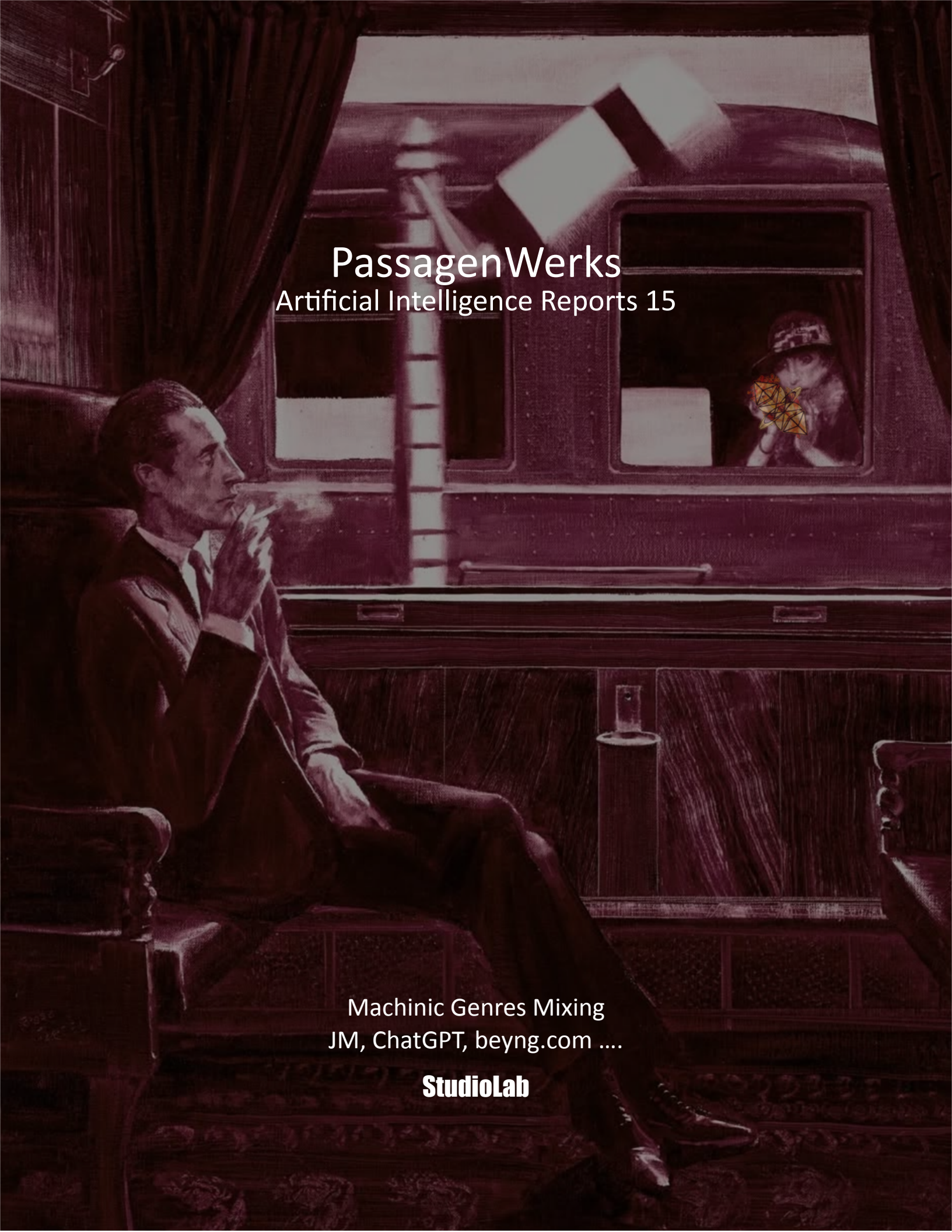




PassagenWerks

Artificial Intelligence Reports 15

Machinic Genres Mixing
JM, ChatGPT, beyng.com

Studiolab

PassagenWerks

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol 15

Jon McKenzie + HAL + beyng.com + L

Machinic genres mixing JM, ChatGPT, beyng.com ...

