

COMPOSING OTHER WAYS: STRUCTURALISM, REALISM AND THE TECHNICS OF
CONTROL AND RESISTANCE

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation synthesizes concepts from three different realist philosophies in order to understand stabilities that structure scientific practices and the historical transformations in our capacities to exert power over matter through technologies. I explore the impacts tools and techniques have on the evolution of selves and society and I direct specific attention to technologies of writing and composition. I present archival material from poets and artists formerly and currently incarcerated that shows the power of poetry and artistic expression to resist forms of social control that harm persons' abilities to thrive and exist. This dissertation shows how groups of knowers can collectively activate agency in order to navigate structures that function capture and eliminate, and it provides recommendations for those seeking to abolish the social function of carcerality.

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BACKGROUND

In an abandoned lot, next to a partially burnt and boarded up once hotel then retirement home on Woodward Ave. in Detroit, sits two cars, parked to catch the foot traffic between the gas station and liquor store. Beneath a collapsible awning between the cars is a table and a sign in front that reads, "FREE CELL PHONES!" I'm on my way to get a loosie from the Arabs—they may be Chaldeans—who watch a mini tv beneath the counter. If someone's hustling out front, I'll get one from them. One for two or pull three for five. The only loosie I've ever found in Detroit is a Newport 100, which has always made me happy as I've long fucked with menthols. There's a history of targeted poisoning by this brand and in Detroit it's not yet history. Well, for some it is. And for others who've just started hacking, it will be soon. From outside I tap the thick plexi window, flash the bill underneath, and get just one. The quarters clink in the small stainless trough. I check them over, hoping to see a 1964 or below and four dollars' worth of silver. nope. Inside people are impatient at the other two windows, waiting to pay for high fructose corn syrup or play lotto in which lumpen hope springs eternal. Behind both sides of the thick plexi I feel the senses of security, mistrust, vulnerability, anger and fear. Inside his plastic cubicle the clerk rolls his eyes and says something I don't know to a woman trying to play her numbers. I don't think she knows what he said either, but we both understand what he meant. If it's not out in the open, it's just below the surface. Only one of the clerks here is rude to me, but today he ain't here. A lighter slides beneath, I light and slide it back. On my way home, I pause in the lot to smoke and chat with a guy who asks me if I have any change so he can round out what he needs for a beer at the liquor store. I give him the other fifty. He asks me if I'm signing up for a phone. Nah I tell him, having done my own time in the dope game I know you never give shit out free unless there's a hook, and I gesture to my cigarette. Ain't that the truth he says laughing. I'm finishing my smoke as he asks me my name and tells me good looking out Mike Brown. I pause for a minute and think about the coins. Could've

been silver. Could've been another cigarette. Could've been better spent. Could've been a drop in a different bucket. I've yet to give any change, and I've got my disavowed cellphone in my pocket to prove it, and my cigarette breath, and soon he'll have his Steel Reserve. Tethered to our pharmakons we part ways. I walk back home to open my ipad to read and write or simply mark time, consuming bites of bits. Captured in Babylon, I'm struggling to understand what constrains us and what it will take to free us. I write a poem, and then I walk back to the store for another loosie. I return, edit, and hit print. I read it through a few times and then throw on my shoes and jump in the car to head up river.

Fred Williams - LIVING ON THE RIVER

This is not my land

I would rather live on the river

Then drown in debt

Or be eaten alive by loan sharks

Currently the currents carry everyone to currency

Or away from it

Sailing – selling to stay afloat

With a hole in my boat

Katrina is a metaphor for the ghetto

FEMA is a metonym for the government

I was a fish with a life sentence

Screaming for a life jacket
Floated upstream
Faced with naked hatred
Man vs. the force of nature

Anchored at the pier
By a jury of my peers
Copious tears
Cry me a river
Call me a Ni. . . .

Living on the river

Sub-sistence is submarine sandwiches – sub-machine guns
And substitute teachers

Living on the river

In the middle of frigid December
Belongings, valuables, possessions
Floating in the distance
World turned upside down in an instant

Saturated – drenched

soaked in black skin

Wanted to get my foot wet and was sucked in

My load was too heavy

Broke every levy

As the clouds turn darkish – gloomy – obscure

And the wind blows aggressively without a care

Wave goodbye – as the waves carry away

My American ways

I'd rather live on the river

It's Wednesday and I exit my driveway to begin the trip north to 26 mile and the Macomb Regional Correctional Facility. Before I go, I get gas at the station down the block. I watch a State Police car with the single cherry light circling on top fly down the street. Tensions are palpable and are starting to heighten with the increase of settler kids from the suburbs pushing on Detroit. Arabs appear to own many of the remaining gas and liquor stores in my and other neighborhoods, yet they tend to live in Hamtramck or just outside it in Dearborn. There is often flagrant anger and disgust between those selling and buying commodities. But people ask why during an uprising they loot and burn stores in their own communities. As if somehow the structures of exploitation skipped the hood or didn't pit the poor against each other. Both sides of the counter share a dependency on the liquor store: for a fix or federal notes or both. Many of the Arabs here have happily fled the war-torn streets of the middle east, but I don't think they ever really forget where the bombs are made.

Dow Chemical isn't that far from here. With the introduction of a tertiary force from outsiders whose structural positions in some ways mirror my own moving in, previously stable interpretive modi are being scattered. We have colonial smiles. Beyond structural positions most want to know intentions. There is usually little prejudice against you simply because you grew up different. But intrigue is noticeable, and, in my case, a pale skinhead tends to stand out in a city that's 83% Black. Folks hustling know me to be good for a loosie, my loose change, a gallon of gas for their generator, and occasionally a 20-spot when I'm far enough away from need myself; I have little and I'm further than most. There have been two murders, two robberies, and just recently a house fire on my block since I've lived there. The neighbors are calmly shocked because this is new, to this block, but three down people are being displaced and desperation has people sensing opportunities that really aren't. Gas is down and NPR tells listeners of the protests in Venezuela because of basic food shortages. I grab another couple loosies through the plexi. The pharmacy is always open to sell known poisons, and although I think I'm no longer addicted the connections are still strong in my neurons and I keep the pack at bay by pacifying them with a few a week. I swing through Hamtramck to get my co-conspirator in prison poetics, toss him a smoke he tosses back as he shows me his 27s and we're off to Macomb. We drive past the remnants of industrialism. Ford and Chrysler are still here but just barely and mostly on the other side of the black and white line that is 8 mile. The drive out is uneventful. Past strip malls, suburbia, superstores, and then our exit. Sometimes we take a right and get a coffee at the TimmyHo's, but most days we exit left, take the ramp over the freeway, and then a right just past the golf course. It's a beautiful area, for Michigan, near the top of the lake. We pull into the prison lot and before we enter the grounds, we pass the signs reiterating the illegality of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and cell phones on prison grounds. All of those things are available inside despite the signs. And the vast majority isn't smuggled in during visits. CO's make decent money for only needing a high school diploma, but they can always use more. We too come bearing gifts, but

of a whole other nature. As I throw the car in park and gather my material I wonder: if I left my keys in my unlocked car and someone escaped to find transportation waiting, how many different ways could my abolitionist accountability haunt me? I know it's not a reality, or at least it is a very slim one. Toss them under the seat. I abstained from contributing the 50¢ for a locker that the prison charges because I refused to give them anything I didn't have to. Later I found out that the money from the lockers goes to programs. I enter with a smile to the religious folk. The warden has twice rejected my proposal for a philosophy class, but they just can't get enough Jesus through the bars. We get our IDs and manifests, which allows us to carry our collective revolution across the grounds. Then we wait for the call to pass through the gate. Most of the time things go smoothly. Sometimes the wait is short, sometimes long, sometimes you get turned around at the door and sent home. You'll never know which is coming and there is no appealing anything right then, you simply leave as directed if you want to be able to return. Procedural redress is effectively nonexistent. The call comes. Volunteers. We enter a small room by way of a controlled metal and plexi door. The CO doing the search says close one, and the door is closed and locked by a CO inside a separate control room. No more than five at a time. We're run through a metal detector, remove shoes and socks and show the bottoms of our feet, then we stand and get frisked, pockets out, mouth open, lift the tongue, good.

Fred Williams - DIRECT ORDERS

“Take your clothes off!”

“Get naked!”

“Open your mouth!”

“Wide!”

“Lift your tongue!”

“Grab and lift your testicles!”

“Now bend over”

“Spread your cheeks!”

“And cough!”

“I gotta see in there before I send you back to your cell!”

This emasculating process emanates the ambivalence

I feel towards a visit from friends and family

The overjoy is smacked away

And replaced by humiliation

When you are forced into a closet for a strip search

Immediately thereafter

Sometimes during the visit

Sometimes shaken out of your sleep in the middle of the night

Cause for the strip search

Presumably to ensure you’re not smuggling contraband from your loved ones

Without being hyperbolic

Sometimes the cause for the strip search is explicitly for the gratification of the prison guard

I am forced

Forced to strip naked and bend over at the behest of sadistic guards

who sometimes are overly excited to examine your anal cavity

These indicators officially qualify this act as sexual harassment

Someone in a position of authority over you making you a subject of sexual arousal for himself

He threatens to penalize you by jeopardizing your livelihood if you refuse his command

So you are left to deal alone

Alone with the self-blame

Self-blame that says you should have resisted

But if you resist you lose your visiting privileges

Phone privileges

Outdoor privileges

Employment privileges

And I must add that you may be shot with a taser if you refuse

Sexual assault victims report the mental pain

is immeasurably more damaging than the physical pain

psychological rape occurs daily in prison

while officers manipulate the policies for their pleasure

officers most times don't touch you

but sadistically violate your mental security

when they visually caress and penetrate your naked body

while stripping you

while you're bent over

while you hold your testicles

while your mouth is open wide

they make sexual comments and compliments

that leave you feeling frustrated and defenseless

Strip

Take your clothes off

Squat

Spread your cheeks and cough

They strip me naked to search my rectum

Authority subverts my spectrum

Authority subverts my dignity

Standing there naked

Shivering

Shriveling

Sickening

His blue eyes stare through my black skin

I'm bare

Barely breathing the same air

Embarrassed to tell my girlfriend

Fear I'll lose her respect

You're wrong if you consider human rights

Death becomes attractive when this is life

Crease in his boots

Foot on my neck

Smirk on his face

Hate in his heart

You feel less of a man

He feels more empowered

A lifetime of trauma

Occurred in less than an hour

For visitors, the levels of search through materials listed on your manifest depends on the CO. Tonight it's a newbie. She slowly thumbs through our papers. What is all this? What do y'all do? Poetry. We do poetry. All is clear. Roll two.

Chrystos - Going Into The Prison¹

the guard growls. *What's this!?*

Poetry, I answer, *just Poetry*

He waves me through

with a yawn

that delights me

So I smuggle my words in

to the women

who bite them chewing starving

I'm honored to serve them

bring color music feelings

into that soul death

Smiling as I weep

for Poetry who has such a bad reputation

She's boring, unnecessary, incomprehensible

obscure, effete

¹ Chrystos, *Fire Power*, 3

The perfect weapon
for this sneaky old war horse
to make a rich repast of revolution

Through the next gate, into another room flanked by two control centers behind bars and plexi. Most times the guards are congregating in the control center jawing or playing on the internet. Occasionally they're filing a report or doing something else more stereotypically part of their paid duties. Two more security doors and an escort and we begin our trek across the beautifully manicured yard.

Figure 1: David Armstrong Jones - LIPSTICK ON A MONSTER 25:00-27:32



The short young white male guard asks us: You actually like coming in here? We tell him yes, haven't missed our weekly visit in years, and explain that when we stand as poets we don't stand as anything that stands against them. They appreciate what we bring to share and want to share with us. He tells us all they do is lie to him. Sometimes the guards caution the visitors about the animals and violent criminals behind these bars and to stay close, mostly when there is a group or when women are present. Most nights it's simply a quiet walk to building 300 where in a small conference room we discuss and read poetry. Leering eyeballs, familiar nods, jeering comments, racist, sexist, or homophobic ones, or simply well-timed jokes at our expense, some of which have left us laughing for days. Visitors are a variation in an otherwise very repetitive place. We get to 300 and as it is most nights, Mr. B is the guard at the podium in the entrance. I have been worrying about him lately. I suspect that he has cancer and has begun some sort of treatment. He seems to be a good man, always treats the men with respect and they all seem to confirm that he is a rarity among COs. We smile at each other and he wishes us good evening. We ask if we are small conference room and he nods as he deals with the others coming in to use the gym. We head the 25 yards down the hall, giving nods and smiles to faces we know in the library and saying hello to others that pass by in the hall. Some nights they've beat us to the room, some nights we beat them. Sup? Yo Yo. A handshake. A high five. Fist bump. Bro hug. Firm embrace. Regardless, our greetings are always warm. I make it a point to always make contact with everyone. But always keep an eye out. Over-familiarization will get you tossed. No touching beyond a hand shake. No slapping hands. Definitely no hugs. Most of the time all is clear. And although we appear to be beyond the archival eye, the retributive potential of the panopticon never lets you forget. We jaw for a little, talk business and outline projects that we are working on, or poetic styles or themes we want to explore together, and then it's down to business. Who's up? The poet stands. The room quiets.

David Armstrong Jones - WRITER'S BLOCK Start @ 5:00 Stop @ 5:35

The door closes

A world opens

We share and see truth

Seeds are planted

Words produced

Captive born

They live free

Free to worship the hope of tomorrow

One day closer to Wednesday

To Refuge

When we'll find our way back

To our block

We applaud as they sit. We offer comments, or perhaps ask for a reread if the poem was fire or needed a different delivery. Then, which way we going? The first poet decides if we move counterclockwise or opposite. This way. Oh it's like that huh? Yeah, it's like that. The poet stands. The room quiets.

James D. Fuson - UNTITLED 0:33-0:43

I'm staring at a bunch of murderers, thieves, rapists, child molesters, liars and assholes

#community

My dissertation examines the alterations we live through as we navigate our desire to express ourselves in writing, and beyond this, in various forms of self-composition and symposiums. We may

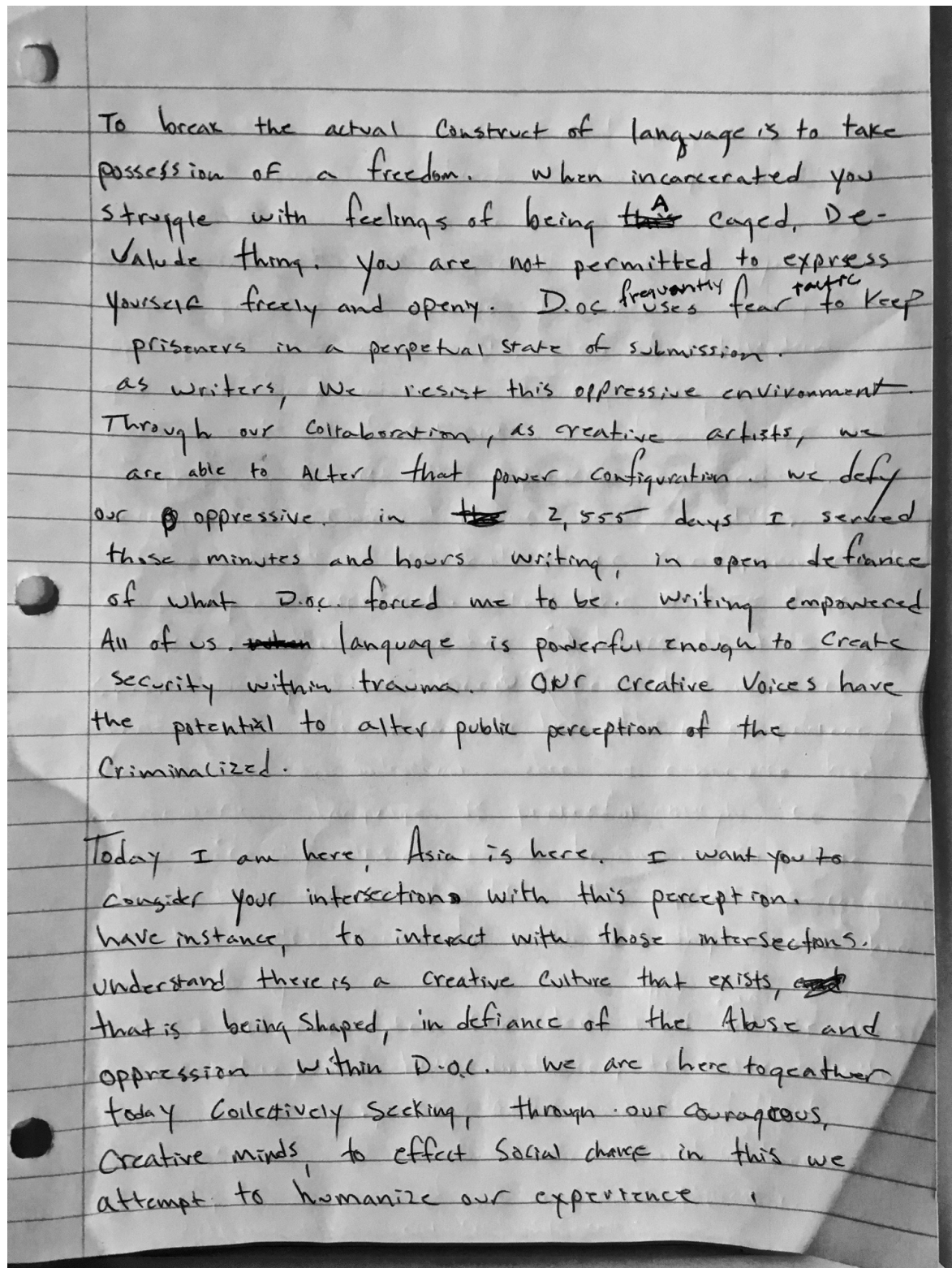
write on and with keyboards, pens, pencils, flat glass surfaces, paper and programs as we compose emails, letters, assignments, poetry and any number of texts, which we can transmit across vast distances. We write the story of our life on mediums of communication and exchange. We sculpt our identities and our bodies by taking up and shedding a multitude of exchangeable, identifiable and hopefully acknowledged naturalcultural practices. And the tools we use leave marks on us. They have changed us. They are changing us. “When the hand works, what it inscribes in matter is inscribed also in *its* matter: in its grey matter. And the hand is also that which holds the reed, the quill or the pen, types on a keyboard, touches an Ipod screen, etc.”²

S/he who writes, writes. In uncertainty, in necessity. And does not ask whether s/he is given the permission to do so or not. Yet, in the context of today's market-dependent societies, ‘to be a writer’ can no longer mean purely to perform the act of writing. For a laywo/man to enter the priesthood—the sacred world of writers—s/he must fulfill a number of unwritten conditions. S/he must undergo a series of rituals, be baptized and ordained. S/he must submit her writings to the law laid down by the corporation of literary/literacy victims and be prepared to accept their verdict.³

² Stiegler “Fourth class of seminar 2012,” Ibid.

³ Trinh *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, 8

Figure 2: Karmyn Valentine "Remarks"



I've long had an interest in writing. I lean on the idea of composition, understood in an abstract sense, as a way to conceptualize a familial set of diverse practices. But, writing in a narrower sense has always interested me. By writing papers, lectures, articles, books, and other compositions, which our communities read and hear, we are ethnopoietically intra-active epistemic and ontological agents. And, as individuals who've pursued institutional education to its highest degree, we have unique relationships to reading, writing, and the practices associated with knowledge production. Having traversed these institutions, I've witnessed academic practices change over time. I've witnessed my own practices change. In making sense of, being at home in, and advancing valuable academic practices, understanding the transformations to composition within the institutions of higher education is important. Changes in writing are taking place, primarily as a result of the explosion of information access available through the integrated networks organized by information sciences and technologies. Digital medias, bibliometrics, open source libraries, blogs and other dispersed compositions have fundamentally altered research and made the ability to familiarize ourselves with our own and various other disciplinary discourses greater. These changes have also played a part in the development of inter, cross and transdisciplinary research, which have increased communication and collaboration among previously isolated academic communities. Yet, one constraint following from the affordances of availability is that more and more, there are impetuously sourced compositional mashups, reductive summaries, and cut and paste bit-torrent like assemblages; diffractions from the techno-logic that allowed the peer-to-peer pirating of digital media. Information access is conflated with knowledge acquisition and generation. I've witnessed writers and other composers pull a technical definition from here, a summary there, skim-read a few articles or blog posts, then mash the parts together to make Frankensteinian forms enlivened by citations of cursory, selective, and often straw-manning research. In the hopes of monetizing followers, rhetorical identity performers, like little birds on a tree in the morning tweet tweet across a

host of platforms for who is the loudest in idle chatter. There are similar socio-structural changes in the practice of reading when done on digital devices, most significantly for the generation of users for whom the only norm they have ever known is reading online. Ocular cameras show us that the online generation reads texts on devices categorically different from their parents. And the projections are that reading practices will fade as more and more people simply watch or listen to whatever content they want.⁴ This tendency was suppressed in my academic training because the focus was directed more toward textual comprehension and exegesis, and in order to succeed one had to learn how to read a whole book carefully, slowly and for sustained periods of time with the express purpose of remembering and being able to competently recall and accurately integrate as much as possible. However, this practice is not uniform and often we tend toward uncharitable and terse readings intent on writing papers wherein we develop critiques. “Critique is too easy, especially when a commitment to reading with care no longer seems to be a fundamental element of critique.”⁵ But the growing fascination with new, current, #trending, recent scholarship makes sustained attention to a book harder and harder in the immediate and in the long run. Employment opportunities for certain kinds of research are diminishing. More and more books seemed to be compilations of articles that had to go out quickly online so that the critique could be branded as one’s area of research and intellectual property. If you don’t pay attention to what is immediate you can be passed over. Adjunct and junior faculty insist that journals are where the important debates are happening; an accurate position in many cases, but also indicative of a struggle for recognition and gainful employment in an era of our overproduction. All the while we are being saddled with the demand that we automate pedagogy, design it to solicit the younger, fully immersed online generation, and exacerbate the competition for already scarce employment. In the student

⁴ Manjoo, “State of the Internet”, Ibid

⁵ Barad (Interview), *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, 49

population, I read papers that show a growing change in the way they compose on the devices. I explored and exacerbated this juxtaposition by designing my classes so as to require that students keep handwritten notebooks in addition to composing papers on their computers to be policed by surveillance programs like Turnitin. There was a marked difference between the way they thought and composed on the different technologies. Admittedly, this depends on requirements, but the point is differences were particularly stark when they were required to regularize different compositional habits.⁶

Admittedly, like wringing out a sponge, my writing releases what I have soaked up in the milieus in which I've been immersed. "A biography of any literary person ought to deal at length with what he read and when, for in some sense, *we are what we read*." These two dimensions of the reading brain's development and evolution—the personal-intellectual and the biological—are rarely described together, but there are critical and wonderful lessons to be discovered in doing just.⁷ I know archive fever well. I have more books on my iPad than most cities have in their public libraries.⁸ And, given the functional powers of the deep web, the tor network, and pirate libraries, I have at my immediate disposal more books and articles than all but the top 10 or 15 libraries in the country. I've noticed the differences in reading, researching and writing on different devices. And thus, given that I was interested in these themes, my thinking kept changing as I would encounter new and different material. My dissertation began to span a wide range. My interests kept morphing. My thinking kept changing, somewhat irritatingly as my dissertation was already a multitude of projects. My head was in many different areas at the same time and thus like Deleuze and Guattari

⁶ Reading and writing are dynamically changing through their co-evolution with human beings. This evolution changes the institutions that make ontoepistemic products and are the initial "produmers."

⁷ Wolf, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, 5. Here Wolf is quoting Epstein.

⁸ Access to storage and ownership over ontoepistemic products of value is part of how we enter into economies that present the world in particular ways.

note in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, “Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away.”⁹ All this is to say that my dissertation harbors many projects, about writing, and technologies, and hegemony, and totalities, and radical politics, and I struggle to be careful, faithful and helpful to the various traditions to which I owe debts. In very real ways many have given their lives to ensuring that their voices and the voices of their forbearers resounded. The mnemotechnics that are accessible, i.e. the archived, retrievable, sensible, and applicable tools and techniques, are supports that provide me with the ability to familiarize myself with a wide array of research. This, coupled with slowing my time-to-degree allowed me more learning opportunities. Given the skillsets I was given from those who have gone before me, I was able to work my way through new areas of research. I had no idea the degree to which the technological mediums constitutive of expression and identity would impact me, in part because I didn’t really understand technology. The differences in writing and composition between the computer and the hand on paper are substantial. They are made even more so when the pen on paper was a state approved transparent medium tipped black pen composing a poem on the back of an institutional chit that approves a captive’s movement across the fields and between quarters.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 3

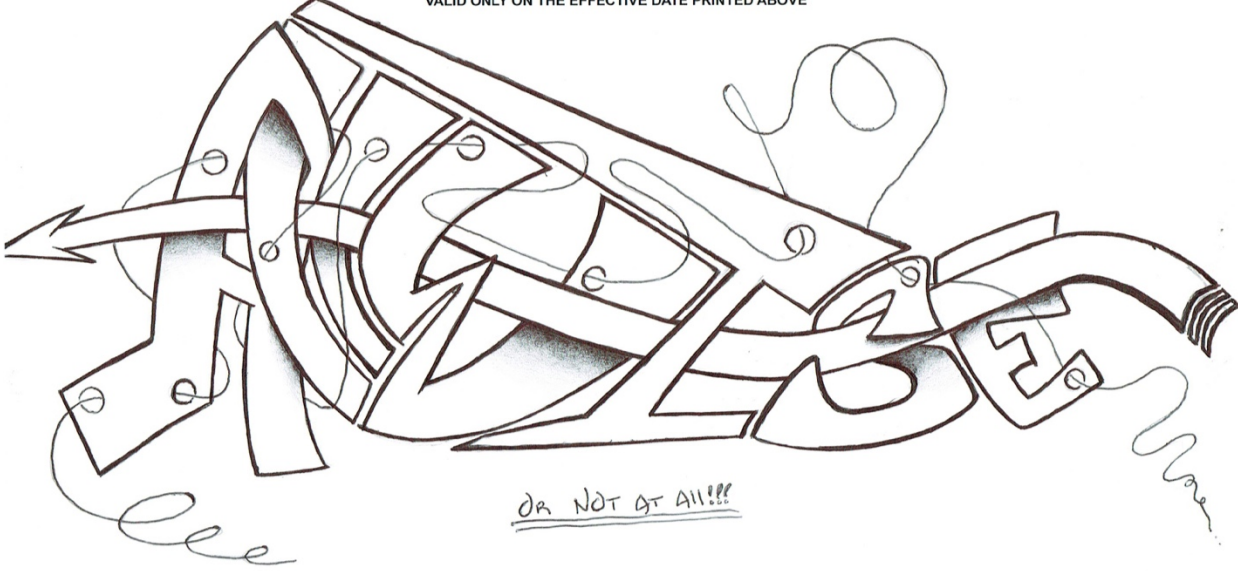
Figure 3: Yusef Qualls-El “All Wise”

MACOMB CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
Housing Unit : HU#3
Offender Daily Schedule
Effective Date : 10/20/2014 (Monday)

Offender : 252358- QUALLS, YUSEF **Wing : B Lock : Top - 052**

Callout / Assignment - Description	Reporting Station	Room	Department	Depart	Arrive	Depart
Hobbycraft - Leisure - POETRY POETRY	Officers Station School	Room 35	Special Activities		19:00	20:30

VALID ONLY ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE PRINTED ABOVE



Distribution : Offender Page 1 of 1

The differences and similarities between the hand and computer written assignments of college students and the typewriter ribbon scrap paper writings composed by people incarcerated kept me inquiring into the significance of writing. And as my concept of writing—as always-already through a spectrum of different mediums of composition synthesizing a multitude of particular situations—expanded, so too did my interest in constructive, intentional, and non-reflective aspects of a more general identity composition. Performative aspects of identity require the uptake and output of socially recognized practices. Eyeshadow, tank tops, shoes that differentiate the wearer from another group of people associated with a different identity, saying ask or aks, these practices of meaning making in communities teach us the differences that matter. And the critiques of political economy and the culture industries, which historically situated what appeared to be fixed

social identities, kept pushing me to think more about the dynamism and contingency at the heart of identity. Part of the dynamic evolution of socio-personal identity is related to the evolution of technologies that expanded certain forms of consumption for populations that had previously consumed otherwise. And those expansions had impacts. Realistically, I was experiencing something common to my generation, i.e. those of us who lived before the internet yet were young enough to avoid the trap of alienation that hit older generations. If we are going to overcome the reductive but at times sensible Luddite positions on technology, we have to begin to recognize that our supplements and accessories have always had not only semiotic but also somatic weight. It is not simply the case that there are illocutionary and perlocutionary effects in an ideologically shaped linguistic community attempting to navigate their way around in an objectively real material nature. Rather, as the complexity of historically evolving lived experience shows us, the technics of composition possess somatic weight in the sense of a sculptural power over the shape of bodies. The somatological significance of compositional practices appears starkly if we think about pharmakons, which brings me to my last prefatory comment.

Whether we are talking about the impacts of the consumption of psychotropic plants on the evolution of the central nervous system of mammals or the patented pharmaceutical compounds engineered by chemists at Johnson & Johnson, drugs are and will continue to be of profound importance. Chemical compounds introduced via the supplements we consume work on the body and in ways that force us to take more serious the somatological impact of our compositional and consumptive practices. Along with the ubiquity of electronic media and the informational paradigm I've witnessed the spread of a pharmaceutical regime. Tracking the alterations to the practices of performative self-writing means attending to the ability to control behavior through the introduction of drugs. Adderall, Ritalin, Prozac, Oxy, mdma, to the spectrum of organics, the carceral population in the US shares at least this much with the student bodies of many major academic institutions, i.e.

vast numbers of them are on drugs. I became interested in the stability of neurochemical forms of control and the idea of neurochemical assessments.¹⁰ The idea of a chemical imbalance became cachet despite the fact that no one was testing the balance of chemicals prior to handing out a Ritalin prescription. The functionally open pharmacy showed in my classes. Raise your hand if you know a source for or possess pharmaceutical drugs not prescribed to you. Every hand goes up. If you're familiar, you can feel the Adderal in their final papers, which of course they think during the intensity of a cram writing session are brilliant. More and more people manage their selves with pharmakons. No doubt this has been a longstanding practice and the complexity of this practice is almost unfathomable as it runs the gamut from paleontology to geopolitics. Agribusiness in Guatemala is bound to the fact that 40% of their exports are consumed by Americans who just can't get enough coffee and sugar to get through their days. What happens when we begin to think about these supplemental practices as technics of evolving selves and societies? What happens when we think about time from the standpoint of inheritance and how we are bequeathing complex evolutionary epiphylogenetic impacts? Are we lead towards speculative futurism predicated on a contemporary realism? What and who shapes this future? And who is included in it? Pharmacology provides ways of writing on the body and for different durations and under different regimes. Technics in this sense lose the presumed value neutrality often ascribed to them when we recognize the historic evolution of their semantic and somatic impacts. What happens when the introduction of these practices is not of our choosing but rather something that we structurally inherit? What happens when the power to predict and control is used to suppress and oppress? Hearing the call over the loudspeaker: "Level 4 med lines now in progress. Level 4 med lines now in progress" and

¹⁰ This resulted from a conversation with Marilyn Frye, who at the time was getting her social work degrees. She challenged the idea that somewhere someone was doing some kind of neurochemical analysis of someone prior to proscribing them medication.

watching half of the population migrate to the pharmacy gives one pause to think about the internalization of disciplinary regimes.

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This one time they put him in the chair for two days. They let him stretch every couple hours. He couldn't sleep, no shower, his knees locked up from having his ankles strapped to the legs of the chair. We had one of the deepest conversations about how we both got into prison, how he started taking meds just to get high, and how he noticed they started slowing him down, but he couldn't sleep without them. He cut himself because sometimes he don't think he will ever make it out of prison, and sometimes prison is worse than death.¹¹

We design spaces that are worse than death. We force people to inhabit those spaces. That inhabitation has real consequences for bodies, psyches, families, communities and beyond. I believe these works can contribute to critical philosophical engagements with writing and composing therapeutics and fulfilling obligations that we have to the resistance of oppression. Techniques permeate our having been, our being and our becoming. Yet something seems to have changed about our ability to manipulatively control life via technical protocols. We can see this manifest in the reproduction of carcerality in particular. There is evidence to suggest that sinister machinations play a role in the creation of the prison industrial complex, and it is undeniable that corporate exploitation and repression of communities disproportionately subjected to incarceration is a regularized practice. But perhaps more troubling than the conspiratorial is the general neglect that constitutes the function of prison. The necropolitical control over life and death, which because it has learned to draw the timelines of demise out a bit, manages to convince people it somehow doesn't exist or that its regularity is exaggerated. Despite all this, as I and others will serve as witness, resistance grows. Controlling for resistance is a central feature of the contemporary carceral regime. From coded expressions of disgust to organized prison rebellions, the carceral regime anticipates

¹¹ Hall, *The Watch*, 29

and enforces a dichotomy that binds resistance within a predictable oscillation between trivialized discrete micro-scale events and impossible spectral macro-scale movements. Thus, adaptive resistance requires that we struggle against predictability and antagonize against the dichotomization of micro/macro. This dissertation develops a technics of abolitionist pedagogy as a counter to counterinsurgency. I argue that by bolstering epistemic agency and disrupting reductive and restrictive social ontologies, abolitionists can write, compose, engineer, grow and pollinate an organization-ization of resistance that works to liberate limitations imposed on bodies and the meanings upon which they depend.

OVERVIEW

My dissertation constructs a confluence of scientific, technological, and social theoretical concepts in order to think about the implications of the practices of a growing group of mostly incarcerated poets in the state of Michigan. I present parts of a larger project, grounded in 5 years of an ongoing practice, of collaborative resistance to exploitative, extractive, oppressive, and eliminative disciplinary regimes. We might juxtapose these practices to the self-cultivating and therapeutic techniques of discipline. The work I present is an account of participatory philosophical praxis understood in an andragogical and ethnopoietic sense of self and community learning and creating. Linked with these poietic movements is a similarly creative and therapeutic sense of techne. I argue that as technical beings we are fabricating our personal and social becomings in time, and that we ought to be attentive to the ways that we inherit, animate, and bequeath oppressive practices, often unwittingly. Responsibility means antagonizing against the heritability of structural oppression. Justifications for eliminative practices often rely on the fact of structural heritability in order to direct force against groups and individuals deemed problematic. They accept that structural forces historically accumulate and impact the psychological and somatological existence of peoples, and then they distort and twist matters into a shackle closing the chains unconscionable apologists use to justify binding peoples to the political practices of erasure. As abolitionist geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes, “If unfinished liberation is the still-to-be-achieved work of abolition, then at bottom what is to be abolished isn’t the past or its present ghost, but rather the processes of hierarchy, dispossession, and exclusion that congeal to produce group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”¹²

¹² Gilmore, “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence,” 228. Reproduction is a major theme around which circulate a host of questions. One central for me is about reproduction as self-socio-re-evolutionary futurity. Not humanist, but certainly compost materialist.

Our historicity, as embedded and embodied hermeneutic traditions, reproductively materializes in personal and collective practices spanning ideological and somatological levels. What we think and how we live is inextricably bound up with world that raises us and the socio-historical positionalities that we inherit. How we understand and interpret these positionalities is by applying techniques and tools at our disposal for representing, visualizing, organizing and applying knowledges. Akin to Foucault's examination of the historical transformations in the technologies of the self, I explore the ways our inherited, retentional technics—as the material and ideological supplements of the past that we find already accessible—get deployed protentionally, i.e. the way and degree to which we actively and dynamically shape selves and worlds via instruments of self-(re)composition. This is what I, following others, call economies of presencing, i.e. the historical transformations in the management and ordering of selves/worlds via arrangements both tacitly and explicitly taken up by individuals and collectives at micro, meso and macro scales. In these economies we see stabilizing and evolving totalities. Thinking from philosophers of technology, we know that establishing a taxonomy of economies requires that we grapple with the conceptual tool of a *period* or *epoch*, and the degree to which they stabilize or disrupt existing relations of power becomes a question of dynamics, i.e. how coherent are the “ages” of technology? As inheritances, it is important to delineate how and to whom economies of presencing transmit power across time. If, as I will argue, it is appropriate to understand technics as indissociably linked with human becoming/evolution, then it is also imperative that we distinguish between injurious and therapeutic technical inheritances, for they will shape the horizons of possibilities we assume to be poietically possible. I argue that the hegemonic structures and technical instruments governing inheritance in the capitalist epoch, i.e. relationalities that cohere between positionalities neither static nor classically material, privatize and exploit historically accumulated social expenditure, poison many, heal few,

and capture, captivate or anesthetize most such that they play formulaic roles in the reproduction of the social forces of control and oppression.

As a way of working against oppressive dynamics, I testify to the potential of radical poetics to resist anesthetizing and function as therapeutics capable of advancing emancipatory struggles against the asymmetries of inheritance. By way of compositions, poets in prison open freeing relationalities by exercising epistemic agency within epistemic structures entangled with ontological forces, bringing before themselves and into worlds the knowledges they possess and generate collectively. These compositions, and their material amalgamation—which is archived, distributed, or accessed differently according to position within the relations of power and reproduction—become reservoirs, of matter and meaning, for others. And, they can open individuals to the possibility of shared understandings, which can in turn function to organize collectives against status quo practices of oppression and silencing. Deploying epistemologies that emphasize: knowledge as situated, embodied, and generative practices of struggling over relationality; and understanding as a process achieved via articulation, I submit a small sample of a larger collection of compositional practices that show the creation of spaces and times of radical personal and social transformation, sharing, and being-in-common. I focus on radical resistance, from micro through to macro. Frequently a kind of neopositivist approach to knowledge attempts to consume or appropriate an often-fetishized standpoint of those who inherit oppressions and I will explore this tendency so as to guard against it and the universalist tendencies to obliterate differences under the rubric of sameness. I will emphasize the generative aspects of knowledge, reiterate the importance of participatory epistemic agency in techno-poietic creativity, and argue that learning to read radicals' responses to oppressions requires that one transcend the naïve position of observer and become engaged in transformative activities of resisting and protectively coding fragile emancipatory networks. Poetry diffracts throughout the MDOC. This exposes a radical abolitionist praxis which, if supported, can spread

rhizomatically throughout systems of oppression insofar as it remains adaptive praxis responding to the ways oppression reinforces the status quo and practices counterinsurgency. I'll compartmentalize the project into three sections, but I want to emphasize the intertwining and intermeshing of the various parts.

The main frame for the project as a whole is STS, understood very generally. I explore realist discussions in the philosophies of science, to think about technoscientific discussions in the philosophies of technology, some of which impact STS understood more specifically, to think about discussions in radical social-political thought. The main traditions I deploy in the project are: phenomenology and its variously labeled progeny of hermeneutics, deconstruction and post-phenomenology; Marx & friends and other radical thought; and several feminisms with a concentration on works by women of color internationalist in leaning. Although these are the mainsprings for the work, the smaller mechanics of the project utilize numerous other concepts and theories insofar as they are helpful for understanding my central claims. Said as simply as possible, my dissertation makes the claim that we are experiencing profound transformations in reading and writing resulting from the technological dynamism at the heart of capitalists relations of production. Networks of information—an emerging hegemonic economy—and communication technologies are at the center of these transformations. In our contemporary world, various technoscientific biopowers have become the chisels inscribing oppressive and exploitative practices on and into bodies. And, in unprecedented ways, the things we use are formative for our historico-socio-politico-neuro-somatological life. With the technical manipulation of life, along with the structural universality of digital discretization and the growing global ubiquity of information as paradigm and product, powers both corporate and state are writing and composing protocols of control and oppression. I examine some of the specific technics deployed by the carceral regime in prison; a space of concentrated historical inequality, injustice and captivity. And, as a form of resistance, I assemble a

series of ongoing abolitionist resistances that take seriously the recalcitrant and reproductive character of oppressions yet nonetheless embrace the radical freedom and creativity required to escape captivity, i.e. to flee and to stay safe.

I begin by exploring three philosophers interested in first or fundamental philosophy, i.e. those who systematically theorize ontology and epistemology *as such*. I begin with these three thinkers because they help us to think about the stabilization of epochs and the role technologies play in the transformation from one epoch to another. Importantly, these three thinkers bolster an argument that there is an intimate intertwinement of ontology, epistemology, and ethics. By examining the ways these philosophers respond to the “closure of metaphysics” or the “post-foundational” landscape—opened to us by various crises in mathematics, physics, and fundamental ontology, i.e. by Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger according to Schürmann; Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud according to Floridi; and Bohr according to Barad—I am interested tracking some general commonalities in the works of these different systematizers or grand theorists. Each is working to lay the foundations for a new epoch all the while attempting to account for the fact that the idea of foundations itself has become problematic. I outline the way that these three thinkers demarcate history according to epochal shifts and what they believe follows from the shifts between epochs. In different ways they argue that our contemporary era forces us to accept: the impossibility of reductive universalisms; the complexity and difficulty of grounding knowledge of the world in-itself; and the importance of epistemic agency in shaping ontology. I will tarry with the problem of how philosophers interested in developing systems navigate through our epoch of complexity and plurality, and moreover what they provide us with for thinking about the grounds for being and acting. These thinkers come from the phenomenological, analytic, and post-structuralist STS traditions of philosophy respectively. However, it is important to note that e.g. Floridi, a logician who employs a formalist set-theoretic approach to the philosophy of information as “philosophia

prima”, understands himself to be writing from a “post-analytic-continental divide” perspective. He affirms a sense of philosophy as constructionist analogous to a formulation by Deleuze and Guattari. Similarly, Barad is a physicist-philosopher bridging Bohr to Butler through Foucault. And, all three are linkable to discussions of structuralism. The purpose of this exercise in theory is to expose the pluralization of epistemologies and grounds for being and acting in the contemporary philosophical landscape. If our inherited traditions, which in one way or another advocate for the subsumption of difference to some form of universalism, are being overturned and problematized, what does this imply for the philosophical desire to construct systems or a fundamental first philosophy? And, more to my purposes, what do they offer us in the way of tools for thinking about radical an-archic change if it is the case that our histories and edifices are rupturing? I am interested in the way that these different flavors of realism organize history epochally according to sets of ideas, practices and material forms and I explore the issue of structural stability in scientific knowledge as a way to think about technics and inheritance. I examine the claims they make regarding the defining features of epochs and epochal history such that corresponding claims about the revolutionary times that we live in come to the fore.

Within this section I will explain what concepts I am preserving from their systems and why I think it legitimate to deploy them in my project. From Floridi I will borrow the idea of ontological and epistemological commitments relative to the levels and gradients of abstraction deployed for thinking about the world and the stabilities and subsumptions of previous technoscientific practices. I will also explore his neologisms *inforgs*, *infosphere* and *reontologization*. It is with these neologisms that he works through the idea that people are active designers of knowledges and beings. Barad’s work helps to expose more of this complexity, and from her I will borrow the ideas of *diffractive materialism*, *intra-action* and *material discursivity*. She too has a way of thinking about and historically situating the radical transformations within western epistemology. Further, her

elaboration of the implications of quantum entanglement for materialism, as deeply connected to the creation and performativity of bodies, will be important for later reflections on somatological control. In an epoch forcing a realistic confrontation with a future less and less wedded to essentialisms, the idea of post-humanist freedom from principal grounds helps to usher in reflections from Schürmann. Firmly rooted in Heideggerian phenomenology, his central concern is tracking the history of attempts to ground being and acting in fundamental principles. From him I'll borrow the ideas of economies of presencing, epochal history as the movement from, between and to hegemonic phantasms, and the anarchic nature of grounds for being and acting. Lastly, I'll synthesize elements from these three theorists and explore the implications this synthesis has on a note Floridi makes about the need to explain structural stabilization over time. The claims of structuralisms are thoroughly entangled with questions of realism, ignorance, and philosophical antinomies or paradoxes. If one argues that there is a preservation of structure across time, despite the inadequacies, inaccuracies or incompleteness of previous theories, which justifies our expectations about the historical continuity of realist knowledge as it appears to us in the various sciences broadly conceived—and the nuanced debates between the various species of structural realism argue that good theories will track general everyday epistemological and ontological commitments—then this forces us to take seriously the historically continuous, reproductive, and recalcitrant nature of oppression. At the level of everydayness, it is undeniable that oppression and control are deeply rooted in our instruments and theories. Further, it seems irresponsible to deny the effectiveness and realities of power and control that emanate from the instruments of technoscience. Information is a growing power in the political economies of our present age and it is at the center of transformations in both war and work.

There is much to be said about these three thinkers. And although all are in some sense foundational in a post-foundational era, they are substantially different philosophical projects. What

interests me here is the degree to which there is a structural or family resemblance between these three different takes on realism, i.e. informational structural realism, agential realism, and deflationary realism, to borrow a term from Dreyfus. I am interested in exploring the claim that through lenses attuned to complexity and multiplicity we are beginning to see a structural stabilization of reality across transformations in theories, which nonetheless takes seriously the issue of the social construction of not just meaning but being. What does social construction mean here? Not that nature doesn't exist, but that it is not essentially telic. I am most interested in what this means as a totalizing discourse or as a replacement hegemonic phantasm, what it might mean for agnotology, and, if knowledge is generative, what this means for the sites of knowledge generation. Much of the why I am beginning with a foray into the three theorists above will become clearer as I move into the section on technology. The projects of Schürmann, Barad and Floridi are connected to questions asked by philosophers of technology. My critical assessment of the existing structures and relations of power immanent in technology is because I accept a degree of structural stabilization over time. And in many ways, my pessimistic take on technics is precisely because I concede a certain reality to the historical continuity of structure over time in addition to an asymmetrical concentration of power. Without attending to these asymmetrical accumulations, we risk becoming extremely naïve regarding the socio-political implications of massive technological assemblages and the degree to which we are being shaped by state-corporate interests. If the revealing power of technology is taken seriously, then the existing and developing inequalities that are beginning to separate human beings per their access to technologies of the self force us to critically examine positions we could label techno-eschatological in nature, precisely because of the eugenicist questions that they beg. I will use Marx & friends along with generally post-phenomenological lenses to help focus my analysis in the next section on how technologies reveal worlds.

The second section explores the various ways that scholars organize history along with some of the general continuities shared between them. Following lines of thought that track the importance of technologies for the transformation from complex societies to civilizations, I highlight the development of technics and discuss the role of states and governmentality in their materialization. This presents a cleaner way of thinking about stability, subsumption, suppression, complexity and progress. I'm interested in accounts of what technology is, how we understand history according to transformations in technologies, and the relationship between evolution and technology, beginning after Marx's notion of technological change deeply connected to transformations in the structure of states and the technological dynamism at the heart of capitalist relations of production. Competition incentivizes technical innovation. Marx and Engels' studies of nature, natural and evolutionary processes, materialism, thermodynamic systems, the mechanization of industrial processes, and the idea of metabolic rifts between natural and technical systems, are part of Marx and Engels' complex understandings of matter and motion and show them aware of the standing debates about the nature of physical systems and physical laws. Highlighting Marx's claim about the revealing nature of technologies along anti-humanist lines of thought links anti-humanisms to a body of Marxist scholarship and shares terrain with the discussion of Marx in Schürmann. Marx emphasized that material history, as ideological and technical inheritance, gave shape to an evolving interaction between self and world. This evolutionary process is connected to the development and transformations of states as structures for organizing and governing people. Marx highlights the role of political economy for shaping technological innovation, which has the effect of innovating real even if immaterial social forces. However, because capitalism relies on the naturalization of socio-historical constructs, technical innovation runs against the exploitative need to essentialize social life. For example, one could trace the ecological shortsightedness characteristic of immediate valorization and gluttonous expenditure capitalism to claims that existing human

practice is naturally ordained. Taking serious long-term environmental impacts runs against the tacit worldview of those who argue that capitalism reflects innate structures in human beings or a divine architecture. My point is not to argue that Marx exercises all the ghosts that haunt the tropes of enlightenment, there may be enlightenment tropes about control over a natural vs an unnatural or toxic system in Marx, and I will only gloss these issues as I am not interested in getting into the infinite maze of Marxology debates. What I want to develop out of these reflections is a sense of autopoietic systems no longer strictly wedded to biology. If history presents an evolving technical dynamic, then the generative nature of technical forms presents both stability and mutation. It is in the mutant powers that some see the potential for the perpetuation of life by means other than life as we have known it. However, at everyday socio-political levels, maintaining a status quo requires the reproduction of homeostatic functions and relationalities. Thus, dynamic, evolving or dyshomeostatic tending systems require that operators control for potential challenges that could alter or free functioning beyond designed parameters. Technological progress may free people from work but, insofar as gains are privatized, workers experience no real freeing granted by that progress. Infrastructural developments, which seek growth from investment of surplus into future sites for valorization, embrace the evolution and creation of markets for extraction but struggle to maintain essentially static social relations. Work takes on new forms with the growing globalization of capital and the hegemony of information, yet the distribution of surplus remains grossly asymmetrical. Capitalist power is advancing the most costly and complex technological systems, which are painfully manifest in the processes of state control and war. I will concretize some of these points by looking at the cybernetic revolution as it played out in the scientific practices of war and social engineering. From a war against nature to a war against terror, the occident has characterized the world as chaos so as to justify setting in motion its panic mechanology and deleterious pharmacology to work inside the social body.

I'll connect these concerns to the body as technical assemblage across history, bringing to bear reflections on the anthropological, archeological and genealogical from both Stiegler and Foucault. I'll explore the positions that Stiegler lays out in his *Technics and Time* series about technics as a temporal structure of being in a world of material inheritance. I discuss Stiegler's claims about humans and technics and the cogency of demarcating history according to epochs, thinking specifically about the socio-material nature of those epochs. I explore a few issues related to what he calls an organology because: if the role of epistemic agency becomes important to attend to as contemporary realists believe, it is also important to think about the localization of that agency and the effective and affective ability of power to shape it. This is part of what Stiegler wants us to be aware of in his discussion of how the brain became the primary organ of individuation and why there becomes a focused development on what he calls psychotechnics. This harkens back to the Freudian revolution for Floridi and the modern hegemonic phantasm of consciousness for Schürmann. It is then with the concept of psychopower that Stiegler explores manifestations of neurological control. Here I take up the idea that humans are indissociable from some form of technics, although this should not preclude us from recognizing that there are a multitude of technical assemblages and with them worldviews. Nonetheless, technical artifacts retain the intentional structure of design in their material form and it is this retentional engraving, as it is apprehended by those who inherit a world already constituted by assemblages and objects ready-to-hand and in language, which forms *who* the *what* is for. I use this frame for thinking about technics as material inheritances with embedded or intrinsic relationalities of use that delineate, but not necessarily delimit, horizons of possibility. Lastly, the general way that Stiegler mobilizes the idea of pharmacology as the supplementations that form individual and social bodies helps to bridge his Derridean approach to Foucault.

Taking from Foucault's discussions of technologies of the self, biopower and carcerality, I'll stitch together some of the themes I've developed above about structural stability in order to explore the implications of this understanding of technics. The inheritance of technical ensembles and disciplinary regimes is substantive for how we live as bodies and persons across time. Foucault's discussion of hypomnemata, as repositories for writings that formed performative subjects, will help tease out why I want to think about a broader sense of writing as self and social composition via technics. And, it will help connect his work to Barad who deploys Foucault's thought in her emphasis of the importance of performativity as material discursivity. I'll amplify these ideas by looking at the internalization of chemical protocols, biohacking, and other futurist possibilities of antagonizing against the state-corporate controlled research and development status quo and the constrained imaginaries of a heteronormative humanism. Haraway's call to make kinships in the face of the irreversibility of ecological catastrophe and Preciado's exploration of pharmacoporno capitalism pushes speculative thought to take seriously the power to shape life that has accumulated in our technics. But how we see life is already intimately tied up with the tools and techniques we use to visualize and conceptualize it. Thinking about the role of instrumentation for how, what and where we see the world will bring the discussion of technology from Barad back to the fore, entangling it with the work of Ihde.

With Ihde we come to a deeper appreciation of the way technologies impact how we see, what we hear or are attuned to, and how that attunement impacts our sense of what it means to have a world. What Ihde calls pluraliculturalism is important for thinking about the hermeneutic implications of technics as non-neutral mediums that become the messages, to steal a phrase from McLuhan. And in some ways similar to Floridi, philosophers of technology articulate the revolutionary impact of information on history. Borgmann's tripartite distinction between information about, for, and as reality, for example, allow us other ways of thinking about the various

spheres the information revolution has impacted in our lived experience. However, Borgmann does not develop the role of information as technology for how we perform, engineer and live the body. This is why I will emphasize the general sense of biopower and control as well as imply that how we construct the body has the potential to be more plastic than we might have assumed. This points us in at least two directions, i.e. a general “organology” to track the creation of what Stiegler thinks of as psychotechnics or what Berardi calls the “colonization of experience”, and towards socio-cybernetics and what Preciado calls “pharmacopornographic” power. The major accumulators of data, who use that data to modify their technical output so as to maximize control, proficiently anticipate and habituate practices, and generally shape desire, have found in informational feedback loops powerful tools for sculpting life biologically and virtually. From the accumulation of bioinformatics, an appreciation of the potential for control in Wolff’s law, the principle of minimal wiring, CRISPR, germ-line editing, somatic mutation, plasticity, to well mapped and modeled neuroanatomy, we ought to be apprehensive of the power materialized in technical assemblages under the control of existing states, institutions and corporations that exploit and oppress. This is why the spaces of knowledge creation and stability are important because they help us to attend to the issues of epistemic contribution from situated epistemologies. And, we ought to take seriously the protensional eugenics dawning on the horizon. Biopower has informationalized a host of genomes and intends to shape them. This is not a question of if but when. The worries about neuro-totalitarianism, the horizon of cybernetics, robotic, drone society are real, despite being often too widely speculated.

