

Queer and Trans Theory

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Abstract

In this chapter, we follow Donna Haraway's assertion that 'science fiction is political theory' to read Rivers Solomon's SF novel *The Deep* (2019) as and alongside contemporary queer and trans theory. We argue that queer science fiction is not simple escapism, but a tool for refashioning the self and the present. Queer and trans writers and artists are not fleeing from the world as much as they are reshaping it by crafting science-fictional worlds which defy the stultifying norms of hetero- and cis-normativity. These re-imaginings of the self and communities are intertwined with the embodied reality of queer experience, and Solomon's novel exemplifies sf's ability to grapple with the various facts and fictions used to police queer and trans lives, such as the purported primacy of biological sex and kinship.

Articulated in three interconnected sections, our chapter first uses Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag' to find a purposeful re-writing and mythmaking in Solomon's work that counters the violence of white supremacy. We then turn, via the work of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, to examine Solomon's rejection of the natural world as an implicitly heteronormative realm. Instead, *faer* embraces the many parthenogenetic,

intersex, polymaternal and decidedly non-normative creatures of the deep. Lastly we find in Solomon's rejection of heteronormative kinship an imagining of collective being and reproduction that resonates with Sophie Lewis's concept of amniotechnics and José Esteban Muñoz's vision of queer utopia. Finally, we turn outward to suggest that Solomon's *The Deep* is not a static text, but one that constantly invites its reader to transform the story – and possibly, the world.

Bio

Beyond Gender are a group of researchers, activists and practitioners engaged in collective close readings of queer / trans / feminist science fiction.

Introduction: science fiction *is* queer theory?

Sf allows us to imagine otherwise – other bodies, other futures, other worlds. These other imaginaries offer new possibilities for queer and trans experience. As the creator of the *Dream Babes* zine, Sin Wai Kin (formerly known as Victoria Sin), puts it: 'The space of speculative fiction is the space that is created between lived realities and distant fantasies that take us out of our world so that we can occupy a new, if temporary, positionality' (2). In the worlds of sf one can remake one's body into previously unthought of shapes, meet with differently gendered beings, move beyond gender.

These speculations are not of our world and yet 'this is not escapism' (Sin 2). These imaginations, theorisations and speculations cannot be detached from their historical and social contexts because they are always rooted in our current and past

moments. In this way, sf aligns with the fictions theorised by Ruha Benjamin: they 'are not falsehoods but refashionings through which analysts experiment with different scenarios, trajectories, and reversals, elaborating new values and testing different possibilities for creating more just and equitable societies' (2). Queer and trans creators are not, then, fleeing from the world as much as they are reshaping it; they contribute to queer and trans theory by imagining science-fictional worlds which defy the stultifying norms of hetero- and cis-normativity, 'especially when [they] do it seriously, and collectively' (Sin 2).

This chapter resists attempts to distance sf from the embodied realities of queer and trans lives. It argues, after Donna J. Haraway, that 'science fiction is political [queer and trans] theory' (120) and, building on E. Patrick Johnson's notion of 'theory in the flesh' (9), treats sf as 'queer theory on the front lines, in the trenches, on the streets, or anyplace where the racialized and sexualized body is beaten, starved, fired, cursed' (5). Rivers Solomon's *The Deep* (2019), understood as fleshly, lived theory, exemplifies sf's ability to grapple with the various facts and fictions used to police queer and trans lives.

Solomon's novella envisages the undersea lives of the descendants of pregnant enslaved people thrown overboard during the Middle Passage. The story follows Yetu, the Historian, whose task it is to imbibe the knowledge of her people's past collective trauma. Once a year, at the festival of the Remembering, Yetu must recount their history; this collective reliving of trauma functions as a catharsis for her people, allowing them to live without the painful memory of past generations. Yetu, however, is unable to forget and must perpetually relive the anguish of her ancestors. The tensions between Yetu and her people, between the individual and the collective explored in the text, also

emerge in the names given to these aquatic ‘creatures’. On the one hand they are called ‘Zoti Aleyu’, translated as ‘strange fish’, ‘a suitable name for something singular and alone (50)’, but on the other they name themselves ‘Wajinru’, meaning ‘chorus of the deep’ (10).

