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Materializing Trauma: Ceramic Embodiment, Environmental Violence, and the Colonial Legacies Of Mount Baldy

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MATERIALIZING TRAUMA: CERAMIC EMBODIMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE, AND THE COLONIAL LEGACIES OF MOUNT BALDY

by

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May we all continue to remember, heal, and love.
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Figure 1. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool at River.” 2017.
Introduction

Overview

Trauma is transformational. It can cause chronic body pain, flashbacks, intense depression, isolation, and more. Although it has major impacts, experiencing trauma is not a rare or exceptional occurrence. Rather, it is a fundamental component of the societies we live in. It is thus necessary to reposition trauma as an environmental force that people are always influenced by, rather than an event. To position trauma as an environmental force, I look to an actual environment and the ways in which it remembers and responds to systemic violence. Specifically, I track the colonization and exploitation of Mount Baldy, and how natural occurrences such as floods and fires have consistently threatened human development on the mountain. If trauma is both monumentally impactful and an environmental force, then it merits a major rethinking of many of the aspects of human existence that are assumed to be stable.

To begin the project of imagining what it might look like to understand conditions of modern society through the lens of trauma, I undertake a material research process using clay harvested from Mount Baldy. Clay, which mimics characteristics of the human body and is literally a part of the natural environment, provides a way to connect the embodied nature of trauma for human
to the environmental manifestations of trauma. Locating trauma corporeally is key because the physical aspects of trauma is common ground for how it manifests both for traumatized humans and the land. This also allows a way of understanding trauma that is based in embodiment, which is helpful because it is often difficult to talk about trauma, and even when able to express its impacts verbally, the affect of traumatization is still lost.

In chapter 1, trauma is positioned outside of the psychological definitions of the DSM and into a communal and systemic framework. In chapter 2, I analyze how trauma is held in an environment in order to better understand what it would mean to reposition trauma as something other than an event. A case study of Mount Baldy provides a way to understand how environmental forces react to trauma, which provides a way to imagine how a society or community might collectively operate as a traumatized being. In chapter 3, I undertake a material research methodology in order to understand the corporeal elements of trauma both in an ecological site and in any body, whether it is human or environmental.

Understanding trauma in this way is key to moving towards more appropriate healing methods as well as collective liberation because it centers the way violence is structured communally, whether it is visible on individual bodies or shared by entire groups of people. Individual traumatic events are consequences of underlying systemic framework of violence. If trauma is collective and structural, then it must be understood as something that is lived in
and *through*, rather than lived *around*. It is more accurate for trauma to be understood as a force constructing the environment that someone lives through, rather than an event that happens in someone’s life that then becomes integrated as part of their past.

In order to understand what an environmental positioning of trauma might look like, it is helpful to look at an environment that has experienced trauma. Relating trauma to the physical landscape helps both to understand how trauma manifests environmentally. It also tracks how physical environments remember traumatic events that have happened to the land. Positioning trauma into the structures that frame people’s everyday existence—the environmental makeup of their lives—is a more accurate way to understand the ways in which trauma manifests. Trauma is a lens that can place the history of an environment into a narrative that centers how matter holds, heals, and reacts to violence.

Mount Baldy is a site that holds a history of immense amounts of violence which also physically reacts to settler-colonists’ attempts to further exploit it. Mount Baldy is a central peak in the San Gabriel Mountain range that has been exploited for resources from the initial colonization of the Los Angeles Basin by Spaniards in the 1800s. Since then, settlers have mined for gold, built rustic getaways, developed resort destinations, and cut gashes for roads. Although people have ceaselessly developed new ways to assert dominance over the mountain, most of these projects were destroyed by natural disasters. Mount
Baldy is the site of multiple forms of such violence, yet also consistently resists and reasserts itself against human control. This speaks to the position of Mount Baldy as a traumatized being--one that has experienced violence and reacts to further exploitation from a place of injury in attempts to heal, hold space, and protect itself.

This thesis is grounded in material research in and around Mount Baldy itself. Using a ceramics process of repeatedly sculpting forms on Mount Baldy with clay that is extracted from Mount Baldy, I have developed a material mnemonic to gain an understanding of the embodied nature of trauma and how that manifests in the ecology of Mount Baldy specifically. The clay enables a corporeal exploration of how Mount Baldy remembers its trauma, which in turn provides insight into how trauma is held in human bodies. Using local clay to connect with the physical memories of the land by observing how the clay reacts to forces exerted up on it illustrate the affective manifestations of trauma. In this material methodology, memories were able to be held, molded, broken down, reconstituted, and transformed. This process is telling about how trauma is held both in the body of the land and in the bodies of humans.
History of Place

Mount Baldy, a specific site of settler colonialism that has seen many different forms of occupation throughout its history, has been exploited for material, social, economical gain. Mount Baldy the highest peak in the San Gabriel Mountain range, which is raised along the San Andreas Fault system and frames the Los Angeles Basin. The Claremont Colleges, founded in 1887, are built in the shadow of the mountain, and stand atop the slope of its foothills. The Tongva tribe is indigenous to the Los Angeles Basin, and the San Gabriel mountains mark the northern border of Tongvan territory along with the San Bernardino Mountains where the Kokoemkm people primarily resided before being displaced by Spanish settlers. The Santa Ana River marks Tongvan territory to the east which is primarily Cahuilla and Acjachemen land (Acuña and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). The city of Claremont, founded in 1887, was developed where Torojoatngna, a trading village whose name literally means “the place below Joat” once stood (Acuna and the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999).

Mount Baldy was called Joat by the Tongvan people which means “snow” and “mountain”, and is one of four sacred Tongvan mountains (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). Baldy’s official name is Mt. San Antonio, which was first mentioned officially in 1865 (Osborne 66). Although the
origins of this name are not totally clear, the narratives surrounding it helps to contextualize the position that Baldy had in relation to those who imagined the name. The most cited conception is that a ranchero named the mountain after Saint Antony of Padua, who was a Portuguese Catholic priest and Franciscan friar (McKinney 1988). This name was already enveloped, however, in the creation of the Spanish missionary system before colonists arrived in Baldy’s particular mountain range. Mission San Diego de Alcala was the first Franciscan mission in California, and an original landing point for Spanish missionaries in 1769. The beginnings of the mission were highly unsuccessful as many of those who sailed to the colony died by scurvy on ships that were small and poorly built, and the Kumeyaay people who were indigenous to the area attacked the mission in its first month of existence. The Spanish planned to abandon San Diego and return farther south rather than continuing to expand in California, and Father Serra who oversaw the project expected that “"...centuries might come and go before the country would again be revisited..." (Englehardt 33). Yet, just as the Spanish intended to leave San Diego in 1770, a ship full of food and other supplies originally destined for Monterey landed in the port. The supplies allowed the mission to sustain itself and develop into a hub that would enable moving farther north to colonize other parts of California. The ship that allowed the Spanish to remain in California was called San Antonio and one year later in 1771, Mission
San Gabriel was established in the shadow of what the Spanish would call Mt. San Antonio (Englehardt 36).

Mount San Antonio has been colloquially named Mount Baldy, which likely came from the lack of trees and “bald” appearance of the top of the mountain. This name also originated from white colonists, but is the name used now by locals. For the Tongvan people indigenous to the LA Basin, Mount Baldy was called Joat and is sacred. It was understood to be the home of the Earth God who created the land they lived on, and was a place to find respite from the summer heat and to connect with other local tribes and share goods and knowledge (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). The Spanish mission era and its after effects—the development of cities, citrus groves, colleges below Baldy, tourist destinations, sites to mine resources, and ski lifts on the mountain—shifted power from the Tongvan people’s interdependent relationship with Baldy’s ecology and spiritual energy towards producing a consumption-based space to escape industrial life.

Several students at the Claremont Colleges have documented the violent history of colonialism and white supremacy that created the city of Claremont and disempowered surrounding cities in the Inland Empire (Audet 2016; Reyff 2016). Tongvan people have created detailed timelines about what their community has experienced since initial contact with Spanish colonists. These bodies of work frame the history and contemporary situation on Mount Baldy. The history of the
mountain is interwoven with what has occurred in its foothills and in the surrounding areas. The work done by previous scholars has outlined the shadows cast by the mountain, and this project intends to understand how the mountain remembers its own past and lives through its trauma.

**Trauma**

Trauma reveals how violence manifests in embodied ways that are located in individual experiences but felt across communities. The concept of trauma provides a framework to process and explain the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical damages of systemic oppression. Mount Baldy is the site and the subject of ecological, colonial, and capitalist trauma and those histories structure the conditions of the present. Understanding the history of Mount Baldy through the lens of trauma provides a way to contextualize the experiences that have happened on--and to--the mountain in relation to the ways people process pain. Understanding the spatial history of Mount Baldy inside of this framework means attending to how the pain is held and embodied in the land itself. Regardless of which body trauma is held in--whether in an individual person, across a society, or in a landscape--it is always felt physically, so studying the embodied trauma of Mount Baldy is reciprocally helpful for better understanding how trauma is felt by humans.
Systemic violence is central in understanding the traumas faced by Mount Baldy and in human societies. It is key to the formation of governments and institutional powers, and thus also influences communities and individuals. Situating trauma in this context shows that it is connected to the conditions that make up people’s lives; it determines someone’s expected life path rather than derailing it. This reorients how people relate as communities and resist structures of violence. Illustrating what it means to live in an environment of trauma is best done by understanding an actual geographical space that has been the site of immense trauma. Mount Baldy, which has felt and resisted violence since the initial point of colonization in the 1500s, provides a case study to begin to bring the embodied nature of trauma, its environmental manifestations, and the physical trauma held by the land, in conversation with one another.