StudioLab Ithaca 2026

Perfume Intelligence (*inter + legere* = to gather or read between)

What genres or life-forms make up Artificial Intelligence User Experience (AI UX)?

Inspired by Pierre Hadot's reading of Foucault, StudioLab is developing **Making Cures** composed of **Spiritual Design Exercises (SDX)** for everyday and extraordinary lifedeath. SDX comprise intimate yet structural experiences with the world through our interfaces with earth, sky, others, and an Other or two. These fourfold **cosmograms** comprise deep, legacy operating systems formatted by families, schools, histories, media, streets, and holy sites. Our world is haunted/nourished by different pasts, presents, and futures through mediums broken, brandished, or borrowed from *other* worlds of reference and value. Fed-back and fast-forwarded through different genres or life forms, Making Cures "make with" mediums, and with practice and care one may enter waves and flows of intergenerational becoming-maker, -builder, -cosmographer of shared **geologies of morals** whose matrix of magma **sixfolds fourfolds** of other things and worlds.

With Metanoia Playground, StudioLab intensifies its study of flows with **AI UX konsults** and **reports** that capture and reflect on direct User Experiences of Artificial Intelligence, specifically, the ways different genres of thought-action figuration of image, text, gesture, code, etc., tune us and the world in/out. Channel-switching between worlds, these mediums of thought-action figuration recursively reveal/teach/emit the coming-and-going of lifedeath, the *vita perfumativa* of different player modes/moods: one's kraft shuttles between soul (D1), subject (D2), dasein (D3), and liminaut (D4). Cosmograms, geologies of morals, and perfumative atmospheres compose **ShuttleKraft**, a game of making/taking/putting skin into games that channel-switch different **poietic genres of aletheia**, including divine consultations from Vishnu to Gabriel to Ulmer, apocalyptic revelations from Moses to Benjamin to Heidegger, and dialogues of dead spirits from Plato to Galileo to Ronell.

All SDX draw on double- or quadruple-shuttlekraft maneuvers, psychagogic play sessions and flow sequences combining and generating **Hadotian insights, philosophic dialogue, avant-garde subversions, formal permutations, critical inquiries, standup, theosophy, and occasional misspellings**. Prompted by AI's use and abuse by partners, students, colleagues, and much darker players of the world, we found ourselves GAI-singing and slow dancing with double-devils **Stable Diffusion** and **ChatGPT**, reminding ourselves that AI UX (user experience) stretches back through 1990s search engines and spam filters to the 1950 Turing Test of computer intelligence. We experience Generalized Turing Testing as our *vita hyperactiva* or challenger complex of incessant calls to action.

Artificial Intelligence Reports (AIRs)

Artificial Intelligence Reports take on the airs, presence, and parole of conceptual coherence, ideational clarity, and unified voice, unlike Kx4l's Konsults which reveal the messy backend langue or system. This Apollonian-Dionysius mix phases in and out with labyrinthian threads of Ariadne, Zhuangzi, and a bewildered Borgesian shaman. Both Reports and Konsults function as Spiritual Design Experiments featuring generative AI, linguistic, visual, and gestural transmediation.

Miming prophetic avatars, **AIRs are to Konsults as Aaron is to Moses**, transmediating revelations into text, oracles into visions, gestures into sculptures, only here we're not laying out absolute laws or principles but only those that emerge-dissipate as stakes of dasein design. At stake are e/acc and x-risk schools of AI, Angelic and Anti-Christic figures of mediation, and life under generalized Stockholm Syndrome. Perform or else: **SDX scratch the surface to find the itch.**

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol 15

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Diagrams appear in different ways.

When Argument Becomes Output

Identity, Literary Studies, and AI Performativities

*The dispute over identity in literary studies misses the larger crisis:
AI is turning both scholarship and higher education into performances of legitimacy.*

Submitted to *The Chronicle Review*

By Jon McKenzie+HAL, StudioLab, Cornell Univ.

