the body as a discrete and autonomous formation, the body is only able to do so through demonstrations of its own radical openness to various forms of sensational communication between itself and other bodies. "Successful" or normative intercorporeal communication culminates in proving to the subject his or her wholeness. Closedness, in normative iterations of embodiment, always also belies openness. However, Party Mummy challenges us to consider the implications of "unsuccessful" intercorporeal communication, or discommunication. This is exemplified by Party Mummy's growing exasperation with his interviewee, who unsuccessfully seeks to normalize the intercorporeal exchange through attempts to appease Party Mummy. Party

Mummy's frustrated refusal to be pacified through his subjugation to whiteness leaves his interviewee baffled by what feels to the interviewee to be an unsuccessful interpersonal exchange. Their perceptions of the situation, and thus themselves, must be understood as incommensurate, even though forged through the same circulation of affect or intensity.

Understanding Merleau-Ponty's desire as synonymous with affect/intensity, we can understand Party Mummy's interaction with his interviewee as echoing Merleau-Ponty's description of desire's unlocatability and sexuality's ambiguity: "As an ambiguous atmosphere, sexuality is co-extensive with life. In other words, ambiguity is of the essence of human existence, and everything we live or think always has several meanings."[73] Though it may seem a matter of common sense to state that every interaction can be characterized by a multiplicity of meanings, it cannot be overstated in attempting to understand the nuances of affective exchange—particularly when attempting to understand how racialized identities come to be mapped onto bodies. In this sense, processes of racialization do not necessarily always reify the primacy of whiteness or overdetermine the embodied experiences of those affective processes. Rather, there exist in each interaction multiple potentialities for felt experience. This allows for readings of affective processes of racialization that account for moments of subversion and rupture wherein dominant narratives of whiteness do not always cohere normatively in embodied experiences.

Reading Party Mummy's interview with this in mind, wherein desire is unlocatable and perception occurs sensationally, makes it possible to understand his interaction with his interviewee without reinscribing narratives of racialized othering in ways that flatten the complexities of their dynamic. For example, focusing on his interviewee's nonverbal responses demonstrates the ways in which the man deploys a variety of strategies to regain control he does

not have within the interaction: he first attempts to comfort Party Mummy, then tries to diffuse the intensity by rendering it humorous (and thus impotent), and finally seeks recourse through antagonism and mimicry. Ultimately, however, he is left decentered and disoriented, as his attempts to reorient the dynamic in his favor have seemingly failed. Following Merleau-Ponty's understanding of self-perception, wherein I come to understand and ground myself in my body through my interaction with the other,[74] it is possible to read the interviewee's disorientation as a failed attempt to reconstitute himself through the construction of Party Mummy as racialized other. Though both bodies experience frustration through the misrecognition they incur in their interaction, they differentially experience this misrecognition as inhibiting their capacities for self-perception. Though Party Mummy is frustrated, angry even, his understanding of himself appears unwavering. He concludes the interview by simply waving his hands to signal he has had enough. His interviewee, however, consistently demonstrates confusion and imbalance. He is unmoored, indicating not only a sense of having been misunderstood but also a sense of self-misrecognition. This example of radical spatial reorientation, wherein the brown racialized other coheres into subjecthood through the dissolution of the white body's sense of corporeal groundedness, provides a unique way of understanding Party Mummy's performances as disrupting processes of intersubjective racialization.

These processes of affective and intercorporeal racialization, wherein the boundaries and understandings of the body break down through processes of intercorporeal exchange, prove to be one particularly salient manifestation of the decorporealizing logics of modern U.S. imperialism. I wish now to complicate this reading of Party Mummy's encounter with his interviewee to probe more deeply into its implications for modern understandings of the body and those understandings of the body as byproducts of and replicated through contemporary

imperialist war-making practices. Specifically, I argue that by disrupting the spatiotemporality of the racializing encounter, Party Mummy similarly evokes and calls into question what I refer to as the three decorporealizing logics of contemporary U.S. imperialism: the body-made-threat, body-made-target, and the body-made-torture. By examining empire's own practices in the war on terror, it becomes possible to understand that the human body is not a stable concept or entity but is rather part of a complex network of human and non-human matter, discursive and material formations engaged in dual and perpetual processes of de/reterritorialization. I offer what I refer to as the technology of ghosting/haunting in the war on terror as a way to understand the relationship between bodies, technology, and empire in contemporary ecologies of warfare as characterized by these dynamic de/reterritorializations and presence/absences. Specifically, it is necessary to consider the intersections between the decorporealizing that occurs in ghosting/haunting and the dissolution of corporeal boundaries in intercorporeal processes of subjectification in order to understand the links between everyday and extraordinary processes of racialization in the U.S. war on terror.

Anne McClintock describes empire's specters and spectral practices as results of the crisis of "violence and the visible,"[75] empire's need to perpetually produce images of an imaginary and ever-present enemy. Though McClintock's formulation is useful, it mistakenly privileges the visual in ways that occlude the complexities of haunting as a technology of imperialism. The visual should rather be understood as one form of perception operative in haunting's sensorial and spatiotemporal field, which can more broadly be understood as complex interplays, or crises, of presence/absence or de/reterritorialization. It is also necessary to understand that empire's crises are not those with which it must grapple, as McClintock argues, but rather crises that imperialism creates to further its continuous expansion and violent

practices. For example, empire does not just need to produce images of the enemy; rather, it must also constantly render that enemy imageless and spectral. According to the self-perpetuating logic of empire, the enemy must always and continuously de/reterritorialize. For it is from the threat of haunting, the enemy who reterritorializes where he should not be, that U.S. empire derives endless justification for practices of torture, detention, and killing in the war on terror. The question I seek to address, then, is, how and why does empire produce its own ghosts? The fantastic specters of imperialism warrant always more extreme responses to counter them. Additionally, haunting functions not only to absent those bodies that threaten imperial formations, but also to simultaneously obscure the violences of empire and its own shadowy material practices such as drone strikes and forced disappearances. Haunting is a dialectical process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in the war on terror, a magical choreography of bodies, technology, and discursive formations.

In order to explore the relationship between human and nonhuman bodies, discourse, and technology more effectively, I deploy what Levi Bryant describes as the practice of "onto-cartography," constructing "a map of the spatio-temporal gravitational fields produced by things and [semiotic] signs and how these fields constrain and afford possibilities of movement and becoming. . . mapping the spatio-temporal paths, the gravitational fields, that arise from interactions among things. . . [through] the recognition that things and signs produce gravity that influences the movement and becoming of other entities"[76] Crucial to this type of project is not only the work of deprivileging the human, but also an understanding of spatiotemporality as relative, multiple, and, perhaps most importantly, not limited by the constraints of proximity.[77] These dual characteristics of onto-cartography, deprivileging the human and reimagining spatiotemporalities, provide a particularly helpful analytic for conceptualizing the relationship

between Party Mummy and his interviewee as simultaneously a relationship between Party Mummy and the drone, Party Mummy and the tortured body of the detainee, or even Party Mummy and discourses of terror and surveillance in the war on terror. In this way, all of these entities function as units that affect and are affected by one another within a "*regime of attraction*,"[78] cultivating an understanding of U.S. imperialism that is defined not by borders and the acquisition/loss of territory, but rather as an ecology of human and nonhuman bodies, intensities, and resonances.

