Captivity: A Provocation

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In the streets of Guatemala City, on the outer edges of today's war on drugs, Christians hold a growing number of users captive inside Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers. Inside these makeshift asylums, pastors preach about the slavery of salvation—about how we are all either imprisoned by sin or held captive by Christ (see O'Neill 2017a). "Crack [cocaine] has a hold on me," one user explained while held inside a onetime factory building. "It has me tied up, and it won't let go." Meantime, off the coast of Somalia, atop the Indian Ocean, young men in fiberglass skiffs routinely chase down cargo ships the length of football fields, leaving the crew of such carriers in a state of perpetual unease (see Dua 2013). "At sea you're always somewhat captive," explained a crewman, "so being captured by pirates is like a double captivity." He toggled between the practical and the philosophical, adding: "The first thing the [pirates] did after tak-

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ing control of the ship was to lock us all up inside the engine room. I remember sitting in the dark thinking of the stowaways we [had found] onboard after we left ports like Durban and Lagos." He sounded dumbfounded: "In that moment, I felt like a stowaway on my own ship." Captivity is constant across such varied contexts as Pentecostalism and piracy, Central America and Somalia, and it here provides a provocation.

Despite the number of people held at this very moment inside prisons, detention centers, black sites, reformatories, stockades, refugee camps, and even the hulls of ships, there has been surprisingly little self-consciousness about the analytical power of captivity in social thought. While there are scholars dedicated to the topics of slavery, servitude, and carcerality, their efforts have rarely coordinated into a large-scale comparative project in which authors and activists working in different geographical regions and historical periods recognize the commonality of their respective endeavors. Take the prisoner, the slave, and the servant: how can scholars interested in these figures, often taken as distinct, become more robustly engaged in conversation with one another? We propose to foreground such a conversation across fields as diverse as global prison studies, the history of slavery, and the sociology of debt, our aim being not to equate these figures but to provoke a common political project. We contend that captivity as a point of reference has the capacity to show that seemingly discrete fields of study are in fact deeply interrelated.

Multiplying genres of captivity continue to detain a growing number of people. Compulsory drug rehabilitation centers and Somali pirates are just the start. There are over 10 million prisoners worldwide, half of whom are held in Russia, China, and the United States (Walmsley 2016); over 21 million refugees and asylum seekers tethered to camps in countries other than their own (UNHCR 2016); and as many as 9.1 million men, women, and children trafficked either internally or internationally for forced labor (Human Rights First 2017). And those are just the obvious examples. Captivity as an analytic has the power to stretch beyond the brute materiality of chains and walls to include the more amorphous but no less manacling perils of debt and depression. Currently, US household debt staggers at $12.6 trillion (Oyedele 2017), and the World Health Organization estimates that 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression (WHO 2017). Tying people up and holding them back, these often pernicious relationships obstruct people from cultivating what Karl Marx (2012 [1932]: 77) romantically understood throughout his work as *Gattungswesen* (species-being).

Scholars of late have told a collective story about abandonment. Free trade and liberalization, they report, have drastically transformed social landscapes to

produce a series of practices commonly characterized as neoliberalism. Social abandonment (Povinelli 2011), symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), and social death (Bauman 1992), even social suffering (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1996) and structural violence (Farmer 1996), all describe processes by which powerful political and economic regimes and less clearly marked forms of cultural hegemony strip people of their humanity. These authors detail in many ways what Giorgio Agamben (1998) considers the progressive animalization of the human, what Michel Foucault (1994) takes to be the bestialization of biopolitics. It is what the anthropologist Adriana Petryna (2002) would call, in the broadest of terms, "life exposed"—a condition that dovetails with claims of precarity (Allison 2013), expulsion (Sassen 2014), and dispossession (Li 2010) as well as thanatopolitics (Murray 2006) and necropolitics (Mbembe 2003). Amid lumpen abuse (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009) and industrial exile (Davis 2006), people have been rendered superfluous (Mbembe 2004). They have been left to die (Biehl 2005).

If a critical mass of scholars today can say with confidence that politics has become a matter of abandonment, then we must add that it has also become, even if through a parallel and opposed genealogy, a matter of captivity. This is a politics constituted by the tracking and capturing of humans and animals, but especially humans as animals. For as Orlando Patterson (1985) and others have noted, societies most concerned with freedom have often been the very ones to hold large sections of the world captive. Following this irony, we propose that captivity—as event, description, and ultimately an analytic—provokes us to consider anew the complex contours of violence and economy, affect and agency, and bondage and freedom.

