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Creative Intervention

Rebirth | Revolt | Resurrect – A Conversation about Uhuru Phalafala's *Mine Mine Mine*

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Helene Strauss (HS): Thanks again for allowing me into the intricate spiritual-material work of "unburying" (2023, p. 55) that you do in *Mine Mine Mine.* The sacred alchemy by which you've turned the dust of South Africa's mines into this miracle of memory, rhythm, and sound, signals histories-in-waiting, an arrival in print of truths long ready to be told. The volume invites long-overdue scrutiny of mining as a site of racial, gendered, and environmental violence at scales both intimate and planetary, and as such, speaks powerfully to each of the three terms at the center of this Special Issue's collaborative inquiry – namely Reckoning, Repairing, Reworlding.

As an offering of return to dignity and vitality, a refusal of the death and "ambiguous loss" (2023, p. 5) delivered to your grandparents by the train and the mineshaft, *Mine Mine Mine* is at once a call to arms, a love letter, and a roadmap to a better future. It crafts a moving vision of unburying as "undrowning," the word that Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2020) uses for "breathing in unbreathable circumstances . . . in the chokehold of racial gendered ableist capitalism" (p. 4). Mining as drowning, writing as unburying. A chronicle of expropriation and exploitation:

> of the Atlantic and Indian, casualties of the middle passage
> residing in the womb-tomb of the ocean, unable to breathe
> from the hold of the ship to holding cells,
> to mine hostels, the final grave
> of mice and men
> of underground people, moles, and mules
> never to see the sun again

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> pawns in our breathless and breath-taking civilization
> water-logged, dust-clogged lungs
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 20

I keep returning to these lines for many reasons, not least for their crucial linking of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave ship and the mining compound as parallel sites of suffocation. I am also struck by the horrific theft of sunlight that turns men into moles and mice, the debilitating disruption of circadian rhythms becoming a cellular register of South Africa's history of racial and economic injustice.

Uhuru Phalafala (UP): I will interject here to also express my gratitude for the close reading of my text. I appreciate the intertextual reference you make between my work and that of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, between her notion of undrowning and my concept of unburying. These are black feminist practices concerned with the process of "writing as a ritual of assembling," as co-writing: creation as co-creation, and birthing something into this world as a ritual process of death and rebirth. *Mine Mine Mine* was ancestrally-co-written, to use Pauline Gumbs' own formulation – I did not intend to write this work, and in fact had no interest in mining per se, as an area that could provide a framework to think of everything I do. So the work invited me into collaboration, visiting itself and making itself and its existence known to me. The black feminist praxis here is the care work of listening to this visitation, trusting it and following it, creating space for it and submitting self to the calling. This is black feminist work as it is concerned with ancestral work, with gathering the worlds of spirit with the physical world, and with birthing from spirit into the physical world something "new" – new only insofar as it becomes knowable and known to us, reveals itself to us, for the first time in this way. But it is not new, as a co-creator of this work will know; it existed elsewhere in another time, and made itself known to us in this time. The black feminist praxis here unfolds and enfolds/materializes on various fronts: the work is located in the realm of the erotic, deep within us and simultaneously deep within the dimensions of this existence, intertwined. A black feminist practice is one that attends to these deep layers of the world beyond the logics of Man (Sylvia Wynter, 2003): the seen and unseen worlds, living and nonliving, human and nonhuman – we know and trust these as worlds where temporality, history, and future are outside of the machinations of coloniality. In attending to these worlds, we make meaning of our worlds beyond the boundaries of reason and rational as dictated by Man. Those boundaries are border keeping roles that have kept black women on the outside, existing on the margins and at the bottom. They've also kept out the realms of spirit as real and lived, and this is where our power lies. The power of that realm is one that teaches us that we are abundant and accompanied on this journey, never alone and never entirely inscribed by the culture of scarcity; that we are entrusted and guided by intergenerational forces of being and becoming that live through

us and by us – that our work is their work, that we are co-creating with them always, for the future us, all entangled in the past and yet-to-come. The realm of spirit reenchants our lives here in this loveless culture of death and extraction – it opens to us other possibilities, and this is what I experienced co-writing this book.