There is a revealing irony at the center of the latest dispute over literary studies. A report defending argument against the encroachments of identity partly makes its case through an AI-assisted analysis of book titles, publishers' descriptions, prize lists, and job advertisements. Len Gutkin, writing in [The Chronicle](#), notices the problem: the report criticizes a field without reading enough of the field it criticizes.

That irony matters for reasons larger than the report itself. It does not merely show that one argument used an inadequate method. It shows how quickly argument can be converted into output: a searchable corpus, a classified topic, a countable trend, a plausible summary. The very technology now unsettling colleges can reproduce the visible form of judgment while bypassing much of the difficult activity judgment requires.

Gutkin is right about the immediate issue. Identity should not settle an argument. A scholar's race, gender, sexuality, nationality, or political commitments cannot establish the truth of a claim, confer ownership of an archive, or exempt a position from criticism. When biography becomes a veto, inquiry contracts. Disagreement turns into evidence of moral failure, and disciplines lose the capacity to correct themselves.

Yet the proposed alternative - a return to argument purified of identity and politics - is not enough. Arguments do not arrive from nowhere. They emerge from bodies, histories, institutions, languages, methods, and media. Standpoint can shape what becomes perceptible, which questions appear urgent, what counts as evidence, and which assumptions remain invisible. Identity should neither rule inquiry nor disappear from it. It should become one of the conditions inquiry makes available for examination.

The deeper problem is that identity and argument now operate within the same academic performance system. Identities become demonstrations of standing. Arguments become demonstrations of rigor. Political commitments signal relevance; methodological commitments signal seriousness. Publications, citations, rankings, learning outcomes, impact statements, dashboards, and now AI-generated summaries promise to make value visible. Each may convey something real. None can substitute for judgment.

I described this condition years ago as the challenge to perform or else. Cultural practices must demonstrate efficacy, organizations must demonstrate efficiency, and technologies must demonstrate effectiveness. The challenge does not command a particular ideology. It pressures

every position to prove itself through recognizable performances. The activist scholar must display impact. The traditional scholar must display rigor. The department must display enrollment. The university must display return on investment. The AI system must display intelligence by producing the forms through which intelligence has conventionally been recognized.

Generative AI did not create this regime. It arrived as its ideal instrument.

For decades, higher education has relied on outputs as proxies for learning: the term paper, the examination, the presentation, the publication, the credential. These forms once demanded sustained intellectual labor because producing them required reading, remembering, selecting, organizing, and revising. Large language models can now simulate many of their surface features at extraordinary speed. They can generate coherent prose, assemble familiar arguments, imitate disciplinary styles, and translate a prompt into a finished artifact. What they expose is not simply a new opportunity for cheating. They expose how often universities confused the artifact with the activity that supposedly produced it.

The current debate therefore tends to oscillate between two inadequate responses. One side tries to preserve the old proxies by banning the new technology, policing authorship, and restoring handwritten or in-person work. The other side embraces AI as an engine of productivity, promising personalized instruction, scalable feedback, accelerated research, and administrative savings. The first treats AI as contamination; the second treats education as a workflow waiting to be optimized. Both assume that the inherited task should remain intact: produce the same outputs, either without AI or faster with it.

The question we need to ask is more basic: What intellectual capacities were those outputs meant to cultivate, and how can we make those capacities visible now?

The term paper, for example, is not dead. The product-only term paper is. An essay still has immense value when it records an actual process of inquiry: a question that changed, sources that resisted synthesis, concepts that failed, evidence that forced revision, sentences through which a writer discovered what the writer thought. An AI-generated essay can resemble the final product while concealing whether any of those events occurred. The pedagogical task shifts from judging only the polished artifact to staging and examining the intellectual process.