**Theoretical Framework**

The impacts of colonization, resource exploitation, and tourism can be felt and seen on the mountain. It is crucial to connect to the physical realities that are consequences of such violence, and that must be done by engaging with the land in its own physical language. This means *feeling* what the air, the ground, the trees, and the water remembers about Mount Baldy’s exploitation.
Queer theorists have argued that humanity’s relationship to non-human and non-animal *things* impacts the distribution of power between humans, animals, and the land. Specifically, Lauren Berlant uses the concept of “vibrant matter” to highlight “the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own” (viii). Berlant labels this capacity as “vitality.” For matter to have vitality, then, does not necessarily mean that it is making a conscious choice to act, or doing it out of some sort free will, simply that it is acting and doing—participating and enacting and responding and relating. This does not mean the actions of nonhuman matter should be personified. Instead, it puts into question the way personhood creates divisions between humanity and inhuman others. Berlant argues that the need to distinguish human subjectivity stems from “fantasies of a human uniqueness in the eyes of God, of escape from materiality, or of mastery of nature,” (ix). Not only does this separation create an alienation from the natural world, it also allows for a gradient between those who possess subjectivity and humanity and those who are not. This is used to justify humans asserting power over plants, animals, and inorganic matter, as well as asserting power over other humans who are deemed unworthy of humanity. It is key to acknowledge the importance that matter has in structuring the environment and
human lives, as well as learn about the environment in ways that connect to the matter of which it is made.

**Material Framework**

Mount Baldy holds a material memory of the human, ecological, environmental trauma it has experienced. Clay, as a substance that responds to itself, its environmental conditions, and forces exerted up itself, is an animate material. The listed instructions describe the ceramics process undertaken in order to connect with Baldy’s material knowledge and acknowledge the violence undertaken on and into the mountain. This process serves as research into the vibrant materiality of Mount Baldy and what that matter can reveal about the trauma inherent to the land. Mount Baldy is the central object of analysis, and clay enables a corporeal exploration of Baldy through observing how the clay reacts to a cyclical process of sculpting, destroying, and reforming.

The steps taken for the ceramics project are as follows:

1. Build a bucket and a slab tool out of white stoneware clay.
2. Harvest clay from Mount Baldy.
3. Process the clay in the bucket. Strain out non-clay material such as rocks and organic matter.
4. Transfer clay from bucket onto slab tool. Allow clay to dry so that it can be used to sculpt. Fire bucket.

5. Go to Mount Baldy. Bring harvested clay on slab tool and bag. Locate a site on Baldy that has been impacted by human contact (trash, excessive spray paint, a historical location). Use bag to collect trash along walk.

6. Sculpt object(s) out of harvested clay in response and relation to the site. Document observations about the process.

7. Clean site, especially by removing litter, because it is important to attend to the physical needs of the sites in addition to gathering knowledge from them.

8. Leave a sculpted clay form as an offering to the site. Leave it somewhere discreet, because the object needs to be present, but does not necessarily need to be visible (the mountain is not going to “see” it). Ultimately, after leaving objects at each site, there will be no clay left to sculpt with and the project will be finished.

9. Bring the rest of the clay down from Baldy on slab tool and leave the objects to dry.

10. Transfer sculpted clay objects to bucket. Fire slab with remaining clay residue. Break objects down into small pieces in bucket and add water to make slip.
11. Transfer clay slip to the slab tool and let it dry out until it can be used to sculpt. Fire bucket.

12. Repeat steps 5-9 until there is no remaining clay with which to sculpt.

The ceramic research method is a mnemonic to gain knowledge in a medium that can be held, sculpted, and felt. It provides a way to access the memories of trauma by literally interacting with the materials that hold the memories. Each trip to Mount Baldy includes building objects with the clay harvested from the mountain itself and spending time picking up trash and tending to the land in other ways that are necessary. This helps show the corporeal nature of trauma as felt in the land, which then can be applied to understanding how trauma is embodied for humans.

The same clay is used throughout the project to provide a more accurate depiction of how memories of trauma interact with each other and to reduce the environmental impact of the work. The clay tools are never washed so they display the marks the clay has left as it is sculpted, destroyed, and reconstituted to be sculpted again. The clay holds its own memories of the cycles it has moved through as the fired remnants from previous iterations reconnect with the unfired clay in the bucket and on the slab. Using the same clay and firing the tools to document the processes that have been undertaken shows how each cycle layers on top of the previous work. At the end of the project, all of the clay harvested
from Mount Baldy, except for the residue permanently adhered to the tools, will be returned to the mountain and will disintegrate back into the ground.
Chapter 1: Trauma

Trauma is a lens for understanding people’s reactions to violence which impact the way they move through the world, think, understand themselves, engage with their bodies, and more. Trauma fundamentally alters how someone experiences themselves and the world. Reactions to trauma are explained in contrast to what is assumed to be an average reaction to average experiences. Given this, trauma is positioned as out of the ordinary—which means that what is assumed to be ordinary is a life without trauma. This is a misrepresentation of the contemporary conditions of the world—where the social, political, economic, and ecological organization of countries, communities, and international bodies means that nearly everyone is impacted by some sort of traumatic experience. Rather than trauma removing someone from the typical life trajectory (of not experiencing any particularly harmful impacts) trauma increasingly defines people’s life trajectories. This means that an accurate understanding of the conditions of the world, as well as the outcome of people’s lives, must be fundamentally based around the impacts of living in a traumatic world, rather than positioning those who experience trauma as outliers.

Trauma is inherently subjective and fundamentally transformational: it alters the way that people experience nearly every part of their lives, and different
Traumas are processed uniquely depending on the person and the situation. People process and heal from violent experiences based on their histories, identity, community and other factors, so a legible framework for a world according to trauma must attend to how it is subjective and embodied. Thus, reorganizing our understanding of societies based on trauma means abandoning normative frameworks of memory, healing, progress, and time and replacing it with nuanced growth processes that center individual needs and are based in people’s communities. This stems from a repositioning of trauma as a condition that people and communities live through rather than as a specific event in someone’s life. If trauma constructs the environment that people live through, then the first place to understand how that manifests is to look at an environment that holds trauma, and how that impacts its inhabitants.

**Critical Trauma Studies and Communal Trauma**

The field of critical trauma studies recognizes that individualized definitions of trauma cannot facilitate healing from systemic violence. Solely understanding trauma through its manifestations for individual people is used as a way to gaslight marginalized populations’ experiences with violence that is enacted by social institutions rather than specific people. Critical trauma studies attempts to reposition trauma as a societal problem rather than a medical one. In
the introduction to *Critical Trauma Studies*, an anthology of works around the politics, poetics, and praxes of trauma, Eric Wertheimer and Monica J. Casper write that critical trauma studies as a discipline is a departure from the biomedical and psychiatric model that attempts to restore victims of trauma to a sense of normalcy or stasis. They continue:

…the field, such as it is, has been forged through shared intellectual considerations of “modern” catastrophes such as war, genocide, forced migration, and 9/11, alongside everyday experiences of violence, loss, and injury. If there *can* be a conceptual heart of critical trauma studies—a domain of inquiry as various and global as its subject—we’d settle on a set of centripetal tensions: between the everyday and the extreme, between individual identity and collective experience, between history and the present, between experience and representation, between facts and memory, and between the “clinical” and the “cultural.” (Wertheimer and Casper 4)

This framing moves trauma away from being a diagnostic tool and uses it to capture a shared experience sculpting social and environmental conditions. The clinical, individual understanding of trauma fails to capture the reality of collective trauma.

An individualizing model of trauma will never be sufficient because systemic trauma happens to entire communities and over generations. Helen
Meekosha writes in her article “Decolonizing Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally” that the process of disabling in global South is “a total dehumanizing process and must include the destruction of physical, the emotional, psychic, economic and cultural life” that is the direct result of colonialism. She cites appropriation of land, enforced dependency, racist ideologies that position Indigenous people as non-human and animalistic, and the creation of penal colonies all as factors that disable entire populations in the Global South. These manifestations of disability are incommensurable to the construction disability identity in the Global North that focuses on identity-related distinctions between impairment, disability, and chronic illness. Meekosha specifies that “we cannot meaningfully separate the racialized subaltern from the disabled subaltern” in colonized regions because both are fluid and the result of processes of capitalism, colonization, gender supremacy, and Western hegemony (Meekosha 673). Thus because colonization is happening at the global and systemic level, engaging with its disabling impacts must also be framed around the destruction of communities, nations, and peoples rather than the reactions that individuals have to living in such conditions. Taking a cue from Meekosha, then, would mean a recentering of trauma around entire communities and as an impact of global systems of domination. Using the terms of the DSM that positions trauma as an exceptional event in an otherwise stable life inherently centers lives that have the privilege of stability. This only serves to further marginalize processes of colonialism as
secondary problems to address despite that an estimated “75% of the global populations have had their lives shaped by colonialism” (Meekosha 671).

