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"Terminal Insomnia": Sleeplessness, Labor, and Neoliberal Ecology in Karen Russell's Sleep Donation and Alex Rivera's Sleep Dealer

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Jonathan Crary's influential *24/7: Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep* argues that "in its profound uselessness and intrinsic passivity" sleep presents a stubborn biological barrier to capitalism's theft of time.[1] However, this barrier has been increasingly eroded in the era of neoliberal capitalism, as personal and social identities are reorganized to model "the uninterrupted operation of markets, information networks, and other systems" within the 24/7 environment.[2] The reinscription of human life as "duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning" (8) flexibilizes sleep patterns in order to maximize labor, and spurs military and pharmaceutical research into the elimination of the necessity for sleep. According to Jason W. Moore, the "ecological regime" of neoliberalism has been insistent on the financialization of nature and the appropriation of new ecological and labor surpluses through accumulation by dispossession and technics of enclosure: "capitalism's arrogance is to assign value to life-activity within the commodity system (and an alienating value at that) while de-valuing, and simultaneously drawing its lifeblood from, uncommodified life-activity within reach of capitalist power."[3]

Like universal access to clean drinking water, which has been enclosed through pollution and privatization and monetized as a bottled commodity, the creation of insomniac conditions has enabled the creation of scarcity in relation to sleep. The despoliation of sleep has been inseparable from the neoliberal dismantling of social protections and enclosure of ecological commons, and can be understood as the appropriation of a new frontier of un- commodified life activity, through a biotechnical "fix"— the pharmaceutical sleep aid — which chemically induces unconsciousness, but does not resolve the underlying conditions (social violence, anxiety, physical exhaustion, overwork, precarious employment, austerity), which work in conjunction to create sleeplessness. Sleep, or at least a chemically modified state approximating it, can be purchased from the same pharmaceutical companies researching stimulants to end sleep. Use of non-benzodiazepine hypnotics has soared in proportion to ongoing forms of dispossession and social ruin; in 2010 alone, over 50 million Americans were prescribed zolpidem (Ambien) and eszopiclone (Lunesta).[4] However, this capitalization of sleep is characteristic of the temporal logic of neoliberalism, which privileges short-term profit over forms of investment that would enable long-term accumulation, and as such could be seen as signaling the exhaustion of the "four cheaps" of labor, energy, food, and raw materials that have sustained the neoliberal ecological regime.[5] The pharmaceutical "fix" does not resolve but only accelerates the ecological

contradictions of "bioderegulation," Teresa Brennan's term for the "brutal discrepancies between the temporal operation of deregulated markets and the intrinsic physical limitations of the humans required to conform to these demands."[6]

Not only do long-term prescription users find that they have to take higher and higher dosages due to drug resistance, but a recent study in the *British Medical Journal* found that patients dependent on prescription sleep aids were nearly five times as likely as non-users to die in a period of two to three years, though the risk was increased even for those taking fewer than twenty pills a year; researchers also discovered a sharp increase of cancer rates amongst heavy users of prescription sleep aids. This phenomenon could be understood in tandem with what Moore calls the "superweed effect"— the tendency for particular ecological regimes to face "blowback" to their modes of appropriation, from the "revolt of extra-human nature" in forms of resistance such as herbicide-resistant pests and weeds in agro-industrial GMO cash-crops, cli- mate change, or the increase in epidemiological vectors, autoimmune syndromes, and mental health disorders affecting humans, when capitalization exceeds the capacity of the web of life to provide ever-expanding ecological surpluses of unpaid work and energy for appropriation.[7]

For Crary, the twenty-first century epidemic of sleeplessness has a particular affective texture that captures a larger collective experience of the erosion of diurnal temporality and a generalized "condition of worldlessness."[8] However, while compelling in his analysis of post-Fordist society, Crary is less attentive to the unevenness of development between capitalist cores and peripheries and the ways in which differential conditions of labor, exploitation, and technological access might affect the time-space sensorium of sleep and temporality. In this essay, I will contrast representations of insomnia and labor in Karen Russell's novella *Sleep Donation* (2014), published only as an e-book in conjunction with an interactive website, and Alex Rivera's "cybracero" film, *Sleep Dealer* (2008). In both texts, I argue that sleeplessness functions not only as an indictment of the insomniac conditions perpetrated by neoliberalism that erode human subjectivity and the imaginative capacity to historicize time and conceive of futurity, but also allegorizes the crisis of the "ecological regime" of neoliberalism itself, shot through with the anxiety that "terminal insomnia" may correspond to a "terminal crisis" of "unravelling American hegemony," as predicted by Giovanni Arrighi.[9]