These names capture three elements of queer and trans experience. First, the notion of the strange fish, neither fully animal nor person, which challenges the category of the Human as predicated on the exclusion of all that falls outside of white cis bourgeois heteronormative identity. Second, the interplay between the strange fish and the chorus gestures towards the community of difference that is central to queer existence: a kinship structure comprised of singular non-normative subjects, woven together into a community of care and solidarity. Third, the chorus made up of strange fish illustrates the performative and prefigurative world-building of queer and trans practice, which both lives and brings about ‘a world beyond this world’ (46).

Queer and trans worldbuilding as collective performance

Collaborative authorship is central to both this chapter and *The Deep*. The Deep is set in a world originally built by the electronic music duo Drexciya, and more recently adapted by the hip hop group clipping.; editor Navah Wolfe defines the relationship between these three projects as ‘a game of artistic Telephone’ with each release – or ‘misheard whisper’ (157) – expanding and transforming previous ones. Drexciya’s ‘original mythology’ (158) was built across eight albums, nine EPs, three singles and sleeve notes. This transmedia narrative established Drexciya as an underwater kingdom populated by the ‘water-breathing, aquatically mutated descendants of

“pregnant America-bound African slaves thrown overboard by the thousands during labour for being sick and disruptive cargo” (Eshun 300).

Drexciya created ‘a world that was only being filled in partially, track by track, and you were doing a lot of the navigating’ and ‘to be a Drexciya fan was to build the mythos by yourself’ (Eshun cited in Solomon 159). Thus Drexciya’s medium invited audience participation. ‘The Deep’ (a song by clipping.) and *The Deep* equally invite this recursivity, expanding Drexciya’s transmedia narrative. Drexciya, ‘The Deep’ and *The Deep* might therefore productively be understood as an example of ‘transmedia world-building’, a process that takes place ‘across media’, ‘involves *audience participation*’ and ‘*defers narrative closure*’ (Hassler- Forest 5).

The Deep and its precursors’ speculative re-writing of history can be seen as an instance of ‘temporal drag’ to use Elizabeth Freeman’s term, a kind of ‘counter-genealogical practice’ (Freeman xxiii) where objects and stories are archived to ‘gestur[e] toward the past’s unrealized futures’ (60). This process has clear ties to the Afrofuturist tradition of remixing or ‘digging the future out of the archive’ (Gunkel 19) in which Drexciya participated. C. Riley Snorton has more recently linked ‘temporal drag’ to photographs of James McHarris printed in *Ebony* in 1954, noting how McHarris, a Black trans man, found ‘space for moving in and through gender in the afterlives of slavery’ (Snorton 172). In Snorton’s figuration, archived imagery enacts a ‘temporal drag’ pointing us towards those as of yet ‘unrealized futures’ (Freeman 60, as cited in Snorton 174) of our queer/trans ancestors. ‘Temporal drag’ or ‘remixing’ are therefore deeply entwined with Black and trans culture, and it is this history that Solomon builds on. This is not simple escapism but purposeful re-writing and mythmaking to counter the

violence of white supremacy. As Elisabeth Wheeler argues, texts like *The Deep* produce 'Afroaquanauts' and imbue us with the 'optimism to "dance underwater and not get wet" and the strength to push for change' in the name of our real and speculative queer/trans ancestors (128).

This chapter scopes *The Deep*'s methods and themes, recognising its place within a wider transgressive queer/trans sf culture – a genre packed with examples of collective writing, re-writing and transmedia worldbuilding. Janelle Monáe's visual album *Dirty Computer* (2018) builds a narrative of queer resistance across media outputs; Danielle Braithwaite-Shirley's Black trans archive *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* (2020) world-builds across animation, sound art and video games; artists Sin Wai Kin, Sophia Al-Maria and Tai Shani re-write and transform sf by Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin in their work. *The Deep* provides a necessary intervention within this wider genre, utilising collective-authorship and transmedia worldbuilding to centre such themes as the coloniality of gender, the contingent category of the Human, and queer kinship.

Such collaborative worldbuilding also has clear ties with the worldbuilding of queer communities. The collective process of reminiscence that takes place during the Remembrance, which sees Yetu share the pain of her people's memory, represents for her a dual experience of great release and of profound exhaustion: it is a process that demands 'an openness' so complete that the 'void of the ocean' might wash 'out [one's] identity' (Solomon 32), but which also underscores a meaningful reconnection between Yetu, the wajinru and their collective, embodied history. In its raw, communal vulnerability, the Remembrance is a poignant example of the ways in which the creation

of space through performance can provide a meaningful way for queer communities to grapple with complicated legacies of abuse and to establish networks of healing and care. Although *The Deep*'s most immediate relation is with the histories of colonisation and enslavement tied to the Middle Passage, the Remembrance demonstrates that one means of resisting these histories lies in the spaces created for and nurtured by queer communities.