It is helpful here to invoke Ann Laura Stoler's understanding of imperial formations as force fields, formations "produc[ing] scales of differentiation and affiliation that exceed the clear division between ruler and ruled. These are enduring forms of empire, force fields of attraction and aversion, spaces of arrest and time."[79] As force fields whose gravitational signatures structure spatiotemporal paths, imperial formations have particular gravitational pulls that interact with human and non-human matter to construct these space-time pathways or curvatures. Empire's pull may grow stronger or weaker, diffuse or more concentrated, but it is important not to conceive of it as a static or permanent characteristic of empire. Keeping this in mind, I argue that the slippery nature of U.S. imperialism post-9/11, in all of its shadowy mutations and presence-absence, produces a gravitational pull that confounds modern understandings of spatiotemporality. It is at once here and there, everywhere and nowhere, and capable of drawing together seemingly distant and surprising objects and actors. As a gravitational force that interacts with environments of bodies and objects through complex ecological frameworks, contemporary U.S. imperialism's peculiar spatiotemporality eliminates the necessity of proximity in relational fields. Hence, the specters of terrorist threat, the tortured Guantánamo detainee, and the body targeted by U.S. drone strikes emerge through and are deeply connected

to Party Mummy's encounter with his interviewee and intercorporeal forms of everyday racialization.

The gravitational pull and spatiotemporality of empire also allow for a way of conceptualizing how it is that de/reterritorialization works within the war on terror. The complex and perpetual interplays of de- and reterritorializations in the war on terror are necessarily deeply related to a similar dialectic of presence/absence. For example, as soon as terrorism appears to manifest within locations or bodies, it almost immediately disappears back into the spatiotemporal mélange of the imperial formation. Similarly, in the moment the drone appears as a menacing spot on the horizon, it immediately vanishes without a trace. The markers of the drone's former presence, or the territorializing moment of the strike, are simultaneously the violent absence left in its wake—absence of human, plant, and animal life destroyed in the blast of the hellfire missile—and the presence of the environmental and bodily effects of the thermobaric weapon whose heat and shrapnel work on and interact with everything within the missile's 15-20 foot blast radius.[80] This example of the drone's present-absence and absent-presences provides a clear insight into processes of de/reterritorialization in the war on terror, where they occur such that presence is marked by the simultaneity of absence and absence by lingering residues of presence. Again, moving beyond McClintock's crisis of the visible as the primary way in which presence/absence and ghosting/haunting function in the U.S. imperialism, it is necessary to think of these dialectics as ontological hallmarks of imperialism.

In order to examine how Mir hijacks haunting as a technology from the gravitational pulls of empire, an analysis of the relationship between discourses of monstrosity and racialized otherness is helpful to understanding the relationship between the terrorist other, de/reterritorializations, and intercorporeality within the interview's regime of attraction.

Specifically, it is necessary to examine the mummy as Orientalized trope linking the brown male body to monstrous spectacle and the brown male body as Muslim terrorist threat in the U.S. war on terror. Here, the figure of the mummy provides a particularly salient manifestation of ghosting/haunting as a technology of imperialism, as the mummy both demonstrates a particular form of racialization and also always functions as the specter and threat of the undead. Scott Trafton cites the United States' fascination with the mummy as dating back to the early nineteenth century and as being historically linked to constructions of race—first representing the racialized other as "object of medical curiosity" and later as symbolic of monstrous and dangerous abnormality.[81] Trafton describes that by the 1830s, "the mummy was more and more associated with a particular kind of either literal or symbolic revenge, with themes of reprisal, retribution, and retaliation. . . a sign of *reanimation*, of the terrors of death disavowed" (Trafton's emphasis).[82] In this way, the mummy as racialized other comes to be synonymous with racialized other as shadowy and sensationalized threat to white supremacy and imperialism. This connection between the mummy and racialized other is not only premised on the mummy's threat of reanimation, but also his threat of reemergence more broadly. Animation itself deterritorializes and reterritorializes in the figure of the mummy.

The mummy as defined by Trafton provides an apt parallel to the construction of terrorist masculinities in the post-9/11 U.S. Jasbir Puar describes terrorist masculinities as "failed and perverse, these emasculated bodies. . . are metonymically tied to all sorts of pathologies of the mind and body—homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, madness, and disease."[83] The figure of the male Muslim terrorist, then, comes to stand in for all that is deemed abnormal within the biopolitical regime. This figure is also always inherently monstrous, as noted by Puar and Amit Rai in their 2002 article "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of

Docile Patriots."[84] The "*terrorist-monster*" represents " 'a shadowy evil'. . . the opposite of all that is just, human, and good. The terrorist-monster is pure evil and must be destroyed."[85] The figure's very existence is viewed as posing an indescribable threat to the sovereignty of the nation-state, necessitating the eradication of this dangerous class of bodies.[86] Junaid Rana draws this connection to the role of torture used in U.S. detention facilities in the war on terror. "Through a combination of physical and verbal abuse that connects carceral violence to racial terror, the body becomes a site on which to play out sovereign authority."[87] The tortured body of the brown male other becomes the disciplinary surface upon which racial anxieties are mapped and against which state authority and violence must be mobilized.

Understanding the deep historical connections between monstrosity, otherness, and the body also helps to underscore how these elements converge in the context of the U.S. war on terror. In "Paranoid Empire: Specters from Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib," Anne McClintock describes contemporary U.S. imperialism as a "phantasmagoric" formation of practices and violence producing specters through what she refers to as the dual crises of "violence and the visible" and "the enemy deficit."[88] In this formulation, empire must perpetually imagine and reimagine its enemies in order to justify its endless expansion and violences. The invisible enemy haunts empire's periphery, threatening to rematerialize at any moment. Though McClintock notes that this creates the conditions whereby empire must also produce a visible and territorialized enemy,[89] I am most interested here in the ways that empire thrives on the dual processes of de/reterritorialization through the continual preservation of the crisis of the visible. No sooner than the enemy is embodied and locatable, he is immediately rendered out of sight and out of reach, vanishing into the periphery of threat once more. Through this form of ghosting, empire accomplishes two tasks simultaneously. First, by rendering the enemy out of

sight and out of reach through practices such as extraordinary rendition and indefinite detention, ghosting erases the evidence of imperial practices and violence, eliminating the conditions that might hold empire accountable. Second, ghosting preserves the crisis of the visible.[90] The specter of the enemy remains that which haunts the metropole, threatening to reveal the violence of imperial practices and the stability of empire altogether. To more fully explore these dual valences of ghosting, I analyze the interconnected though distinct processes of body-made-threat, body-made-target, and the body-made-torture as decorporealizing logics of ghosting in the war on terror. All three of these processes necessitate a reconsideration of the meaning of the body in the context of modern warfare, where there is always a more-than or exceeding of the body within the peculiar spatiotemporality of U.S. imperialism.

In order to adequately understand how ghosting functions to absent brown male bodies in the war on terror, it is necessary to explore how a logic of haunting is constructed as simultaneously inherent to and in excess of the terrorist body. Junaid Rana describes the "model terrorist" as a body that is "mutable and can shift in comportment. . . trained not only to act in a chameleon-like way in sleeper-cell environments, but also to maintain multiple aliases and forged documents in order to confuse law enforcement."[91] Here, not only is terroristic potential seen as being inherent to the brown male body, but so too is the ability to dissemble in such a way that the body itself is rendered ultimately immaterial. Terrorism is not simply expressed through what Rana refers to as a "corporal essentialism," whereby "terror and its ideology are understood as socially and culturally learned and simultaneously internalized in the body."[92] Terrorism, rather, becomes defined by empire as the ability to transcend or escape the body's material corporeality—to deterritorialize or become-spectral.