I

Karen Russell's *Sleep Donation* is set in an insomnia-plagued America in the near future, where a "Slumber Corps" patrols in Mobi-Vans and FEMA trailers, soliciting sleep donations as transfusions for "orexins," insomniacs with a neuropeptide dysfunction that traps them in a state of "untenable hyperarousal."[10] For these sleepless orexins, traditional hypnotics like zolpidem no longer work; they have become resistant to pharmaceutical remedies, and remain conscious for months or even years, imprisoned in an unrelenting vigilance. As such, they are grotesque parodies of capitalism's fantasy of a productivity fix in the form of unsleeping workers, but far from enabling perpetual productivity, their wakefulness causes progressive debilitation, both physical and mental/emotional. After they enter their "Last Day"— the period during which they never again sleep — they become increasingly less able to function psychically and physically,

until finally their organs shut down and they die, unless they receive a transfusion that resets their circadian rhythms. The first person narrator, Trish Edgewater, is a campaigner with a legendary ability to solicit transfusions from reluctant donors by evoking the emotive death of her own sister, Dori, from terminal insomnia. Trish is wracked with guilt over her manipulation of donors, a mining of emotion equivalent to the mining of dreamers, and worries that a transactional logic has subsumed all her interpersonal relations. Her anxiety intensifies after she discovers an infant, Baby A, whose purity of sleep can cure any orexin. The Supreme Court passes new legislation allowing infant "donation" since babies are such "rich, deep wells" of dreams, and the Corps proceeds to draw ever-greater transfusions, until Trish discovers that the local heads of the Slumber Corps, the Storch brothers, a pair of toilet-seat designers turned philanthropists, have been selling units of Baby A's sleep for millions on the black market to a Japanese biotech corporation that promises to synthesize an injectable of "artificial sleep" (982).

The allegory of Russell's speculative scenario is complex and shifting, functioning on multiple levels. The LD (Last Day) of the orexins signifies the collapse of the day/night divide, the terminal crisis of debilitated diurnal time. The Slumber Corps, described on the *Sleep Donation* interactive website as "an independent entity that is organized and exists as a non-profit, tax-exempt, charitable institution." works in conjunction with the federal government, but does not receive federal funding.[11] As such, it functions as critique of what Arundhati Roy has called the "non-profit industrial complex" of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate in the vacuum created by the evisceration of welfare states by neoliberal austerity. Working with funds which represent a "miniscule fraction" of the cuts in spending on health care and other "public goods," NGOs occupy the vacuum spawned by the shrinking welfare state. They contain political dissent and act as "a profitable graveyard for social movements" by distributing as charity what people ought to receive by right, altering subjectivities to recast people as victims rather than protestors:[12] "NGOs form a sort of buffer between the sarkar and public, between Empire and its subjects. They have become the arbitrators, the interpreters, the facilitators. […] It's almost as though the greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs."[13]

The global boom in funded NGOs correlates to the application of structural adjustment policies throughout the Global South from the 1970s onwards; as peripheral states were eviscerated according to the demands of the IMF, World Bank and -led capital, NGOs funded by the same agencies moved into the very areas abdicated by the state. In *Sleep Donation*, NGO-ization and the boom of the non-profit industrial complex around sleep correlates to the outsourcing of US state functions, particularly those of health care, after the 2008 financial crisis and banking bailout.

As Trish describes, insomnia is only the latest stage of a "public performance of illness" in a nation characterized by rising homelessness and the steady erosion of healthcare: "Death's dress rehearsal is ongoing at any bus stop in America, where sick people beg us not for minutes of sleep but for metallic dollar-flakes […] Long before the sleep crisis, our downtown was a maze of sidewalk asylums" (191). At the start of the narrative, Trish is resistant to the marketization of sleep, and believes that her NGO presents a moral response to the crisis:

"Nobody in our Mobi-Van would suggest that the raw market would do a better or a fairer job of matching insomniacs and donors than the Slumber Corps. None of us can imagine the solution proposed by certain factions, 'the sale of sleep,' leading to an equitable system" (379). However, she increasingly becomes disillusioned with the sense that sleep donation is "all Ponzi" (711), an unsustainable trade based in extraction of "surplus unconsciousness" (loc. 1471) and permeated with a neoliberal transactional logic. She is disturbed by the way in which her constant performance of the "subjunctive calculus" (1471) of extorting donations restructures her subjectivity and comes to permeates the whole of her social relations: "I'm afraid that working for the Crops may be irreversibly perverting the way I evaluate human exchanges. *Now* who is the donor, the donee? I'll wonder, watching a high school couple kiss at the mall. Are they a match? Will their transfusion be a success? What songs are the corporations piping into her body?" (925). The Slumber Corps acts as a forerunner for privatization and financialization, introducing novel relations of banking and exchange that allow a new industry to emerge. On the e-book's interactive website, the parodic corporate commentary puffs, "'artificial sleep' has been a goal of medical researchers since the sleep banks first started operations," and exults that soon "Americans would have a potentially bottomless 'dream well' from which to make withdrawals."[14] Replacing human donor supply with artificial injectables is posed as a potential cure to the epidemic that only corporate biotechnology can supply, when what it actually represents is an intensive new form of enclosure in which synthesis supplants the more crude extractivism of the "sleep draw." Far from granting "a faucet of unconsciousness, an inexhaustible dream well, 'sleep for all'" (1471), or having a kind of trickle-down of insomnia-relief in which the benefits of privatization will "accrue to every living person" (982), it will make sleep a commodity available only to those who can afford it, while swelling the coffers of the disaster capitalists who profit from the crisis.