HS: I'd like to briefly pause here, in turn, to reflect on the gift of ancestral accompaniment – a song intergenerationally harmonized – that scaffolds the "Movements" and "Coda" into which your epic is composed, and that your collaborative black feminist praxis elucidates here as a return to abundance. Your being called into this feminist care work – learning to listen to this visitation, to submit yourself to the calling, as you so beautifully phrase it – matters profoundly, I think, for redirecting the conversation surrounding South Africa's history of mining that has started to draw increased attention amongst creative cultural workers in recent years. Given how well this genocidal history has been relegated to the margins of post-apartheid South African public discourse, beginning to rise to prominence arguably only due to outrage following the 2012 Marikana massacre, your cross-generational collaboration crucially refuses this amnesia with the guidance of those for whom ecological plunder has been an embodied reality since the very start of the so-called South African mineral revolutions in the late nineteenth century (indeed, since the beginnings of colonial occupation in the seventeenth century, which saw the foundational enmeshment of harms at once human and ecological).

Cultivating more expansive ways to listen across the imposed divides of which you speak – between the human and nonhuman, the living and nonliving, the seen and unseen, the old and the new-old – is increasingly acknowledged among scholars associated with the so-called nonhuman and new materialist turns as an antidote to the carbon imaginary's destructive legacy. Yet this acknowledgement is belated, evidence of ancestral wisdom historically discredited in favor of racial capitalism's extractive logics, an asphyxiating legacy of epistemic violence to which *Mine Mine Mine* serves as such a resonant corrective. To be ancestrally entrusted, as you allow yourself to be, further places *Mine Mine Mine* at a distance from the work of national commemoration in the conventional sense of respectful public remembrance – a relegation to statue or museum. Rather, it compels a radical rethinking of inheritance as not only shaping the (infra)structural, material, and biochemical embodied present, but also as an animate and animating ancestral force offering guidance (each of these inheritances is explicitly evoked, for instance, in Movement 6 as "Lefa La Ntate" (p. 38) – also the inheritance of your grandmother). To trust this guidance in the way you describe here, strikes me as crucial to building more equitable, non-extractive futures, even if we do not all access this guidance in the same way.

For me, reckoning with an inheritance of harm for the benefit of my ancestors, myself, and my offspring, to be guided by your co-creation, is to

learn to unlearn; to do the much-needed healing work of unburying the root causes of black debilitation and death that traverse oceans, land, and skies, as a commitment to their undoing. I take direction here also from Alexis Shotwell's suggestion that to repair broken relations, to work against whiteness and towards the flourishing of more-than-white worlds, requires that white people claim bad kin and acknowledge realities of ongoing brutality from which we benefit. There are many ways these oppositional labours can be taken up in the contemporary South African context of struggles for access to breath, including the ongoing work of putting pressure on the mining industry and the state to honour the 2018 outcome of the class action lawsuit of which you write. Yet as your footnote on the first page of the volume reminds us, the death of the miners cannot be undone.

UP: What you say brings up for me the definition of "radical," an otherwise overused word these days, but it is apt here: the etymology of radical is "root" – unburying the root causes is radical in the sense that it goes to the root. In my view this is "root work" – the work of both extraction and enchantment. Root work is working with the unseen worlds, with other presences, in concert with them to arrive at another point different from the given one. Root work is also going to the genesis or source of the issue, in this case, all of the social ills we live through in the afterlives of the mining industrial complex. So *Mine Mine Mine* is a praxis of root work in both its meanings.

Unburying became an apt poetic to think beyond that death of extraction, or death by extraction. My grandfather died, our collective grandfathers and fathers died. But they refuse this death. In visiting to tell me his story four years after his physical death, he asserted and affirmed his life by enunciating something so deep it will tell a story we have not begun to speak about. He is directing and redirecting the course of his own life beyond the grave, against anti-black death. Writing as unburying is the communal ritual of excavating the bones and reburying them with dignity. In telling his story he and they will find rest.