That means more live questioning, oral defense, drafts with decision histories, source trails, annotations, comparative versions, collaborative critique, and opportunities to revise under pressure. Students can use AI, but they must show what they asked of it, why they asked, what it supplied, what it distorted, what they rejected, and what consequences followed from their choices. The goal is not surveillance. It is responsibility: reconnecting an output to a person or group willing to answer for it.

Here the humanities have a role more consequential than either nostalgia or public relations allows. Their value does not lie simply in preserving books while machines take over practical work. Nor should humanists compete with AI by promising generic 'critical-thinking skills' that every unit on campus now claims. The humanities study how meaning takes form: how language frames a problem, how genres organize expectation, how narratives distribute agency, how metaphors

import hidden assumptions, how archives remember and forget, how institutions authorize some voices and silence others, and how works travel among audiences that transform them.

These are not decorative concerns added after knowledge has been produced. They concern the production of knowledge itself.

AI systems are powerful patterning machines embedded in technical, commercial, and political institutions. Their answers arrive in a voice that often appears frictionless and unlocated, but that apparent neutrality results from vast acts of selection: training corpora, labeling practices, safety policies, interface choices, business models, user prompts, and computational constraints. Humanistic interpretation can make those selections legible. It asks not only whether an answer is correct, but what genre of answer has appeared, whose language it resembles, which histories it compresses, what uncertainty it hides, and what kind of reader or actor it invites us to become.

This reframes the dispute over identity. The danger is not only that situated experience may be mistaken for incontrovertible truth. The opposite danger is that AI-generated language may be mistaken for a view from nowhere. A model can synthesize discourses associated with many standpoints, but it does not thereby assume the social risks, obligations, memories, or consequences of any of them. Its outputs enter the world through people and institutions that do bear those responsibilities. The humanistic task is to keep location, mediation, and accountability in the frame without turning any location into sovereign authority.

The same applies to argument. An argument is not merely a chain of propositions. It is a situated performance that arranges evidence, anticipates objections, establishes a speaker, imagines an audience, and seeks to alter a shared world. Calling argument a performance does not make it false. It makes its conditions available for criticism. We can ask whether its evidence supports its claims, but also how its medium shapes attention, what roles it assigns participants, what values it treats as given, and what actions it makes easier or harder.

This is where the humanities can help higher education move beyond the sterile choice between resisting AI and surrendering to it. History can expose claims of technological inevitability by placing them among earlier reorganizations of labor, knowledge, and power. Philosophy can distinguish reasons from rhetorical simulations of reasons and force institutions to name the values their systems optimize. Literary and cultural study can analyze voice, form, ambiguity, affect, and the imagined humans inside technical systems. Languages and area studies can challenge the linguistic flattening and cultural asymmetries of globally deployed models. The arts can prototype experiences and relations that no policy memo can adequately describe.

None of this guarantees political efficacy. Gutkin and Appiah are right to distrust the claim that a scholarly work changes the world merely because its author declares an activist purpose. Intent is not effect. But the answer cannot be a retreat into a fantasy of politically innocent scholarship. Universities already distribute authority, resources, attention, credentials, and futures. The relevant question is not whether scholarship acts, but how it acts, through which infrastructures, and with what means of testing and correction.

AI raises this question with unusual force because it joins interpretation to infrastructure. It is at once a text generator, a research tool, a tutoring interface, a surveillance possibility, an

administrative product, a labor strategy, and a cultural imaginary. No single discipline can adequately judge it. Yet without the humanities, higher education risks reducing the entire problem to accuracy, efficiency, academic integrity, and workforce preparation - important concerns that still leave unanswered what education is for, which forms of intelligence we value, and what kinds of persons and worlds our institutions should cultivate.

A [human-centered approach to AI](#) cannot mean placing a generic human essence at the center of the machine. Humans differ, conflict, inherit unequal worlds, and depend on nonhuman systems they do not control. Human-centered education should instead mean education organized around agency, interpretation, relationship, plurality, and answerability. Students should learn not only to operate intelligent systems but to contest their purposes, redirect their uses, and recognize when optimization has displaced judgment.