In the novella, the sleep crisis acts as affective corollary to the hollowing out of social structures under neoliberalism, both in its drive towards the production of sleepless consumers who buy without end, and through the privatization of new spheres of human subjectivity. The narrative's obsession with affect, mirrored in the form of Trish's solipsistic, circular musings, reflects "the individualization of lifestyles and the intensification of emotional life projects; and the economization of social relationships, the pervasiveness of economic models to shape the self and its very emotions."[15] Trish describes Dori as destroyed by wakefulness, trapped in a state of perpetual continuity which allows no release from individuation in which to disengage from constant sensation and metabolize the material of her days:

> I hated watching her go speechless under the conglomerate weight of so much unrelenting looking and thinking and listening and feeling, her mind worn thin by the sound of every cough and the plinking moisture of every raindrop, these noises exploding like grenades through her naked awareness — her mind crushed, in the end, by an avalanche of waking moments. Once sleep stopped melting time for Dori, she could not dig herself out. She was buried under snowflakes, minutes to hours to months. The official cause of death was organ failure. (138)

As Crary notes, the temporality of sleep functions as a kind of interruption that disrupts neoliberal presentism, providing a space for reverie that refuses "the unsparing weight of our global present."[16] As a form of "historical time," sleep "contains a bond to a future, to a possibility for renewal and hence of freedom. It is an interval into which glimpses of an unlived life, of postponed life, can edge faintly into awareness."[17] In a bravura passage, the novella heralds the extinction of sleep as the extinction of time itself (and secondarily, as the extinction of Walt Whitman's heroic imaginary of the United States):

> Sleep has been chased off the globe by our twenty-four-hour news cycle, our polluted skies and crops and waterways, the bald eyeballs of our glowing devices. We Americans are sitting in an electric chair that we engineered. What becomes of our circadian rhythms, the "old, glad harmonies" that leapt through us like the vascular thrust of water through leaves of grass? Bummer news, Walt: that song's done. And the endogenous clock, the suprachiasmatic nucleus, heredity prize of every human, that tiny star cluster of neurons in the hypothalamus which regulates our yawning appetites for hard winter light and spacey blackness, the master clock that syncs us to one another, and to the Earth's rotation, the sun and the moon? […] Bummer news, everyone: the clock stops for humanity. Time itself will soon become an anachronism. Time, as our species has lived it on this planet, will cease to exist. No more dark/light binary. […] No longer is sunshine the coagulant of consciousness, causing us to clot into personalities, to cohere once more on our pillows each morning. (163–4)

If sleep is an escape from the relentless neoliberal logic of individuation and emotional life-work in which the self itself becomes a site of endless work, orexins are denied this escape, and the "solution" to their nightmare of unending attention is deeper commoditization. The sleep transfusions harvest human energy, drilling down to a vertical frontier of appropriation by transforming the immaterial stuff of dreams into a material commodity. In an aleatory passage, Trish describes the temporal weirdness of the "sleep draw," shot through with "a frightening, exhilarating charge […] an overpowering sense of ambient destiny, fate crushing in on all sides" (431). This sensation is produced by "proximity to enveloping illusions," to "the unhosted ghosts of these dreams in transit…to facilities where they will be tested, processed, plated on ice, awaiting transfusion" (431). The dreams glitter with the fetish of their strange congealment into value, a process made especially eerie by the function of dreams as what Russell calls "world-blueprints:" condensations of sleepers' dreamwork, an unalienated labor engaged in the construction of alternative selves, worlds, possibilities, outside of the homogenous present of capitalism, unfettered by commodity relations. In extracting world-blueprints from sleepers — with all their sense of alternate destiny — the Slumber Corps is effectively mining futurity, acting out the legendary impatience of finance capital, with its avoidance of fixed-capital investment and its insistence on short-term appropriation. That it is babies who are the deepest "wells" of extraction suggests the degree to which the bad medicine of neoliberal austerity has relied on the demolition of the prospects of a future generation for its temporary "fix" to financial crisis. According to a "Fresh Air" interview, Russell originally brainstormed the novella's imaginary inventions for the *New Yorker*'s May 2013 "Innovations" issue.[18] Sleep transfusions were not included in the magazine's final catalogue of utopian

innovations, perhaps because of the pessimism of their pointed critique of neoliberalism's tendency to invent new ways of commoditizing spheres outside exchange value rather than producing substantial revolutions in productivity.

The transfusion innovation — imagined as a technological "fix" to the failure of pharmaceuticals to resolve the ecological crisis of sleep — is essentially a failure, producing an iatrogenic epidemic of elective secondary insomnia, after the Donor Y infection is spun into Sleep Blend G-17 and the transfusion pool is infected by "nightmare-prions" inducing night terrors so severe that patients grow "nostalgic for their insomnia" and *choose* never to sleep again (648). The narrative's imagination of literally infectious terror and the subsequent proliferation of government apparatuses and algorithmic arrays such as the nightmare index aimed at surveillance and discipline satirizes the whole post/911 discourse on terror, states of exception, and US policing of its Latin American backyard. The FEMA trailers of the Slumbers Corps evoke natural disasters exacerbated by climate vitality and state abandonment such as Hurricane Katrina, which disproportionately affected socio-economically disadvantaged populations. Like the trailers in which Katrina refugees were housed, the Slumber Corps base camp is designed as temporary accommodation for "local teams working at the frontiers of the crisis," rooted in denial that the "insomnia emergency is now a permanent condition" which the first-response measures of the NGO cannot resolve, especially as they continue to ignore the systemic causes of the epidemic, treating only the symptoms (63). Ironically, as Trish remarks, "the cure is worse than the disease," responding not only to the failed technological intervention and NGO-dependency created by the Slumber Corps, but to the neoliberal state's own manipulation of iatrogenic insomnia to justify an intensification of securitization and expansion of its military-industrial complex rather than substantive investment in public health and preventative care (650).