Although I think the issues raised by the theorists in this section are of central concern, I want to tie these discussions back to everyday ontological and epistemological questions about realism. What happens when we seriously confront the plurality of onto-epistem-ethical grounds in a post-foundational landscape? Following Ihde’s arguments about the pluralizations of grounds and

the generative nature of technological systems, which if we want them to function therapeutically need to have something akin to ethical epistemic participation from knowers involved at all levels of engineering and implementation, I shift to discussions about inheritance, collectivization, open source and something akin to democratic participation and accountability. In order to mark distinctions between neopositivism and epistemic appropriation, and antagonizing against structures predicated on injustice and oppression, I connect epistemic oppression to concerns about epistemic justice when dealing with vulnerable sources for whom privacy and cryptography is linked to survival, because of the structural injustices functioning in institutions that collect information for eliminative and exploitative ends. I'll clarify that although I think the concerns I've jested towards are warranted, I want to caution against overzealous speculations about the future, insofar as they can run the risk of detaching us from the reality of oppression as it exists now, every day, in the reproductive present. Interestingly, my concern about fetishizing the future is expressed elegantly in the speculative futurism of Octavia Butler's science fiction. Butler shows the immediacy of exiting oppressions and the way that they are felt and lived by bodies that inherit pasts. Her work helps me diffract the focal point of the dissertation through a multitude of concepts from these theorists to describe sets of phenomena and unfolding in order to explain the practices of evolving tacticians in prison.

In trying to make sense of the everydayness of micro and macro phenomena and our roles in the reproduction of them, I shift to conversations among internationalist leaning feminists that I know to be attune to global solidarity, for they have shown us the connection between the macro sense of struggle and solidarity and the everyday micro level nourishment that sustains life otherwise. Their astute appreciation for and embodiment of non-hierarchical an-archic organizational structures is exemplary. Also, their realist assessments of the recalcitrant sadism that annihilates life should prompt us to take serious stock of why apprehension of technical inheritance is important.

Exemplified in Trinh's *Women, Native, Other* critical self-reflection abounds in their work and forces those of us struggling to write as allies against oppression and elimination to think about the positions from which we write, structurally and necessarily entangled with agnotology. Their work helps us as we labor over the degree to which we should theorize out loud or expose practices precisely because they could really matter. These concerns connect to issues of structural reproduction, surveillance, privacy and cryptography. After all, the IDF uses Deleuze and Guattari in order to walk through the walls of Palestinian homes. The dangers that exist for some are precisely because the carceral state functions retributively. My inheritance dulls the blade of retribution for me but can't guarantee that for my comrades. My intention in linking the works above to a discussion of radical thought and poetics is not to shift the concerns of the project overall, rather I think of it as changing the granularity of focus when moving between micro and macro scales. The everyday micro is connected to historical macro, but the timescales are different. And yet, struggle is constant throughout the change of registers, or the movement between scaffolding, the in and out of economies of presencing, and I want to explain the potential I witnessed in the radical poetic resistance of abolitionists when we embraced the techniques of poietic composition and challenged our inherited assumptions. Much of what we struggle to do is to create heterotopias, which we accept as potentially ephemeral, in our everyday lives. Yet this should not be read as diminishing the complexity of our practices. Rather it is precisely in the complexity and dynamism of poietic practice that we should see potential.

Currently, I'm collaborating at different levels with +80 incarcerated people inside numerous prisons across Michigan. My volunteerism in prison relates to my educational activism. In Philadelphia for the last two years and in Detroit for four years before that a small collective we have been growing peer-to-peer/community-to-community knowledge sharing and generation projects we call freeschool. Liberationist in orientation and free to anyone, those wanting to share

their knowledge teach the process, and wherever possible, demonstrate the techniques required for executing a similar future project independently. Abstractly conceptualized as a kind of continuance practice aware of mutational repetition we think of this as a kind of rhizomatic organ-ism-ization. One of our early classes inside and out of the prison was on the idea of heterotopias and we explored in some detail the concept of temporary autonomous zones, thus we've been prepared to witness the ephemerality or withering of roots. But the rhizome has also evolved and grown in other directions so long as we've stayed committed to the ethos of transformation. We have been co-facilitating art-ed programs in prisons in and around Detroit. We publish books of incarcerated poetry and I record, post, curate and archive artistic audiovisual material. We sponsor events organized by incarcerated artists, most often without institutional sanction, and we supply educational material to groups and individuals. I've also volunteered supporting prison deterrent programs founded and facilitated by incarcerated men focused on keeping "at risk" youth and young adults out of prison and away from practices that deteriorate the cohesion and health of their communities. When working in solidarity as an abolitionist with incarcerated people it is imperative to embrace a critical self-reflectivity of the degree to which one stays committed to just epistemic practices and supportive agency. As Dotson's work helps to illuminate, better epistemic practices do not necessarily mean more just ones. Incarcerated people are all too familiar with people who take, often out of a spirit of solidarity, but who nonetheless fail to think of the larger implications of their taking and/or incorporate those incarcerated as agents within the structures they are afforded access. This is why one of my primary orientations is to emphasize the fact that, in this case, people who are incarcerated have epistemic agency with ontological weight, which as abolitionists we ought to take seriously. If we do not heed the work, thoughts, activities and desires of incarcerated people, or build supportive ties between the communities effected by incarceration, we not being just. The symmetrical contribution by individuals and communities in the generation of knowledge, and in the

application of knowledge in strategies focused on destroying the social role of prison is paramount. On the other side, symmetrizing obligations is important as well because as Anzaldua notes, we cannot consume the time of those we harm by requiring that they explain to us how we harm.¹³ We need to ask ourselves: whose responsibility is this? We must antagonize against the privilege of ignorance. Proliferating spaces wherein the knowledges of others can come forth and challenge an oppressive status quo is adaptively generative praxis. And radical poetics can provide such a space for the creative inertia necessary to escape capture by the monstrous carceral regime. Over five years of weekly, often daily, interaction and belonging is hard to summarize or demonstrate. The selections and incisions that cut out parts for reconstruction are so limited, in part because so much of what is, is felt, was felt, in that space we created together. Giving sense to the complexity of resistance means, methodologically, including the various mediums of resistance and creativity. They help illuminate the various hues of abolitionist technics as we are developing them and allow one to appreciate the at times substantive differences that the various compositional mediums can have. A poem can change your life. It can be more impactful to hear the \$16 per hour voice of a poet incarcerated, or to visualize the structures of surveillance in €10 email communications than to read a transcription of a poem.

In exploring the issues and concepts from the first two sections my goal is to understand the mechanisms and dynamics whereby exploitation, domination and oppression are realized as explicit and tacit practices in our contemporary scene. I do this so as to empower resistant and emancipatory struggles striving to overcome potentially perilous social structures or living in the wake of them. Although I argue that there is a certain consistency to the descriptive accounts various thinkers give when demarcating technics and epochs, e.g. Stone Age or Information Age, and I share many of their normative impulses and concerns, e.g. resisting the captivating power of psychotechnologies or

¹³ Anzaldua, *Making Face, Making Soul Haciendo Caras*, xx

the eugenicism of genetic engineering, the main point is not about preparing for the speculative futures of the soteriological technosciences of control. Rather, I want to expose the often ignored, subtle and overt necropolitical powers that materialize as structural neglect, poisoning and erasure.¹⁴ If we accept the present as a stabilization of techniques and tools inherited from the past, then when we critically explore carcerality we are forced to recognize the evolving legacies of slavery, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, patrolling, panopticism, and a host of other attempts to normalize oppression and adaptively control populations. And yet, when we examine the histories of oppression and vulnerability, we can also see the histories of resistance. The underground has a longstanding status of being a site of resistance to the status quo and it is to this underground that I want to carefully turn. Carefully because of the dangers present with exposing survival tactics to institutions set to erasing vulnerable populations. My ignorances could expose my friends to retribution. Our organizing already has.

The history of abolitionism is fertile grounds for thinking about the technics of emancipation, writings that compose resistance, and the creation of cryptographic signs that indicate to competent readers that underground camps and safe houses still proliferate. By not vanishing in the belly of the beast, underground performances of abolitionist poetics become the mnemotechnics called upon by communities resisting erasure. By coming to understand the reality of the socio-historical structures of carcerality, those incarcerated contribute to the resistance and mutation of carceral structures by generating and disseminating their knowledges to help others avoid capture. And, they struggle to proliferate their knowledges. I will emphasize social-composition over self-writing precisely because as the theorists above demonstrate, we are actively composing worlds as ensembles of players with agency as a distributive property shared in and across various dynamic structures. The more poetic voices resist silencing the more spaces and times of alterity to the

¹⁴ The concepts necropolitics and erasure are heavily indebted to Mbembe and numerous scholars of settler colonialism.

prescriptive performativity of carcerality open. As I present this collaborative work, I will highlight the importance of epistemic justice and elaborate my methodological commitments to symmetry and attribution.

Carcerality is growing rapidly. Some theorists of incarceration argue that captivity and the carceral subject function as the foundation of modernity. With a focus on the mind, consciousness, or psyche under the hegemonic phantasm of consciousness, and with a state less interested in displaying the awesome power of punishment over the body, the brain becomes the area for the internalization of discipline, control, and study, first in the psychoanalytic revolution and then in the bio-neuro-mechanical revolution taken up by the informational and pharmaceutical regimes. This history is, at least in part, fictitious and abolitionists have problematized Foucault's neglect of the formative role of slavery for carcerality. While the carceral regime is changing, ancien brutalization of bodies is an ever-present part of power's recalcitrant commitments to xenophobic, racist, sexist and classist domination and these recalcitrant tendencies force us to think critically about the ideas of both epochal breaks and the stabilization of structures over time. Our contemporary landscape has seen carcerality permeate the public and the private and the worries of neurototalitarianism and eugenicism are related to concerns about the power to capture attention and control life. More and more the technics of governmentality and policing have coalesced such that surveillance, interference, manipulation, control and captivity have transcended the panoptic prison and embedded themselves into our semiotic and somatic worlds. Captivated by power, porn, prison, pills, politics, pugilism, and the horror of witnessing a looming pestilence, people have become passive, or their outbursts pulsating and predictable. Whether we are awed by Arnold Schwarzenegger bursting through our tv in a tank ordering drone strikes from a cellphone, or by an Uzi armed Ronald Reagan on a velociraptor, or by Trump frolicking in a goldenshower, when our attention is captive we are at work for the data miners who design the app for the apocalypse so that

even existential angst about the future of the biosphere can be monetizable in an app. Meanwhile the stabilizing shadow state sweeps through another neighborhood and creative classism's 501c3s green another vacant lot in colonial Detroit. Carcerality is desperately trying to force the homeostatic functioning of the status quo and capture people so that they can function within data regimes designed to expedite the political economies of state and corporate criminality. Incarcerated now have access to costly digital devices for games and email so that the PIC can extract as much time and money as possible. All of this is present to us. We know it, and yet many remain silent, and our silence is a language.

Fred Williams - YOU ARE Start @1:00

You are the chauffeur of chauvinism

You are the poster for post-colonial sexism

You are the host of the post-slavery death penalty

You are not racist

But you are

You are a part of the inequality

You are a tax payer

Just because we have black mayors

Doesn't white wash these black slayers

Apart from your charity and donations

A part of your support to political races

Has humanity suffering in opaque places

Pulling itself up by the very boot straps that put it there

You are not acquitted here
You are sympathetic to the plaque of poverty
But inactive in assuring that banks don't get away with robbery
You are just in the pursuit of happiness
Next to a high speed pursuit that will end tragically
Your silence is fatally dangerous
Your silence is a language
You are not excused
For failing to object to these rules
Court rules that mandate black men
Eight times more likely sent to prison than
You are
You are classy
But class is segregation
You are enjoying facetime
Meanwhile
Young black males just face time
You claim you are color blind
Without a clue
What else should I expect of you
You are red, white, and blue

Establishing a general conceptual frame of captivity for thinking about the phenomena of control and resistance will help focus specific attention on the control of bodies in prison along with

the manifest forms of resistance. I will emphasize the ethnopoietic sense of collaborative compositional resistance. I will outline a few methodological positions that deal with the knowledges potentially shared via poetics, and the creativity required to resist silencing as shown in the works of mostly feminists of color. The inclusion of incarcerated art from those with whom I've transformed my life is at one and the same time: a methodological point in relation to ethnography and being at stake in the intra-active grassroots; a hermeneutic point about traditional symmetry and the expansion of semiotic reservoirs; a metaphilosophical point about what counts and what gets recognized as philosophical; and lastly a personal point regarding the degree to which, following Hurston and Lugones, I've been transformed by the poetic formulations and writings of my collaborators, because I traveled to other places willing to confront uncertainty and challenge the knowledges that have shaped my world.

The lack of exegetical engagement with singular texts from the women in this section should not be understood as a slight to their works or importance. What I am trying to faithfully render is the impact a poem, an essay, an article can have when it is made accessible to a reader. When dealing with substantive educational gaps between author and audience, texts that can express themselves in accessible language are paramount. However, this is not always straightforward as a text can be accessible yet so replete with meaning and significance that labor is required to fully uncover a seemingly simple poem. Lastly, I am trying to demonstrate a networked theory of account about the shared commitments of a host of women with whom I have deep solidarity. They helped me to remain critical and challenging when substantive differences appeared between myself and an incarcerated co-facilitator. For some it is easier to agree to disagree, but my comrades inside were not satisfied by taking easy paths and these women helped us remain courageous and provided food for thought among a group, most often, composed entirely of men.

My intellectual trajectory at the time meant that I was being guided by feminists of color prior to my involvement with people incarcerated. In reading the likes of Shakur, Davis, and Lorde I knew immediately I would tarry with their thoughts and works for the rest of my life. This is the same point Clarke makes in the introduction to Lorde's *Sister Outsider*. However, I had no idea the degree to which my traversing the tragically predictable literary arcs as generations before me would transform my own philosophical practices and aid my ability to effectively learn and teach in prison. I was ignorant, and as I learned I realized how much more I was ignorant of. I say tragically predictable because I had unknowingly followed the same literary arc Clarke traces out, and there should be more arcs to follow. As Clarke notes during her discussion of the impact *But Some of Us Are Brave* had on the academy, the struggle to legitimate and create institutional space also meant that the resources were limited. Clarke notes the importance of informal texts and letters, and the circulation of these texts profoundly impacted activists and organizers, without which there is no transformative academy. Her account of the literary scene tracked my trajectory almost exactly. And her sentiment is an echo of what Smith said in 1979 when she recalled her experience in the academy of recognizing,

what I call women's studies or academic feminists. Women who teach, research, and publish about women, but who are not involved in any way in making radical social and political change, women who are not involved in making the lives of living breathing women more viable. The grassroots/community women's movement has given women's studies its life. How do we relate to it? How do we bring our gifts and our educational privilege back to it? Do we realize also how very much there is to learn in doing this essential work? Ask yourself what the women's movement is working on in your town or city. Are you a part of it? Ask yourself what women are living in the worst conditions in your town and how does your work positively affect and directly touch their lives? If it doesn't, why not?

She then proposes a question that I think it important to tarry with.

The question has been raised here whether this should be an activist association or an academic one. In many ways this is an immoral question, an immoral and false dichotomy. The answer lies in which emphasis and what kinds of work will lift oppression off of not only women, but all oppressed people: poor and working class people, people of color in

this country and in the colonized Third World. If lifting this oppression is not a priority to you then it's problematic whether you are a part of the actual feminist movement.¹⁵

In thinking for years about the degree to which as an abolitionist I improved the times, spaces and lives of those suffering incarceration makes me somewhat pessimistic. We never do enough. And, we are already behind. I've come to broader and deeper understandings about eros, streetwalking tacticians, mirror writing boxes, poetry, feeling, rebellion, solidarity and care from women internationalist in their commitments. Their work gives sense to the systemic nature, although differently particularized, of a more general structural oppression. In addition, these writers show the possibility of writing resistance if we take seriously the fluid dynamics that coalesce to layer oppression on top of oppression and if we learn how to read, navigate and compose tactical strategies for survival.

Today the need for a plurality of levels of resistant organization is directly proportional to the ubiquity of ICT's and the hegemonic phantasm of information. Tooled with an organology and the pharmacopower to correct for variations of and deviation from the control groups of cyberneticists, we should worry about the speculative futures imagined by power and administrative rationality at an apex. If structuralism's stability is growing overtime there are then grave implications for control over resistance through counter insurgency warfare. When the loudspeaker announces that med-lines are open and half of the incarcerated population moves toward the pharmacy, we might speculate that chemical protocols have aided somatological control. The idea of a thick skinned metaphysics rooted in naive scientific realism resistant or insensitive to anything outside should rightly give us not pause, but cause to mobilize. And it also implies that resistance will appear fringe. But mutations are always possible because the hegemon will never fully materialize from its phantasmic form. These women emphasize that we cannot consume their time

¹⁵ Smith, "Racism and Women's Studies," 48-49

forcing them to explain to us our tacit and explicit ways of reproducing oppression. As the idea of inhabiting inherited worlds becomes important we need to reflect on what worlds there are out there and what worlds we bequeath. Here we can open to questions of justice, symmetry and perhaps deep forms of pessimism regarding the potential for the transformation of macro structures resulting from an ideology that thinks of solidarity work is self-harm for those who inherit privilege and so remain indifferent. Nonetheless, with the concerns of black nihilism in tow, radicals without protection still antagonize against oppression. And daily they win battles. Understanding these battles and struggles requires traveling, learning how to read, and being willing to transform along the way. If we think about change over time and the seemingly chaotic moments that challenge existing measures of stability then we can start to see, in longer run tendencies, the potential to move us toward new organizational forms. We're not just attacking a power structural elite, we are creating different possibilities. Here we enter the ethics of abolitionist design and what for me looks like allied struggle. How does feminist inspired poetics and pedagogy mean liberation within prisons? I will concretize these theoretical reflections by way of an examples from collaborating in solidarity with incarcerated poets and abolitionists over the last 5 years.

The practices of state and corporate power, and the metaphysical grounds they assume to have reached, are phantasms. Structures are not impervious to reorganization because we are unable to totalize our maniacal lust for control and predictability. If they are resistant to reorganization, which many are, perhaps they need to be broken from. The hegemonic tendency tries over and over to cement its control, but resistance continuously cracks its edifice. Those resistances become the object of study in the latter section of this work. From the most grandiose and abstract formulations I will move to the most concrete and modest. Poetics in prison. It is an example of all of these different theories, concentrated within a monstrous creation, cretin, that attempts to realize the dream of eugenicists, cyberneticists, and carceral control. Exposing mechanisms for carrying out a

general carceral somatology, connects to and the way this tendency has played out historically, e.g. savages were not allowed to have brains, or consciousness, rationality, or worth, and so these criminal men and women are set to be erased. But they make marks. They are not vanishing, although they may flee captivity, as Jackson says, “I may run, but all the time that I am, I’ll be looking for a stick!”¹⁶ We found sticks in Baldwin, Jackson, Shakur, Davis, Gilmore, James, and in each other, in Williams, Umar, Qualls-El, Sanders, Daniel-Bey, Fuson and so many more, we found our ability to feel and be free. I hope to give a sense of what it looks like to struggle to carry out an abolitionist technics.

¹⁶ Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, 328

PART 1

Introduction to Floridi, Barad and Schürmann

In a concluding discussion of the way informational structural realism (ISR) can reconcile the disagreements between epistemic and ontic structural realisms, (ESR & OSR) Luciano Floridi notes that among the multitude of structural and scientific realisms (SR), the major contentions revolve around the commitments made regarding the nature of structures and structured entities. And, although the philosophical differences about the resolution to the antinomy of the discrete or continuous nature of reality are not going to be resolved anytime soon, this is unlikely to effect the growing degree of stability and refinement the various sides argue is found in the sciences. Floridi, noting this real and non-miraculous stability, nonetheless reminds us that practical and theoretical stability can't protect us from potentially getting it wrong.

First, *sub specie aeternitatis*, science is still in its puberty, when some hiccups are not necessarily evidence of any serious sickness. What are a handful of centuries compared to the following millennia? From a longer perspective, science may be settling down and the initial swings may be just a prelude to a more inert state of 'structural stability'. As Hacking has emphasized, it already seems that it is not so much revolutionary change as normal stability that requires explanation. Of course the *sub specie aeternitatis* view provides no support for scientific realism...The drying up of scientific revolutions may be just a sign of decreasing empirical or intellectual resources. One day, we may be at our wits' end, or at the end of our technical or financial means. Then the oscillations and vibrations in our scientific theories may be so subtle and infrequent that our thick-skinned metaphysics may not notice them. Indeed, at that point, it may become difficult to talk of bad metaphysics at all. The risk is that then the best theory available may still be the best of a very bad lot...¹⁷

The goal for what follows in this section is to draw out a few important implications of the "structural stabilization" of our ability to observe, control and predict the functions of phenomena across the physico-material gradients of reality. With more stabilization and continuity in scientific knowledges, practices, and instrumentation, comes more control, intervention, and a growing emphasis on design, construction and engineering.¹⁸ Given the way the world is, how can it be developed? I outline these implications by way of three different senses of realism in contemporary

¹⁷ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 345

¹⁸ Ibid., Ch. 1

western philosophy. What's unique about these three approaches is: how they have inherited the various "crises of foundations" e.g. in mathematics and logic, physics, and fundamental ontology, which dominated 20th century thought; and the paths that lead this motley crew of philosophers to surprisingly similar conclusions about what is, how we know it, and why it matters. In the wake of epochal destabilizations in foundational concepts and theories, we encounter different traditions engaged in arguments about stabilization, which at the same time caution us to take seriously the insensitivity to alternatives stemming from reproductive accretions resistant to change. Further, and in keeping with my commitment to the resistance of oppressions, the capabilities realized in contemporary science as they are developed and applied by the state, i.e. the regimes of governmentality, militarism, policing, and corporate capitalism, present us with disconcerting histories and horizons of surveillance, manipulation and control. And, recalcitrant tendencies to control, repress, and anticipate futurity present real problems for our ability to sense or materialize alternative, liberatory, organizational models.¹⁹

My discussion of these three very different senses of realism—Floridi's informational approach to scientific realism and the idea of ontological and epistemological commitments, constraints, and affordances implicit within levels and gradients of analysis or abstraction; Barad's agential approach to the material implications of discursivity as technically manifest diffractive and phenomenal entanglements of intra-active performativity; and Schürmann's historical phenomenological transformations in how what appears is organized by phantasmic nouns that name being and hegemonize the interpretive grounds such that particulars cohere relative to

¹⁹ Being uncritical about functional application runs the risk of, "consecrating the existing conditions by making the practical applicability of knowledge its criterion for knowledge; supposedly nowhere else could the practical effectiveness of knowledge be tested. If in the end theory, which bears upon the totality if it does not want to be futile, is tied down to its effectiveness here and now, then the same thing befalls it despite its belief that it escapes the immanence of the system. Theory steals itself back from the system's immanence only where it shirks its pragmatic fetters, no matter how modified they may be." Adorno, *Critical Models*, 259-260 And, as I will argue below we should accept that in some areas what is required may appear as pragmatically irresponsible.

principal universals—comes out of my longstanding interest in materialism, which I emphasize as I develop the themes and concerns below. Materialist philosophy has a long and complex history of association with the development and philosophy of science, physics and mathematics. It could be argued that developments from early atomist materialisms spawned western philosophy's pluralization of inquiries into physics and metaphysics. And once, through the course of philosophical history, materialism escaped the dichotomous juxtaposition to idealism, cut the anchor of eternally immutable mechanism, and became situated within the passage of time, it developed a sensitivity to the evolving character of the "real world." Emergent phenomena were no longer reducible to being the mere appearance of a more fundamental nous or noumena. And, this changed the way the west read from its encyclopedia of one-nature-consciousness. Reading from the book of the world was not simply an epistemic practice of familiarization with an objective or transcendental state of the thing-in-itself. Serious engagement with critical questions about the impacts of the tools used in representational approaches to mirroring what was assumed to be a reflective real began to take hold. Historically mindful materialists emphasized that tools and techniques quite literally change the world in ontological ways not merely our description of it. It was no longer the case that what is was objectively immutable, and after Darwin this was nowhere more emphatically stated than in the multitude of philosophies that labored to demystify the historical evolution of dynamic social forces assumed to be metaphysically ordained and essential. They emphasized the contingency of coherence in the play of ephemeral agents and historical collectives, and they challenged the legitimacy of ideologies that naturalized structures of exploitation and oppression.²⁰

²⁰ This tradition of thought also connects to the development of phenomenology, highlighting the formative role of time as linguistically situated historical inheritance. These connections refined the lenses of science focused on both discovery and design as the tripartite structure of time in phenomenology mutated telicity to reflect a more plastic futurity. This is how I relate materialism to discussions in SR about structural stability and change.

Now, it goes without saying that there are substantial philosophical disagreements and debates between and among the various schools of realism and materialism, and I intend to bypass most of them. But I note this to explain how I came to incorporate research about information and quantum physics, and why I'm situating a version of phenomenology as a theoretical interlocutor in this investigation. I was made curious as an undergraduate by Schürmann's unique anti-humanist but terse treatment of Marx in his book on Heidegger. In this text, Schürmann argues that Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger are all sensitive to an epochal transformation taking place as a result of the unmooring of the anthropocentric western philosophical ship from its dock of divine ordainment.²¹ A similar argument appears in different ways in the works of a number of thinkers and I'll examine its appearance in Barad and Floridi who, although the timelines and reference points are different, share a general sentiment regarding the unmooring of fundamental concepts that were presumed to ground knowledge and being. My foray into Floridi and Barad came after researching information and communication technologies (ICTs), entropy and complexity theory, process philosophies, technological dynamism, and automation. My materialist background emphasized the importance of understanding the impacts that mechanics, thermodynamics, and other physical systems have had on the technical evolution of power. Thus, learning about the conceptual changes to matter that resulted from quantum mechanics and the polysemic concept of information helped me have a more robust understanding of the foundations and functions of the emerging powers materialized in the machinic assemblages of technoscientific state-corporate apparatuses. These discussions of the praxes and theories of science and the degrees to which we can predict and control are important for the theories and concepts I explore in the philosophies of technology and in the transformations of the organizing principles of materialist economies. The latter is one of if not the central legacy of

²¹ See e.g. Ch. III "Genealogy of Principle and Anti-Humanism" Schürmann's *Heidegger on Being and Acting*. Floridi also notes something similar throughout *The Ethics of Information*.

what might loosely be called historical materialism, i.e. the critical assessment of the historical transformations in the structures and functions of political economies. The military was instrumental in the research and development of both information theory and atomic energy. Google Earth was first a military technology. Automation and computation have long been transforming the state's businesses of maintaining its monopoly of the use of violence. And, military history is largely told as a story of dominance via evolving technologies. In the entropic sense of the physical sciences, the stories of conquest show the victor being able to introduce more chaos than the vanquished can handle onto the battlefield. Coded communications, cryptographic technologies, surveillance and policing are all central to the machinations of power past and present. The infrastructures for much of the technological world that we in the west inhabit on a daily basis are the hand-me-downs of military research, and western militaries love to hand down their declassified technologies provided they've been properly privatized. Growing rapidly across the planet today are the various codes that travel along cables that function to sustain computational architectures at work in nearly every aspect of daily life. More and more, automated ICTs provide the conditions for the possibility of modern life. The global integration of ICT requires infrastructures built upon the governability of physical systems and entities. And yet, in our contemporary scene, very foundational concepts in science like matter and energy are being usurped and overturned. The impact of these changes on research and development are most often state secrets. With the expansion of computational capacities, the naturalization of information and the informationalization of nature, what has become heuristics for engineers, often unreflective on their being embedded in technologically mediated levels of abstraction with success metrics defined by applicability under existing conditions. And more and more we live with the past accumulations and future machinations that are the structural stability of state power.

To be clear, the three thinkers addressed in this section are not political philosophers nor theorists of state power; Schürmann might be the closest to this moniker insofar as a central discussion in his work is law and sovereign discourses. They are philosophers of fundamental ontology, and epistemology who think of their work as systematic and foundational for scientific, technological, and social practice. Floridi, Barad and Schürmann are systems builders who are, in some sense, post or perhaps anti-system thinkers. Or, they are developing foundational projects that disavow ultimate foundations and naive dichotomies.²² However, in thinking about the breadth and depth of these areas of philosophy, their theories claim the ability to adjust the analysis to the requisite level of granularity so as to explain phenomena at other levels along a gradient. Despite the tendencies of many totalizing theories to engulf all difference, I believe these three thinkers offer insight into the functioning of systems, as coherent totalities, which structure agencies in ways that are harmful to inhabitants and their continued existence. I think that they also offer ways of conceptualizing, coping with, and combating the reality of reproductive structural oppressions and injustices. One of the benefits of a systematic approach ought to be the ability to cope with problems within subsets of that system. As Floridi notes, “serious metaphysics should be applicable to the real world and scalable...from sub-observables to observables...it needs to be usable when dealing with the macroworld of everyday life and experience, so that it may become useful in other philosophical contexts...”²³ Connectedly, I’m interested in systems builders and in thinking about the multiplicity of systems, the differences and continuities between them, and the outcomes of the application of their concepts and categories. From the idea of structurally stable regional ontologies to notions of heterogeneous informal and frequently ephemeral consolidations of performative agents acting in concert, first philosophies should have tractability across spectra, strata, gradients,

²² e.g. individualist agency, LoA free, ahistorical identity.

²³ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 357

scaffolds, etc., and give us ways of effectively responding within the complexity of virtual, physical and cultural environments. Using Karen Barad's diffractive method of reading texts, "to engage aspects of each in *dynamic* relationality to the other,"²⁴ I explore what I believe to be a topology produced when reading these thinkers through each other. I synthesize the different concepts of each theorist, which shape the three approaches to how things function within this topology. In the conclusion, I'll use this topological space to theorize and elaborate an adaptive practice of abolitionism attune to the historical continuities of structural relations and their holes, flaws, imperfections and plasticity, i.e. agentially inductive. Having a set of systematic methods to help me work with, through and around the many assemblages that manifest in the lifeworld of an abolitionist is valuable. The pluralization of concepts and theories could be and in some cases was anticipated by the generations that saw ultimate foundations crumble. All three see our epoch as foretold by the generation that came before them. They each have their own genealogical accounts and hermeneutic reservoirs but they all work to develop a systematic approach to first philosophy without an absolute grounding or prioritized side of a dichotomy. One interesting aspect I want to highlight that comes out of reading them through each other is that their realisms always have remainder. The overly dramatic crumbling of foundations, the epochal ruptures, etc. can lead one to misconstruing the finer grained sands of historical experience to being swept away in the turbulence of revolutionary change. But ruptures take time, and the cliché "old habits die hard" is not so. The plurality of approaches to the always-already structure of technical inheritance and the ways of thinking about structural stability helps us to see that there are excretions that accrete, petrify and ossify into calcified deposits of a kind of historical detritus that no solvent is yet to fully dissolve.

The family resemblance of concepts I develop from these three thinkers is synthetic and constructively utilized in order to explore the implications of modern technics. I textually situate the

²⁴ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 93

concepts I deploy so as to ground my interpretation. To forestall objections of decontextualization that may result from synthesizing philosophical concepts extracted from divergent theories I need to reiterate that these three theorists are philosophizing about things the depth and breadth of which far exceeds what I can discuss. I am interested in outlining the implications that follow from utilizing some of their central concepts, descriptive concepts set to work as interpretive instruments within theories that attempt to give account, explain and predict in a host of contexts precisely because these thinkers help us understand the need for emphasis on: the applicability of philosophical theory to everyday practice; recognizing the dynamism of epistemic agency as a distributed potential cohering in structures and structured entities irreducible to atomistic or ultimately discretized individuals; and recognition of the importance of the embodied, technical milieus variously inhabited. I am synthetically assembling theories to be read through and across one another as opposed to applying a particular theory. I begin with concepts from Floridi's work on information, the most abstract and universally applied concept/theory. Then I discuss Barad's work on quantum mechanics, a theory assumed to focus on the very small yet with implications for the very large. Last will be Schürmann, who's phenomenological investigation situates things squarely within the history of horizons inherited as Dasein's possibilities. Floridi, Barad and Schürmann share some important perspectives about the shifting grounds of both our variously dichotomized western epistemologies and our contemporary age. In different ways, all three argue: that knowing matters materially; access to a noumenal realm of the in-itself is untenable or problematic in assuming that there could be an in-itself independent of any level of abstraction or technologically mediated vantage-point; and our evolving epistemological projects have ontological and ethical implications so entangled that the idea of separate domains of epistemology, ontology and ethics needs to be abandoned in favor of an imbricated ontoepistemethics. We are not just neutrally describing, but directly intervening so as to partake in the construction of possible worlds. Thus, we have to be attentive to how we have

inherited, designed, and evolved dynamically with technologies. Following from this and most importantly, I am writing about these three thinkers so as to give detail to a cumulative set of technologies of control, discipline and captivity in order to prepare a way to resistance and liberation. After all, the reliance upon the givenness of stability as part of the validation of the cumulative power of science demands that we have a theory that tracks the everydayness of our ontological and epistemological commitments.²⁵ I'll then connect apparatuses of capture to issues in technoscience and show how the informationalization of nature projects futures wherein corporate-state power becomes intrinsic to somatological inheritance. These apparatuses, as they begin playing in the emerging areas of epigenetics, project monstrous horizons. In what directions will the neoreactionaries, fascists, and militarist forces move as they reproduce their discourses about environmental inheritance?

²⁵ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 346

Luciano Floridi and the Specter of Information

In order to discuss the claims about and the implications of the structural stability of science, I begin with a short overview of Floridi's work on information and a discussion of what I take to be his philosophy of history. This helps highlight an optimistic/pessimistic dichotomy about technologies and the way structures accrue across time. My overall argument accepts the fact that a degree of structural stabilization in science is true and that contestations within most western scientific disciplines about the nature of entities are specialized highly technical academic discussions that do not often radically destabilize the everyday practices of people in those areas.²⁶ Yet, I argue that the ontological and historical priority of technology over science means that science is always already technoscience,²⁷ and that the major material/physical portion of stability that exists is in the corporate-state-military industrial complexes, i.e. the "collective assemblages of enunciation" that structure governmentality and the "machinic assemblages of the war machine captured by the state apparatus" that structure militarism.²⁸ And, ignorance abounds when it comes to tracing out the implications of our constructive control. And critically, who's imagination do we explore?

Although passing references to continental thought appear in Floridi's more popular audience books, engagement is minimal in the more academic ones. However, in describing his work, Floridi analogizes his philosophy of "conceptual engineering" to Deleuze and Guattari's take

²⁶ This is a point that appears in Floridi but more emphatically in Barad, and in both instances relates to their discussion of themes developed by Ian Hacking. Despite the lack of impact philosophical differences might have on the everyday practices within the assemblages of sciences, Barad shows evidence of the way that philosophical differences can have profound impacts on the theorists, who insofar as they go on to delimit domains of research, have subsequent impacts on the development of scientific practice even if in the everyday practitioners remain unaware of the history.

²⁷ Ihde develops the idea of the ontological and historical priori of technology over science throughout his work but there is explicit mention in his *Existential Technics* and *Postphenomenology*.

²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Ch. 12 & 13. There are interesting stylistic differences but also conceptually common grounds between schizoanalysis in Deleuze and Guattari and the analytic of Floridi.

on philosophy as concept creation in *What is Philosophy?*.²⁹ Here is how Floridi describes the task of philosophy.

[P]hilosophy itself consists of conceptual investigations whose essential nature is neither empirical nor logico-mathematical. In philosophy, one neither tests nor calculates...that is science, not yet philosophy. Philosophy is not a conceptual aspirin, a super-science, or the manicure of language, but *conceptual engineering*, that is, the art of identifying conceptual problems and of designing, proposing, and evaluating explanatory solutions. It is, after all, the last stage of reflection, where the semanticization of Being is pursued and kept open.³⁰

In the past, ancient philosophers were responsible for the aggregate of knowledges; today empirical and logico-mathematical questions are outsourced to specialized disciplines and thus philosophy is, in Floridi's assessment, able to direct its energy to the creation of concepts and the development of models.³¹ It's fair to say that there is much for continental philosophers to take stock of in Floridi's work. Arguing from a "post-analytic-continental divide perspective" for the importance of information as a new area of specialization in philosophy, Floridi opposes his work to what he characterizes as an inherently conservative and anti-progressive philosophical scholasticism. In his assessment, institutionalized philosophy devolves into dogmatic and insular debates that do little to critique inherited assumptions or advance philosophy, and serve more to secure professors of schools of thought with employment and publishing opportunities.³² This is not an uncommon argument and it is something that a great many of philosophers agree with even when they refuse to see themselves or their schools of thought as guilty of the same affront. He writes that, "once scholasticism is closed in upon itself, its main purpose becomes quite naturally the perpetuation of

²⁹ See, e.g. Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 24, Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 2, and Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Ibid. There is much to compare between Deleuze and Guattari and Floridi. Particularly interesting is the similarity between the concept level of abstraction (LoA) and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of strata, which could also be linked to what Floridi calls the four conceptual thrusts that push the dialectic of reflection, i.e. the metasemanticization of narrative, (like Barad's concept of material discursivity); the de-limitation of culture; the de-physicalization of nature and physical reality (the virtual and the actual; the hypostatization of the environment inhabited by the mind. See, e.g. Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 8-9

³⁰ Floridi *The Philosophy of Information* p. 11

³¹ Ibid., 11

³² Ibid., 9-12

its own discourse, transforming itself into academic strategy.”³³ He sees a focus on commentary and textual interpretation as part of scholastic dogma where philosophers in caverns labor, “...like wretched workers digging an almost exhausted but not yet abandoned mine. They belong to a late generation, technically trained to work only in the narrow field in which they happen to find themselves. They work hard to gain little, and the more they invest in their meagre explorations, the more they stubbornly bury themselves in their own mine, refusing to leave their place to explore new sites.”³⁴

The newest site that requires exploration is information. Floridi believes we have come to a breaking point wherein the concepts and technologies of information revolutionizing all areas of philosophy and with them the sciences can no longer be ignored. This epochal revolution has been a long time coming, partially because the aforementioned scholasticism in professional philosophy meant that information theorists got ignored by the mainstream, immersed as they were in the linguistic turn.³⁵ And, partially because revolutionary paradigms can come too early and thus be philosophically immature or suffer from being poorly articulated despite their conceptual novelty, as was the case with cybernetics and early AI. However, Floridi argues information is important enough that at this point philosophers who continue to be ignorant of the concepts of information will be vulnerable to accusations of “professional incompetence.”³⁶ This is likely true as a general point, e.g. imagine not knowing about energy or matter. Floridi emphasizes that information presents us with demands for creative, conceptually constructionist responses to the ontological and epistemological problems that follow from a network of epistemic agents conceptually organizing

³³ This critique is not at all original. The critique of insularity is at the center of Marx’s philosophy as it is in a host of other traditions. But, this did not stop Marxism from falling prey to the same problem.

³⁴ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 10

³⁵ Ibid., 4 & 9-10

³⁶ Ibid., 2-4

physical nature as information and creating models in the service of pragmatic ends, which embrace adaptation and a kind of evolutionary development of meaning making. Here his teleological and progressivist philosophy of history begins to emerge.³⁷

Innovation is always possible, but scholasticism is historically inevitable. Any stage in the semanticization of Being is destined to be initially innovative if not disruptive, to establish itself as a specific dominant paradigm, and hence to become fixed and increasingly rigid, further reinforcing itself, until it finally acquires an intolerant stance towards alternative conceptual innovations, and so becomes incapable of dealing with the ever-changing intellectual environment that it helped to create and mould. In this sense, every intellectual movement generates the conditions of its own senescence and replacement. Conceptual transformations should not be too radical, lest they become premature. We have seen that old paradigms are challenged and finally replaced by further, innovative reflection only when the latter is sufficiently robust to be acknowledged as a better and more viable alternative to the previous stage in the semanticization of Being.³⁸

That is to say that the history of ontology progresses through stages wherein the reticulated meaning that gives coherence to what is rigidifies and crumbles only to be replaced by a superior, dynamically sensitive system of meaning. Wash, rinse, repeat. This goes on ad infinitum if Floridi's two-machine artificial agents can generate meaning.³⁹ The biosphere is not a limit. Life by means other than life.⁴⁰ Scholastic philosophy fossilizes thought, but the inertia of conceptual engineering can always get the gears of progress turning again. Further, inheriting a post-metaphysical epoch makes us more comfortable with denying fixity and focusing on design. Here we see continuity with the discussion of structural stability that began this chapter, and which we will revisit at the end in discussing the fundamental commitments of informational structural realism: Thick skinned metaphysics might mean we apply bad theories, but in the evolutionary course of philosophical history were are ultimately saved from degeneracy because the inevitable arch of history, as

³⁷ This is not all that surprising given that, as Floridi explains, a reviewer of *The Ethics of Information* noted Floridi's "distributed constructionism" is thoroughly saturated with liberalism. An astute point given that Floridi tried to avoid political issues in that text. Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, xvi

³⁸ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 10

³⁹ Ibid., Chapter 7

⁴⁰ Here I am projecting to Stielger's discussion of epiphylogenetics in *Technics and Time Vol. 1*.

conceptual innovation and semanticization bends toward the more “viable” forms of resistance to the “primordial dread of annihilation”, which results when the self is exposed the “*horror vacui semantic?*” or a world without meaning.⁴¹ This looks like a species of the genus progressivism, perhaps resting on a evolutionary materialism. And, is consistent with the way Floridi opens his less technical *The Fourth Revolution* with statistics about declining infant mortality and poverty as an indication of our progressive tendencies. But what about those other historical accumulations that survive ruptures in the progressive march of history? Are epochal shifts really as totalizing as we assume or are there structures, structured entities and structural relations from outdated epochs that persist across time? Regardless of one’s pessimistic, optimistic, or other outlook, accepting that we have the ability to intervene, construct, engineer and challenge what were presumed to be static ontologies and essentialisms also means recognizing that evolutionary disruptions require us to confront the stabilizing scholastic tendency, and to think critically about devolution and decadence. In this way I found it helpful to link Floridi’s constructive “innovative reflection” to deconstructive projects that focus on the role of supplements and pharmakons. e.g. through the figure of Stiegler who emphasizes the prosthetic nature of techno-bio-evolution. Scholastics, already institutional governing networks, can spoil and poison, addicted as they are to their mines, worried that they will soon loose their inherited power, despite its deleterious nature. But first, let’s explore the convincing arguments that Floridi makes regarding the profound transformations resulting from the historical development of what he calls information.

⁴¹ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 7. For Floridi, the investment of meaning is largely a practice of the mind, and appeal to the realm of the noetic to justify the possibility of information without material implementation and thus the possibility of ontological neutrality is one of the ways that Floridi circumvents the issues of interference by observation that characterize quantum mechanics. Ibid., 66, 90. It is not clear that this construction is coherent, after all any representation at all requires a material support. This seems to be Barad’s major argument against reflection and why she labors over the phenomenon of diffraction.

Luciano Floridi's work on information is nearly two decades old. He is half of the way finished with a tetralogy of manuscripts on information. The first two volumes have less formal supports in the form of introductory books about information and what Floridi calls the fourth revolution. The forth revolution marks, among other things, a new and emerging epoch in the evolution of identity in an anthropological sense.⁴² Floridi sees this process as a progressive cycle wherein the mind invests meaning in the world and furthers an evolving existential dialectic of individual and social identity formation. This semanticization process requires conceptual innovation in order to develop more and more robust forms of human flourishing.⁴³ The three preceding revolutions were: the Copernican revolution where we learned that we are not the center of the universe; the Darwinian revolution where we learned that we are evolving; and the Freudian revolution where we realized that we are not self-transparent i.e. we have an unconscious.⁴⁴ Spanning these transformations is the information age: 6000yrs old and inextricably tied to the development of writing and the transformations in personal and collective memory. However, the informational societies of the G7 in particular have entered what Floridi calls hyperhistory, i.e. beyond a relation, these societies are marked by a dependency on ICT for their flourishing.⁴⁵ Hyperhistory is impossible without the development of the computational powers of data processing.⁴⁶ This epochal transition required three internal computer revolutions and a fundamental transformation of the structure of society for people to acknowledged what innovative visionaries knew was a revolutionary paradigm.⁴⁷ "The information society has been brought about by the

⁴² "The fourth revolution and the evolution of inforgs concern a transformation in our philosophical anthropology." Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 15

⁴³ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 7-12

⁴⁴ Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution*, Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1-6

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3, 167. Here the central components are *recording*, *transmitting* and the power that pushes us into hyperhistory *processing*, i.e. an informational/computational feedback loop

⁴⁷ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 5

fastest growing technology in history. No previous generation has ever been exposed to such an extraordinary acceleration of technological power over reality, with the corresponding social changes and ethical responsibilities.”⁴⁸ In *The Fourth Revolution* Floridi is more explicit about the historical transformations of technology as formative for ushering in the information age. However, it is the polysemic concept of information, as matter and meaning, that holds the various texts together and receives the most comprehensive academic treatment.

Floridi's work has implications for how we understand, among other things, the philosophy of science, structuralism, and the social embeddedness of constructive everyday epistemic agents. Floridi's project, as a larger coherent whole, is to found a domain of philosophy in which all other philosophical and scientific concepts can be “expressed and interrelated”. He founds his “philosophia prima” by arguing that the philosophy of information is: a mature discipline with its own resolutions to and circumventions of older philosophical problems and paradoxes; and is sufficiently generative or constructive to model and study the new and developing dynamic “reontologization of the infosphere” resulting from the information revolution.⁴⁹ Floridi's *The Philosophy of Information*, articulates a host of emerging research areas, and then explores in detail one type of information, which Floridi argues is the most important, i.e. semantic information, or well formed, meaningful, truthful data.⁵⁰ Its general frame lays out the domain and value of information along with his formal method of levels and gradients of abstraction, which are heuristics for agents to analyze the data of an informational system. This proceeds an application of that formalism in the

⁴⁸ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 4

⁴⁹ Ibid., 25 This might be analogized to the “reontologization” of nature that occurred between the neolithic age and the machine age of the late modern period. In *The Ethics of Information* Floridi gives the example of digitization as reontologization because virtual environment erase the distinction between informee and informer.

⁵⁰ Floridi notes that animals can hold information but don't have explicit accounts of their holding of that information; the kind of account that would be necessary for engineering a second-order technology, i.e. a technology that works on another technology. See e.g. Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 286-287 and Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution*, 28. “Semantic information is well-formed, meaningful, and truthful data; knowledge is relevant semantic information properly accounted for; humans are the only known semantic engines and conscious informational organisms who can design and understand semantic artefacts and thus develop a growing knowledge of reality...” Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, xiv.

specific context of semantic information, subsequent discussions of Gettier and symbol grounding problems, and an articulation of the logics of being informed as a networked theory of well accounted for information. The smaller mechanics of the project are designed to transcend particular philosophical aporias in artificial intelligence (AI) and artificial life (AL) by constructing an artificial agent that can generate semantics independently from it being embedded by a designer or programmer. Floridi's articulation of his action based semantics deploys thought experiments, (in the style of Turing's abstractions, designed to show the possibility of artificial machine meaning making by informationalizing simple organic processes like the heliotropism of sunflowers.⁵¹ Without going into the specifics of the symbol grounding problem or the degree to which Floridi has solved complex questions of sign, signifier, and signified,⁵² what Floridi's has created is a constructionist, design oriented approach to unifying the polysemic concept of information. And, as daily life in the west reminds us, the theoretical and physical implementations or materializations of these concepts grow more ubiquitous each day. However, it is important to clarify what we might call the subsumption or supersession of scientific theories and the dissolution of their central concepts, i.e. it is not as if electronics in theory or practice are done away with, rather that increased functionality in electronics demands informationalization and computationalization in order to understand the scales of complexity and stability required to continue to engineer. The concepts of granularity and level of abstraction help us to highlight the role of epistemic agency and bring the ethico to the ontoepistemic.

Designers are always already situated at a particular vantage point. Epistemic agents base their actions on pragmatic requirements organized according to the ontological and epistemological nature of entities and dynamics within a level of abstraction (LoA), which is "teleological, or goal-

⁵¹ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, Ch. 7 & 11

⁵² Bielecka, "Why Taddeo and Floridi did not solve the symbol grounding problem," Ibid., and others in the issue of the *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence*, dedicated to Floridi argue he has not.

oriented. Thus, when observing a building, which LoA one should adopt—architectural, emotional, financial, historical, legal, and so forth—depends on the goal of the analysis...the world is neither discovered nor invented, but designed by the epistemic agents experiencing it.”⁵³ The plurality of possible LoAs and the need to integrate the various ways of analyzing a system require a gradient of abstraction such that the multitude of onto-epistemic commitments within and between different LoAs can be navigated. A gradient of abstraction (GoA), “is a formalism defined to facilitate discussion of discrete systems over a range of LoAs. Whilst a LoA formalizes the scope or granularity of a single model, a GoA provides a way of varying the LoA in order to make observations at differing levels of abstraction.”⁵⁴ That is to say that discrete systems can be integrated such that movement between different levels of analysis and subsequent alterations to the ontological and epistemological commitments of each can be organized according to the degree to which they complement each other, i.e. disjoint, or incrementally increase precision and degrees of granularity, i.e. nested.⁵⁵ Nested GoAs and granularity are important concepts for thinking about supersession in scientific theories as well as Kantian problems with digital ontologies. Emergent phenomena are what appear between levels as the granularity of abstraction changes. With these formalized tools, reality takes on a new character in the era of information and communication sciences and technologies because of their ability to re-ontologize, i.e. their ability to “(design and

⁵³ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 75, 78. Interestingly, this is a thoroughly Husserlian point. “Thematic interest that lives itself out in perceptions is guided by practical interests in our scientific life. And that thematic interest comes to a rest when certain optimal appearances, in which the thing shows so much of its ultimate self as this practical interest demands, are won for the respective interest...Thus the house itself and in its true being, and specifically with respect to its pure bodily thingly nature, is quickly given optimally, i.e., experienced as complete for that person who regards it as a buyer or a seller. For the physicist and the chemist, such ways of experience would seem completely superficial and miles away from its true being,” Husserl, *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 61. Floridi might reject this linkage arguing that Husserl maintained a subject based mental approach in his phenomenology, see e.g. Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 60

⁵⁴ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 54

⁵⁵ Ibid., Ch. 3, 55-58

construct anew) the very nature of the infosphere...”⁵⁶ And, given that the infosphere at its utmost “is a concept that, given an informational ontology, can also be used as synonymous with reality, or Being...”⁵⁷ we can see how nature, energy, and matter have been usurped, or are in fact LoA nested within the concept of information.⁵⁸ The usurpation by this synthetic constructionist philosophical concept is totalizing. “Reality is the totality of information (notice the crucial absence of ‘semantic’)”⁵⁹ and ICTs allow us to change what reality is. Applied to what we call nature, this “very radical form of re-engineering...fundamentally transforms its intrinsic nature”⁶⁰ and forces us to recognize that nature can and is being informationalized and information is being naturalized.⁶¹ In the “first philosophy” discussions, the hegemonic phantasm of nature as bios-anthropos becomes evolving techno-info-engineering.

Whether formulated in terms of the discrete/continuous, striated/smooth, digital/analog, or some other variation, the puzzle in informational terms is the same. At the lowest level, i.e. the most fundamental, what is the nature of reality as such? If it is the case that we can predict and control natural systems along the GoA that nests the physical, chemical, and organic to such a degree that we experience levels of success in redesigning their fundamental nature, then shouldn’t we conclude that we are accessing reality in itself? Can we anticipate a growing stabilization of our ability to do so over time as ICTs rapidly accumulate? The answer Floridi gives hinges on the distinction between being able to access something and being able to fully determine its nature such that we could say we

⁵⁶ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 206

⁵⁷ Ibid., 6

⁵⁸ This notion cat-cradles a way to Barad’s physical realization that what matters matters for matter, i.e. the evolution of semantic information impacts the evolution of syntactic approaches to natural information insofar as it impacts the development of the technologies used to informationalize nature.

⁵⁹ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, xiii

⁶⁰ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 6

⁶¹ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 43-44. This is growing in importance particularly in the era of “e-science” where immense computational powers are at work in emerging areas of science. “The term refers to any computationally intensive scientific research that relies on distributed network environments, very powerful processing capacities, and very large data sets.” Ibid., 324 fn. 10

have exhaustive knowledge. Floridi emphasizes, “the method of levels of abstraction allows one to understand that reality in itself, though not epistemically *inaccessible*, remains an epistemically *inexhaustible* resource out of which knowledge is constructed.”⁶² And if ontological dynamism and evolution are true, this seems a legitimate claim. This is because any system is always analyzed by an epistemic agent from a particular LoA and there is no system apart from the onto-epistemic constraining affordances used to model it. This is Floridi’s informational approach to recasting Kant’s resolution to the antinomies. Attempting to answer whether, for example, the ultimate nature of reality is discrete or continuous presupposes the possibility of some viewpoint independent from any LoA. But, for Kant and Floridi, this is incoherent. What Floridi’s relational approach to structural realism offers is a way of avoiding having to choose which of the two is primary, i.e. the ontology of objects or the ontology of structural relations, and thereby a way of structurally integrating a governor on the tendency of scholastics toward semantic closure.⁶³ Essentially, it’s an engineering question, hence Floridi’s constructionist approach to philosophy as conceptual creation and modeling. He accepts the real world as independently existing, but argues that it is dynamically recreated through the poietic activity of organisms, which more and more will understand themselves informationally. Floridi says that we, “are poietic creatures, and constructionism is ultimately best understood as a struggle against entropy, both in the thermodynamic sense and in the metaphysical sense...[of]...any form of impoverishment of Being.”⁶⁴ Harkening back to above, the mind invests the world with meaning in an ongoing dialectic so as to flourish in the face of death.⁶⁵ It does this by ordering the world in ways that are increasingly useful to it, and by capitalizing on the cumulative achievements of previous orders. We are witness to the emerging power of ICTs

⁶² Ibid., 331

⁶³ Ibid., 334

⁶⁴ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 175 & 67

⁶⁵ Ibid., 175

resulting from physical, chemical, organic, and semiotic systems being nested together under the concept of information and virtualized for the purposes of engineering. Today, given the computational processing powers of ICTs, we can assume the continuous nature of a system and yet make that irrelevant to our purposes because we can discretize the smooth at a level that suffices for our objectives. And what follows from this for Floridi is that this power and capacity of informational organisms (inforgs) to design in the onto-epistemic spheres forces us to consider the ethical implications of our activities in a way that we might not if we thought we were simply revealing what is. The anastomotic ontoepistemethical, although not discussed with a unified term, is developed in Floridi's *The Ethics of Information* most explicitly. I quote at length because here not only do we see what I'm characterizing as the conjoining of ontology and epistemology, but we also see the degree to which contemporary "foundationalist" theorists eschew representationalism as a way of circumventing the dichotomies of the antinomies and recognizing the importance of the dissipative ethical impacts emanating from the actions of agents.