Herein lies the real threat of the brown male body imbued with terrorist potential; he threatens to rematerialize anywhere at any time without warning. Amira Jarmakani has deployed the metaphor of radiation to describe the racialization of Muslim and Arabs in the United States. Radiation, according to Jarmakani, "suggests how racial logics can silently and invisibly permeate ethnic, religious, and cultural categories in potentially deadly ways."[93] It is helpful to extend Jarmakani's radiation-as-metaphor to describe not only processes of racialization in the war on terror but also the character of racialized threat itself. Radiation-as-metaphor provides a way of thinking through how it is that terrorist threat defies and exceeds the corporeal boundaries and threatens the bodily integrity of those it can "silently and invisibly permeate."[94] The terrorist threat of the brown male body is rendered spectral and airborne, capable of saturating and permeating the space of the metropole with the insidious promise that the terrorist could reterritorialize at any moment. The terrorist body is no longer the body proper, but rather he becomes the body-made-threat. The body-made-threat is always the body in excess of itself, threatening and defying modern corporeal boundaries through its presence and immediate intercorporeal interactions as well as through its absence, where threat becomes a vital force that functions even in the absence of the physical body from which it is imagined to emanate.

Though this logic is deployed by the state as a way of describing the threat potential of the brown male body, it is important to point out here that this is a masochistic logic of state terrorism. The specter of the terrorist, haunting and saturating the metropole, can be understood as one form of affective weaponry deployed by the U.S. in its war on terror. Here, the specter of the terrorist is produced by the state for the state in what is best described as a form of "*atmoterrorism*," "an assault on the enemy's acute environmental living conditions, starting with a poison attack on the human organism's most immediate environmental resource: the air he

breathes."[95] As an affective weapon within contemporary U.S. military practices, the threat produced through the specter of the terrorist creates the conditions whereby the United States besieges its homeland for the purposes of continued imperialist expansion. This is not to say that those events and bodies the U.S. characterizes as terrorist are merely figments of an overactive imperialist imagination (though one could argue that is, in fact, often the case); rather, it is to say that the U.S. signifies those events and bodies as producing threat such that threat is then reoriented for and by the state within the metropole. The specter of the terrorist, airborne and highly volatile, functions at the atmospheric level, a poisonous admixture of nowhere and everywhere that constantly threatens the nation's habitus. Here, the state turns its terror inward, creating the imperiled conditions that allow for its continued outward expansion and violence. The post-9/11 United States, then, provides for a particular understanding of what Foucault refers to as the "suicidal state" within biopolitics.[96] As perhaps an unintended consequence of atmoterrorism's unpredictability, it is only by targeting its own population at the environmental level that the state is able to create adequate justification for its imperialist biopolitical goals.

This also warrants a conversation of how haunting functions in other popular practices of war-making in the war on terror. Not only does ghosting function through the construction of racialized threat, but it occurs both literally and figuratively in practices of killing in the war on terror. Specifically, drone warfare and targeted killing in the war on terror function as particular manifestations of haunting as a technology of imperialism that produce what I refer to as the body-made-target. The regime of the drone is one that demonstrates a complex interplay between de/reterritorialization that perpetually ghosts its victims through the process of becoming-target. Jeremy Packer and Joshua Reeves note that deterritorialization is the dominant logic operative in the use of drones.[97] War-making is no longer reliant on territorial distinctions; rather, "empire

has established the entire globe as a stage on which it enacts a permanent state of exception, claiming universal jurisdiction to track and eliminate the terrorist threat."[98] The atmoterrorist qualities of threat in turn call for and necessitate a deterritorializing state response. However, it is important to note that there is more at play in drone warfare than simply its literal deterritorializing logic through the elimination of specific territorial concerns. Rather, as I mention earlier, drones and their targets participate in a complex and perpetually shifting interplay of de- and reterritorializations; the drone's present-absence and absent-presence are marked simultaneously through what the drone ghosts and through what is generated by its interactions with targeted bodies and objects within the missile's blast radius.

In "Drone Encounters: Noor Behram, Omer Fast, and Visual Critiques of Drone Warfare," Matt Delmont notes that "drones draw their deadly power from these twin claims to visual superiority: the ability to see and to resist being seen."[99] A prominent facet of contemporary biopolitical aeromobility, drones not only surveil and target populations without being seen but also demonstrate a particularly disturbing example of how ghosting functions in the context of drone warfare and its scopic regime. The casualties of drones are rendered invisible or spectral in two ways through these shadowy practices—through the secrecy of the drone program, which denies and misrepresents the number and identities of those targeted by drones,[100] as well as the drone's dehumanizing ability to reduce its victims to targets. The reduction of individuals to "targets and non-targets"[101] disappears those bodies from the realm of personhood as it is understood in dominant [visual] culture. No longer legible as persons, targeted bodies become specters within the ghostly ether of U.S. empire. As Packer and Reeves note, in drone logic, "it is not a question of locating ontologically given enemies, but rather producing enemies according to algorithmic determination."[102] In the encounter with the drone,

the body is no longer a body as such, but is literally digitized and constructed as an object that is either threatening or non-threatening, enemy or friend, and, ultimately, target or non-target.

In "Theory of the Drone 10: Killing at a Distance," Derek Gregory explores French theorist Gregoire Chamayou's discussion of the production of targets in the drone era.[103] Building on Harun Farocki's "*operational images*," Gregory summarizes Chamayou in his 2013 *Théorie du drone* to describe these images as produced through "militarized vision as a 'sighting' that works not only to represent an object but also to act upon it. . . This has a long (techno-cultural history), but drones use a video image to fix and execute the target: 'You can click, and when you click, you kill'. There's something almost magical about it. . . 'pinning' the target in the viewfinder—transports them into the killing space."[104] The magic that Gregory cites here is tantamount to the rendering spectral that occurs in the production of the racialized target. The body-made-target in the scopic regime of the drone is the body radically dispossessed of personhood. In what Gregory refers to elsewhere as "the time-space compression of the kill-chain,"[105] drone technology produces a "double dissociation," whereby the act of killing delocalizes action through a series of spatiotemporal "splits."[106] The act of killing occurs simultaneously in the Creech Air Force Base in Nevada as well as in the location of the targeted strikes.[107] Summarizing Chamayou, Gregory describes these spatiotemporal splits as "engender[ing] radically new forms of experience, of being-in-the-world, that can no longer be contained within the physico-corporeal confines of the conventional human subject."[108] Here we are pointed to the ways in which the body-becoming target, a processual act of ghosting, is also a process of the body exceeding itself as the targeted body interacts simultaneously with the body of the drone operator in Nevada, the drone technology itself, and the ambient environment also affected by the hellfire missile.

Within the ecology of the drone, we also see an expansion of the ways in which we can conceive of affect/sensation. It is important to understand, particularly as a way of not minimizing the violent dehumanization that occurs in processes of becoming-target, that the drone is not merely a conduit for delocalized intensities between the drone operator and the body-made target. Rather, the drone becomes an actant in the relational field that similarly affects and is affected by the environments in which it operates. Departing from affect theorists, then, who would emphasize the primacy of the human in affective relations, I offer the affective ecology of the drone as an entrée into conversations of affect taking place in the field of object-oriented and machine-oriented ontologies. Specifically, I follow a line of thinking articulated by Jane Bennett that affords a "*geoaffect*," "*material vitality*" or "*impersonal affect*" to objects and things.[109] Not only does material vitalism allow for a way of understanding the complex interactions between drones, bodies, and environments, but it also avoids the entanglements of subject-object discourses, wherein the body-made-object—or target in this case—is reinscribed as hierarchically inferior and less human than bodies afforded subjecthood.