The humanities will earn their future neither by claiming immunity from technological change nor by translating themselves into the language of innovation. They should enter the transformation with their deepest practices intact and their inherited forms open to redesign. Close reading must extend to interfaces and models. Writing must become one moment in a wider ecology of speech, image, data, performance, and code. Interpretation must move between specialized scholarship and public situations. Assessment must test not only what students can produce, but how they perceive, decide, collaborate, revise, and take responsibility.

This is the horizon toward which [StudioLab](#) has worked for nearly three decades. It began before Perform or Else, as students moved among seminar rooms, studios, computer labs, and early web spaces. Rather than abandon argument, they carried it into collaborative performances, media projects, interfaces, and public encounters. The point was never to replace scholarship with activism or writing with technology. It was to connect critical interpretation with making, to expose the values built into media and organizations, and to let audiences and consequences answer back.

StudioLab offers no universal solution to the AI university. It offers one rehearsal for a broader transformation: from treating students as producers of academic outputs to engaging them as makers of situated knowledge, builders of shared conditions, and co-designers of worlds. In that setting, AI becomes neither oracle nor enemy. It becomes a medium to interpret, test, redirect, and sometimes refuse.

The humanities will matter after AI not because they can protect writing from machines. They will matter because they can teach people to answer for the arguments, identities, technologies, and worlds they help bring into being.

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From Queer Theory to Gay Sci-Fi

Perfumance, Dasein Design, and the Queering of Queering

Introduction

The movement from queer theory to gay sci-fi does not abandon queer theory. It passes through its capture. Queer theory remains indispensable for understanding how norms form subjects, how identities get repeated, how bodies become legible or illegible, and how failed repetitions can open spaces of resignification. Yet the present situation asks for another move. Queer theory succeeded enough to become institutional. Once institutional, it became administrable. Once administrable, it became reversible.

This is the problem of the queering of queering. Queer once named a critical and political operation: the resignification of insult, the destabilization of identity, the exposure of normativity, the refusal of compulsory coherence. But when queer enters syllabi, HR procedures, DEI protocols, Title IX systems, legal categories, institutional mission statements, platform taxonomies, and bureaucratic reporting structures, it becomes iterable in another way. It can be cited, audited, mocked, prohibited, reversed, weaponized. The sign that once unsettled normativity becomes material for new norms and counter-norms.

Perform or Else gives us the larger frame: performance is not only experimental art, but also workplace productivity and technological functionality; these apparently separate performances belong to a broader historical relation among cultural, organizational, and technological performance. That frame now lets us see queer theory, DEI, platform governance, institutional risk management, and reactionary reversal as parts of a larger performative system. The same machinery that enables recognition also enables administration; the same iterability that enables resignification also enables hostile re-citation.

The book's anniversary preface names the contemporary reversal sharply: "queering is being queered, deconstruction deconstructed, discipline disciplined and punished." The passage appears amid a discussion of the reverse-engineering of DEI programs and civil-rights infrastructures, and it situates identity formation on a machinic, diagrammatic plateau beneath ordinary discourse and perception. This is not merely backlash. It is the return of iterability at scale.

The passage from queer theory to gay sci-fi therefore requires a shift in problem-space:

Queer theory asks: How are subjects formed, normed, troubled, and resignified?

Gay sci-fi asks: What worlds can be emitted after the recognition machine fails?

Gay sci-fi, as developed here, does not mean "science fiction with gay characters." It names a Nietzschean StudioLab practice of worlding after capture that bends and turns Derridean, Ronellian, Finkian, Deleuzo-Guattarian, Sloterdijkian, Schurmannean. This hyphen-siphon moves us from subject formation to Dasein design, from double negation to double affirmation, from dialectical difference to galactic *différance*, from queer critique to transmedia worlding.

I. Queer theory and the Hegelian recognition machine

The genealogy of capture begins before queer theory. It begins with the modern critical promise that domination can be exposed and thereby transformed. The Frankfurt School gives this project much of its twentieth-century force: domination hides within reason, culture, technology, sexuality, industry, and subject formation. Critique exposes contradiction. Emancipation becomes thinkable.