Understanding philosophy as conceptual design means giving up not on its foundationalist vocation, but rather on the possibility of outsourcing its task to any combination of logico-mathematical and empirical approaches. At the same time, understanding philosophy as conceptual design enables one to avoid epistemic relativism at the expense of representationalism. For the equations in front of us are rather simple: we can either embrace a representationalist epistemology, which can avoid relativism by dropping the constructionist stance; or we can accept the fact that we are in charge of our conceptual constructions, some of which are very ill-conceived...while others are increasingly successful in making sense of the world...but then constructionism without relativism becomes possible only by unveiling representationalist epistemology as another ill-conceived artefact.⁶⁶

Being a foundational theorist in a post-foundational world means seeking a ground that isn't, insofar as grounding means a coherence between the real and our representations of it. This is Floridi's contribution to the conversations about scientific realism, structural realism and the multitude of species within the genus. Informational structural realism (ISR) develops, "a full-

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2-3

blooded ontology of objects as structural entities” that eschews both digital and analog in favor of a constructionism that takes the reproductive power of technics, applied to the nested gradient of ontological and epistemological knowledges accumulated by western technoscience, to be ethically serious. In this way I also want to emphasize the degree to which Floridi’s work, although not centered on the concept, nonetheless has a central place for the importance of writing as sculpting and designing. Engineering the world and ourselves implies our ability to control the instruments of composition and in this way we are self-poietically self-writing our way across time.

ICTs have made possible unprecedented phenomena in the construction of the self. Self-poiesis today means tinkering with the self, with still unknown and largely unassessed risks and rewards. Amazing as all this already is, we are witnessing only the beginning of an information revolution, which may have even more radical consequences in our self-understanding and the constructions of our own identities...I used this model of the self in order to highlight how ICTs may be interpreted as egopoietic technologies...from the perspective of informational structural realism...selves are the final stage in the development of informational structures, for they are the semantically structuring structures conscious of themselves.⁶⁷

Floridi’s arguments are technical and numerous, as should be the case for someone claiming not only to found an AOS but to found *the* AOS. He is an unabashed constructionist intentionally avoiding the metaphysical assumptions implicit in representationalism. He is a structural realist who believes that a mind independent reality exists but is relational and neither static nor exhaustible, which as we will see puts him somewhere close to Barad. His work is in many ways about writing, dare I say it smacks of grammatology wherein ICTs are recursively reading and writing technics, tooled to the purposes of autopoiesis. Or, more appropriately as Haraway rightly notes and in being fair to history, we are always already sympoietic.⁶⁸ I will develop the idea of self-writing and material discursivity by now turning my attention to the work of Barad. I will return to the discussion of structural accumulation and stability in closing this chapter. Floridi gives us a way of thinking

⁶⁷ Ibid., 226-227

⁶⁸ Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*, Ibid.

through structural stability by thinking about organization, entropy, accumulated structures and knowledges, etc., but insofar as this is not totalizing, because of ontological evolution and semanticization, then we have to be aware of ignorance and that in the search to resolve ignorance there is a risk, thus we need to take ethics and agency—as diffractive, dissipative, distributed, non-local—serious.

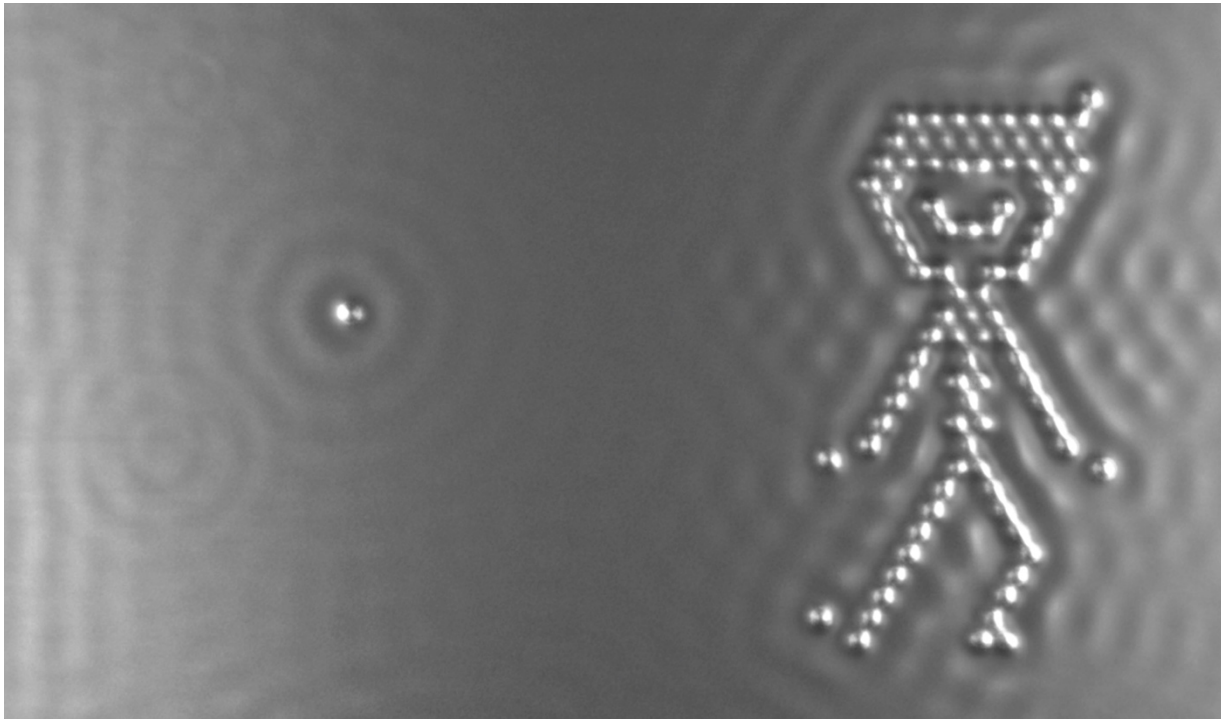
Karen Barad and the Quirks of Quantum Mechanical Phenomena

The day after giving a lecture about the social construction of science, down in the basement of a physics department replete with the familiar sounds and smells of a laboratory, Karen Barad tells a story about her first experience witnessing a scanning tunneling microscope (STM) image and move individual atoms. She describes her amazement at the way a microscope designed to image atoms actually “feels” the matter it is imaging through the quantum effect of “tunneling” electrons across an energy barrier. Technicians can actually listen to the sound of the tip of the microscope drag individual atoms across the surface and drop them into one atomic diameter cell units. The STM then transmits the measurements of the electrical current to a computer to process the information into a visual image on a screen. But this experience did not cause her to recant her position regarding the constructed nature of scientific knowledge. “The fact that scientific knowledge is constructed does not imply that science doesn’t “work,” and the fact that science “works” does not mean that we have discovered human-independent facts about nature.”⁶⁹ For Barad, nature isn’t at base some discretized or digital substrate of stuff known by consciousness. Rather, our generative activity is productive in and with, impacted by, responding to and from a position that is always already immersed in diffracting nature. As enactors in the world we, the things that we use, and the things on which we work are all intra-acting “component parts of nature...our ability to understand the world hinges on our taking account of the fact that our knowledge-making practices are material enactments that contribute to, and are part of, the phenomena we describe.”⁷⁰ In 2013 IBM Research released the smallest stop-motion movie ever made, *A Boy and His Atom*, by manipulating carbon monoxide molecules around with a STM. This

⁶⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 40

⁷⁰ Ibid., 247

Figure 4: IBM “A Boy and His Atom”



was part of their ongoing research into data storage and compression.⁷¹ Imaged as emanations from the individual atoms are ripples or diffractions. Pulling heavily from Haraway, diffraction is the central physical phenomenon detailed and methodology deployed by Barad. Diffraction is all around us. From ripples in still water when a stone disturbs the surface, to rays of sunlight shining through clouds, to the iridescence of a bubble or a butterfly wing, to voices through bars carrying around the corner and down the hall, to the ripples in flesh as a bullet strikes, diffraction patterns emerge when waves propagating across space are interfered. They can either amplify or dampen adjacent waves depending on the amount and configuration of matter, or in the image above, of atoms on the two dimensional electron gas that buffers between the tip/sample and the copper plate substrate. For a

⁷¹ International Business Machines, “IBM Research Makes World’s Smallest Movie Using Atoms,” Ibid. The film is largely an ideological publicity stunt, but the research and development implications are very real. IBM notes it takes a million atoms to store a single bit of magnetic information on current processors. They’ve been able to store a bit on 12 atoms. Moore’s law suggests that the processing power will continue to double every two years and thus building processors one atom at a time is the present that projects into the future. “If commercialized this atomic memory could one day store all of the movies ever made in a device the size of a fingernail.” This will be an important evolutionary concept.

sense of scale, the still above shows atoms imaged at 3/10ths of a nanometer. A tennis ball is 80 million nanometers. If the atoms were the size of tennis balls, the tennis balls would each be the size of earth. These images are created via trained technicians on highly controlled, sophisticated apparatuses designed to perform according to a multitude of specifications laid out beforehand. A plethora of historical and contemporary knowledge practices are at work in these images. And, they are part of the ongoing scientific and philosophical debates about the fundamental nature of reality. If we get down small enough will we be able to determine whether or not things are discrete or continuous? Or, like other metaphysically loaded questions in the post-foundational era, will this question lose coherence? Imaging atoms seems to show us the discrete nature of atomic entities. They are there like little BBs on the screen. However, it is not as if a camera simply snaps a picture of otherwise elusive little balls already floating around individually.

Although the STM images in the IBM gallery were created at temperatures near absolute zero so that the atoms placed in specific locations stick to the surface...they are not snapshots of preexisting things frozen in time—caught in the act as it were—but rather condensations of multiple material practices across space and time. Reading the phenomena—the difference patterns through which space, time, and matter come to be—including all the various apparatuses that help produce the illusion of the self-evidentiary nature of “the given” allows the frozen images to thaw out and the subject matter to come alive.⁷²

And things come alive, according to Barad, when we pay attention to the diffractions co-appearing with the atoms. Barad’s work helps to make matter and mattering lively in very important ways and helps to expose the problematic presuppositions inherent in the either/or question of the discrete vs continuous nature of appearances or reality. Although fascinating, recounting the history of the development of quantum mechanics is not Barad’s purpose, despite the fact that she spends a fair amount of time in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* introducing physical experiments. Rather, her main contention is to argue for a holistic

⁷² Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 360

approach to understanding “phenomena.” Although they are made to appear in nanoscale experimental physics, and are the fundamental units of reality, phenomena are not to be understood as ontologically separable from the technological performance of epistemic practices. They are not things with “independently determinate boundaries and properties...phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of observer and observed, or the results of measurements...phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components.”⁷³ Reality, according to Barad’s agential realism, is inextricably entangled with the practices of agents in and of it. Barad challenges how we think about the nature of nature and matter and the degree to which we accept as given the demarcated boundaries that inscribe differences among entities. Although speaking about those trained in classical physics, perhaps Barad’s point holds for most of us, i.e. “it is certainly *not* part of our training to question the intuitive ontological assumption that individual objects possess inherently determinate properties and that the role of measurement is to reveal such properties.”⁷⁴ But, questioning those assumptions is precisely what Barad sets out to do and in ways that help us to understand that diffractive entanglements are all around us. That is, by rejecting a certain givenness to our everydayness we can actually better track our everydayness. Further, her account of the performative nature of agency forces us to recognize that our very identities are subjects of and subject to the same diffractive forces. Ambitiously, Barad argues that her theory not only challenges some specific subset of philosophical and scientific problems but stands to revolutionize the whole of western thought. Whereas Floridi’s ambition traverses the post-analytic-continental divide to found the new first philosophy, Barad’s transdisciplinary yet no less immodest and systematic approach claims to contribute to the foundation of both “a new ontology, epistemology, and ethics, including a new understanding of the

⁷³ Ibid., 33

⁷⁴ Ibid., 399

nature of scientific practices”⁷⁵ and a new interpretation for quantum mechanics.⁷⁶ Her approach to bolstering scientific realism is to articulate an, “epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human and nonhuman, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices.”⁷⁷ She is a realist who exposes the formative role the coherence of agencies performing sympoietically plays in the delimitation of phenomena that are materially real.

As a tenured theoretical quantum physicist turned history of consciousness professor, Karen Barad’s work has both breadth and depth. In addition to her ken of subatomic structure she is also adept in traditions of post-structuralism, feminism, feminist philosophy of science, epistemology and ontology, all of which play a role in her performative account of scientific realism as agential intra-action. Barad’s work warrants careful study and I can only introduce what are complex and nuanced concepts attempting to navigate beyond the shoals of dichotomies. Barad’s understanding of realism, structuralism and the epochal stabilities of technoscientific practice comes out of the work of Neils Bohr. “Bohr...shook the very foundation of Western epistemology. Indeed, Bohr’s philosophy-physics...poses a radical challenge not only to Newtonian physics but also to Cartesian epistemology and its representationalist triadic structure of words, knowers, and things.”⁷⁸ Much of Barad’s work is a development of the “philosophy-physics” of Bohr, who she reads as a philosopher-physicist of phenomena, responsible for developing the theoretical and experimental principle of complementarity. Bohr’s crucial distinction between the “objects of observation” and the “agencies of observation” helps explain how this principle works. Although Bohr’s detailed

⁷⁵ Ibid., 25

⁷⁶ “I argue that the conceptual shifts derived from my diffractive methodology...are significant and robust enough to actually form the basis for a new interpretation of quantum physics.” Ibid., 36

⁷⁷ Ibid., 26

⁷⁸ Ibid., 97. This relates to Schürmann and the modern hegemonic phantasm of consciousness.

drawings and elaboration of the famous two-slit experiments bring the onto-epistemic issues into a more detailed relief, the distinction is easiest to approach if we think about internalization of technological prosthetics.⁷⁹ The example that Bohr uses is holding a stick in a dark room.⁸⁰ If the grasp is light I sense the stick as an object with particular contours organized by me as part of the objective world I am trying to sense. If the grasp is firm I'm able to sense objects with the stick as though it were an extension of my body whereby it becomes indistinguishable from the agency I'm exercising in sensing the room. Nothing inherent to the stick makes it either an object or agent of observation, rather that distinction is made through a discursively enacted process that creates a cut between what matter matters and in what way.⁸¹ For Barad, something important happens with the development of Bohr's philosophy-physics. The role of observation as embodied instrumentation looses its representationalist garb and instead bears its naked affirmation of indeterminacy in epistemological and ontological terms.

Bohr argues that the indeterminacy of the measurement interaction is of profound consequence: Since observations involve an indeterminable discontinuous interaction, as a matter of principle, there is no unambiguous way to differentiate between the "object" and the "agencies of observation." No inherent Cartesian subject-object distinction exists...The boundary between the "object of observation" and the "agencies of observation" is indeterminate in the absence of a specific physical arrangement of the apparatus...The

⁷⁹ Ibid., 153-161. The bodily incorporation of technology has been a research question in cognitive science for some time. The incorporation of external objects into the internal sphere of the subject is explained by way of example. Writer Nancy Mairs who had MS and was progressively confined to a wheelchair notes her shock when forced to see herself in the wheelchair such that it becomes a thing again "out there." Her experience of shock resonates with experiments in cognitive science inspired by Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Alterations to cognitive states occur when a tool ready-to-hand in use malfunctions such that it appears present-at-hand. A smoothly operating system requiring both cognitive and bodily integration for the performance of a task does not distinguish between tool as thing and subject as agent. But, when the function of the tool breaks down the smoothness is disturbed, and the thing stands before the self as other. See e.g. Dotov, "A Demonstration," Ibid. Patterning and archiving these kinds of neuro-somatological functions is part of the informationalization of nature, and the practices have long been underway, e.g. the mapping of primate neurology in order to introduce artificial electronic stimulation to control limbs, see e.g. Ethier, "Restoration of Grasp," Ibid. It's a short walk from this "therapeutic" or "restorative" research to erasing memories in rats. See e.g. Nabavi, "Engineering a Memory," Ibid. Psycho-technico-pharmaco-porno-capitalism, carried out through informational feedback loops harnessing the power of mirror neurons, optogenetics and research in neuroplasticity, will be formative for the futures of bio-somatological engineering.

⁸⁰ Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*, 92-101

⁸¹ This idea of determining cuts links to Ihde's discussion of a two-dimensional drawing of a three-dimensional cube and the multistability of views can vacillate between different appearances. See, e.g. Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, Ibid.

apparatus enacts a cut delineating the object from the agencies of observation. Clearly, then, as we have noted, observations do not refer to properties of observation-independent object (since they don't preexist as such).⁸²

Technoscientific embodiments and habitats have ontological implications on phenomena and not simply on the theories assumed to reflect them.⁸³ And further, theories themselves do not “leave the material world behind and enter the domain of pure ideas where the lofty space of the mind makes objective reflection possible. Theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice.”⁸⁴ Our ethical responsibility grows from the diffractions that emanate from our theories and practices. Barad quotes Bohr who notes that the, “interaction between the measuring tools and the physical systems under investigation constitutes an unsuspected limitation of the mechanical conception of nature...but has forced us, in the ordering of experience, to pay proper attention to the conditions of observation.” That is, specific attention needs to be paid to the material apparatuses and the discursive practices that delimit what gets included or excluded from their construction. This is Barad’s coupling of materiality and discursivity. She argues that Bohr’s complementarity and indeterminacy are “at once semantic and ontic (not merely epistemic).”⁸⁵ This illuminates important differences between Heisenberg’s uncertainty and Bohr’s indeterminacy principles, which Barad develops to support her intra-active realism.

Modern western epistemology constructed the notion that dynamic systems are based on an ultimately mechanical ontology wherein parts are distinct even if all working together in the cosmic clockwork.⁸⁶ When the world does not conform to expectations deeply rooted in our hermeneutic reservoirs we experience a cognitive impasse and often times we exert energy attempting to preserve

⁸² Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 114 Barad works out in detail the nature of an apparatus. See e.g. Chapter 4

⁸³ Ibid., 161-168 See e.g. The discussion of the role of cigar smoke in the Stern-Gerlach experiments

⁸⁴ Ibid., 55

⁸⁵ Ibid., 126

⁸⁶ This philosophical issue reappears as the assumptions of modern epistemology are connected to the contemporary epistemic vs ontic structural realism debates mentioned in the discussion of Floridi above.

our perspective.⁸⁷ Heisenberg, although not modern, still tacitly accepted the presupposition that the metaphysical dualism of subject and object was coherent. He made the collapse of the wave function of a particle when its position was determined an epistemic issue about what we know about the real world, which simply was one way or the other. Bohr argued that the collapse of the wave function indicated that the classical model of physics, which required a clear subject/object distinction, is wrong and that ontological indeterminacy characterized phenomena, which, although only expressible with the dichotomy, is not both and not neither.⁸⁸ Bohr's epochal impact is the recognition that reflection as a model for objectivity and a model for consciousness' role in matters of matter that matter needs to be replaced by a diffractive methodology wherein what matters in discourses about materialism is that they have semantic and ontological weight.⁸⁹ Indeterminacy is an epistemic and an ontological issue deeply connected to the construction of apparatuses. The ontological implications of the conditions of observation rest on the idea of the Bohrian cut and the agencies and objects of observation juxtaposition, which comes into being as a technologically mediated construction of eventual operations. The fact that both wave and particle behavior can be exhibited by the performance of measurements with different technological apparatuses means the modern metaphysical framework of subject/object cannot give a coherent account of the world. The uncertainty framework sidesteps issues of ontological indeterminacy by presuming fixity to the

⁸⁷ This can be linked to Floridi's sense of scholasticism. This can also be an issue of self-preservation insofar as the iterative self has a vested interest in the continuity of identity.

⁸⁸ There is an extended discussion of the notion of "collapse" and I use it as a term of convenience. Interested readers should see Barad's Ch. 7. The presumed stronger value-neutrality in mathematics over material sciences leads to difficulty in convincing practitioners of both that ethical concerns are actually inextricable from their epistemic practices. Despite the structural stability of science and the realization that philosophical differences might not mean much if anything for the everyday practices of scientists, Barad, somewhat pace Hacking shows us an example wherein the philosophical differences between Bohr and Heisenberg had substantial impact not only on their practices but also on the success of their respective contributions to nuclear weaponry. Hacking's short discussion in *Why is There a Philosophy of Mathematics at All?* on the impact of philosophical differences for the way that mathematicians teach math helps sound the ontoepistemethical call, albeit in a muffled way. That is, pedagogical commitments demonstrate, at least tacitly, a value of education as social good and means for individual flourishing.

⁸⁹ Foreshadowing from this notion to the idea of poetry as a form of survival we come to see that we aren't just playing in creating abolitionist resistance literature.

subject/object dichotomy of a naive realism, and then reducing indeterminacy to an epistemic issue of not knowing, rather than accepting that phenomena don't abide by the metaphysics of subject/object. In the end, the "exploration of Bohr's ideas reveals that...causality...power...science and ethics...the metaphysics of individualism...the very nature of knowledge and being...every aspect of how we understand the world, including ourselves, is changed."⁹⁰ But, this will not mean that we lose all stability. Rather, as the dispersion of agencies participating in the construction of knowledge and being spread across space and time we see a growing refinement of our ability to control. This ability is materialized, rather amazingly, in the amalgamation of theories/praxes at work in the creation of an image of an atom. Scaled from the ability to propel objects to other planets to the ability to image and move single atoms we can say rather clearly that we have a large degree of control along the continuum of physical phenomena, especially if we are clear about the role that technics and agential intra-action play in their production. *No man is an island* takes on a new meaning given that Barad does not presuppose agency as an inherent feature of "subjects". Rather, agency is something that is always-already in the mix of the material world according to our ability to enact differences; our agency is indissociably entangled with others. "The neologism "intra-action" signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies..."⁹¹

Barad also mounts a significant challenge the idea of interaction, which presupposes independently existing agents that interact with other independent agents. She argues that her concept of intra-action as the manifestation of a coherence of relational force that gives rise to matter and meaning, "recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action...agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute sense, that is, agencies

⁹⁰ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 23 This is the idea of epochal crises and foundational ruptures in fundamental concepts, although hermeneutically sourced from different traditions in Floridi and Schürmann.

⁹¹ Ibid., 33

are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements."⁹² And it is this sense of entanglement at every level of reality that exacerbates the demand that ethical life not be separated from the practices of science or philosophy. "What would it mean to deny one's responsibility to the other once there is a recognition that one's very embodiment is integrally entangled with the other?"⁹³ Barad reminds us not to disconnect praxis from the body and that "memory and re-member-ing are not mind-based capacities but marked historialities ingrained in the body's becoming."⁹⁴ This helps bring life and death into the picture. And here is also where Barad resists anthropocentric constructions. Although the primary influence for Barad, Bohr did have some trouble avoiding a form of anthropocentrism; a particularly thorny problem according to Barad as it also ensnared Butler and Foucault, her other two theoretical mainstays, who in addition to only theorizing the human body and human sociality also fail to see matter as dynamic.⁹⁵ Regardless, Foucault, Butler and Haraway figure prominently in Barad's realist approach to the material impact of performative discursivity despite differences among these folks and their respective takes on what is called scientific realism. Her strategy is to reconcile anti/realism by interpretively clarifying what she believes are defensible positions of constructivists. Yet, while assigning a strong role for constructivism she explicitly critiques the overemphasis on the play of language. Her realist reliance on the intuitive givenness of matter is bodily.

How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter? Why are language and culture granted their own agency and historicity, while matter is figured as passive and immutable or at best inherits a potential for change derivatively from language and culture? How does one even go about inquiring after the material conditions that have led us to such a brute reversal of naturalist beliefs when materiality itself is always already figured within a linguistic domain as its condition of possibility?⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid., 33 Here she is close to the ISR fully relational ontology.

⁹³ Ibid., 158 This sentiment is also connected to themes in Spivak and Trinh.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 393

⁹⁵ Ibid., 151 "For all of Foucault's emphasis on the political anatomy of disciplinary power, he fails to offer an account of the body's historicity in which its very materiality plays an active role in the workings of power." Ibid., 65

⁹⁶ Ibid., 132

The brute facticity of the body does not place it outside the sphere of linguistic influence but more generalizably for Barad is the performative enactments wherein bodies iteratively reproduce their identities. Her performative intra-actions are a way of reclaiming the weight of bodies. “[P]erformativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real.”⁹⁷ Barad resists anthropocentric constructions by closing her account of performativity with a tale about the brittlestar. By giving this example she is keen to reiterate her disdain for reflection and geometric optics as idealizations ill-suited to cope with the diffractive nature of the physical world.⁹⁸ Researchers studying a species of brittlestar discovered that the skeletal structure of the brittlestar’s arms were composed of calcite crystals that functioned as lenses the focal point of which takes light directly to the nerve bundles of the diffuse nervous system. This led researchers to say that this particular species of Brittlestar was a giant compound eye. For Barad “Brittlestars literally enact my agential realist ontoepistemological point about the entangled practices of knowing and being...Knowing is a direct material engagement, a practice of intra-acting with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation.”⁹⁹ The brittlestar’s ontology is integrated with the dynamism of the physical world such that when the concentrations of light change so too does its color, or when threatened it can break off parts of its body. “*Its discursive practices*—the boundary-drawing practices by which it differentiates itself from the environment with which it intra-acts and by which it makes sense of its world, enabling it to discern a predator, for example—are *materiality enacted*.”¹⁰⁰ Linking these observations to the discussion of

⁹⁷ Ibid., 133

⁹⁸ Here it is important to note Barad’s physical sciences background and her affinity for species of Marxism. Her realism is one that is heavily reliant on the importance of physical phenomena. This will be important for thinking about both the structural stability of technoscience as control along gradients of reality, the role of physical systems in political economies, and the production of “conditions that provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself.” Marx, *Capital Vol 3*, 949

⁹⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 379

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 375

apparatuses means that through our discursive practices we are making matter matter in ways that produce differences that have real effect. The living compound eye that is the brittlestar, as a dynamic apparatus drawing boundaries around what to incorporate into itself and what of itself to detach as it reconstitutes, exemplifies agential realism. Via Barad's critique of anthropocentrism we see that the claim is not that consciousness creates the material world *ex nihilo*, rather intra-active agents force the world into discrete subject/object relations via the material arrangement of diffractive apparatuses that draw boundaries or make cuts. This is something found not only in humans but any bodies that are in and of the world and the topological enfoldings that encode what was outside as inside and vice versa.¹⁰¹ All this is to say that when we begin to think about the implications of our ability to observe and predict phenomena in the physical world we have to attend to the various practices that establish boundaries and differences and the role that those practices play in forming material, phenomenal, becomings. Barad allows us a way of thinking about our entanglements with a nature that we often tend to detach ourselves from. "Realism, then, is not about representations of an independent reality but about the real consequences, interventions, creative possibilities, and responsibilities of intra-acting within and as part of the world."¹⁰² This is how Barad mobilizes the notion of performativity in the service of her approach to realism. The last point I want to highlight is Barad's way of entangling ethics, ontology and epistemology so as to connect her concepts to the sociopolitical production of bodies and ways of living and knowing. Barad's disbursed and entangled notion of agency, as both a descriptive and methodological point, helps emphasize the importance of collectives in ontological and epistemological terms.

Barad is explicit, when distinguishing between the phenomena of diffraction and reflection, about the "ethico-onto-epistem-ology" of her agential realism.¹⁰³ In the production of differences

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 376

¹⁰² Ibid., 37

¹⁰³ Ibid., 90

that matter we need to attend to the exclusions and inclusions that appear during the discursive and material cuts delineating phenomena. In attending to the constructive powers to effect matter embodied in apparatuses that make meanings we have to be accountable to the implications of our agency. “Diffraction is an ethico-onto-epistemological matter. We are not merely differently situated in the world; ‘each of us’ is part of the intra-active ongoing articulation of the world in its differential mattering.”¹⁰⁴ Harnessing our ability to control matter and produce phenomena in accordance with our knowledges of reality means attending to the diffractive nature of those productions and the alterations they will cause in how others inherit the past and design the future. These concerns, stemming from an imbricated ontology, epistemology and ethics, or more appropriately entangled, the concerns stemming from an anastomosing ontoepistemethality can help us to think critically about the computational powers set to work processing the complexities of nature. The growing informational regime accepts the ultimate irreducibility of matter to objectivity. Nonetheless, that does not stop it from informationalizing the anatomy of brittlestars so that corporations can begin designing new materials. This appropriation of nature is possible because the realism at work in the structural stabilization of science does not demand the resolution to philosophical aporias, all that it demands is a clearly demarcated apparatus such that phenomenal manifestations can be reproducible. We may be shattering our senses of essence and objectivity given that, “the recent convergence of biotechnologies, information technologies, and nanotechnologies reconfigures the human and its others so rapidly that it is already overloading the circuits of the human imagination.”¹⁰⁵ But, this might not be all that destabilizing insofar as we become more and more accustomed to engineering beyond limits. Thus, we may have encountered an epoch that releases us from the obligatory search for ultimate grounds and in so doing freed ourselves from modern

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 381

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 27

metaphysical assumptions, but this won't stop us from pursuing problematic paths particularly if we don't rigorously interrogate the seats of the powers to design and engineer.

Reiner Schürmann and the Phantasms of Philosophy's Past, Present and Future

Reiner Schürmann is likely to be the odd man out in a conversation about scientific realism. His work is not widely known outside a small circle of Heideggerians and high brow anarchists.¹⁰⁶ His untimely death has bequeathed to us just three monographs, his first on Meister Eckhart, another on Heidegger, and a philosophical tome, finalized after his death and also very Heideggerian, on the institution and destitution of fundamental philosophical concepts and systems. Before those he wrote a novel. At times deeply autobiographical, the protagonist in it grapples with the themes of arche, ground and dehiscence, which will consume Schürmann's philosophical energy for the next two decades. The monographs in philosophy are studies in the theories and praxes of first philosophy and philosophical life. Like so many post-WWII European philosophers, particularly Germans, who inherited the aftermath of a major conflict and horrific revelation, Schürmann is skeptical of grounds that claim to order and organize what is. He is also deeply rooted in mystical christian apophatic theology as he was a man of the cloth in the Dominican order until his mid-thirties. And for negative theology, the names given to what is are of profound importance. For Schürmann, transcending the tendency to seek ultimates, which give meaning to being and acting, entails accepting the an-archic nature of becoming.¹⁰⁷ And, that means eschewing naive dualisms and dichotomies. We must ask, according to Schürmann, "the inherited question of the relationship between theory and practice, but...from a perspective that forbids couching it in opposites such 'theory and practice'."¹⁰⁸ In order to do this Schürmann de/reconstructs the history of philosophy so as to expose what he calls "hegemonic phantasms" that produce ontological and

¹⁰⁶ See e.g. Newman's *Postanarchism*, Abensour's *Democracy Against the State*, Vattimo & Zabala's *Hermeneutic Communism*, and Schrijvers' *Between Faith and Belief*.

¹⁰⁷ Schürmann is quick to point out that his economic anarchism should not be likened unto the political anarchism of Proudhon or Bakunin, for they struggled to overthrow the existing seat of power in class relations and replace it with with a different principle. Simply substituting one ground for another is, according to Schürmann, a thoroughly metaphysical gesture. Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 6, 292.

¹⁰⁸ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 1

semantic closure and have, throughout the course of western philosophy, served to organize and subsume all differences beneath them. Thus, highlighting the pluralization of grounds in Schürmann's reading of Heidegger is important. "Only on the premise of the plurality of historical orders can Heidegger the phenomenological genealogist claim that times of transition uproot political acting."¹⁰⁹ In the post-metaphysical era, where the project of fundamental ontology, understood as destruction, has shown history cycle through different ultimate grounds, we have finally inherited the Nietzschean fable. Ordered under the one, ordained by divine nature, or known by the undoubtable thinking mind, the world as it is now is as it must be. Discontent need simply wait for transcendence, into the exalted and lopsided portion of a dichotomous hierarchy. Nietzsche loved to torment those whose inauthentic living had them gnashing teeth and dreaming of transcendence. His famous "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable" presents his genealogy of the morphing grounds for being and acting, from Platonism to positivism, to his abolition of inherited values and the vertigo of being without a ground or beyond. From whence realism? "The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps?...But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*"¹¹⁰ We can no longer simply substitute the next hegemon. We have come unmoored from the practice of mooring to principal grounds. Perhaps all that is left is to diffract along waves. The destruction of edifices and the exorcism of the specters and spirits who haunt our tyrannicides past entails an end to simple dichotomies. We come to see the historical inheritance of interpellative structures that call us to witness the masquerade of foundations. But we now know they are ephemera.

What we are attempting to understand is the caesura that marks the end of the metaphysical epoch. It may well be that in these decades of ours, the principle is reversing that hitherto has managed a long epoch; that therefore as a principle, it becomes thinkable because it is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 37

¹¹⁰ Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 171

already farther away; and that in this our interstice, an absence reveals itself that is soon forgotten when laws and order obtain without question under the unsuspected dominion of a referent held supreme. It may be that in the divide between one era and the next anarchism appears, the absence of an ultimate reason in the succession of the many principles that have run their course in the West. It may be that as this absence becomes apparent, human practice, notably political action, becomes thinkable in a way that it is not when life and thought obey the order made for them between two reversals.¹¹¹

When one foundation crumbles there is a moment of pause when the grounds are surveyed, before the assembly begins again, and in that moment before the reason for building the next edifice enters, we are without why.¹¹² We must remember, according to Schürmann that “it is necessary to exist ‘without why’ in order to understand presencing itself without *archē* or *telos*, ‘without why’.”¹¹³ Although Schürmann’s idiom is heavily Heideggerian and relatedly, concerned with the way hermeneutic inheritance shapes our being in the world, he is not simply recapitulating Heidegger’s thought. By outlining the historical ruptures in the tendencies to ground knowledge, being, and acting in fundamental principles, which “is hardly an explicit theme in Heidegger insofar as it effects action” he is challenging the western philosophical project we have inherited and in so doing, it “may also be possible to steer what is said in a direction the man Martin Heidegger would not have wished to be led.”¹¹⁴ As a first rate commentator on Heidegger, Schürmann’s work has kept open the floodgates of scholastic Heideggerian discourse. From sycophantic apologetics to asinine straw manning and every shade in-between there is no shortage of debate about topics in Heidegger.

¹¹¹ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 31

¹¹² “[S]o-called unproductive expenditures: luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity (i.e., deflected from genital finality)—all these represent activities which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves.” Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, 118. Bataille’s thoughts on expenditure, i.e. glorious consumption as unproductive destruction without why or justification, provides an interesting point of comparison.

¹¹³ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 293. The point about not having an origin or end contrasts with Floridi’s explicitly teleological constructionist project. Further, it emphasizes the difference between Heidegger’s notion of pathways, poetics and thought, and ends, science and knowing. Engineering or fabrication constrains becoming because the end is already the towards-which of the activity and thus closed to meandering without why. “[G]ranted that *we* cannot do anything with philosophy, might not philosophy, if we concern ourselves with it, do something *with us*?” Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 12. Developing the sense of *everydayness* will help connect the sense of ontological groundedness in ways of living, to ideas in Floridi and Barad from AI/AL to starfish.

¹¹⁴ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 3

Schürmann eschews these debates to a large degree. He is primarily a reader of canonical texts and he is interested in thinking through the consequences of action and praxis losing the ability to be secured to the immutable grounds of canonical concepts. For Schürmann, practical philosophies have found their grounding in principles established by first philosophy. The historical transformation of first philosophy's principles shows western thought unable to recover or suture the grounds after their dehiscence. And the final diremption of the metaphysical project is Heidegger's destruction of essence and subject. The various philosophical domains or areas have often served as the placeholders of first philosophy. Deconstruction shows the historicity of first principles, i.e. from ethics, to logic, to the hegemonic nouns that name being, the subsumption of practice to such posited metaphysical principles is not only untenable but founded in the violence of ontotheology's fetishism of presence.¹¹⁵ The ontotheological tendency need not be relegated to religious sentiments as it is also operative in the idea of immutable laws that supposedly govern what is given to us by the naive realism of science. However, with the closure of the modern epoch in history, filling the void left by the absence of absolutizing presence can only proceed if it attends to the *transitions between economies of presencing*. Schürmann notes that, "to seek an enduring standard for answering the question, 'What is to be done?' is to search in the vacuum of the place deserted by the successive representations of an unshakable ground."¹¹⁶ The attempt to ground action in first principles is precisely what, according to Schürmann, allows us to differentiate epochs in the history of western philosophy.¹¹⁷ As we recognize the shifting grounds of different epochs we begin to turn away from the demand that the grounds for being and acting be ultimate and immutable, and we

¹¹⁵ Ontotheology has seen a resurgence with the renewed interest in fascist writings like those of Evola and works of the rightwing Heideggerian Aleksandr Dugin, who calls his Eurasian followers to immanentize the eschaton. Similar tendencies also appear in neoreactionaries and accelerationists who call for an expedition to the demise of our epoch in order to overcome decadence and corruption.

¹¹⁶ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 4

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 4

turn towards “presencing as irreducible difference...If these are the contours of the program of deconstruction, the necessity of an avowal of ignorance begins to be glimpsed: the very question of a ‘political *system* coordinated with the technological age’ is one of principal constructs.”¹¹⁸ Ultimate foundations have no guarantee, as history has shown us. The project of attempting to secure ultimate foundations must be abandoned and we must concede that our actions are predicated on a certain kind of ignorance. In his chronologically backward reading of Heidegger, Schürmann emphasizes the coherence of Heidegger’s intellectual arch through the development of his fundamental ontology arguing that, “the essential concern of Heidegger’s thinking remains the same: to understand ‘being’ phenomenologically as presencing, and to understand it through the manifold modes that entities have of rendering themselves ‘dense,’ of ordering themselves, of constituting a text or ‘poem’.”¹¹⁹ Making entities dense in phenomenology means situating them in history, i.e. time. The tripartite structure of temporality as it was developed by phenomenologists problematized the ideas of presence and stasis and forced western philosophy to take serious the evolutionary nature of entities in history. The world as it is, is framed by the past that gives to the present the interpretive modi used for processing the already meaningful nature of material givenness. Attending to our rootedness in history we come to recognize the protentional futurity that allows what is given from the past to project beyond the finitude of individuals. Thus the way the world appears is always already being-with as hermeneutic inheritance of language and technology. The world is given already meaningfully, and that meaning is not determined by individuals, rather it is in accordance with certain historical accumulations. “In anything ready-to-hand the world is always ‘there’.”¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 6. Schürmann is keen to point out that ignorance is inextricable from Heidegger’s philosophy.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 12. Although Schürmann’s deconstruction saw Derrida’s as a direct opponent they share a focus on textuality and writing along with a preoccupation with critiquing the metaphysics of presence and the importance of difference as a concept that resists subsumption under the universal. And for these reasons poetry is also freeing. Schürmann notes that, “Thinking and poetry corrode teleocracy as rust from a gentle rain corrodes iron.” Ibid., 280

¹²⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 114. I emphasize the *mitdasein* (being-with) character of the world’s historical there-ness.

closure of metaphysics helps to elucidate the idea of presencing and give sense to the constellations of technological inheritance along with the historical ways in which being in the world evolves. The presencing of the world diffuses grounds such that their pluralization ruptures the epochal constellation of ultimate foundations.¹²¹ We see stabilizations, which can last millennia, become unstable and this is related to the periodization of technological epochs, e.g. the neolithic age, etc. Technology becomes an important motif in Schürmann as he constructs his “topology of broken hegemonies, a topology that analyzes the legislating constellations to which the ultimates have given rise.”¹²² Schürmann argues that these constellations give a sense of ordering and capturing and he shows us the way phenomenologists interested in fundamental ontology take up the issue of structural stability in epistemology and ontology. In Schürmann’s case, his project is deeply connected to praxis as political action and ethics as responsibility in how we take up historical inheritance. And according to Schürmann, Heidegger was not the first to sense the dissolution of modern metaphysical rationality grounded in the epistemology of subjective consciousness. Nietzsche, and Marx before him, saw the undeniable thinking mind of man start to wane. Although the cameo is short, Schürmann’s uniquely anti-humanist reading of Marx helps give sense to his Heidegger inspired concept of “economies of presencing.” He argues that although Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger have substantive differences, all three of them,

¹²¹ In this sense Schürmann’s deconstructive project is a first philosophy insofar as it challenges the compartmentalization of knowledge, being, and right action, and prescribes phenomenology as a corrective. It also parries the thrust of the antinomies, which as Floridi notes “are generated by an unconstrained demand for unconditioned answers to fundamental problems...the natural, yet profoundly mistaken, endeavour to analyse a system (the world in itself, for Kant, but it could also be a more limited domain) independently of any (specification of) the level of abstraction...” Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 59

¹²² Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 6. The way that law is handed down by the institution of principles is a major theme that runs throughout *Broken Hegemonies* and can be juxtaposed to Foucault’s disciplinary regimes and Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic and collective assemblages of enunciation. In this way all four thinkers can be useful to the deconstruction of carcerality and the exposure of the exceptional logic of necropolitical power as both a form of life forced on populations and individuals and as form of death deployed as punishment. Of course, Mbembe will challenge the limits of the concepts of these thinkers in his exploration of necropolitics.

speaking *from* a reversal in the coordinates of their historical locus which is functionally comparable...structurally alike due to the experience of a break...the experience of the end of principal history. Each of them would have sensed an incipient plurification. And if it could be shown that the referent dismissed in each of these three cases is man as the point of reference, the 'center', for what is knowable about entities, then their experience would anticipate a constellation of presence where such a cognitive center fails entirely. What would make their experiences alike is the move away from man.¹²³

These three thinkers found themselves at points in history where instability, transformation and dynamism characterized their socio-technological milieus.¹²⁴ This instability was in large part due to the growing stability of technologically mediated production, which was reorganizing every facet of life on a growingly globalized earth. Thus, the destabilization of the grounds of modern metaphysics came through the growing stabilization of technoscience sprawling out machinic assemblages of large scale industry and industrial, managerial, colonial governmentality. Looking just at the example of Marx, he saw the institution and destitution of god as the work of mortals, but his move away from Feuerbach and his affinity for Darwin forced the recognition that human dynamism did not allow for a static humanist ground for either materialism or revolutionary praxis. Marx resisted a metaphysically grounded humanism. Rather, what materialism needed to grasp was historical transformation. This is, in part, Marx's critique of Hegel and evidence of Schürmann's argument that principal history develops a practical philosophy from a first philosophy, i.e. Hegel developed a political philosophy of the state from the speculative idealism of absolute spirit and fails to account for the historical materialist grounds of the state and the structures that allow social conflict to reproduce across history. The pluralization of principal referents means that "absolute referents have lost their credit, the office of stabilizing passes over to administrative rationality. It is

¹²³ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 44-45. I'm making a similar comparison between the work of Schürmann, Barad and Floridi

¹²⁴ "Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger have, each in his way, experienced such extinction [of hypostatized principles]. We will see that technology is the place where this lineage comes to an end. The non-humanistic language of epochal economies will thus make it possible to hold an alternative discourse on technology..." Ibid., 59

this rationality...that reaches its acme with the technological turn.”¹²⁵ The technological epoch is one that represents, determines, knows, quantifies, and captures manifolds under the law of ultimates. A kind of constructionist stance, focused on the design potential or revealing power of technics, comes out of the deconstruction of principles.

Our technological epoch is the most recent in a series according to Schürmann. In *Broken Hegemonies* Schürmann reconstructs the institution and destitution of phantasms as they evolved in the western philosophical tradition and thus in some sense he presents a philosophy of history as conceptual evolution.¹²⁶ “These analyses are first of all historical. They take up a debate, more than a century old, concerning epochs and the thresholds that separate them.”¹²⁷ In framing this work around the dominant languages that western philosophy has spoken, Schürmann argues that there are three major epochs. Parmenides articulates the Greek fascination with *the one*, and henology proceeds through Plotinus who ruins Greek metaphysics.¹²⁸ Following the Greek hegemonic phantasm, the *law of nature*, instituted by Cicero and Augustine and made destitute by Meister Eckhart, dominated the Latin phantasm. And finally, *the subject* of experience and conscious knowledge in the modern hegemonic phantasm as it was developed by Luther and Kant suffered diremption after Heidegger, who shows the subject as always already ontologically rooted in history/time.¹²⁹ These epochs are different *economies of being* and they become hegemonic when, “an

¹²⁵ Ibid., 29

¹²⁶ Although, unlike Floridi, Schürmann does not recount this process as progressive. Each age presents compelling and enduring concepts, in part because they are understood more generally and philosophically.

¹²⁷ Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 4

¹²⁸ This was a point of contention with Derrida as Schürmann saw him as too dismissive of Plotinus. In “Neoplatonic Henology as Overcoming Metaphysics” Schürmann begins outlining the transformations of henology from Plotinus through Meister Eckhart to Heidegger who recognizes the henological desire for ultimates expressing itself globally as technological administration.

¹²⁹ “*Diremption* signifies the loss of every hegemony...” Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 623. One of the main reasons for including Schürmann into this section is because of the way that he emphasizes the importance of poetics and poesis for the politics of an-archism. If the criminal functions as ultimate grounds for the justification of carceral rationality as technoscientific economy of presence that cannot think, then the abolishment of grounds is the freeing relational ontology that cuts chains and allows life to freely wander. As Foucault showed through his genealogies of criminality and the insanity, they are discursive regimes and in this way economies of presencing.

entire culture relies on it as if it provided that in the name of which one speaks and acts...They serve to say what is, to classify and inscribe, to distribute proper and common nouns.”¹³⁰ The hegemonic economy makes present a name that serves to universalize all singulars, and this is why Schürmann, along with most Heideggerians, points out the almost fetishistic fixation with verbs and becoming in Heidegger’s presencing. Schürmann’s sense of economy is Greek, i.e. economy is the management and ordering of a household, or linking the concept to later Heidegger we might say that economies of presencing are the legislating ways mortals dwell on earth beneath a divining sky.¹³¹ But as Bataille reminds us, “Philosophy is never a house; it is a construction site.”¹³² And the foundations for our constructions are evolving over time. The epochal constellations wherein differences are gathered under a hegemonic name are plural. “‘Economy’ is the generic term here of which the *epochal* constellations (with their reversals) as well as the *anarchic* one (after the turning), constitute specific instantiations.”¹³³ Economies are ways of ordering our world, the way we dwell upon the earth, and our thoughts and actions be they grounded in first principles or not. For Schürmann the epoch of ultimate foundations is over, and more than that, universalizing projects that claim to discover ultimates are dangerous as they silence and smother difference and our unique singularity.¹³⁴ This happens when names as ultimates subordinate becoming to an economy of presence. Technics reveal a world of relationality wherein comportments towards what appears are shaped through historical inheritance. But technological revealing through the application of force in science cannot fully remove the agony of indeterminacy. Schürmann gives a sense of this agony of

¹³⁰ Ibid., 7

¹³¹ See e.g. the essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 143-162

¹³² Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 11

¹³³ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 74

¹³⁴ “*Singularization to come*” is the phrase that Schürmann uses when discussing issues of mortality and being-towards-death, which as one’s own most possibility dehisces the sutures that bind becoming.

indeterminacy by way of reference to Heinrich Hertz's frustration at not being able to resolve the question about the essence of fundamental physical forces.

Hertz wondered about the being (Wesen) of electromagnetic energy. Having invented the antenna...he asked what those forces were that the device captured, a field of waves or a stream of corpuscles? The problem was to remain painful and insoluble. The physicist nevertheless succeeded in 'eliminating' the problem by borrowing sometimes Euler's photic model, and sometimes Newton's...both, however heterogeneous, prove equally workable. What is cruelly lacking is a higher set of propositions capable of subsuming them both under a demystified concept of force...Hertz found his peace by contenting himself with protocols following either one or the other image.¹³⁵

The technological apparatus orders what is so as to actualize the phenomenal coherence of entities according to the telic knowledge already posited as hegemonic. But for Schürmann, Hertz's question of the being of the two contraries is important precisely because it should stay a question for thought. The entangled way phenomena appear as historial presencing, and the ineliminable role that discursive materializations play in economies, as concentrations of power to order what, how, and who gets to know and use what is, cannot be detached from the ethical questions about just distribution or political questions of revolutionary praxis as opening freeing relationality. Nihilism in this frame is the desire to answer all questions, to know all the answers and to cease asking, i.e. to capture elusive entities, to keep them from moving.¹³⁶ Schürmann's anarchic thought tries to move from the violence of thoughtlessness to poetically dwelling in anarchic poiesis.¹³⁷ The importance of the question concerning the essence of technological enframing and the violence of leveling is to provide access to a plurality of constellations of becoming rebelling against captivity.¹³⁸ To dwell under an economy of presence rooted in the order of a hegemon that strips language and the ability

¹³⁵ Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 28-29

¹³⁶ Schürmann shows the connections between hunting and knowledge and captivity and death. "The hunting metaphors are most pertinent to the violence of the modern cogito by which objects are re-presented, i.e., forced into constant presence to the subject. As an act of conceiving (*begreifen*), representation already amounts to an act of attacking (*angreifen*)." Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 276. See also Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*.

¹³⁷ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 229

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 279

to give names from cultures and people, and to free thought to avoid captivity and closure is the anarchic revolutionary praxis of those who struggle to abolish the grounds that serve to legitimate violence. By thinking through my own praxis I have come to deeply appreciate tarrying with the thought that our “implicit understanding of an economy springs from what we make and do. The philosophical effort to render that understanding explicit will remain paralyzed unless preceded by poietic, political practical modifications.”¹³⁹ And in our collective practices we mobilized thought, and people, who in turn freed others to move beyond the confines that held them captive.

Motility. It will be recalled that the economies, since they assign each thing its site or world, can be called ‘poetic’, or better, ‘poietic’. They order the *topoi*, the places, where each phenomenon is what it is. Action, too, is to be understood in this topological sense. The universal and necessary conditions for action reside in the constellations as they come about and undo themselves. That literal sense of ‘poetic’, according to Rene Char, tells us what we are: “In your essence you are incessantly a poet.” In the age of transition—Rene Char would say: at the “ford”—this making, this *poiēsis* of modes in presencing, turns and becomes irreducible to any archic figure. To the question, What is to be done? the poet responds with another question: “Why should this ford of philosophy be a single stone?” In the age of closure, economic *poiein* becomes multiple, mobile. As such, it precedes action and determines it: “Poetry no longer punctuates action; it moves ahead of action to show it the motile path.”¹⁴⁰

Freeing movement of a-telic thought in poetic philosophy might be a tough sell to the philosophies of scientific realism as an important condition for the possibility of sciences capable of thinking, but it is not that strange for Schürmann. There is a tradition of Heideggerians who read Heidegger’s thought as not only realist but consistently engaged with the primacy of the philosophy of science.¹⁴¹ So why Schürmann, particularly when he is so close to the Heideggerian idiom and in some ways farther away from others who have noted Heidegger’s scientific concerns? The answer is double sided. On the one hand I believe that Schürmann’s pluralization of economies of presencing

¹³⁹ Ibid., 243

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 303

¹⁴¹ Rouse contends “that philosophy of science was at the center of his project and its development throughout his career.” Rouse, “Heidegger on Science and Naturalism,” 123. And like Dreyfus, Schatzki, “Early Heidegger on Being, The Clearing, and Realism” reads Heidegger’s project as fundamentally connected to the idea of realism.

allow us a way of thinking about the complexity of ontoepistemethetical entanglements. On the other side, the role of radical thought as poetics, which free us from captivity and allow us to think about being accountable for the economies of presencing that we partake in the construction of, brings us to the demand of responsibility for our ignorance. To appropriate a title from Bataille, what Schürmann's work helps us to think about is not just questions about the ontological status of entities and our knowledge of real structures that disclose the significance of our world, but in the wake of the collapse of an appeal to principal authority we have to inquire into our *unfinished systems of non-knowledge*. Schürmann's pluralization of economies of presencing provides us with a tool for organizing our everydayness and the commitments we live by as we discursively materialize our relational social ontologies. Schürmann's realism is phenomenological, eschewing the reductive binary of anti/realism by reiterating the importance of historically dynamic phenomenal appearing inextricably entangled in the tensions of technological forces. One of the dominant traditions in continental philosophy of science is phenomenology. And although Schürmann might not be the first that comes to mind when thinking about issues central to the philosophy of science, his integration of radical political praxis understood in a post-metaphysical, post-foundational, post-principal epoch resists the discrete/continuous antinomy of the ultimate nature of reality question, and clears the path to thinking about our ignorance of entanglements and world disclosures forced into being via the accumulations of technical powers past.

As Schürmann and others have noted, anthropological reflexivity defined the socio-technological milieu Marx and Engels inhabited, and in response to which they developed ideas of dynamism, evolution, and metabolism at various socio-somato levels. Comprehending the evolutionary development the human species required that materialists become familiar with a multitude of technoscientific economies of presencing and the impacts those areas had on the

development of the species. They sought to pluralize our vantage-points and think about their entanglements with other systems.

Far from ignoring the distinction between the endosomatic (bodily) and exosomatic (tool-based) uses of energy, Marx built his analysis around this distinction, which derived from ancient Greek materialism. It was subsequently to contribute to Engels's powerful analysis of human evolution, focusing on the human-species as a tool-making animal, drawing on Marx's insights and in line with Darwin's analysis...Marx incorporated into *Capital* and other works Liebig's understanding of the metabolic exchange underlying agriculture, Ludimar Hermann's biochemical physiology, Grove's studies of the correlation of physical forces and of electricity, Charles Babbage's treatment of machinery and power, Robert Willis's studies of the mechanics of energy transfer, and so on.¹⁴²

Studying the entanglements of economies and structures/structural relations/structured entities that persist epochal transformations, helps us to understand the ways in which their discursive, or perhaps more appropriately recursive, practices are materializations, i.e. diffractive phenomena. This helps to connect issues in the sciences to Marx and Engels' dynamic-evolutionary materialist theorizing about complexity and thermomechanic systems, which in turn helps connect to work developed by physical chemist Ilya Prigogine, who discovered that far from equilibrium systems can show novel ways of ordering and balancing relations within and in this sense there are very real, material ways of ordering systems that can come out of the most destabilizing of events.

¹⁴² Foster & Burkett, *Marx and the Earth*, 138. Foster is a resource for robust explorations of Marx's materialist ecology, science, physics, and energetics. From parson naturalist questions about sustainable population growth to Engels' inquiries to entropy, Foster maintains a tradition of Marxist thought that all too often goes ignored in philosophy.