Colonialism is a central cause of trauma that purposefully disenfranchises and dehumanizes entire peoples and communities. If trauma is positioned as an extraordinary experience that ruptures someone’s emotional wellbeing, colonialism can never fall under the domain of trauma because it forms the everyday conditions that people are living in through in the Global South. An individualized notion of trauma also excludes the necessary forms of healing from the systemic, generational violence of colonialism and its specters--reparations and an overhaul of global economies and institutions. Trauma must be situated in relation to the conditions and processes that are causing it on societal scales.

**Individualism and Exclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders**

In order to fully position trauma as felt by communities and enacted because of structures of violence, it must be disconnected from the medical models of psychology, which is an often-cited reference on understanding trauma. Using the language of mental illness to describe trauma that is a result of systemic violence shifts the focus of resistance towards individual growth and away from societal change. Individualizing trauma by simply labeling it as PTSD, a mental
illness that someone heals from, separates the impacts of oppression from the institutions that enact it. Instead of being a discrete consequence experienced by an individual because of a singular act of violence, trauma is symptomatic of larger social problems that have psychological impacts on entire communities. Because trauma is experienced by entire communities, and every community (even those with more identity based privileges) experiences trauma, trauma fundamentally transforms the nature of human’s relationship to each other and our environments.

The Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is the current authority on psychiatric diagnosis and is a seemingly simple and accessible way to understand trauma. The diagnostic criteria for PTSD was moved from being a specific manifestation of an anxiety disorder, as it was detailed in the DSM-4 in 1994, to being part of a new category of “Trauma and Stressor-Related Disorders” (DSM-5 265). This category also includes Reactive Attachment Disorder, Acute Stress Disorder, and Adjustment Disorder. The diagnostic criteria for PTSD, which is the major diagnosis psychology uses to label a reaction to trauma, outlines parameters of what is considered a traumatic experience:

A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation in one (or more) of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.

3. Learning that the event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. Note: In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.

4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains, police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

   **Note:** This does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.

The parameters are remarkably specific as well as insufficient to provide a way to understand widespread and systemic pain. The three possibilities for a traumatic event all require violation of an individual’s body: death, injury, or sexual violation. Reactions to emotional abuse, neglect, or any other experience that someone might have that does not directly put their bodily safety in jeopardy, are disincluded into the diagnostic criteria. Furthermore, the ways of engaging with bodily harm are also specific: direct experience, witnessing in person, exposure because of work, or having a close relationship with the victim (of a violent or accidental event). Electronic media is specifically noted to *not* count as
diagnosable exposure to a traumatic event that could cause PTSD, which is a problematic addition considering the proliferation of videos of police brutality and other forms of violence exploding in the media. As images and videos of death become more prevalent in the media, reframing what it means to “witness” something traumatic must expand.

There is some explanation of “culture-related diagnostic issues,” but they are insufficient in nuancing how PTSD might manifest across different communities. The DSM criteria also imposes a binary between the culture-specific iterations of trauma, that are described as “genocide...inability to perform funerary rites after a mass killing...residing among unpunished perpetrators in postconflict settings...stress in immigrants” (DSM-4 278). Mass conflict, war, and genocide are distinguished from how typical trauma would manifest and labeled as abnormal even under the category of PTSD. Personal traumas such as sexual assault or a car accident make up the central definition of trauma. Thus the normalized understanding of trauma frames it as an exceptional event that happens to someone who otherwise should not have been in danger. It is an attack, an infringement, a disruption in a life that is assumed to be stable and free from danger. In contrast, “culture-related diagnostic issues” creates a margin to acknowledge collective trauma.

Marginalizing “culture-related diagnostic issues” defines racialized conflict as a cultural difference rather than an expansive global problem. This,
again, recenters the assumption that a violence-free life is the norm and trauma is an event that disrupts it. This skews the definition of trauma towards how it looks on bodies who expect safety and security—people who can pinpoint specific events that cause symptoms of PTSD because their lives are otherwise not marked by crisis, or people who sacrifice that safety to be in the line of duty—soldiers who are traumatized from killing the enemy or police officers who consistently enact violence as part of their career. The only variants are those facing mass extermination or are in the midst or aftereffects of war. This lacks analysis about how such events might impact entire communities and need to be addressed differently, and erases the everyday experiences of trauma that marginalized people face in “first world” nations due to systemic racism, hetero/cis/sexism and ableism.

Specific moments of interpersonal harm are still results of the ways that society is structured around violence. Even the individual traumas that would fall under the DSM definition of trauma are symptomatic of a larger system that is justifying the violence. For example, sexual assault is a readily available example of how a specific event can fundamentally alter someone’s life. While it may be true that sexual assault is an event in a person’s life that is particularly jarring, it happens as a consequence of greater patterns of sexism and normalized interpersonal violence. While a trauma may be exceptional in an individual’s life,
it is not exceptional that the individual experienced that form of violence because it happened in the context of a social problem that happens regularly and often.

Additionally, others whose traumas might fit under the definitions provided by the DSM are better navigated in a framework that understands violence as fundamentally systemic. The traumas felt by those who primarily benefit from systems of power can be positioned as a consequence of systemic violence. Police officers who develop PTSD as a result of committing murder are simultaneously responsible for killing someone and playing a role inside of a toxic justice system. The moment of a black man being killed by a police officer, as Black Lives Matter activists have argued, does not originate or end with the single police officer but rather is a result of institutional racism. Ending police brutality necessitates fighting racism, mass incarceration, the war on drugs, and the other systems that feed into the individual prejudices that leads an officer to pull the trigger. Trying to facilitate healing for police officers would then also mean working against the conditions that lead them to commit racist acts of violence. Instead of ensuring police officers have sufficient mental health care and rehabilitation, a better solution would be previous training for officers to prevent them from committing murder, creating community accountability structures that do not require a police presence, disarming police, and other solutions that work towards engaging with the system of police brutality instead of the individual harms that the system creates. This is only one example of how decentering the
individual manifestations of trauma provides opportunities both to better contextualize violence as well as better address it.

There is some space in the DSM for traumatic responses to “stressful events that do not possess the severe and traumatic components of events” encompassed by PTSD and Acute Stress Disorder (DSM-5 282). This category is labeled as Adjustment Disorder, which positions someone’s trauma as an extreme reaction to an event that merits a less intense reaction, meaning that their feelings are abnormal in relation to an event or a situation that simply requires an adjustment period. It is diagnosed through the following criteria as the development of emotional or behavioral symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor(s) occurring within 3 months of the onset of the stressor(s):

A. Marked distress that is out of proportion to the severity or intensity of the stressor, taking into account the external context and the cultural factors that might influence symptom severity and presentation.

B. Significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

C. The stress-related disturbance does not meet the criteria for another mental disorder and is not merely an exacerbation of a preexisting mental disorder.

D. The symptoms do not represent normal bereavement.
E. Once the stressor or its consequences have terminated, the symptoms do not persist for more than an additional 6 months.

Between the different diagnostic criteria available in the DSM, trauma is either 1) a disruption to a life that is normally safe and secure, 2) a repercussion of sacrificing that security to fight in the line of duty, 3) a cultural phenomenon symptomatic of mass genocide or war, 4) an extreme period of adjustment to a vaguely stressful event. These do not provide a helpful way to address the vast and interconnected ways that trauma manifests. Particularly, it excludes the violence that marginalized populations experience as a hallmark of living under institutions that were created to disempower them. The DSM, as the major diagnostic tool used nationally and internationally by psychologists and counselors, creates a definition of trauma that excludes the people who are experiencing violence as a condition of their everyday life.

Expanding the definition of PTSD in the DSM is insufficient in developing a way to approach healing from the impacts of racism, heterosexism, cissexism, and ableism. Pathologization of people’s experiences has long been used as a way to control different populations, and expanding the net of what is considered a mental illness only continues to bring more people under the control of psychiatric regulation. This is an existing process rooted in the histories of psychiatry. In the 1960s and 1970s, black activists were diagnosed with schizophrenia after it had primarily been a label for white middle class people.
before the civil rights era. Jonathan Metzl, in *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*, shows that mental illness was equated with blackness as a way to invalidate activists claims about systemic racism. Large numbers of black men were hospitalized in the Ionia State Hospital for the Criminally Insane during the 1960s and 1970s because they were diagnosed as schizophrenic, regardless of whether they were showing clinical symptoms. Currently, as psychological care is increasingly being equated with criminalization for black men, and prisons are increasingly the providers of mental health care, more accessible diagnostic criteria would only further incorporate people of color into the medical (and criminal) industrial complexes.