In particular, the specially-built dome where the ritual takes place evokes the queer ballroom: a space which allows participants to be openly queer by protecting them from the cisheteronormative expectations and abuses of the external world. While it is difficult to pinpoint a singular narrative in the evolution of ballroom, it is impossible to talk about ballroom culture without paying tribute to its Black and Brown, frequently trans, pioneers. Compared to more conventional LGBTQ+ venues, which increasingly cater to cishet audiences, the ballroom is often a safe haven for the most marginalised within the queer community. In *The Deep*, Solomon shows that the sense of shared vulnerability fostered by the ballroom, or this ball-dome, facilitates, rather than hinders, community formation, conducted under the guidance of a master of ceremonies (in this case, Yetu herself).

While one element of this painful, joyful collectivity, which allows the wajinru to 'bear it all together' (148), is built on the identity of those within these spaces (queer folks in the ballroom, wajinru in the Remembrance), another element relies on the transformative potential of performance. For the wajinru, history is not an abstracted narrative, but a lived experience with physical embodied and affective manifestations. In turn, performing the history is cathartic because it involves not simply reliving a memory,

but reconfiguring it into a new form. Voguing is an excellent example of this kind of queer performance, because it takes the insults aimed at queer men for being too effeminate and redirects them into empowering movement. Where loose wrists and wiggling hips are a cause for abuse outside the ballroom, they are a sign of mastery and celebration within its walls. As Bryant Alexander argues, the reclamation of these traumas creates a 'slippage' between spaces (351). It does not negate the pain caused outside of the communal safe space, but it allows for an emancipatory reckoning of self and selves.

The fact that these histories are lived and actively performed means that the recollections they offer are imperfect. Yetu often has difficulty telling memories apart, as the watery spaces of various pasts and presents seep into both her own experience and her reconfiguration of the collective History. However, a rigid understanding of accuracy is not the point of these moments. Like sf more broadly, the exaggerated ceremonies of queer spaces (the elaborate runway, the extravagant costume) are not literal representations of life on the outside. Queer theory – whether it is understood through the sf of *The Deep* or through the (un)realness of the ballroom – is not invested in recalling the details of the past precisely, but in what that past represents and can teach us. So often queer voices are suppressed or intentionally erased from dominant historical narratives, meaning that queering history requires one to read meaning into absences and loss. Yetu's human lover Oori comes from a people whose history has been lost. While Yetu is overburdened by memory, Oori has none. The radical potential of these moments of community and performance lies, therefore, in their ability to navigate an unevenly distributed, painfully felt, traumatic past. These performances

disrupt a linear (and narrow) understanding of historical time. As Sara Ahmed unequivocally states 'Moments of disorientation are vital' and, indeed, sometimes 'disorientation is an ordinary feeling' (157). Instead of pushing it away, embracing that disorientation, that ordinary strangeness, becomes a healing experience for the wajinru who, by the end of *The Deep*, recalibrate the rituals of the Remembrance so they can 'live out their days all sharing the memories together' (148). Here, queer community and performance offers an emancipatory recalibration of trauma into hope.

Undoing human nature

The wajinru are not human. When first encountered with a human, or two-legs, Yetu screams, 'opening her mouth wide, showing rows of sharp, long teeth, narrow and overlapping' (72). The Yetu 'lived in water and she looked it', while the two-legs appear 'so . . . fleshy' in comparison (74). And yet, Yetu wonders 'how much of two-leggedness was in her' (74). Despite her ability to replace her face 'with a black endless pit guarded by fangs' (72), Yetu swims uncomfortably close to the borders of humanity. Rather than reading the wajinru as nonhuman, therefore, they might more usefully be thought of as 'dehuman'; in Julietta Singh's formulation, dehumanism is a 'term that signals clearly the imperial work of making humans and worlds', and it 'is united with queer inhumanisms as it presses us towards an overtly global, imperial critique of the making and mapping of Man and its proliferating remnants' (5). Dehumanism stands opposed to colonial and heteronormative definitions of the human, emphasising the ties between those who attempt to erect borders around an essentialised definition of womanhood and those who defend the territory of Man. Against such practices, Singh 'asks us to open

ourselves to reimagining ways of relating to each other – to others human, nonhuman, and inhuman to which (even when disavowed) we are mutually bound’ (7–8). *The Deep* demonstrates the potential of sf for such a project.