Captivity is not a new theme. In the seventeenth century, when Native Americans kidnapped colonists, survivors published their autobiographical accounts, with the captivity narrative becoming a popular form of literature in American culture. Take the genre's foundational example of Mary Rowlandson (1997 [1682]), the wife of a Puritan minister. Narragansett Indians took Rowlandson hostage for some eleven weeks. She walked with the Narragansett almost 150 miles north until her husband paid for her freedom. The tale enjoyed multiple printings, with its narrative arc captivating its colonial readership while allowing Christians to convert the political conditions of Rowlandson's captivity into a journey of Puritan spiritual suffering. Doing so subsumed the politics of white-Indian conflict into a compelling religious narrative of redemption (Lepselter 2016). Rowlandson's three-part structure—removal, conversion, and return—defined a genre that helped both justify westward expansion and deepen North American racism (Strong 1999). And, as an early form of travel writing, historians and anthropolo-

gists often used the early American captivity narrative as datum while mirroring a kind of ethnographic engagement that now undergirds professional scholarship.

Part of our provocation is to build on this genre by moving beyond captivity as a narrative form to address it as a mode of living that constitutes practices and affects. Captivity is about being literally tied up, but it is also about feeling tethered. Those held inside Guatemala's Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers anxiously await redemption behind iron bars and steel doors, with the most resistant of these captives often tied up with ropes. Yet they also find themselves subject to a theology that converts addiction into sin. Drug use, then, is a vice in both senses of the word—as immoral, wicked behavior but also as an apparatus that secures an object. Seized by something stronger than themselves, detainees are prompted to shift their attention away from their literal captivity toward what these pastors understand as their sins, with the pastoral message often announcing that one must be lost in order to be found. What this biblical truism suggests is that the perils of freedom flowing from these theological programs rest on, if not require, captors and captives as a narrative foil and redemptive contrast.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Ocean, piracy off the Somali coast constantly forges and reconfigures modes of attachment within the hulls of ships. Much of this has to do with widespread practices of overfishing and a longer tradition of extracting profits through the capture of global circulation. And though piracy is nothing new, these encounters at sea have recently caught worldwide attention, even bewilderment, by foregrounding a seemingly anachronistic return to an ancient practice in an era of global logistics. These are stories of bravado and chance as well as loss and violence. But what these moments of hijacking also make visible is an offshore world of seafarers and pirates, stowaways, and insurance adjusters—where captivity and its evasion are part of the drama of everyday life and a source of extraction for everyone involved. This includes both pirates and those who ostensibly oppose them, such as private security companies. An ethnographic attention to these relations demonstrates not the failure of the economy so much as the very constitution of late global capitalism.

To observe such pursuits, up close and over the course of several years, generates at least three important theoretical contributions. The first is that captivity as analytic demands us to think through its multiple temporalities. Captivity tends to center on an event. Consider the high-profile manhunts for Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, and Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. Pursuits of these kinds culminate in moments of kill and capture, with those hunted often hiding inside a hole (Hussein), shot in their compound (Bin Laden), or sheepishly returned to prison—yet again (Guzmán). These moments are powerful because they demand

rigorous contextualization that often evades other available approaches. At what point has someone been left to die? When does life become bare? And what is the actual moment of abandonment? These are not needling concerns but rather lines of questioning that belie the fact that a generation of scholarship has largely been written in the passive tense—that people have been left to die, that they have been abandoned, and that they have been rendered superfluous. But who exactly has done all this work, we ask, and when did they do it? Captivity helps to press scholars to write in a more active tense, to engage a level of historical and theoretical specificity that corrects for the otherwise awkward realization that terms such as *precarity* can often appear boundless, seemingly applicable to an ever-expanding number of people: from refugees to graduate students, from the so-called Fourth World to the underemployed. Captivity's commitment to contact inspires a qualified appreciation for agency and action as well as advocacy.