It is unhelpful to try to reconstruct a helpful definition of trauma through the lens of psychology. Regardless of how inclusive a psychological definition is, it will still only focus on individual manifestations of trauma and the consequences of someone’s experiences. This means it will always fail both to account for how trauma is spread across communities, and will point to a reactive solution from helping people to heal from trauma, rather than working to prevent it from occurring.
Trauma as Environmental

Trauma, regardless of whether it is the consequence of a single moment of event, or the result of entire communities being displaced and disempowered, is symptomatic of greater processes of violence. This necessitates a reconceptualization of trauma as a component of the very environment that makes up everyday life. This, then, requires a new understanding of what the normal or expected life trajectory is for people who are marginalized or more privileged.

In her book *Time Binds*, Elizabeth Freeman places the biopolitical regulation of the human population’s individual bodies in relation to how they move through time. She explains that people’s lives are structured as “event-centered, goal oriented, intentional, and culminating in epiphanies or major transformations” (Freeman 5). There is a clear narrative for what a successful life trajectory ought to look like, and often looks like on white, heterosexual/homonormative, middle and upper class, able-bodied people. As people age, they hit benchmarks such as marriage, graduating from different levels of school, getting a job, having a successful career, having children, sending children to college, retiring, and otherwise moving along a linear path that ultimately should end in success, fulfillment, and productivity. This life path is already often unattainable for marginalized people who are unable to conform to expectations around marriage, careers, family life, and other norms. It is also an unhelpful way to understand individual progress because it is subjective and
nonlinear. However, this trajectory is coded as the norm, rather that something that is only accessible or desirable for a certain group of people which invalidates other life paths and the people upon them who do not assimilate to biopolitical expectations.

Trauma, in the language of PTSD assumes that people are on a normative life path, and then argues that traumatic events push people away from a trajectory that they otherwise would have been moving towards. Traumatic events are transformational, but assuming that people’s baseline is a normatively successful life is inaccurate. Notions of trauma changing the course of someone’s life conceals the reality that many people’s baseline is actually a path of experiencing trauma and its transformations.

Wertheimer and Casper ask what it means to use the language of trauma to “represent events as ruptures, breaks, and other deviations from the normal? And what, then, is the normal?” (3). Trauma, rather than being an event that pushes someone outside of a typical life trajectory, creates the norm. But, Wertheimer and Casper’s questions need to be pushed further: not only is trauma a regular occurrence, it is a framework for the everyday. A rupture tears at the fabric that something is made up of, but the fabric of global capitalism and colonialism is trauma, and even those with white, colonial, and class privilege have lives that rely on perpetuating the violence inflicted on others. This, too, has traumatic implications.
Lauren Berlant takes up this claim in her book *Cruel Optimism* through the notion of crisis-everyday. She introduces the term “slow death” which is the systematic wearing out of populations under capitalism. Instead of the conditions of slow death taking the form of an event, she writes that it is rather an environment of living-through:

Environment denotes a scene in which structural conditions are suffused through a variety of mediations, such as predictable repetitions and other spatial practices that might well go under the radar or, in any case, not take up the form of event. An environment can absorb how time ordinarily passes, how forgettable most events are, and overall, how people’s ordinary perseverations fluctuate in patterns of undramatic attachment and identification. (Berlant 100)

This explains the basic characteristics of what makes up an environment—mainly, repetition and integration of situations of the norm. An environment makes up the ordinary. Berlant equates ordinary with undramatic, which is not totally representative of how people experience trauma. While trauma might make up people’s ordinary experiences, it certainly is not forgettable or quotidian. Still, an environmental contextualization situates trauma as creating the conditions people live through rather than pushing them outside of a normative life. Because people are bound up in systems of violence and power, the everyday environment of
oppression creates a landscape of living in crisis rather than any singular event that could be pointed to as the cause of pain or harm. Berlant summarizes this:

…the structurally induced attrition of persons keyed to their membership in certain populations—is neither a state of exception nor the opposite, mere banality, but a domain where an upsetting scene of living is revealed to be interwoven with ordinary life. (102)

Environment gestures towards the form of a space, which might seem like it would feel the same regardless of who moves through it, but people experience the spaces that they move through uniquely, based on their identity and mindset and many other factors that lead them to zoom in on some aspects of the environment and ignore others. Berlant recognizes that the affect of crisis is felt by entire populations because, although “they might not be in the same crises biographically or physiologically…all must inhabit the shared atmosphere of dehabitation and forced improvisation that an endemic and pandemic health crisis induces” (57). While it may be true that crisis creates the need to move away from the ordinary routine of daily life in order to navigate the terrain of a pandemic, the disruption is not universally experienced or navigated. This is an important tension in the framing of trauma as an environment—Berlant uses “slow death” to depict a biopolitical mechanism that impacts entire populations who exist under capitalism and its specters. Although slow death may be an underlying framework of capitalist society, it impacts people in differing ways
depending on their privilege. This is clear because people have differing access to resources and safety: people of color experience violence because of their race and white people are privileged because of theirs, disabled people are forced into residential institutions, and transgender people are denied medical treatment and murdered.

Trauma is not experienced universally because power is not equally distributed. Yet, although certain people carry the weight of such violence in their bodies and minds, it is enacted by institutions of power that influence everybody’s lives because they structure society. Because trauma is a result of institutionalized and structural violence, it must be understood as a systemic problem rather than an interpersonal or individual one. Positioning trauma as one of the major components of how people live their lives is a more accurate description on the conditions of the modern world than positioning trauma as an exceptional part of some people’s lives.
Chapter 2: Incursion of Mount Baldy and Ecological Resistance

In order to understand trauma as a conceptual environment that people move in and through, it is helpful to first understand how trauma manifests in the physical environment. Trauma resonates through physical environments because what occurs in a space creates its meaning. A space might be understood as empty--something able to be filled. This is differentiated by a place, which is often contextualized by its history and its established purpose. Mount Baldy has always been a place, far from empty as it holds entire ecosystems of interrelated plants, animals, microscopic organisms, and people. When the Spanish missionaries reached the Los Angeles Basin, they attempted to fill it with Christian ideals and European work ethics, forcibly converting the inhabitants and developing the land in the ways they thought signified progress. As those who have settled the area have transformed it to fit their own needs and intentions, Baldy has been filled and filled again with the forces exerted upon it. While events of the past are typically thought of as moments that something moves through, the histories of a place are what gives it its context. Just as air, which feels empty, is filled with small molecules, the resonances of the past make up the
conditions of the present. Mount Baldy has undergone multiple violent transformations--and everything that has happened on the mountain influences the way it feels now.

**Colonization**

Mount Baldy was a fundamental and sacred part of Tongva life prior to colonization. Before the Spaniards began establishing missions around Mount Baldy, it was a locus for the indigenous tribes of the area to trade, meet, and exchange knowledge and stories (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). Colonization marks the beginnings of the extreme violences that have created Mount Baldy’s history of trauma. In 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed into the Santa Monica Bay and made contact with the Tongva people. His major intention was to map the west coast, which led to the creation of a trade route called the “Manila Galleon Trade.” In 1592, other ships sailed into San Luis Obispo Bay. In 1602, a ship led by Sebastian Vizcaíno entered San Pedro Harbor, and sailors went ashore to “teach the Tongva about the Christian faith.” Vizcaíno placed a cross on a shrine, desecrating it and providing a small amount of forewarning for the later force of religious colonization that would establish the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel in 1771 (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). This is also when Spaniards called “Indians of the…[villages] in
the area ‘Gabrieleno’” (Emanuels 141). The mission system was officially intended to convert Native people to Christianity. San Gabriel was “a place of horror, starvation, exploitation, terror and death” (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). The Tongva were enslaved and exploited, forced to work in service of the Church and State. Tongva were tortured and punished for not accepting Mission life and labor exploitation, prohibited from eating local foods causing health problems and starvation. Spiritual leaders were tortured and ridiculed in order to crush any spiritual traditions.

In 1846, California was incorporated into the United States. The already massive extermination of Tongva people continued. In 1846, “there were about 100,000 Indians left of the close to one million that had once inhabited the ‘state’...By 1847, all the Indian settlements of Los Angeles had been destroyed’” (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). The devastation of colonization still continues today:

The Tongva, by now known only as the Gabrielino, were dispossessed of their lands, their villages, and most of their culture. Stripped of their heritage, they were culturally overwhelmed...The Mexican Rancho system continued the decimation and the State of California and the Federal Government of the United States completed the work...Tongva, now Gabrielino, culture was obliterated or adulterated with Spanish, the
Mexican, the American ways. (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999)

The impacts on the land were also detrimental. “The great rivers were dammed and altered, and the forests cut down. The herds and flocks of wild life disappeared” (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). Before colonization, Tongvans would clear underbrush and open the forest with careful and precise use of fire to light surface-fires to burn undergrowth. This would also help encourage species diversity in ecological communities and support grass and seed production in grasslands (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999). Fires were also used to produce grasses ideal for weaving baskets--setting fires would send out “stronger new shoots of the dimensions needed for baskets” (Martin 49). Through the use of fires as well as pruning and weeding systems, the Tongvan people maintained complex ecological systems especially in the interest of tending to the oak trees (Martin 46). This was such an established practice that the Spanish colonizers would have entered “a well managed landscape” where “the relationship between people and the land and the plant and animal communities was one of mutual respect and care” (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999).