I want to return to the excerpt you cite from the collection:

> of the Atlantic and Indian, casualties of the middle passage
> residing in the womb-tomb of the ocean, unable to breathe
> from the hold of the ship to holding cells,
> to mine hostels, the final grave
> of mice and men
> of underground people, moles, and mules
> never to see the sun again
> pawns in our breathless and breath-taking civilization
> water-logged, dust-clogged lungs
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 20

I am still to take in these words. It seems to me that everything I have read and studied and written about in my work as a scholar of race were coming

together in this moment of co-creating. Placing the Atlantic and Indian Ocean in the same framework as the mine to expand on the amazing contemporary scholarship is work I've been thinking about since I read Christina Sharpe's exceptional book *In the Wake* (2016) in which she delineates the three holds of race-making in the New World, fabulously (if not heartbreakingly) exploring their afterlives – the holds of the ship, the plantation, and the prisons. To these holds I wanted to add the hold of the mining industry, which has always been clear to me as the foundation of South African modernity built upon black death, the decimation of the black family and black sociality. I see now that Christina Sharpe's languages of breathlessness deeply impacted me. I think that is what black feminism is concerned with: writing with/from the body and speaking to the body that has not only been undervalued by western Enlightenment, but has also been chained, whipped, electrocuted, raped, decapitated, etc, by a brutal civilization intent on forcing us out of our bodies to mechanize them for extraction and labour. Moving in and from the body as a legitimate site of knowing ourselves and the world as black women then becomes a formidably radical and political act. We may not be able to entirely return to the lands from which we've been forcibly removed, but we can return to our bodies. And perhaps returning to the land cannot happen without a return to the body. The body remembers the land and it is from the body that we can hear the land and heed its rhythms.

In my work I have thought at length about how the train in Southern Africa can and must be read in the same paradigm as the ship of the middle passage: both are vehicles central to the making of racial capitalism, colonial modernity, and black catastrophe. They are vehicles for black displacement and psychic dislocation whose afterlives we live today. It became important for me to find ways for the bottom of the ocean to co-exist with the mine's hold, for the hold of the ship to co-exist with the hold of the mine. So the lungs became the logical and metaphorical site of black catastrophe in colonial modernity. They have become emblematic for premature black death: "I can't breathe" is a black lamentation from Fanon to Floyd. Covid-19 also located the lungs at the centre of premature and disproportionate black death related to the pandemic.

HS: Yes! First, your reading of "root work" as involving both extraction and enchantment really resonates. Yvette Abrahams provides a particularly helpful model for this kind of work in a recent essay on her own backyard labours to decolonize the soil "one meter at a time." Her reminder that one of the first things Jan Van Riebeeck did when he arrived at the Cape in 1652 was to order the uprooting of indigenous plants and their replacement with European seed – which were not suited to the environment and required considerable labour to cultivate – is also a reminder that root work is spiritual work, a re-sacralization of relations between soil, water, earth, sky, and the seen and unseen forces and cosmologies that sustained these interdependencies before extractive European farming methods started to rob the soil of its nutrients. I

see the incredible harm done within my own ancestral lineages by these logics of conquest, extraction, and disenchantment, which not only severed people from their constitutive interdependence with regenerative ecological relations but also produced the kind of dissociative spirituality that, for instance, made it possible for the Dutch Reformed Church to support apartheid.

Second, your work reminds readers that the theft of black breath has been foundational to extractive capitalism from the outset, well beyond the diasporic contexts of anti-black asphyxiation that tend to feature most prominently in recent work on the cultural politics of respiration (see for instance Jean-Thomas Tremblay's *Breathing Aesthetics*). From the start of your epic, your grandfather's hardships devastatingly take readers deep into the bowels of African earth to expose mining's ongoing assault on black airways. "Rakgolo," you write of your grandfather's ruptured relation to home, kin, and his own body:

> … did you dread coming home
> to searching eyes and hearts
> to strangers who were once kin
> to impotent excitement and dreary celebrations?
> Were your lungs already half-filled?
> Could you breathe?
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 6

These lines are then answered by your grandfather himself, as the text hauntingly shifts into his italicized, first-person voice:

> *my mind is a terrifying adversary*
> *there my family resides fatherless*
> *there my livestock roams without a herder*
> *there the rains fail to nourish the drought in my soul*
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 6

It matters here that your grandfather's lamentations distantiate mind from family, livestock, and rain as the lost conditions for the restoration of breath. Spoken in his own voice, these words clearly signal your grandfather's affirmation of his own life and longevity notwithstanding the anaesthetizing psychic barriers:

> *hiding hurt and heart*
> *numbing memories of pleasures*
> *coveted and stolen elsewhere*
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 7

UP: I'd like to return to what you say about reckoning with an inheritance of harm for the benefit of your ancestors, yourself, and your offspring. This requires unpacking. Part of the book's goal is to initiate these difficult conversations, and I am glad you brought this up. I cannot begin to imagine the

texturalities of confronting the wreckage out of which your inherited privileges arise. Exactly how does *Mine Mine Mine* alchemize this process?