Second, captivity calls our attention to its multiple scales. Consider the fact that more Guatemalans are tied up inside Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers than locked inside the country's maximum-security prisons (O'Neill 2017b). The sheer force of this statistic can overwhelm, with these captives each potentially producing their own narrative. But as a scaling project, captivity attends not only to individuals but also to entire populations. Individuals can be held captive but so, too, can thousands of chronically unemployable drug users. This shift in scale appreciates spatial configurations in relation to temporal ones, allowing the scholar to move from one location to another, linking present moments to distant pasts and imagined futures (Carr and Lempert 2016). "We used to be pirates once as well," a Dutch insurance underwriter remarked as he walked past the Lutine Bell in the Lloyd's of London. Recovered from a shipwreck in 1858, the bell was traditionally rung to mark the recovery or loss of an overdue ship at sea. It now sits silently, though prominently, at the entrance of a labyrinthine underwriting room. "Shipping and piracy has always been our lifeblood," remarked another underwriter as he peered over shipping reports on SAP software, a proprietary program for marine insurance firms. Between workshops on insuring ships transiting through the Gulf of Aden and the tedium of writing coverage policies, underwriters switch back and forth in time and across oceans, reflecting on the similar nature of not only Lloyd's and the Dutch East India Company but also the world of piracy off the coast of Somalia. Far from London, in coastal villages in Somalia, pirates also set out to sea with desires of escape.

Third, captivity pushes us toward examining the politics of escape, taking up freedom as a problem space for social thought. An attention to the historical and ethnographic specificities of such encounters oftentimes foregrounds a dialectic

between the hunter and the hunted, the predator and the prey, as well as the captor and the captive. Inherent to these dialectics are the possibilities of reversal: that the hunted might one day hunt, that the prey may become a predator, and that the captive may escape. This phenomenology is one of the reasons why the story of Rowlandson proved so compelling, with the experience of being chased and then caught, of being held and then released, appealing to an audience's adrenal impulses while demanding a strikingly empathetic imagination about the exhilaration of escape. "I had often before this said, that if the Indians should come," she writes, "I should choose rather to be killed by them than be taken alive, but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous beasts, than that moment to end my days" (Rowlandson 1997 [1682]: 352).

Rowlandson's allusion to suicide alongside her strategic submission complicates what it means to be free. Hence by "escape" we mean something more than just the literal release from bondage. By paying attention to the lives made possible by captivity—exploring the forms of sociality forged within the holds of ships or the practices of endurance behind the walls of Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers—we argue that captivity helps open up alterative understandings of what freedom means. Such perspectives move us beyond political imaginations to spaces outside the law and beyond the deficiencies of liberal conceptions of the "human" (Weheliye 2014). This nuance speaks back to what has been so clearly established by studies of neoliberalism—that the rule of freedom (Rose 1999) governs the subject with a cruel kind of optimism (Berlant 2011). The freedom that the neoliberal subject seeks throughout such studies is so often the very cage that holds him or her. But more urgently, a focus on the politics of escape does not prompt a philosophy of witnessing (Agamben 1999) or a politics of solidarity (Hooker 2009) so much as it prompts an ethics of advocacy. Important are those moments when scholars sit with the suffering, being present and attuned to the ways that people make life in the most uninhabitable of conditions. But as poignant as this approach is powerful, captivity reminds us that those held inside prisons, detention centers, and black sites await not simply our recognition but also our participation in getting them out. What our respective research has routinely reminded us is that people want out, and they want it now.

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Guatemala's Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers are largely unregulated enterprises. Often staged inside of onetime garages, factories, and apartment buildings, with each renovated for rehabilitation with razor wire, steel bars, and iron

gates, these sites of captivity hold users against their will for months, sometimes for years. At the request of a wife, a mother, or a sister, each at wits' end, pastors drag users from the streets and into these centers—to wait for a miracle (O'Neill 2017b). Such a capture can be a terrifying event, a genre of abduction that echoes all too well a not-so-distant past. That was when a different kind of faithful during a different kind of war disappeared labor activists, union organizers, and university professors (Erlick 2004). The fear is only heightened with the added knowledge that these drug rehabilitation centers are often far too small to hold as many people as they do, that there is absolutely no way for any of these captives to appeal their imprisonment, and that dozens die every year inside these impromptu asylums. The only way out is for the pastor to agree with the captive's family that the user is ready to leave. It is a temperamental process of discernment rooted in scripture, a veritable hermeneutics of the soul, which many captives try to subvert with direct pleas to family and friends. The desperate write letters to their loved ones, with such missives opening a window onto the horror of human vulnerability and the experience of being prey (Plumwood 1995).