Securitization is another form of enclosure that transforms concepts, assets, and geography into security concerns and, in so doing, legitimates the occupation of previously non-capitalized spaces. As Eli Jelly-Schapiro argues,

> The term 'homeland security' signifies a moment defined by its myriad contradictions — between imperial expansion and imperial decline, between the willful performance of state failure (Hurricane Katrina) and spectacular performance of state power (the 'shock and awe' conquest of Iraq), between the labor imperatives of business and anti-immigrant nativism, between the hypermodern weapons of info-war and atavistic methods of (neo)colonial expropriation, between the universal aspirations of capital and the territorial exigencies of the nation-state.[19]

The novella satirizes the homeland security state — what Naomi Klein calls the "homeland security industry"[20] — in its description of the Dream and Nightmare Tracking and Epidemiology Division, a massive surveillance operation that tracks nightmare outbreaks, analyzing the "biomechanics of 'nightmare-prions,'" and enlisting the Slumber Corps in a public-private partnership with state and federal agencies. The division's aims are territorializing, mapping clusters of dreams across geographies, marking particular nations with a discourse of contamination and alterity: the labelling of a Guyanese woman as Patient Zero,

thus attributing the etiology of the crisis to the pathological Global South; the speculation that Donor Y "is a new kind of bio-terrorist, who co-opted Gould's technology to stage an attack" (626); the blaming of the black market sleep labs in Vietnam, Haiti, and Cuba for trading tainted sleep and infecting US citizens, as if with the dangerous ideology of affordable healthcare. However, the nightmare index also performs a predictive and disciplinary function, using logistic regression models to detect probable trends and calculate the risk of infection from exposure to sick dreamers (449). Securitization is conducted within what Antoinette Rouvroy describes as a new mode of "algorithmic governmentality," which predicts behavioral patterns through induction based on infra-personal raw data and metadata, rather than the intent or motivation of individual agents:

> [D]ata mining and profiling techniques seduce industries and governmental institutions with promises of real time, automatic, and thus allegedly "objective" detection, sorting and forward looking evaluation of the invisible opportunities and risks carried by individuals. Opening the way to pre-emptive action to secure commercial profit and forestall dangerous or sub-optimal behaviors, the attunement of individuals' (informational or physical) environments and interactions according to their constantly evolving "profiles" is an unprecedented mode of government.[21]

The novella's speculative scenario of sleep-terror satirizes the war on terror's incitement of an affective state of perpetual vigilance, showing how the pre-emptive actions of the security industry produce a paranoiac national structure of feeling rooted in mass hypochondria: "Entire neighborhoods are having allergic reactions to the Donor Y crisis; even people with no history of insomnia or dream transfusion are suddenly frightened to crawl into bed" (638).

However, the novella also gestures beyond the crisis of the imperial nation-state to the global crisis of neoliberal capitalism. The displacement of the sleep crisis through a biotech fix only produces a more severe crisis, respatialized on a global scale, after nightmare-prions spread out of the American hemisphere to Hunan Province in China: "Naively, we now realize, we believed the dysfunction was bounded by our hemisphere, peculiar to American sleepers. But here is proof that nobody is quarantined by geography — that anybody, anywhere, might become an orexin" (1425). This image can be read as the 'contagion' of financial crisis, if interpreted in light of China's ownership of US bonds and dependence on the United States as a consumer market for its exports. The fact that the Harkonnens sell sleep to their east Asian competitors in search of a technological fix suggests that the United States is no longer the potential site of a revolution that could solve the "plague" of declining productivity.

Yet, the crisis of terminal insomnia is represented in the novella not only as socio-economic, but as profoundly socio-ecological, signifying the larger exhaustion of the neoliberal ecological regime. Over three decades of neoliberalism, frontiers in cheap food, energy, resources, and labor have encountered peak appropriation, no longer able to secure rising surpluses in conjunction with declining unit costs of extraction. Biotechnology has not produced a sufficiently large revolution in productivity to sustain a new wave of accumulation that will resolve systemic crises of under- and over- production. For Moore, the capitalist world-ecology is in the throes of a developmental, possibly even epochal crisis, of which the potentially

terminal crisis of American unilateral power is only one facet.[22] Correspondingly, *Sleep Donation* is permeated with figurations of the "global desertification of dreams" as interdependent with global environmental crisis.

Exhaustion of cheap oil and cheap water haunts the novella's symbolic regime, shadowing the anxious attempts of the US core to eke out its hegemony by opening new frontiers in extreme energy and extreme water. If extreme oil has been used to describe technologies of fossil fuel extraction, which are more expensive and carbon-intensive than their predecessors, including fracking, deep-sea drilling, and tar sands extraction, the term "extreme water" as I use it can likewise designate intensive technologies of water extraction that follow peak appropriation of freshwater, including aquifer pumping, deep drilling, and mega-dam projects. Extreme energy compounds the environmental toll of extreme water, given the vast amounts of crude water consumed and polluted by fracking, mining, smelting, and electronics-manufacturing. Trish is based in a Pennsylvanian city, which she describes as afflicted with "one of the greatest REM-sleep deficits on the East Coast." Drawing on Pennsylvania's association with intensive fracking, she frames her fears of draining Baby A in the extractivist vocabulary of extreme water:

> 'We will never overdraw your daughter…' I make this promise at a moment when people are plunging their straw into any available centimeter of shale and water, every crude oil and uranium and mineral well on earth, with an indiscriminate and borderless appetite. […] Some animals we've turned out to be. We have never in our species' history respected Nature's limits, the doomsday speculators announce, smacking their lips, until it seems like some compensatory sucrose must flood into their mouths every time they say the words "mass death." According to their estimates, our species will be extinct in another generation, having exhausted every store of water and fuel on the planet. (1471)