HS: Thanks for this invitation to elaborate. There's no easy way to confront this history and doing so often leads to defensiveness. But there's no hope of stepping out of this wreckage if we do not learn to be unafraid of these questions. To start, while *Mine Mine Mine* mediates a debilitating history of black loss and suffering, it does so without pathologizing this pain. This refusal lies most clearly, perhaps, in the nuance with which you convey complexity across the experiential and affective spectrum, clearly moving beyond what Unangax feminist scholar Eve Tuck, in reference to research-practices involving Indigenous communities in the US, once called a damage-based approach to histories of harm. Your overwhelmingly beautiful meditation, in Movement 4, titled "Black Rage in Swallow" (p. 23), of the complexities of black female desire and resistance, comes to mind:

> The swaying of hips on stages of song.
> Swingsters, merrymakers, skylarks, diponono
> arranging their bodies to elude capture,
> efforts that make the uninhabitable liveable,
> to escape confinement of four cornered worlds,
> and tight, airless matchbox houses.
>
> *Mine Mine Mine,* pp. 23-24

More to the point, *Mine Mine Mine's* refusal of the grammars of damage and defeat lies in the text's unflinching naming of black debilitation as the result of white power, comfort, leisure, and wealth, including the incredible violence inflicted by white women as co-custodians of this wealth. I am reminded here of a comment bell hooks once made in her reading of the pathologization of black rage, namely that to make this rage seem pathological is a diversionary tactic meant to redirect attention from the structural causes at its root. To direct attention to these causes is not to re-centre whiteness. I read it instead, as an invitation to white readers to move from being voyeurs and consumers of the activist aesthetics of *Mine Mine Mine*, to being invested participants in the work of reckoning, repairing, reworlding. This is one reason why I so deeply appreciate you inviting me into this process of co-creation, as it allows for the space of working through, of connection even if, paradoxically, we meet in spaces of friction and disconnect, at the limits of comfort and ease.

Mine Mine Mine offers many lessons for building better relations than the ones my daughter and I inherited. Its focus on the molecular legacies of mining reveals, for instance, how the long-standing fixation within whiteness studies on the discursive reproduction of white privilege, while valuable, overlooked key aspects of whiteness as a material inheritance – in both the economic and biochemical senses. Even when whiteness studies attended to racism as a structural as well as individual legacy, it failed to consider racism in its cellular,

embodied forms, manifest, for instance, in the unequal distribution of access to breathable air. This oversight has started to be addressed only fairly recently by those recognizing pollution as colonialism (Max Liboiron 2021) or racial violence as also atmospheric and chemical (Hsuan Hsu, 2020, and Michelle Murphy, 2017). Liboiron importantly highlights pollution as a set of bad relations, or more precisely, as a still unfolding enactment of colonial relations to Land. No amount of environmental activism, Liboiron writes, can hope to remedy the violence of pollution without the anticolonial undoing of these bad relations, which are premised on the assumption of unlimited access to terra and sub-terra, water and sky, for never-ending extraction without replenishment.

There are no easy ways out, but I am inspired by the deep medicine work (Rupa Marya and Raj Patel, 2021) that *Mine Mine Mine* does to reconnect severed relations and fill in the missing parts of histories that confer sickness and suffering. Marya and Patel (2021) memorably write that "we become inflamed when we are in abusive relationships with our soils, our rivers, our microbial passengers, our animal and plant relations, our air, and each other" (p. 349). And so I return to the concept of care that you centered earlier. They suggest that inheritors of the spoils of colonial plunder move from an approach of "caring about" towards "caring with," which includes allowing the agenda to be set by those living the destructive embodied afterlives of colonialism as we actively work toward reparation and redistribution. I am also moved by their reminders of the gendered history of care, which is one that *Mine Mine Mine* actively addresses through its mediation of reproductive violence. In your work, care work is spirit work that both lovingly and furiously works against this violence. "My skin," you write, "a pathology of violent encounters/ an inhalation of fibric intimacies/ a memorial of enforced labor" (p. 13). You write of an inheritance of reproductive hurt, fibrous growths as harm inhaled across generations:

> Our bodies are voids
> In which history
> Casts its shameful acts
> Our bodies are vaults
> storing trauma that still breathes.
> In.our.wombs
>
> *Mine Mine Mine*, p. 72

A vivid invocation of the deeply gendered alterlife (Murphy, 2017) of industrial mining, namely the unevenly shared condition of chemically altered life as racism's embodied past, present and future, you gesture here to rematriating modes of feminist care, of repairing the abusive relations of which Marya and Patel (2021) write.