Solomon directly interrogates those systems which seek to separate living beings into fixed and definitive categories, writing:

Two-legs had a specific way of classifying the world that Yetu didn’t like [...] They organized the world as two sides of a war, the two-legs in conflict with everything else. The way [the human] Suka talked about farming was as if they ruled the land and what it produced as opposed to [...] existing alongside it (84).

The sharp divisions Yetu observes here are marked by a desire for domination and mastery, where human life exists in conflict with other species and the environment. Solomon’s linking of farming to other efforts to ‘rule the land’ aligns with Alexis Pauline Gumbs’s argument that ‘the gaze of biologists’ and ‘what would call itself the “neutral” scientific language of marine guidebooks’ is deeply political (*Undrowned* 9). Gumbs consulted these books because she ‘just wanted to know which whale was which’ but instead found herself ‘confronted with the colonial, racist, sexist, heteropatriarchalizing capitalist constructs that are trying to kill [her] – the net [she is] already caught in, so to speak’ (9). Solomon’s two-legs, who wage a war against the ocean, are engaged in the same project as Gumbs’ biologists, who fill books on marine mammals with ‘awkwardly binary assignments of biological sex’ (9). The net of ‘the human’, and the colonising,

heteronormative taxonomy it brings with it, here reaches down into the depths of the oceans.

And yet, in Solomon's writing those who live in the deep meet this net with teeth bared. By co-creating the wajinru, this chorus of strange fish, Solomon defies efforts to taxonomise the ocean. The wajinru are illegible, their human ancestry giving no definite indication of their identities. As Yetu puts it: 'Though her foremothers were two-legs, she felt she had very little in common with these strange land walkers, whose teeth were weak and flat' (84). However, her refusal of the human – she proudly declares: 'I am animal' (84) – is explicitly designed to help her to make a connection with Oori, a woman who is 'not so good with [...] human interaction' and who 'prefers animals to people' (83). Yetu thus refuses the label of human in order to get closer to a woman who is deeply uncomfortable with her own humanity. Her queer desire and her ambiguous relationship to humanity come together in a rejection of all binary opposition even as she emphasises her difference from those 'strange land walkers' (84). This same rejection of binary logic can be felt in Solomon's design of the wajinru's bodies, which flourish outside of hetero- and cis-normative systems of sexual and gender identification. Speaking intimately with Oori about the mutual strangeness of their respective bodies, Yetu explains that 'wajinru have a place to envelope, and then there's something else, and that is what gives sperm' (117). She notes that 'couple was an odd choice of word' for sex, given that 'it could involve any number of wajinru, frequently up to five' and that 'it is [her] understanding that it is most common for everything to be . . . engaged at once [...] and when not [...] it is decided based on the preference of the wajinru involved in the heat of the moment' (118–9). As well as

designing bodies that defy cis- and hetero-normativity, Solomon refuses to naturalise wajinru desire. There are variances in what the wajinru find pleasurable and, as Yetu's attraction to Oori suggests, these variances are not determined by the wajinru's reproductive capacity. In short, not only do wajinru bodies appear queer from a human perspective, there are queer wajinru.

In her keynote address at the 2018 *Worlding SF* conference, leading trans feminist sf scholar Cheryl Morgan stated:

We keep getting told as queer people that our lives are not natural, that what we are doing is somehow wrong. And I'm here to tell you that if that's not natural, well, the natural world is magnificently, exuberantly and unrepentantly not natural.

This is the kind of self-consciously unnatural queerness Solomon's sf evokes. Rather than shying away from the 'natural' world as an implicitly heteronormative realm, Solomon dives into the belly of the beast and explores the queer and trans lessons one might learn from the many parthenogenetic, intersex, polymaternal and otherwise decidedly non-normative creatures of the deep. As Oliver Bendorf writes, 'transgender studies can create a discourse in which nature is not the cisgender space it has been made out to be' (137). He calls for 'theoretical critique and art and song about species [...] and biodiversity and evolution and instinct and habitat,' which are 'not just about our genitals, though they can be about that too' (137). Yetu's meeting with the two-legs is a

form of alien encounter which refuses to leave the alien as a safely distant other.

Instead, the wajinru prompt the question, 'What is natural, anyway?' (Bendorf 136).