This language of exhaustion is both literal and figurative, overlaid with an imaginary of intensified water and oil extraction, which draws an analogy between the vertical frontiers of resource mining and the biotechnological mining of human subjectivity. Donors are described as "dream wells," Baby A is a "fleshy aquifer," the faces of sleepers are "happy and plump, irrigated by sleep" (214); transfusion relies on the "hydrology of human generosity," (685) the Corps are "hydraulic engineers," redistributing "funds, dreams, to eradicate thirst" (576); even Trish's surname, "Edgewater," is suggestive of hydrological crisis. Sleep trouble in this sense can be seen as the crisis of the forms of extraction that fuel particular kinds of predominantly middle-class consumer subjectivity. Elsewhere, the novella fleetingly alludes to the fact that indigenous peoples are often the most exploited by forms of hydro-extractivism and enclosure, drawing a direct link between a Lakota man in a coma whose family claims that the Wyoming Slumber Corps has been "mining him" for sleep and "all the mining, drilling and *earth-rape* they are *actually* doing in Wyoming" (398).

For the most part, the novella sidesteps the question of what forms of collective resistance could be mobilized in response to enclosure, extractivism, and securitization. However, it does intimate the containment of dissent through its dialectical portrayal of the "Night Worlds" which "form spontaneously, on the margins of cities" comprised of "mazes of tents, nocturnally blooming

speakeasies" where orexins and elective insomniacs who are either denied sleep transfusions or who refuse them go to seek solace in their sleeplessness (191). Russell's wider oeuvre of short fiction has been consistently concerned with representation of economic busts and recessions, haunted by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, traversing western ghost towns and the spectres of a deindustrialized Deep South. Here, the "Night Worlds" produced by the collapse of sleep allegorize the modern-day recession, recalling the tent cities spreading through the United States after the collapse of the housing bubble in 2008 and the epidemic of house foreclosures. They are eruptions of the disenfranchised that allegorize the social violence of debt by imagining insomnia as a kind of fatal bankruptcy of sleep into which masses of people are thrust, cast out of ordinary society and relegated to the peripheries of ordinary existence. But they also have a weird, phantasmagoric energy that signifies their potential to act as sites of the emergence of new collectivities in the wake of socio-ecological disaster. Their "heterogeneous mix of revenants" and "hallucinatory reef" of fairgrounds, poppy fields, and transgressive performances are reminiscent of the carnivalesque atmosphere occasioned by the Occupy movement's occupation of public spaces and conscious generation of new forms of democratic art, education, and political praxis (1056).

At the same time, however, the subversive potential of the Night Worlds to incubate collective dissent and non-normative praxes is quickly assimilated into a circus of 24/7 consumption where sleepless consumers vainly try to sate their insomnia with a cornucopia of novel commodities, drugs, sleep placebos, and life-style experiences. As Trish wryly observes, "America's great talent, I think, is to generate desires that would never have occurred, natively, to a body like mine, and to make those desires so painfully real that money becomes fiction, an imaginary means to some concrete end" (1340). The round-the-clock customers haunting the night bars are described in monstrous terms, scarecrows shuffling through their perpetual purchases but drained of pleasure, like so many zombie consumers. The Night World is a site of social contradictions, seeded with creative potential, but also a dystopian prospect of a future in which capitalism has reworked the planet into a "non-stop work site or an always open shopping mall of infinite choice, tasks, selections and digressions," where "sleeplessness is the state in which producing, consuming, and discarding occur without pause, hastening the exhaustion of life and the depletion of resources."[23]

Trish's own journey into the camp jolts her out of the recursive cycles of her solipsistic anxiety and leads to a new recognition of collective suffering. In the Night World, she is confronted by a microcosm of social totality, as she encounters sleepless from across the class spectrum, finding it "perversely cheering" to see "rich insomniacs [who] have gotten lonely enough to disable their alarms and leave their marble enclaves, coming down the mountain" (1056) to wander restless alongside the outcast and the homeless. Significantly, it is in the liminal space of the Night World, outside of the normative sphere of daylight life, that Mr. Harkonnen confronts Trish about her ongoing exploitation of his daughter and asks her to agree that she won't sleep again until she stops drawing infusions from Baby A. Rather than the crude transactional logic that haunted her Slumber Corps negotiation, her agreement with Harkonnen is a social contract, born of mutuality and transindividual intimacy, in which Trish finally attends to the deep asymmetries of sleep extraction by experiencing them in terms of her own deprivation.