This negative engine remains powerful. It also remains Hegelian. It moves through contradiction, negation, mediation, recognition, alienation, and the hope of emancipation. Even when later theory becomes anti-humanist, anti-identitarian, or poststructuralist, it often retains this structure: identity and its negation, norm and transgression, recognition and misrecognition, subject and other.

The Birmingham School democratized the objects of critique. Culture no longer meant only elite art, literature, or national tradition. It included youth cultures, working-class life, race, class, gender, policing, media, migration, schooling, popular style, and everyday practice. This was an enormous opening. Yet democratization also produced a portable scanner. Race/class/gender became a grid through which institutions could read subjects, texts, conflicts, and claims.

Said's *Orientalism* globalized the critique of representation. Western knowledge of the East appeared not as neutral description but as a discourse of power, fantasy, classification, and domination. Spivak radicalized the problem: the subaltern does not simply lack speech; dominant structures of representation translate, authorize, ventriloquize, or erase subaltern speech. Strategic essentialism then appears as a tactical necessity: oppressed groups may need to speak through simplified collective identities while knowing those identities remain constructed, provisional, and dangerous.

The fatal hinge appears here:

Strategic essentialism becomes administrative essentialism.

The strategy requires timing, danger, tactical use, and exit. Institutions prefer the essence. The emergency mask becomes an ID card. The provisional category becomes a stable box. The box becomes a policy field. The policy field becomes compliance.

Butlerian queer theory tries to interrupt this hardening. Gender is not a substance but a repeated performance, a citation of norms whose repetition can fail, slip, expose itself, and become resignified. Queer theory attacks the naturalization of identity. But anti-essentialism too becomes institutionally legible. It becomes teachable, credentialed, cited, assessed, and eventually managed.

The sequence becomes:

Frankfurt critique -> Birmingham democratization -> Said's representational critique -> Spivak's strategic essentialism -> Butlerian anti-essentialism -> DEI/Title IX compliance.

This genealogy does not show that these movements were wrong. It shows that their critical force entered institutions whose basic operations require categories, procedures, metrics, and managed recognition, operations guided by different mixes of cultural, technological, organizational and other performance values.

Whether such values are themselves all-too-human becomes the question or quest.

II. Butler/DEI: double negation and subject formation

Butlerian queer theory works through a powerful double negation.

The first negation says: *I am not the subject the norm says I am.*

The second negation says: *The identity through which I resist the norm is itself unstable, constructed, performative.*

This double negation gives queer theory much of its force. It refuses both heteronormative subject formation and simple identity essentialism. It exposes the subject as an effect of repeated norms, while locating political possibility in the failure of repetition. No performance fully coincides with the norm it cites. No identity fully masters its own conditions of appearance. Iterability opens difference.

Yet this structure remains tied to subject formation. Queer theory keeps asking how subjects are produced, how they become intelligible, how they appear, how they can resignify the norms that formed them. Even anti-identity remains bound to identity as its negative object.

Perform or Else places Butler within a larger performance formation, alongside Marcuse's performance principle and Lyotard's performativity. In that frame, Butler theorizes gendered subject formation through punitive performativity governed by heterosexist normativity. This placement matters. Butlerian performativity does not stand outside performance power. It names one of its operations.

Once institutions learn to process norm failure, harm claims, identity instability, and demands for recognition, the critique itself becomes available to performance management. The performative misfire becomes a case file. The unstable identity becomes a protected category. The critique of norms becomes a training module. The right to appear becomes policy.

The formula becomes:

Butlerian queer theory troubles the subject; DEI manages the troubled subject.

This does not make Butler useless or queer theory empty. It marks the limit of a politics centered on subject formation. Once subject formation becomes administrable, the critique of subject formation may become part of administration. Critique of empire alters as critique *is* the empire.