When the Tongva were murdered, forced into Christianity, and exploited for labor on European settlements, they could no longer tend the land as they had previous done. The absence of ritual fires being routinely and purposefully lit is a
direct cause of the immense and destructive brush fires that now regularly ravage the LA Basin. Other environmental consequences are immense: as the Tongva people were forcibly disconnected from the land, the land suffered. Now, occupants of the land attempt to disconnect the “wilderness” and the everyday environments of industrial life. Cities, suburbs, college campuses, and other human habitats are excessively developed. Native ecosystems are replaced by grass, concrete, and decorative plants while the land separated from human epicenters is untended and becomes increasingly wild. The Tongva set up communities that were integrated with the natural environment, rather than attempting to overpower it.

There have been some attempts to set intentional fires as a way to make the natural environment better suit the needs for colonial lives, but they have been careless and destructive. In the late 1800s, ranchers attempted to set purposeful fires to produce more food for their cattle. The results of these fires were devastating: they burned for weeks, destroying chaparral covers on many parts of the San Gabriels. In 1878 a fire burned across twenty miles and ravaged at least five canyons (Robinson 97).

Colonization by the Spanish was an initial moment of violence that would continue through Mount Baldy’s history. It marks the mountain entrance into a trajectory of trauma, which has not yet ended. Yet, even though colonization has a marked beginning--the entrance of foreign missionaries onto the land--the
violence carried out on Mount Baldy and in the LA Basin specifically is part of a larger process of the Spanish invading California, the colonization of the United States and North American continent as a whole, and European projects to conquer the rest of the world.

**Material Animacies**

It is helpful in making the argument that Baldy has experienced trauma to point out the historical moments where violence has been inflicted on the mountain. However, surviving trauma is more than that—it is resisting, reacting, healing, operating with a different framework based on what has happened in the past. In the geographic area that Baldy towers over, efforts to use natural resources for industrial and colonial development have nearly always been met with natural disasters that destroy the projects. Humans continue to push against nature and keep industrializing, but Mount Baldy also consistently responds to and resists the violence it is experiencing.

The animacy of the mountain can be clearly seen in its history without creating a larger story around what has happened. Regardless of whether Mount Baldy consciously decided to flood or catch fire, creating a narrative that positions natural occurrences as responses to trauma provides a way to read trauma into an physical environment. This in turn enables an understanding of
how trauma might influence an incorporeal environment, such as that which structures human life.

Reacting to new threats after experiencing trauma is not necessarily straightforward or regular, and the way the natural occurrences align with different exploitative developments nuances what it means to act from a place of trauma. Sometimes things we do in the present that are tied to past abuse is reflexive, as trauma responses are unconscious and habitual. Sometimes, we lash out when we see others suffering the same abuses. Sometimes, we self-destruct and self-sabotage. The following timeline notes different moments where Mount Baldy and the mountains it is connected to have flooded and caught on fire. These are only some of the ecological occurrences that have happened in relation to human development in the mountains. Some events not on Mount Baldy are included because Baldy is not in isolation--it is connected to its mountain range, and the water and trees do not set strict boundaries between one peak and the next.

Geologically, Mount Baldy has always been an unstable, ever-shifting being. Its is creation is likely an impact of volcanic activity around the Los Angeles Basin. In an LA Times article by Berkley Hudson, two geologists explain their theory about the origins of the San Gabriel Mountains:

About 30 million years ago, an ocean ridge far out in what today is the Pacific collided with the continent's edge, generating incredible heat.
The heat was so powerful its effects were seen over the next 15 million years, partly in the form of volcanoes that formed during the collision of the two plates...The coastal volcanoes, some submerged and some above the ocean's surface, erupted in the area of what is now the Salton Sea near the Mexican border. Beneath those volcanoes was the very ancient rock that would one day become the San Gabriel Mountains. Over millions of years, movement of the Earth's plates caused the underlying rock to rise and to tilt. By 8 million to 9 million years ago, repeated earthquakes and fault activity had caused the volcanoes to gradually slide downslope six to 12 miles...About 5 million to 6 million years ago as the San Andreas Fault emerged, these volcanoes and the material that would eventually form the San Gabriel Mountains began to head northwestward from the Salton Sea, pushed along by the movement of the earth's plates. The rock eventually formed the northern edge of the Los Angeles Basin. (1993)

This history provides two key ways to understand the animacy of the mountain. First, that it exists because of volcanic activity means that its underbelly is one of fiery eruptions. The volcanoes were born out of a transformative collision, which fundamentally transformed California’s geography. Mount Baldy, then, has been a site of change and active natural occurrences since it originally appeared as part of the San Gabriel Mountains.
The movement and change inherent to Mount Baldy also manifests because it is positioned atop fault lines. The San Andreas Fault is along the San Gabriel Mountains’ north side, and created the San Antonio Canyon. The San Gabriel River canyon’s east and west forks divide because of the San Gabriel Fault. The Sierra Madre Fault Zone partially formed the southern topography of the mountain range, and Icehouse Canyon is also the consequence of a fault (Osborne 44). These canyons, which are some of the particularly unstable portions of the mountain, are also some regions that have in particular been developed as humans increasingly used the mountain for their own purposes.

Hudson’s article about the San Gabriel Mountains also has another understated resonance that is key to understanding the natural occurrences on Mount Baldy as a response to trauma. The beginnings of the San Gabriels were near the Salton Sea, significantly farther south than they currently reside. That area still holds the same ancient volcanic rocks that are found in the mountain range now that it is along the Los Angeles Basin, which means that the two locations are parts of the same whole. Mount Baldy’s reactions can be understood in relation to the histories of other geological sites that might be understood as its “siblings.” To push this idea further, Hudson poses the questions, “What is the connection between volcanic rock found both high in the San Gabriel Mountains and miles below in the foothills around Glendora, La Verne, Pomona and San Dimas? And what might it tell us about why the Earth
has shifted, shook, rumbled and belched over these many years in Southern California?” The following histories attempt to begin to answer these questions.

Ecological Resistance on Mount Baldy and in the San Gabriel Mountain Range

In many cases, Mount Baldy and the greater San Gabriel Mountain Range has attempted to resist development and exploitation. This timeline points out particular moments where floods and fires have significantly impeded human projects. This can be read as the beginnings of a narrative that understands these natural occurrences as reactions to traumatic violence--both ways to self-preserve, as well as ways to display anger, pain, and fear at the violence humans intend to continue on the mountains. Following the timeline are some specific examples of floods and fires that have disrupted human activity on the mountain.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Response</th>
<th>Human Action</th>
<th>Natural Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Sawmill constructed.</td>
<td>Destroyed by floods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>William H. Stoddard built one of the first resorts on Mount Baldy.</td>
<td>Destroyed by floods, which also permanently “took away much of the beauty from Stoddard’s canyon” (Osborne 4). This prevented any major future development of the canyon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Camp Sturtevant, a popular vacation resort.</td>
<td>Brush fire threatens Camp Sturtevant and 100 guests. A year later, Sturtevant must battle the Department of the Interior in order to keep the resort, which was successful due to strong local support (Robinson 171).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Sierra Club ski hut, built in the Baldy Bowl</td>
<td>Destroyed by fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Big Tujunga Dam, built in 1931, was assumed to eliminate flooding problems in the canyon</td>
<td>In one night of rain, the Great Flood of 1938 overwhelmed the dam (Osborne 204). Mountain residents and visitors were trapped for days. 200 cabins were destroyed and 200 more were damaged. Residents were trapped for days. Valley Forge Lodge resort was destroyed by debris from construction of a highway that was carried by the water (Osborne 183).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>The Experimental Forest, which was known as an “outdoor laboratory, dedicated to learning about the influences of geology, soil and vegetation on mountain watersheds” (Robinson 245).</td>
<td>A fire burns 15,000 of 17,163 acres of the Experimental Forest (Robinson 247). The site was hit by many other fires and floods, which eventually became a useful way to study the effects of such forces on the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Residential development in the LA Basin begins to replace raw resource production. A major aspect of this was freeway and road expansion.</td>
<td>The Big Tujunga Dam is flooded again (Osborne 204). The water destroys freeways and roads in LA and Riverside County and Mount Baldy residents are stranded for at least a month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Chairlift from Baldy Notch to Devil's Backbone was completed.</td>
<td>Fire in Baldy Village burned several cabins before being extinguished by a snowstorm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Mt. Baldy Ski Lift.</td>
<td>Thunder Fire sparks near ski lift, which burned 12,000 acres of land and destroyed 28 cabins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Baldy Notch Restaurant.</td>
<td>Burnt down by fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Icehouse Canyon Lodge, built in 1922 and called a must-see site on Mount Baldy.</td>
<td>Destroyed by fire. Icehouse Canyon is also where miners extracted large quantities of ice in the 1850s. This is especially painful because “Joat,” the Tongva name for Mount Baldy, means “snow” and “mountain” (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Mt. Baldy Village.</td>
<td>The town is threatened by fire, although there was little actual damage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eldoradoville: Mining and Floods in the East Fork