She perceives this contract as liberatory rather than oppressive, opening up prospects of future agency that had seemed foreclosed:

> I don't feel like a slave to contract. I don't feel that Mr. Harkonnen tricked or frightened me into it. Each time I stare down at our handshake, I feel the same vertigo, a dislocation that is much stranger than mere anticipation, as though I'm being catapulted forward in time, rocketed to my death, perhaps, or to some absolute horizon, where I get a glimpse of my own life massing into form, a thrilling feel for all that will happen to me now, all that I cannot know, haven't yet done, haven't spoken, haven't thought, will or won't. Just entering the contract does this. […] The simple algebra of our arrangement feels like a ladder that he is holding out to me. (1401)

Newly empowered with an ethos, she concludes the narrative by directly confronting the Storch brothers and exposing their illegal sale of sleep to Japan. This whistleblower conclusion is rather paltry by way of a political gesture, a narrative resolution rooted in the idea of redemptive individual action through official legal channels by a bourgeois agent and the liberal belief that institutions only need reform, rather than thorough-going systemic transformation through collective action. Russell's novella predominantly concentrates on privatized experiences of bioderegulation and affective sleeplessness corresponding to the 24/7 environment in which post-Fordist bourgeois US consumers are immersed. In contrast, Rivera's film, *Sleep Dealer,* as I will demonstrate, foregrounds collective experiences of labor outsourcing, intensified extraction, and uneven development in post-NAFTA Mexico, focusing not on the individual privation of insomnia, but rather on the social totality of "cybraceros" working in "sleep dealer" factories.

II

If in developmental crises of capitalism, the appearance and growth of fictitious capital, the most virtual, immaterial form of capitalization, and primitive accumulation, the most brutally material, are interlinked, then the emphasis on affect and governmentality in Karen Russell's speculative literary aesthetics could be argued to figure more strongly the abstracted mode of financialization in the core, while Rivera's self-termed "science fiction from below" figures the scarring modes of accumulation in the semi-periphery.[24] Rivera is a US director, son of a Peruvian immigrant, whose socially conscious films invert science fiction genre conventions to explore the hierarchical relations between the United States and the wider American hemisphere. *Sleep Dealer*, his first feature, is a Spanish-language film shot in Mexico. In *Sleep Dealer*, the sleeplessness of protagonist Memo Cruz is not an affective plague, neither a privatization of interiority nor an erasure of the capacity to dream, but rather the physical product of overwork in twelve-hour shifts in virtual reality factories, the eponymous "sleep dealers" in which "cybraceros" use nodes to plug into bots which operate remotely in the United States. Instead of the reddened corneas of Russell's insomniacs (as depicted in the *Sleep Donation* cover image), Rivera's cybraceros present eerie, whitened irises, a zombified glare reflective of their reduction to dehumanized labor. The workers experience spatio-temporal disorientations, electricity-induced blindness, and hallucinations as a result of having their "nervous system" plugged in too long "to the other system — the global economy."[25] The factories literally "deal" sleep —

that is, unconsciousness or even death — to cybraceros "when their nervous systems overload from the electrical input" from working uninterrupted shifts.[26] If Russell's sleepless consumers embody the anxious subjectivity of a contracting American middle class that nonetheless remains the market for the export commodities manufactured by Mexican maquiladoras, Rivera's sleepless workers rematerialize the other side — "*el otro lado*," as Memo hails it — of the axial division of labor across the border.[27] The predominance of dusk and twilight scenes in the urban borderland setting — in contrast to the sun-drenched natural light of the opening scenes on the farm in Oaxaca — emphasize the artificial illumination of the factories, the collapse of diurnal distinctions between night and day as the workers pursue virtual shifts. Even the recreational spaces outside the sleep dealers — the Node bar where exhausted workers consume stimulants or depressants, the studio bedsit where the node journalist jacks in to file her stories — are predominantly absent of natural lighting, the interiors murky with crepuscular purples or garish with digital neon.

Rivera criticizes contemporary science fiction thriller films for conceiving of futurity almost solely in terms of cosmopolitan capitalist core cities, while eliding representation of the exploitation of the rural hinterlands or megalopolises of the Global South.[28] *Sleep Dealer* deliberately opens not in a city, but in Memo's home village in the rural countryside of Oaxaca:

> To think about the future of Oaxaca, you have to think how so-called 'development' has been happening there […] It's not superhighways and skyscrapers. […] The buildings look older. Most of the streets still aren't paved. And yet…instead of an old-fashioned TV, there is a high-definition TV. Instead of a calling booth, like they have today in Mexican villages, where people call their relatives who are far away, in this future there is a video-calling booth. There's the presence of a North American corporation that has privatized the water and that uses technology to control the water supply. There are remote cameras with guns mounted on them and drones that do surveillance over the area. The vision of Oaxaca in the future and of the South in the future is a kind of collage, where there are still elements that look ancient, there is still infrastructure that looks older even than it does today, and yet there are little capillaries of high technology that pulse through the environment.[29]

This vision of futurity is foregrounded in uneven development, highlighting the underdevelopment of basic infrastructure in contrast to the overdevelopment of security infrastructure to protect transnational capital and more effectively enclose new frontiers of ecological surpluses (water). Likewise, when the film follows Memo to the borderland city, the gleaming high-tech factories, security apparatus and information telephony sharply contrast the sprawling shantytowns outside the glittering center, where the "netbacks" huddle over rudimentary wood fires.

The film reworks the cyberpunk genre to rebut technotopian fantasies of biophysical transcendence via hyperconnectivity into a mecanosphere. The node workers' minds are set to operating heavy construction mechs and farming avatars in remote locations across the US border in the North, but their bodies, left jacked into the sleep dealers, are still wholly susceptible to the biological limits of sleep exhaustion, even as they are infused with oxygen to keep them more alert, or as they consume shots of "teki" in the node bar to attempt to

counteract exhaustion by overstimulating their metabolisms. Overconnectivity in virtualized cyberspace is not the source of morphological freedom from the constraints of human flesh, as in the myth of liberatory transhumanism, but rather a rupture in biological metabolism that heralds death. Automation does not bring salvation from wage-labor, but rather a new form of exploitation that further alienates workers, dematerializing their bodies and removing their capacity to organize in the sphere of production, thus ironically fulfilling the "American Dream" of virtual outsourcing: "We give the US what they've always wanted. All the work, without the workers."[30] As the voiceover in Rivera's satiric short promotional film *Why Cybraceros?* explains, "cyber-bracero means a worker who poses no threat of becoming a citizen…providing labor at low financial and social costs to you, the consumer."[31] The fantasy of disembodied productivity reflects the peripheralization of Latin American immigrants in the contemporary US political system and the erasure from political consciousness of the suffering and exploitation endured not only by workers in the borderland cities, but all those displaced from their land by mining, mega-dams, and agri-business corporations in the interior.