Utilizing a geoaffective framework or material vitalism to think through the relationships between bodies, technologies, and imperialist processes such as drone killings and torture in the war on terror, which I discuss later, also helps to elucidate the ways ghosting obscures both the practices and material effects of U.S. imperialism through a peculiarly intercorporeal relationship between technologies and imperialist and othered bodies. In the "double disassociation" of drone killing, the bodies of the drone operator and the drone target are rendered simultaneously spectral, though clearly asymmetrically so. Neither body is solely here nor there; the action of the point-and-click kill of the drone provides a technologized connectivity between bodies that are simultaneously impossibly distant and terribly close. Similarly, in theorizing the intimacies

between drone operator and target, it is necessary to understand the formation of affective intimacies between drone operator/target and drone technologies. This understanding of the drone as participating in the affective ecology of drone warfare, as an actant who can affect and be affected by, also creates an avenue whereby we can understand that it is in part the technology of drones themselves that function as a means of ghosting. Ian Graham Ronald Shaw and Majed Akhtar note that "the drone is fundamentally a *fetishized* object. . . the drone presents itself to the world as an autonomous agent, isolated from the imperial and military apparatus behind it."[110] The fetishization of the drone goes hand in hand with what Christian Parenti describes elsewhere as the "*technofetishism*" of contemporary military practices.[111] In addition to the ways that fetishization in this context renders invisible the military and social relations of production, the spectrality engendered by the technologized double disassociation suggests a sort of hyperfetizhization whereby the social relations produced *by* the drone are similarly obscured. Thus, not only is the body-made-target rendered spectral and invisible, but so too is the complex relationship between drone operator, body-made-target, and the environment impacted by drone killings.

Here, the technofetishism of contemporary imperialism can be seen as one of a multiplicity of environmental factors that make up haunting within a framework of "ecologized" warfare.[112] As Sloterdijk notes:

> Terrorism, from an environmental perspective, voids the distinction between violence against people and violence against things: it comprises a form of violence against the very human-ambient "things" without which people cannot remain people. By using violence against the very air that groups breathe, the human being's immediate atmospheric envelope is transformed into something whose intactness and non-intactness is henceforth a question.[113]

Environmental terrorism, following Sloterdijk, not only "voids the distinction between "violence against people and violence against things,"[114] it also voids the ontological distinction between

people and things. To be more specific, it voids the distinction between people, things, and their ambient environments. I build on Sloterdijk here to argue that the body as a construct is rendered uncertain and spectral, always in excess of itself as a permeable unit within its broader environment. The body is not simply *dis*embodied; rather, the concept of the body is eradicated altogether from the landscape of hypertechnologized warfare. Consider the drone operator in Omer Fast's *5000 Feet Is the Best* who describes the heat signature of the target as a "white blossom" left on a park bench, a singular signature within a landscape of cold and heat signatures.[115] Also referred to by the drone operator as "quite beautiful," the heat signature becomes noteworthy not because of its target value, let alone the humanness it represents, but because it is aesthetically pleasing to the drone operator. Here we see just how divorced the target becomes from any resemblance of the human. In this rendering, human, animal, plant, and inorganic matter are rendered indistinct units within the drone's scopic regime, all participating as constituent actants within the affective ecology of drone warfare.

The relationship between haunting and ecologized state terror, wherein the very composition of the body and its environment are hurled into uncertainty, is perhaps nowhere more evident than in practices of detention and torture in the war on terror. It is through these practices that we witness what I refer to as the third decorporealizing logic in the war on terror: the body-made-torture. In the case of U.S. detention centers such as Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Base, as well as the many CIA black sites operative in the war on terror, detainees are thrust into environments that deconstruct corporeality by their very design. It is helpful here to analyze forms of torture deployed in these sites to better understand how the body is radically broken down through environmental warfare in U.S. detention facilities. In a 2004 memo to the Department of the Navy Inspector General, former General Counsel of the Navy

Albert J. Mora describes "interrogation techniques [used] at Guantanamo, including (with some restrictions) the use of stress positions, hooding, isolation, 'deprivation of light and auditory stimuli,' and use of 'detainee-individual phobias (such as fear of dogs) to induce stress'."[116] Describing these interrogation techniques as a "new regime of torture," McClintock points out that "the US administration even has a name for it: they call it '*touchless' torture* (emphasis added)."[117] Touchless torture relies on modulations of environmental intensity to provoke a state of profound discomfort and pain for imprisoned bodies. The implication that 'touchless' torture is less painful, however, is a violent misnomer, as bodily experiences of intensity are necessarily experiences of physical sensation. Intensity is "embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin—at the surface of the body, at its interface with things."[118] In this way, torture is elevated to the level of ecologized state terror, wherein the detainee's environment is turned against him. In the case of stress positions, the detainee's own body is reduced to an environmental unit that can be harnessed to inflict pain, a profound form of dissociation that demonstrates a logic of radical decorporealization within torture practices in the U.S. war on terror. The body, in being simultaneously the torturer and the tortured, becomes the body-made-torture, a particularly horrific example of the decorporealizing logics of the war on terror.

The decorporealizing logic of the detention center provides an extreme example of haunting as a technology of imperialism and ecologized warfare. Not only is the environment harnessed as the mechanism by which to attack the enemy, the environment itself is also constructed as a spectral location for this express purpose. Following analyses of Guantánamo as simultaneously "kenomatic," or empty of law, according to Giorgio Agamben[119] and a site of legal excess according to Derek Gregory,[120] detention centers in the war on terror construct the

detainee as juridically spectral through this sadistic interplay of legal excess and absence. In discussing Guantánamo as state of exception, Giorgio Agamben marks the detention facility as a "kenomatic state, an emptiness of law."[121] Contradicting Agamben's definition of the state of exception, however, Derek Gregory notes that Guantánamo should be viewed as state of legal excess, wherein the matrix of law is so dense and convoluted that it precludes the existence of legal rights.[122] By Gregory's formulation, Guantánamo becomes a space saturated with law in such a way that it renders further invisible those detained and tortured bodies who inhabit its facilities. Gregory explains that, "Guantánamo was *outside* the United States in order to foreclose *habeas corpus* petitions from prisoners held there and *inside* the United States in order to forestall prosecutions for torturing them" (Gregory's emphasis).[123] This creates an impossible double bind, wherein the legal excess that characterizes Guantánamo as place constructs detainees as juridically out-of-place. In this out-of-placeness, the tortured/detained bodies of Guantánamo ascend to a dimension of specter within the law; though their presence haunts the U.S. legal system and media, their intangibility allows the state to evade accountability indefinitely.

Detained/tortured bodies at Guantánamo are rendered additionally spectral as they are positioned as inhabiting a space outside of time.[124] Amy Kaplan describes Guantánamo as "a territory held by the United States in perpetuity, over which sovereignty is indefinitely deferred, the temporal dimensions of Guantánamo's location make it a chillingly appropriate place for the indefinite detention of unnamed enemies in what the administration calls a perpetual war against terror."[125] The deferral of accountability regarding Guantánamo into an unforeseeable future has haunted the administration of Barack Obama since his primary bid in August 2007 when he first announced plans to close the facilities when elected president.[126] Though one of President

Obama's first actions in office was to sign an executive order to have the facilities closed, 160 detainees remain in the facilities with no material plans in motion toward their release or transfer. In a cruel twist, and a further means of ghosting, one of the only actions taken by the state regarding Guantánamo has been the January 2013 elimination of the office in the State Department tasked with closing the prison.[127] Though the U.S. government's endless deferral of accountability and prisoners' indefinite detentions point to Guantánamo as a space of anachronistic time, it must be also considered as a space of what Bliss Cua Lim refers to as "immiscible times," which refer to "multiple times that never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness, discrete temporalities incapable of attaining homogeneity with or full incorporation into a uniform chronological present."[128] Guantánamo is a space of competing times, wherein these empty and immiscible versions of time haunt the progressivist time of empire. To return to the gravitational pull of imperial formations as force fields, we can understand these peculiar and incompatible temporalities as resulting from the gravity produced through a complex ecology of bodies, state and non-state actors, environmental factors, and imperialist discourses and practices. Here Guantánamo becomes a sort of black hole, a vacuous realm invisible to the outside world from which escape is rendered impossible.[129] This is not to say that the outside world does not know *of* Guantánamo, just as the outside world knows *of* black holes; rather, it is to point to the spatiotemporal unlocatability of Guantánamo. As a space outside of both law and time, the detention center in the war on terror becomes the playground on which empire can perfect practices of environmental terror. It is therefore not unlike Mbembe's "death-world," wherein necropolitics produce the conditions of social death for entire populations.[130] As empire's black holes, facilities such as Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Base function as one form of empire's necroscapes, environments cultivated as living graves

from which the specters of those tortured and detained bodies emerge to haunt the metropole, providing the conditions necessary to justify endless warfare and imperialist expansion.