PART 2

Structural Stability and Technics of Control and Transformation

I've presented three different takes on the stability of what is, how we know it and why it matters, and moving forward I'll be making use of the concepts above. Also, as I progress along, I'll be tracing connections across assemblages of different sources as a way of accounting for the plurality of impacts that have shaped my philosophical praxis and the praxis of a number of my co-conspirators in abolition.¹⁴³ This approach is a methodological commitment to symmetrize hermeneutic, epistemic and ethical imbalances and is an application of agential intra-action. The take away from the above accounts is that we need to seriously attend to: the complexities of dynamism and historical evolution when reckoning with what is and how we know it; the distributed and coalescing nature of agency; and the entangled nature of ontology, epistemology and ethics.

What my above discussion allows us to help clarify is one possible misconception about the positions above regarding the structural stability of reality. i.e. that what is real is layered and ontologically stacked, and different theories apply to distinct layers of the stack. Although this may be a helpful image for thinking about levels, gradients, density, and complexity, and is true about theories to a degree, and how we instrumentally reify moments in time, as Floridi and Barad reiterate, nature knows no such layers, and both give reasons why ontological levelism seems untenable.¹⁴⁴ And yet images of layers are captured by our optical instruments. From the middle level, where complex biological life seems to live, we look out at the heavens through lenses and see the past of cosmic, galactic, stellar, geophysical gigantism. We concentrate our instrumental gaze inward and image cells, molecules and nanoscale elementals. The lens gets closer to the sample and

¹⁴³ A better image is the string figures of Haraway's cat's cradles that draw lines between different hinge points or perhaps Deleuze and Guattari's notion of lines of flight that de/reterritorialize intensities.

¹⁴⁴ Barad, when noting the applicability of agential intra-action beyond the microscopic scale, reiterates that, "it's an empirical question whether or not there are different ontologies at different length scales, but at least so far there is no evidence that that is the case, and contemporary physics does not incorporate such a belief." Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 408 fn 23. For further research challenging the idea of ontological levelism see Heil, "Levels of Reality,"; Schaffer, "Is There a Fundamental Level?"; and Craver, *Explaining the Brain*.

what was densely homogenous now seems heterogeneous, with different layers of structures in the growing magnifications. As the working distance of the microscope gets closer we see more layers, more complexity, and the space between microscopic entities appears greater. Then the STM comes so close that what is imaging and what is imaged become phenomenally entangled and the difference indeterminate. Layers and distinctions among objects in spacetime with particular identities disappear into the coherence of forces that give rise to mass, and between those forces and massless entities...at this point we're captive in a sophomoric Hollywood movie wherein existential detectives conjecture about cracks and connections in the fundamentals of reality. The ability to capture and control phenomena across various scales of matter should not be read as indicating that we are accessing reality *as such*. What all three of the above thinkers reiterate is that the idea of a subject or agent encountering and reflecting back the objective world of mind independent reality as it is in itself, be it ultimately discrete or continuous, is a metaphysical remanent of a modernist worldview that has individualist subjectivity at the center of epistemology, and ontology as the phenomenal appearances of more idealist noumena. Further this worldview is inconsistent with: the way being-in-the-world presences in the phenomenological sense; the phenomenal nature of nature at all levels of physical structure in the Bohrian quantum mechanical sense; and the abstract formalisms of theories designed to engineer along all scales of reality in the informational approach to scientific and structural realism.¹⁴⁵ As I have already tried to make clear, according to these three thinkers, amalgamating and integrating the various instrumentally produced levels of abstraction in a cumulative synthesis will not produce a metaphysical principle. Further we don't need to resolve questions about the ultimate nature of reality in order for knowledges to be put to work. They may still trouble us and they may help us to remain critical and evolving but they may also disappear

¹⁴⁵ We might say that clear subject/object metaphysics arise from our everyday intuitions about reality, but as soon as we look outside and or prior to western ideology we see that it may not be as intuitive as we would like to think.

without a decision's resolution, i.e. the Bohrian cut is real. In fact, metaphysical preoccupations may function to keep us buried in scholastic mines such that we fail to ask critical questions about technoscientific practices and the conditions of their possibility.

If, through technoscientific practice we control the conditions for the possibility of phenomena along intertwined gradients, then metatheoretical questions about the conditions for the possibility of technoscience circles us back to the question of first philosophy and the primacy of ontology or epistemology. But, in the post-foundational era, we return in such a way that ethics, technics and epistemes are no longer henological principles but historically entangled emergents. How do they emerge? Where is the work being done? Where is the power to control located? When and how is it applied? That is, when our attempts at controlling phenomena at various levels are successful and we argue, as Floridi does, that although inexhaustible, we are accessing the structures and structured entities of reality, and that our access is progressively improving such that we can pursue our design projects: where and what are the tools we use to increase that stability? My contention is that as historical accumulations of knowledge, as ontoepistemic control, technoscientific stability is reliably found concentrated in the discursive-material economies of war, spoliation and exploitation, which persist across epochs. Yes there is stability. Yes science generates functionally applicable knowledge of reality. But, in accessing the inexhaustible ignorance abounds, and if we create theoretical or conceptual instruments that allow us to "image" matter in its locality, the point is that, despite the diffuse potentiality, it is localizable in physical spaces networked in hubs that are at root, the military industrial complex (MIC). The ability to control and manipulate natural phenomena is not limited to these areas, but the development of the capacity to intervene usually originates in the works of people who are beholden to power or who are quickly seized by it. Technoscientific power in the west is predictably found in exploitative, oppressive structures that reproduce the relations of power upon which they depend.

[P]ower must be understood in the *first instance as* the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; *as* the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; *as* the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; *and lastly, as* the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.¹⁴⁶

Insofar as there is a value placed upon having continuity between theoretical explanations and everyday ontological and epistemological commitments, i.e. folk ontology, as Floridi argues, then the everydayness of experience forces us to recognize those structural relations among structured entities that persist across history even if ultimate ontology is epistemically uncertain and ontologically entangled in relations of complementarity and indeterminacy. In the phenomenological sense of being-in-the-world as it presences via the givenness of equipmentality,¹⁴⁷ the stability of technoscientific knowledge is firmly in the hands of the state-corporate-military-police industrial complexes. This point is where philosophers of technology, who point out the historical and ontological priority of technology over science, are the most adept at thinking through the entanglements of ontology, epistemology and ethics. In turning to what I believe are some shortcomings, I'll briefly discuss what are the important takeaways from the theorists above and how they can be put into conversation with philosophers of technics.

In Floridi's work, what is, is information. We have come to know it because we have progressed through a series of historical epochs that have refined and improved our individual and collective identities in tandem with an evolving power to reengineer our worlds. Our capacity to informationalize, computationalize, and redesign our existing theories has increased our ability to

¹⁴⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 92–93. The emphasis is mine as I want to highlight the levels of abstraction and their interconnection along a gradient in Foucault's concept. He moves from abstract generality to a very entangled set of particular social dynamics. The diffusion of power in Foucault's work is an attempt to parse out the implications hermeneutic or discursive traditions have on epistemological and ontological evolution, and it is an attempt to attend to the localization of power in places and times of discursive reproduction as materially significant. I'll link this to Hacking and the idea of lived practice manifest in teaching approaches and the institutionalization of math education.

¹⁴⁷ Equipment is a major theme for Heidegger and is taken up explicitly by both Malpas and Dreyfus.

reontologize. With information we have found a way of subsuming disparate scientific concepts and practices under a more abstract and computational based approach. The list of computational sciences spans the alphabet from computational archeology to computational weather prediction. Those areas of western science that have not adopted a computational methodology would, nonetheless, not be able to function in their form without the computational powers they enjoy.¹⁴⁸ In tandem with this expansion of information in the sciences and the dependency on ICTs for most aspects of globalized western society, attending to the way information is reshaping identity is pressing. Floridi talks about this throughout his work, but I want to mention his short *Technologies of the Self* partly because it shares its name with a Foucault lecture series, centered on the evolution of care and composition of the self in writing practices from the Greco-Roman empire, and partly because in it Floridi discusses the transformations in identity resulting from the proliferation of ICTs and social media platforms in a telling way.

ICTs and social media platforms are mediums that allow us, in western digitally immersed culture to compose and curate our lives and share our compositions with the world. The fad of phones will change, but as globalization, framed as an expansion and exportation of American-ish technoculture, continues, it pushes us to think about the formation of a more general, global digital media culture. Devices massage our identities and our practices of self-writing.¹⁴⁹ But, we should ponder over an age old question about value. What if, in our utilization of technologies for self-writing, “what we are writing is not worth reading”?¹⁵⁰ The familiar image of those famous prisoners chained in a cave concerning themselves with shadows...the projections on their facebook feeds...functions as Floridi’s cynical rejoinder. We’ve always been subjects to the banal consumption

¹⁴⁸ Ihde makes this point throughout his works.

¹⁴⁹ The allusion is intentional as McLuhan noted in the early 60’s that, “we become what we behold.” McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 19

¹⁵⁰ Floridi, “Technologies of the Self,” 272

of entertainment. Bread and circuses. Bread and circuses. However, Floridi seems to think those banalities are errors of *use*, and shouldn't hinder our appreciation of the upward arc of ICTs, which allow us to expand our poietic potential.¹⁵¹ Floridi believes we are soon to reach a point at which the hyperhistorical “onlife” generation, which cannot make a meaningful distinction between online and offline,¹⁵² will “feel deprived, excluded, handicapped, or poor to the point of paralysis and psychological trauma whenever it is disconnected from the infosphere, like fish out of water. One day, being an inforg will be so natural that any disruption in our normal flow of information will make us sick.”¹⁵³ This sentiment is likely already true for those whose day to day life finds them saturated in ICTs and we are seeing this more and more as technologies are integrated into our somatological regimes and pharmacological practices. What all this indicates is that there is a complex of stabilities: in the physical implementation of information and communication sciences; in technological milieus; in the social incorporation of technologies; and in the predictability of user response within the emerging onlife “device paradigm.”¹⁵⁴ ICTs function because we have a good handle on mechanics, electronics, boolean algebra, chemistry, running miles of fiber optic cables, launching satellites, etc. Social adjustment to evolving technological milieus is integral to our evolutionary history. Human responses are increasingly predictable and manipulable because we have a good handle on mammalian neurochemistry, affectivity, and what we might call a general pharmacology. Access to people who, rather reliably and consumptively, cycle through excitation

¹⁵¹ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, Ibid. Floridi labels us *homo poieticus*, but in a text outlining a theory of ethics and normalizing the social incorporation of ICTs there is not a single mention of the conflicts across the world over the lands that corporations and states exploit for the materials they need to build ICTs that afford us the ability to create online communities.

¹⁵² Floridi, *The Onlife Manifesto*, 1

¹⁵³ Floridi, *The Forth Revolution*, 98. see also Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 17. Floridi's historical categories and account of technical evolution reeks of occidental supremacy and requires a response that unfortunately is beyond the scope of my project.

¹⁵⁴ See e.g. the works of Albert Borgmann and his elaboration of the way devices structure social life.

and relaxation as informationally generative “produmers” is the product sold.¹⁵⁵ More data more potential to exploit. But, beyond simply being another example in the long line of outputs resulting from scientific development and technological dynamism, the formalization and incorporation of information in the sciences and in social life has produced an epochal revolution in the Schürmannian sense.¹⁵⁶ Although the terms data and the digital are commonly the nicknames given in pop discourse, the emerging economy of the present is information. From the realm of theory wherein attempts are made to explain the cogency of our knowledge of what is, to the everydayness of folk ontology, information is solidifying its hegemony.

Information is growing our ability to control physical bodies, social bodies and individual bodies. Although their analyses aren’t centered on the idea, critical theorists and situationists noted during the emergence of the culture industry, that at the levels of personal and social subjectivity we are witnessing the power of audiovisual programing to create desires in individual psyches and in the production of social bodies.¹⁵⁷ In our contemporary era this power has localized focus on the brain primarily, as both the seat of personal identity and an adaptive plasticity, which in technosocial ways can produce chasms between communities. This is accomplished, at least in part, by informational feedback loops that give to the architects and purveyors of ICT’s user feedback, which allows for the targeted adjustments of outputs so that subsequent uptake and use conforms to their design. By controlling the medium they control the message, and thus the power of ICT’s is the discursive/material power to design informational feedback loops that control behavior across multiple natural/cultural levels. The industrialization of this power aids the construction of social bodies, which can internalize the values of those who own the machines upon which their lives

¹⁵⁵ This tendency might be thought in libidinal terms, from Freud to Marcuse to Preciado although in the latter, relaxation does not allow addiction to take hold, so instead what we find is a cycle of excitation-frustration-excitation.

¹⁵⁶ One could argue that Heidegger’s attacks on cybernetics were his realization of the coming hegemony of information.

¹⁵⁷ “The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that the consumers *feel* compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.” Adorno & Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 167.

depend. The corporate response has long been that they simply give the consumer what they want, i.e. they either tacitly adhere to the metaphysics of individualism, and platitudes about consenting adults, or explicitly refuse to acknowledge the manipulation of desire through the exploitation of user data.

Raymond Umar Hall - Normal

The amount of feedback from ICTs is almost unfathomable. Google will tell you that it processes 3.5 billion searches a day, and although it's the largest search engine this is but one source for user information feedback. This presents industrialized informational economies with a problem.

The real, epistemological problem with big data is *small patterns*. Precisely because so many data can now be generated and processed so quickly, so cheaply, and on virtually anything, the pressure both on the data *nouveau riche*, such as Facebook or Walmart, Amazon or Google, and on the data *old money*, such as genetics or medicine, experimental physics or neuroscience, is to be able to spot where the new patterns with real added-value lie in their immense databases, and how they can best be exploited for the creation of wealth, the improvement of human lives, and the advancement of knowledge. An analogy with energy resources may help: we have now entered the stage of data fracking.¹⁵⁸

Twitter is an important and inevitable evolution in the ongoing development of performative, technologically mediated, social and personal identity creation. Twitter needs to streamline its exploitation of the input that the users contribute so as to capitalize on their energy, keep them tweeting, and stay competitive with the other giants in the sphere of human improvement and knowledge advancement...like Walmart. Seemingly, Floridi writes this with a straight face. Beyond being snarky, it's important to note that Floridi recognizes that the major accumulators of data are the sciences and industry. But, it is precisely these accumulators who either exploit their positions for their own ends, work in tandem with powers that do, are enveloped into those powers when recognized as possessing potential benefits or threats, or rely on technologies that originated in and were developed by those who exploit, capture and kill. Of course there are other functions

¹⁵⁸ Floridi, "Big Data and Information Quality," 306.

championed as support for the importance and indispensability of the state/governmentality, but they are not the focus here. From the techno-material scaffolding that is the internet's writ large to Google Maps, militarism guarantees continuity of control in the transitions from state power to corporate exploitation. Beyond a focus on ownership and control, by attending to the ways agency is embedded in matter, the idea of value neutrality in technologies is shown to be problematic. Debates about what we keep in circulation from the past are dead in the water if we can't at least concede that by maintaining and reproducing technical assemblages and their requisite social milieus we are committing to producing similar bodies, social relations, and environmental conditions. In this way, proletarianization becomes general as class does not neutralize the fact that technics impact psycho/soma/enviro. A constellation becomes visible when the criticism of reflection is used to link the concepts of presencing, intra-action, and construction. This conceptual constellation shows some of the similarities among post-foundational foundational theories in approaching questions of realism, i.e. reality independent from a vantage point is incoherent in the post subject/object metaphysics of postmodernity. A vantage point is not simply a neutral, anthropocentric subject. Subjects have to be understood as always already plural, i.e. agency is a distributed property both socially and historically, which coalesces phenomenally, is epistemically generative and is ontologically dynamic. However, we can, as these three thinkers reiterate, recognize a plethora of epistemic sources and generative practices, which forces us to think critically about the drive to secure the ultimate foundations of reality, and we can challenge the assumption that our scientific practices speak monolithic truth about an objective ontology, but this should not lead us to denying the reality of control that exists under the hegemony of the phantasm of information. Further, and more to my purposes, we shouldn't pretend that exploitative interests don't predominate even if we want to believe people intend better. "Marx understood all about how privileged positions block

knowledge of the conditions of one's privilege."¹⁵⁹ The power of information grows with laboratory regularity in both real and virtual spaces through the rampant informationalization of nature. Modeling in virtual environments with computational powers that just decades ago would have taken lab access is now available on demand. We would be naive to deny the power of scientific realism armed with information, which discretizes what may be continuous sure, but at decimal points so far down that for all intents and purposes those synthetic, virtual, artificial life-forms looks smooth as silk. And, they are integrated into the practices of technoscience at a rapidly growing pace. And those practices, as structures/entities/relations and the exertions of force, are then applied by corporate and state entities in order to design objects and anticipate and shape the responses of entities within environments. When applied to people at ideological and somatological levels, or when applied to our entangled natural environments, the idea of encouraging exploitative data fracking by corporations and scientific conglomerates with demonstrably questionable and at times abhorrent track records is disconcerting to say the least.

Floridi's informational structural realism is fascinating and his creative philosophy is extremely important, but although in his thought we find science and to a lesser degree technology, we never really find society. Rather, we find an idealized, sanitized, and individualist western version of it. Put frankly, I find his politics to be cretinous. And as Barad might argue, disentangling them could prove difficult. The problems as I see them result from technology being under theorized.¹⁶⁰ I think this problem also appears but in a much smaller degree in Barad. Floridi reads like a

¹⁵⁹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 111. Intentions and ignorance have a lot to do with ontoepistemethetical standpoints and I will revisit this issue below.

¹⁶⁰ As an aside, the idea of an individual evolving in accordance with nature, as an atomized self with internal agency, using objects obeying the laws of physical cosmology creates divergent timelines of dynamism for biological, psychological and geological transformation. This can lead to a gallimaufry of concepts that sees e.g. evolution, essence, matter, and identity all jumbled together. In this jumble realism as it relates to evolutionary materialism is the cosmic path of technologies while psychologist idealism or individualist mentalism is the path of identity. There are connections here to concerns about anthropocentrism, as we've seen how other things exist but aren't granted minds, identities, selves, or agency, as well as concerns about psychotechnics on the brain, but I digress.

technophile who realizes shortcomings but thinks we can engineer or manage our way around them. Whereas Barad concedes that dirty hands are inevitable and courage means being accountable to our response-abilities and the diffractive impacts of our agential intra-actions in the world.¹⁶¹ Schürmann leans in the direction of pessimism for reasons related to the fact that “science does not think” and because he sees the idea of technocratic rational management as the solution to technological shortsightedness a gateway to totalitarianism. In a mutated form, technophilic tendencies are manifesting in a looming eugenicism, which has been well reconnoitered by activists and academics.¹⁶² And yet there is a tension, for in a single paragraph Floridi can vacillate between ecological catastrophe and technological utopia when describing the “success of the anthropocene”¹⁶³ and the disastrous environmental degradations that have followed its development. He notes that the infosphere “is now jeopardizing the well-being of the biosphere. This is a risk that is inevitable, but it should certainly be managed more safely, and it could be managed entirely successfully...”¹⁶⁴ According to the progressivist ideology of liberal capitalism these dangers are just hiccups that can be overcome through rationally organized administration, as if somehow uneven development wasn’t structurally intrinsic. The problem of assuming that improper management is only potential and might be avoided so as to prevent future inequality is that it does not take serious the structural stability of inequality and the reproductive power that it enjoys, which are features already embedded in technoscientific assemblages, i.e. it cannot be simply a question of proper management when the problems are reproductively inscribed in tools and techniques used to manage. This is not our first catastrophe. Floridi takes a strongly optimistic line consistent with his

¹⁶¹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 396

¹⁶² See e.g. Ikemoto, Benjamin, Roberts, “Gene Editing and the Future of Reproductive Justice Webinar,” Ibid. We are not there yet, as Floridi notes as do those familiar with gene editing, but the protentional future is one that black feminists have long been able to see, in part because of their familiarity with the structural reproduction of oppression and the way necropolitical powers show a continuity of desire to control bodies.

¹⁶³ I think this is an absurd claim and debunking it is similar to the ways in which scholars have challenged cogency of Steven Pinker’s pop culture western apologetics.

¹⁶⁴ Floridi, *The Forth Revolution*, 205

progressivist philosophy of history. And yet he recognizes our contemporary out-of-joint-ness resulting from the introduction of technologies that reshape the world such that “we should not harbour illusions about how widespread and inclusive the evolution of information societies is or will be...the digital divide may become a chasm...the gap will not be reducible to the distance between rich and poor countries, because it will rather cut across societies...We might be preparing the ground for tomorrow’s informational slums.”¹⁶⁵ But, the problem is framed in terms of access, which slips in an assumption about neutrality. Informational slums will be those without access, never mind those immersed in the technologies of the self captivated by the banality of industrial consumption. Remember, Amazon is diligently working on the improvement of human lives. Beyond important questions of access to technologies that afford us the ability to develop as living beings, we attend to the way history is entangled and enmeshed in the technologies that impact not just our psyche but our physical bodies and the environments in which we live. Agency not just as idealist nous but material soma. Becoming, in its everydayness, shows us that we need to attend to the body and the complexity of lived experience. However, in Floridi’s work the problem is not about the body but about the mind and our self-identities. “We have begun to see ourselves as inforgs not through some transformations in our bodies but, more seriously and realistically, through the re-ontologization of our environment and of ourselves.”¹⁶⁶ It seems as though our performative identities are detachable from our bodies and re-ontologizing ourselves is possible without subsequent changes in our body. Floridi argues that post-humanism, “once purged of its most fanciful and fictional claims, is something that we may see in the future, but it is not here yet, either technically (safely doable) or ethically (morally acceptable). It is a futuristic perspective.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Floridi, *The Forth Revolution*, 48-49

¹⁶⁶ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 15

¹⁶⁷ Floridi, *The Forth Revolution*, 95. He argues on further on that the fourth revolution is changing our “conception of what it means to be human.” This is an idealist or mentalist reduction.

And this is where the arbitrary demarcations within his concept of technologies proves most limiting. Instead of seeing technics as time, in the sense of prosthetically given temporal structures of worldly inheritance that transmits across history and are always already bodily engagements with somatological force, he sees technological evolution as impacting an idealist or psychologistic sense of individual subjects seated in the mind and social psyche.¹⁶⁸ He clarifies that, “What matters is that ‘the *fourth* (or *nth*) revolution’ is an *interpretation* of the *information revolution* as a transformation whose greatest significance...[is] the way in which we are rethinking our nature and role in the universe...[ICTs] are now changing who we think we are and can be. And this is revolutionary.”¹⁶⁹ Self-conceptions evolve but primarily as mental constructs and intellectual exercises not as biopolitical internalizations with somatological force. His uncritical affirmation of social media as poietic community creation makes sense if I am just a brain with a set of eyeballs staring at a screen.¹⁷⁰ He does not account for the fact that technics are inseparable from the evolution of human biology, as both ontological facts (tools) and epistemic domains (techniques), and that they impact the composition and reproduction of the whole person inhabiting a world, not just our self-conceptions. I argue that, in this way, his position is simply wrong, and suffers from a limited conception of both the body and technics, which become much less cumbersome in Barad.¹⁷¹ Floridi seems to think it possible to disentangle use and design such that in using technologies of self-writing and re-ontologizing both the world and ourselves we somehow avoid that fact that the technologies designed, controlled and owned by corporate entities have extraction and the captivity of attention as their goals. That is, somehow the design of ICTs are value neutral or the values are avoidable and the extractive and manipulative objectives of those who control ICTs are

¹⁶⁸ This also leads to his tripartite conception of first, second and third order technologies appearing arbitrary.

¹⁶⁹ Floridi, “The Road to the Philosophy of Information,” 254

¹⁷⁰ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, Ch. 8 also 8.5.5

¹⁷¹ The emerging areas around epigenetics and research on the ability to control autonomic and sympathetic nervous systems will likely make this position more and more untenable.

unimportant. If you want your technologies of the self to write stories not worth reading that doesn't have anything to do with the tools you use to write. Thus it doesn't matter that the design of Google's engine is engineered to monetize information, collect behavioral data and encourage a schizophrenic link to link to link form of consumption so that it can sell algorithmically constructed identities. But it should give us pause to know that Eric Schmidt thinks, "most people don't want Google to answer their questions, they want Google to tell them what they should be doing next."¹⁷² And yet, Floridi's informational ethics argues that value is intrinsic to the world, entropy is evil, organization good, and thus a problem over the way values are determined and organized goes unexplored.¹⁷³ I would argue that as an individualist liberal Floridi promotes apologetics that are poisonous to the resistance and contestation of the tendency to naturalize the form and the existing dispersions of equities in design, control and benefit of ICTs. Floridi presents the evolution of information as inevitable. Our only option is to get on board because, "as with all counter-revolutionary or anti-historical approaches, 'resistance is futile': trying to withstand the evolution of the infosphere only harms current users"¹⁷⁴ who have adapted to the revolution. But he has essentially eviscerated political struggle against extractive corporate/state control. This problem is not present in Barad or Schürmann. But perhaps that is because they are closer to my own sympathies and because the role of technology is more pronounced in their respective works. Further, they are both keenly aware of the problems of administrative rationality which seems much less of a concern in Floridi.

Informational structural realism is entangled with quantum mechanics, as many of the discussions about the future of physics are centered on the concept of physical information and the

¹⁷² Jenkins, "Google and the Search for the Future," Ibid.

¹⁷³ This issue is complex because one of the ways that Floridi theorizes evil relates to the phenomena of entropy but unfortunately interrogating this point is beyond my scope.

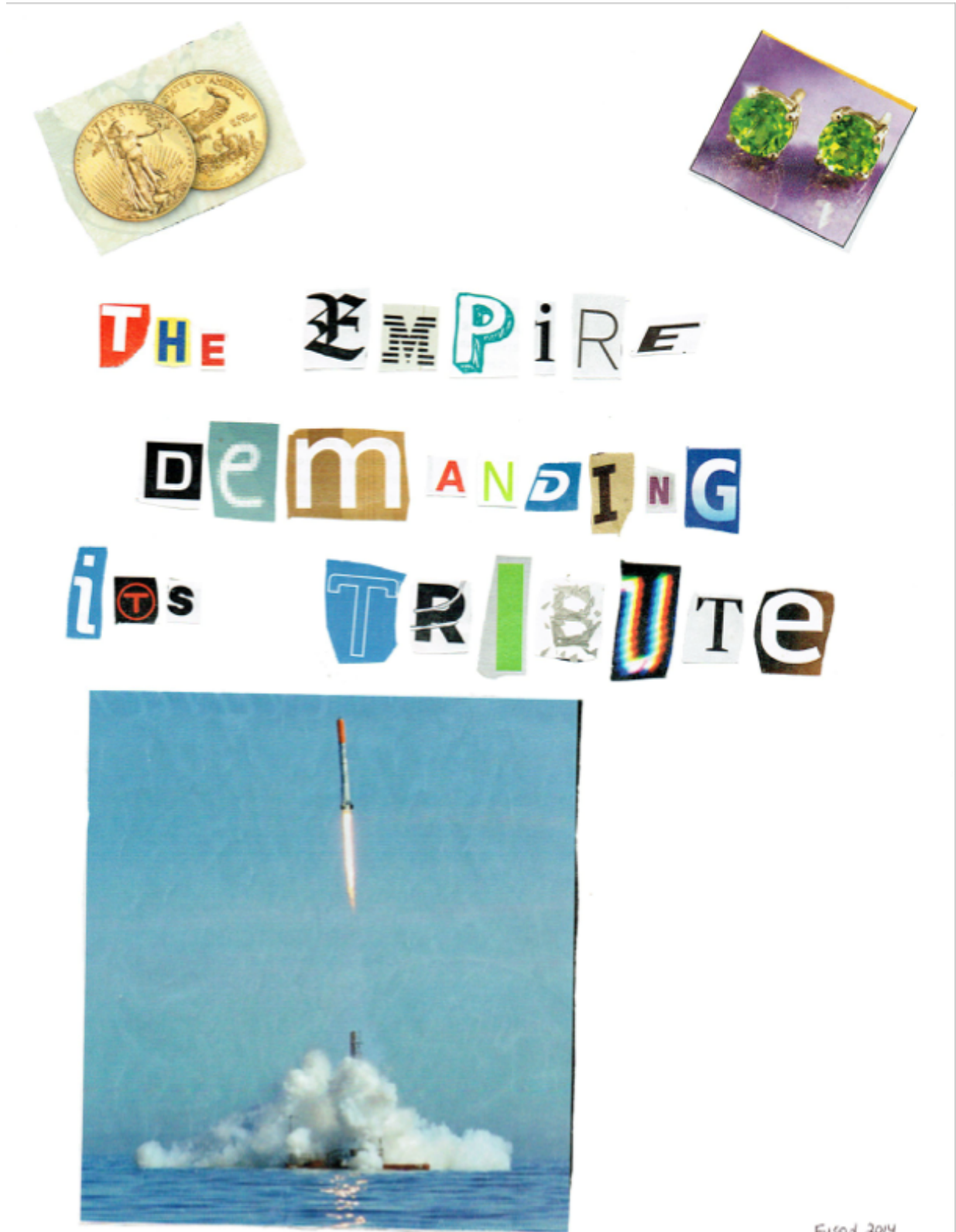
¹⁷⁴ Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 248

computational powers we are likely to enjoy in the future for further study in quantum physics.

However, unlike the abstractions of Floridi, Barad's new materialism emphasizes that moving atoms requires serious machine and technical control. Electrical currents need to be exact, machined parts need to be exact, the environmental conditions perfect, and computational inputs need to be immediately processed in modified outputs. Moving atoms also requires serious money. Getting high quality images of single atoms will cost upwards of two hundred thousand dollars. But usually these fancy microscopes are a drop in the bucket for most research institutions, and long before the technologies within are available for civilian consumption they have been vetted by governmental powers that have determined them admissible into the public milieu. As just one example, although a powerful one, it is important to remember that the internet is the hand-me-down of the Department of Defense. Shannon and other information theorists may have gotten sidelined by academic philosophy, but that small clique has never been the mainstream. Shannon and Turing and others swam with sharks in powerful currents deep within the state apparatuses ensuring that weapons succeeded in accurately targeting and killing human beings and governments succeeded in intercepting, decrypting, and keeping secrets. And, the machines that they inherited helped them engineer others. The same is true for the technological development of nuclear power. Bohr, Heisenberg, Fermi, Oppenheimer, and the list goes on, all worked in tandem with militaries to develop weapons of mass destruction. And when one side lost the other welcomed them with open arms and gave them positions of power and prestige. Einstein felt compelled to write Roosevelt and plead with him to build a bomb because he worried the Nazis were trying.¹⁷⁵ And they were. And Heisenberg was part of that. And a quarter million civilians died in the flashes of a thousand suns. And Heisenberg went on to lecture at Harvard.

¹⁷⁵ Herrera, *Technology and International Transformation*, 179

Figure 5: James Fuson “Empire Demanding Tribute”



Continuities and stabilities in the economies of presencing are such that today when Iranian scientists won't capitulate to the demands of powers greater than those they depend on for their livelihood, assassinations follow. Or when politicians and their academic lackeys war monger illegally and violate the Geneva Conventions with torture, they get a pardon and hit the links.¹⁷⁶ These relations among social positionalities well established are just as much part of the stable structures of technoscientific apparatuses as the ability to engineer along the gradients of reality, and they have continuity across history. With predictable regularity extrajudicial killings transpire, are denied, and then later excused or pardoned once the people involved are dead or when relevant documents are leaked.

Yusef Qualls-El WARFARE

By attending to the everydayness of practices within the places that control powerful technologies we are safe in assuming that corruption, collusion, exploitation and lack of accountability is just as much a part of structural stability as are our epistemic fortifications along the gradients of matter. Barad sees this relatively clearly as she notes that once the potential is made clear, men in suits knock at the door asking how we are prepared to service nationalism.

These quantum information theory projects are still on the drawing board, but they promise to revolutionize the computing, finance, national security, and defense industries, for starters, and development efforts are receiving millions of dollars of R&D support. So as it turns out, several U.S. government agencies, including the National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Advanced Research and Development Agency (ARDA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Department of Energy (DOE), and the Army, Navy, and Air Force are now interested in

¹⁷⁶ It is clear that Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, et al. committed war crimes and were supported in their efforts by people like John Wo, James Mitchell, and Bruce Jessen et al. See e.g. Fink and Risen "Psychologists Open a Window on Brutal C.I.A. Interrogations," Fink "2 Psychologists in C.I.A." and Fink, "Settlement Reached in C.I.A. Torture Case." And now Haspel and the MIC just keeps proving my point.

such “merely philosophical” issues as quantum entanglement, a notion that lies at the heart of the interpretative issues in quantum mechanics.¹⁷⁷

The quantum computer will be to the information age what the nuclear bomb was to the thermodynamic, electromechanical age. We are waking to the dawn of autonomizing swarm, drone, information warfare. These new forms of warfare are effective because ICTs give access to reality and control over affectivity in real time, #trending.¹⁷⁸ And when we rewind the tape of western history, beyond the particulars of the ICTs of Google¹⁷⁹ or Apple or the NSA, to look at the origins and accretions of the power to control and engineer, we see a complex intertwinement of technology, science, and corporate-state power. The instruments of war along with the academic achievements that evolved them/with them have always been near the seats of political power. Many of our earliest instruments were designed to kill and capture and many of our earliest writings are accounting records for the abundances of the wealthy.¹⁸⁰ We can periodize history according to the technics of war and present a compelling narrative. Of course this narrative can tend toward being too general and monolithic and can be met with counterexamples. The point is that if realism is supposed to track or resonate with both folk ontology and the structures and entities articulated via sophisticated theories and technologies, then realism needs to attend to the fact that oppression is reproductively presencing and doing so as a complex and intersectional assemblage. Apparatuses, ensembles, machinic and enunciative assemblages, diffractive intra-actions, historically evolving totalities, economies of presencing, etc. are concepts for linking and meshing the pluralization of regional ontologies and epistemic standpoints so as to think about both the physico-material

¹⁷⁷ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 253

¹⁷⁸ As just one among a host of current examples we have seen the way bots, trolls and hackers have swarmed in order to orchestrate protests and intentionally pit dissenting groups against each other. See e.g. Davies, “How a Russian Troll Factory,” Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Google was just recently awarded a DoD contract for their AI technology. See, e.g. Fang, “Google is Quietly Providing AI Technology,” Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ This point can be explored by thinking with Deleuze and Guattari and their discussion of the war machine and the various instantiations or iterations it has when captured by the political apparatus.

gradients of reality and the discourses that function to stabilize and normalize the practices that constitute and disclose the worlds we share. Barad makes this point strongly when discussing the entanglement and complexity of reproductive injustice and oppression. And as Floridi desires to do, Barad's examples actually track the everydayness of our ontoepistemethical commitments and in a way that allows us to challenge existing relations as opposed to Floridi's politics of concession. Barad notes the work of Leela Fernandes who studied the enmeshed textures of inequality and oppression in the everyday lives of people working in a jute factory in India. According to Barad, Fernandes' work shows the way the dynamics, not the identities, of class, ethnicity, caste and gender intra-actively create the spacetime of the shop floor. The differential ways that a particular entanglement of class and gender would materialize was entwined in the other dynamics of ethnicity and caste, and thus in the materialization of economic exploitation, oppression, and resistance, discursive dynamics were inseparable. Fernandes notes that, "structure does not represent a set of transcendental, objective determinants but is shaped by modes of representation and meanings that social actors...give to their positions and activities."¹⁸¹ Fernandes's study shows the layered and performative ways that inequality and hierarchy reproduce. They are very everyday, what are often called micro-scale behaviors and non-reflective tacit ways of inhabiting, sexism for example. And, they are transmittable across spacetime. To think through the complexity of these fluid dynamics I imagine confluences of anastomosing rivers. Various channels mix with others and the currents drift and swirl and the pressures change depending on depth, and when rivers meet they produce a confluence, and along the swirling seam of the confluence the maelstroms and eddies create dynamics not reducible to one nor to the other nor to both rivers, rather they expose a complex mix of currents and particles and changing pressures inextricably bound up with what happens upstream and impacting what happens downstream. Conveying the complexity of inhabiting those spacetimes

¹⁸¹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 229

to others who have only known the main currents is laborious. And it is hindered by the mainstream's subsuming complexity under some monolithic theory of currents. Everyday we move along in currents, and we experience different degrees of freedom, resistance and force based on the distribution of power within the systems in which we find ourselves. What we need according to Barad,

are genealogies of the material-discursive apparatuses of production that take account of the intra-active topological dynamics that iteratively reconfigure the spacetime-matter manifold. In particular, it is important that they include an analysis of the connectivity of phenomena at different scales. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore points out, it is crucial to trace the "frictions of distance," to do analyses that move through the range of scales of injustice, not by pointing out similarities between one place or event and another, but by understanding how those places or events are made through one another.¹⁸²

Complexity grows as we attempt to connect phenomena across different scales, levels and gradients, and various powers have set to work parsing out problems. Deciding which connections matter when accounting for evolving and reproductive social dynamics is one of the privileges/affordances of power. And, when predicting and influencing social dynamics, attending to the scales of injustice means thinking critically about the telos of objectives. Appropriate or liberate? Who is doing the research? What are their investments? How do unjust asymmetries in one area reconfigure the dynamics of oppression or exploitation in another, especially when the major asymmetries in society are access to and control of the reservoirs of discursive and material wealth? Although relying on the presumed authority of physics might be relished in some argumentative contexts, we have other ways of articulating the multiplicity of grounds for being and acting without appealing to the empiricist machinery of particle physics. In a strange interplay between theory and empiricism we have seen concepts, long circulating in continental philosophy, get scientific and material confirmation from areas of science that have been deeply invested in attacking this tradition as incoherent and irrational. In a lecture at Duke, after discussing her interpretation of Bohr's

¹⁸² Ibid., 246

ontological indeterminacy and the Quantum Eraser Experiment: i.e. a variation of the double-slit experiment, wherein interferometers to detect electromagnetic interference record which-path information, which is then erased, after recorded observation, resulting in a change to the interference pattern or ontological status of atoms already recorded; Barad invokes a playful *mea culpa*. “Any entities past identity, its ontology, is never fixed, it is always open to future reworkings...Derrida forgive me...This is empirical evidence for Derrida’s hauntology.”¹⁸³ And the crowd laughs. This scientific concession to the “terrorist obscurantist” would have been unthinkable in the polemics of physicists and mathematicians during the so-called “science wars” where naive realists misconstrued the at times jargon laden and esoteric positions of de/constructivists. However, Barad is well familiar with post-structuralist work and thus her ability to connect discussions of fundamental ontology to science and technology shows her attunement to the actual arguments. And what is more, she has seen the value of grappling with the concepts and theories of performative dispositifs, which aids our ability to understand how tentacular and entangled our interventions along and across gradients of reality actually are with how we live and imagine becoming. But what the reference to Derrida also shows us is that there are other ways of thinking about how we know and are entangled, done at greater or lesser degrees of remove from the repressive state technoscientific apparatuses and institutions from which knowledges emerge. Arguing that there is structural stability to material-discursive inheritances, in both everyday and exceptional practices, which reproduce oppression and exploitation, should not be read as an attempt to homogenize the practices of agents. We navigate structures as structured entities continuously de/activating structural relations. Resistance and heteronomy abound in the everyday. And within institutions there are regularly contestations over their organization, administration, function and purpose. Rather, my point is that the foundation and form of administrative power

¹⁸³ Duke Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies, “Feminist Theory Workshop Keynote – Karen Barad,” Ibid.

allows for the seizure of control over function, outputs, and compositions within institutions as they cannot be disentangled from the state-corporate complex. Money in the western model is militarily backed. Radicals battle everyday inside institutions that in other ways reproduce practices that are detrimental to them and their struggles, but because these institutions are not fixed the battle over the shape and allocation of resources within them continues. And radical struggles have made major inroads. But, they don't pretend to deny the reality of the injustices embedded in the institutions they struggle within, and they are not unaware that if their contestations are deemed threatening by those who can, forced removal is always an option. This is where ideas about cryptography and transformative reading begin to come to the fore as they imply coding both in the sense of identifying so as to be readable and hiding so as to be unreadable.

A genealogy of the hermeneutic grounds for being and acting that have shaped the way that the west has organized and administered the presencing of the world echos Barad's call above. And, the ideas of pluralization of economies of presencing, and the anarchic possibilities in Schürmann's work are helpful for resounding it.¹⁸⁴ Further, his articulation of the importance of history and the retentional structure of intentionality, embedded in the technological forms that we inherit, supports the argument that technology is historically and ontologically prior to what we call science.¹⁸⁵ Importantly, Schürmann also forces us to attend to our own ignorances, and beyond the trivial sense of not getting our designs right the first time. But, that in getting things wrong, we can be dangerous, even harmful, not just inaccurate. He challenges the way arrogance obscures the violence of force as it is applied in framing the world as objectively present. Schürmann's idea of hegemonic phantasms gives us a way of thinking about information as hegemonic and allow us another entry point into the discussions of realism partly because I think that the concept of information is our

¹⁸⁴ Echoing ideas from Levinas, the notions of ethical resounding and response-ability re at work in Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 391-396 and also in Barad, "On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am (v1.1)," Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ See e.g. Ihde, *Existential Technics*, Ibid and Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies*, Ibid.

contemporary hegemon, and it gives us another way of thinking about the economies of information as definitive of our current age. Conceptually, everything is being turned into information, and when applied to the sciences, information is quickly usurping all other scientific concepts as they are reontologized such that they can be computationalized, modeled and engineered in virtual realms. Both Floridi and Schürmann see the process of hegemonic reorganization and principal institution through the lens of the philosophy of history. But whereas Floridi presents an optimistic view of progressive semanticization, Schürmann sees the closure of thinking, the suffocation of becoming, and the captivity of manifold ways of being-in-the-world by the homogenizing power of enframing, i.e. technological violence that stamps form onto what appears as opposed to letting it be in accordance with its own evolving.

Following from others who have read Heidegger this way, I read Schürmann as affirming a version of realism born out of witness to the historical stability of structural violence against both people and planet. There is a certain undeniability to the equipmental world as a kind of historical unfolding of uses in time. The brute facticity of material reality can slam down upon us as a hammer on a nail. Further, Schürmann's apprehension of cybernetics is an indication of his belief in the reality of material phenomena and our ability to shape and control the material world. And, in the breakdown of the function of tools, which then stand out as present-at-hand, phenomenology grasps the connections between realism and materialism. Schürmann emphasizes the manifold ways in which historically rooted, everyday practices organize and gather together entities so as to render them dense. In this sense his thought tracks an evolving topology of presence.¹⁸⁶ In his deconstructive genealogy, Schürmann traces the way hegemonies dissipate and have shown themselves and the dense entities within them to be ephemeral. Logocentrism could be read as the

¹⁸⁶ “‘But poetry that thinks is in truth the topology of Being...’ Heidegger, *‘The Thinker as Poet’*” Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology*, 1. Heidegger’s thought moves from the meaning of being, to the truth of being, to the place of being, according to Malpas and there are links here to draw to Derrida’s discussion of $\chi\omega\rho\alpha$.

misdirected attempt to fix presence as an insect in amber. He emphasizes that the manifold ways of equipmentally ordering the world are rooted in power relations, and that the significance of the world is already given to us in the varying ways that technics shape our interpretative horizons. Technics embed memory into the world, and we inherit power relations established in the past as we are bequeathed languages and names for what is, what becomes, and ways of making entities dense, i.e. ontologizing and sematicizing. What Schürmann's critical project tracks is the transmigration of a tendency to totalize and cordon ontology within an epistemological fortification, i.e. to capture errancy, which bares upon the discussions of negentropy and are also connected to Schürmann's discussion of Hertz above. This tendency is strong in occidental history, deeply entangled with militarism, and it has morphed in recent times. As Schürmann reads the work of Heidegger, the attempts to uncover the fundamentals of the world are mistaken insofar as they rely on ideas of essence, presence or reflection of some objective real that consciousness accesses. Western scientific practices are not simply accessing what is present, but rather forcing a way of presencing, i.e. it's not just about access, it's also about agency's material-discursivity, which for Schürmann entails responsibility. This is how I diffractively read Schürmann, Barad, and Floridi through each other, i.e. ontoepistemethically as recognizing the entanglements of co-activated agencies, praxis as material engagement with an immanent ontology that is epistemically accessible but, because of the possibility to re-ontologize, ontologically and epistemically inexhaustible, i.e. open to future re-workings. However, I don't want to obscure what are deep and fundamental differences between these thinkers. The Floridian celebration of the virtualization and informationalization of entities within ISR, which can then become the play things of engineers, is for Schürmann the evolution of a metaphysical project of the will to power fundamentally rooted in a desire for total domination. I quote and interpret at length with the intention of tracking the genealogy of principles, and then

entangling the concept of information with the way Schürmann reads the idea of *gestell* or enframing, i.e. enframing as informationalization.

From the standpoint of praxis, metaphysics appears as an enterprise of legitimation. It refers the question: What is to be done? to a primary discourse, whether about being, nature, God, or a supreme judgment of reason. Because of this search for a justificatory fundament, metaphysics is a system in which representations of a ground replace one another across the ages. Heidegger enumerates a few: 'Metaphysics is that historical space in which the suprasensible World, the Ideas, God, the moral Law, the authority of Reason, Progress, the Happiness of the greatest number, Culture, Civilization, lose their constructive force and become nothing.' These referents, which have served successively to legitimate the practical disciplines, I have called the epochal principles. The referent that could serve in this role today would be 'enframing'. It could indeed be added to this list of ultimate representations. But what becomes of such grounding? Since 'enframing' designates domination at its apogee, as effectively global, domination has only itself to legitimate itself; cybernetics, only cybernetics; the will and mechanization, only the will and mechanization. With this collapse of an ordering referent—or of the *pros hen*—metaphysics comes to a close. The hypothesis of closure results from the *reduplication* 'will to will' substituting itself for the *difference* between 'being and entities'. Enframing, then, is not like any other principle. It is transcendence abolished. Total mechanization and administration are only the most striking features of this abolition and reduplication, of this loss of every epochal principle; a loss that, as Heidegger suggests, is happening before our eyes. To let technology be would mean to follow the potential for bringing down representations of transcendence, a potential contained in technology itself as the culmination of the deep-fixed logic of domination. Under the hypothesis of metaphysical closure, technology appears as essentially bifrontal. Its *actuality*, its Janus face turned toward the past, is the most violent principal grip ever. But because it is the rationality of control fully deployed at last, it also harbors, pointing ahead, the *possibility* of a turning toward a non-principal mode of presencing. 'Higher than actuality stands possibility.' It is this possible turning that letting-be, or 'releasement', prepares.¹⁸⁷

In a mutated elaboration of the above quote, I am suggesting that we are amidst an anarchic interstice in the institution of the hegemonic phantasm of information brought about by technical evolution. In Heidegger's *Question Concerning Technology*, technological enframing, as it is based on the exact sciences and modern physics, is such that being is revealed as functionally exploitable as a source of power, i.e. it is challenged forth as standing reserve.¹⁸⁸ Domination manifests not only as the imposition of hegemonic discourse that names what is, but as the ability to control along the

¹⁸⁷ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 288-289

¹⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 283-317. The ecological impacts stemming from our ignorance about and measures of stability and organization are likely the most universally pressing issue.

material gradients of physical reality anywhere in the world. As we deconstruct the concepts that predominate in western thought, their genealogy shows how being and acting have been dominated by the demand of telic progress toward and coalescence around principal referents. Systematic approaches to knowledge successively centered on a transcendental that unified what appeared as disparate, i.e. the *difference* between existence as such, and the things ordered within it. What is the as such? Fill in the historically floating signifier.¹⁸⁹ The possibility of detaching praxis from ultimate referents means that control and automation need not appeal to anything outside of their own *reduplicated* immanence. Informationalization involves bringing the world under the order of computable management, which allows for the automation and control of functions without needing first philosophy to commit to sides in metaphysical debates. No more representations of a ground as the one ground, rather the ability to grab control and engineer grounds at will. Thus, principal metaphysics, as an epistemic project to discover and represent the transcendental grounds of ontology, is abolished. Informatics, only informatics. The will and informationalization, only the will and informationalization. If we are in and of an informational ontology synonymous with being, there is no transcendental principle, only the will to engineer, semanticize and reontologize. Our inheritance of hermeneutic and material accumulations gives us a firm grasp on what is actual, and in turning away from the telic project of grounding the actual as a representation in the transcendental, and instead focusing on future realization through engineering, we approach total mechanization and administration. In the end, Schürmann points to a remainder released by the deconstructive tradition and something these three theorists have been grappling with ever since, i.e. possibility beyond the confines of prescriptive determination. Without final referents there is the possibility of

¹⁸⁹ Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, Ibid. Laclau presents another way of thinking about the role of empty signifiers in the formation and evolution of social hegemonies. e.g. Ch. 3 “Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?”

an-archy.¹⁹⁰ And, in order to give sense to an-archic movement as nearly every Heideggerian is wont to do, Schürmann emphasizes the idea of *gelassenheit* or releasement. For Schürmann, releasement is linked to poetry, thinking, and the Eckhartian sense of wandering joy in movement that is without why, predetermined direction, given end, or will.¹⁹¹ The *turning* towards poiesis is an attempt to retrieve a sense of *techne* not reducible to the calculative rationality that sees the world as standing reserve. Schürmann emphasizes the importance of thinking understood as the playful, freely wandering poietic activity that resists the telic directionality of determinate knowledge and total administration. Schürmann follows Heidegger along off beaten tracks noting that thinking needs to be able to meander in a way that discretizing certitude obstructs. This is not to say that knowing is reducible to technicity or the metaphysics of presence, rather that enframing in the modern epoch captures and orders being under a certain economy of presence that hinders our ability to attend to the manifold ways in which presencing and becoming could possibly evolve. When the epoch of metaphysics closes, and praxis no longer presupposes the redemptive eschatology of ultimates, it becomes free to question, create and redirect possibility. How possibility manifests will depend on the configuration of the dynamic economies that coalesce as the presencing of the world. But, this poietic activity should not be read as antithetical to technoscientific practice. Rather, what Schürmann argues is that we need to have a more robust understanding of the perils of thoughtlessness. “Heidegger’s case against technology stands and falls with the claim that it is dangerous because *gedankenlos*, thoughtless.”¹⁹² Heidegger recognized the ingenuity and importance of the concepts emerging from the technoscientific practices of thinkers revolutionizing physics. And, what was important about the work of the leaders of atomic physics was their thoughtfulness.

¹⁹⁰ This sense of anarchic movement outside or beyond the telic finality of a principal referent resembles the non-equilibrium dynamics of poetic resistance to the hegemony of captivity.