The California Gold Rush had devastating impacts on the environment, the miners, and especially for the Native Americans who lived in places that were mined for gold. Diseases introduced by those who came to California to mine for gold killed over sixty percent of the indigenous population of California, and those who survived diseases were systematically enslaved, massacred, and forced into missions and reservations (Chatterjee 1998). By the time of the Gold Rush, over 900,000 Native Americans had been killed. The extermination only continued:

Between 1848 and 1870, one-half of the 100,000 Indians remaining at the time California came under the control of the United States in 1846 had died; by 1870, there were only 50,000 surviving Indians The main causes of death were murder, starvation, and disease. In addition there are estimates that about 10,000 Indians may have been indentured or sold between 1850 and 1863. (Acuna and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden)

The East Fork, a canyon that houses part of the San Gabriel River, was a major location for gold mining. In 1854, the Los Angeles Star newspaper announced that gold had been found in the river (Robinson 17). By 1859, “a boarding house, 2 or 3 stores, blacksmith shop, butcher shop, etc” formed the beginnings of a mining settlement in the lower East Fork canyon (Robinson 18). Yet only a few months after the settlement was announced, it was destroyed when
the San Gabriel River, prone to “occasional intemperate moods,” “ravage[d] the canyon bottoms,” destroying “all the mining works erected on the river--dams, wheels, sluices” (Robinson 19). Nevertheless the miners remained, rebuilding their materials and continuing to extract huge amounts of gold from the river. The mining settlement erected after the flooding was called Eldoradoville which was a town “governed by the muzzle of a six-gun or the blade of a knife…” that housed around 27 members of a secret pro-Confederate organization (Robinson 21). Wells Fargo, who managed a large amount of the mining operations, was able to make $15,000 per month off of gold mined primarily from the San Gabriel Mountains (Robinson 22).

In January of 1862, a mere three years after the mining operation in the East Fork began, torrential floods hit again. Every remnant of the settlement and the mining setups along the river was literally washed down the river “where the day before there was a town, nothing remained by mud and boulders” (Robinson 22). It took two floods entirely demolishing the operation, but Eldoradoville, after existing for would never be rebuilt after 1862 (Landis 2017).

**Highways**

In the early 1900s, developers envisioned a mountain highway over the crest of the San Gabriels, but it was difficult to begin the project because different interest groups disagreed on the details. This continued for many years, until 1919
when two huge fire erupted and burned for three weeks destroying 151,680 acres of land (Robinson 197). “At night, valley residents gazed northward at the eerie red glow...Churches held prayer meetings seeking divine aid” (Robinson 104). The fires refused to yield in the efforts of two thousand men attempting to put them out. It was not until two days of rainfall pelted the land that the burning stopped.

The main problem in containing the fire was said to be a lack of roads, yet it still took years before any were built. In 1924, another fire burned up 90,000 acres of land after a camper carelessly threw a match. In response, the Forest Service built fire roads that “tore up the mountainsides and left ugly scars throughout the range” (Robinson 104). Although the roads make it easier to transport people attempting to put out fires and do reduce the spread of fires and how long they burn for, fires still burn huge swaths of land regularly, destroying the chaparral before they are put out. The problem of fire is still present, but the construction of roads has additionally left the land permanently scarred.

**Camp Baldy**

Camp Baldy, built in 1909, was a highly popular tourist resort located 4,700 feet atop Mount Baldy. Kimberly Creighton documents the development of the resort during its 30 year existence in a collection of photos. Creighton’s archive depicts a highly developed site with a daily mail service, grocery delivery,
a school, fire department, photography studios, dance pavilion, theatre, large hotel with swimming pool and rows of cabins (Creighton 42-62). The resort was easily accessible from cities around Southern California, and was hailed to have attracted guests across demographics: “families, college students, Hollywood celebrities, and religious groups of all faiths” (Creighton 7). The photographs of those who frequented the Camp were overwhelmingly white.

In 1938, a massive flood destroyed most of Camp Baldy. Cabins were completely destroyed, buildings were ripped off their foundations and swept down the mountain. Very few structures survived the forceful waters--only the hotel and what is now called Mt. Baldy Lodge remained to be salvaged (Creighton 63-70).

**Conclusion**

The history of Mount Baldy provides a glimpse at how the activities of an environment play an active role in human life, and how human exploitation elicits a response from the environment that can be understood as the impacts of trauma.
Chapter 3: Embodied Presences and Material Remembering

Theoretical Underpinning

Clay is a material that provides unique characteristics that are helpful for understanding how bodies behave and remember. Clay is at the intersection of how the human body remembers trauma and how trauma is manifested in the physical environment because the clay is literally a part of the land and mirrors many facets of the human body. In “Has the Queer Ever Been Human, Mel Chen and Dana Luciano analyze self-portraits by Laura Aguilar to understand why it is generative to position human bodies in relation to nonhuman matter. They analyze Aguilar’s piece, Grounded #114, to show that “by mimicking a boulder, Aguilar enters the very nonhuman fold where some would place her, effectively displacing the centrality of the human itself.” In decentralizing the human by aligning her human body with a boulder, Aguilar brings out a softness in the stone and a sense of durability to her body. This opens up the possibilities of resisting dehumanization by putting into question why human-ness is prioritized.

The material component of this thesis stages an encounter between the animacy of the natural world and the embodied forms of human memory. Chen
and Luciano ask, “when the ‘sub-human, in-human, non-human’ queer actively connects with the other-than-human, what might that connection spawn?” (186). The ceramic work in this chapter attempts to connect such dehumanized humans’ (who Chen and Luciano reference with “queer”) ways of remembering trauma with the ways that trauma is remembered in the land. The connection is not only symbolic: “queer ecocriticism also takes up an understanding of ecology as naming not the idea of the “natural world” as something set apart from humans but a complex system of interdependency” (Chen and Luciano 188). Humans are fundamentally connected to the ecology of where they live. It is a project of colonialism to create distance between humans and nature through development and industrialization. Staging an encounter between the human embodiment of trauma and Mount Baldy provides a glimpse at what interconnectivity might look like. The human body is also more comparable to the environment than what might be initially understood. Chen and Luciano quote Gloria Anzaldúa’s statement that “You’re all the different organisms and parasites that live on your body and also the ones who live in a symbiotic relationship to you…So who are you? You’re not one single entity. You’re a multiple entity” (187). Not only are humans a part of a larger ecology, but the human body is an ecology in itself. Moving towards a material way of conceptualizing memory displaces the conscious, intellectual, and verbal understandings of trauma and moves towards
its bodily manifestations. Clay is the pivot point where the human body can be put into dialogue with the land.

In addition to providing a way to connect human experiences with trauma to ecological trauma, clay also provides access into the corporeality of environmental trauma itself. Working with clay creates a mnemonic to physically connect with the memories held by Mount Baldy. It is a way of looking at animacy on a more accessible scale than attempting to transform the mountain as a whole—which is also the project undertaken by settler colonial resource exploitation.

Looking exclusively at the history of Mount Baldy can show the scars of the traumatic occurrences, but not how they felt or were integrated into Mount Baldy’s ontology. It is necessary to work directly with physical matter because impacts of trauma often transcend what can be described linguistically. Even between people, the nuances of how someone feels their pain is lost when only communicating verbally, and this is even more pertinent between human and non-human beings because non-human beings cannot speak about their trauma at all. Working with local clay is a way to feel what it is like to have undergone over 150 years of exploitation and to exist with those memories now. Because the clay was harvested from Mount Baldy, it is literally a part of the land that holds trauma and thus holds those memories as well. Matter, affect, transformation, and residues are the vocabularies used by clay to describe the effects of trauma.
Exerting different forces on the clay paralleled and memorialized the forces that have been exerted on the mountain. The trauma was held, sculpted, contoured, smashed, soaked, and finally, made permanent. The clay was loud, pushy, insistent, and, ultimately, pained. The resonances of Mount Baldy were carried in the smaller clay body being worked with. The clay provides space to grapple with the physicalization of trauma in order to gather knowledge in a way that does not simply look at trauma’s aftermath. In addition to digging into the history of the mountain, the ceramic process brings trauma into the present to form a material, artistic, and physical knowledge that otherwise would not be accessible.
Figure 2. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool 1.” 2017.
Figure 3. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool 2.” 2017.
Figure 4. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool 3.” 2017.
Figure 5. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool 4.” 2017.
Figure 6. Agrelius, Felicia. “Slab Tool 5.” 2017.
Explanation of Process

I first constructed a slab tool and a bucket out of white stoneware clay that were used throughout the process. The red clay extracted from Mount Baldy only touched the surfaces of the tools so that they would record its behaviors. It took three attempts to successfully extract the clay, which ultimately came from a construction site where the clay was already uprooted from the ground. The pieces of clay were large and solid, so they were broken down into smaller pieces then pushed through a strainer to separate out any rocks or organic matter. In order to transform dry chunks of clay into a state that can be sculpted, water was added to the clay. The clay pieces soaked into the water until they had broken down into small particles that were evenly distributed in the water. At this point, the clay was in a liquid form called slip, and needed to be dried out so it was malleable and could hold a form. Once some water had evaporated, the slip was transferred to the slab and left to dry. When clay is ready to sculpt, it is “wet.” The process of adding water to dry clay and then drying out the slip is called “reconstituting” clay back to a form that can be sculpted.