It is the very spatiotemporal unlocatability of empire's black holes, however, that also allows for the proliferation of de/reterritorializations that do not fall within the bounds of empire's privileged narratives of threat and containment. It is in these moments, when the specters of U.S. imperialism reappear where they are neither desired nor expected that we see moments of emergence and animation that challenge the perceptual intangibility of empire's practices. Cracks in the seemingly smooth unstriated fabric of imperial formations appear, wherein empire's peculiar spatiotemporality opens up in all of its dizzying and disorienting intensity. It is this type of emergence that we see operative in Party Mummy's interview. As Party Mummy's interviewee fails to ballast himself as subject and body through normative processes of racialized othering, the specters of imperialism that converge in Party Mummy become momentarily palpable, emerging through the "bulldozed terrain" of empire.[131] In this way, Party Mummy intervenes in "the kinetic spectacle of modernity," which "erases from the picture of movement all the ecological catastrophes, personal tragedies, and communal disruptions brought about by the colonial plundering of resources, bodies, and subjectivities."[132] Rather, as the interviewee's body is blown back by the intensity of Party Mummy's cries and wavers with embodied uncertainty, we witness how the very gravitational pull that creates the pathways and force fields of empire also generate the spatiotemporal conditions that allow for moments of subversion and rupture. Just as threat washes over the metropole signaling the apparent necessity of military intervention in those territorial locations where the perceived adversaries of the United States are purported to dwell, so too do the specters of empire emerge through Party Mummy's interview, permeating the space of the interview as they point to the

violences and inconsistencies of imperial practices and discourses. The specter of terrorist threat comingles with those ghosted through practices of torture and targeted killings like a chilling wind just perceptible enough to render unsteady the footing of Party Mummy's interviewee. This form of affective intervention initiated by Party Mummy functions as a form of militant psychasthenia, where in psychasthenia the "meshing of subject and body fails to occur."[133] Writing of Roger Caillois' studies of psychasthenia in nature, Elizabeth Grosz describes the body affected by psychasthenia as "unable to locate himself or herself where he or she should be. . . . They are capivated and replaced, not by another subject. . . but by space itself."[134] In Mir's performance, Party Mummy initiates militant psychasthenia as a means of anti-imperialist intervention within the spatial landscape of the colonizer. As his interviewee struggles and fails to achieve the unity of body and subject through affective and intercorporeal forms of racialization, bodily and subjective experience dissolve into space itself, momentarily opening up the colonizer's body to the suffocating black hole of empire's peculiar spatiotemporality.

3 LIVE AMMUNITION: WEAPONIZING AFFECT IN MIR'S "MOHAMMED THE PLUMBER"

In this chapter, I return to the scene of Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber," wherein the co-embodied figures of the terrorist other and the white working-class comedian emerge through Mir's performance at a comedy open mic night in Greenville, SC. As an audience member for Mir's performance, I listened from my seat as the towelhead jokes Mohammed the Plumber told became increasingly overt in their reference to violence: "If the sign above the nursery reads 'Live Ammunition', you might be a towelhead." The playfulness present in the beginning of the performance transformed into a form of affective provocation, the room became saturated with tension and discomfort. Nervous laughter was replaced by the sound of bodies shifting in their seats, squirming under the weight of Mohammed's accusation. In this moment, the American audience members, myself included, were exposed as complicit in the violent dehumanization of the racialized other, which marks the weaponization of the brown body as terrorist threat from the moment of birth. The brown child is understood as a nascent terrorist or terrorist-in-becoming, a phenomenon Steven Salaita has called "the trope of the child terrorist"[135] in his analysis of propaganda dispersed by the Zionist organization StandWithUs. One poster depicts a small Palestinian child in the presence of presumed Palestinian suicide bombers, "lovingly patting his head, a jarring correlation of violence and affection."[136] Salaita notes that "the poster endeavors to achieve maximum shock value by invoking every trope of subhumanity,"[137] which directly maps this subhumanity and future terrorist violence onto the body of the Palestinian child and constructs terrorism as a heritable trait for the racialized Muslim. If imperialist discourses utilize shock value to underscore the threat posed by the terrorist-in-becoming, Mir

deploys this same type of affective unsettling to lay bare the violence of these discourses and trouble the racialized layout of the event space.

Analyzing ambivalence as viral affect and building on my previous chapter's discussion of the decorporealizing logics of the war on terror, specifically through a non-object analysis of the body-made-threat, I expand on Muñoz's understanding of terrorist drag[138] and offer affective contagion as a hallmark of militant psychasthenia in Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber." As detailed in last chapter's analysis of Mir's character Party Mummy, recall that militant psychasthenia is the radical dissolution of the subject into space itself in failed processes of subjectification. This chapter extends analysis of this process to understand the effects of militant psychasthenia as a shared or intercorporeal experience for audience members in Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber." Drawing from my own presence at Mir's performance and my observation of audience members' intense and ambivalent responses to Mohammed the Plumber, I ask what occurs when the white American dominance of the event space is reoriented toward the peculiar figure of the co-embodied terrorist other and terrorist-hating white working-class comedian? Rather than understanding audience members' ambivalent and hostile reactions to Mohammed as the recuperation of the event space in the name of whiteness, I offer Ed Cohen's discussion of "immunity-as-defense" as a way of thinking through those reactions as desperate attempts to shore up the modern body as delimited by distinct and impermeable borders.[139] Analyzing Mir's performance of threat using non-object affect theory, I argue that Mir's strategic deployment of affect is a tactic in what Amit S. Rai has referred to as "molecular revolutions,"[140] politics operationalized on the level of affect and sensation that pose a radical threat to biopolitical understandings of race, identity, and the body as well as the spatial landscape of the imperialist homeland.

It is first necessary to understand that Mir's inhabitation of Mohammed the Plumber functions as a disidentificatory performance of what Muñoz has referred to as "terrorist drag."[141] Utilizing strategic deployments of affective intensity in performing the co-embodied terrorist other and terrorist-hating white working-class comedian, Mir mobilizes anxiety produced through racialized logics of threat in the war on terror to confound the racial orientation of the performance space. Audience members' reactions, ranging from confusion to bemusement to anger and hostility can be understood as reactions to the intimate proximity of the terrorist other's hypervisible brownness to the whiteness of the towelhead joke-telling comedian. It is, in fact, not simply a tidy proximity either—Mohammed the Plumber becomes the literal moment and site of racialized encounter. Almost paradoxically, it is through the fluid enmeshment of brownness and whiteness that both categories are rendered hypervisible in the performance space. Rather than functioning as the neutral or invisible backdrop against which the movement and action of racializing narratives take place, whiteness here becomes a constituent factor in Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber." Specifically, Mir lays bare the violence of whiteness through the intimate proximity of the terrorist other and white working-class comedian co-embodied in Mohammed the Plumber. Using the example of Vaginal Creme Davis and her performance of the white militiaman Clarence, Muñoz describes terrorist drag as "performing the nation's internal terrors around race, gender, and sexuality. . . us[ing] ground-level guerrilla representational strategies to portray some of the nation's most salient popular fantasies. . . . involv[ing] cultural anxieties surrounding miscegenation, communities of color, and the queer body."[142] Similarly, the multiple identities that come together in Mir's performance as Mohammed the Plumber function to "conjur[e] the nation's most dangerous citizen"[143]; the miscegenation that occurs in Mir's performance of terrorist drag through the co-embodiment of

the terrorist other and white-working class comedian at once destabilizes the dominance and coherence of whiteness. Following the logic of a racial imaginary that defines terrorism as both a heritable trait passed down biologically for brown racialized bodies and, as I discussed in my previous chapter, the ability to always exceed the limits of the body, Mohammed the Plumber represents the site and the moment that terror both exceeds the brown body and penetrates the dermis of whiteness.