¹⁹¹ “The lower intensities of releasement require an effort of the will; the higher intensities of releasement exclude every voluntary determination.” Schürmann, *Wandering Joy*, 82

¹⁹² Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 60

The greatness and superiority of natural science during the 16th and 17th centuries is because all the scientists were philosophers. They understood that there are no mere facts, but that the fact is only what it is in the light of the fundamental conception and always depends upon how far that conception reaches. The characteristic of positivism, wherein we have stood for decades and today more than ever, is contrary to this in that it thinks it can sufficiently manage with facts or other and new facts, while concepts are merely expedience which one some how needs but should not get too involved with, since that would be philosophy. Furthermore, the comedy, or rather the tragedy, of the present situation of science is, first, that one thinks to overcome positivism through positivism. To be sure, this attitude only prevails where average and subsequent work is done. Where genuine and discovering research is done, the situation is no different from that of three hundred years ago. That age also had its indolence, just as, conversely, the present leaders of atomic physics, Niels Bohr and Heisenberg, think in a thoroughly philosophical way, and only therefore create new ways of posing questions and, above all, hold out in the questionable.¹⁹³

Idealizing nostalgia aside, not only does Heidegger note the same thinkers Barad brings our attention to 72 years later, but the quote also argues that conceptual ingenuity, something central to the practice of philosophy, must confront the limits and plasticity of its reach. We must attend to the way we frame our knowledge of being in the world. It's worth a short historical aside to make a few connections here. Rouse notes that Heidegger did not mention Einstein and yet had, in *Being and Time*, made reference to relativity as significant for ontology's resurgence.¹⁹⁴ In the anthology, *Physics and National Socialism*, one finds the direct nazi attacks against "jewish physics" the basis of which was Einstein's supposed privileging of mathematical formalism over "nordic physics" that do "clean" experiments with clear answers about how to control nature, discover truth, and build machines with brawn. Einstein, "stroved to turn physics into a purely mathematical system of concepts. They propagated their ideas in the manner characteristic of Jews and forced them upon physicists."¹⁹⁵ Now, it was well known that Bohr was half jewish and he too was attacked by nazism, thus in 1935 as a nazi Heidegger should have omitted his name but didn't. I don't mention this as a pass for Heidegger, he doesn't get one. But what I find interesting is that the argument that

¹⁹³ Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 67

¹⁹⁴ Rouse, "Heidegger on Science and Naturalism," Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Hentschel, *Physics and National Socialism*, 119

Heidegger gives against the “indolence” of “average and subsequent work” is that the natural sciences try to reduce things to the positivism of facts. This may be linked to a fixation on logics and maths, but unlike his nazi colleagues, he is not arguing for more empiricism and the application of “superior” German engineering. Rather, average science lacks appreciation of conceptual philosophical work, i.e. thoughtfulness. There are, of course, serious debates about the roles of pure theory and applied experimentation in the sciences, and in this case nazis obscured the issues for racist ideological and political purposes. Yet, the conceptual problem, or rather this debate, returns with more technical nuance in Barad’s discussion of Bohr and Heisenberg. Heisenberg tried to circumvent the wave-particle problem by appealing to mathematical formalism, whereas Bohr recognizes the need to work toward conceptual clarification, part of which centered on the importance of the design of apparatuses and the cut between agencies and objects of observation.¹⁹⁶ Barad argues that Heisenberg’s philosophically instrumentalist presuppositions led him down the wrong path. “Heisenberg, adopted an instrumentalist stance...that the key factor is a working mathematical structure, not a solid conceptual foundation.”¹⁹⁷ Bohr on the other hand knew that the nature of representational concepts were not neutral, or as Barad might say, there are no mediums, theoretical practice is intra-active.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, by emphasizing this point, she entangles theory with ethics. For Barad, what the Bohr/Heisenberg debates show is, “a poignant example of how philosophical stances matter in the construction of scientific theories.”¹⁹⁹ So, unlike those who see conceptual creativity as an unfortunate philosophical remnant impeding quantitative science, in a historically circuitous triangulation Heidegger, Schürmann, and Barad argue that if conceptual

¹⁹⁶ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 123-124, 141-146 “The quantum eraser experiment not only supports Bohr’s interpretation over Heisenberg’s...but it confirms the centerpiece of Bohr’s interpretation: the inseparability of the object from the agencies of observation. Furthermore, these experiments demonstrate that measurements extend rather than resolve (collapse) entanglements” Ibid., 317

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 123

¹⁹⁸ “theoretical concepts (e.g., position and momentum) are not ideational in character but rather specific physical arrangements.” Ibid., 139. Waves and particles are abstractions unless they are defined in relation to other systems.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 124

thinking is erased from technoscience serious dangers abound. They recognize those who flee ontoethical entanglements, enacting what Ihde, following Pickering, calls the retreat strategies of positivist science-as-knowledge approaches, which when confronted with the messiness of everyday reconstructive practices tend toward abstract formalism, i.e. “science as a kind of theory generating system of hypothetical-deductive schemes...characterized as ahistorical, an-institutional, and apraxical.”²⁰⁰ Might this be a historical result of the division of labor in scientific evolution as it coevolved with industrialism? The Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village, which displays among other advents of american industrialism the evolution of Edison’s, the Wright’s and Ford’s workshops, is an example of how as the factory systems expanded so too did the granularity of individuation of task per shop floor space, the tendency toward automation, and the reduction of individuals to workers. This trend continues today in what Stiegler calls “general proletarianization” and is why STEM education without politically informed ethics produces easily manipulable and cooptable docile workers. When outlining his approach to conceptual engineering, Floridi notes how philosophy began outsourcing investigations as the sciences developed. Echoing Heidegger above, Floridi writes that previously, “philosophers had to take care of the whole chain of knowledge production, from raw data to scientific theories, as it were...philosophy has progressively identified classes of empirical and logico-mathematical problems and outsourced their investigations to new disciplines.”²⁰¹ And yet, they all give examples of the significance of philosophy for the way scientists practice science as it relates to the conceptual work that cannot be outsourced to logico-mathematico-empirical disciplines. These disciplines presuppose certain conceptual stabilities as a condition for their theoretical possibility. Said differently, wandering atelicity is anathema to the constitution of their practices. And, metatheoretical questions about the coherence and decoherence

²⁰⁰ Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 117

²⁰¹ Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*, 11

of concepts beyond a particular theoretical frame are the kinds of inquires Barad affirms in her emphasis on the importance of philosophical metaphysics. Understanding ontoepistemethetical entanglements and their ongoing material reconfigurations is why there is a need for thoughtful conceptual engineering. Unfortunately, finding where exactly philosophy as conceptual generation and creativity enters the sciences can be difficult. The impact of philosophy for those disciplines set to work in the everyday on delimited problems is more uncertain, particularly if we examine the more abstract, computational, logico-mathematical, gedanken-experiment type approaches, which often assume they can eschew problems of material realization. This is a direction in which Floridi tends, i.e. away from concrete and complex practices and towards totalizing generality or abstraction. And yet interestingly, he is forceful in reiterating that the practices of everyday epistemic agents have ontological weight and ethical implications, thus his philosophy recognizes the importance of reconciling everyday practices of both folk ontologies and highly theoretical abstractions. He claims his informational approach to structural realism has the ability to render abstractions dense via integrated gradations of governable and controllable matter that are entangled in ethical complexities. Determining where the philosophical rubber hits real road is not always easy. Hacking notes tensions and historical shifts in the importance of philosophy, which “mattered more to some mathematicians, in, say, 1884 than 2014...these discussions are of very little interest to working mathematicians. No matter what consensus builds (about the philosophical foundations of mathematics, i.e. platonist, intuitionist, structuralist, etc. which Hacking argues is unlikely)...it is unlikely to make much difference to mathematical activity or to what mathematicians think they are doing.”²⁰² On the other hand, in Hacking’s discussion of the work of leading mathematicians Connes and Gowers he notes that their philosophies,

are best described as *attitudes* to the mathematical life...These are not the technical doctrines of philosophers who dedicate their lives to careful analysis. They are the background ideas of

²⁰² Hacking, *Why is There a Philosophy of Mathematics at All?*, 207, 223. My addition in parenthesis.

men who dedicate their lives to creative mathematics. Their opposed philosophies may not matter much to how they engage in mathematical research, but they make a difference to how they conceive of their activities. They are philosophies to live by. Each mathematician's philosophy makes sense, for the individual, but what makes sense of the mathematical life for one person may be the opposite of what makes sense for another person.²⁰³

“Making sense” reads as a kind of epistemic tracking across our everyday ontological and ethical commitments. Careful, thoughtful philosophical analysis allows us to appreciate the importance of attending to larger and more complex totalities, dynamics, as well as areas to which we may be insensitive. The idea of making sense as ways of living in the world helps elucidate the anastomotic nature of our ontological, epistemological, and ethical lifeworlds. We can separate them but they will consistently flow together. In localizing the impacts of philosophy as sense giving connected to lived practice, Hacking notes the effects different philosophical commitments had/have on the development of mathematical education. This point ought not be understated, i.e. here, in the mathematical dispositif, not only do ethical values of right education seep in, but it also becomes clearer that political thrownness is already substantive within the apparatuses that institutionalize mathematical practices, which in turn become those sites of ontoepistemic generation bequeathing their materialized histories.

The opposed philosophies of mathematics may, however, make a difference to the way in which mathematicians teach their subject...what in America became known as ‘the new math’...urged that elementary instruction begin with set theory and logic, and should emphasize that maths is about structures. This point of view...was urged upon American elementary schools in the 1960s. There it gained added impetus from the desire to reform mathematics teaching in order to catch up to the Russians in the aftershock of Sputnik.²⁰⁴

From the Red Scare to math education in the US, parsing out mathematical problems means attending, to some degree, to the historical legacies of maths, which are discursive and ontologically dynamic, particularly when placed into the technical milieus of today’s computational approaches. Barad takes a slightly harder line, arguing that philosophical differences matter for the practices of

²⁰³ Ibid., 196

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 196, 199

physicists and that awareness of the imbricated nature of ontoepistemethicity meant that, in the end, Bohr was right and Heisenberg was wrong about the degree to which matter matters. In different ways both Hacking and Barad show what might be characterized as background philosophical ideas, which nonetheless can mean a whole lot to what develops in the future, both on ethical and scientific grounds. Only preparing undergraduate mathematicians or physicists to process or performatively handle concepts, but not to grapple with their broader significance or the way our relationships to them might impact our lived practices, is a bureaucratizing pedagogy. Cynics might argue that, realistically, students just need to be able to get jobs doing stock analytics or the like.²⁰⁵ Philosophical questions only muddy the water and slow progress. And, today the degree to which the various empirico-logico-mathematical disciplines incorporate philosophy or think critically about ethical entanglements as they set to work processing ontological and epistemological questions seems limited. Perhaps, because these domains set atomized individuals to work on what are reductively framed as merely empirical problems, they are not often seen as inherently entangled with ethical and political praxis. Or, the epistemic parts are interpreted as ontologically distinct from ethical problems abounding in the larger social dispositif. Perhaps because abstraction is often assumed to be more detached from the machinic assemblages of technoscience the value-neutrality of maths, logics and theoretical physics remain a pop and institutional dogma. But, arguing as Ihde convincingly does, that there is an ontological and historical priority of technology over science, and understanding, as Stiegler does, the ways in which intentionality is embedded in material, allows us to challenge this dogma. However, we need to be careful and specific about what is being argued when acknowledging the ways contemporary realists acknowledge social construction so as not to appear contradictorily relativist. If we take the entangled, evolving nature of praxes into account, we see that the historical reduction of inquiry to a pursuit of solutions to problems of mathematical

²⁰⁵ Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, 93

calculation obscures social ontologies and ethics, which play parts in the development and deployment of quantitative abstraction. If Barad is correct, this ahistorical approach presents itself rather ironically, as physically inaccurate. However, as a kind of thoughtlessness, this approach appears structurally stable. And, this seems to increase the more that disciplinary division of labor widens. This aside to the socio-material technics of maths and physics serves to create some links between these discussions of realism and historical materialism broadly understood. Lives dedicated to the development of creative mathematics have aided in the creation of the world we now inhabit, which is not without its problems. Perhaps some of those problems could be ameliorated if more time was spent quibbling over “merely philosophical” quandaries and the complexities of living amidst and betwixt intersecting dynamics.

My intentions in including these discussions of metaphysics is not to open the floodgates to the deluge of debates about scientific objectivity and social construction. Although those issues are looming in the background here, the main objective is to note the long-standing marriage of political power and technoscience, and to emphasize something akin to the distinction Ihde makes between science-as-knowledge (SK), science-as-practice (SP), and the pluralization of perspectival philosophies of science. As Ihde notes, this plurality is articulated to us in different terms by constructionisms, phenomenologies, hermeneutics, and post-structuralisms. As above, he argues that the retreat strategies of those who favor the science-as-knowledge perspective is the formalisms of math and physics. Barad umbrageously notes that the dismissive and pejorative label of the “merely philosophical” functions to delegitimize the value of attending to the complex of practical and everyday features of scientific praxes. This compliments Ihde’s attending to the importance of feminist research in the sciences. Ihde is critical of, “the retreat strategies of SK traditions. These arguments are those which wish to discredit or invalidate feminist perspectives as ‘philosophy’—but, interestingly, those arguments do not apply specifically to feminist versions alone, but to all the

newly emergent SP traditions.”²⁰⁶ Acknowledgement of the various traditions that take the implications of lived practice for the formation and formulation of a science is met with the dismissive label of being merely philosophical. Be it an appreciation for embodied indigenous knowledges or the value of feminist perspectives in the sciences, Ihde takes seriously the contributions from myriads of standpoints and situated epistemologies. He emphasizes that knowledges coevolve as embodied praxes. And, when we examine the historical evolution of physical systems, entities, and relations, one question that arises is: to what degree do stabilities persist throughout the subsuming shifts caused by the introduction of new concepts, laws, and technological milieus? Stabilities seem to provide evidence that there is some coherence to the idea of transhistorical forms. The concepts may change, e.g. from energy to information, but the social ontologies, which materialize in technics upon which the war machine depends, endure. Stability grows in part because of the fact that technological accumulations provide us with vantage points from which we reflect on the development of self-species-cosmos via mediated levels of abstraction/filtration. From Jaynes’ wild speculations about the hemispheric merging of a previously bicameral mind, to Foucault’s attention to the technics of self archived in hypomnemata, to Mignolo’s elucidation of the geopolitics of cartography, we can synthesize the concepts: of reflexive socio-technics that coevolve with neocortical complexity; the evolving forms of self-writing; and the geopolitics of territorial organization, to think through the implications of how, beginning in 1948, we became visually aware of our cohabitation on a single blue marble.²⁰⁷ Today we examine the network of lights connecting cities at night and compare them to arrangements of neural pathways. Under some nested gradient of abstraction we naturalize the overlaying of micro meso and macro as we see similarities in structures. We’ve seen ages and epochs of technological evolution. But, who

²⁰⁶ Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 119. i.e. those disciplines that attempt to think through the complexities of practice.

²⁰⁷ See e.g. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness*; Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*; Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*.

funded the map makers, and who controls the satellites? It should be reiterated that subsumption and supersession of law or concept doesn't mean that the forces they delimit are merely constructs. We access and reontologize reality by continuously technologically reframing it. And, reontologization has material, reproductive and evolutionary force. This is why in Floridi, Barad and Schürmann the role of a historically dispersed and contemporarily networked agency becomes central to their thinking as it helps us understand why we should attend to how we inherit the technics of self-writing. Epistemic agents don't just represent a world ready made or rearrange an objective material world, but rather mutationally access diffractive and dynamic un/enfoldings of a world of which they are a part. The nature of nature is not reducible to subject and object metaphysics, static essentialisms, or naturalized economies of presence. Questions about stability are relative to some measures of scale in spatiotemporal terms, i.e. in both duration and localization of material forces. How are things controlled? Where do the forces of control exist? How and where do they manifest, and for how long? From what level of granularity and/or complexity are we assessing stability? How far out are the praxes of control stable? And, how do we track their evolutions and materializations? When we acknowledge the entangled everyday practices of biologically and sociologically dynamic individuals, the historical evolution of some larger abstract totalities that we might call industrial-institutional complexes, and the evolution of artifacts, it seems incontestable that the aforementioned retreat strategies will provide an incomplete picture of reality.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ "But if any artifact may be used in multiple ways, one might be tempted to say that it nevertheless 'is,' in some ontological sense, this or that thing. This is, however, to misconstrue technological artifacts. Apart from human-technology relations, such *technofacts* as they might be called, would at best be certain conglomerations of material being, for example their physical or chemical properties. But the being of a technofact is more like that of an art object than a natural object, not only by being made, but by its use context. Thus the ambiguity of uncontrollable, multiple uses for any single technofact is balanced by the ambiguity that I may also use any number of technologies to achieve the same purposes." Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 37

Working against this tendency, Ihde's work elucidates the economically and institutionally entangled nature of contemporary technoscientific practice. In addition to highlighting the dispersed nature of knowledge production in our contemporary era, this helps reiterate the importance of the pluralization of epistemic sources and the impact that archived memories, as accessible mnemotechnics, have had on hominization in general and the development of western scientific research in particular.²⁰⁹ The main point of emphasis is the coherence of the concept of technoscience as social complex. Who creates, distributes and consumes these products? The webs are wide.

...corporate technoscience may be seen as a third stage in our brief history of science from ancient to modern to now, contemporary science. But it is now clearly sedimented as illustrated in the following indicators...Big Science has now become the model for science research and development. The multibillion dollar, single instrument is now common: super colliders and the Hubble telescope are but two examples...Most research is corporate team research, resulting in virtually all publications being jointly authored. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the oldest medical science journals in the U.S., indicates that at the turn of the century 95 percent of all articles were singly authored, with today 95 percent being jointly authored. *Science* magazine recently indicated that the record number of signatures was in a mathematics article with some 194 authors!...And although the momentum of physics, with its early modern associates of astronomy and nuclear physics continues, both chemistry—which has almost as long as physics had billion dollar projects—and biology, which has its first billion dollar plus project (the Human Genome Project), have come into the Big Science corporate gambit...Contemporary technoscience in its now technological and corporate form *requires a very complex, large, and society-supported infrastructure for the production of its "products."*²¹⁰

Joining the mega structures of state research and development in the various areas of physics came biology and chemistry. Beyond mapping and archiving ever expanding genomic databases, specific attention is being directed toward informationalizing and perceptualizing the communicative

²⁰⁹ "Ultimately a point was reached when the memory of even the ablest individual could no longer serve as a filing cabinet for the growing amount of knowledge. Nonhuman cabinets had to be invented lest knowledge be lost. The impasse was resolved fortunately by the invention of writing and papyrus." Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, 24

²¹⁰ Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 60

neural networks of biological organisms.²¹¹ As just one among many examples, the Obama administration's BRAIN (Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies) initiative is a DARPA project that promises to uncover and exhaustively map the mechanisms of neurology.²¹² The initiative boasts industrial, academic and endowed institutional supports in their endeavors to visualize "connectomes" of neural pathways and synaptic connections.²¹³ These and similar research projects, like those into the biology of brittlestars, the ability to erase memories in rodents, or the ego disintegrating pharmacology of hallucinogens, show compounding technological and biological impacts on the evolution of life on earth.²¹⁴ The industrial data nouveau riche and the old money of science are deeply invested in the research and development of both state and academic structures. The American university system has promulgated this approach at home and abroad. And the approach is not at all novel.

American universities were extending their reach overseas as an integral part of U.S. capital's internationalization or imperialism. American universities overwhelmingly topped the ranks of the world's top universities and continued to attract a disproportionately large number of foreign students, whose tuition fees bolstered university budgets. The attraction of foreign students majoring in science and technology was proving important to the manufacturing economy in the United States, where they provided an important source of trained labor. Research and development activities were being internationalized, spurred by globalized American corporations. Universities in other countries were being restructured in conformity with the U.S. model and American universities were opening campuses in other countries. The growing international reach of American academe is paralleled by the increasing influence of American media, advertising, and entertainment, and must be

²¹¹ One of Ihde's contentions is that technics function as translation mechanisms bringing non-perceptual but nonetheless real phenomena into the perceptual realm. Informatics, computers and digital modeling have done wonders for pedagogy and virtual engineering.

²¹² "A focus of the initial years of the BRAIN Initiative is the development of next-generation tools for exploring how dynamic patterns of neural activity in the brain control thoughts, feelings and movements." National Institute of Health, "Overview," Ibid.

²¹³ Brain imaging is getting good and generating important research, e.g. we can create maps of how brains respond to psychoactive hallucinogens, and we can show how your job can affect the structures and functions of your neuroanatomy. See e.g. Maguire, Woollett, and Spiers, "London taxi drivers and bus drivers," 1091-1101. Schartner et al. "Increased spontaneous MEG signal," Ibid.

²¹⁴ Nabavi et al., "Engineering a memory with LTD and LTP." 348. Researches have shown it possible to erase and implant memories formed as a result of conditioned responses to fear/pain from the brains of mice. By technologically intervening in their neurophysiology researchers map and manipulate on a multitude of levels. Carhart-Harris et al., "Q: correlates of the LSD experience revealed by multimodal." More generally, the emerging areas of research around the concept of epigenetics seem relevant here.

understood as just as much an aspect of U.S. imperialism as its military, financial, and economic power overseas.²¹⁵

Controlling the institutions and designing the projects to be carried out therein, by those who enjoy the power to generate and materialize knowledges, is central to the technics of governmentality. From the slave labor shield factory of Cephalus, to Galileo's military compasses, to Heisenberg's work on a nazi bomb, to Shannon's fire control systems at Bell Labs and beyond, big, corporate, state, academic technoscience shows us a stably widening confluence. Just as the BRAIN initiative is linked to old money merging with the nouveau riche, so too was DARPA's more military minded Total Information Awareness (TIA) project, an applied predictive policing theory of global surveillance. Ongoing cooperation is such that every major private tech corporation participates in endless intergovernmental projects of mass surveillance and population control predicated on informational feedback loops of user input.²¹⁶ Ihde's work helps elucidate that the practices and locations of science involve networks of actors who bring with them personal idiosyncrasies and philosophical orientations that matter. Importantly, examples of alterity and cultural difference in the development of perceptual technics abound in Ihde's work, and he traces the philosophical implications of, for example, prioritizing the realm of the visual in the sciences over or against other embodied perceptual ways of knowing.²¹⁷ These are lessons learned through his engagement with other philosophical traditions attune to embodied praxis. "I am suggesting that the proliferation of pluralist philosophies of science—many with strong normative programs—are the late twentieth-century response to a much broader shifted perspective on science overall. Feminists...have hit home with respect to a nondeniable bias within the very heart of science-as-practice. I doubt that it

²¹⁵ Heller, *The Capitalist University*, 172

²¹⁶ Most of the details about PRISM were given in the revelations of Snowden. For recent takes on some of this material see e.g. Harcourt, *The Counterrevolution*, and Levine, *Surveillance Valley*.

²¹⁷ See e.g. Ihde, *Expanding Hermeneutics*, Ibid and Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, Ibid.

will get off free.”²¹⁸ Ihde's notion of pluriculturality, as postmodern relations among non-neutral embodied hermeneutics and cultural practices, which impact how we interpret possible uses, discloses technological multi-stabilities and potential. This affords us ways of knowing that can become binocular and beyond. The interchanges between different hermeneutics contributes to both ontological dynamism and epistemic expansion.²¹⁹ However, the difficulty in parsing out the implications that result from recognizing the messy practices of science is why Hacking, for example, sees a need to specify where the application of the concept of social construction pertains.²²⁰ It both is and isn't the case that atoms are social constructs. “Concepts, in Bohr's account, are not mere ideations but specific physical arrangements.”²²¹ Atoms are real despite their material irreducibility, and through the control of physical forces through apparatuses we can make them manifest before us. We can capture them as information on mediums and produce images. Atomic science constructs ways of intervening in the world, which is possible because of the world's reality. But, atomic science doesn't exhaustively capture some objectively real world, nor is it neutral in terms of its impact on future research and development. Our ignorances and inability to anticipate outcomes involving complex systems abound, and are evidenced in the extinction of species and the toxified spaces on earth that will radiate for millennia. What we need are ways of thinking through practices capable of responding to the complexity of ontoepistemethetical entanglements.

²¹⁸ Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 131

²¹⁹ “Pluriculturality is, in fact, a *proliferation of ways of seeing*.” Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 174. Importantly, in Ihde's existential technics we see how, e.g. learning of, from, and betwixt multiple languages gives us a greater understanding of our own. I think of this point as an ontoepistemethetical reflection of the technics of self-writing. And, here I would draw connections to Lugones' sense of tactically grounded readings and travelings, and the wisdom in Lorde's feminist poetics wherein she notes the myriad ways in which “we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other” through the subsumption and obliteration of difference and voice.

²²⁰ Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, Ibid. For example, the question about the speed of light in the chapter on weapons research reiterates that the coherence of a question is highly context dependent. “I am not a contingentist about the content of science, once the questions are intelligible and are asked. But I am inclined to contingentism about the questions themselves, about the very form of a science.” p. 165

²²¹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 54

One strategy to achieve this is to expand epistemic agency in areas of design. One of Ihde's suggestions is that philosophers resituate themselves so as to impact research and development of technology. Philosophers, "should reposition themselves at what I call the 'R&D' position where technologies are taking developmental shape, in think tanks, in incubator facilities, in research centers. Only then can truly 'new' and emerging technologies be fully philosophically engaged."²²² For Ihde and others, having agency in the engineering of technics, upon which we depend and are impacted by, is important. As Arthur Galston, one of the developers of Agent Orange who coined the term ecocide and came to abhor the applications of his research is often noted as saying, "I used to think that one could avoid involvement in the antisocial consequences of science simply by not working on any project that might be turned to evil or destructive ends...things are not all that simple...the only recourse for a scientist concerned about the social consequences of his work is to remain involved with it to the end."²²³ Galston's call for more wholistic involvement entails something akin to the thoughtfulness described above. However, limitedly, in a version of the value-neutral perspective of science, Galston seems to see the "perversions" of science stemming from social pressures rather than, at least in part, internal to the material conditions of research. The point about mathematics pedagogy and competitive militarized space exploration, or the technosciences of biological engineering is to emphasize that epistemic practices are entangled in the power relations that govern and control the spacetimes wherein knowledge is generated and the materials on which it is stored. A scientific realist, asserting structural stability demonstrable in technoscientifically controlled phenomena along the physico-material gradients of reality, must concede the reality of stability within existing social ontologies. A structurally integrated account of the growing hegemony of information in our post-foundational engineering epoch shows how the social ontologies and

²²² Ihde, "Can Continental Philosophy Deal with the New Technologies?" 332

²²³ Galston "Science and Social Responsibility: A Case History," 223 See also Zierler, *The Invention of Ecocide*.

economies of the infosphere maintain a strong degree of historical continuity and stability with entrenched relations of power. We see military black sites, destroyed evidence of torture, and the productions of psychological and somatological trauma in the war against errancies that don't abide the homeostatic logic of perpetual subordination. This power is likely to grow rapidly because of the technological dynamism of capitalism, at least relative to other epochs. If we examine the future as it is imagined by those with wealth and position we should anticipate continuity, i.e. agents and institutions will continue to exert their power in order to maintain, secure, exploit and deploy disproportionately accumulating social wealth in the service of their own interests.

Developing the idea of technologies of the self, partially from Foucault's analysis of the differences of use across an archeological episteme and the genealogical implications on subject formation of early writing practices, Steigler argues that historically evolving technologies of social and individual composition have become focused on, "the systematic organization of the capture of attention made possible by the psychotechnologies that have developed with radio (1920), television (1950) and digital technologies (1990)."²²⁴ Industrialized and commercialized technologies of self-writing have ushered in what Berardi calls the "colonization of experience" carried out through the introduction of a new ICT device paradigm.²²⁵ We can see the future forming when google's "Eric Schmidt declared that the twenty-first century would be synonymous with what he called the 'attention economy,' and that the dominant global corporations would be those that succeed in maximizing the number of 'eyeballs' they could consistently engage and control." Crary continues, noting that eyeballs, motionally understood, become indexes of attention, as do mouse drifts, and with all movements being recorded and reported for algorithmic analysis, "corporate success will also be measured by the amount of information that can be extracted, accumulated, and used to

²²⁴ Stielger, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 81

²²⁵ Berardi, *Neuro-totalitarianism*, Ibid.

predict and modify the behavior...to normalize and make indispensable, as Deleuze outlined, the idea of a continuous interface...with illuminated screens of diverse kinds that unremittingly demand interest or response.”²²⁶ The approach whereby we informationalize neuroanatomy and get continuous feedback about behavior so as to engineer and manipulate it can be understood as part of what Stiegler, following Leroi-Gourhan, calls an organology, which “takes as its object the historically contingent structures in which physiological sense organs are conjoined and coarticulated with artificial organs or what one might term the generalised field of ‘technical prosthetics’.”²²⁷ Affective capitalism harnesses these institutional affordances so as to exploit the coupling of brain and computer. The evolution of our egopoietic technics of self-writing and the control over them by those who design the devices for the purposes of captivating of attention and extracting value compresses in our contemporary era. If informationalization is contributing to the development of an engineering epoch, and there seems to be reasons in abundance to take this idea serious, we need to confront the fact that, as Ihde has noted, “engineering science is as wedded to the ‘military-industrial complex’ as any Eisenhower ever dreamed of.”²²⁸ Through the global ubiquity of computational infrastructures, surveillance programs like PRISM have shown how the MIC captures the whole of global information and communication flows; a power grounded in the fact that the MIC was engineering the infrastructures. “When people in government assert that the NSA would never collect communications on an American, any American, whether they’re the president...or whatever, without a warrant, they are lying...They pick it up, they save it, and they drop it in their database. That happens to everyone right now....These things happen by default. That’s how...the

²²⁶ Crary, 24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, 75-76

²²⁷ James “Technics and Cerebrality,” 69

²²⁸ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 195. One could also look to Mills, *The Power Elite*, to find earlier versions of similar concerns.

system of surveillance works.”²²⁹ And from those who have uncovered details about military research programs, which long predated what Snowden brought to light about PRISM and how “the NSA had turned Silicon Valley’s globe-spanning platforms into a de facto intelligence collection apparatus”²³⁰, we have troves of evidence about innumerable programs: from attempts at pharmacological mind control in MKULTRA, to campaigns of misinformation, neutralization, and assassinations in COINTELPRO, to the CIA’s funding and oversight of academics developing torture through extreme sensory deprivation. The American government wasn’t unique in these or other barbarous practices as these are tried and true methods of power and control exerted on populations all across the globe. And historically, long before the nazi experiments at Dachau and Auschwitz, American eugenicists were forcibly sterilizing already vulnerable populations.²³¹ And before that, attempts at destruction of the ability to control their own future or way of life was visited upon spatially sequestered indigenous populations deemed dangerous to the social health of the west. Colonize through territorial encroachment and military force, assimilate those you can, sequester those you can’t assimilate, surveil, appropriate property, destroy mechanisms of inheritance, and where necessary, eliminate superfluous populations. Although different in the iterative particulars, when framed in such a way as to highlight the historically enmeshed contemporary practices, we can begin to see the ongoing legacy of an evolving colonialism. Today, the repositories of privatized genetic code informationalized, manipulated, or discarded by institutions, which are the sites of socio-structural reproduction and knowledge generation that

²²⁹ Scahill, “Snowden vs Trump.”

²³⁰ Levine, *Surveillance Valley*, 193. And, the same is most likely true for the development of the TOR network that is supposed to provide anonymity online. As Snowden made clear the MIC built the infrastructures of the internet, and signals intelligence, with its geopolitically panoptic 5 to at times 41 international surveillance eyes, have penetrating vision. These are programs the public discovers, which are often illegal or extrajudicial. For these and other reasons I would argue that we are safe in assuming that undisclosed systems of surveillance have already replaced the leaked ones.

²³¹ Lacter, “Torture-based Mind Control: psychological mechanisms and psychotherapeutic approaches to overcoming mind control,” Ibid. See also McCoy, “Science in Dachau’s Shadow,” Ibid. Most of McCoy’s work deals with issues of biopower, militaries and colonialism. Collins and various black feminists have also covered eugenics.

control, maintain and capitalize on the appropriation of bio-digital resources, are developed through the dispossession of collective, historically accumulated inputs and effort. Writing about the implications of mass surveillance, Fuchs notes that ICTs “of the surveillance-industrial-complex disempower citizens who cannot shape their own conditions of information and it creates multiple power asymmetries that question the freedoms of information, thought, opinion, and communication...The surveillance-industrial complex shows that a negative dialectic of the Enlightenment is at play in contemporary society...”²³² And as others have shown, disentangling modern science from the MIC is impossible because of the fact that science is, “embodied in instrumental technologies...embedded in a matrix of engineering and linked to the largest-scale patronage available.”²³³ Which is, usually, the military. And for all their power over life and death, they are also those most responsible for life’s increased vulnerability to death. Capturing people and territory, spatially sequestering populations, and subjecting them to assimilation or erasure has long been a part the western conception of human progress.²³⁴ Inversely for radicals, escape and resistance to these apparatuses of captivity is paramount. But, because of my pessimistic outlook on the potential to antagonize against these structured and structuring relations through the utilization of the very tools designed and distributed by the agencies that engineer them, and the loathsome prospects of obligatory and largely vacuous political participation, I will stress the importance of an apostatical creativity and invention. Prior to and from Socrates’ invocation of dialog against the arresting power of those who are stronger, to critics of seemingly endless globalized war, the resilience of resistance has resounded since time immemorial. Now, despite the fact that I take the

²³² Fuchs, “Information Ethics in the Age of Digital Labour and the Surveillance-Industrial Complex,” 186

²³³ Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 195

²³⁴ See Vine, *Base Nation*, Ibid and his companion website are excellent visual accounts of the evolution of militarism and the settler colonial, annihilating logic of territorial control. We might also see Paul Rucker’s artworks of prison proliferation. What is interesting in Rucker, “Proliferation US Prisons,” Ibid, is that the green dots indicating prison proliferation from 1778 to 1900 don’t account for the millions of people enslaved on plantations. Filling the southern gap would require adding: Schulten, “Slave Density Animation”; Mullen, “The Spread of U.S. Slavery” and Saunt, “U.S.” for the for the progression of U.S. settler colonialism see

structural stability of asymmetrical inheritance and social position to be, realistically, obvious, nonetheless I will draw attention to a few specific technoscientific developments within the MIC and the corresponding alterations to war and governance resulting from the information revolution. My goal is to elucidate praxes of control, captivity and surveillance central to modern state power and its adaptations and mutations resulting from the ICT revolution. I think we ought to take the MIC powers of captivity serious. This doesn't mean that stability precludes adaptive, dynamic or entropic alterations relative to the existing measure of order, rather it allows us to see the mechanisms whereby errancy is controlled, adjusted for, or exploited in order to maintain the powers of captivity and control. Ultimately I'll do this so as to open to a discussion of the possibility of creative tactically grounded resistance to the deployment of eliminative technologies. I'll provide a tightly compressed and highly synthetic but I believe accurate synopsis of this convergence. Before I do, allow me a brief aside to discuss the idea of apparatuses of capture, which will be important for thinking about psychological and somatological control.

Without going too far into the idiomatic maze of Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic plateaus, a brief explanation of their concept of capture and the way that technoscientific stability is captured by the state apparatus, will help situate the discussion of the way compositional powers to write control protocols are embedded in the technics of governmentality. Not unlike a GoA or a diffractive reading, in the first paragraph of "10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think It Is?)" a professor mixes geological and biological ideas in a lecture on processes of consolidation and differentiation. These processes are at work in different levels of organization or strata and are core concepts for how Deleuze and Guattari philosophize. Technologically mediated vantage points have provided us with evolving pictures of cosmological, geophysical, biological, and cultural becoming. The power to control and intervene along physico-material gradients for Deleuze and Guattari is the ability to de/territorialize across what they call strata. The various strata, "consist

of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, of producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates. Strata are acts of capture...striving to seize whatever comes within their reach...they proceed simultaneously by code and by territoriality.²³⁵ Capture as territorialization is the ordering or striation of spaces and times, whereas lines of flight deterritorialize and smooth space. It can be the case that striated spaces desire a kind of smoothness, e.g. highly striated and hierarchical totalitarian state control can be a way of smoothing space through the obliteration of difference as we might characterize the prison system, which is highly striated space designed to obliterate differences and identities such that state control is smoothly totalized, but we need not explore this more here. The idea of stabilizing acts of capture are specific to the gradient or strata on which we focus our technical attention, i.e. the cosmic, terrestrial, geophysical processes of inorganic physics; the cellular, living, mobile processes of organic chemistry and biological evolution; or the significant, semiotic, cultural and linguistic processes of the alloplastic strata. Our knowledge and ability to control phenomena in the realm of inorganic chemistry is pretty solid, wherein form, content, expression and substance are closely linked and understood according to the molar/molecular distinction. Whereas, our knowledge of the long term physiological impacts on children raised by overworked single parents grows in complexity as it mixes dynamics with different intensities from geological, organic and cultural strata. Concrete machinic assemblages allow us to capture material forces via configured apparatuses and are entangled with the discourses and enunciative assemblages that give sense and meanings to matter. Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari, we can conceptualize stabilities as assemblages capable of linking together dynamics from across different physico-socio-scientific practices such that in creating linkages we develop the ability to phenomenologically capture becomings, record moments

²³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40

on mediums which we deploy protensionally as we engineer. By reading signs we can capture prey, erase its agential errancy, and manifest it as an object before us. As semiotics evolve in complexity, enunciations take on more significance and are less dependent on physical content. Collective assemblages of enunciation and their entanglements in machinic assemblages of physical objects give us ways of thinking about the quadratic arrangements of content, expression, form, and substance.²³⁶

The example concept will be the military, but given the influence of Foucault on Deleuze and Guattari, we could easily substitute, as they do, the concept of the prison industrial complex. In the collective assemblage of enunciation of the military we have contents and expressions, both of which have forms and substances. The content comes in the form of designs of military installations, the organizational theories of military practice, the design of weaponry and the corporate structures that build them etc. The substance of the content are the guns, bombs, buildings, fortifications, command hierarchies, etc. The expression is in the form of discourses on war, conquest, combatants, the practices of killing, militarism, invasion and counterinsurgency, etc. The substance of the expression is the declaration of war, the laws that govern conflict and the treatment of combatants, the utterances that legitimate military power, the laws of torture and detention, etc. This is the military industrial complex as *dispositif*, and its development in the west functioned to seize, secure and demarcate territory, and internalize disciplinary regimes such that populations within could be governed in accordance with other machinic and collective assemblages of enunciations about what constitutes a healthy polis.²³⁷ Thus, “every assemblage has two sides, the machining of bodies or objects, and group enunciation.”²³⁸ The point is that through assemblages of both enunciation and concrete materialization, or what I have followed Barad above in calling

²³⁶ The formulation is explicit in the fourth plateau “November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics” but is developed throughout. See also Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus*, Ibid.

²³⁷ Here I am combining some themes developed in Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, Ibid.

²³⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 439

material discursivity, we can see the confluences between technics and the evolution of various forms of captivity. Through various apparatus of capture that operate via assemblages we can repeatedly align relations, or flows of intensities, so as to structure, stratify and produce meaning and matter in accordance with the designs of those deploying the material and intellectual accumulations of historically well entrenched power. The development of the state apparatus in the west has produced assemblages the function of which is to reproduce and maintain existing power relations. “The whole system is an apparatus of capture of the vital potential of the many for the disproportionate and sometimes deadly satisfactions of the few.”²³⁹ This is what happens when the war machine is captured by the state apparatus. The idea of the war machine in Deleuze and Guattari is complex or confused depending on your sympathies, but war making as it was and is carried out in the development of western states is a process of territorial expansion. State apparatuses establish control over land through processes of territorialization and colonization, internally discipline populations via host of assemblages. In our time has been through the development of ICT infrastructures, the virtualization of space and time, the creation of digital resources imbibed with value or semanticized by people who are dispossessed of that very value, and the development of somatological control through chemical, biological and pharmaceutical technologies. My argument is that technological development cannot be disentangled from military and corporate forms of control and exploitation. Integral to the development of the state as ubiquitous military assemblage is the stabilization of the techniques and tools that carry out the scientific ways of warfare.

The watershed moments of technological history are entangled in the agential intra-actions that exercise the power over life and death. The foray into different takes on realism in contemporary philosophy, and the structural stability and expansion of technoscientific practices of

²³⁹ Massumi, *A Users Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 76

state, was to track how embedded technics of control are part of the everydayness of human experience. I've argued that we must concede that everyday we inhabit a world made up of the hand-me-downs of militarism understood as evolving yet stable practices of governmentality. "Violence is found everywhere, but under different regimes and economies."²⁴⁰ And, there are more or less dominate economies of presencing. We are developing the ability to capture intensities, reontologize the way errant beings appear through material, somatological and ideological apparatuses capable of reconfiguring forces so as to control how something behaves. The development of this power is traceable across history and becomes visible when we examine the coevolution of human biology and technology. As Lewis notes about the work of Stiegler, the "central thesis is that man never exists without technics, and this means that any *transcendental* account of man's emergence must implicate an *empirical* account of the emergence of technology."²⁴¹ At an explanatory level this requires that we have a materialist account neocortical emergence, which can disclose to us the evolution of control focused on the brain and biology as communicative systems capable of being informationalized and technically manipulated.

In tracing an account through the paleontological development of bipedalism to the artifacts of neolithic anthropology we can compartmentalize history into epochs of technological revolutions and show a large degree of coherence. As one example, the development, implementation, and proliferation of technics are central ways of understanding military history. Telescoping forward in time from stone tools, to the control of fire, to the navigation of waterways, to agriculture, to the development of writing, I want to focus in on the clockwork mechanology of the modern occident and follow it up to our contemporary era. The art of governing the body was understood according

²⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 425

²⁴¹ Lewis, "Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology," 53. Interesting contrasts emerge between the way that Stiegler understands the function of myth in human evolution and the way Lorde incorporates myth into her biomythography. Both are connected to archaic history however uniquely different.

to a mechanological physiology ordered by a divine artisan to which was analogized a sovereign political body the rational head of which was the crown of an enlightened absolutist state. The mobilization of the modern war machine consolidated the combined resources of entire villages for the production of armed iron clad riders of territorial conquest, which in turn revolutionized governmentality and the function of the military industrial complex.²⁴² As chemical revolutions continued to materially emerge, thermodynamics began to change the landscape. The mechanics of war began inventing new sources of energy. Motorization set in dynamic motion centralized power sources animating machinery that reshaped conceptions of the cosmos writ large into a vast heat engine.²⁴³ Energetic resistance and the entropic randomness of heat dissipation problematized the idea of a frictionless mechanism. Domains of control, design and engineering exploded when new sources for motor power began to proliferate at various levels of scale and complexity. How do we control the function of a deteriorating motor or a system that tends toward the entropic? How do we idealize, automate, regulate, and order it? Enter Watt and the science of governors as servomechanical regulatory systems premised upon informational feedback loops. Disorganization and chaos can be adjusted for if we can anticipate and sense disturbances caused by the randomness that characterizes physical systems. And despite the fact that the gears of the world could not be reversibly unwound, mechanics were not overturned, rather they were subsumed, structurally stabilized through their integration into a gradient of abstraction tightly nested within growingly specified technoscientific assemblages. Mechanics still work and function, just like Newtonian physics do, but they need not be rooted in the idea of a metaphysically stable ground or principle,

²⁴² See e.g. White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, Ibid and discussions of technological changes and historical forms of social ontology. Of course, the age systems and the idea of epochs are prone to over simplification and are meant here as generalizations about technical systems broadly understood.

²⁴³ “It was quite difficult not only for physicists but also for other men of science to reconcile themselves to the blow inflicted on the supremacy of mechanics by the science of heat.” Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, 141

e.g. in the frictionless creation of a divine clockmaker. Knowledges accumulate, integrate, and proliferate, and knowledge impacts sociological and somatological evolution. The implications of technoscientific dynamism on the evolution of complex socio-structural ontologies is a central materialist question, and deeply connected to the development of socio-political hegemony.²⁴⁴ Throughout the ages, military industrial complexes develop their capacities to capture, conquer, and consolidate power. Some come to consolidate territories and control populations therein. We retain portions of our imperialist and colonialist histories that we pretend into the future of asymmetric network-centric counterinsurgency.²⁴⁵ Out of the thermodynamic, electromechanical, and the servomechanical regulations of function come the cybernetic systems of automation, the computer, and the development of a global digital infrastructure. “Philosophical reflection was now faced with such widespread technical expansion that all forms of knowledge were mobilized by, and brought closer to, the field of instrumentality, to which science, with its ends determined by the imperatives of economic struggle or war, and with its epistemic status shifting according became more and more subject.”²⁴⁶ As computationalism advances, war machines outsource and automate the task of perfecting the parabolic trajectories of lofted projectiles. The west began concentrating its technological powers on development of biological weapons, cryptanalysis of state secrets, atomic experimentation, and introducing more chaos and disorder into situationally real-time operations then an enemy combatant could process. Surveillance takes center stage, and the automation of control through the use of internalized monitoring systems allowed for computational adjustments

²⁴⁴ The concept of technological “revealing” is central in Harvey, *A Companion to Capital*. Harvey spends an entire chapter on footnote 4 to ch. 15 of Marx’s *Capital* and the influences of technology on sociological and somatological evolution.

²⁴⁵ We are pretending toward “chaoplectic war” according to Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare*, Ibid. We also see examples of the appropriation of radical thought by the MIC present today in a way similar to Weizman, “Walking Through Walls,” research on IDF officers’ application of Deleuze and Guattari in their settler colonial control of Palestine.

²⁴⁶ Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, 2, 286 and the discussion of light-time as a war of speed. Fiber optics and informational feedback loops.

of a system so that its operation accorded with specifications of design. Largely a conceptual machine prior to its materialization, computers developed within a complex of machinic assemblages involving the collaboration and communication of engineers, scientists, and institutional laboratories. They were among the conditions for the possibility of nuclear weaponry.²⁴⁷ Shannon and Turing were central to the development of electronics capable of performing functions in logical and mathematical terms. Their work expanded the development of electromagnetism and it revolutionized telecommunications. Binary notations indicating electric charge could be used to perform an operation of boolean algebra by reading and writing on small storage mediums. Information became a concept for the negentropic ordering of physical noise or randomness on smaller and more compressed bits of matter. The idea of physical information develops with digital architecture, and more and more warfare becomes informational and information becomes metaphysical. As the information age spread across the globe, the ubiquity of digital technologies and infrastructures formed what Stiegler calls an integrated and planetary technical system.

The various levels of combinations are statically and dynamically interdependent, and imply laws of operation and processes of transformation. Each level is integrated into a superior level dependent upon it, right up to the global coherence that the system forms. A technical system constitutes a *temporal unity*. *It is a stabilization of technical evolution around a point of equilibrium concretized by a particular technology...* The evolution of technical systems moves toward the complexity and progressive solidarity of the combined elements...globalization ...the deterritorialization of technics— leads to what Heidegger calls *Gestell*: planetary industrial technics—the systematic and global exploitation of resources, which implies a worldwide economic, political, cultural, social, and military interdependence.²⁴⁸

Systems for controlling behavior expanded beyond the mechanical to the biological.

“Cybernetics was concerned from the very beginning with describing the universal patterns of organization behind biological and mechanical systems and thereby enhancing the possible

²⁴⁷ “The computer and the computer network have their roots in the same science–industry–state nexus that built the atomic bomb and was the technological motor behind the American waging of the cold war.” Herrera, *Technology and International Transformation*, 199

²⁴⁸ Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, 31

interfaces between them.”²⁴⁹ Cybernetic servomechanisms functioned to maintain homeostasis, i.e. a biological concept of interdependent elements working in systemic equilibrium. Reading deviations from design function, error sensors are able to automatically adjust the behavior of the elements such that the system operates at equilibrium. These and other developments in computing and cybernetics were central to the development of control and communication. Across various technoscientific assemblages the demands for the regulation of behavior of phenomena being investigated expanded the application of homeostatic control systems. Regulation became central to the sciences of not just mechanology but biology, pharmacology, endocrinology, neurophysiology, and then extrapolated into the realm of the sociopolitical. These and other areas of research and development are the frontiers of our current era, wherein we have created new forms of control over life through the deployment of bioinformatics in ICTs. We are developing systems of knowledge that are rigorously, and at times ruthlessly, cartographic.

Figure 6: Padberg et al. “Cortical Evolution and Hand Use: 1”

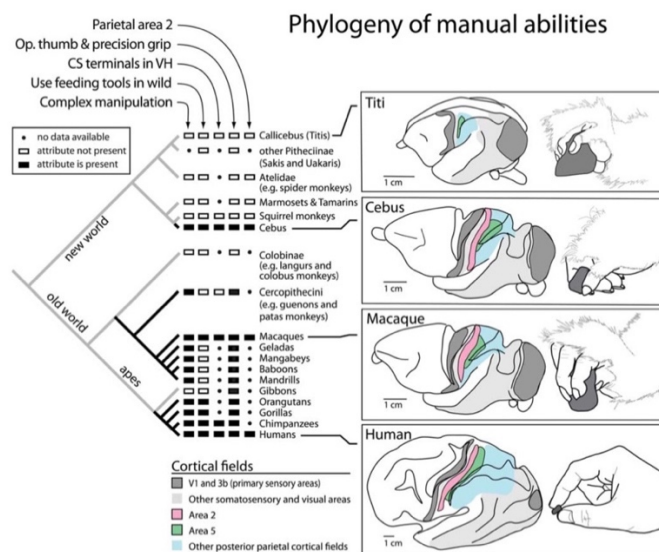


Figure 7. Left, Primate cladogram showing which primate taxa have the following characteristics related to manual control: complex manipulation (e.g., grasping food with one hand and peeling it with the other), use of feeding tools, corticospinal (CS) terminals in ventral horn (VH), opposable (or laterally opposable) thumb, and presence of parietal area 2. Filled box, Characteristic is present. Unfilled box, characteristic has been sufficiently tested and is absent. Right, Parietal areas and representative grasp postures traced from photographs in five primate species. The cladogram was adapted from van Schaik et al. (2003).

²⁴⁹ Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare*, 112

Figure 7: Padberg et al. “Cortical Evolution and Hand Use: 2”

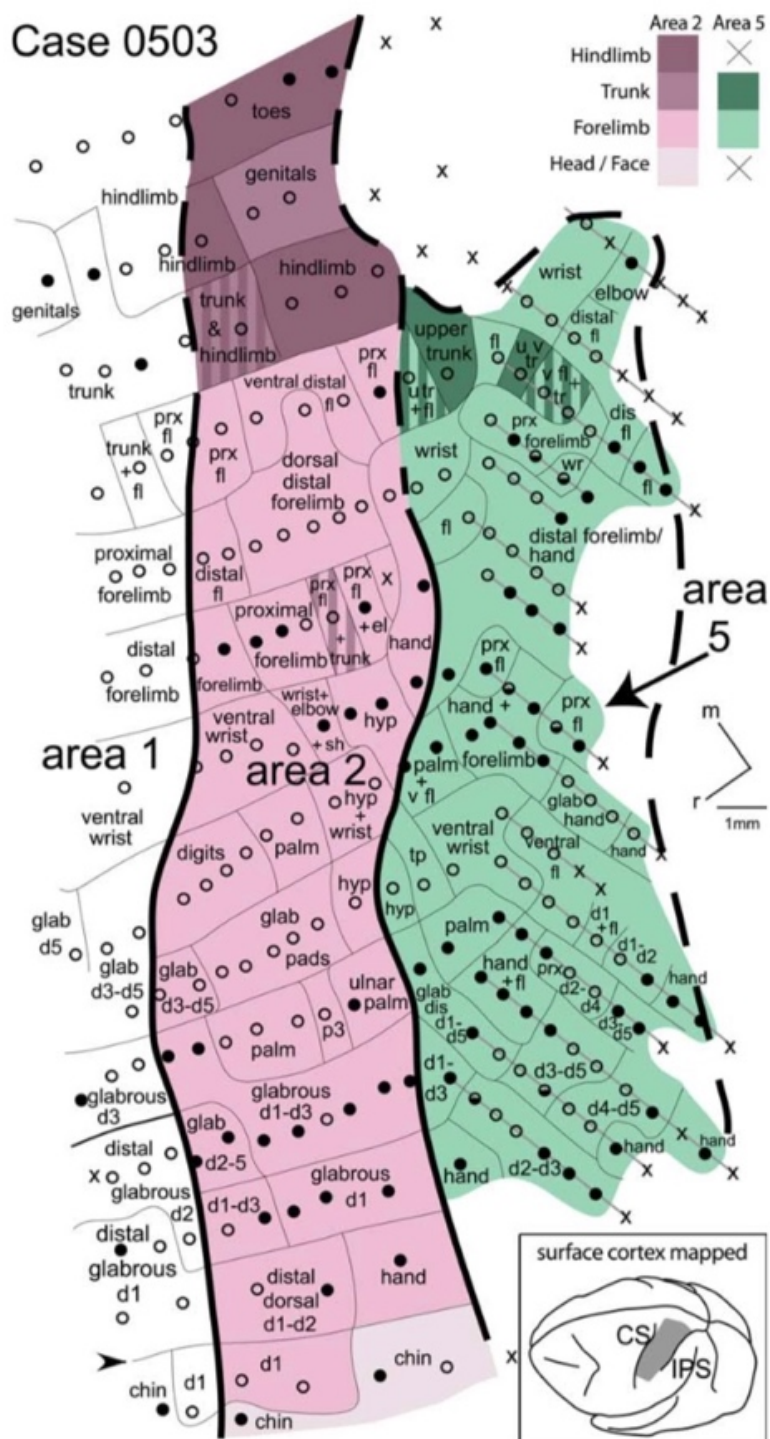


Figure 3. Electrophysiological map of case R0503. In this case, a number of electrode penetrations were made into the rostral bank of the IPS as well as on the post central gyrus. The organization of area 2 was similar to that of area 2 in other cases (Fig. 2). As in the other cases, area 5 was dominated by the representations of the forelimb, hand and digits. Conventions are as in previous figures.

Figure 8: Padberg et al. “Cortical Evolution and Hand Use: 3”

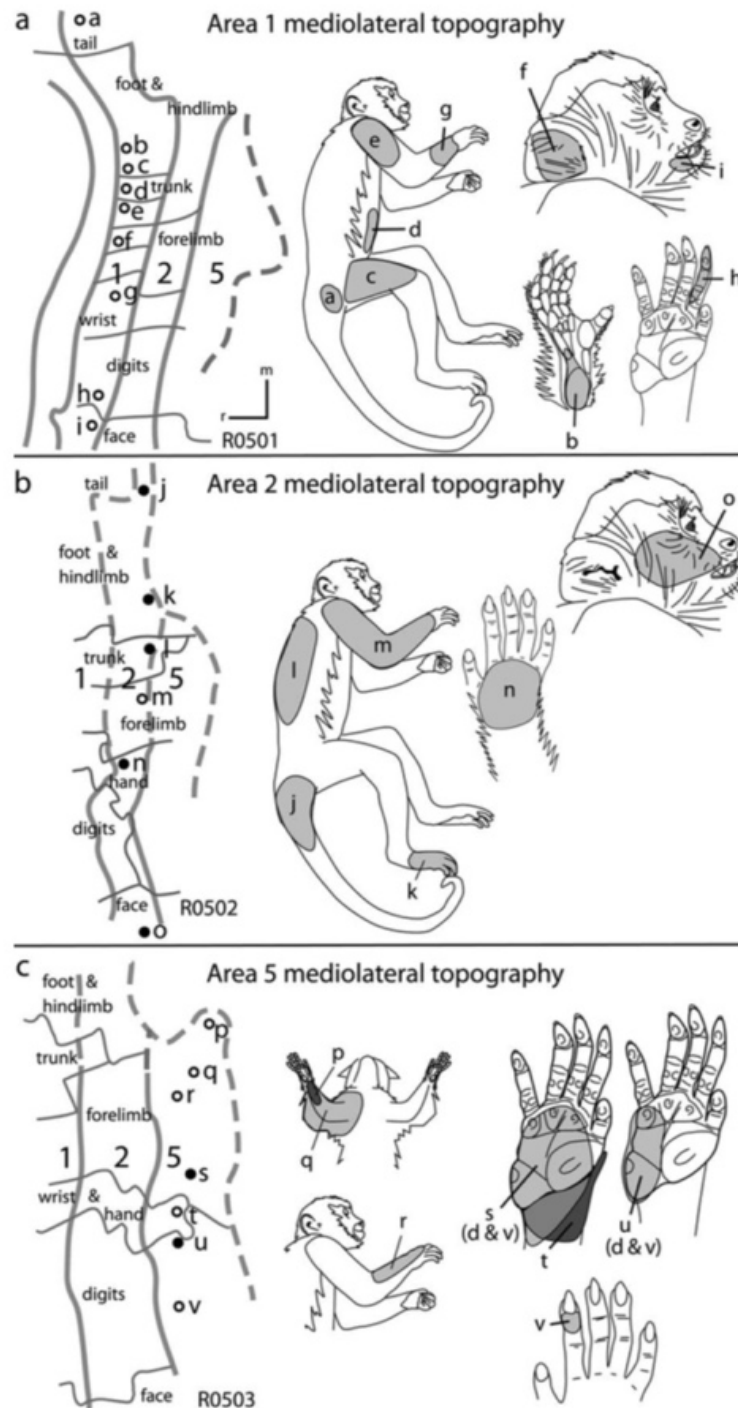


Figure 4. *a–c*, Mediolateral progressions of cortical representations in area 1 (*a*), area 2 (*b*), and area 5 (*c*). Lowercase letters in *a–c* mark electrode penetrations. Corresponding receptive fields (gray) for neurons at those sites are marked on drawings of the body to the right. Relatively precise topographic arrangement of body representations was observed mediolaterally in areas 1 (*a*) and 2 (*b*) in cases R0501 and R0502, respectively. Mediolateral arrangement of representations in area 5 (*c*) demonstrates that this field is dominated by the representations of the hand and forelimb. Conventions are as in previous figures.