UP: Phew, this is most difficult. Black women's experience of the migrant labour system and mining industrial complex will never be fully known or

articulated. There is something that poetics allow for me that for instance scholarly/academic work does not enable: speaking from that place that you call the molecular. In my exploration of why it is that black women are affected by fibroids at an alarmingly disproportionate rate than women of other races, I could only move from the body as I am neither, according to academia, a health practitioner nor am I working in the Medical Humanities. But as a black woman with a womb, it is from the womb that I speak. I wrote *Mine Mine Mine* with my body! And poetics are a generative and capacious space that makes possible an "inhalation of fibric intimacies" in the context of "violent encounters" and "enforced labour." (Gqola, 2015, p. 13) There is so much here that alludes to sexual warfare and "rape as profitable" (Gqola, 2015) on the plantation. I remember being enthused by how capitalism extracts not only manual toil-labour but also reproductive labour from black bodies: both are blood-and-sweat labour but the difference between the ship and the train as vehicles of black catastrophe is that there were only boys and men on the trains while black women were relegated to the continuance of rural life, locked out of "modernity" and "future." This has had the tendency of removing black women from our narratives of black exploitation, migrant labour system, and mining. But the question remains, if black boys and men were central to producing global commodities and excavating white wealth, who produced black boys and men? And this is where the exploration of a gendered racial capitalism opened itself to me.

I want to take this in another direction where black feminist praxis allows me to hold multiple often irreconcilable truths, unbowed: the bodies that died in the cities returned to their rural homes for proper burial rites. This devastation is what I explore in the epic. What impact did this have on black women who've had to live with the terror of the proximity of birth and death? With this new historical imperative? This for me is in line with Movement 6 of the piece which navigates the difficult terrain of its afterlives: living with the dead bodies of black men, spiritually dead absent fathers, emotionally dead, and so forth. Black women still have to shoulder the burdens of this colonial modernity and its afterlives today.

So we are now talking about a centuries-old pathology that affects black women; of course we are going to have reproductive issues – fibroids, hysterectomies, infertility, endometriosis, debilitating period pain, etc. These in my understanding of disease as symbolic of spiritual dis-ease according to indigenous cosmology of this land, of disease as histories' manifestation in the body, as articulated by Raj Patel and Rupa Marya in *Inflamed* (Marya & Patel, 2021) are deeply and inextricably tied to the mining industrial complex. There are deep relationships between our biological systems and the profound injustices of our political and economic systems. This too constitutes part of the complex. These live and still breathe in black women's bodies, hence the rising number of hysterectomies in black women under the age of 40.

Given all of this, along with it comes the responsibility that sits in a deep place within us to keep living. Imagining life in this state of death, of black death and planetary death is imperative and is a black feminist praxis. The act of unburying is a practice of aliveness and possibility that goes against the single narrative of suffering and dystopia. When we hold these truths alongside each other – that the migrant labour system and the middle passage were the most catastrophic events of black life in this civilization, that they represented the end of the world for black people, and also that they gave us some of the most innovative black expressive cultures, from music (blues, scathamiya, bebop, mbaqanga, jazz, maskandi, rap, spoken word poetry, etc.) to other cultural forms – we learn from those who come before us that life prevails alongside dreaming to end this world. We are not afraid to end this world for we have the capacity, vision and imagination to sing our resurrection, to rebirth the world anew. This poetic of possibility gestates in the realm of the erotic – a life force that is renewable and regenerative, and which trumps any man-made hateful and necrophilous reality. Unburying is that act of regeneration.

HS: What you describe feels at once heavy and light. I think by pulling together these seemingly irreconcilable truths, by allowing for what Saidiya Hartman (2019) calls "improvisation with the terms of social existence … when there is little room to breathe" (p. 228), *Mine Mine Mine* offers a complex, multisensorial mediation of the difficulties of finding black rest. What you do here requires tiring and tireless creative investment, and I think it is crucial that you route your vision through the realm of the erotic as driver of the kind of regenerative aesthetics needed for the work of reworlding. When we started this project, you generously shared with me some of the ways in which your family was moved by the documentary *Dying for Gold* (Meyburg & Pakleppa, 2018). Documentary work is important work, and as I've elaborated elsewhere in my own writing, we cannot underestimate the sensorially rich and aesthetically subversive potential of the genre, but there's no denying that poetic mediation does something else.