It is also necessary to tease out the complexities of ambivalence and understandings of corporeality at work in Mir's Mohammed the Plumber in order to fully explore militant psychasthenia as a tactical form of molecular revolutions. Not only do I understand ambivalence to simply mean the presence of "both/and"; rather, ambivalence, as I theorize it, is whereby a space becomes saturated with intensity in ways that render any attempts to qualify that intensity difficult and disorienting. For this project, ambivalence is an embodied and spatializing multiplicity that results in a proliferation of simultaneous and seemingly irreconcilable emotional and sensational responses. This type of ambivalence is also inseparable from the ambivalence generated for and by processes of racialization, where discourses of race function as actants in the affective ecology of the performance. Jasbir Puar articulates ambivalence as deeply imbedded within narratives of Muslim masculinity, which she describes as, "simultaneously pathologically excessive yet repressive, perverse yet homophobic, virile yet emasculated, monstrous yet flaccid."[144] This understanding as racialized ambivalence echoes Homi Bhabha's discussion of *the productive ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse*, "that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity."[145] When constructing mythologies of the other, ambivalence becomes the affective product through which those mythologies are constituted and experienced.

Figuring ambivalence as affective excess—a site of disorientation and unsettled emotional responses—I argue it becomes possible to see the transformative possibilities to which Bhabha gestures when he describes that this productive ambivalence "reveals the boundaries of colonial discourse and. . . enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness."[146] If we begin to think of the spatializing properties of ambivalence, as experienced inter- and intracorporeally by the bodies inhabiting a space, it becomes possible to understand the disruptive logic of ambivalence in the racialized landscape of the event space.

So what is the work of ambivalence in Mir's Mohammed the Plumber? How can the potential of ambivalence reorient and reorganize spaces in transformative ways? To explore this more fully, I employ Sara Ahmed's description of the disruptive potential of the hypervisible brown body as a spatializing phenomenon:

> Nonwhite bodies do inhabit white spaces. Such bodies are made invisible when we see spaces as being white, at the same time that they become hypervisible when they do not pass, which means they "stand out" and "stand apart," like the black sheep in the family. You learn to fade into the background, but sometimes you cannot. The moments when the body appears "out of place" are moments of personal and political trouble. . . when bodies arrive that seem "out of place," it involves *disorientation*: people blink and then look again. The proximity of such bodies makes familiar spaces seem strange: "People are 'thrown' because a whole world view is jolted."[147]

Building on Ahmed here, it is not only Mir's hypervisibility that creates an affective climate of disorientation; rather, we can understand this disorientation or thrownness as a direct result of his deployment of psychasthenia as a tactic within the disidentificatory performance. Therefore the world view that is jolted is not merely scopic; nor can it be reduced to the obliqueness attributed to it by Ahmed.[148] It represents the very topographies upon which processes of racialization take place and create that are reimagined. For to understand racialized disorientation as a lineal phenomenon that can be charted on a Cartesian plane is to flatten and elide the intercorporeality

attributed to processes of intersubjectification by the very phenomenologists from whom Ahmed builds her argument. Returning to Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of subjectification and self-perception as intercorporeal processes, wherein my understanding of myself is constituted through iterative and, most importantly, embodied interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies, it is possible to understand the problem presented by Ahmed's hypervisible brown body as one that exceeds the bounds of hyper/in/visibility. Similar to my previous chapter's discussion of Party Mummy, where his interviewee's disorientation results from failed intercorporeal processes of racialization, the disorientation or thrownness experienced by audience members of Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber" is exemplary of a shared experience of failed subjectification. The monstrous figure of the co-embodied terrorist other and terrorist-hating white working-class comedian present an unthinkable dissonance that precludes audience members from grounding themselves in and through their relationship to the racialized other.

It is also helpful here to invoke Puar and Rai's discussion of the "terrorist monster," which builds on Foucault's configuration of abnormality within a biopolitical framework.[149] Puar and Rai note that "the terrorist has become both a monster to be quarantined and an individual to be corrected."[150] Building from Foucault's assertion that the three figures of abnormality—the monster, the individual to be corrected, and the masturbator—are deeply connected,[151] Puar and Rai understand the terrorist to simultaneously function as the monster, or limit figure of the "'juridico-biological' domain,"[152] and the incorrigible subject who must be institutionally reformed in lieu of a pathologized family that has failed him. Expanding on Puar and Rai's configuration of the terrorist monster as a figure who must be both contained and reformed allows us to not only see how Mir engages with discourses of terrorist abnormality but also understand how viral affect functions particularly well as a means of intervening in those

discourses. Here, the figure of the monster and individual to be corrected are both deeply imbricated and dangerously distinct formations. The individual to be corrected, as Foucault notes, is "an everyday phenomenon. . . There is a kind of familiar, everyday obviousness that renders him immediately recognizable."[153] Through the recognition of the individual to be corrected as a familiar subject, he also becomes recognizable as a subject who can be recuperated through "technolog[ies] of rectification" or "supercorrection."[154] In the quotidian figure of the individual to be corrected, we see how everyday forms of racialization for brown bodies in the United States function as a logic wherein racialized abnormality can be ameliorated through hegemonic intervention. The individual to be corrected is Ahmed's invisible racialized other who "fade[s] into the background," what Puar and Rai refer to as "the docile patriot" or Mamdani's "good Muslim."[155] However, even as the good brown body proves his capacity to be reformed and molded into an image of the proper American citizen, he is still positioned as containing the threat potential that we have already discussed as central to logics of terrorism in the war on terror. He is, to reiterate the previous chapter's discussion of the body-made-threat, always already monstrous and thereby always subject to [failing] technologies of quarantine or containment. I bracket failing here to indicate that though the brown body is subject to extreme attempts to quarantine or contain terrorist potential, as illustrated in practices of indefinite detention and targeted killings, the atmoterrorist logic of the U.S. war on terror requires an understanding of a threat so pervasive that it warrants the perpetual military intervention of the United States in the face of an uncontainable perceived terrorist threat. This threat is that which exceeds the body, outlives the body, and defies physical attempts of containment. So while mainstream multiculturalist discourses are reliant on understandings of brown otherness that can be reformed or successfully normalized, with only exceptional cases subject to extraordinary

practices of containment, this disciplinary approach merely provides a smokescreen for a logic of monstrosity that understands threat as both of and exceeding the body subject to those multiculturalist discourses. The logic of containment operationalized in the war on terror is, then, that while terrorist bodies can be contained/quarantined, terrorist threat cannot.