In highlighting the parallel between cortical evolution and lithic evolution, I maintained in *Technics and Time 1*, that in the Paleolithic corticalization, and during most of the process of hominization, the brain was transformed by its relation to the matter it exteriorized itself into via its hand just as much as it interiorized the hand, for when its hand works, what it inscribes in matter is inscribed also in its matter: in its 'grey matter', in its brain. And this induces a progressive exit from the situation described by Darwin—namely evolution according to the simple conditions of the struggle for life.²⁵⁰

We can capture the monkey, anesthetize it with pharmacons, informationalize it, thingifying it, gloss over the gap in accuracy between representations in print and in the lab, and use our electromechanical ability to manipulate the neurophysiology of an organism such that it becomes present before us as object of science. And by controlling the monkey's hands we are thereby furthering the control over our own. The presumably integrable gradients of abstraction between primates allows us to research and develop technics capable of exerting the same kind of laboratory control over human physiology as we can exercise over other forms of life. However, unique to our adoption of ICT devices, we are providing far more informational feedback, which is being surveilled, sifted through, and analyzed, allowing for the modification and updating of programs and protocols designed to captivate our attention.

The evolution of biopower coupled with state-corporate control over the design and collection of data from technologies of self-writing has exploded the power psychotechnics and somatechnics in our contemporary era.²⁵¹ "The application of surveillance and biotechnologies for governing civil society started during the late 1930s: the war was the best laboratory for molding the body, sex, and sexuality. The necropolitical techniques of the war will progressively become biopolitical industries for producing and controlling sexual subjectivities."²⁵² This coupling of state and cultural apparatuses exercising biological, psychological, and economic control in our

²⁵⁰ Stiegler, "Fourth class of seminar 2012," Ibid.

²⁵¹ These concepts circulate in different ways in contemporary work on posthumanism, transhumanism, metahumanism, and the anthropocene,

²⁵² Preciado, *Testo-Junkie*, 25-26

contemporary era is explored in intimate detail in Preciado's *Testo-Junkie*. As a kind of protest, sabotage, and exploration of the boundaries of sex and gender identities, Preciado consumes synthetic testosterone for 236 days. This work shows the confluences of state, corporate, academic, and cultural industries, and explores the implication on the evolution of the body and somatological control. Our contemporary age is one in which, according to Preciado,

We are being confronted with a new kind of hot, psychotropic, punk capitalism. Such recent transformations are imposing an ensemble of new microprosthetic mechanisms of control of subjectivity by means of biomolecular and multimedia technical protocols. Our world economy is dependent on the production and circulation of hundreds of tons of synthetic steroids and technically transformed organs, fluids, cells (techno-blood, techno-sperm, techno-ovum, etc.), on the global diffusion of a flood of pornographic images, on the elaboration and distribution of new varieties of legal and illegal synthetic psychotropic drugs (e.g., bromazepam, Special K, Viagra, speed, crystal, Prozac, ecstasy, poppers, heroin), on the flood of signs and circuits of the digital transmission of information, on the extension of a form of diffuse urban architecture to the entire planet in which megacities of misery are knotted into high concentrations of sex-capital.²⁵³

My purposes here don't allow me to go into the complexities of sexual politics. What is important to note is the degree to which biopowers, embedded in the technics of our daily lives, have increased in their ability to impact and alter our physiology. And these practices need to be understood as having historical precedence, which helps us track mutations to what have been long standing social practices, i.e. somatechnics today are part of an evolving practice of eugenicism that has been fixated on the control of bodies and the future of populations. As Roberts, Washington and others have demonstrated, these forms of control are nothing new.²⁵⁴ From physical sequestration of populations as a mechanism to control behaviour, to medical experimentation on black slave women's bodies to extract informational content, to the forced introduction of chemical protocols, to the ideological justifications for mass sterilizations and population control, command over somatology has been a major focus of governmentality. Combined with ICTs we see a growing

²⁵³ Ibid., 33

²⁵⁴ see e.g. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, Ibid, and Washington, *Medical Apartheid*, Ibid.

power of technological control over the forms and functions of bodies. And, the politics of extraction and elimination are always searching for new ways to turn the bodies of people into commodities. Informationalization and bioinformatics present us with a scary future based firmly on evidence in the present. I don't know if this is the case, but it seems likely that Octavia Butler's character Lilith was informed by Henrietta Lacks, whose immortal cancerous cervical cells, taken from her without her knowledge, did nothing to save her life but are the most studied cells in human history.²⁵⁵ In Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, an alien species of gene traders who use biology to engineer their evolving somatology are interested in Lilith's DNA because she was a cancer survivor. They have archived a complete blueprint of Lilith's biology, and through alterations to her body they have given Lilith eidetic memory making her question at one point how many iterations of her they have gone through. Like Lacks, Lilith has no say in the matter as this race of aliens colonize her body to create a mixed species of human-alien hybrids. But, instead of exploring the fantastic futurist elements of the story I will instead focus on one theme I think central to the story, i.e. captivity. Lilith is a prisoner, and her central concerns, after becoming aware of the fact that the alien creatures intend to breed with her and other humans to repopulate a post-apocalypse planet, are to learn and to escape. Humans must, "*Learn and run. Learn to live in this country, then lose themselves in it, go beyond the reach of the Oankali. Learn to touch one another as human beings again.*"²⁵⁶ The underground imagery shines bright as she imagines escaping bodily control. Escape. Run. All the while search for sticks. For most of Butler's protagonists, the powers of history and inequality are felt on their bodies. Traveling back in time in *Kindred*, Dana finds herself on a plantation, where she is beaten and then immediately seized by slave patrols. Instantly, by working time in reverse Butler is able to show how history is a force on human bodies. The speculative futures of Butler's science

²⁵⁵ John Hopkins Medicine, 'The Legacy of Henrietta Lacks,' Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, 222

fiction demand serious attention and it seems an all too predictable tragedy that her work is not yet a major theatrical project. Butler forces us to take a hard look at the way that our work obfuscates forms of psychological and somatological trauma very much a part of our everydayness, as soon as we strip back some of the pretense of progress. Helping to establish continuity of structure across time she reminds us to attend to the existing sequestration of populations, the calls for population control and the competition over resources that is likely to visit us very soon. Under the control of patrols, immersed in the political economies of plantations, in the biomechanical complex of alien colonizers we see a looming eugenicism already present in the authority over bodies and the extraction of their informational content.

Daniel Turrentine - Cleptocracy

9/14/18 Fred tells me a 25yr old kid died yesterday at Marquette. This is not the first time he has told me he witnessed a death. Possible drug reaction. They watched him fall on the yard. Regardless the specifics in this case, hopeless youth snort experimentally mix pharmakons just to generate an effect. Good or terrible, variation is the objective. New experience, escape. The drugs came from the prison's pharmacy. 23hr lockdown. This is not the first body produced by the MDOC. Between the newly introduced "tablets", cheap electronic devices that allow the prison to extract money from those wanting to send emails and play games, and the open doors of the pharmacy, biopower takes on a whole new meaning as men and women move in rhythm to the war drum of the loudspeaker. "Level 4 med-lines now in progress. Level 4 med-lines now in progress." Fred talks about the importance of poetry. It's hard on him. The kid was part of a group that he laughed and goofed around with. He wants to write his family and tell them about how he was starting to value himself as a knower and a poet. 9/25/18. Learned today that death was ruled heart

failure. Fred's spoken to this kids mother, she's trying to get an independent autopsy and investigate possible connections to him being tased a year ago and having experienced health problems subsequent. What is it like to learn to take this in stride? We talk about self care as a fight breaks out on the basketball court. Stabbings are regular. Violence has been higher than normal lately. A dust up with a drastically outnumbered aryan brotherhood. We talk about coping skills, from the fascistic fear that demands a fight to obliterate difference, to refusing to do other people's emotional labor. I tell him his feminist tag is showing and we laugh and think about how to develop and share coping skills that are therapeutic and empowering. I have sent him articles about epigenetics and yoga, and mindfulness and meditation, because we know that prison is killing him and creating physiological demands on his system that are traumatic and costly over the long term. Mass wasting of cortisone. Over production of adrenaline. Force the shape of human bodies in the weight pit. We know that these hormones are connected to inflammatory diseases and shortened lifespans because, "excessive or persistent proinflammatory cytokine production plays a central role in autoimmune diseases."²⁵⁷ Imagine laughing at the prospect of being stabbed because you are trying to teach people to read and write poetry. What does it mean for those incarcerated to live under those conditions? Maurice Sanders, a man with more heart than anyone I know has, in his early 40's been battling cancer for several years now. He is slowing being eaten away while the PIC and the MedIC move his body from cell to surgery table. PTSD abounds in the MDOC but these soldiers get no treatment.

Stress can be regarded as a bodily response to events that are perceived as a threat or a challenge. This response may precipitate a health risk when stress is severe or it occurs over a long period of time without adequate coping mechanisms...exposure to severe stressors can have a profound influence on the body and can lead to detrimental changes in its biology, such as reduced gray matter in several brain regions. The effects of stress go beyond the brain and can be found in our genes in a form of a CTRA. CTRA is a common molecular pattern that has been found in people exposed to different types of adversities, such bereavement, cancer diagnosis, trauma, and low socioeconomic status.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Kox, et al. "Voluntary Activation of the Sympathetic Nervous System," Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Buric et al. "What Is the Molecular Signature of Mind–Body Interventions?" 2

Maurice's mother died this year from cancer. They were deeply estranged. Add her to the list. He lost his child while imprisoned. He lost the love of his life while imprisoned. He sent me a poem after he had learned of his mother's passing.

I Wish...

I wish I had a thousand wishes, a thousands years to love you, a thousands smiles, a thousands dreams.

I wish I had the ability to travel back in time and erase every pain you ever had, every pain you ever felt and every experience that broke your heart so that I can take away the sorrow that burdened your soul and the grief that tore us apart.

I often wish my breath was strong enough to continue to make you breathe, that my lungs were large enough to substitute for yours, that my confidence in your ability to survive this nightmare was enough to will you on, was enough to take away all of your sorrow, to take away all of your worries, to take away all of your doubts, to take away all of your concerns. But it wasn't.

I wish I could give you my heart, my strength, my determination and my drive so that you wouldn't have had to struggle as much as you did, so that you could endured the loneliness of your thoughts and emotions as you pondered on what was left to come. Hoping the hard times were easing up and finally coming to an end.

Matter of fact I wish when times got hard, to hard for you to bear that you would have leaned on me for support, that you would have leaned on me for balance, that you would have leaned on me for love.

So that I could have given it to you.

I wish you would have let me love you when you was lost, I wish you would have let me love you when you were afraid, I wish you would have let me love you when you was alone facing your fears and crying over the nightmare that haunted your nights and days.

Because I wish I had a thousand wishes, a thousands hopes, a thousands dreams.

I wish I had the chance to tell you how much I truly loved you, I wish I could have told you how much I truly cared, I wish my fears wasn't consuming my heart, I wish my eyes would stop crying lonely tears.

I wish I was there comforting you and holding your hands when your heart stopped.

I wish I just do, I wish.²⁵⁹

I wish I could see him again. My argument, in short, is that insofar as we can talk about the structural stability of control in chemistry or biology so too can we talk about the structural stability of exploitative and corrupt social ontologies, which are not a-historically fixed forms, but continuously reproduced relations entangled in asymmetrical inheritances. And those stabilities are destroying people. Alarmingly, in the age of engineering without appeal to principial grounds, nothing needs be good or bad, merely possible with degrees of certainty satisfying often limited demands regarding the implications of design. Thoughtful attention to the complex of ontoepistemethical entanglements and how the world might be impacted slows the function of extractive industries interested in the short term and the accumulation of wealth and power. What are we doing to them, and their families, and ourselves? We can manipulate the physiology of a primate to perform actions without the activation of the neocortex, and we can make a human being act counter to the tendency towards self-preservation, and we can take pictures of atoms, but we can't stop coral reefs from dying, or the ice caps from melting, or the rapid extinction of life on the planet. And yet all is not lost. Opposed to the captivation of bodies and minds the goal of poetry as

²⁵⁹ Sanders, *I Wish*, Personal communication. 2018

survival is to activate both. Perhaps homeostasis presumes too much in the metaphysical arena, as if there is something fixed against which to measure disequilibrium. But evolving systems make presumptive metaphysics problematic, and so the measure for balanced function becomes immanent to the engineering specifications or design objectives, at which point we can assess the degree to which we have poisons or remedies.

Disruptions to control mechanisms introduce randomization into a system, which is both a key feature of biological development and evolution, and at the same time a key feature of systemic destabilization that control systems are designed to mitigate. Randomization should be brought under the control of virtual technologies such that their errancy can be studied without destabilizing the real. As opposed to the captivation of attention we hope to activate it such that it generates novelty rather than replication. Mutation and the disturbances to what we consider to be the boundaries of being human of life are the futurist fixations. But there is also the control of death that is not about the boundary of mutations but rather the necropolitical control over who lives or dies. Although the speculative future is important to prepare for, fixation on it often means ignoring the reality that we are not just potentially going to bend our concepts and categories beyond where we are comfortable, but rather that we will destroy them all together.

The reason why I've labored over the idea of ontoepistemethical entanglements and apparatuses of capture is so that, as I present various media and materials, selected from an archive with much greater breadth and deeper, what begins to amalgamate or coalesce are moments that will help elucidate the apparatuses of captivity and the economies of extraction and erasure. On every front, over the last 5 years, I have personally experienced the extraction of time and energy. I've spent countless hours on the phone with companies, captains, corrections offices, mailrooms, ombudsmen, lawyers, politicians offices, etc. And from hours of personal dialog with family members I know my frustrations pale in comparison to the mother or wife or child trying to keep

their loved ones in their lives. Another extractive source. I am, with the help of my comrades, sketching lines across something akin to a dispositif whereby it becomes clearer that the engineering of the apparatus functions eliminatively. I'm connecting nodal points in a dynamic network, cat's cradle, rhizome, anastomosing waterway, organ-ism-ization. In one version what we see as the necropolitical power over populations labeled superfluous. In another version we see at work the servomechanical auto corrective adjustments of function to design specifications, which although it may include adaptation makes no real alteration to or destabilizes the resiliency of certain hierarchies. Resistance is anticipated and therefore controlled for. So the primacy of invention is required, and that requires, in order to be successful, that situated knowers activate their agency in whatever ways possible. Power and privilege frame challenges to existing function as dangerous and likely to end in self-harm. As Lugones helps us to see, they are bad readers. And yet, this is a double bind in some sense, because I'm framing these nodes by reference to what are, at times, resistances to erasure. Providing evidence of abolitionist resistance is a tricky game, particularly when the forces being resisted have the social and juridical standing of being precisely those institutions and agents representative of justice. Without skin in the game you're likely to expose too much. We take as given surveillance, and we rely on the protective coating that transformation through process encodes on those familiar. We're just doing poetry and knowing what we do can only really come from being engaged in the spacetimes of sharing and transforming together. It's not just in the poetry, it's in the caring for each other and in being vulnerable together.

PART 3

Abolitionist Technics Escaping the Economies of Erasure

“Today’s prisons are extractive...prisons enable money to move because of the enforced inactivity of people locked in them. It means people extracted from communities, and people returned to communities but not entitled to be of them, enable the circulation of money on rapid cycles. What’s extracted...is *the* resource of life—time.”²⁶⁰ I was told that my volunteering in prison was white supremacy as usual by an ally in Detroit. I was aware of the issue she raised. I had previously done a freeschool class on what critics call the non-profit industrial complex, and in doing the research for that class and on Flint I became familiar with the way that the shadow state, as Gilmore calls it, makes money off of the sale of other people’s misery. Affective capitalism in the era of the over production of human misery. I had also been organizing in Detroit around issues of housing and water and we all witnessed an cohort of brand happy kids generate media and then disseminate that media in a network they were afforded access to in order to generate revenue that wasn’t making it made it back to the community or actual organizations with community members. The NPIC also did land-seizure post Katrina. Her argument was entangled with her own personal calamity and anger at having lost her job after she found two black men dead at her place of work. Despite her having nothing to do with it, and being invested in making corporate money, as she was the one first on the scene of a murder-suicide she suffered when the company cleaned house. She and I had worked together trying to locate an attorney to fight tax foreclosures by litigating on arrears from over assessments of taxable value in the city of Detroit. We got almost nowhere with every lawyer that we saw. Years after being told by someone at the NAACP office that we really had a “political issue” and sent packing we learned that the NAACP went on to litigate a class action case with the ACLU dealing with exactly this issue in Detroit’s housing. Adamant about knowing and representing the interests of black people she said she was articulating what were the

²⁶⁰ Wilson, “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence,” 227

community's intolerances of deviances like homosexuality, socialism, communism, radicalism, etc. These were things that black people have no interest in. She was also keenly familiar with the problems implicit within the community of activists who struggle against problems of concentrated disadvantage and marginalization in the city. She was well informed on many levels, yet her prejudices and ignorances made her reactionary and offensive when she need not be. A self-described extreme conservative she argued that people incarcerated are being punished by god for the evil they have done in the community and that going to prison was the equivalent to going to a cemetery. She saw my volunteering in prison as not only a misallocation of my abilities but a distortion of anti-racism because by supporting black criminals I was reaffirming and recreating the problems that have plagued the black community. I would personally benefit from the social problems in black communities by working in the prison because the white establishment loved to champion people like me, who are of them and can take them on a guided tour to a place that they are uncomfortable. Absolutely spot on diagnostic in many ways. Although, I know that if we did the books, our numbers won't add up that way. Remember, prison is extract and I have many people I love imprisoned. Nonetheless I'll concede that Bourdieusien capitals spend. We've never paid ourselves for the work that we do, and we have always insisted on being distributively just by making sure that any money we came upon was delivered into the hand of those most directly effected by mass incarceration and or utilized in the interest of decarceration. But those aren't the only areas were capital spends. Her comment came up out of an existing reservoir or anger because I asked her, unaware of her past at the time, if she wanted to come to the prison to hear incarcerated men read their poetry. Her rage was intimately connected to her knowledge of racist and sexist marginalization, although she would not self identify as a feminist. Somewhat suppressed or unarticulated, her vehemence was directed toward the violences that can be found in masculinity. The two men who she found dead at her place of work were disputing over the possession of a

women that they shared in common. I had grief of my own from a cousin made victim of a murder-suicide a couple years prior. After watching a documentary about Angela Davis, some of her perspectives admitted more complexity, and the massive disinvestment in the city, the lack of presence in the neighborhoods, and the physical deterioration of community became connected to some of the problems I had argued we were trying to address by going into the prisons, but she did not want to participate. I recount this anecdote so as to acknowledge that paths that run counter to the established currents of society are always fraught with danger and we will never be able to avoid them if we can't admit that they exist. Freeschool is not a 501c3 and will likely never become one, but that does not eliminate the possibility that by doing the work that we are doing we might unwittingly play part to the reproduction of relations that we ought not. We have tried to be diligent in thinking through the dangers to ourselves and the communities we care about that come from resisting ignorance and silencing. We have tried to attend to the fact that we cannot demand time and attention from those who suffer under the weight of our ignorances and that if we were going to make sense of what was required to defeat structures of exploitation and erasure we had to take the time required to familiarize ourselves with the abundant knowledges and interpretative approaches to creativity, imagination, inventive resistance.

Conceptual revolutions in the area of unarmed combative martial arts happen rarely and with much resistance, very real physical resistance. When discussing the current evolution of submission grappling via the introduction, into the competition circuit, of a cohort of players applying their own interpretive take on a systematic approach to leg locks, famous jiu-jitsu coach John Danaher recounts a moment that changed his life, emphasizing that profound change can happen in a very short window of time. Dean Lister, a famous grappler responded with a question when Danaher inquired into why he was so into leg locks. "Why would you ignore 50% of the human body?" Danaher was forever changed, in a moment. "Give a man a point of view, and you can change him." I should like

to link this point about perspective and lived bodily practice to the struggle for transformation that comes through traveling, in Lugones' sense of the term, to a world of sense. Make him feel it. Situate him at that confluence and he'll get it. And I would like to show how the poetics of feminist revolutionaries can, in a few words, give one perspective that can in turn become livable insofar as it impacts you such that you change your life.

The central movement...is resistance to intermeshed oppressions as an ongoing activity from which to understand liberatory possibilities. Resistance is also the active state from which to seek collectivity and coalition. Resistance hardly ever has a straightforward public presence. It is rather duplicitous, ambiguous, even devious. But it is also almost always masked and hidden by structures of meaning that countenance and constitute domination. "Reading" resistance is crucial for an alternative understanding of the realities of the oppressed. But that reading is done within enclosures and crossings that attest to a need for company. "Traveling" to worlds of sense that are not given in the daily "teachings" of dominant structures of meaning is one of the techniques, the arts, of moving from resistance to liberation. I have had insightful, enriching, and enduring company in this theoretico-practical path. I could not have come to voice without it. I could not have sustained my voice without it, either. Optimism, a realist optimism, is a hard thing to maintain in this Pilgrimage. I have kept that alive only with company. Gratitude is not the word for my attitude regarding each person included in that heterogeneous company. It is rather a sense of shaping ground together, of standing because of each other's words and deeds, and the congruence between them. I would like to honor them.²⁶¹

The will to dominate will relentlessly attempt to suppress or eradicate resistance. Under conditions of surveillance one knows that resistance can only very rarely be out in the open and when it is it will inevitably cost. But resistings are ever present, and thus as Lugones shows, becoming a competent reader of subtleties grounded in the tactical ability to navigate between spaces of violence is key to working in solidarity. This is a ground that can only be crossed together because it requires those who are willing to expose their vulnerabilities to teach others how to read. The eliminative and extractive practices of the PIC points toward the demand that we develop alternatives and I will provide a few examples that myself and others have been involved in.

²⁶¹ Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, ix-x

“We might then consider black captivity in the modern world as the ‘perfection’ of metaphysics, its shameful triumph, because through the violent technology of slavery Being itself was so thoroughly devastated. Personality became property, as Hortense Spillers would describe it, and with this transubstantiation, Being was objectified, infused with exchange value, and rendered malleable within a socio-political order.”²⁶² And as the allusion to Butler’s *Kindred* above notes, captivity in our contemporary era cannot be disentangled from the practices of slavery, and the territorial encroachment, sequestration and colonization of indigenous people; practices themselves entangled with the development of the MIC and the control of populations. The policing system in the United States originated in the slave patrols of the south. There are of course different and complex genealogies to follow regarding the development of police and prison in the US. From kin police to volunteer militia to slave patrols to sheriffs there has been a persistent transformation in our control society. Nonetheless, prior to the mid 1800’s there was no real police force to speak of despite the fact that armed patrollers and overseers had been brutally repressing and controlling black populations in the US for over a century.²⁶³ The point is not to go into detail about the origins of the police but rather to show how for a major section of the American population and for people of color across the western hemisphere relations of surveillance, captivity, and territorial control are structurally inherited social positionalities. Today as it was yesterday, prison and mass incarceration, “operates as a means of purging, removing, caging, containing, erasing, disappearing, and eliminating targeted populations from land, life, and society in the United States.”²⁶⁴ Under these conditions we can see how escape and fleeing from captivity is part of the creative propulsion that pushes life away from intensities of forces that diminish and eliminate. As Koerner also sees, there are ways of

²⁶² Warren, *Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope*, 25

²⁶³ See e.g. Archbold, *Policing: A Text/Reader* and Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*

²⁶⁴ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 1

connecting Althusser's example of being hailed by the police to Jackson's being chased by a cop with a gun to Deleuze's lines of flight from territory, as it is well known that Jackson had a profound impact on Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari.²⁶⁵ By not being hailed and instead by fleeing captivity, errancy in the swift feet of street peeps gets to invent both movement and trajectory. But don't smash into people. The trick is avoiding getting caught up in other nonsense, and that is a lesson these international feminists of color help teach by exposing the multiplicity of dynamics and identities. When you inhabit intersections recognizing complexity is intuitive. Through the technofacts of their writings and voices these women of color offer ways of thinking and feeling one's way through the layering of exploitation and oppression. By attending to those layers we can see the ways in which forces common across a variety of social positions create unique current signatures when they intersect with the dynamics of another force. Without obliterating or subsuming difference we can avoid being snared by, homophobia for example, when we flee from the traps of racism. Recognize one form of oppression now recognize the rest.²⁶⁶ Don't feel it? Get some perspective. And beyond, in performing struggle and care these women show ways of actively resisting through the creation and dissemination of both works and community. We are working toward the perpetual decolonization of thought and action, to twist a phrase from Viveros De Castro.²⁶⁷ He argues that, "the source of the most interesting concepts, problems, entities and agents introduced into thought by anthropological theory is in the imaginative powers of the societies—or better, the peoples and collectives—that they propose to explain."²⁶⁸ We could also think about this in the realm of situated epistemologies and the grounding of theories in the tactics of everyday

²⁶⁵ Koerner, "Line of Escape," Ibid.

²⁶⁶ an adaptation to lyrics from "Nailing Descartes to the Wall/(Liquid) Meat is *Still* Murder" by Propagandhi

²⁶⁷ De Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, 40. "Anthropology is ready to fully assume its new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent decolonization of thought." Interesting to note that in Viveiros De Castro's work, there needs to be another source for concept creation other than philosophy.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 40

practitioners without fetishizing the social ontology of marginalized people. “We have to grasp the consequences of the idea that those societies and cultures that are the object of anthropological research influence, or, to put it more accurately, coproduce the theories of society and culture that it formulates.” As it is the case with people incarcerated insofar as epistemic agency is respected and alternative hermeneutic reservoirs are explored. Although the context is Amerindian cosmologies the disciplinary point relates to conceptual generation and the gradient of abstraction or the categories within analysis. Insofar as they combat the hegemonic social structures and relations, novel conceptions and interpretative frames can be likened unto to alternative cosmologies, or at the very least what others might call lifeworlds as domains wherein the semanticization of being coheres differently in a regional epistemology. By linking eros to the resistance of sexist imperialism and sexist colonialism, Lorde helps us think about the extent to which, in tarrying with alternatives, we open ourselves to new ways of being in the world. As, “Lorde demonstrated, the recolonization of the subject was codified formally through the psychological operations of the occupation forces...“P.S.Y.O.P.S.”...and the relentless cultural imperialism of the U.S. military. Thus, once more, she connected U.S. state force and a reassertion of white supremacy with the control of one’s sexual and erotic self-determination.”²⁶⁹ Freeing the power of eros for Lorde is related to the production of bonds between bodies that feel and can expose us to other ways of living and loving. Rejecting the hierarchy of oppressions, Claudia Jones, in 1949, addressing communists and those who claim to work in solidarity pointed to the entangled and intermeshed ways in which oppression functions. She showed the apparatuses of neglect and extraction of energy by pointing out the ways in which black women are devalued and destroyed through the hermeneutic arrogance of white chauvinism and the violences of sexual assault. As Collins elaborates, the particular ways in which oppressions can overlay in different combinations shows how, “contextualization in power relations

²⁶⁹ Spira, “The Geopolitics of the Erotic,” 186

generates a particular kind of social constructionist argument, one that views Black women's sexualities as being constructed within an historically specific matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions."²⁷⁰ Jones' insights are further developed by Davis, Shakur, the Combahee River Collective, Smith and more. In the terms I've tried to develop above, internationally attune women of color are well aware of ontoepistemethetical entanglements, and have been prior to Bohrian physics even if in their own articulations they formulate different understandings. They have known it. "When I speak out against the cynical U.S. intervention in Central America, I am working to save my life in every sense. Government research grants to the National Cancer Institute were cut in 1986 by the exact amount illegally turned over to the contras in Nicaragua. One hundred and five million dollars. It gives yet another meaning to the personal as the political."²⁷¹ And in the sphere of poetics, their works offer readers accessible, demystifying, interconnected, diffractive, and emancipatory ways of listening and composing.

These issues are complex and related to the specific tactical requirements for resistance and coalition building. Although,

Black diasporic frameworks center analyses of Black women within the context of common challenges experienced transnationally. The version of Black feminism that U.S. Black women have developed certainly must be understood in the context of U.S. nation-state politics. At the same time, U.S. Black feminism as a social justice project shares much with comparable social justice projects advanced not only by other U.S. racial/ethnic groups but by women of African descent across quite diverse societies.²⁷²

Lorde and others extend this reach by seeking out, listening to and proliferating the words of other women around the kitchen table.²⁷³ Clarke notes the importance of the poems, edited volumes and statements of Black Feminist literature for the development of feminists groups and

²⁷⁰ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 127

²⁷¹ Lorde, *I Am Your Sister*, 149

²⁷² Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 29

²⁷³ An allusion to the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, which, arguably, published the most important collections of feminist writing during of the 20th century.

organizations across the globe. (But is she a pessimist? or a realist?²⁷⁴) From across the kitchen table Lorde introduced me to Aguilar who underscored the reality of resistance and preciousness of having and caring for our comrades. They have consistently been at the forefront of the struggle to adaptively collaborate to survive and provide livable alternatives to being erased or relegated to the back of the bus. These lessons are invaluable. And I'm grateful for my comrades are

Like all poets for whom poetry is not only the written product of creativity but also a way of life demanding constant consciousness and inquiry, Aguilar lives and creates on the edge where nothing is assured, nor ever settled beyond question...For her, poetry is a weapon, and using it can mean death. She is never without this knowledge...Read these poems carefully, many times. And remember Mila Aguilar, 32, Journalist, Activist, Mother, Poet, on August 6, 1984 was arrested, and charged with "subversion and conspiracy to commit rebellion", and placed into solitary confinement in prison somewhere in Manila. For writing these poems.²⁷⁵

Mila Aguilar - Damn the Dictatorship²⁷⁶

Damn the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.

My people starve

While Imelda lives it up with Christina Ford.

Thirty days after San Juanico

Usurped sweat of the Filipino people,

Rice queues longer than any vaunted

"Seventh longest bridge in the world."

Damn the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.

²⁷⁴ "Transformed? Some spaces. Sometimes radical politics are more represented than at other times, but neoliberal times make our positions precarious." "But Some of Us Are Brave and the Transformation of the Academy: Transformation?" Cheryl Clarke in *Signs*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer 2010), p. 786

²⁷⁵ Lorde, Introduction to Mila Aguilar *A Comrade is as Precious as a Rose Seedling* (1985) p. viii-ix

²⁷⁶ Mila Aguilar *A Comrade is as Precious as a Rose Seedling* (1985) p. 38-39

My people starve

And all the land's riches off to America and Japan.

Ferdinand kisses the corns of the new U.S. ambassador

While coconuts vanish from the stands,

Lapped up by a cabal of compradors

Who careen in olive oil while soap prices soar.

Damn the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.

My people starve

The rice queues lengthen

The prices soar.

While Ferdinand schemes to prolong his reign

At least seven years more,

Seven miserable years of civil war.

Damn the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.

Damn it with a million armalites

To utter destruction.

Mila Aguilar - A Comrade is as Precious as a Rice Seedling

A comrade is as precious

as a rice seedling

One of many, it is true,

but nurtured by them
whose faces grow dark,
and taut, and lined
for the sake of their rice seedlings.

A comrade is as precious
as a rice seedling
for whom the peasant's hands
grow thick and calloused
for whom his fingers
scrape the hardened mud.

A comrade is he
for whom the peasant's toes
get muscled and big
because, like a rice seedling,
he will grow, one of precious many,
to fill the hunger
of him who cared enough
to nurture little seedlings.

A comrade is as precious
as a rice seedling
fed and nurtured

guarded from pestilence and floods

And yes, beloved of the peasant

because a rice seedling

grows, not only to fill his hunger,

but to give birth

to other seedlings

who will give birth

to many more

who will fill the hunger

of generations of peasants

for food, and land,

and right

“For those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak it. For others, it is to share and spread also those words that are meaningful to us. But primarily for us all, it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth”²⁷⁷

Lorde resonated with me immediately upon discovering her work, in part because my experience with philosophical insight almost always came in the form of poetic attending. I would listen or attend to my thinking and feeling and I would write something by hand in my notebook, usually as a

²⁷⁷ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 43. There is a diffractive and immanent non-neutral technics evidenced in Lorde’s reiterating the danger of the master’s tools and can be connected to liminal alterity, randomness and variation as creativity, composition, and expression.

mnemotechnic so that I could come back and revisit the feelings and thoughts. I was becoming more familiar with Audre Lorde just prior to my volunteering in prison in 2013. And, I brought Lorde to as many people as I could as my experience over and over again was that for people who have never encountered Audre Lorde reading her work sparked conversations with and changes in people from all different stations is life. Following in the footsteps of women who worked diligently to get their works out and to see the works of their sisters and allies circulate was one of my central concerns. Thus, I began to explore the technological mediums which up to that point I had been extremely resistant to. The idea of publishing my writing on the internets did not resonate with me, but for those inside it was an opportunity to be heard in a milieu they were structurally precluded from accessing. So first was the webpage, then publication of Fuson's book, then recordings on soundcloud, then vimeo, the instagram and I kept working on building these tools that I was not really personally invested in but rather personally invested in a collective investment.²⁷⁸ I have tried to utilize the technologies of self-writing in off label ethnopoeitic applications. I've learned how to design websites, curate, archive, record, disseminate and incorporate people who are incarcerated into all the work related to the PIC that I produce. The material that I've collected far exceeds what is capable of presenting here. And so, I've selected moments from a wide array of times and places in order to give sense to the extractive and eliminative processes affecting individuals and communities as well as the sympoietic ways in which I've collaborated against erasure with those moving steadfast into the futures of alternative directions. We used the non-hierarchical or supportive rhizome to grow in way that was possible only because we challenged institutional restrictions and when necessary, questioned the value of breaking them. For me, my effectiveness as an freeschooler and organizer in the PIC is inexplicable without reference to internationally attentive women of color feminists. I owe debts to feminist writers across the globe. I'm confident that I

²⁷⁸ This is partly why the notion of agency as intra-action resonated with me.

would have committed innumerable more mistakes without their guidance. And, I'm confident I've committed a fair amount still. I've struggled over how I might proliferate a discourse with such depth and breadth and of which so many people are ignorant if not outrightly antagonistic towards. I continue to struggle.

I will try and give sense, in my own bricolage sort of way, to four major elements of this story. The Youth and Prison Deterrent programs, the protest at Kinross prison in September of 2016, the experience with a philanthrocapitalist organization and youth programs in Detroit, and Frederick Williams. There are other events worthy of note: We had family and friends read incarcerated poetry in the Diego Rivera Court; and then we turned that into [a movie on the archive](#); I've collaborated with men and women inside to present works or speak over the phone at numerous academic and activist conferences; we've arranged multiple exhibitions of artworks by incarcerated people and helped them to show their work in other cities and countries; we've published 4 books of poetry; and most rewarding of all is that I have had the chance to see eight of my comrades leave prison grounds. Asia Johnson most recently, Kyle Daniel-Bey a week prior to her and Bryan Jones just before that, Jamie Laufenberg after beating cancer, and James Thomas after 30 years incarcerated, Karmyn Valentine who is now a union carpenter, Major Sheperd-El who has a child on the way and Ben Sunde who owes me a tattoo. Most disheartening, is that we await the return of so many more.

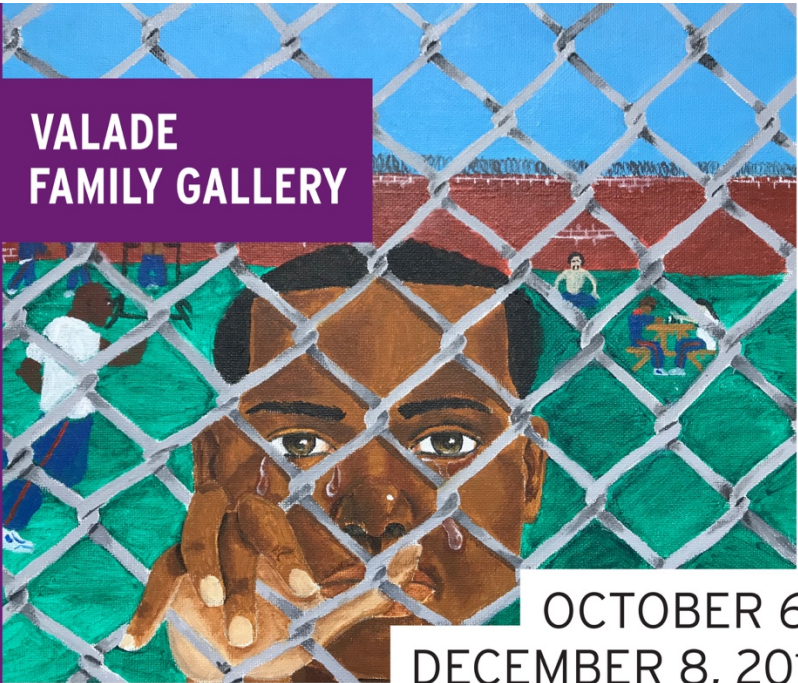
Figure 9: Freeschool Books



Figure 10: Freeschool “Kites Above the Razor Wire”


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VALADE FAMILY GALLERY

OCTOBER 6 -
DECEMBER 8, 2018



**KITES ABOVE
THE RAZOR WIRE**

**ART, POETRY, AND MESSAGES
FROM MICHIGAN PRISONS**

Kites – in prison, defined as messages – are forms of communication passed between the incarcerated and often remain behind prison walls. Kites Above the Razor Wire presents paintings, drawings, poetry, prose, and messages to the outside world beyond the razor wire, from prisons across Michigan.




The exhibition is presented by Hamtramck Free School and incarcerated artists and poets throughout Michigan, and surveys art and writing organizations from around the state that, animated by creativity, support personal and political transformations inside Michigan prisons.

OPENING RECEPTION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2018
5 - 8 P.M.

(Top) No More Tears, (Bottom) Mother and Child, Yusef Qualls-EI.

Exhibitions in the Valade Family Gallery are produced by the College for Creative Studies' Office of Exhibitions & Public Programs and are supported, in part, by Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, the Kresge Foundation and the Friends of CCS Galleries. Valade Family Gallery, A. Alfred Taubman Center for Design Education, College for Creative Studies, 460 W. Baltimore, Detroit, MI 48202. Free parking available in the CCS Parking Structure located on Baltimore between Cass and Second. Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 12 to 5 p.m. Like **CCS Exhibitions & Public Programs** on Facebook: facebook.com/ccsexhibitionsandpublicprograms and **CCS Exhibitions** on Instagram: instagram.com/ccs_exhibitions to stay informed about all the exhibitions, lectures and special events throughout the year.

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YDP PDP

For just over a year, in addition to doing poetry every Wednesday at Macomb, I also drove a short distance from my house to Ryan correctional facility. Towards the end of my time in Detroit sometimes I went twice a week. Just up from Hamtramck, past vacant lots and burnt out houses, over the tracks, past the scrap yard, and then a right into the parking lot. Now known as Detroit Reentry Center, Ryan's a short term stop. It holds people who are doing time for parole or probation violations, and it has some drug rehab programs. It's part of a larger complex sprawled across 80 acres of land formerly owned by the auto industry. At the other end is the Detroit Detention Center, formerly Mound correctional, now up and running again after a three year closure. Open, close, rename, cut costs, modify functions, shuffle people in and out the way they used to shuffle cars. Just across the way, on the north side of Nevada street, is the Sojourner Truth housing project, federal housing designed for black workers in the war industries during WWII. The iconic sign, "We Want White Tenants in Our White Community" flanked on both sides with little american flags, was posted outside the housing project. In 1942, through a mob of armed racists, black families eventually made Truth their home. But it was not without bloodshed. And it wouldn't end there. Less than a year later racial tensions would erupt again. The struggle for a place in Detroit continues today. And entanglements abound.

It's not scared straight, they think of it as cared straight. Imprisoned with dialysis patients, with men recovering from amputations, with men with colostomy bags, a small cadre of men doing life have been at Ryan running a Youth Deterrent Program for years. YDP. At risk youth spend a Saturday locked inside a visiting room. They listen to this group of incarcerated men express their love for them. The men try and impress upon the youth the weight their actions may force them to drag into the future. They apologize to the youth for not being at home in the community to help guide them. They give hugs. And they tell the youth that they matter and that they are valuable. They

attempt to fill the room each month with people they think are community leaders who can help them or who they think represents someone to aspire to be. Many good and caring people are and have been involved with YDP.

The actual time with the kids was for me both rewarding and frustrating. They get dropped off and signed in by their parents, some of whom appear concerned, some annoyed, mostly mothers solo but not only. In the waiting room it's a weird version of high-school detention. A group of 7 on the low end to ± 30 on a busy weekend, most of whom don't know each other, all in trouble. Imagine a big line outside of the principal's office. Some of the kids are already locked up in juvie and have been bussed over. They tend to be a bit more serious. The age ranges I saw were 11 to 18. Some are reserved and scared, some put up a front or try and establish themselves, some try and make light of things, some really don't give a fuck and some obviously have other issues. I engage them in a playful way, but I have to be cautious because the MDOC guy who's the go between for the prison, principals, parents and probation officers wants to maintain the this is serious vibe. I don't work against it. I reiterate to them that this shit is serious and I even mess with them a little. Just wait till you get inside. But I want them to know that underlying all this is the fact that people care about them.

In the waiting room is also that week's crew of outsiders, there to participate in YDP. Businessmen, politicians, district attorneys, clergy, reporters, police, FBI, teachers, etc. They talk amongst themselves. In my time there only once did I witness someone from outside engage the kids in the waiting room before they were on the clock. He was a retired teacher. But everyone is there to save the youth. I always sat with the kids. I tried to find a few that seemed curious or open to listening or getting the scoop from me and tried to drag a few aloof kids into the fold. But the clock is ticking. Bald headed white guy, you police or lawyer or something? Nah, freeschool. What's freeschool? Up against the wall when I call your name. Stand up straight. Pull up your pants. In they

go, past guards who put on a little, and through security doors. It takes awhile to funnel everyone through 5 at a time. Once inside the visiting room its down to business.

MDOC people start it off. Grandstand a little, play the vice principal tough guy roll, and then try to impart heartfelt concern. Sometimes things doesn't fit. The suit in a tie telling the youth it's cuffs or cufflinks. Be respectable or get housed like a piece of shit. But what gets respect? Money, prestige and power are the objective and the general rhetoric is: Be a man. Get a job. Get the ladies. Buy a boat. Like Future? No not like that, like a respectable business man or preacher. Shit, half the kids in here are successful businessmen, but their business gets no respect. And if those are the ends, and these are my beginnings, you must be trying to sell me a Hollywood movie about working hard and achieving the American dream. Coming from these schools? From Sojourner Truth? What's the unemployment rate in Detroit? As the you can be anything train ignores its derailment, the kid next to me slips further into nihilism. In the last year he's watched everyone he's ever loved die, and he's hurting inside, and life has lost meaning, and the only acceptable form of expression for a tough guy is an anger filled I don't give a fuck. Not about you or your cuffs or your cufflinks. And the clock is ticking. There is less and less time to spend with them before they return to the conditions for the possibility of their return. But when you're going through the motions, or you're trying to appease your superiors, or your limited by institutions in which you lack agency, or you need to build commutation connections to people with power who bring their own cameras in to document the good work they do and support, it's hard to interrupt the suit with: HEY! You're loosing one, or five, or all of them. Now I get it. Believe me I get it. I was one of those kids, and I know that speaking in the idiom they know and meeting them on their own terms is part of a strategy to reach ears that are going to have a tough time hearing what you have to say. But there is more to supporting them, and there is more in them than the lust for women, money and power. Pursuing those ends is a major contributor to their current predicaments

and the disintegration of the community, and it fills the women's version of YDP at Huron Valley correctional facility with young girls telling horror stories to women with their own. But the arrogant business man and the FBI agent think their exploitative military mindsets are something to emulate and their I'm cool bravado misses the target in the vast majority of cases. Or worse, manages to hit center mass and it's the wrong one to give sharp financial instrument or a badge and a gun. Through inflated chests I watch the kid tucked into a t-shirt he's chewing on slip through the cracks. And the costs are devastating.

The format was kind of stereotypical restorative justice seminar. Many of the guys had done Inside-Out, a college course that brings students into prison for a class with people incarcerated and at the end of the term they organize an event, bring people in from outside, present something to the group, break into smaller circles for conversation, etc. YDP was similarly structured: meet and greet, introductory remarks, MDOC presentation where you see some shivs and shitty food, tell them prison sucks, breakout groups to engage them and try and get them to think, outsider speaks to the kids, some support agencies give their spiel, and by the end, being one of those kids, feeling bounced formulaically from station to station, I'm thinking thank fucking god I'm not on probation because I wanna get the fuck outta here and get high. What a waste of time with your stand up hold the mic and tell you what I learned today. Um, I learned to respect myself more. Ok that's good, that's good, everybody give him a round of applause. What about you? Um, I learned to make better decisions. Ok that's good, that's good, everybody give him a round of applause. What could interrupt this all too familiar failure was this group of incarcerated men being able connect.

That's what I tried to offer the group when I started trying to tactically strategize with them. Get the others to shut up. We're running against the clock. Take the floor and they'll listen. The best weekends were when outsiders sat and listened and supported, and the suits were minimal or missing. The fellas had more time to tell their stories, confess their stupidities and harms, expose the

injustices of the justice system, convey their losses, their regrets and actually listen. They have lost children to gun violence, lost family members to drugs, lost the opportunity to watch their children graduate, or to be present for becoming a grandfather, or to be able to bury their mothers. These were men that these kids knew they didn't want to fuck with, wearing their self-described blue and orange badges of disgrace, and they could make these children feel emotions they're taught to suppress when they confessed that they cried themselves to sleep on a pathetic state issued lump that passes for a pillow. Getting familiar with them I witnessed the way they these men would wound themselves retelling a story they've told a hundred times. To convey the truth so that it would stick, they needed to feel it, and so they would, again, and again, and again, re-injure themselves in order to show love. They were from the same hoods. They walked the same streets and they stood on the same blocks peddling the same shit, carrying the same hardware. And it was there, in the complexity of all the different currents and intensities shaping the spacetime of YDP, where I was witness to a moment, which exposed in an all too tragic way the historical reproduction of the very same structures we all agreed to work together against. It went unnoticed, kind of, or at least unchallenged in the moment and that is something I deeply regret, but as I articulated how I interpreted it to the group the next week during our planning meeting it was a point of bonding.

Now I was never fond of the practice, but we would gather together in a big circle in the beginning, after the suits turned over control, and the youth would have to stand up one by one. Name? What'd you do? What do you wanna be? You get out what you put in. I'm gonna be a rapper. Professional basketball player. I'm gonna be some other culture industry fill-in-the-blank. Captivated by culture industries. Occasionally someone would surprise you. Often they just said whatever let them pass the mic along. I don't actually think I'm gonna play basketball, I just said that. But on this day we were witness to the reproduction of asymmetrical, unjust and deeply recalcitrant forces. There were white kids most of the time, but they were almost always poor white

kids from Detroit and they were vastly out numbered. This week there was just the one white kid, in a room full of mostly black, a few brown, and a few arab. He was already in juvie, so you couldn't tell it by looking at him, because the juvie kids are in polos and khakis, but when he talked you knew: he wasn't from Detroit. Now we've gone around the room and the what'd you do is: gun, gun, fighting, punched a teacher, gun, robbery, armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, gun, car jacking, gun...you get the idea. You're 13, why do you need a gun? It's where I live. To stay safe. To protect my family. I got a little sister. People got beef. My neighborhood isn't safe, etc. Now we get to the white kid. What did you do? I got caught with a trunk load full guns. What the fuck do you need a trunk load of guns for? I don't. I don't even like guns. I'm not into violence. I was coming into the city from the suburbs selling the guns to buy drugs. But it's ok because after juvie my parents are sending me to drug rehab. And we finish out the circle with the last few gun, carjacking, gun, sexual assault, and a stick of dynamite. No shit. That's it. Captured in that moment was an evidentiary iteration of the whole system right there. From individual micro to geopolitical macro. Military grade guns go down and the cocaine comes up off the bathroom countertop in a trendy veteran bar in colonial Detroit while Maria full of grace starts to get fatally sick in a motel in LA as one of the condoms stuffed with heroin in her stomach ruptures. How long have we been in Opiodistan? We witnessed the cycle recycle right there in that moment. And the likely truth was, it was going to be ok for that kid. He was likely going to get the help they think he needs. History teaches him he deserves it. But the 17 year old armed robber, who tries to jack the wrong guy, he'll will be the one to account.

Fred Williams - Don't Think They Know

Don't think they know about us

They don't know

That I'm a crack baby

A product of that product

Don't think they know that

I was hand crafted by drug dealers

That police kicked in our front door

And put me face down on the floor

That I was told at seven years old not to blink nor flinch

When I seen someone get murdered

I would be murdered

If I snitched

Going to school my clothes had a stench

My closes had holes and needing stitching

Or stitches

Because my parents didn't give a shit

Or addiction alters ability to make decisions

Don't think they know about them

We know where these drugs come from

Where these guns come from

Where these prisons come from

Don't think they know about us

They don't know

He carry a gun

More than he carry his son

Because people get buried everyday where I'm from

We hold grudges because judges only want to

Evict us

Convict us

Restrict us

They don't know

How it feel

being treated like you're about to steal

Or kill

Or both

They don't know what it's like to be black

To be black is to be hard

But being black is so hard at times I wanted to turn my back on black

To be black is to be

Not free

Yet to be black is

To be me

I wear a hoodie because I'm cool

Because I'm cold

Because I'm hot

Doesn't mean I deserve to be shot

Don't think they know about us

They don't know

Racial oppression is the root cause of our aggression

Yes I'm defensive

Don't think they realize

They paralyze

Us with government assistance

We can't have black power without general electricity

They pass bills through the senate

That makes it impossible to pay bills is the house

Hold

Holding us to a standard that they can't stand next to

Policies that shove us into poverty

Dispossessed of property

Atrocities like boarded up houses and abandoned school buildings

Harsh reality for our children

My community is a cemetery

And I'm supposed to celebrate February

Don't think they know about us

They don't know

I worked with the guys at Ryan for over a year. I met weekly with the group of men, brought in readings and offered what assistance and perspectives I could as we strategized expanding the program to the adults at Ryan and making sure that the lessons landed heavy in the minds of the kids who attended each month's event. There were deep disagreements between some of the guys about the telos of the program, and they manifested in at times heated arguments. Regardless of the disagreements, the essential strategy that brought things together was the pursuit of freedom. Freedom from incarceration so the need to demonstrate to the powers that be that you are a value to the community and should be released. Freedom from the conditions that contribute to the reproduction of violent, drug addicted, poor young men coming to prison. Freedom from the pressures that have been pressing down on the community for...how far back do we need to look when we analyze structures in order to be able to effectuate change? And how do we tactically negotiate our way through the immediate? The clock is ticking.

The program was expanded as the functions at Ryan changed. Judges started sentencing adults to diversion programs at Ryan instead of sending them straight off to prison. Word was that some of the judges were invested in the trademarked treatment programs. Thus, the Prison Deterrent Program (PDP) took form about 4 months before I moved to Philadelphia. Mostly young

men were to go through a host of programs for GED, hospitality or hi-lo job training, substance abuse, etc. and then for a few hours twice a week they would be in PDP. The fellas were charged with developing curriculum, some of which I found to be problematic, for a group of 15, then 25, then 40, then a steady stream of young men who instead of being sentenced to prison were given 6-9 months to get their shit together and avoid the charges hanging over their heads. If they got through they'd go back before the judge and potentially get released. Caught with 50 grams of cocaine, 50 grams of heroin, and some guns and got sentenced to a 6-9 month diversion program? It's not insane weight but it's a lot and I know old school guys doing life for less. We were excited because unlike YDP, PDP afforded more time to help another way of being in the world find ground. And it provided the opportunity for each guy to have their own unit of material to develop and discuss. This program developed because of the work these men were doing from inside. I was basically along for the ride, sitting in and listening, trying to insert philosophical tidbits or poetry where I could, or be an errand boy on the outside. I'd already been going into Macomb every week for years, so I knew better than to step on toes or to think that because it's prison it's somehow the same. Every stop is different, every group a different dynamic, every person a different set of challenges as we intra-act. This is not to say that there isn't consistency to structures and agencies within, but in the dynamics of intra-action drastically different currents can develop. PDP presented many challenges. The guys coming in were older, generally 18-25 but there were a few outliers, and more prone to behavioral problems, being disruptive, posturing, and disconnect. Many of them were detoxing from various street and pharmaceutical drugs, alcohol, and street or party life. I would bring in poetry from Writer's Block guys or some poet I was reading, but we never really got to dig too far into them. It was usually a couple guys would talk to me on our way out of class. One time I gave an animated and intentionally performative rendering of Plato's cave, which had them attentive to the fact that I was trying to get them to look behind the curtain. During and after I started to

develop rapport with the group, who had previously been suspicious of the dude who comes in to prison without getting paid on his own accord. The cave imagery can start a conversation about what matters matter, and they are familiar with the feeling of having their attention captured by the dancing shadows parading across their screens, and they are apprehensive of the power. Whereas some award winning folks came in talking about getting a job to get a flatscreen and making sure that your baby mama's boyfriend, oh you mean the guy that's been part of taking care of your child while you were doing time in a federal pen, knows that you're the man now, that you already had that, and your new wife is hotter than her anyway. And in this sense I will admit that I was always going to be disruptive. But I never really got a chance to see the PDP program develop.

They guys at Ryan learned the degree to which I was crazy over time as we would discuss and debate contemporary social and political issues. Ideologically, sometimes our gaps were narrow and sometimes they were wide. The split was usually predictable, but we'd surprise each other. Pragmatic political problems were more explicit at Ryan because this group was dealing with a whole different set of institutional oversights and they had different objectives. In my own assessment, the group was hindered by the hierarchy in leadership. There was someone standing out front, a few of the others that didn't care about that, while a few bemoaned and challenged it, but there was a hierarchy. That structure would never have worked at Macomb, or any of the poetry groups I've witnessed come into being, and I think in part because of the nature of poetry, and because of the impact that feminist organizations had on those attentive to the tactical and strategic advantages of dispersed leadership. At Ryan it was ok to read and discuss, but no radical shit, no freeschool affiliation or the like. We're trying to get the Governor to come in here. To be as clear as possible, in my own assessment, I never really pushed radicalism at the table. I was worried the doors would close to me and I desperately wanted to increase my quickly diminishing time remaining with the PDP group. But as just one example, I encountered a host of different challenges to incorporating

feminist thought. The reasons for why are complicated, not all that unique, and will likely never be fully transparent to me. Beyond the most formative and glaring fact that sexism saturates our society writ large, I think some of it had to do the confluences of religiously grounded patriarchy, the complexities of homophobia and incarceration, familiarity with a sample population that skewed perceptions of the larger set, and experiences with social science literature of a limited set. There's a natural, most times divine, structure to reproduction. Man and woman have fixed roles. No homo. Diagnostically, we can see that the family is disintegrating. The men are locked up and the kids coming in are coming from single parent households. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that these young men need education in being a man, and for many of them being a father, not some emasculating liberal college feminism trying to tell them that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle. Obviously, some of the Inside-Out material either wasn't right or didn't sit right.