As Rivera explains in an interview, his science fiction from below aesthetic is explicitly concerned with foregrounding the hierarchies of combined and uneven development, emphasizing the way in which the wealth of cores is built on the surpluses extracted from peripheries:

> We use the word 'futuristic' to describe things that are…explosions of capital, like skyscrapers or futuristic cities. We do not think of a cornfield as futuristic, even though that has as much to do with the future as does the shimmering skyscraper. […] The ancient cornfields in Oaxaca are the places that replenish the genetic supply of corn that feeds the world. Those fields are the future of the food supply. For every futuristic skyscraper, there's a mine someplace where the ore used to build that structure was taken out of the ground. That mine is just as futuristic as the skyscraper. […] *Sleep Dealer* puts forward this vision of the future that connects the dots, a vision that says that the wealth of the North comes from somewhere. It tries to look at development and futurism from this split point of view — to look at the fact that these fantasies of what the future will be in the North must always be creating a second, nightmare reality somewhere in the South.[32]

Memo's metamorphosis into a sleepless laborer acts as a guide into the nightmare reality instituted by the North American Free Trade Agreement, which unleashed violent rounds of accumulation by dispossession to force indigenous peasants off the land and coerce them into casualized forms of proletarian wage labor. In the 1990s, the Mexican state executed a mass privatization of *ejido* lands previously owned collectively by the peasantry and removed import barriers, thus lowering the price of corn and other staple food commodities so that they could not compete with the cheap food imported by the US agro-industry. Millions of migrants flooded into the northern cities to enter the vast reserve of cheap, flexible labor supplying the three thousand assembly plants springing up alongside the border. Deruralization and maquilaization brutally re-organized socio-ecological relations through the mass enclosure of Mexico's land and

water commons, exacerbating the burden on local ecologies already under stress after the elimination of state funding for waste storage and water treatment facilities. Maquila factories in the desert ecosystems of the borderlands contributed to extreme water through aquifer pumping, toxification of watersheds by leaking chemicals and illegal dumping of hazardous waste into waterways such as the Rio Grande, while failing to provide basic water infrastructure, sewage, or waste disposal provision for the workers living in the shantytowns encircling the industrial parks.

Rivera's film shares the hydrological imaginary of Russell's novella, conjoining sleeplessness with water crisis, but its split perspective foregrounds the hydroculture of the semi-periphery and periphery in contrast to that of the core, emphasizing the exhaustion of water in conjunction with food, rather than oil. Memo explicitly connects the draining of his life-force in the sleep dealer with the privatization of water in his village in Oaxaca, after the Del Rio water company, a transnational American corporation headquartered in San Diego, dams the local river and charges villagers by the dollar to irrigate their fields. Staring at his desertified *milpa*, Memo's father describes the neoliberal enclosure of the river commons as inducing a material and existential rupture in temporality: "Is our future a thing of the past? […] We had a future. You're standing on it. When they dammed up the river, they cut off our future."[33] Images of Memo's exhausted body hooked into nodes are juxtaposed with a shot of the overland water pipeline, as he declaims, "My energy was being drained, sent far away. What happened to the river, was happening to me."[34] Appropriation of nature's unpaid work/energy is thus dialectically linked to the exploitation of Memo's labor, as is the spectre of exhaustion: the exhaustion of the worker's body, and the exhaustion of the water and food needed to sustain social reproduction, proposing limits to the appropriation of labor by virtual means and signaling the maxing out of ecological surpluses. In Rivera's post-NAFTA film, unlike Russell's story, sleeplessness does not provoke a terror of contagion; rather, dehumanizing conditions of labor and privatization of the ecological sources of daily survival are the sources of chronic fear and anxiety. Sleeplessness is not portrayed primarily as an affective disorder of individual privation, but rather as a generalized condition deriving from structural violence and the hierarchical division of labor. Where Russell's novella can only imagine a limited assertion of individual morality in response to systemic crisis, Rivera's film concludes by imagining the possibility for collective resistance to North American capital and the neoliberal Mexican state's heightened discipline. For Rivera's characters, terminal crisis of US hegemony is devoutly to be wished, rather than anxiously avoided through liberal reform. Unlike *Sleep Donation*, in which class distinctions are mostly invisible, the film carefully plots a series of class differentials: Memo, the disenfranchised *campesino* of the rural interior turned precarious cybracero; Rudy, the Mexican-American drone pilot who remotely polices the corporate dam in Memo's Oaxacan village from his security base in California; Luz, the bourgeois creative who turns her memories into story-commodities for TruNode in order to pay off her student debt to a bio-media university. The latter represents the film's self-reflexive meditation on the hollowing out of artistic autonomy by financialization and the subsumption of cultural production by algorithmic governmentality. Luz's "writing" is actually a recording of her memories and feelings, which are bioauthenticated as "truth" by a data recording algorithm. TruNode represents an extreme form of data-mining that mines memories and dreams themselves, a corollary to the commodification of sleep draws in *Sleep Donation*. However, the film carefully differentiates between Luz's

immaterial, affective labor and the sheer physical toll of Memo's exploitation, and reveals her perspective and feelings as problematically bound by her own class experience, as when she turns her romantic relationship with Memo into a commodity for exchange in the memory trade, or when she visits his village and describes it as something alien and exotic for her viewers, romanticizing its underdevelopment and poverty: "Going there felt like time travel, like entering a completely new world."[35]