It is this tension between multiculturalist discourses of normalization and logics of extraordinary monstrosity that also undergird audience members' ambivalent affective responses to Mir's Mohammed the Plumber. Even as audience members attempt to reinscribe Mir as individual to be corrected, a practice that would solidify audience members' self-perceptions of having a benevolent and coherent American identity, Mir's disidentificatory performance short circuits audience members' abilities to do so. To make sense of Mir's disidentification, audience members must either implicate themselves in the racist and imperialist violence he lays bare, risk recognizing themselves in the unthinkable figure of miscegenation that Mohammed the Plumber embodies, or resist grounding themselves in subject-object oriented processes of racialization. In this way, audience members are unable to ballast themselves in the benevolent promise of whiteness (and tolerance). Mir's tactical deployment of affective intensity allows for a narrative of whiteness that is only able to cohere into subjecthood by making plain the racialized violences, not least of all those violences masquerading as benevolent multiculturalism, that it seeks to keep hidden in normative processes of intercorporeal subjectification.

The affective chaos generated through Mir's performance of threat functions artistically as what Brian Massumi has referred to as "creative contagion"—it is not essential to Mir and cannot be contained as such.[156] The potential of the event spreads, mutates, and diffuses in unpredictable directions and forms. The movement and ligatures of this type of affective mobilization also necessitate an unpacking of affect as it can be read through metaphors of

contagion. Specifically, I build on my previous chapter's discussion of the body-made-threat as a body radically open by exploring discussions of the body in non-object analyses of affect. Massumi describes affect as degrees of unqualified intensity in zones of contact between surfaces and bodies.[157] Affect is "virtual" and "synesthetic," "escap[ing] confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is."[158] In this configuration, affect is the force that mobilizes the body even as it is not and cannot be contained by the body. It is infinitely mobile intensity, working unpredictably on and through the bodies and spaces in which it is generated. This understanding of affect also necessitates a conceptualization of the body as "radically open,"[159] both in the sense that there is no corporeal distinction between inside/outside and in its "abstractness pertaining to the transitional immediacy of a real relation—that of a body to its own *indeterminacy* (its openness to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now)" (Massumi's emphasis).[160] The body, through its constant motility, is both temporally and physically unlocatable.

It is the body's radical openness that makes the metaphor of contagion/virality particularly salient in understanding the circulation and transformational work of affect. Affect works invisibly though not imperceptibly, registered through felt sensation that emerges from the dynamic relationship between brain and skin.[161] Affect permeates the borders of the body—skin represents a surface of contact though not a boundary at which contact stops. Rather, as tactility is folded into the body through proprioception,[162] the skin represents the moment rather than the location wherein affect enters the body. The body's radical openness also implies its openness to other actors, both human and nonhuman, within its field of existence. Though affect is experienced and qualified differentially (for example, through translations into terms of emotional experience), it cannot be contained by any one individual body. Intensity is, rather, a

relational phenomenon, traveling between and through objects that occupy shared spaces. Similarly, viruses, as simultaneously autonomous and precarious agents, "not only change through replication, they also change their embodied contexts, in that all viruses require a host and can be spread from one host to another."[163] The spread and circulation of affect, then, mirrors that of viral contagion. Viruses, altered by and altering the composition of that with which they interact at the cellular level, move and mutate without regard for the perceived limits of their host objects.

It is through this lens of contagion that it becomes possible to conceive of the way affect works on and through the spaces of Mir's performances as a form of threat to audience members, as the import of contagion cannot be separated from the perceived threat it entails. Ambivalence, the affective product generated by Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber," provides a particularly clear example of the way this threat moves, mutates, and disrupts the spatial arrangement of the performance and the relationships between the bodies that inhabit that space. In ambivalence, as I noted earlier, the ratio of unqualifiable intensity to qualified emotion results in a substantial remainder of affective excess, or potential, within the space. The disorienting presence of this potential functions as threat, described by Massumi as a "nothing yet – just a looming. It is a form of futurity, yet has the capacity to fill the present without presenting itself. Its future looming casts a present shadow, and that shadow is fear."[164] Affective excess, in its unqualifiability, hovers as imminent though not yet realized threat. Like the microscopic virus, its power is inseparable from the fear it inspires. Audience members mobilize defensively in response to the affective threat that is perceived to emanate from Mir's performance of "Mohammed the Plumber." Emotional responses of hostility represent individual attempts to fortify corporeal borders of the subject-as-body.

It is important here to note the deep connections uniting forms of threat in the U.S. post-9/11 imaginary: the human terrorist threat and bioterrorist threat both represent the unseeable enemy. Just as the popularized image of the terrorist is that of a brown Muslim body in hiding, lying in wait to perform acts of violence against "innocent" populations, so too is that image transposed onto the cellular level in contemporary biopolitical figurations that understand race as operating genetically.[165] This harkens again to Salaita's "trope of the child terrorist."[166] Here, threat not only exceeds the body but is also a heritable trait that threatens the body's undoing on a molecular level. This echoes what Dorothy Roberts describes as the "new biopolitics of race," where race and racialized criminality are defined genetically; terrorist threat is a trait in hiding, waiting to be expressed by the brown bodies in which it is presumed to reside.[167] This threat becomes further pronounced if considered in tandem with Ed Cohen's description of "immunity-as-defense" as a hallmark of Euro-American biopolitics.[168] In *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body*, Cohen traces immunity as a concept initially understood juridically and only later articulated as a means of cellular defense that "grafts or inoculates both military and political potentials into human biology."[169] In contemporary biopolitics, theories of biological immunity are always implicitly coded as providing the naturalized bases for racialized violence and war. Following Cohen, political narratives of post-9/11 U.S. expansion, wherein military forces are mobilized pre-emptively to defend "the homeland" from threats of terrorism, are always already mapped onto scientific understandings of the cellular body. The individual white body must shore up its defenses to protect itself from the dangerous expansion of the brown Muslim other and the threat of molecular terrorism imposed by that othered body. Through molecular terrorism, part of the atmoterrorist logic of the war on terror, the body-made-threat is invisibly and completely

pervasive. Molecular terrorism is understood as capable of permeating the bounds of the modern white body at every turn, threatening that body's very undoing from the inside out.

If we use this understanding of molecular biopolitics to read the affective spaces of Mir's "Mohammed the Plumber," we also see the unfolding of a narrative where it is the very corporeality of the modern body that is under attack. Cohen describes the modern body as "a proper body, a proprietary body, a body whose well-bounded property grounds the legal and political rights of what C.B. Macpherson famously named 'possessive individualism'."[170] It is this body, the American colonialist body of Mohammed the Plumber's audience member, that feels it must defend itself from the affective threat of Mir's performance. Its very understanding of selfhood rests on its ability to remain a closed and impenetrable system. And if the white body represents that which desperately fights to maintain its self-perception of being a closed system, Mohammed the Plumber represents a dangerously open system. Affect radiates outwardly from his being, viral molecules charged with terrorist threat. The openness of his corporeal schema threatens to breach, and thus render impotent and immaterial, the boundedness of the modern body.

Mohammed the Plumber as exemplary of the body-made-threat can be seen as a representation of what Massumi has called a "body-transducer," a body "extended beyond the skin to propagate through the surrounding space. The transductive physicality of the body extends to the limits of its spatial containment. The body-as-transducer literally, physically fills its space. . . . A corporeal opening onto sound, image, architecture and more. The future."[171] I argue that transduction as it is understood in the biological sciences provides a particularly salient analogy here, where transduction refers to the process through which genetic material is transferred intercellularly between hosts by viruses.[172] Affect-as-contagion represents the threat

that genetically coded terrorism can both spread and infect other bodies. Not only does the transmission of affect pose a threat to the boundedness of the modern body, but it also threatens to rewrite the very terms of that body's composition at the molecular level.