Now my reductive summary isn't exactly fair to the nuances of the positions or the ways in which, despite the problems I think the position has, it was not *simply* a prejudicial rejection. I'll try and express the difficulty like this: one of the guys in the group, the softest spoken, had made his way up and out of Detroit via the gridiron. But before his older brother left home, he gave him a bag and a pistol and told him to stop asking his mom for money. So wanting to be a man he tried to ride the fence with one foot on the field and one in the street. But if you're in the dope game you're all-in, regardless of whether or not you see yourself that way. Sentenced to life at 20, he would watch his friends and equals win national championships. And most horrifically he would receive word not once, but twice, that he'd lost yet another child to gun violence. Years after, when one of the killers eventually ended up in the same prison, people cleared a path, because if anyone can understand the desire for retribution, people imprisoned for murder can. They expect it, and its one of the ways psychological trauma haunts the guilty and hinders transformation. The guys inside knew he was going to kill him. And they were wrong. He took the young man under his wing and became a

mentor to him. He doesn't lie when he tells the youth and young men that they are his sons. And for those without, it was at times heartbreaking to watch these young men gravitate to a father they desperately wanted and needed. A powerful black man, willing to wrestle with them and show them physical affection, successful in those areas with social cache telling them he is proud of their achievements, that they are valuable and need to respect themselves and treat their women like queens, and that he loves them, and that ain't no homo. So whether on essentially strategic or simply pragmatic grounds, the transformative moments that result from being witness and part to these dynamics forced me to accept certain entanglements. Although, I worked to unknot those I could, questioning the value and costs of adding caveats, and I tried to remain critical of the ignorances and arrogances of my praxis. I came to recognize the significance of gaining traction in the immediate and the importance of quality of impact over quantity of message. That didn't mean that I was not struggling with fidelity to Clarke's recognition that when we remain silent about these kinds of violences we are failing to transform. "And, of course, like everyone else in America who is ambivalent in these respects, black folk have to live with the contradictions of this limited sexual system by repressing or closeting any other sexual/erotic urges, feelings, or desires."²⁷⁹ We would discuss some of these issues, and I would bring what I had to the table. With a host of theological and political beliefs swirling around in prison, getting others to challenge deeply held assumptions and being willing to challenge your own takes time. And the clock is ticking before I've got to walk back across the yard. And my pragmatic goal is just to get a little something in there for next weeks PDP and there was some trepidation about that allowance by the guy calling the shots. So, to paraphrase something Castro said about talking about communism with rural Cubans during the revolution: If you don't mention communism by name the people are generally supportive of the proposed reforms and the policies. But if you say the word communism people become uneasy. So,

²⁷⁹ Clarke, "The Failure to Transform," 199

I'll leave out this or that tidbit and simply make sure that we make some space next week to talk about a short poem wherein we can play with the bad women in the alley and around the corner, because these kids know the desire to strut down the street, and the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks has much to teach them.²⁸⁰ So, I try to proliferate a discourse of utmost importance such that the academy isn't the only beneficiary of those continuing the tradition of Truth.²⁸¹ In that way, my abolitionist network is supported, and my comrades inside and out putting in work with at risk girls at Women's Huron Valley know that I'm not staying silent.

Silences and the inability to hear or the unwillingness to listen to others was one of the hinderances to closing the gaps between inside and outside. The problem of community isn't contained by razorwire. Inside, many believe that their immediate community is so riddled with problems that in order to survive they have no choice but to be focused on self-preservation. They want to rejoin the outside community and to be freed from captivity so badly they utilize that as a bonding mechanism with youth, who in this context tend to be thoroughly narcissistic. But free from is not yet free to, and we have to consider the problems of making the narcissistic self the center of the world. You might lose your freedom. Yes, but with it what about what you're doing to other people? We have to see how telling a room full of boys one week that manhood is tied up with getting pussy and they don't want someone out there getting their woman's pussy when they're locked up, is connected to the next week when a kid on what should be a rape charge makes light of how he posted pictures on facebook of him and two friends running a train on 15 year old girl inside

²⁸⁰ The allusion is to the poem "a song in the front yard" from Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville*. See also, Clarke, "But Some of Us Are Brave," and Flynn's essay in the anthology dedicated to Brooks wherein he take up the issue of childhood and ways in which Brooks' poetry helps children imagine ways of interaction with their histories and communities that can transcend some of the limiting inheritances given to them. "In letting children speak, through her own poetic voice, and in helping them find their own voices, she provides both "arms and armor" for social change. In the '40s, Brooks first posed the question "What shall I give my children? who are poor,/ Who are adjudged the leastwise in the land" At the end of the century, her question has not yet received a sufficient answer." Flynn, "The Kindergarten of New Consciousness," 367

²⁸¹ Clarke "But Some of Us Are Brave," Ibid.

a bando. She wanted it. How stupid can you be? Posting pictures on social media like that is gonna get you 20 years. Wait what? You don't want to be hanging out with girls like that, says the respectable man of the community. Wait. What? We're not going to gloss over that are we? Resisting the tendency to swallow silences challenges the multiple violences operating in moments such as these. Imagine your sister, or your mother, or your grandmother, imagine someone doing that to her. Never happen. Why? She would know better. No one in my family would ever do that. I wouldn't let it happen because that shit ain't right. So why would you do that to anyone? That's somebody's family. That's someone's baby. We have to start seeing each other as connected. So when one of three perpetrators of a sexual assault on a 15 year old in an abandoned house posts pictures of the act on facebook claiming that she wanted what she got, and a grown ass man that passes for respectable in the community makes light of the trauma by saying that he shouldn't be hanging around with girls like that it doesn't go unchallenged and it doesn't get repeated.

In attempting to understand why there was such resistance we might look to Collins who noted that ordinary black folks "voted with their feet" in attending the Million Man March and have either, "ignored or remain unaware of the often contentious debates among African American intellectuals in the 1990s that castigated the NOI's patriarchal and heterosexist programs...African Americans apparently found the core ideas of this conservative version of Black nationalism more appealing than arguments advanced by well-known Black public intellectuals who opposed the march."²⁸² She continues on, noting that intellectual and political vacuums exists and that,

the persistence of Black nationalist initiatives cannot be explained away simply as a wrong-headed ideology foisted on falsely conscious African American masses...As Robinson observes, "Despite its strange cosmology, the NOI stands as the sole national Black political organization that has a strategy explicitly aimed at improving the lot of the most disadvantaged." As long as this remains the case, Black nationalism is unlikely to disappear anytime soon.²⁸³

²⁸² Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 83

²⁸³ Ibid., 93

Collins and Robinson hit the nail on the head. In addition to other strange cosmologies, the NOI is strong in the MDOC, and there is a long history that connects to this region in particular. The Muhammad Mosque #1 is in Detroit, headed by Troy Muhammad, who himself spent 10 years incarcerated and regularly visits Ryan and other facilities. The Moorish Science Temple and The Five-Percent Nation have strong presence here. Malcolm was from here, his father was murdered in Lansing, his mother was hospitalized in Kalamazoo. There are three Shrines of the Black Madonna in Detroit and there is the recognition that inside the MDOC the NOI and affiliates has men standing tall, building community, and taking care of each other.²⁸⁴ I saw that first hand. I also know a number of men who became disenchanted with these organizations and walked away. So as Jackson, Newton and others, who demonstrated critically self-reflective and evolving thinking about their sexist and homophobic tendencies, and others in the black liberation movements began to note, contributing to the vacuum of alternatives is the constructive work of revolutionary praxis. In her discussion of the impact of black feminist literature on generations of activists and scholars, Clarke recounts a letter Lorde had written, expressing her disdain for the prospect of laboring to organize an academic conference. She argues that Lorde provided other ways of conceptualizing,

what Wahneema Lubiano has called a commonsense black nationalist strategy of eschewing the white institution...and of dealing with our black selves. Lorde made clear...that time devoted to white institutions was **time stolen** from other pressing concerns, and she provided compelling images of who would be languishing while we planned such a conference: 'Our time is not forever, my sisters. While we are planning the Brooklyn conference, who's organizing a race/class/sex rap with the black women at Bedford Hills, or in other prisons? Who is maintaining contact and hopefulness with the increasingly isolated black women students who feel they have no place or interest in Women's Centers...And shall we invite the 14 year old black alcoholic who is carrying her father's child?'²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Which Henderson notes functions a counterinstitutional, "resource as well as a refuge to many of Detroit's organizing young proletarians, student organizers, and community activists." Henderson, "Malcolm X, Black Cultural Revolution," 259.

²⁸⁵ Clarke, "But Some of Us Are Brave," 782. my emphasis

Figure 11: Asia Johnson and Karmyn Valentine “Poetry Reading Discussion”



“And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives.”²⁸⁷ As Radford-Hill notes, after breaking with the NOI, Malcolm X began challenging more directly the gender roles in leadership and the work of black women, who contributed to the grass roots activism that built the various organizations and collaborations, provided part of the impetus for some of the changes in his thinking, and perhaps in a way similar to the impact that Davis and others had on Jackson’s sexist viewpoints.²⁸⁸ In Lorde’s strongly worded

²⁸⁶ India Porter was sentenced by former Michigan Supreme Court justice Diane Hathaway, infamous for doing just shy of a year at Federal Prison Camp Alderson, also known as Camp Cupcake, for felony bank fraud. “Rather than looking at lack of sex education, poverty, sexual assault, and other factors that catalyze high rates of pregnancy among young Black women, researchers and policy makers often blame the women themselves and assume that the women are incapable of making their own decisions.” Stripping one of agential potential across ontoepistemethcal strata and assemblages. These practices play a part in the evolving exploitation of labor and what fates are assigned to populations once they become superfluous to production. Prison is the solution to the problem of extraction.

²⁸⁷ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 43

²⁸⁸ See e.g. Radford-Hill, “If You Can’t Be Free, Be Indigent,” *Ibid.* Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, 283 & 298 and Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 157-159.

letter in addition to escaping from the extraction of time and energy by institutions so resistant to change she shows us the power of creative invention of other spaces. Every night we shared at the table inside prison we too participated in the creation of other space and despite its frustratingly ephemeral nature, in staying the course we have witnessed the diffractions.

On my way home after that Saturday's YDP I'm sickened with an all too familiar feeling. I can't sleep for days. Incessantly gnawing at a knot I've tried untying before, which binds up the asymmetries of agency and the power to influence the thoughts and writings of people incarcerated with failing to critically reflect on the hermeneutic reservoirs I pull from when curating the literature I send inside. This presents me with an interesting point of note when thinking about technical dynamism in human cultures, and seems to be a species of some genus of ignorant do-gooder missionary work, e.g. the introduction of iron axes into communities that ritualized the sharing of stone ones. But I dislike the miasma of elitism that lingers in the example. Nonetheless, I can't shake the question: What makes what I am doing different from what Spivak articulates as a core component of the justificatory grounds of colonialism, i.e. white men saving brown women from brown men?²⁸⁹ The justification of imperialism as a civilizing mission wherein, in this example, an educated white male goes into the dangerous world of prison and struggles to enlighten the darker shades of violence and barbarism with institutionally approved literatures. But I am not saving anyone nor do I have delusions of grandeur about the work we are doing. I'm working my way through a tradition of thought, which regularly provides me with perspectives that help me navigate my way through interlocking, intermeshing, intersecting dynamics and in so doing makes me feel less truncated as a person and more adept. And, I have witnessed the transformative power of the prose and poems of women who have struggled to survive and thrive in the face of structures of elimination and silencing. They have given us gifts, and I am grateful, and those gifts need to be

²⁸⁹ Spivak, "Can The Subaltern Speak?" 271-313

circulated. I am not didactically lecturing incarcerated men or women in order to bring them into the fold of my ideology, I am trying to create times in spaces of captivity wherein voices of the black mother poet that lives in all of us can resound.

The Black mother who is the poet exists in every one of us. Now when males or patriarchal thinkers (whether male or female) reject that combination, then we're truncated. Rationality is not unnecessary. It serves the chaos of knowledge. It serves feeling. It serves to get from this place to that place. But if you don't honor those places, then the road is meaningless. Too often, that's what happens with the worship of rationality and that circular, academic, analytic thinking. But ultimately, I don't see feel/think as a dichotomy. I see them as a choice of ways and combinations.²⁹⁰

By staying committed to honoring the spacetimes created by these writers and disseminating their works I could attempt to answer in the affirmative when a black woman warrior poet doing her work asked me if I was doing mine.²⁹¹ Knowing that work needs to be done by me and in my communities so that the labors don't go another generation unnoticed by those whose ignorances reproduce systems that devalue the perspectives and experiences of others. In the end, YDP and PDP were a small part of my ongoing abolitionist work, but they help to emphasize lessons that I learned and serve as an interesting counter point to the other ways of understanding what is unique about what we were doing elsewhere. The places of poetic sharing and vulnerable exposure were different from the telic directionality of political hierarchy.

²⁹⁰ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 100-101

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 42

Figure 12: Freeschool “Snail Mail Readings”

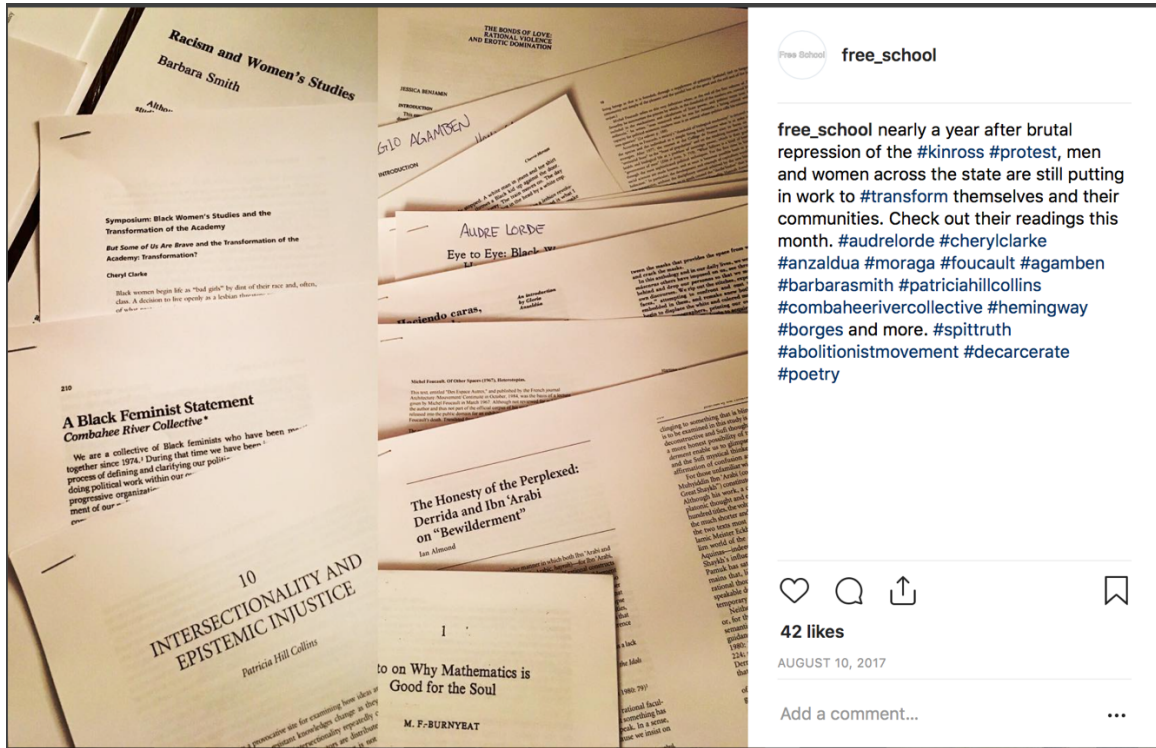
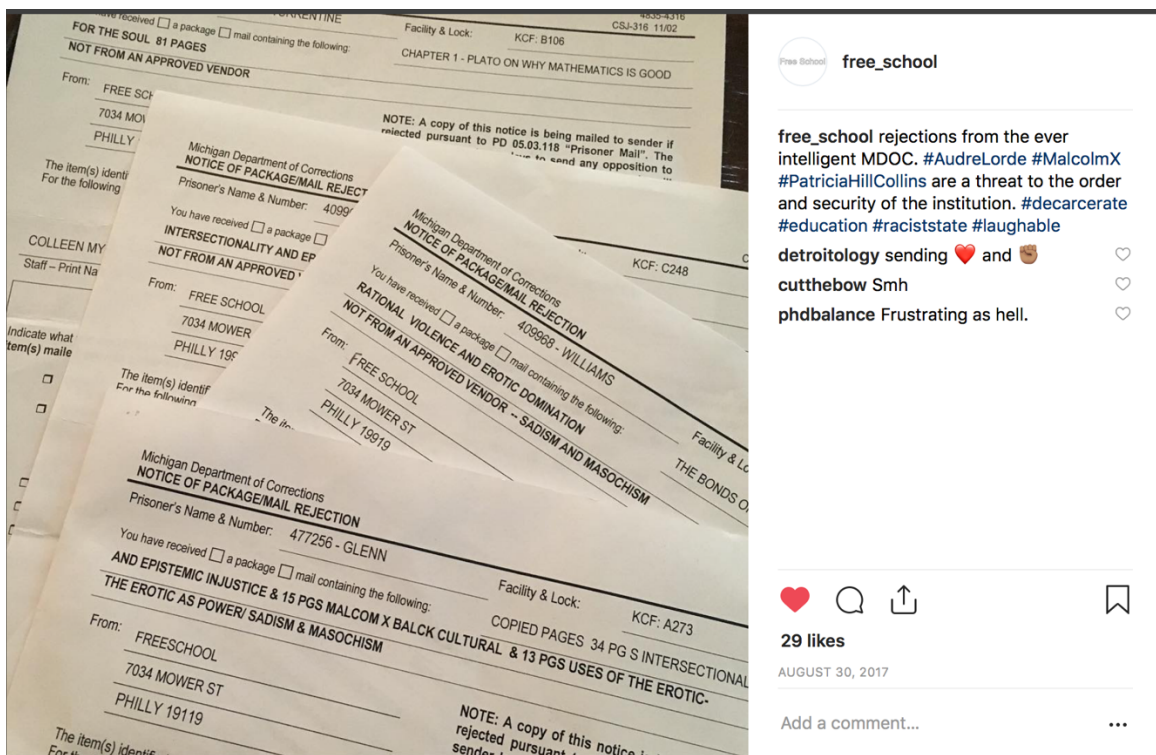


Figure 13: Freeschool “MDOC Rejections”



Kinross

F. Williams, B. Jones, G. Benton, C. Westerfield, Adégun, Akinyemi @ Kinross 9/8/16

September 9th 2016 marked the 45th anniversary of the Attica Prison Rebellion. Incarcerated men at Attica Prison, protesting the murder of George Jackson two weeks prior, took control of the compound. They desired to have their voices heard and they protested the inhuman treatment to which incarcerated people all over the world are subjected. Many were murdered for their resistance. September 12th marked the 39th anniversary of the torture and murder of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko while in police custody. Biko gave his life organizing and fighting against an unjust and oppressive system that limited human flourishing. On September 9th 2016 Incarcerated men at Kinross, in coordination with others across the country, organized a peaceful protest to bring attention to mass incarceration writ large and to problem specific to Kinross. They listed persistent health threats and hospitalizations resulting from poor ventilation and unsanitary conditions, inadequate nourishment, overcrowding, low wages, and arbitrary abuses of power directed against those incarcerated and their loved ones among their grievances. Bryan Jones, one of the voices on the recording, typed out a detailed letter outlining the specific problems and the illegal violations. On 9/8/16 members of Writer's Block Norte called me to record their poetry and messages to be share with those who would listen. A few day prior to that I received the grievance letter. So as not to tip their hand early, I waited until the morning of September 9th to post the letter and audio to the HFS website and email our list serve. I requested that those wanting to show solidarity contact Kinross and request a formal inquiry into the conditions and the health and safety of those protesting, and request that the administration address the complaints of the people incarcerated there. I suggested that people also contact other prisons and the MDOC to request a formal inquiry into the conditions, health and safety of those protesting. Earlier in the month we had ordered securepacs i.e. food and sent along reading material to keep the guys occupied and in

good spirits. There was word coming out to people during and it seemed like the first day went well. Then radio silence. Then nothing for a few days. Then I recorded a couple of accounts of the event.

Figure 14: Freeschool “Kinross 9/9”

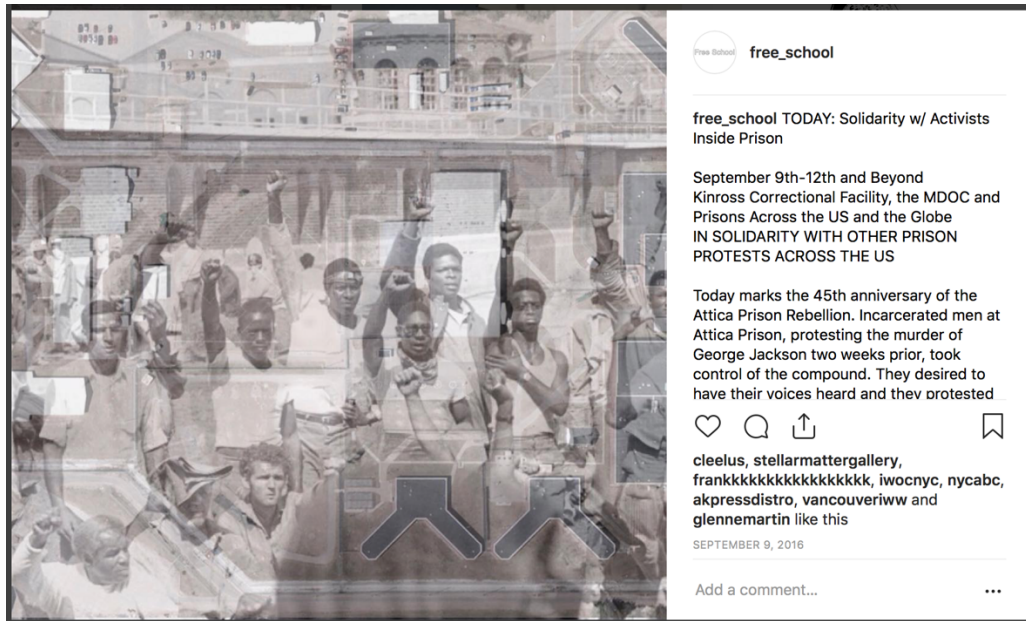
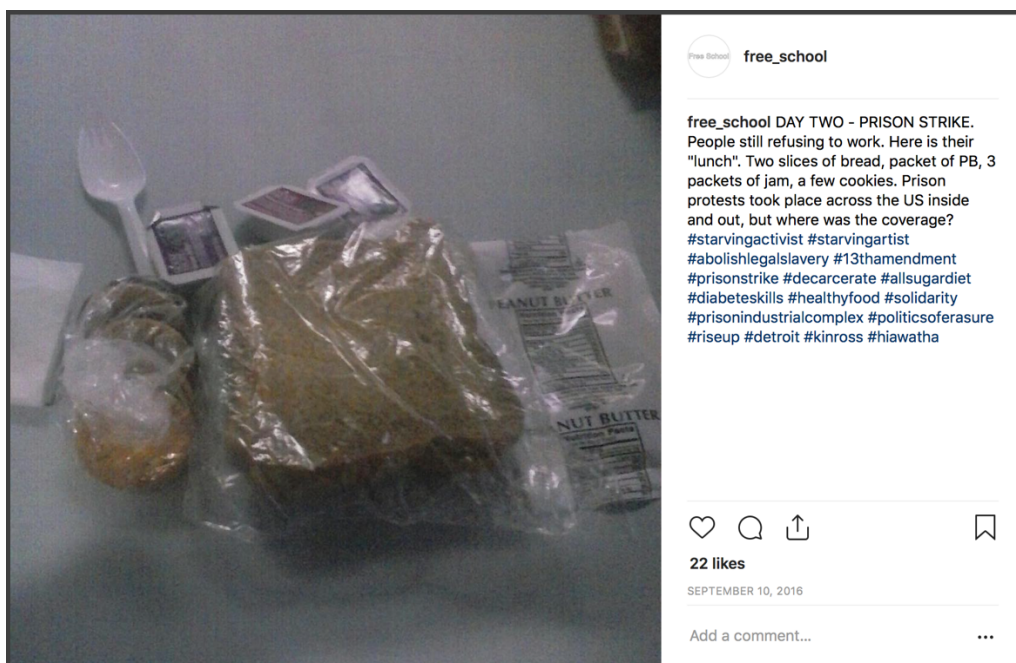


Figure 15: Freeschool “Kinross 9/10”



Fred Williams @ Kinross Aftermath

Anonymous @ Kinross Aftermath

Figure 16: Calvin Westerfield "Incite to Riot or Strike"

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS				CSJ-228	
MISCONDUCT REPORT				10/10 4835-3228	
Prisoner Number: 633261	Prisoner Name: WESTERFIELD	Facility Code: KCF	Lock: H-1-17	Violation Date: 9/10/16	
Time and Place of Violation: 0855hrs KCF Commons Yard		Contraband Removal Record Provided to Prisoner? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			
Misconduct Class: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I <input type="checkbox"/> II <input type="checkbox"/> III		Charge(s): Incite to Riot or Strike; Rioting or Striking			
Describe Violation (If contraband involved, describe in detail; identify any other employee witnesses): At 0855hrs., 9/10/16, prisoner WESTERFIELD 633261 and a large group of prisoners at the Kinross Correctional Facility left their units when the Yard was not open and entered the KCF Commons Yard. The large group of prisoners assembled in front of the Control Center. The amount of prisoners participation in the demonstration was in the hundreds. The siren was blown signifying an Emergency Count. Facility staff including the Deputy Warden directed the prisoners to return to their units for count. The prisoners remained assembled in a large group in front of the Control Center through count, disrupting facility operations. Prisoner WESTERFIELD identified by OTIS and Unit Count Board.					
Reporting Staff Member's Name (Print) Lt Maki		Reporting Staff Member's Signature <i>[Signature]</i>		Date and Time Written 9/10/16 1748	
REVIEW					
Location/Verification/Condition of Evidence:					
Elevated to Class I at review: <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		If "yes", explain reason:			
COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY FOR REVIEW OF CLASS I MISCONDUCT					
Status Pending Hearing: <input type="checkbox"/> Bond <input type="checkbox"/> Segregation <input type="checkbox"/> Confinement to Cell/Room <input type="checkbox"/> Other					
Reason if Non-Bond: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Bond List <input type="checkbox"/> Bond Revoked (must give reason)					
Date and Time Given this Status: 9-11-16 1341		Who Notified in Housing Unit of Status: Sgt Boyer			
Hearing Investigator Requested? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes		Witnesses Requested? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes			
Relevant Documents Requested? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes		If yes, list: Will tell HI			
Additional Comments:		Prisoner Waives 24 Hour Notice of Hearing? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes			
Reviewing Officer's Name (Print) Sgt James		Reviewing Officer's Signature <i>[Signature]</i>		Review Date and Time 9-11-16 1341	
I have received a copy of this report. My signature does not necessarily mean that I agree with the report. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prisoner refused to sign. Copy given to prisoner.		Prisoner's Signature <i>[Signature]</i>		Date	
WAIVER OF CLASS II OR III HEARING					
I understand I have a right to a hearing. I waive my right to a hearing and plead guilty to all charges. I also waive my right to appeal and accept the sanctions imposed.		Prisoner's Signature		Date	
SANCTIONS IMPOSED (Hearing Investigator enters begin and end dates for Class II misconducts)					
Days Toplock		Begins: _____ Ends: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling/Reprimand (Class III only)	
Days Loss of Privileges		Begins: _____ Ends: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ Restitution (Class II only)	
Hours Extra Duty		Begins: _____ Ends: _____			
Property Disposition If Applicable: _____					
Employee Accepting Plea and Imposing Sanction (Print)		Employee's Signature		Date	
Hearing Investigator's Name (Print)		Hearing Investigator's Signature		Date	
Distribution: Prisoner; Counselor File; Record Office File (Class I and II); Central Office File (Class I); Hearing Investigator (Class I & Class II)					

Initially the press did little to cover the story beyond talking to Corrections Department spokesman Chris Gautz, who tried to minimize the event saying that it was “Not a riot at all.”²⁹² But as more details emerged and the CO union president Tom Tylutki told the Free Press on Tuesday. “It was a riot...For anybody to describe it as anything other than that is just amazing to us.” He noted that, “It was the first time armed officers were sent into housing units since the Michigan prison riots of 1981.”²⁹³ Still the press included nothing from the people incarcerated despite the fact that I had reached out to the Free Press and others directly. There was some back and forth between the CO union and the MDOC and as expected. The union defined the event as a riot in their newsletter.²⁹⁴ But of course the MDOC didn’t want to have to pay for it. As the union pushed back against the Department of Corrections for downplaying the event, more began to come to light about what actually happened.²⁹⁵ As expected, the MDOC had to pay out nearly a million dollars in wages. After the event, the state’s response was as expected, i.e. retributive and arbitrary. Many men are still caged in Level V segregation, and have been for more than two years. Despite the repression, men and women are still organizing and resisting the injustices that abound throughout the MDOC. And the state’s surveillance and repression has taken on a more preemptive character. Just prior to the anniversary in 2017 people were being moved for minor infractions or for completely fabricated ones, as was the case with Fred, who achieved about as much notoriety as someone incarcerated can when his interview ended up getting picked up by Democracy Now!²⁹⁶ The charges against Fred, which were dismissed after appeal, were a pretext to disrupt the growing influence he and other co-facilitators were developing via their DIY classes and discussions of books we send in. Fred conveyed to me that it was made explicit to him before he was moved that his

²⁹² Egan, “Inmates in Upper Peninsula Set Fire,” see also Newsroom, “Kinross Correctional Facility.”

²⁹³ Egan, “Riot or Reined In?” and see also Stateside Staff, “Riot? Disturbance?”

²⁹⁴ Michigan Corrections Organization, “MCO Taking Action Following Riot,” Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Egan, “Kinross Prison Disturbance Cost Michigan Nearly \$900,000.”

²⁹⁶ Democracy Now! “On 1st Anniversary of Largest U.S. Prison Strike.”

security level increase, from II to V, was because of his activities educating and organizing, and although they couldn't prove anything, they wanted us to know that they knew we were "fomenting rebellion" via poetry and educational reading material. It's all rather laughable if it wasn't for the fact that their retribution is very real. I received another letter written late 2017 explaining a plan for targeted boycotts, protests and work stoppages. Below is a list of books I sent to people inside in 2016 and 2017 in addition hundreds of photocopied readings. Both practices are getting harder because of surveillance and the state's ability to censor literature despite first amendment protections. These readings circulating throughout the MDOC they are part of why the state fears and attempts to suppress education.²⁹⁷

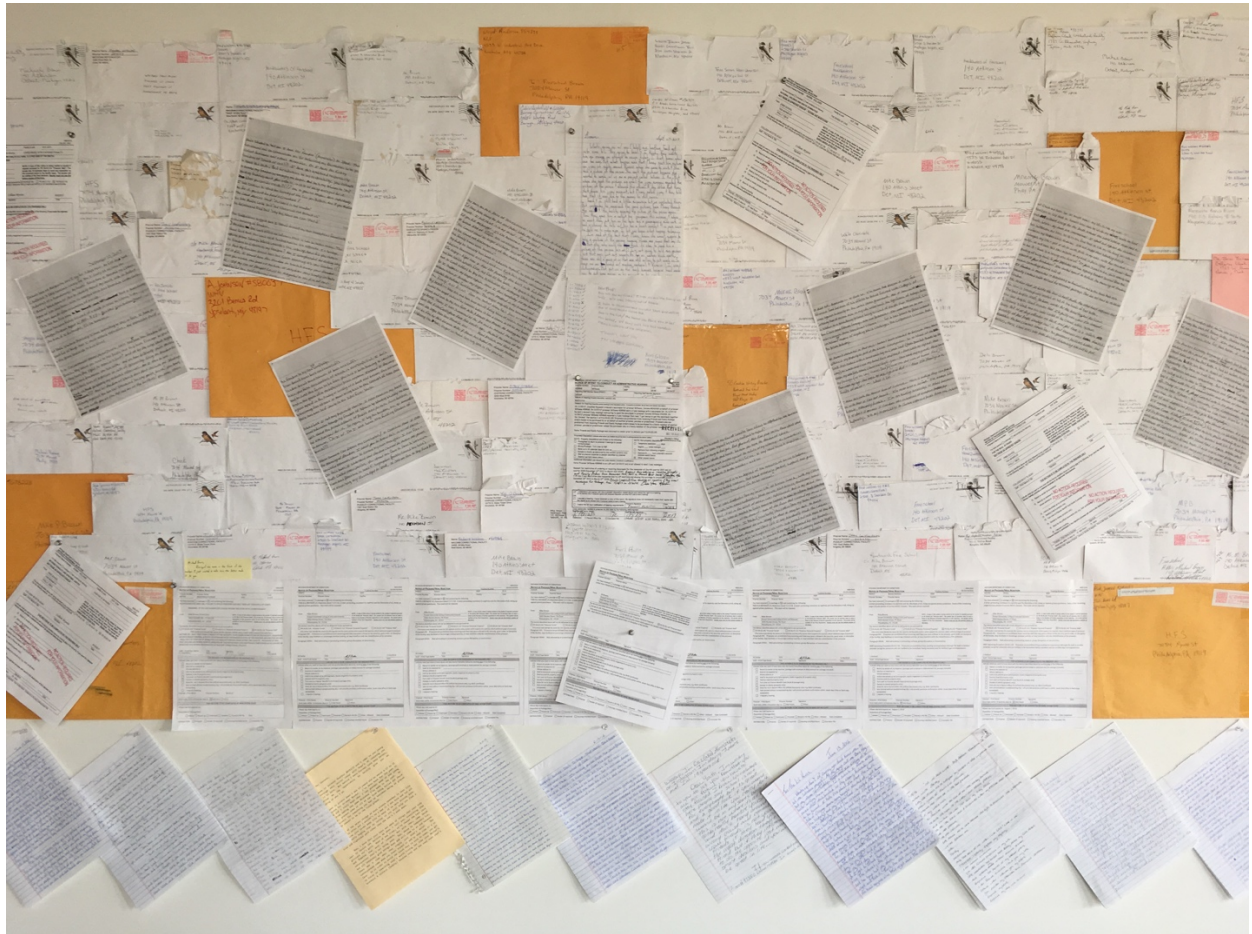
Steve Biko: I Write What I Like
 Marc Mauer: Race to Incarcerate
 Paulo Freire: Pedagogy of the Oppressed:
 Saul Alinsky: Reveille for Radicals
 Allan G. Johnson: Privilege, Power, and Difference
 Lora Bex Lempert: Women Doing Life: Gender, Punishment and the Struggle for Identity
 Angela Davis: Freedom Is a Constant Struggle
 Angela Davis: Are Prisons Obsolete?
 Don Sabo: Prison Masculinities
 Michelle Alexander: The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness
 bell hooks: All About Love
 Friedrich Holderlin: Hyperion
 Mike Davis: Planet of Slums
 Naomi Klein: The Shock Doctrine
 Talal Asad: On Suicide Bombing
 Sherman Jackson: Islam and the Blackamerican Looking Toward the Third Resurrection
 Achille Mbembe: Necropolitics & Critique of Black Reason & African Futures
 Audre Lorde: Sister Outsider & Black Unicorn
 Georges Didi-Huberman: Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz
 Daisy Hernandez (ed): Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism
 Robert Allen: Black Awakening in Capitalist America
 Octavia Butler: Xenogenesis Trilogy & Kindred
 Donna Haraway: Staying with The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene
 Stella Bolaki (ed): Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies
 Taylor Keeanga-Yamahtta: From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation
 Tutuola Amos: The Palm-Wine Drinkard and My Life in the Bush of Ghosts
 Lorenzo Veracini: The Settler Colonial Present
 Franklin Rosemont: Black, Brown, & Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora

²⁹⁷ Reflections from Inside, "Michigan's Kinross Prison Strike" and Making Contact, "Specters of Attica"

David Harvey: A Brief History of Neoliberalism
 Aime Cesaire: Discourse on Colonialism
 Harsha Walia: Undoing Border Imperialism
 Chandra Talpade Mohanty: Feminism Without Borders Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity
 Nikhil Pal Singh: Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy
 Gloria Hull (ed): But Some of Us Are Brave
 Cherrie Moraga (ed): This Bridge Called My Back
 Subcomandante Marcos: Our Word is Our Weapon
 Lenin: Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism
 Ashai Dalou: Hauling Up the Morning: Writings & Art by Political Prisoners & Prisoners of War in the US
 Ania Loomba (ed): Colonialism/Postcolonialism
 Rita Kiki Edozie: Malcolm X's Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for Contemporary Black Studies
 Cedric Robertson: Black Marxism: The Making of the Radical Tradition
 George Jackson: Soledad Brother
 George Jackson: Blood in My Eye
 Manning Marable (ed): Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology
 Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Masks
 Trinh Minh-ha: Women, Native, Other
 INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence: The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the NPIC
 Greg Jobin-Leeds: When We Fight, We Win: TwentyFirstCentury Social Movements and the Activists That Are Transforming Our World
 Kristian Williams (ed): Life During Wartime: Resisting Counterinsurgency

One of the things I need to address is the vulnerability and danger that comes with radical education particularly in prison. When you expose brutality no matter where it manifests you will frequently be running contrary to existing currents of power from a host of different directions. There are dangerous people in out and between, and you can make enemies in all directions, and in prison that can be a much more immediate threat on your life then in most circumstances.

Figure 17: Freeschool “Wall of Writing Other Ways”



Writer's Block and Fred Williams

About a year after I started going into the prison I wrote a short article for a local activist paper in Detroit titled, "Retribution, Resistance, and the Incarceration of Kids: Poetic and Protest in Prison." We were trying to generate some attention to the fight for juveniles sentenced to life without parole (JLWOP) to get resentenced. The Supreme Court had determined that it constituted cruel and unusual punishment to sentence a juvenile to mandatory life without at least taking into consideration mitigating circumstances, but had left it up to the States to decide about retroactivity. Juveniles could still get life, but it couldn't be a sentence imposed mandatorily. I was already doing some behind the scene work trying to familiarize myself with the appeals and commutation processes for David Jones, who is doing 50-75 years for a home invasion, assault and car theft. Unbeknownst to David at the time, his victim was a deputy Warden in the MDOC. Oh the blindness of justice. Marilyn Frye was helpful in connecting me to a psychologist who was going to do a psych-eval on David for his commutation application but it never panned out. I had no idea how entangled I would become. This marked the beginning of my struggle to understand coauthoring in the service of decarceration and it helps to introduce the others who formed my first impressions of both prison and writing poetry to share in a group setting.

"I write poetry for Wednesdays. I have come to cherish Wednesdays despite the sadness they often bring me. Wednesdays, two other facilitators and I make the drive from Detroit to the Macomb Correctional Facility (MRF) on 26 mile in New Haven. We are volunteers at MRF. A year ago Jonathan Rajewski, Matthew Polzin and I luckily inherited the opportunity to facilitate the Writer's Block, a poetry group with a long running history at MRF. Currently the group consists of 10 imprisoned poets. Long time Writer's Block poet Daniel-Bey once described the volunteers as "Lightbringers." I hope that's true. Perhaps we're like the spiders and birds in a James Fuson poem,

able to pass through brick and razorwire fence with ease, never fully aware of what that means.

Incarcerated people know mobility, only it's the state that determines their movement.

The last Wednesday of April this year marked the loss of the third member of the Writer's Block. Last year, Q aka "The Love Doctor" was the first forced to relocate. Luckily, we got to say goodbye. K.D.A. Daniel-Bey was the second, and regrettably luck afforded us no farewell. The most recent was Jamie, who after a quick hug was disappeared into the system aptly called the prison industrial complex. Now, all three are only accessible via the MDOC databases that contain their "biographical information," i.e. name, number, racial identification and other reductive banalities found on a drivers license. But we remember them. We remember Jamie's abusive "hilljack" family, and the brothers and sister he loves.

Forced movement is familiar, many have known various prisons throughout the state since childhood. David A. Jones writes about this aspect of incarceration in the poem "I Own Ya", about the hilltop prison in central Michigan.

Ionia: An ancient region of
W Asia Minor along the Aegean Sea
colonized by Greeks
before 1000 B.C.
I own ya
They said
not with words
with brick and bars
M.R., Pride of Ionia
Pain to the walking numbers

the unwilling subjects
of castle reformatory.

Jones, known to the group as DJ, has done 26 of an unfathomably unjust 50-75 year sentence for an armed robbery he was convicted of as a 19 year old. As transfer documents shuffle through institutional channels, Jamie shuffles onto a bus and we shuffle across the yard. Beside some jeering comments about our appearances, the yard is calm for us, but that's not the reality of prison for those forced to live in it. P, the youngest in the group knows this well. P writes in "Being" that, "...this is existing/tribal tattoos scribbled across decaying battlefields a land/where blood flows like milk and honey use to/where wisdom whispers warped wishes/this is existing/.../this is existing/to the harps melodies fingered by angels/all dance with the devil/replanting roots/broken bones, fed by tears/and shattered glass/that burn hot like coals/this is existing." The intersecting macro and micropower dynamics make prison life comprehensible only to those who have experienced it first hand. And for them only just so.

There is no uniform perspective, no univocal poetic prison voice one can distill from the works of these writers. The desire to do so is part of a process of disindividuation they are all too familiar with. Sentenced as a juvenile to die in prison, James D. Fuson, whose adept use of poetic brevity can jar a reader, "geese flying/against the gray sky/above the razorwire" notes this depersonalizing phenomena in,

DISINDIVIDUATED 1:10

MCL 750.316

County No. 12356

3rd Circuit

MDOC No. 244473

Level 4 to Level 2

Housing Unit 3

Cell No. 98

Top Bunk

Counted

Assignment No. 602

5th for chow

036 now 436 Class II

Lockdown

The Supreme Court recently ruled that mandatory life for juveniles constituted cruel and unusual punishment and was therefore unconstitutional. Currently, the state courts are debating retroactive review for cases where this punishment was imposed. The lives of half the Writer's Block poets hang in the balance. 5 of the 10 members were juveniles when the state of Michigan sentenced them to die in prison. James Thomas' poem "Freedom" recounts part of this experience, "...As I stood before the judge and paraded around the court room, photo opts being taken as if I was in a fashion show. Never shed a tear because freedom wasn't a reality for a fifteen year old. Because I never seen freedom in my neck of the woods." Sentenced to die behind bars, Thomas, has spent the last 27 years incarcerated. The men understand what hangs in the balance for the juvenile lifers, and although they're hopeful about their future, they're also familiar with the unbalanced scales of justice and the cold subtleties of retribution. Yusef Qualls-El's "DayDream" explores the reality of retributive justice and the damage inflicted not just on the body of the condemned, but also on a mind never allowed respite.

...Layin on my back with my hands clasped behind my head./Thoughts moving at a snails pace./Relaxation finally realized./.../I'm finally calm enough to not focus./Not look at how much I hate where I am./Not to look at what I'm missing by being here./Not recognizing the hurt./The hurt that I caused my victims./The hurt that I caused my family./The hurt that I've caused myself./.../The jarring sound of the loud speaker cries out,/‘Any available Maintenance TX Control Center...’/.../Gone is my peace./Back is the torturous state, imposed by the state./As a punitive measure./A sanction./A punishment, with no attempt at rehabilitation./This despair./This monotonous monster./This jackhammer to hope./Anchored to me like a ball and chain./No sleep./No peace./No Justice!!!

Q was 16 in 1995 when he was sentenced to life behind bars. Today's a critical moment for the juvenile lifers, they must amass enough public support such that the state decides to retroactively review their cases. If reviews happen, courts must be made to consider mitigating circumstances as relevant details when sentencing. They need to take seriously the conditions of children's lives, and the socio-structural, personal, and emotional implications of those conditions, they need to hear the words of Maurice Sanders

...imagine him being almost choked to death at the age of 10 by the being that gave him life simply because he treated her like a stranger and never like a friend as he cringed from her touch and all he remembered from that day was the look in her eyes as she stated repeatedly die just go ahead and die imagine what that child felt afterwards lying on the cold wood floor looking up at someone he never knew wishing someone would hear his screams but no one ever did//imagine his strength as he picked his self up off the floor trying to regain his balance as he mustered up all the courage he possibly could and silently walked away imagine how much he hated himself for not being able to make her love him imagine how that made him feel// imagine him feeling love, strength and comfort in the streets imagine someone looking at him and telling him lil bro we love you, you're our family now. You'll never be alone again because you got us, imagine him believing that and doing everything in his power to make them proud...

Maurice was sentenced to death behind bars for a felony murder charge he was convicted of as a 16 year old. He's been behind bars for the last 20 years. The only way to accept the current state of incarceration is to turn away from the reality of these words, to silence these poetic voices. But, after hearing the words of Fred, the youngest of the juvenile lifers, who forces us to gaze upon the glaring contradictions in our society's structure, turning away is unjust.

Here I stand
in the mainland
above hell
beneath heaven
in the capital of capitalism
where shadows of death glow in the dark
at the university of wealthy

Dear Professor
does sharing religious beliefs
with my oppressor
make my brain capacity lesser

Here I stand firmly perplexed
in the mouth of the monster
in the eye of the dollar
I'm no scholar
But is black hoodie worse than white collar?

As Writer's Block closes down for the night, and the poets are shuffled out the door, and we are shuffled through the razorwire the words of the newest member of the group, Umar, are ringing in my ear, "A desensitized society/A desensitized society/the media deciding a child's future/obese adolescents told the best place to get a six pack is a liquor store/the only way to make it is a mixing board/kick a few rhymes/push a few dimes/commit a few crimes/get a little shine/then die!!/is everybody high?" Our anesthetized society seems deaf to the voices of those suffering the injustices of american justice. But, although we write poetry for Wednesdays, daily the voices of the oppressed

transcend their confines and awaken slumbering ears to the music of the muse who inspires the struggles for freedom.”

Eventually, after loses, disappointments and protracted legal battles, the juvenile lifers got their day in court and retroactivity was affirmed. Two from our group have been released. We await word on 5 more. Now my institutionally sensitive account of my support of Fred Williams.

To The Honorable Judge Qiana Lillard,

My name is Michael Brown. I am an affiliated scholar at the Center for Science, Technology and Society at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PhD candidate in Philosophy at Michigan State University, a former resident of Detroit and cofounder of a local educational project Hamtramck Free School. I have been a facilitator of several educational and creative art classes within the Department of Corrections. I have provided educational and pedagogical support for the Youth Deterrent and Prison Deterrent Programs at Ryan Correctional, two programs founded and organized by incarcerated men committed to keeping kids and young men out of prison. I am also a co-facilitator of the Writer’s Block, a poetry and creative arts collective within the Department of Corrections. For the last five years other facilitators and I have made a weekly trip to Macomb Correctional Facility to work with a dynamic group of poets, artists and incarcerated educators. In addition, we provide educational and artistic support to other chapters and members of Writer’s Block throughout the state. Over the last five years I have spent hours every week collaborating with members of the Writer’s Block and I can say, without reservation, that this has been the most rewarding, supportive and enlightening personal, artistic and pedagogical experience of my life.

I am writing on behalf of Frederick Williams, who has been one of my closest confidants for the last five years. I know Fred to be a poet, scholar, organizer, and for the last 17 years, a wrongly

incarcerated man. He was thrown into a world of drugs and desperation that gave him little vantage of anything different. When children are raised under conditions that discourage them from internalizing the mores and ethics necessary for healthy social being, and instead are immersed in personal and social practices that normalize killing, stealing, exploitation, abuse and inattention, it should be no surprise that over time they begin to externalize those very same practices. When a society creates conditions of deprivation and desperation, predictably, those deprived and desperate take actions to alleviate those conditions. And often, those actions lack perspective.

Fred's parents were drug addicts and drug dealers. His earliest memories are of guns, drugs, murders and death. His father is dead. His mother is dead. His brother is dead. He was homeless, in and out of shelters, told to pretend he had a learning disability and missed so much school that when he entered prison at 17 he was illiterate. He was running a crack house at 14 and experiencing all the world had to offer a child in those circumstances. Despite all this, he would once again reacquaint himself with the wonderful little boy who knew to throw his mother's crackpipe away. Fred met that capable and intelligent child again inside prison, and he has walked him down his true path. He has become a voracious reader, a scholar, an intellectual who rivals most graduate students with years of formal education, an organizer and an activist. And throughout all this, he remains an innocent man.

Unfortunately, our prison system does not function to rehabilitate, restore or reconcile members of our community. It is a violent, limiting, and ultimately repressive place, which discourages human flourishing. This is what makes Fred such an exceptional person. He thrives despite prison. I have witnessed years of personal and community transformation at his hands. I have watched the institution disrupt community over and over, and I have been part of the maintenance and growth of that community nonetheless. Despite losing friends and family I have seen Fred remain undeterred in his pursuit of positive and supportive personal and community

empowerment. I've seen Fred reach out to the most "notorious" members in prison because he knows the struggle of those written off by society. I have watched him use his intelligence and knowledge to transform repressed anger, hate and frustration into cathartic forms of emotional expression. He helps individuals to heal from the violence and victimization that so often plays its part in the cyclical reproduction of the violence they perpetuate. An offender becomes able to empathize with victims, thus transforming their lives in ways that allow them to take seriously and fight against the kinds of harms they visited upon the community.

I want to speak, briefly, about the issue of "irreparable corruption." Without belaboring over the meaning of this conceptual pairing, I will express my sincerest conviction about Fred Williams and attempt to assuage the fears of those charged with keeping our communities safe. Frederick Williams is not corrupt. Corruption is not a word you could attribute to any element of his person. He is, wholly and in parts, a wonderful human being. He is and will continue to be my friend. And I know that the world will be that much better for having had him in it. The prison system ought to be sad the day that it loses control over him because I've borne witness to the radical changes he has brought into his community. I have seen the degree to which he can inspire, empower and uplift people in their darkest hours. I have seen him nourish life and I have watched his care spread across the institution. I have played a part in his organizing his community and encouraging them to read, learn, change and become better people. I have archived the fruits of his labors and together we have encouraged others to change their lives in ways that empower and embolden them in their pursuits of the just and the good. I have watched Frederick Williams suffer sanction for his efforts, because individuals within the institution cannot properly read rehabilitation and distrust peer to peer learning. Their approach is to cordon off those most in need and those most dangerous. But the nature of violence grates against control, no matter how much we reinforce barricades. Violence erupts. And the institution is all too familiar with those eruptions. Fred Williams has forestalled

more eruptions than the institution knows, and for his efforts he has been relocated time and time again. When something is about to break between two groups, the leaders of those groups will sit down with Fred and he will enact his training and his learning and he will defuse violence, then the institution will assume things about him and his influence and relocate him. Ultimately, this approach has only strengthened and empowered a more general movement taking place among incarcerated men. Everywhere he goes, Frederick Williams continues his pedagogy of empowerment and his collaborators continue on alongside him despite his physical absence.

Over the last year alone, Fred and I have organized conference presentations, study groups, class discussions, and inside and outside community events. He has given formal presentations at the *Philosophies of Incarceration conference at Villanova University* and the *International Conference On Prison Abolition at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth*. He has lectured and lead discussion in my Contemporary Social and Political Philosophy class, and in Professor Claire Herbert's Introduction to Sociology class, both at Drexel University. He has presented on his activist work and read poetry at numerous art events in the city of Detroit, e.g. Arts In A Changing America's *RemapDetroit* and 9338 Campau's *We Don't Dream Under The Same Sky*. And most importantly, for all those events he has organized other incarcerated men's participation. As a current example of his ongoing educational practices, he and a group of other incarcerated men at Kinross Correctional Facility are reading and discussing a host of Black feminist writings. They have no outside volunteer, and so despite restrictions about how many men can sit together at a table, Fred is facilitating discussions of Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Cheryl Clarke, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks and others. Every few days I get a phone call detailing the amazing transformations taking place and together we strategize for the future. Daily he works in groups and one-on-one with young men, aiding the improvement of their reading, writing and understandings of the structures of oppression, violence and

exploitation. Many of these young men have in-turn taken up the mantle of emancipatory education, and witnessing their collective growth is both beautiful and edifying.

I want to assuage the concerns about what happens to Fred when he returns to society. I am fully committed to supporting Frederick Williams and I will aid him in finding employment, educational opportunities and housing. I am willing to personally house Fred in my home in Philadelphia until he is able to become self-supporting and I welcome the opportunity for my daughter to finally get a chance to meet her friend Fred, who sends her cards and pictures, in person for the first time. It is my sincerest hope that Frederick Williams is released immediately. I hope that a discerning and compassionate mind reviews all of the elements within his case, examines his history and comes to the realization that justice has not been done. Rather, a series injustices have been committed and now is the time to correct those travesties. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Humbly,

Michael Brown

Hopefully this helps give some sense of the man who has been my main collaborator inside over the last 5 years. It's always difficult to know how to talk about Fred Williams. I struggle to gather together the words capable of conveying his significance, and no matter what I manage to organize, it will be inadequate. It may be easiest for me to briefly tell the story of his current location and then retrace his journey over the last five years. Right now Fred is in a cage, with two cameras just outside it, in level V maximum security prison, on the shores of Lake Superior in Marquette Michigan. He is locked inside his cage 23 hours a day, sometimes 24 because the state was recently sued after a man was left outside in the winter and got frostbit. So now, if the temperature drops to zero he is not let out at all. The northern side of the UP in winter regularly reaches zero.