> Hi Mom—This is Javier, and I am sending you this letter to ask you to please come and get me out of here. I am better, thanks be to God. The thing is that they punish me here and they beat me and I do not want to suffer any more. Please help me. Only you can help me. I want to escape. Come quickly. I promise to change the way that I am. Please come and get me out because I want to continue living. I beg you. Mama, come here after you get this letter or you might lose me forever. I love you very much and I am waiting for you here. Love, Javier

Written on pirated paper and often pushed into the hands of visitors without the knowledge of the pastor, at their most romantic, these notes invoke a long tradition of jailhouse letters—from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971 [1948]) to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail" (1996 [1963]). Mohamedou Ould Slahi (2015: 314) writes in his *Guantánamo Diary*:

> I was in a worse situation than a slave: at least a slave is not always shackled in chains, has some limited freedom, and doesn't have to listen to some interrogator's bullshit every day. I often compared myself with a slave. Slaves were taken forcibly from Africa, and so was I. Slaves were sold a couple of times on their way to their final destination, and so was I. Slaves suddenly were assigned to somebody they didn't choose, and so was I. And when I looked at the history of slaves, I noticed that slaves sometimes ended up an integral part of the master's house.

With requests to deliver messages to family and friends, letters have been pushed into my (O'Neill's) hands for years. Yet while agreeing to relay these pleas for mercy, I quickly found myself listening to another side of the story. These included tales of users stealing from family members, straight from their pockets, while also pilfering nearly anything that could be sold. "He sold our lightbulbs," the brother of one captive told me. "He just took them from sockets and started walking down the street selling them for a fraction of what they cost us." The brother told me all of this as he read one of these letters in a dimly lit room: **"**Dear Mom—The reason for this letter is to tell you that I want to get out of here. I beg you. I cannot stand it anymore. Please, mom, understand me because I understand you and I am sorry for bothering you with this letter but I cannot take it here anymore. Goodbye and God bless you. Tomás." The epistle as genre ensnares its subject. James Ferguson (2002) makes this point in his essay "Of Mimicry and Membership." He notes that in August 1998 two Guinean boys (one fourteen years old and the other fifteen years old) were found dead in the landing gear of a plane headed for Brussels. They carried a letter on their persons, which read, in part: "We beseech you, come to our rescue. . . . Members and officials of Europe, we are pleading to your graciousness and solidarity to come to our rescue. Please help us. We are suffering enormously in Africa" (ibid.: 551). These two young men addressed the people of Europe to rescue them from poverty and war in Africa. It was a desperate plea made at a tremendous expense, with Ferguson making the point that letters such as these should not simply be treated as evidence, with interest in context and authorial intention. Instead, he writes, "Let us read this letter *not* as an ethnographic text but precisely *as a letter*—a letter that demands not a sociological analysis of its authors but a response" (ibid.: 560; emphasis in the original). "Mother—The reason for this little letter is to ask when I am getting out of here. You can tell me when you come to visit me on Wednesday or if you do not want to bother visiting me you can just send the answer with the man who is doing me the favor of giving you this letter. I love you. Your son, Andrew." Each of these letters hails its reader, forcing him or her to stand at a decision point. But like the letter, captivity, too, is uncomfortable precisely because it demands a response, even if there is no obvious addressee. In Guatemala, outside of these Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers, one often finds crumpled-up pieces of paper pushed out of windows. Notes essentially stuffed into bottles and then set out to sea, they fish for a compassionate soul, asking absolutely anyone to take interest in their captivity. One appeared a few meters from a center, obviously chucked out of a second-floor window—through its bars and possibly at a passerby, but then it sat on a sidewalk waiting for anybody to read. "My name is Carlos Rigoberto Gonzalez M. They

brought me here on the eleventh of November. They took me from my parents' house while I was sleeping. Today is August 13th and I have been locked up inside this center for 9 months and 2 days. As much as I beg my parents to take me home, they say no." While captivity brings the possibility of escape to the fore, the term also sheds light on the politics of pursuit. "It's easy really," a pirate admitted. "We see a ship in the middle of the night and then follow it in the darkness. At first light we speed up and come next to it, making sure not to get caught in [its wake]." The logic of piratical predation can so often seem cool-headed, rational. "The boat will be bouncing up and down at this point," he continued, "but you have to be brave and throw the ladder onto the ship. Then we climb up and before the crew even realizes it, we can reach the [bridge] and capture the ship."