Watery kindred

Thus far we have focused on how Yetu's journey out of the deep and into the world of the two-legs undermines the categories of 'nature' and 'the human' in ways which refuse the separation of the two. However, Yetu does not exist in a vacuum, and an important element of *The Deep's* challenge to hetero- and cis-normativity lies in the impossibility of separating the wajinru out into discrete, atomised individuals. At the end of the novella, Yetu, filled as she is with memories, wonders why she cannot remember life inside the womb. In response, her mother, or Amaba, asks her: 'What if some of your remembering of dark loneliness as a pup were you inside a belly, and it was hardly distinguishable from floating in the deep? It is all waters' (150). This question casts the ocean itself as a vast body of amniotic fluid and evokes Sophie Lewis's concept of amniotechnics. This 'cyborg conception of water' frames the waters, both internal and external to the body, as a 'social and presocial [...] companion technology' (161). The amnion 'is the bed of our bodies' overlap and it is, not necessarily – but possibly – a source of radical kinship' (162). Part of Solomon's unmaking of the human as a category involves grappling with the wajinru and two-legs' respective capacities for this kind of radical kinship. By insisting that 'it is all waters', Solomon also evokes Astrida Neimanis's concept of hydrofeminism – a theorisation of queer feminism which argues that, in constructing humans as 'human bodies of water', it is possible to 'account for our differences while demanding our interconnection' (166). This theorisation of life as

interconnected bodies of water is not an exercise in resolving or homogenising difference; rather, it 'embrace[s] the multifaceted ways in which we relate to, rely on and reciprocally affect bodies of water' (169). The watery entanglement of *The Deep* imbricates wajinru and humans: 'Yetu didn't believe that the sea was sentient. But it was where life began. It was where the life of the wajinru began, and reaching backward, the life of the two-legs, too' (154). This passage emphasises the porous distinctions between humans and wajinru that emerge from their mutual reliance on the ocean as a body of water.

In part, the queer potential of this watery collectivity lies in its refusal to be mapped onto heteronormative definitions of the family. Through echolocation, electricity and vibration, the zoti aleyu collaborate as a queer multiplicity, united not through biological kinship but through shared suffering and solidarity. Moving together in a crowd, shoal or school which threatens to change global weather systems, they declare: 'We are song, and we are together' (64). Here, the wajinru resist the violence of classification, not (or not only) with their individually non-normative bodies but in their collective illegibility. They form an amalgam of sound and movement which challenges the primacy of heteronormative kinship.

However, this is not to say that queer science-fictionality requires one to look away from or ignore kinship. As Yetu's interest in the womb suggests, ancestral ties, particularly maternal lineages, are of central importance. Solomon writes of 'the first mothers' (42), those enslaved, pregnant two-legs who were thrown from slave ships and who gave birth to wajinru 'pups' (51) under the water. Thinking back on this pivotal moment, the first Historian – who is known only as Zoti Aleyu and who uses the

collective pronoun 'we' to refer to themselves – emphasises the necessity of maternal care, stating: 'We live only by the graciousness of the second mothers, the giant water beasts we've [...] come to call skalu, whales, who feed us, bond with us, and drag us down to the deepest depths where we are safer' (42–3).

The wajinru's queerness does not amount to an aversion of maternity. Indeed, in much the same way that Solomon refuses to frame these strange fish as science fictional outsiders to the categories of 'nature' and 'the human', so the wajinru infringe upon the sanctity of 'the family'. *The Deep* demonstrates sf's capacity to force its readership to think about how strange it is that we were all, once, gestated under water and fed on our mothers' bodies to survive. Solomon thus ventures, like Susan Stryker, 'into the heart of civilization itself to reclaim biological reproduction from heterosexism and free it for our own uses' (245).

Solomon is not unthinkingly positive about familial relations. When Yetu first emerges from the waters, she meets a family of humans to whom she looks 'more or less like food', and who wonder whether 'they should eat her'; it is only upon hearing her speak, that the human Suka recognises Yetu as kin:

"My god, my god, my god," Suka said. "You are – What are you?"

[...]

"I am Yetu," she said, hoping that might calm them.