Likewise, the film shows the induction of media consumers into the affect of the security state by including a parody of National Geographic's *Border Wars* shows called *Drone Wars*, a reality TV program that encourages viewers to celebrate as "high-tech heroes use high-technology to blow the hell out of bad guys" and justifies the exercise of force in the service of water enclosure and resource monopoly: "Dams all around the world are the target of massive resistance by legions of aquaterrorists. So the companies fight back."[36] However, here again it is careful to offer a dialectical perspective, juxtaposing the immaterial affects of virtual fear, terror, and celebration of spectacular state and corporate-sponsored violence enjoyed by domestic US consumers of the program with the real physical experience of securitization across the border in Mexico, showing Memo's family running in terror from drone hits as their village is flattened.

Even more importantly, it portrays the possibility of collective political insurgency against the security apparatus, rather than imagining it as an all-subsuming form of governance that leaves no room for agency. Throughout the film, the protagonists witness television segments and street graffiti referencing the "EMLA" or Mayan Army of Water Liberation, who are demonized by the US and Mexican media as eco-terrorists, but embraced by the people. Wearing balaclavas reminiscent of the Zapatistas and demanding water autonomy, the EMLA correspond to the real-life ELZN, the movement of indigenous peasants who rose up against the enclosure of their lands by the neoliberal Mexican state, and now maintain a precarious autonomy in Chiapas. The drone pilot, Rudy, who kills Memo's father in a drone strike after mistaking him for an eco-terrorist, is depicted as experiencing a slow conscionization of his own role in exercising the monopoly of violence to protect US capital interests. Awakened to Memo's humanity by Luz's story of her encounter with him, Rudy crosses the Mexican border in search of him, where he confronts the full reality of structural inequality. Crary argues that "sleeplessness takes on its historical significance and its particular affective texture in relation to the collective experiences external to it" and Rudy's encounter with Memo rematerializes this social collectivity, making visible the forms of dispossession and social ruin with which sleeplessness is concomitant.[37] His journey through the Tijuana maquilas catalyzes anagnorisis, the recognition of a larger social totality founded in the concerted life situation of the semi-periphery, since as Rivera argues in a video interview for the Latino Film Festival, "The periphery is the center," where the hierarchical labor relations underlying global modernity can be discerned.[38] He goes on to highlight the salience of the Mexican borderland as the only land border between the United States core and the (semi)periphery, where the violence of exploitation is therefore peculiarly visible.

Subsequently, Rudy allies with Luz, the memory-worker journalist, and Memo, to hijack a sleep dealer and blow up the transnational dam in Memo's village. This alliance, in which the

Hispanic-American professional aligns with the indigenous peasant-turned-proletarian and the female Mexican middle-class intellectual, imagines a class realignment. The "memory cross" of Memo Cruz's name, thus, might signify not only his crucifixion in the node-machine of the factory, but also redemption through the recuperation of political memory. His character acts as a crossroads or axis of resistance through which alienated fractions can be joined into a new solidarity that enables their re-autonomization. As such, the film offers more than the token individual resistance within the constraints of liberal institutions as imagined in Russell's novella, and inspired by its sympathetic proximity to Zapatista struggle, its political imaginary is much broader, seeking instead to dissolve the material and social structures that underlie the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. The interdependent mutuality of the characters is reinforced by Memo's memory of *milpas*, in which "the beans wrap around the corn and the two help each to grow," an image drawn from the Mayan ecological imaginary, which rejects the idea of nature as a reified object, a surplus to be rationalized and commoditized, or as a source of perpetual competition, in favor of an understanding of interdependent relations in which human and extra-human nature can act together in symbiosis. Their act of *ecotage* is not depicted as act of terror, but rather as the restoration of life, releasing the "miracle" of the river, the first action of a water war that will restore the "future" of the Mexican peasants. The film concludes with Rudy embarking on a bus south, presumably to EMLA territory, while Luz and Memo remain in Tijuana to contemplate their next action. The final shot is of Memo planting a rooftop *milpa*, whilst proclaiming, "But perhaps there's a future for you here on the edge of everything. A future with a past. If I connect. And fight."[39] This reassertion of temporality reclaims the dimensions of historical time and futurity, refusing the endless neoliberal present of sleepless, virtualized labor, in favor of a vision of *la lucha continua*, of the possibility of autonomy and solidarity across time. Thus, I would argue that while both Russell and Rivera's texts offer productively dystopian imaginations of the "end of sleep" in the neoliberal era, they do so from across an axial division of labor, offering a kind of uneven and combined geography of sleeplessness whose differing emphasis on affect and governmentality vs. autonomy, and unequal ability to conceive of social collectivity is situated in the contrast between the concerted life-situations of the North American core hegemon and the Mexican semi-periphery.

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