From 2008 to 2012 some two hundred ships and over three thousand crew members were held hostage in the restive waters of the western Indian Ocean (European Union Naval Force, n.d.). But capture was seldom the end of piracy. It was instead a means to an end. Unlike the economies of maritime predation in West Africa and Southeast Asia, Somali piracy has exclusively been a kidnap and ransom enterprise where capturing the ship is often the easy part of becoming a pirate. What comes after the hijacking is best understood as navigating time. "You bring the ship back to shore," another pirate explained, "not too close so that the crew members will try and escape, but close enough where you can bring food and water onboard and the guards can use their cell phone. Then you wait." The pirate-turned-apprentice for a European Union–funded project then faced me (Dua) and repeated the line about waiting, adding, "This was the toughest part about being a pirate."

Crew members can be held hostage for weeks, months, and sometimes years in the holds of seized ships to wait for the ransom to be paid. These were stretches of time often structured around moments of fear and violence. Ransoming required keeping crew and cargo in good condition and often included protecting the hostages from being victims of indiscriminate violence. Nonetheless, the time of captivity was saturated with terror. A crew member related his ordeal: "For the first week they locked us up in our cabins separately. They did not want us on the deck or talking to each other. I missed two things desperately that week . . . talking to my family on Skype and exercising. I was going crazy in my cabin all day. If someone complained, they could get beaten up or tied up to the bed. It was a nightmare." Other hostages tell similar tales of isolation and fear, with routines and kinship ties to those on land torn asunder in the moments after a hijacking. In this sense, captivity is an interruption. Being held captive means being confined, being tied up, but it is also generative of other possibilities, with the drama of cap-

ture often forging new social intimacies and solidarities. As the hijacked captain quoted earlier remarked, being captive made him imagine himself as a stowaway on his own ship. Captors and captives both describe such moments of recognition where prior hierarchies and divisions are subtly, if only temporarily, reversed.

"When the hijackers realized that our company was willing to make them sweat for a ransom," the captain remembered, "I think they realized that they were also stuck with us in this ordeal." His experience of captivity later turned him into an advocate for seafarers' rights with a nongovernmental organization (NGO) office in Mombasa, Kenya. "We're going through the registration process," he explained, "and soon will be able to assist seafarers specifically who are dealing with the consequences of hijacking." From psychological counseling to lost wages, former hostages tend to return to everyday life now confronted by the structural violence of global shipping, finding themselves battling companies and opaque bureaucracies. "That's when we want to come in and help them get what they're owed," explained the former captain turned NGO director. A picture of a giant Panamax-size containership sailing in an azure sea framed the wall behind me (Dua) as he recalled his own experience of capture:

> Being captured really made me a different person. I had worked for [this shipping company] for over a decade and never questioned the standard six-on six-off lifestyle of shipping. The industry has changed so much in the time since I started, and we just take it as a fact. But when the company was delaying paying the ransom and bargaining over our lives like we were a carpet in a *souq* [market], it makes you question things. . . . When we were held on the ship, we would obviously dream of being released but also talk about our work conditions. I would often think how our lives as seafarers are not so different from these pirates stuck with us. We're both trapped to the whims of our bosses [and we're both] dreaming of release.

The former captive's embitterment toward his shipping company and his recognition that the pirates onboard are themselves trapped within larger systems are made legible within a genealogy of capture as transformation. Just as former colonial soldiers discovered in the prison camps of World War II the "tense and tender ties" (Stoler 2001) that structured the relationship of colonizer and colonized, those who advocate for seafarers in the aftermath of their own release remind us that the experience of captivity continues to be a moment of the recognition of the structural violence and systems that ensnare and trap.

And yet it should also be noted that there are unlikely forms of intimacy that

emerge directly within the space and time of captivity. From 2010 onward, global navies emboldened by a United Nations–sanctioned war on piracy started aggressively patrolling the sea-lanes of the Gulf of Aden that pushed pirates farther out into the ocean. As piracy became a floating diaspora scattered across the western Indian Ocean, with attacks occurring as close as forty nautical miles off the coast of India, the use of "mother ships" became a successful strategy to aid in the making of this diaspora. These are larger boats, often fishing vessels and traditional Indian Ocean sailing vessels called dhows. These vessels expand the geographical reach of piracy by allowing pirates to create mobile bases at sea. The transformation of these boats into mother ships is, like the seizure of cargo ships, certainly fraught with danger and potential violence. Crews are threatened and mistreated, supplies stolen, itineraries disrupted, and losses incurred in these moments of temporary capture.

