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Editorial

Liveable Futures: Radical Imagination as Method // Radical Imagination as Survival

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It feels as if we are living amid the ruins of liberal democratic capitalist technocracy with nowhere to go. In the face of an increasingly crisis-prone and hollow world order, calls for resistance have become more frequent while efforts to build alternatives have faded. Spectacular moments of dissent continue to erupt globally but they seem atomized rather than part of a building wave. Existential dread and an ironic pessimism have become defining characteristics of mainstream online discourse. Worry about creeping fascism has given way to the reality of authoritarian populism in the very heart of liberal democratic order. The failures and disappointments of liberal democratic capitalist technocracy have never been clearer. Against this backdrop, horizons of political possibility feel more remote than they seemed less than a decade ago.

In this context of fear and hopelessness, the imagination is endlessly invoked, evoked, and appealed to as if, like a spell being cast, it could summon into existence fully formed socio-political alternatives to our painful status quo. Many have observed that the imagination is a generative and quotidian force integral to human experiments in sociality (Anderson 2006; Appadurai 1996; Bakhtin 1981; Castoriadis 1997; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Haiven and Khasnabish 2014; Kelley 2002; Taylor 2004). Critically, exploring imagination as a constitutive force of human social life across time and space reveals it as a lived, embodied experience rather than an abstract force. Imagination is a collective activity, something that people do together, not a rarefied individual possession. It is at work in every iteration of human sociality, even the most mundane, and underpins the rich symbolic economy that makes human communication possible. It is conspicuously at work when robust and powerful social movements emerge since every struggle for things to be different requires a notion of

how they might be so. The form of anticipatory consciousness that theorist Ernst Bloch (1986) described as the "Not-Yet" is deeply at work in every attempt to envision and build society as it might be otherwise.

Crucially, understanding imagination this way means that the best way to study it is to locate oneself amidst the action as it sparks between individuals, collectives, and movements. Such a methodology allows us to move past the question of what imagination is to the much more important one of what it does. Imagination is what makes all experiments in how we might live and arrange ourselves possible. This means it can be fascist, conservative, reactionary, liberal, progressive, radical, and much more. It has no necessary disposition toward or against collective liberation, toward or against domination and exploitation. What it is and does can only be understood by examining it relationally in context and in action. This is the task we set ourselves for this special issue of Atlantis.

Welcome to "Radical Imagination as Method," Issue 46.3 of *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice*. Like imagination, this issue comes to you out of a lived, material, and relational encounter. In May 2023, we convened a series of panels at the Canadian Sociological Association Annual General Meeting to facilitate a dialogue about the radical imagination as a territory and method. We strongly feel the necessity of a social science and community praxis that engages the imagination, an approach that requires us to reach beyond the boundaries of our disciplines, academic institutions, and methodological traditions.

The works included in this issue began as conference papers and became something else through the submission, review, and editorial process. They include creative, interdisciplinary, community-based work and works-in-progress that draw on "radical imagining" as a method for co-creating liveable futures in the university and beyond. The work we received blurred boundaries between fact and fiction; past, present, and future; and art, activism, and scholarship. We begin this issue with a creative submission by Fazeela Jiwa and a dialogue between Billy Ray Belcourt and Jeffrey Ansloos. In "Shitheads and Revolutionaries," Jiwa reflects on displacement, settlement, colonialism, and embodied memory. Belcourt and Ansloos discuss Belcourt's new work *Coexistence: Stories* and reflect on Indigenous queer life, love, grief, and the ways in which art and intimacy might conjure desirous worlds. These pieces are followed by three small collections of works that explore art-making as insurgent method, intergenerational solidarity, and kinship relations as generative space for world (re)building, and, finally, two pieces on Black Feminist Afrofuturism challenging the perceived inevitability of colonial expansion into our futures and worlds beyond our planet.

Our first collection of papers features contributions from three writers who use arts-based and storytelling methods to re-imagine the past, present, and future. Helen Yao's work positions research-creation as a method to overcome the dominating force of carcerality in the public imagination. Informed by abolitionist feminism, Yao's artistic practice sketches a window from the world of the prison into other possible futures, breaking with methodological conventions in criminology and public safety research. Sadie Beaton shares a handful of seeds from her larger body of research-creation work exploring settler ancestry, memory, storytelling, and embodied barriers to sovereignty on un-ceded territory. Beaton's attention weaves between past and present, in and through archival objects, to disrupt the "pioneer lie" underpinning settler land theft. Finally, we include the work of Nicole Santos Dunn and Jeffrey Ansloos who use narrative inquiry and life history methods to conceptualize the ecological dimensions of suicidality. Their works urges us to consider how we might include those who don't see a liveable future for themselves, as we seek to build a world beyond the insecurity and violence of contemporary life in settler colonial societies.

The second collection of papers explore intergenerational solidarities and kinship relations as generative spaces for world-building. Amanda Watson shares her work with the Imagine Kin Project, revealing the relationship between climate crisis, economic insecurity, and reproductive decision-making for young adults in Metro Vancouver. Watson shows how "apocalyptic thinking" in youth impacted by climate catastrophe poses a barrier to fostering research relationships geared toward improving futures for youth in Canada. Magdalena Olszanowski's creative reflection considers her children's experiences participating in protest action in the streets of

Montreal to free Palestine from Israel's genocide. Olszanowski questions where we might draw a boundary between protecting children from the horrors of the world and reproducing myths of childhood innocence that are deeply problematic. She tunes into children's experiences and the work of James Baldwin and Merleau-Ponty, asking us to consider where children belong in protest and as active participants in the worlds we are fighting to build together. Finally, May Chazan and Megan Hill share a reflection from an arts-based workshop on queer, crip, and decolonial futures as part of the Aging Activisms project. They demonstrate the catalyzing effects of intergenerational solidarity between youth and elders, arguing that these spaces of solidarity can effectively open doors to imagining futures that are beyond reach otherwise.

In our final collection Amy Foley and Nevandria Page offer Black Feminist Afrofuturism as a framework to create fiction out of fact and fact out of fiction and disrupt the perceived inevitability of colonial expansion in space. Foley ushers us into the work of Janelle Monáe and Ruha Benjamin to inhabit "new fictions" as resistance to the forces of technological surveillance and domination in worlds structured by white supremacy. Foley encourages us to experience the "fiction" of Black Feminist Afrofuturism as fact and resist the fictitious trickery of white supremacy and the worlds it works to create. Finally, Page draws our attention to the expansion of technocratic colonization in worlds beyond our own and proposes three aspects of a Black Feminist Afrofuturist methodology: countermemory, interdisciplinarity, and worldbuilding.

We came together in May 2023, and through these pages, to ask:

How can we find the footing to imagine an alternate world, when the one we are standing in is on fire?

How can we envision futures that are safe when many of us are under attack by transphobic, homophobic, racist, and misogynistic political movements in Canada?

How are our imaginations enclosed, suppressed, and conscripted? By whom? In whose interests and with what consequences? And what is the role of research and scholarship in co-imagining liveable futures?

More than two years after our first meeting together, we remain compelled to keep asking these questions, of ourselves and our co-conspirators. We are inspired by the work of the authors in this issue and we are deeply grateful, dear reader, that you have joined us in exploring these critical questions with us.

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