After this process, the clay was taken to a site on Mount Baldy, and I sculpted objects on the slab tool in response to the site. Sometimes, I went to sites where there were particularly large amounts of trash and graffiti, and other times I went to sites marking certain historical events, such as a monument about the first
hydroelectric power system on Baldy. As I worked with the clay, I recorded any observations I made about how it behaved because these provided the parallels between the ceramic process and the manifestations of trauma. I left a clay object at the sites I visited, which ultimately would lead to all of the clay being returned to Baldy. After sculpting the clay, I brought them down from the mountain to let them dry out and then reconstitute the clay. In order to create a parallel for the different forms of violence have been enacted on the same mountain for over a hundred years, I continuously destroyed the objects I made each time I went to the mountain then reconstituted the clay to sculpt new objects out of the same material. This meant that the clay held memories of multiple different processes and sites, and showed how memories of the past impacted how an object formed in the present.

After I used the tools, I fired them in the kiln instead of washing them off. It is impossible to “wash off” trauma--it is remembered and permanently impacts those who experience it, and the tools documented the actions that the clay had undergone. Each time I used the bucket and the slab after they were fired with the clay residues on them, some of the fired pieces would stick to the unfired clay. The clay being sculpted was constantly picking up the memories of its past and attempting to integrate them back into its form. This was ultimately impossible because fired clay can never break back down into unfired clay.
The process was cyclical, and I repeatedly reconstituted the clay, sculpted objects on Mount Baldy, destroyed the objects, and fired the tools. This created a system to gather knowledge about how the clay responded and remembered its history. Even when the physical forms of the objects were destroyed, the memories were still held in the clay body and were visible in the clay’s behavior and the fired clay left on the tools.
Figure 7. Agrelius, Felicia. “Sculpting at Mount Baldy.” 2017.
This image shows a specific location that was visited during the process. The clay objects were sculpted directly on the slab tool, which was set on the ground at each site.
Figure 8. Agrelius, Felicia. “Site of Commemorative ‘Sculpture’ of Hydroelectric Power on Mount Baldy” 2017. This is a site visited during the project. It is called a sculpture but is actually a large boulder that has been placed on a concrete pedestal and surrounded by chains.
Process Design and Implementation

1. Build a bucket and a slab tool out of white stoneware clay.

2. Harvest clay from Mount Baldy.

3. Process the clay in the bucket. Strain out non-clay material such as rocks and organic matter.

4. Transfer clay from bucket onto slab tool. Allow clay to dry so that it can be used to sculpt. Fire bucket.

5. Go to Mount Baldy. Bring harvested clay on slab tool and bag. Locate a site on Baldy that has been impacted by human contact (trash, excessive spray paint, a historical location where something). Use bag to collect trash along walk.

6. Sculpt object(s) out of harvested clay in response and relation to the site. Document observations about the process.

7. Clean site, especially by removing litter, because it is important to attend to the physical needs of the sites in addition to gathering knowledge from them.

8. Leave a sculpted clay form as an offering to the site. Leave it somewhere discreet, because the object needs to be present, but does not necessarily need to be visible (the mountain is not going to “see” it). Ultimately, after
leaving objects at each site, there will be no clay left to sculpt with and the project will be finished.

9. Bring the rest of the clay down from Baldy on slab tool and leave the objects to dry.

10. Transfer sculpted clay objects to bucket. Fire slab with remaining clay residue. Break objects down into small pieces in bucket and add water to make slip.

11. Transfer clay slip to the slab tool and let it dry out until it can be used to sculpt. Fire bucket.

12. Repeat steps 5-9 until there is no remaining clay with which to sculpt.
Figure 10. Agrelius, Felicia. “Side View, Bucket with Fired Residue 1.” 2017.
Figure 11. Agrelius, Felicia. “Side View, Bucket with Fired Residue 2.” 2017.
Analysis

Depicted consequences of colonialism

While specific moments of Mount Baldy’s history were not discernable in the ceramic process, the violence of colonization was forefronnted in the ways the white industrial clay and the red local clay interacted with each other. Chen and Luciano describe how, although Aguilar does not directly reference the colonization of the land her body is aligned with:

...the photograph’s location, its invocation of temporal contrast, has political as well as geological and ontological valence; this desert terrain belongs to a region overlaid with histories of occupation, of settlement, displacement, colonization, and genocide, as well as of attachment, identification, aspiration, and political and cultural reimagination. These histories are not invoked directly in *Grounded #114*, though they hover just beyond the frame. (185)

The enslavement and massacring of Indigenous people underlies anything that happens on land that was colonized. Using clay from a place where most of the Indigenous population had been killed meant that this legacy is always at the forefront of the material’s memory. The stoneware tools were white and the clay from Mount Baldy was red, so the residue from the Mount Baldy clay covered the
white surfaces in a red color. This looked like blood, which is a direct connection to the amount of blood that has been spilled due to colonialism.

The red color of the clay also references the racist terminology of Native people as “redskins,” and how Native Americans are aggressively stereotyped and painted in ways that do not represent who they truly are. This manifests as assuming they are part of a distant past, savages, and unable to form any meaningful societies, which all justify current and past colonial projects. In this ceramics work, instead of whiteness covering the red, the red was altering the white surfaces. The white stoneware documented the experiences underwent by the Mount Baldy clay, but were also destroyed in the process. After multiple cycles through the kiln, they were covered with red clay, both stained below the surface and piled with layers of fired residue. Memories of the specific and extreme violence of colonial occupation can never be cleaned or concealed--they will always show through and stain the surfaces (lives, societies, and otherwise) that were created atop them.
Self-Preservation

During this process, Mount Baldy protected itself from losing clay, and it took three attempts of trying to find clay before getting any materials that could be sculpted and fired. First, the clay was inaccessible, laying in compressed cliffs that were visible on the sides of the road. Without heavy tools and a willingness to mine for the materials as cars passed, this clay would remain integrated in its position lining the road. This makes sense: in order to be protect oneself from experiencing more violence, one might withdraw inward, drawing parts of themselves close so that they cannot be touched by those attempting to inflict violence. A violated body might be less open to other forces in the future, because openness and connection might feel connected to the violence.

The second time I attempted to harvest clay, I was able to extract a material that behaved like clay but ultimately was not. After processing it, straining out large chunks, breaking small particles into smaller dust, bringing it to sculpt with on the mountain, then firing the remnants, it became apparent that the body was almost entirely sand rather than clay. The sand postured as its ceramic counterpart, but does not transform in the kiln in the same ways. Whereas clay’s transformation under high temperatures leads to a permanently different form, the sand would simply continue its process of splitting into increasingly fine rock particles. In this process, nothing permanent happened to the sand body, although it was soaked and sifted and molded and fired, returning it to the land
would not mean dividing it from the land it was originally taken from. This represents another protection mechanism, where the only substance readily accessible was one that would not be irreparably altered. Rather than using something that would be permanently transformed when fired in the kiln (clay), the sand provided a small sacrifice that could be worked with, but never really changed from the form it held when it was safely on the mountain.

The third attempt to find clay was only successful because it was already disconnected from the larger form. Rather than disconnecting the clay from the land it communed with, the clay was found at a construction site where the land was already being disturbed by people’s work. The clay that was used for the project was already laying in chunks on the ground, directly because of human influence on the mountain. In this case, the clay body had been made accessible because of the same forces of violence that it would be used to research—the histories that were being remembered through the material process were already engrained into the memories of the literally particles that would be used to sculpt with. The clay was not a symbol of the violence occurring on Mount Baldy but a product of it. This surrendered parts of the mountain that had already felt violence to a process of understanding how that violence was remembered. The material already held the memories that were being investigated, and only needed to be illuminated in the process in the future. This preventing any additional violence
being inflicted on the mountain—such as what would have been necessary to forcibly extract clay from a hillside.

It is reasonable that Mount Baldy was wary of undergoing a process filled with many transformations and repetitions. Working with the clay that had been disconnected from its larger form already provided an entrance to working with a body that already held the pain that was definitive in forming the mountain’s greater history. Before the process ever really began, Mount Baldy was already an active presence, deciding which clay would be given up to the process, and what would be protected from the research.
Figure 14. Agrelius, Felicia. “Detail, Residue on Interior of Bucket 1.” 2017. The fired clay residues built up on the sides of the interior of the bucket. The stoneware clay was almost completely covered by the local clay after the first firing.
Memory

The residue on the white tools left by the red clay provided access into the ways that matter is able to remember its past physically, rather than consciously or mentally. Although the Baldy clay never touched other surfaces, it bled out of the closed system created by the tools because even closed environments are connected to their surroundings. When the dried objects were broken down into smaller pieces to turn into slip, dust particles dispersed into the air, which were impossible to reconnect with the larger form. The dust came from the places where the clay forms split, so memories of the moments when the clay was disconnected from itself were irrevocably detached from the rest of the form. It is difficult to pinpoint specific moments of trauma, especially when it is systemic and spread across a lifetime rather than occurring in any discrete moment. Forgetting or refusing to acknowledge the violence is a way to dissociate from the memories and self-protect. The specific memory of the clay being broken apart would never be fully recognizable on the tools or in the clay body because they disappeared with the dust in the cracks.