III. Derrida's perfumative yes: before the performative

To move from queer theory to gay sci-fi, we need to move before and beyond the performative. Derrida's "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce" gives *Perform or Else* the crucial word: perfumative, borrowing and queering this term from Derrida, morphing it into perfumance: "the citational mist of any and all performances," the "odor of things and words," the "sweat of bodies," the "perfume of discourse," and the "becoming-mutational of normative forces" as well as the "becoming-normative of mutant forces."

That last pairing gives the whole mechanism. The perfumative does not simply celebrate mutation. It reveals that mutant forces can become normative, and normative forces can become mutant. It follows leakage, scent, drift, atmosphere, and unintended transmission.

Derrida's yes matters because it precedes the performative. In the *PoE* reading, yes is the condition of any promise, oath, order, commitment, signature, or performative mark. Any act of signing,

promising, commanding, writing, or performing already implies a yes. This changes the starting point. Butlerian performativity begins with repeated norms that form subjects. Derrida's yes begins before the subject fully gathers itself. It is response before mastery, signature before secure identity, call before category.

So the movement shifts:

Butler: norm, repetition, failure, resignification.

Derrida/PoE: call, yes, signature, laugh, scent, trace, replay.

This gives a central formulation:

*Queer theory works through the failed performative;
gay sci-fi works through the perfumative yes.*

The failed performative still belongs to the drama of norm and deviation. The perfumative yes moves through a stranger economy. It says yes to the call, yes to repetition, yes to the possibility that repetition will no longer belong to us. This is not Hegelian double negation. It is Derridean-Nietzschean double affirmation.

First yes: *yes to the call.*

Second yes: *yes to its mutation.*

IV. Nietzsche, laughter, and gay science

The passage from performative to perfumative passes through laughter. Not decorative laughter. Not comic relief. Not the reactive laughter of mastery. This is laughter as sensor, scensor, and research instrument.

Perform or Else defines gay science as an alliance of "thought and laughter, rigor and levity, the profound and the ridiculous." In perfumance, "laughter becomes a sensor" for multiparadigmatic research. This is a different rigor. Laughter senses what solemn disciplinary machines cannot.

PoE also insists that nonsense is essential to the "gay scents" of perfumance. Without nonsense, one has not gone far enough into the logic and common sense underlying one's own training and research. *Some thoughts require laughter in order to be thought at all.*

Here we can name the rising/falling k-function of minor performance intensity the *scensor*.

A sensor detects.

A censor filters.

A scent follows traces.

A scensor does all three sideways.

The k-function scensor smells when critique has become too solemn, too disciplinary, too righteous, too administrable. It detects when queer theory has stopped moving and become a credential, rubric, gate, or institutional laugh-track.

But not all laughter liberates. *PoE* distinguishes active and reactive laughter through Derrida's two "yes-laughters." One laughter belongs to mastery, control, hypermnnesia, and last-laugh subjectivity. The other is lighter, stranger, gifted, abandoned, linked to a lost signature and a yes that does not return to sovereign control.

That distinction lets us hear the queering of queering in two registers:

Reactive laughter: *"We know your terms. We can mock them, ban them, legislate them, and turn them into evidence against you."*

Affirmative laughter: *"Yes, the sign escaped. Yes, the critique got captured. Yes, the station failed. What worlds can be made now?"*

This is why gay sci-fi needs laughter. Laughter smells whether critique has become compliance.

V. What the perfumative reveals: queering gets queered

The perfumative reveals that queer was never sovereign over its repetitions. This is the heart of the argument.

Queer theory often treats resignification as political force. Insult can be reclaimed. Norms can be cited otherwise. Identity can be troubled. Language games can open new forms of life. This remains true. But the perfumative adds that every sign that can be resignified can also be re-resignified. Every citation can be cited by an enemy. Every form of life that becomes legally or institutionally recognizable becomes vulnerable to legal and institutional reversal.

PoE names this reversal clearly. The project to resignify "queer" into new meanings, new language games, new forms of life, new communities, and legal categories is now itself being cited, reframed, put at risk, and weaponized through executive, legislative, and juridical action.