"You speak. You're alive...you're like us". (79)

For Yetu, being recognised as similar, as ‘sharing something in common with not just one another, but a whole *us*’ (80 italics in original), beyond and beneath the perceived differences of her other-than-human embodiment is flattering. And yet, she quickly realises she is not ready to be ‘swept into the fold of a stranger’ (80). While the two-legs and the wajinru are both birthed from the same waters, this does not imply a necessary intimacy between them. Yetu notes that ‘kinship isn’t inherently a good thing’ (83) and Solomon refuses to shy away from the violence and abuse which often accompany familial ties.

The fact that the wajinru are mothers, have many mothers, value the work of mothering, does not, therefore, imply an embrace of homonormativity. As Jasbir Puar notes, the homonormative ‘politics of recognition and incorporation’ – which are focused on ‘gay marriage and families,’ rather than a more subversive queer and trans liberation – are ‘contingent upon ever-narrowing parameters of white racial privilege, consumption capabilities, gender and kinship normativity, and bodily integrity’ (xii). The wajinru, in contrast, value maternal care precisely because the transatlantic slave trade so violently ripped it from them. As Black feminist theorist Hortense Spillers argues, ‘The fact that the enslaved person’s access to the issue of his/her own body is not entirely clear in this historic period throws in crisis all aspects of the blood relations, as captors apparently felt no obligation to acknowledge them’ (217).

In *The Deep*, motherhood does not imply access to institutional power, nor is it recognised as the sacred, natural heart of the family. Rather, as Spillers puts it, ‘the “reproduction of mothering” in this historic instance carries few of the benefits of a *patriarchalized* female gender, which, from one point of view, is the only female gender

there is' (216). What Solomon's many-gendered mothers serve to create is another point of view, from which it is possible to see that 'to name oneself "mother" in a moment where representatives of the state conscripted "Black" and "mother" into vile epithets is a queer thing' (Gumbs 'M/Other' 21).

In the last moment of the novel, Yetu takes Oori into the ocean and shows her how to breathe underwater:

They held each other close until Yetu was able to transfer to Oori the remembering of the womb. [...] But when Oori jolted from the remembering, she was breathing underwater, just as she'd breathed in the womb. [...] She was a completely new thing.

Yetu beckoned her downward into the dark, into this world of beauty.
(155).

This highlights the power of sf to pull apart the boundaries of the human through an expansive understanding of queer mothering. Solomon demonstrates the power of the intersection between science fictional transformation and queer longing. Yetu and Oori have 'longed' for each other and here that longing manifests in their ability to remap their bodies and find new ways of being together. Oori's descent into the dark waters, her transformation into something other, is a potent fusion of monstrous becoming and queer desire. Like Stryker, who writes of her use of 'dark, watery images [...] to assert my worth as a monster in spite of the conditions my monstrosity requires me to face' (254), Oori embraces monstrosity: an embrace which acts as a provocation to 'redefine

a life worth living' (250). She does this, both by becoming 'a completely new thing' and by reaching back into the wajinru's ancestral past, to the moment when the first wajinru children were born into the deep. In this way, Solomon literalises the concept of a collective, ancestral breathing practice; as Gumbs (2020) argues, for 'those who survived in the underbellies of boats', 'their breathing is not separate from the drowning of their kin [...] from the breathing of the ocean [...] from the sharp exhale of hunted whales, their kindred also' (*Undrowned* 1).

Here, a clear line is drawn between wajinru and two-legs. By teaching Oori to breathe underwater Yetu bridges the gap between drowned and undrowned, showing that the work of learning to breathe in 'the chokehold of racial gendered ableist capitalism' does not involve a turning away from the past but an immersion in it (*Undrowned* 2). This is what José Esteban Muñoz calls 'a backward glance that enacts a future vision' (4) – a form of queer utopianism that those science-fictional beings, the wajinru, make thinkable.

Conclusion

In the sf imaginings of queer and trans futures, we see the beginnings of a radical, fundamental reshaping. As mentioned, these speculations are not escapism, but an intrinsic part of the 'work to change the world' that corresponds to 'being concerned with the way our actions and beliefs now, today, will shape the future, tomorrow, the next generations' (brown 16). This, at its core, is science fictional behaviour. Drexciya, clipping. and Solomon have collectively built an underwater world across media, inviting audience participation through its fractious nature and multiple authors, and equally

deferring narrative closure through this invitation. The degrees of transformation that characterise each iteration of *The Deep* are not a failure; rather, they gesture towards the open possibility of this story 'continu[ing] indefinitely, happily taking on the adaptations of each new interpreter, into the future' (158). We are invited to join this game of telephone, to transform the story – and possibly, the world – once again.

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