The clay residue left on the tools formed a visual documentation of the processes that the clay experienced. Rather than cleaning the tools after they were used, they were fired so that they kept records of what had happened to the clay from Mount Baldy. The residues that stuck to the tools piled on top of itself (see
Each time through the process, a new layer of the red clay would cover the tools and rest on top of the other layers. In some places, it is easy to distinguish between the markings that came from different times on the mountain and in other places they all mix together and the remnants of each event blur into the others. What causes someone to be “traumatized” is rarely able to be discretely identified—because violence upholds the organization of society, it is also defines large parts of people’s lives. The memories of microaggressions, moments of discrimination, intimidation, and aggression, deaths of community members all pile on top of each other. The remnants are all there, visibly and openly, but they are met with the remnants of other moments of pain. The memories inform and create each other, and are inseparable.

There are handprints in specific places on the tools, which means that they were touched the same places repeatedly as the same actions were undertaken. The silhouette of fingers permanently stain the handle of the slab tool. Layers of the same fingerprints piled on top of each other, discoloring a part of the slab that was already tender. The repetition of the remnants shows that unconsciously the same damage was being done in the same places. The only noticeable human imprints were where the tools had literally been grasped. Aside from that, it is difficult to connect a particular memory to a specific action. Trying to discern if a mark came from a ball of clay hitting the slab, or the clay being pushed down in a
place, or laid out flat, would be difficult even with a single layer of markings, but is impossible when each action piles on top of its predecessors.
Once fired, remnants of specific handprints meld together with previous marks on the bucket. This makes the prints less individually discernable, and they form a sort of assemblage of where hands touched the bucket.
Figure 17. Agrelius, Felicia. “Detail, Fingerprints on Slab Tool Between Firings.” 2017. The color difference between the fired and unfired clay allows the residue from one cycle to be distinguished from residue from previous cycles. The fingerprints are only visible on the handle of the tool.
Agrelius, Felicia. “Fingerprints on Slab Tool Handle after Firing.” 2017. Once fired, the fingerprints become less distinct. It is difficult to see the boundaries of individual fingerprints.
Permanence and Transformation

Firing is representative of how violence can be permanently transformational. Parts of the self are lost after trauma, and people who carry such burdens are disconnected from others who cannot understand what has happened. The fired pieces of clay will never be able to integrate back into the unfired clay, but they always shape it. The fired clay that marked the tools was isolated from the original form and permanently transformed to become distinct from the rest of the clay that had not stuck to its environment. The clay resisted this separation and tried to bring those pieces back into the larger form. When the unfired body came into contact with the fired remnants on the tools, the remnants would connect back to the unfired clay, pulling away from the tools (see fig. 8). But the fired remains could never fully reintegrate into the unfired body--sand particles in clay crystallize at high temperatures, which permanently alters it. Even once the residue was reconnected to the original form, it could never fully recover to the point it was at before being fired on the tools.
Figure 19. Agrelius, Felicia. “Detail, Fired Clay Residues on Wet Clay.” 2017. The chunks of fired clay would initially stick to the outside of the unfired clay forms, and would mix further into the body as the clay continued to be sculpted. Some of the smaller pieces are already embedded into the form in this image.
Figure 20. Agrelius, Felicia. “Sculpted Objects on Slab Tool.” 2017. This is an example of the objects sculpted on Mount Baldy.
No matter how hard one tries to put pieces back into their original places, there will always be disconnections between the form and those parts that fell off. This is true on the individual and social level, and the way that society alienates those who name their trauma is a reason why it is important to recognize that trauma is a definitive aspect of the conditions that make up many people’s expected lives. Those who name their pain as trauma are not unique because they are the only ones who are traumatized, rather they are just those who are speaking about it. The fired clay fragments were both a definitive and destabilizing part of the sculpted forms (see fig. 9). Similarly, while the narrative about trauma is that it pushes someone away from their expected life path, it really is what textures the life paths that most people move on. Trauma is both a disconnecting and definitive part of the social body as a whole. But even as it continues to be integrated in the whole, it still prevents the form from being cohesive. The fired pieces prevented the surface from being smoothed out, and the clay pieces would break apart easily, tearing as the form split apart from itself. Clay naturally wants to compress in on itself at the molecular level but the fired pieces were never able to combine with the unfired body. “Wedging” is a process where air bubbles are pushed out of the clay body which then brings the different molecules in the form closer together. Even after wedging the clay from Mount Baldy, it was unable to fully compress around the fired pieces so there were still some parts of the body that were softer and less compact. This meant that the clay was more willing to
fall apart because it was not able to firmly hold itself together. This speaks to how trauma is destabilizing, both for individuals attempting to heal and gain control over their lives, as well as for a society that is fundamentally dis-integrated due to pervasive trauma. Putting pressure on the soft spots would cause the clay form to take a new shape, or an entirely new identity, just as what is required when attending to trauma. Following the memories of trauma unravel the assumptions that are made about the conditions people live through and what the “norm” is. Recognizing that it is normal for people to carry the devastating impacts of trauma means accepting that society is significantly less strong and solid than what might initially be assumed. Simply pressing in on a single spot on a clay form would easily make the entire object fall apart. While it might initially seem like the general life path for people is one of working towards achievement and success, like the clay that can be broken down with the gentlest of touches, this idea does not hold up. Regardless of how solid the form might seem, its vulnerabilities are what really create the norm.

As the clay went through multiple cycles of the process, the fired bits that were already in the form became increasingly small and distributed throughout the body. The smaller pieces were less dismantling than their larger counterpoints, so continuing to work with the form with the clay would eventually allow the forms to be more integrated. But although the fired pieces would break down the longer they were inside the sculpting clay, other fired remnants that were stuck on
the tools would come off onto the clay each time it touched the slab or the bucket. These new, larger pieces were picked up and would further disconnect the clay from itself in the same way that their predecessors would. Although the residue from a more distant past would slowly become less intrusive, new fragments would constantly be picked up that would prevent the clay from ever really integrating fully back into itself.

**Destruction**

In order to continue sculpting the same clay from Mount Baldy, the objects made at each site needed to be destroyed to turn the clay into a moldable form again. After sculpting at the site, the objects were left to dry to solidify the memories of the particular place. Letting the forms dry also meant that destroying them was more transformational than if the clay had simply been rolled back together before drying. Mount Baldy firmly holds the memories of what it has experienced, and the ways it reacts—in floods, fires, and earthquakes—is a disruptive display. Smashing the dried forms mimicked the forceful human actions of mining, building, and cutting roads into the face of the mountain, and aligned with the disruptiveness of the natural events contesting exploitation. Furthermore, continually experiencing exploitation prevents anything from being built. When traumas happen one after another, they keep destroying the progress
something makes, breaking down attempts at growth and change and pushing things back to their original malleable form.
Conclusion

Mount Baldy is a specific instance of how an environment holds memories of trauma. In order to fully understand how the mountain’s trauma is remembered physically, working directly with physical materials was required. Looking to clay’s reactions to different forces exerted upon it illuminated the way it remembered its own history. Ultimately the clay constantly asserted that trauma is fundamentally embodied. Trauma piled on top of itself as residue on the slab tool and bucket, pushed its pain back into the body that is trying to heal as the fired pieces of clay attempted to reintegrate into the unfired body. Trauma is destabilizing, constantly shifting, and always bleeding out onto the forms that attempt to hold it. Finally, trauma is transformational: it permanently alters the body that experienced trauma, as well as the environment that contains it.

Traumatized bodies take many forms-- entire ecosystems, bodies of water, trees, and stones, human bodies, and the communal body that forms a society. In each case, the impacts of trauma are always physical, and centering the physical nature of trauma thus provides a way to put the different bodies who have experienced violence in conversation with one another. This can happen through clay, because clay lies at the crossroads between human and environment. It
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simultaneously mimics characteristics of the human body, while literally being a part of an environmental form.

The generative possibilities of clay in understanding embodied trauma and memory as they manifest across different bodies, species, and communities are vast. In this thesis, clay was a research method that helped to reframe trauma as communal, and embodied. While trauma is not universally held by everyone because people experience different forms of violence, everyone’s lives are impacted as a result of living in societies that are greatly influence by systemic violence. This means that positioning trauma as a particular event experienced by a specific individual is not helpful, because while a single event may be disturbing, they are ultimately symptomatic of a greater system of trauma that operates on a communal and societal level. Investigating the corporeal nature of trauma provides a way to gain insight about what might be required to position the nature of society as something greatly impacted by trauma. Violence is a major part of how the world is organized, and thus a formative part of people’s lives. If violence is a central part of the makeup of the world, then its traumatic consequences are as well. This means that trauma, rather than being an exceptional and rare occurrence that pushes someone outside of a normative framework, creates the normal life trajectory that people move along.
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