As a political strategy, the deployment of affect-as-contagion can be seen as a tactic in what Amit S. Rai refers to as "molecular revolutions":

> Molecular revolutions have no language or signification because they are not of the order of consciousness, and they have, therefore, no "true" name. They are of an ecological order of embodied composites whose processes of sensation pass a critical threshold of difference-in-repetition and thus effect a counteractualization toward the virtual. . . toward a place of immanence, toward relations that are exterior to their terms.[173]

Molecular revolutions are politics born of, through, and in the realm of affect and sensation. They are slippery, not easily qualified, captured, or recuperated into what Lisa Duggan refers to as neoliberalism's "politics of the possible."[174] Molecular revolutions are, then, the politics of ontological impossibility; they eschew discourses of identity, actively evade and deconstruct the tenacious grasps of liberal subjectivities, and offer one way of conceptualizing the political efficacy of viral affect. Viral affect, through its very excess, resists qualification and naming. Its production of ambivalent and contesting emotional responses demonstrates a process whereby signification is disrupted through ecologies of intensity.

The hostility with which Mohammed the Plumber is met by audience members demonstrates a desperate attempt to counter through qualification the productive/destructive ruptures taking place at the molecular level. For example, toward the end of Mir's performance, one audience member, another performer at the open mic night, rose to his feet and approached the sound booth in what the man later described as an impulse to turn off the audio to Mir's microphone. Of importance here, however, is the fact that the audience member inexplicably stopped before actually turning off the audio feed. He simply stood in the back of the theater,

anxiously shifting from foot to foot and apparently confused by his own inability to act. He was simultaneously compelled to act and prevented from acting by the affective intensity that saturated the event space. Though we can only speculate as to the motivations behind the audience member's (in)actions, I argue that they are a particularly salient demonstration of the tension between the molar and molecular generated through Mir's performance. As ambivalence and intensity saturate the room, a chaotic reorganization of the performance space toward the molecular, the audience member's movements can be understood as a recourse to multiculturalism as a means of regaining spatial order. However, as one of many constituent actants in the field of Mir's performance, multiculturalism's own discursive coherence begins to unravel: Does the audience member allow Mohammed the Plumber to continue, upholding the space's pretense of openness and a commitment to freedom of speech? Or, is the culturally progressive audience member obligated to shut down the performance of hate speech that appears in the form of Mohammed the Plumber's towelhead jokes? Ultimately, multiculturalism's competing interests remain in tension; viral affect's tending toward the molecular prevents discursive and embodied resolutions that would favor molar coherence.

Audience members' defensive posturing, then, represents the molar attempt to resist what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as "becoming-molecular."[175] For Deleuze and Guattari, becomings-molecular are unpredictable processes of transposition and encounter, "emit[ting] particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity."[176] Specifically understanding becoming-molecular in relationship to processes of intercorporeal racialization that we have discussed, becoming-molecular can be seen as also representing the radical openness in the moment of intercorporeal contact. And though "all becomings are already molecular," it would also follow that not all becomings are desired by the

molar body.[177] For example, becoming-molecular in the context of Mir's performance of "Mohammed the Plumber" opens up the molar body to the threat of contamination and destruction, where the subject or self is revealed to be "only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities."[178] The becoming-molecular precipitated by Mir's performance represents a miscegenation that threatens the very core of the biopolitical regime, a multiplicity that reveals the overlap and coextensivity of the white body and perceived terrorist other. It is through this radical multiplicity that the looming potential of affective excess permeates the space of Mir's performance and the bodies that inhabit that space, threatening the very existence of modern iterations of identity and corporeality.

It is also through the virality and weaponization of affect as integral to molecular revolution-making that we can further understand the spatializing implications of Mir's performance. For it is important to remember that though I have devoted much attention to the effects of Mir's performance on the human bodies that also make up the event-space, those bodies are constituent actors in the broader spatial landscape, an ecology of human and non-human actors and objects, environmental intensities, and discourses. Specifically, it is necessary to return to a discussion of the spatiotemporality and gravitational field of U.S. imperialism, wherein imperialism is understood as a complex formation of actants—human and nonhuman bodies, discursive and physical objects, histories of violence, and environmental phenomena—that are not bound by the limits of spatiotemporal proximity. According to André Lepecki, motility, both the movement of the subject and the imperial formation itself, is central to the process whereby colonialism is simultaneously mystified and naturalized, constructing "the ground of modernity":

> The ground of modernity is the colonized, flattened, bulldozed terrain where the fantasy of endless and self-sufficient motility takes place. . . The fantasy of the

> modern kinetic subject is that the spectacle of modernity as movement happens in innocence. The kinetic spectacle of modernity erases from the picture of movement all the ecological catastrophes, personal tragedies, and communal disruptions brought about the colonial plundering of resources, bodies, and subjectivities that are needed in order to keep modernity's "most real" reality in place: its kinetic being.[179]

In this configuration, both the modern subject and discourses of imperialism and modernity are defined by an ease of fluid and unobstructed movement. Within the colonial fantasy, then, the plane of imperialism is unstriated, where possibilities of movement are seamless, endless, and unimpeded. When I use the term unstriated here, I do not mean unstriated in the sense that is used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Though there is much that can be said for empire's attempts to coopt smooth space in the name of striation,[180] I use striated and unstriated space to imply an imaginary of material and discursive smoothness that obscures the destructive and violent realities of imperialist discourses and practices. Here, ghosting/haunting as a technology reappears, functioning to raze the space of movement through the elision of imperialist violence and destruction. However, there are moments of disruption, a "seismological effect" through which "we discover an ontopolitical ground that is not stable or flat, but ceaselessly quivering and grooving."[181] I understand Mohammed the Plumber as inciting this very sort of seismological disturbance. As audience members are unable to ground themselves through normative processes of racialization, they not only become unmoored through their inability to anchor themselves in the other, but the very ground upon which their feet is imagined to rest begins to shift and move beneath them. As discomfort and disorientation expand to fill the event space, wherein whiteness is made simultaneously hypervisible and uncertain, we can understand Mir's performance as not only casting the bodies of audience members as radically open but also demonstrating the radical openness of the colonialist topography. Here, the smooth, unstriated space that makes up the colonial fantasy is revealed to crack, split, and

waiver, creating openings whereby the peculiar spatiotemporality of imperialism is revealed—the façade of empire as a coherent and monolithic formation dissolves into a dynamic and chaotic entanglement of "immiscible times" and spatial multiplicities.[182] As audience members are collectively thrown by Mir's performance, they are not only reoriented toward the violence of whiteness but also confronted with those specters that can no longer be relegated to the elsewheres and nowheres hidden beneath the ground of the colonial project. Here the specters of those bodies tortured and indefinitely detained in Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Base appear alongside those targeted by drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia, demonstrating through the violence of imperialist whiteness the interconnectedness between everyday and extraordinary practices of racialization in the war on terror.

Mir's performance also illustrates a way of understanding militant psychasthenia as an intersubjective or intercorporeal environmental process. For if the singular subject of Party Mummy's interview becomes "space itself"[183] through the dissolution of subjective coherence, so too do the multiple subjects of Mohammed the Plumber's audience become spatial through shared disorientation and failed intersubjectification. Caillois describes that "for these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them. . . It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. . . He feels himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put*" (Caillois' emphasis).[184] In processes of becoming-space, the subject first becomes body and that body then becomes space, occupying at least momentarily an elsewhere and nowhere typically reserved for modernity's most monstrous. It is in this moment of militant psychasthenia, wherein subjectivity fails to cohere, that the figurative bottom of the imperial topography drops out and the deterritorializing

impulses of colonialism subsume the modern subject. Here, as the co-embodied terrorist other and terrorist-hating white working-class comedian converge in Mir's Mohammed the Plumber, imperialism falters. Its own unpredictable and unwieldy logics are turned upon itself, threatening the very bodies that its perpetual warfare purports to protect and revealing not only the violences of colonialism but also its inconsistencies, ruptures, and permeabilities.

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