The arrival of pirates at the threshold is a moment of interruption—but one that can also be read as a moment of refuge. Lost, hungry, thirsty for water or fuel, or just looking for a place of shelter and replenishment, the pirate arrives at the threshold signifying a moment of interruption to the itinerary of the dhow. But as the pirates and dhow crew sail across the ocean, meals are shared and movies are watched against the backdrop of violence and threat in the intimacy of the hold. "We were stuck with pirates for over two weeks," a dhow captain whose ship had been hijacked recalled in a midafternoon pause of loading cargo at a port in northern Somalia. "They came in with guns and were very aggressive. But, you know, they all like Indian movies and, of course, we all need to eat, so we would sit together after a while, eating together. They had probably never been on a boat before, so I also taught them the proper way to pray on the ship as well." These delicate pivots between welcome and trespass, between kinship and enmity, between piracy and protection are central to these encounters at sea. An attention to such complexities makes uneasy, though seldom dissolves, the lines between hijacker and hijacked, revealing the ways that lives are lived and socialities and intimacies forged within worlds of capture.

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Captivity as an analytic ultimately proposes an expansive project, one that has not yet been pursued systematically across the humanities and the social sciences. We are, of course, aware that considerable work of late has centered on slavery, prisons, and black sites. However, it seems to us that much of this work documents and describes particular patterns and trends specific to already circumscribed fields of study, often with a focus on policy and justice. Despite the importance

of such scholarship, the challenge of engaging "captivity" beyond the limits of a case study remains unmet. Throughout this provocation, we have drawn on our own fieldwork—not to provide a blueprint for an alternative conceptual apparatus but to sample the possibilities of thinking about captivity across two decidedly dissimilar situations. Somali pirates and Central American Pentecostals are not obviously comparable, but a long-term, ethnographic engagement with each has set the conditions for a conversation about captivity as embedded in a host of mundane practices, from prayer to food preparation, that open onto the felt conditions of endurance and intimacy. The production of these socialities, we argue, is central (not incidental) to understanding captivity.

So, too, is rendering the world in an active tense. Part of this involves detailing different techniques of capture, beyond simply naming captives and captors. How do pastors in Guatemala get drug users inside their centers? How do pirates take control of the ship? These are empirical questions attuned to a dialectic between captive and captor. The challenge is to build on these observations by extending outward to the multiple and often overlapping webs of captivity that have been stitched together across time and space. In Guatemala, this means paying attention to an anemic postwar state and the United States' war on drugs. In Somalia, this includes the failure of regional fishing industries and the rise of global insurance companies. For captivity here is about highlighting a set of practices and affects that freeze and tie up in ways that open onto forms of historical and ethnographic mobility. Captivity offers a way to compare and contrast, a way to make legible and move across scales, with the experience of captors and captives enabling not only an ethics of witnessing but also a politics of escape. Again, this "escape" is directed not toward neoliberal freedom but toward imagining forms of life and socialities that emerge in the aftermath of captivity and also, importantly, within it.

Given that certain stirrings in this direction are already evident (Seward Delaporte 2017), it is possible to engage the extant literature for provocative combinations. Emerging scholars working in different parts of the world and coming from different theoretical and disciplinary backgrounds already present the distant outlines of a so far uncoordinated conversation. We have our favorites. Susan Lepselter's (2016) fieldwork with those abducted by aliens reads beautifully alongside the work of French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou, especially his *Les chasses à l'homme* (2010) and *Théorie du drone* (2013). The anthropologist and attorney Darryl Li's (2016) work with imprisoned Islamist ex-fighters detained in Bosnian prisons commingles with Juno Salazar Parreñas's (2012) work on orangutan rehabilitation centers. And the writing of Laurence Ralph (2014) on disabled gang members provides a photographic negative to *The Life and the Adventures of a*

Haunted Convict written by Austin Reed (2016 [1858]) and edited by Caleb Smith. Simone Browne's *Dark Matters* (2015) is a model unto itself. But the specific combination of existing scholarship means less here than the possibility of a collective approach that takes captivity as its central problem. The analytic challenge is to foreground acquisition as the theoretical and empirical complement to abandonment, to understand holding captive as an intrinsic part of letting go.

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