UP: For closing comments perhaps I can elaborate on the relationship between improvisation with the terms of social existence as tireless creative investment, and the realm of the erotic as driver. I find this generative for making sense of "Rebirth | Revolt | Resurrect." My scholarly research and creative writing interests have begun embracing the sonic and sound as methodology. Writing my monograph on Keorapetse Kgositsile entrenched me in the world of jazz as a critical facility to challenge the terms of order. The jazz practice of improvisation has become a guiding light in my work, and, without thinking about it, that is how *Mine Mine Mine* was written. Improvisation as practice breaks with the known and the rehearsed, doing away with the logics of following rigid structures of knowledge and how we come to it. Jazz improvisation does not require knowledge of music notation or literacy of musical script. It is democratic. It allows a plunging into interiority, sounding

out from there not only accumulated lived experience and forms of knowing, but also the entanglements we have, at a deeper level, with ancestral memory and interconnectedness with the larger living world. Adapting writing as improvisation diligently attends to the fact that the terms of being and becoming, knowing and doing that are granted by dominant culture work against black life. They deny the complexity of inventiveness that black life has had to adapt to be able to breathe, live, relate, and create communities. Staying loyal to the frame of intelligibility and legibility of the given order as the only reality creates psychic, spiritual, and emotional mutilation: it asks for the black child to negate the full complexity of their lives, the multilayered nature of their languages and comprehension of the world, their culture and their experience of unseen worlds. In the realm of improvisation a break occurs from the limitations of the colonial conception of reality, and other worlds much more complex, entangled and teeming with other forms of existence are entered into, and they are often familiar and much more generous and capacious to hold our lived experiences here. In adapting a writing practice that is modelled on jazz improvisation I have been able to access and express what is deepest and strongest and richest within me – that is the power of the erotic. It is the most truthful place, if we can think of it in terms of truth against colonial fictions. And it feels like care work – taking seriously the worlds that make up mine and my people's experience of life in this anti-Black world, and the many other unaccounted-for lives, lived and unlived. That is the place where I met my grandfather, that is the place where I meet and know myself at a deeper level, and that is the place where I do lineage healing work for my personal lineage but also our collective lineages. Improvisation is revolt against the status quo. It is a method that accesses and gives language to that which cannot be apprehended by logic or intellectual theorizing, to the accumulation of living in an antagonistic world lodged in my biology and biography.

HS: Improvisation as you frame it here strikes me also as a way of honoring that which has been educated out of us, of reconnecting with the embodied, transgenerational, earthly wisdom of story and song. In Part II of your epic, you connect with this wisdom by way of Ama Codjoe's (2020) deeply moving poem "Burying Seeds," which you recompose into a tribute to the widows, wives, grandmothers, mothers, and daughters of anti-black history. The seeds of death, grief, and slowly germinating futures buried in Codjoe's homage to Betty Shabazz become in your riff the:

endings and beginnings
of our bodies remaking themselves.
With blood.
Every month.
Blood that separates us

from our fathers and brothers
in the mosque.
We sing its name:
our foremothers' refrain

Mine Mine Mine, p. 62

It feels fitting to conclude by returning to this reminder of the amniotic wisdom of the womb as a site of rebirth, revolt, and resurrection. It softens me, making me dream of birthing better kin, hopeful for a world in which even my offspring might turn harm into something good. Thanks again for the kindness of this exchange, from which I have learnt and unlearnt so much.

UP: Amniotic wisdom of the womb feels to me like the altar and modality that makes sense to who I am, who we are, who we've been and who we will be. The greatest work I've ever done is womb work; it is ongoing work that gives me life, that sings my foremothers' names as refrain indeed: repetition is prayer. What a beautiful invocation of my sister Ama Codjoe whose work I love. Yes, I am enlivened and fortified by writing in this time alongside many exceptional thinkers who do not only inspire me but in many ways show me what is possible. This gives me life, which is to say in the company of black women writers and makers I am rebirthed.

Thank you, Helene, for engaging so generously with my work.

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