Incarceration in the UP can also entail enduring other hazards. He recently recounted an attempt to

take a shower the other day and as he walked into the bathroom he noticed several swastikas on the pale skin of a group of men there. He decided to only wash his hair in the sink while keeping a cautious eye out. He is currently residing in a wing of the prison where men openly boast about their pedophilic penchants for underage girls, and swastikas abound. He's was moved to this wing as punishment for organizing a poetry event. Before this he was in another wing and he was building community and empowering people with poetry and pedagogy. He was sponsoring poetry readings by giving out candy and commissary goods. He ended up in level V because of his organizing and educational activism. While in level II, he had done a internet radio interview about the protest the previous year at Kinross.

Fred Williams - Rustbelt Interview

Shortly after he was charged with attempted escape when someone on the outside, ignorant to the dangers of her naiveté and privilege, and protected from the consequences, gave them pretext when she tried to send him pictures of the landscapes around the prison for a writing assignment they were going to collaborate on. His lawyer called me in a panic because she had just recently been working to secure a number of years on his JLWOP resentencing. We didn't hear from him for what seemed like forever and I was in tears thinking about how my actions could have contributed. Eventually I got a letter and slowly things returned to, well they're never really normal. He never received any photos and eventually beat the charge, but he's still tallying the days now well past a year in level V. Before Kinross he was at Brooks on the west side of the state. He was working with a good group of poets and organizers over there and in 5 months they managed to get a book of poetry together, which I'm still behind on getting edited and printed. Before that he was with us at Macomb. Before that Kinross and before that with us at Macomb. We lost him, then got him back

then lost him again. He has been part of Writer's Block almost as long as I have. He came into the group a few months after I started volunteering at MRF.

My advocacy on behalf of Fred Williams and other incarcerated people resulted in my getting an email informing me that I was under investigation and that I was no longer allowed at MRF. I knew that this could happen from the beginning and anticipated that my time in Michigan was finite and thus the imperative for me was to affect as much change as I could. hilariously, I was suspended nearly a year after I had already moved to Philadelphia. Oh the efficiency of bureaucracy.

I've managed, with some help from others, to move Fred from having no legal representation to having a small team of lawyers working pro-bono on both his JLWOP resentencing and his innocence case. I'm aware of Gilmore's arguments about why we need to move beyond framing abolition around issues of innocence, i.e. by searching for innocence we frame the discussion around finding those for whom cages are bad but not antagonizing the tendency to cage, and I completely agree. Nonetheless,

Fred Williams - [I Am Still Innocent](#)

I've spent countless hours reading transcripts, talking to and meeting lawyers, gathering information, scanning documents, writing letters, etc. I don't say this to be braggadocios, in fact I believe on so many levels that I have failed to adequately focus my energy toward aiding in the immediate release of someone I believe to be innocent. In addition, as Fred and I have talked about, we would be naive to not recognize that my involvement in his life has had negative repercussions. I have tried to convey my regret of this fact. He is much more forgiving than I am. [The Incarcerated Archive](#) is a testament to his work. The vast majority of the people included on the site came from Fred's educational and community outreach. We were 10 and now we are over 80. And all this was

possible because we decided to use the MDOC's practice of disrupting and destroying community bonds against them. Move our guys around and you also move around our seeds. I bring this up to show the possibilities of creative resistance to stifling pressures when those with structural affordances collaborate to carry some weight for those who are structurally constrained.

Fred Williams - Transfer

Williams #409968

Pack your things – you're being transferred

Rushed goodbyes – no goodbyes at all

Always controlling

Hands cuffed, belly chained, ankles shackled

My fate locked – the deafening sound

Click, Click, Click, Clank!

re-enslaved

The holder of the key – is no older than me

Judging by the pigment of his book

He thinks I'm a crook - his institutionalized eyes

Sees my Blues

Not my Blues

He has Blue eyes

Loaded onto the bus

He's yelling at us...Move it – move it – MOVE IT!

Shackles don't allow much move

ment

I saw a tree with no leaves
It was a mirror to the Fall
My Fall-ing – through the cracks
Bottomless pit – deeper
Buried alive – reaper
Herding us like cattle
Neo Chattel
You railroaded me
From the South
Now you're forcing me North
Again
Hope gone
Sun gone
I'm gone
Love remains
Remains with pain
Would revolt but I'm secured like a vault
Treasured commodity
I wanna escape, but I'll be charged with theft –
Adjust
Conform
That's a thin line

Figure 18: Steven Hibbler “Just-US Depart.”



Comrade Fred,

Damn man...damn. Your girl broke the news to me and Jonathan. I've still not gotten used to this aspect of institutional violence. This is the second version of my letter to you. The first was almost done when I received your letter last week. I got three others in the mail yesterday all of which were poems. I got another today, i.e. your juvenile lifer letter. Included with this letter is some feedback on a few poems. Perhaps revisions could be made to the stuff I've sent back to you and then you send back final drafts with another list of poems you want included? It will take me a bit more time to get back to you on the letter, but I'll try and be quick. Also, once I have confirmation from you that you want me to send your sticky notes from Nic I will. I've hesitated because I want your ok and to know that we have reciprocal contact before sending them, given that I know they

are important to you. I am very happy to hear that you have been accepted into a program that could bring you closer. I have extended this to others and I will to you as well...send the word, put me on a list and I will visit.

Beyond the business section of this letter, I want to convey to you what an honor it has been sharing time and growing with you. Your insights and willingness to push yourself to new levels of thought and expression are inspiring. Please don't let your ascension ever pause. Push, unrelentingly upward along your path. The ideological mystifications you have obliterated with critical insight and revolutionary praxis provide clearings for others, who you can encourage to view the world from their own unique vantages and thereby contributing to a more complete view of our world. We now begin another phase of your intellectual and personal growth. I will not abandon my solidarity. Write and I will respond. Our distance gives us an opportunity to hone different compositional skill-sets. You can send poems, but I also encourage prose. Write young Abolitionist. Write your history in scrupulous detail and with ruthless criticism. Write of the struggle and your knowledge of the enemy and its strengths and weaknesses...its stupidity and irrationality. But never let oppression strip you of your humanity or your love. Never let the struggle harden you to the point of forgetting why you resist. Be inclusive and tolerant and recognize that the enemy has a false understanding of the world and their role in making it the way it is. And, ignorance is pitiful. Show pity. They're sad people. Keep that warm smile and provide heat to those outside in the cold of ignorance. Keep that smile and know that as you struggle to transform your knowledge into understanding via articulation you must communicate it to others and build true community. That's something that cannot be restrained or caged or shackled. Humility and patience aids the development of true comrades. Share and be willing to hear others, push them to confront their inconsistencies as you confront your own...we all have them. A good measure of progress is our ability to accept being wrong, realize unhealthy or cancerous forms of growth and unchain our natural pliability such that we can bend

those over-tread and crooked ways to straighter paths cut for the first time across uncharted terrain. I will miss seeing you every week but I won't complain, I'll stay a little and await word from my friend and comrade. RISEUP.

"When we revolt it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe." (Fanon) "Now, when you have a literary community oppressed by silence from the outside, as Black writers are in america, and you have this kind of tacit insistence upon some unilateral definition of what "Blackness" is or requires, then you are painfully and effectively silencing some of our most dynamic and creative talent, for all change and progress from within comes about from the recognition and use of difference between ourselves...I really feel if what I have to say is wrong, then there will be some woman who will stand up and say Audre Lorde was in error. But my words will be there, something for her to bounce off, something to incite thought, activity. Black male writers tend to cry out in rage as a means of convincing their readers that they too feel, whereas Black women writers tend to dramatize the pain, the love. They don't seem to need to intellectualize this capacity to feel; they focus on describing the feeling itself. And love often is pain. But I think what is really necessary is to see how much of this pain I can feel, how much of this truth I can see and still live unblinded. And finally, it is necessary to determine how much of this pain I can use. That is the essential question that we must all ask ourselves. There is some point where pain becomes an end in itself, and then we must let it go. On the one hand, we must not be afraid of pain, but on the other we must not subject ourselves to pain as an end in itself. We must not celebrate victimization, because there are other ways of being Black."
(Lorde)

Figure 19: Fred Williams "Letter"

2 -
a paradox examined closely in BLACK AWAKENING IN CAPITALIST America pg 119 While white ~~racism~~ ^{racism} structurally prevent my hopes from being realized, you are a white man giving me hope. And like I said not one single Black man I know personally, gives me any hope, nor never have. (BACE) "This poses a continuing dilemma for the Negro Middle Class and results in the ambivalent attitudes it displays toward its own race and toward the white world." The Black Nationalism is an informative Chapter. ~~though~~ though to me. I see Booker T. Washington differently, I mean of course the grounds he broke were unbreakable before him. The Chapter says "Washington was willing to forgo politics and to accept segregation as the price to be paid for white financial support" Is a Black man pushing for the reality of segregation saying something similar to a Black Nationalist? Now I would have disfavor it ~~you're~~ using segregationary Nationalism only for personal benefit, and not that of the people. It's not one of my favorite readings in the package, but I'll tell you what is (Life during wartime) cutting edge reading material. There's a section that's addressing how the government has adjusted to dealing with gangs - and there's a portion there that gives insight to some positive advancements by the GO I'd love to be able to share that info with the fellas here. Since I can't spend all the \$\$ on the phone because that would render me selfish. Guess I'll Glaze over the readings that I've devoured so far - Assata is my soul twin, I freaking love that woman's mind. What I enjoyed the most thus far - besides the drawing from MNEME, besides the pictures of Brothers and Sisters from the Movement is

Figure 19: (cont'd)

3

is hands down Commitment from the Mirror-Writing Box.
This piece is Colorful, ~~layered~~ layered, dynamic. I learned a lot from her I wanna share some of it with, I learned that I need to write outside of myself more often - I remember recently you mentioning that "Jay was the least limited by prison" and as I look at my body of work, 9 or 10 are poems recounting the suchness of my personal experiences. She said its like being in a room full of mirrors - watching yourself - watch yourself. How Narcissistic - to write about only what you wanna hear from yourself.

I like what ^{she} had to say about sexuality, "the other Bisexuality" according to the public's standards you will not give yourself-permission to have attractions to the same sex, or any sex other than traditionally opposite. And that's sort of Bullshit - ~~that's~~ A person should feel free to experiment if one chooses, and not feel less human or shame for doing so.

I can say I like the articulation - Difference needs to be suppressed in the name of Theory. It goes on to explain how gender can imprison you "A woman's Room, despite its new seductive paneling, can become a prison as soon as it takes on the appearance of a lady's room, (Masculine notion of femininity)" I'm going on and on - I'll say if there's more I'd be privileged to read it.

I wish, really really wish there was some guys here that were lined up to pour over these readings as I consume one after the other. At the last location I had A small 'book club' of three. Soon as I finish reading it, they would be waiting to read it next.

Figure 19: (cont'd)

4

I also read Riot by Gwendolyn Brooks - I Can't stop reading the poem on aspect of Love / Alive in the Ice and Fire by Laban Brown

I've finished "The Transformation of Silence into Language ^{And} ~~of~~ Action

And I enjoyed A Black Feminist statement from Combahee River Collective / I appreciate the discussion of how black women feel solidarity with progressive black men, unlike white women who has class/race on their side doesn't need to ~~to~~ have solidarity with white men around race, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors.

Well in other news, I was placed in a Creative writing Class that I recently learned about, first class starts in two weeks. Facilitator is a young lady named Sandra L. Cook graduated from Eastern - I want to take our underground Competition/Showcase to the gym where the other two units can be involved and maybe it can be documented on film.

Also from what I understand, Maria should be familiar with the warden here (Jackson) is his name, thinking the best course of action would be to see if she'll ask him personally to review and air the movie here, or maybe he can direct us towards the next actionable option.

Enclosed you will find poems of everyone that participated in the Showcase last week, I haven't collected everyone's just yet. Everyone hasn't made a copy yet.

Fred,

It was wonderful to get your letter. I was getting updates about you through Jonathan so it was nice to get some word of my own. A few questions for you regarding your new poetry group. I have posted the poems that you gave Jonathan from the other members of the group on the Hamtramck free school website, we have an archive of incarcerated mens' writing on the website but I have it set private because before I publish someone's material on the Internet I want to be sure that I have their consent. If Crosby and Woods are interested in having their material on the HFS website please tell them to send me a letter saying that it's okay and I will do exactly that. It's difficult to actually say this but perhaps the best thing that could've happened for you in regards to your own personal growth is to have left the group, because it has pushed you to take up a more active relation to self cultivation and community development. Our communication will not be hindered and perhaps could even be bolstered because in the space of writing we can share our thoughts in a way that the group often made difficult given the number of people and the small amount of time. To reiterate things I've already said, I'm inspired by your personal and intellectual transformations. You are a talented intelligent young man who can critically deconstruct bullshit and reconstruct avenues of growth better than the vast majority of seniors in college...If we had even 20% of the population who were as dedicated and diligent as you have become...if we had that we would live in a different world. Regardless, we'll continue to struggle for the realization of that world in all places and times...however ephemeral they might be.

Regarding your letter...enclosed supplements should help feed your intellectual and productive appetite...I look forward to whatever you're working on for me. The duplicity of change means it is at once both enlightening and alienating...people you once knew you no longer understand because you have changed...you still know them and what you knew then, but your understanding has changed and has brought with it a transformation of your senses...your sight...you

see differently...you listen differently...you feel differently...your nose is cluing in on the stench of necrotic tissue created by the untreated wounds of injustice, inequality and oppression, and you can smell it on friend and foe...the kept and the keepers...use your sharp insight to cut out that tissue...but remember...it's a delicate task and poses dangers...trusting another and being willing to expose vulnerabilities takes time and support. I'm glad you are enjoying the reading and your insights are spot on...people being unaware of the specificity of marginalized positions different from their own often find it difficult to understand their own shortcomings because they begin with the self and then abstract a universal that applies across all cases likened unto their own...but those abstractions are from concrete particular positions and when abstractions occur they often lose particularity in a detrimental way...in the case of women and men of color when well-meaning white folks abstract oppression they try and find that common core that links systematic exploitation together, which is fine, but it often privileges one feature over the rest, e.g. a reductive marxist line is that class exploitation is global and thus universal suffering is classist and therefore the unifying feature for resistance. Only some of us are black, but all of us are exploited along class lines. Or all women share sexist oppression and thus, universal solidarity along gender. These are true positions in a sense, but reductive, thus the necessity for understanding intersectionality or the differences created by the confluence of oppressive currents or forces. The materialist analogy is a drug test for the FDA. I have a new drug and I want to test its safety...so I test peoples' response to the drug...all good. Drug released...reactions to the drug...because people were taking my drug with this other drug that when combined together makes the drugs and the body react differently...so we need to understanding that combinatorial effect. A young black women in Detroit can experience, class, race, sexist, heteronormative, etc. forms of domination and that makes her particular experience unique and problematizes the idea that if we end her class domination her racial oppression will cease too. The intersectional issue is that material forces change when they coalesce and that they

need to be understood situationally and not simply in terms of one added to another...this is also the importance of situational voicing and fighting against the silencing that happens to people and the loss of their particularity from well meaning attempts to generalize struggle for strategic reasons...strategies should grow from tactics...not the other way around. (Reading that back to myself and it seems a bit heavy and perhaps cumbersome, but I hope I'm clear enough...I send some literature to push this issue.)

Alright fam...I need to send this out so I'll say solidarity...things are ok with me here and I hope this finds you in good spirits and health. I look forward to hearing from you again.
solidarity,

Fred,

Just got word from Nic that you are...out of reach...we'll leave it at that. I'm sorry friend. I don't know what I might be able to say to you that will make your time easier...maybe something from a friend who knows where you are would be more fitting.

I wonder if a poem means anything
to a person who sees death at the door?
Who knows they must answer?
do the words still have color?

I wonder if a poem means anything
to someone at war?
to someone who lives with poverty?
to someone who's children are starving?

I wonder if a poem means anything
to someone with disease?
to someone who lives with beatings?
to someone who's family was killed by a neighbor?

I wonder what a poem can mean,
but I know in solitary confinement it keeps me sane
on lonely nights it gives me a friend
it hugs me when tomorrow seems so far away.

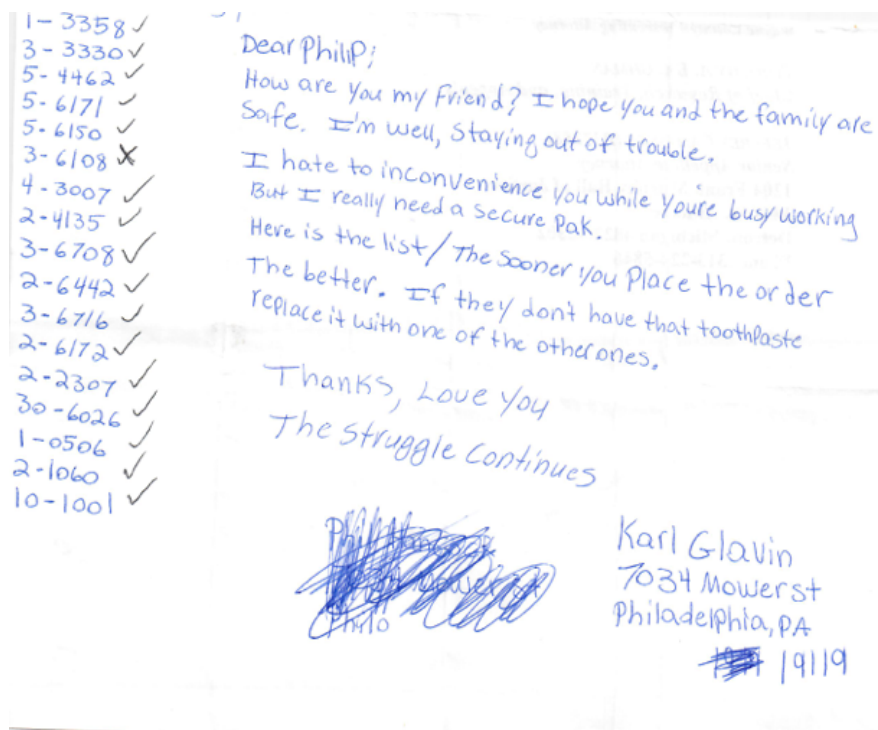
I wonder what a poem can mean, but I know I could
not make it
without a poem.

That poem was written by Jamie...he was recently diagnosed with cancer. You are so far away
friend. I can only imagine your face and I don't want to imagine you not smiling...I'm selfish...yet
I'm a realist...and my heart feels heavy. But, I cannot stop there. I want to think these words will
travel across the distance that separates us. I imagine you reading these words and hearing the
sincerity of my voice when I tell you...Hold fast friend...do not let their coldness shake your
knowledge of the fact that they can take away everything...every material possession...every
personal connection...they can take everything away from you...except that fire that you keep
inside...that source of your insight and inspiration...it is a brilliant fire Frederick...feed it and keep

it burning...in all conditions and under any duress...our darkest moments are when we need light most. My warmest embrace.

solidarity,

Figure 20: Freeschool "Tootpaste"



Dearest Frederick,

I received a phone call recently from Karl Glavin and apparently he knows a kid up at Marquette...some white guy I guess. Anyway, I guess he also knows some people at the free school and Karl said that they sent him a Christmas care package. It must be nice to have friends who are so supportive. I know that you are struggling with being cut off from any form of communication so I figured that I'd send a little note your way to let you know that the fam is thinking about you. We are praying every day that you let Jesus into your heart. Spread yourself open wide for him and let

him fill you with his love. Let God's divine essence anoint you and bless you in this time of need...Amen...thank you Jesus.

Figure 21: Freeschool "No Toothpaste"

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS NOTICE OF INTENT TO CONDUCT AN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING				CSJ-282 REV. 06/06 4835-3282	
Prisoner Number:	Prisoner Name:	Facility:	Lock:	Date:	
409968	Williams	MBP	G-30	12/14/17	
Reporting Staff Member Name (PRINT):		Title:	Reporting Staff Member Signature:		
LaCount		PC			
Nature of Hearing (Property disposition, restriction, etc):					
Restriction					
Reason for Hearing (Describe events leading to this requested action. If property is involved, list all items and explain why taken):					
<p>On 11/29/17, Jonathan Rajewski ordered a securepak for prisoner Williams, Jerome #242439 on behalf of prisoner Williams 409968. On 11/27/17 prisoner Williams 409968 sent a J-pay message with a securepak list. On 11/27/19 he sent a second J-pay message instructing to send the securepak to prisoner Jerome Williams 242439. On 11/30/17 prisoner Williams 409968 received a J-pay message that read, "i got swoop to get the securepak together for Jerome". Per section I of P.D.04.02.135 "Prisoners are prohibited from receiving Friends and Family Package orders known to be purchased by or on behalf of another prisoner, parolee or probationer. Prisoners also are prohibited from receiving Friends and Family Package orders known to be purchased by a family member of another prisoner, parolee or probationer unless the purchaser also is a family member of the prisoner receiving the item."</p>					
Note: Friends and Family Package was returned to vendor prior to delivery per P.D.04.02.135.					
Proposed Disposition (Indicate what action you believe should be taken to address/resolve the above matter):					
NOTE: Property dispositions are limited to the following:			NOTE: Non-property dispositions:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Photograph & return to prisoner it belongs to (except money/postage)			<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone restriction ____ days		
<input type="checkbox"/> Money/Postage - Turn over to PBF			begins ____ ends midnight ____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Store up to 30 calendar days for pick up			<input type="checkbox"/> Remove from following program: ____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Donate to charity as approved by the warden (property only)			<input type="checkbox"/> Remove \$ ____ from prisoner's account		
<input type="checkbox"/> Mail at prisoner expense to person identified by prisoner			(indicate reason below)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Destroy (set forth reason below)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (explain below)		
Additional Information (cite relevant rule, policy directive, procedure or justification):					
Note: Prisoner Williams 409968 is on LOP until 12/23/17 and is not allowed to send J-pay messages.					
Request for restriction of ordering or receiving Securepak for the remainder of the 4th quarter 2017 and 1st quarter 2018 (December 14 th 2017 to March 31 st 2018). Restrict from ordering or receiving Friends and Family Orders from December 14 th , 2017 to March 31 st 2018. Prisoner, M/W A 90 day J-pay restriction also requested due to LOP sanctions and abusing this privilege to circumvent policy. (December 14 th 2017 to March 13 th 2018) Block (restrict) from sending or receiving J Pay email messages for 90 days; from 12/14/17 to 3/31/18. Chris Han, Warden					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I understand and agree with the proposed disposition stated above and waive the right to a hearing. (to be checked ONLY if prisoner agrees with proposed disposition and does NOT wish to have a hearing).					
OR					
<input type="checkbox"/> I request a hearing. I have received a copy of this report. My signature does not necessarily mean that I agree with the report (to be checked ONLY if prisoner wishes to have a hearing).					
<input type="checkbox"/> I waive the 24 hour notification of hearing requirements.					
Prisoner's Signature:			Date:		
			12/15/18		
Copy personally handed to prisoner on this date by the following staff member:					
Staff Member Name (PRINT):		Title:	Staff Member Signature:		Date:
J. Horrocks		PC			12/15/17
Distribution: <input type="checkbox"/> Record Office File <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor File <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prisoner INSP. WH MAIL RM AA					

Most of the recordings presented here were planned for as testimonial record of events. We are aware that they are being recorded. MDOC staff can at any time go to a computer and access a prisoner file and listen through any of their conversations. It has been made explicit to us that we are being monitored for the activities that we are engaged in. We have repeatedly pled with people listening to take up and aid our causes. We have also ruthlessly criticized the institution and pointed to evidence of alternatives to the practices we critique. Speaking subversion to surveillance.

Fred has moved from finding and speaking in his own voice, to understanding his voice as part of history, to understanding history's suppression of voice, to understanding oppression and the erasure of voice, to understanding the power of collective song, to understanding the importance of holding voices accountable, to understanding the importance of listening,

Open letter to Michael P. Brown from Maximum Security Prison.

everyday I wake up
years of disgust
cover my face
its not a mask
the smile is.

I can't sleep/
due to the dreams I have/
I can't be awake/
due to the authenticity of the nightmares
I have.

have not
seen a sunset
in many moons.

The eclipsing affects of language block us from seeing the power structures that engulf our lives, indoctrinate us, imprison us and dehumanize us. Capitalist institutions have silently, and other times violently, thrust property rights ahead of human rights...eliminated our self value and separated us from opportunities of contributing to our families and communities...We have to demand a quality education...want to be educated. But begging and fighting for a westernized education is asking to participate in our own destruction...the pathogenesis that should be listed with the other oppressive institutions to be abolished...I would be asinine, at best, if I expect the system that oppresses us to also teach us that we should combat that oppression and how to go about doing so...Because the people in control of the institutions are at the top, and they have a stake, they will never throw over the system of oppression completely...On a more practical level, I'm trying to collaborate with this guy who teaches poetry inside Detroit public schools. He doesn't seem at this point interested in collaborating with me. I put it to him this way, you're teaching poetry inside Detroit public schools. I'm teaching poetry inside Detroit public prisons, our common goal should be preventing your students from becoming my classmates. I'm interested to see the impact of a collaboration where my classmates could write poems to his class with the purpose of derailing their ride to prison. A prison to school pipeline, if you will. What most people don't know, even I didn't know until I arrived here, is here in maximum security prison is where the state bury the most influential gang leaders, and founders of gangs. Which essentially means to me, here are the key figures that the youth in our communities idolize and model their behaviors after. So imagine the positive outcome the guys here could have by expressing creatively that they made the wrong

decisions with the gang life that cost them their freedom. Denouncing the gang life, denouncing the life of drugs, violence & woman hating. Don't get me wrong, the majority of the guys here still advocate the lifestyle. In fact, just yesterday I overheard them discussing which middle schools and high schools are best to go recruit kids to their gangs to do dirty work. Thus, the few who have laid that lifestyle to rest, and desire to work with the youth in a positive way are jewels and should have a voice. They are accountable, they just need a chance to show it...I will not abandon them. I don't fear being misunderstood, nor being punished, I fear things remaining the same, which is degenerative humanity. In the short span of time I've been here at this maximum security prison I've mentored at least nine young men who've showed tremendous signs of maturation and transformation. Due to maximum security restrictions, have only been able to mentor them by talking out the bars, shouting out the bars, and writing letters back and forth. This significantly hinders, yet, signifies their deep unacknowledged quest to have something positive occur in their lives. The way the youngsters cling to me affirms it. My actions are transparent. Also perceptible is the decrease of violent acts on each other, enemies befriending each other, their attempts to reconnect with their families, their earnest efforts to learn to read and write when I mentor them. Brown, my brother, how silly am I for asking you if there is a real possibility that I am being punished for trying to become a pedagogical incubator for these baby gangsters. Sorry for wasting your time with that question. I cannot afford to underestimate the tactics of counterinsurgency. OF COURSE I'm being punished! There are standing policies restricting gang members from going in the library, taking classes, participating in recreational activities, getting jobs and receiving securepaks. And here I come giving them books, facilitating unsanctioned classes, hosting recreational poetry showcases, and giving away hundreds of dollars to them. I am directly interfering with administrative policies...Am I an enemy of the state? There are no policies that I'm aware, that says I can't give them books, facilitate study groups and poetry classes and give them money. So my

punishment is a bit unofficial but punishment nonetheless...accustomed to receiving the bottom of a boot. We've been shoved out into society's hardest winter without the thinnest of fabric to cover our colored skin. I will not falsify the conditions of my reality to please my captor's superiors and their public image...Here stands a monolith, a prison, a unabashed institution of slavery. We've been jammed into a cage to live our lives in a frame of illiteracy and opaque isolation...It smells like shit in here all damn day! Any actions demonstrating a lack of conformity is punished by taser, gas agents, extended segregation, confiscated appliance, lost of phone and mail accessibility and so forth. I will not stand by and watch my people continue self-destruct, nor be destructed...I've assigned myself the work of uplifting the youth and bringing out their positive qualities. At the root, the gang members are seeking love and protection, like everyone else in society. But where do you turn to for love and protection when your family nucleus are drug users, drug dealers, killers, robbers and gang members? Where do you turn to for love and protection after you've lived in homeless shelters, foster homes, juvenile detentions, vacant houses and cars? They are indigent people of color so who cares if they are loved and protected. On face value, the youth respect two things: money, and violence. In that order...So I keep the tangible things in here that grabs their attention and suggest I am worth building with. The expensive shoes, the watches, the jogging outfits. How many times have I taken that stuff off and given it away to one of my brothers in here who needed /deserved it in an effort to show that real value lies in character not commodities? "The masters tools will never dismantle the masters house." However, they can infrequently be a means to an end...we are foolish to embody and mimic the value system of our oppressors...we find ways to see ourselves as the subjugated because the inevitable anger arising thereafter the realization, fuels a transformational and liberationist agenda...we must regard words as weaponizable, depending on who's using them. Here is my opportunity to go to war with words. In the dictionary that I possess...poor is defined: Lacking in mental or moral quality; a poor spirit. Inferior; inadequate, lacking fertility.

Undernourished; Lacking in value; trivial. Pitiably. I will force the word poor to resign from its job of diminishing the worth of indigent people. MY PEOPLE ARE NOT POOR... My people are very rich; abundantly rich! Rich in spirit, rich with compassion and generosity, a surplus potentiality for positive productivity, a wealth of creativity. Rich with culture and resourcefulness. Rich with personality and forgiveness... 'Poor' deletes the worth of a people, making it easy to kill them, enslave them, displace them, experiment on them, criminalize them, discard them, allow preventable deaths amongst them...which in turn made it easy for them to kill and oppress one another. Unfortunately, when we are lacking in finances, we begin lacking in other areas: morals, compassions. ethics, patience. How much patience can you muster when your bills are over-due and your children are starving. The problem lies in public perception, we're viewed as being indigent because we don't have ethics and patience, rather we don't have ethics and patience because we're indigent...

PS heard your voice, Mneme and Claire's voice on Easter, it sounded like home.

[Fred Williams @ Macomb Advice to Outsiders](#)

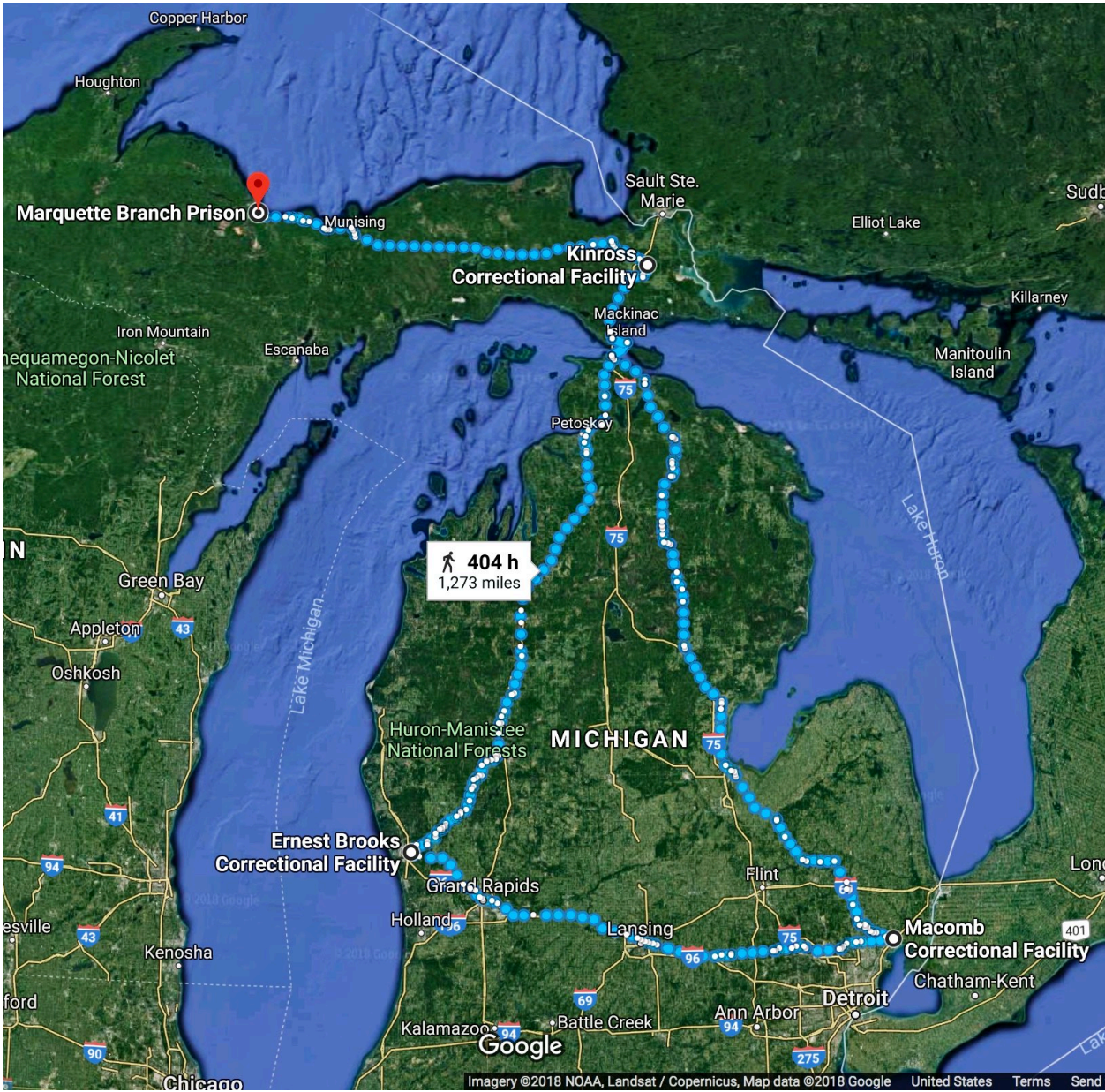
[Fred Williams @ Brooks Poetry Event](#)

[Fred Williams @ Marquette Poetry Event Inside](#)

[Fred Williams @ Marquette Poetry Event Outside](#)

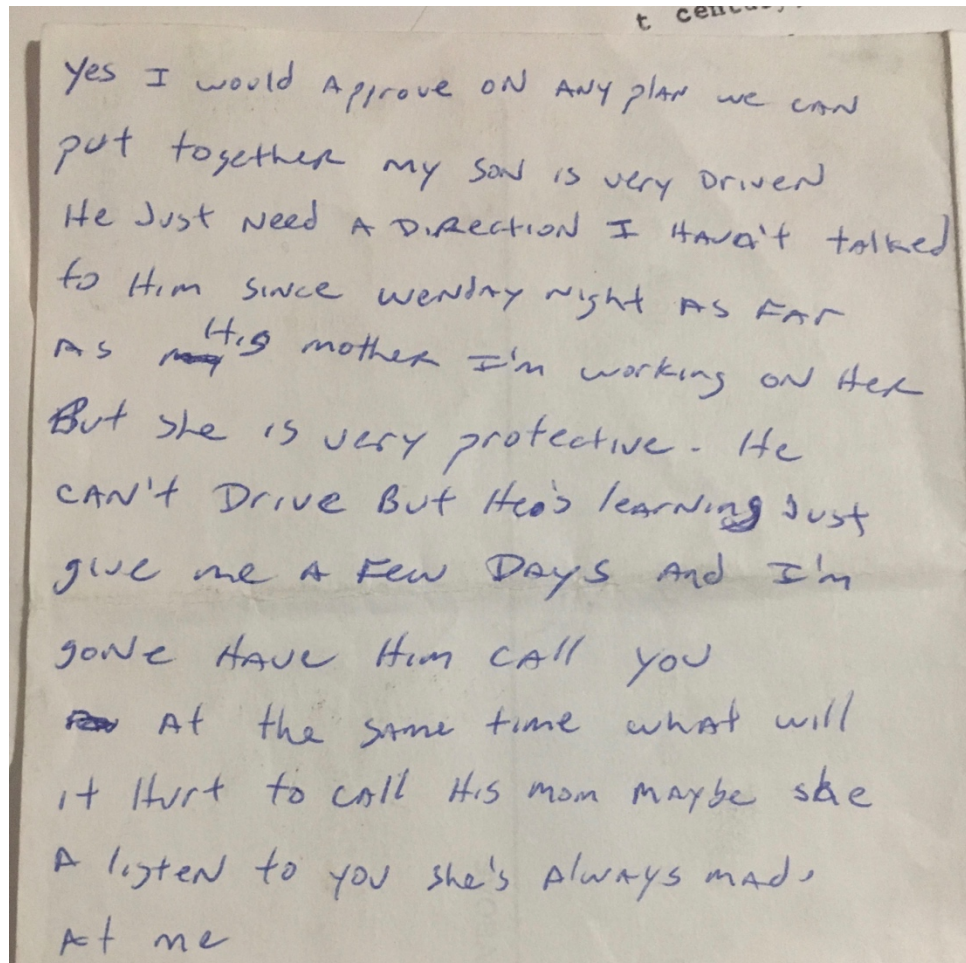
[Fred Williams @ Marquette \(Violence, Drugs, Freeschool\)](#)

Figure 22: Fred Williams “A Long Road”



Check. Mate in one.

Figure 23: Freeschool “Imagine a Note”



Yes I would Approve ON ANY plan we can
put together my son is very Driven
He Just Need A DIRECTION I HAVN'T talked
to Him since wenday night AS FAR
AS ~~my~~ ^{His} mother I'm working ON Her
But she is very protective. He
CAN'T Drive But He's learning Just
give me A Few Days And I'm
gone HAVE Him call you
~~at~~ At the same time what will
it Hurt to call His mom maybe she
A listen to you she's Always mad
At me

Imagine someone incarcerated slips a note to a volunteer he's come to consider a friend, requesting that the volunteer connect with and try and mentor his son. Speaking with his son, over irregular phone calls, he's become worried about him. He seems to be heading down an unhealthy path. He and his mom are doubling-up with folks in Highland Park, and when housing is unstable so is just about everything else. So, mindful of the panoptic eye, the two friends exchange a few notes with ideas about ways to get the kid involved in anything that might push him in a different direction. Cautiously approached phone calls with the mother develop such that offerings of anything from tutoring to driving lessons get close to panning out. But something so out of the

ordinary isn't an easy sell. And when the mother, getting ready to move again, reiterates that the father may want a whole lot of things, but he's in there and she's out here having to make decisions for her child, there's not much more to say. Med scripts and rejected phone calls can serve as a reminder of the relative power imbalances between inside and out. Inside they understand. They know of the weight their loved ones carry and so the committed ones are patient, and persistent. It is in the dejected space of failed plans that a familiarization with the subtleties of inspiration can serve one well. Attending to faintest of potentials, creativity can invent new ways of making connections.

We had kicked around the idea of making a book. I'd been doing the archive for awhile and we had collected a fair amount of work. We wanted to make a book of poetry and art that would display some of the work we put into composing and expressing themselves. Of course the work from us outside members was always included because, as the guys made clear to us, although we might recuse ourselves out of a desire to focus on them, that only further reinforces separation. And we are a collective together. One of the motivations for the books was a desire to close some of the distances between people inside and people outside. As just one example, but a powerful one, many of the guys in our group have children, and it's not easy to be able to maintain a presence in their lives. Everyday things we take for granted are more time consuming, more stress inducing, and more costly.

James Fuson - Phone on the Wall

Bolted to the wall,
a phone hangs in its cradle,
the steel cord connecting it to the body stiff and short.

The hard plastic of the phone,
cold against my ear.
Asked if I wish the automated voice to speak to me in English
or in Español
I pick English.
Will this call be debit or collect?
At 94 cents a day wage, I dial zero for collect.
The voice asked for my PIN, prisoner identification number.
I dial the eleven digits and I'm told the number is invalid,
so I have to start all over again.
English. Collect. Pin.
I get it right.
Area code plus phone number for another ten digits
I'm asked politely to please hold while my call is being processed,
It may take a couple of minutes.
Then a digital ringing echoes from the ear piece,
sounding so distant like it's a million miles away and it's just barely reaching me.
Then a click,
a familiar voice saying hello,
another click,
then silence.
And the silence drags on.
60 seconds
120 seconds

The seconds keep morphing into minutes.
And then another click,
and another familiar voice.
Your call was not accepted, please try again later.
A hallway fan stirs the dust bunnies.
Someone coughs.

Figure 24: James Fuson “Phone on the Wall”



Making a dollar a day is a privilege in prison, as not all people are able to get jobs working inside. Calling loved ones on the outside will cost about \$16 per/hr. Saying that in another way, the sound of an incarcerated voice transmitted through a telephone in the state of Michigan has been commodified and sold at a price of sixteen dollars for every hour. The process that Fuson describes above will have to be repeated four times during that hour as the phone system interrupts conversations with a recorded message every fourteenth minute. “You have one minute remaining.”

And then the phone call is cut off at the fifteen minute mark. That's when the phone actually connects and you can manage hear the voice on the other side, which frequently it does not and you cannot. Waiting in a line for a phone to open during the hours outside your cell, and wasting seconds and minutes of life waiting for the phone to connect, and having to repeat this process every 15 minutes is a privilege in prison. Not all people are able to access the phone. If you are labeled a security threat (STGroup) and placed on restriction, communication with the outside world can be extremely difficult. You are left with writing and receiving letters. If you can afford a stamp, and an envelop, or qualify for a load from the prison if you can't afford one, then you can send your child a letter. And should a child decide to draw you a picture with brightly colored crayons of how they scored a goal at their soccer game, or of Winnie the Pooh to make you smile, as of October 2017, you will receive a notice that your mail was rejected for it's failure to comply with Policy Directive 05.03.118, which clearly states that it prohibits any incoming mail written with anything other than blue or black ink on white paper.

Figure 25: Mneme Brown "Pooh for Fred"



All this is to say that sharing artistic creativity with the outside world is something that is not easy. For parents, who struggle to stay present in the lives of their rapidly growing children its not often you get an opportunity to tell your loved ones about your evolving artistic capacities and how they are impacting you and your community. So we wanted to make a book. But we had no money. Jonathan applied for a grant from a major philanthrocapitalist business funding the arts in Detroit in their not so subtle attempt to shape and control the discourses around what counts as artistic in various cities throughout the country and increase the value of art in their collections. The ever evolving relationship between what Gilmore calls the shadow state of non-profits, philanthrocapitalism, and the creative classes, is a major part of the politics of erasure called “revitalization” in Detroit.²⁹⁸ Jonathan applied because it was a simple application that required little work and we figured initially that if we could get the grant, which allowed for in-kind donations of services rendered, we could simply donate the services we perform every week pro bono or get some other supporters to donate services and we’d be able to scratch enough together to make this big book. We had already made one. Jonathan did the layout and he paid out of pocket to make a small collection of haiku by James Fuson called *Twenty Years: Reflections on an Empty Sky*. This one was going to be big and have color pages and so we needed at least five grand and we asked for ten. Initially Jonathan had submitted multiple ideas as they didn’t restrict proposals and we got past the first round of selection with the proposal of making chapbooks for each of the guys in Writer’s Block. They then required that we detail more of our project, so Jonathan and I sat down together and filled out a more elaborated proposal. We were going to make chapbooks of the work of these incarcerated artists. Weeks later, when we were kicking around different design ideas while waiting for the next round of cuts when we got a phone call from philanthrocapitalists telling us that we had

²⁹⁸ Ruth Wilson Gilmore “In the Shadow of the Shadow State” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex* edited by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge: South End Press, 2007)

been selected to compete with three other groups from the city of Detroit in a text-to-vote campaign, the winner of which would be given \$20,000 without having to match any funds. They asked if we wanted to participate and we said yes. At this point we were two years into facilitating. We have driven every week minus only those weeks our program was canceled because of a holiday. We have purchased journals and other essential tools out of pocket, or we have been resourceful in locating spaces of abundance wherein we could source paper, printing or anything else that might be useful. We tell guys and we have to start learning the ends and out of how to monetize our art and where to put the logo when we send out communication about the campaign. All very laughable but they give us money to make sure that we go out and tell people to get out and vote. We spend our money on improving our website. Folks within the corporate structure keep affirming what we already knew. One day Jonathan and I were discussing our frustrations with the competition. They either didn't vet us or didn't take us serious. We started freeshool reading Deborg's *Society of the Spectacle* and now they want to make a spectacle of us by watching how hard we'll all hustle for less than a drop in their bucket. We talk about splitting the money up if we win but it's not enough to do anything with for the other groups as they were all asking for more than us. You know they're going to make a big deal outta this? They rent out the Filmore and announce the winner at some big event. Really? Yeah. Ok so here's the strategy. We hustle like mad and secure the win and if they are dumb enough to give us the mic in the midst of a big spectacle where we're gonna have to say thank you for commodifying incarcerated people and their art for your advertising purposes we take them to the cleaners. Jonathan's down but doesn't want to be the one to actually do it. No worries. We take the idea to the table, as we do anytime something needs to be discussed. Here's the plan. We win. We give it away and put the screws to them. Worst case we give our winnings to kids in Detroit and were right back where we started. The other three organizations are youth groups in the city of Detroit, Detroit Youth Volume, Stitching Up Detroit, Heritage Works and all of them do great work

with the youth. Next best is 3 outta 4 get paid and we get punished. Check leaves the one move and its mate our game. Will it work? If they're dumb enough to give us the mic it will. We know the way the mechanisms function to this predictable and we know there are governors to correct any major deviations, but they won't see this coming. So? Unanimous. So I get together a strategy that involves a little imagination and an eye on how to shuffle institutional privileges around so as to take advantage. School starts right at the end of the campaign. I get a list of likely affirmatives to requests to come present to university students. Email. Schedule. And we hit a grip of classes in 4 days right at the end of the campaign. They are calling us on the phone because they are watching the numbers we can't see but want us to tell them what we are doing. Of course, you want our strategy to improve your reach. You guys didn't run anything by our PR and we've not seen any final drafts of your emails to approve. Just working hard at a few events we organized.

Figure 26: Freeschool "Philanthrocapitalism"



The campaign ends and we have to wait a month and a half before the party at the Filmore and nobody knows anything. Philanthrocapitalists create a big spectacle. Art scene Detroit and open bar and amazing food and money getting given out to people and institutions. The stadiums big scree is art? And now for the moment. The winner is. Called it. Not knowing if we are actually going to get the mic on the stage while the video they made about us is playing Jonathan asks: We doing

this? Oh hell yeah, lets go. Dumb enough to give us the mic thinking we'll be the playthings of power. Ok.

Immediately after the accountant for the fiduciary we have to use because we aren't a 501c3 is all excited because now a middle man gets to pinch 8% from multiple bags says, you guys are genius. No, we're generous, and we were really willing to give it away because that's our crew. Reading the dynamics that create and structure an event but refusing to accept the script that is supposed to govern behavior. Following a different line. Composing resistance. Not being captured in the gears of a machine. Did we change anything? Not really. They don't do the competition part anymore. But the 20 grand that went to Heritage Works sent them to Senegal. And they took our poetry across the middle passage with them. And they read it aloud. And the words of poets imprisoned resounded on the other side of the world.

Figure 27: Stickup Kids "Filmore"



Final Thought

Lorde ask how we can learn to use our ways of perceiving and knowing pain and anger in ways that don't remove justice from rage and anger. Learning how much truth or pain one can bare to make use of. I understand. "This is the way it was/is with me and Jonathan, and I leave the theory to another time and person. This is one telling." And of course in terms of being felt, ours is a very truncated telling.²⁹⁹ When speaking about the acquittal of a white police officer responsible for killing a 10 year old in Queens, despite evidence of racial bigotry, Lorde invokes the willingness to kill and die, a theme invoking African female deities and warriors who know the entanglements of giving birth and killing on the battlefield.³⁰⁰ Penning her rage on the side of the road she struggles to know how she would have responded to being on a jury in such a situation, confronting,

that atavistic fear of an articulated power that is not on your terms. There is the jury – white male power, white male structures – how do you take a position against them? How do you reach down into threatening difference without being killed or killing? How do you deal with things you believe, live them not as theory, not even as emotion, but right on the line of action and effect and change? All of those things were riding in on that poem. But I had no sense, no understanding at the time, of the connections, just that I was that woman. And that to put myself on the line to do what had to be done at any place and time was so difficult, yet absolutely crucial, and not to do so was that most awful death. And putting yourself on the line is like killing yourself, in the sense that you have to kill, end, destroy something familiar and dependable, so that something new can come, in ourselves, in our world. And that sense of writing at the edge, out of urgency, not because you choose it but because you have to, the sense of survival – that's what the poem is out of, as well as the pain of my spiritual son's death over and over. Once you live any piece of your vision it opens you to a constant onslaught. Of necessities, of horrors, but of wonders too, of possibilities...Of wonders, absolute wonders, possibilities, like meteor showers all the time, bombardment, constant connections. And then, trying to separate what is useful for survival from what is distorted, destructive to self.³⁰¹

Audre Lorde – Power³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 72

³⁰⁰ Kraft, *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies*, 48-49

³⁰¹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 107-108

³⁰² Lorde, *Black Unicorn*, 108-109

The difference between poetry and rhetoric
is being
ready to kill
yourself
instead of your children.

I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds
and a dead child dragging his shattered black
face off the edge of my sleep
blood from his punctured cheeks and shoulders
is the only liquid for miles
and my stomach
churns at the imagined taste while
my mouth splits into dry lips
without loyalty or reason
thirsting for the wetness of his blood
as it sinks into the whiteness
of the desert where I am lost
without imagery or magic
trying to make power out of hatred and destruction
trying to heal my dying son with kisses
only the sun will bleach his bones quicker.

The policeman who shot down a 10-year old in Queens
stood over the boy with his cop shoes in childish blood
and a voice said “Die you little motherfucker” and
there are tapes to prove it. At his trial
this policeman said in his own defense
“I didn't notice the size nor nothing else
only the color.” and
there are tapes to prove that, too.

Today that 37-year old white man with 13 years of police forcing
was set free
by 11 white men who said they were satisfied
justice had been done
and one black woman who said
“They convinced me” meaning
they had dragged her 4’10” black woman's frame
over the hot coals of four centuries of white male approval
until she let go the first real power she ever had
and lined her own womb with cement
to make a graveyard for our children.

I have not been able to touch the destruction within me.
But unless I learn to use
the difference between poetry and rhetoric

my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold
or lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire
and one day I will take my teenaged plug
and connect it to the nearest socket
raping an 85 year old white woman
who is somebody's mother
and as I beat her senseless and set a torch to her bed
a greek chorus will be singing in 3/4 time
“Poor thing. She never hurt a soul. What beasts they are.”

Figure 28: Yusef Qualls-El “Joan Little”



Eric Garner said “I can’t breath.” And to a dying Eric Harris who was losing his breath the response was “Fuck your breath!” Sandra Bland never returned from police custody. If perspective never comes when confronted with a state murder, is it pessimistic to assume that perspective about structural and historical violence will lag behind too?

I caution against hope because hope hasn’t escaped being beholden to metaphysics.³⁰³ But there is a chance. Random chance. You could beat the best in the world on any given night because there is something valuable in amateurism and novelty viewpoints far from equilibrium, and when introduced into structures through pluralist inclusion, actions stand a chance to change the functioning of those structures and the experiences of those who inhabit them. In the diffractive sense, we know we can affect change, we have seen the agential diffractions spread, and there is a chance that those differences will affectively matter for the development of something other than a suicide machine. Escape is not quietism. It is enough to say that firm abolitionist work establishes very clearly that it is true that there are dangerous people imprisoned, exploitative and oppressive practices immeshed throughout the PIC, and that there are incarcerated individuals and collectives that under the existing economy of presence are harmful to people. But prison doesn’t help people and it is not corrective. I also think that abolitionist work and, more generally, plain old common sense establishes very clearly that these facts about the PIC don’t eternalize its form and that they are just as true outside and hold for a host of people who are not incarcerated. When pressed to tally the amount of destruction and loss of human life, environmental degradation, and ideological suffocation, I would venture to say that the vast majority of the points are tallied against people who are not imprisoned, and beyond that, they are people who enjoy a structural privilege that makes them beyond the reach of accountability, which is a principal ground of incarceration. Knowing this

³⁰³ The ideas of problematizing political hope and apostasy are indebted to Calvin Warren *Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope* (2015) Ill Will edition

makes me pessimistic and angry but I question: how much of this frustration and anger can I use or am I just screaming at a wall? Running and looking for a stick ought not be thought of as escapism. Rather we are witness to an apostatic rejection, and the direction of creative energy invested into other projects that, hopefully, will respond with less resistance and provide us the opportunity to continue. From the entangled fact that it matters what we know about what is; to the fact that technosciences frame and write control over matter that matters to who and what we are becoming; to Steven Hawking's not so futuristic worries about speciation and technobiosupremacy, which we might take serious given that e.g. Ike seems to have been pretty spot on with the whole MIC thing; to the tactical adjustments of jiu-jitsu and Jackson doing his best thinking on his feet, to Lugones at the pedestrian level; to the possibility of engaging in and with those openly dangerous supplements; to the importance of amateurism as adaptation on the ground in activity; forces are already propelling us towards alternatives. Running as preceding captivity, fleeing captivity and enslavement as a historical inheritance, and the sense of living in the already creative inertia resonating from previous resistances to silence have bequeathed to us. Whose words do we hear and how do we treat their voices? Do they resound? And, what does this mean for identity? Growth dazzles like a dialectic...sympoiesis.

I'll concluding with a kind of policy recommendation, although at the level of informality that I'm suggesting perhaps it would preferably not be institutionalized. I think it can be shaped such that it would require a minimal level of personal and negligible institutional investment that nonetheless stands to profoundly impact our collectively entangled communities. Compose a folder of physical copies for your courses. Open call student note takers to share P2P such that incarcerated individuals can have access to a student's or a small group of students' interpretive iterations of a course. Send those materials inside. Push for philosophers to submit to the ministerial organization that approves clergy a request to be included, as ministers and atheists are in other

states, on the list of those who have access to incarcerated people seeking council, as philosophers should be allowed access to people incarcerated as their field of study “relates to fundamental existential meanings” and is therefore protected, and use this point of entry to set up philosophical heterotopias. Bequeath these groups, and make sure that people interested in maintaining community are afforded the opportunity to exercise that agency. There are numerous men and women inside ready and desiring to receive something, anything approaching this. In many ways they have sent me here to request that you do this. It will last as long as it lasts. Energy dissipates and cannot be physically recovered. It must be regenerated through agential intra-activity. Sucking order from ebullient life to recycle animations beneath dark skies of astral abundance.

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