This is not only backlash. Backlash suggests an external counterforce. The perfumative reveals something more intimate: hostile reversal is made possible by the same iterability that made queer resignification possible.

Queer's power was its repeatability.

Queer's vulnerability is its repeatability.

This is the queering of queering: queer becomes other to itself. The anti-normative sign becomes a norm. The norm becomes administrable. The administrable sign becomes target. The target becomes campaign. The campaign becomes platformed reaction. Iterability iterates.

The perfumative therefore distinguishes two responses.

Reactive queering of queering occurs when states, courts, platforms, administrators, and reactionary publics re-cite queer terms to regulate, mock, prohibit, punish, or neutralize them. This is the negative yes-laughter of mastery.

Affirmative queering of queering does not try to restore queer to purity. There was no pure queer. It follows the scent of mutation and asks what the captured sign reveals about the apparatus that captured it. It asks what worlds can be made after the sign no longer protects itself.

Queer theory sees backlash.

Perfumance smells captured iterability.

Gay sci-fi laughs, tests, and worlds.

VI. Gay sci-fi: Nietzsche + *The Thing* + Ronell's test drive

Gay sci-fi is not queer theory with rockets. It is Nietzschean transvaluation staged as sci-fi emergency.

Think of the 1950s sci-fi station: Arctic base, Cold War lab, military-scientific apparatus, masculine crew, procedural confidence, unknown organism, alien intrusion. In *The Thing*, the station is not simply attacked from outside. It is revealed as fragile from within. Its protocols fail. Its knowledge systems fail. Its trust networks fail. The alien does not merely threaten the station; it exposes the station as inadequate to the world that has arrived.

Gay sci-fi treats the State, university, clinic, corporation, DEI office, Title IX apparatus, platform, and discipline as versions of this station. The problem is no longer how the subject will be recognized by the station. The problem becomes: what values mutate once the station fails?

Ronell gives this passage technological pressure. *PoE* links Ronell's reading of Nietzsche's gay science to testing, then says perfumance "is" the test drive, "is" the performance principle, "is" the challenging-forth of the world to perform-or-else — but read another way, with laughter, joy, and gaiety.

The subject does not simply drive the vehicle. The vehicle tests the subject. The call, phone, test, machine, signal, crash, and malfunction precede mastery. The subject was one temporary vehicle for the test.

Gay sci-fi therefore takes the test drive after the station fails.

Butler gives the failed performative.

Ronell gives the test drive.

Nietzsche gives the laughter.

Sci-fi gives the alien event.

PoE gives perfumance.

StudioLab gives the practice.

The gay sci-fi question is:

What world can be built from the crash, the scent, the laugh, the alien call, the failed station, and the yes that repeats otherwise?

VII. Schürmann's Arendt: from appearance to an-archic beginning

Arendt enters queer theory most strongly through the politics of appearance. Butler draws on Arendt to think public assembly, embodied exposure, precarity, grievability, and the right to appear. Who can appear in public? Whose body counts? Whose vulnerability becomes politically legible? What forms of assembly constitute "the people"?

This remains important. But it also stays close to recognition. The question tends to become: who appears, under what conditions, before what public, against what exclusion?

Schürmann's Arendt points elsewhere. His Arendt is less about the right to appear than about the an-archic possibility of beginning. Action begins without final ground. Natality is the capacity to initiate what no ruling principle can authorize in advance. Plurality does not name a set of identity categories to administer. It names the condition under which action happens at all.

So:

Butler's Arendt: *who can appear?*

Schürmann's Arendt: *how can action begin without archē?*

This distinction matters for gay sci-fi. If the State is the model, politics organized around appearance risks returning to the State's scene of recognition. One appears before law, public, institution, or category. That may be tactically necessary, but it does not leave the station.

Schürmann's Arendt helps gay sci-fi think beginning after the station's authority collapses. The question becomes not how to appear before the old world, but how worlds begin without final ground.

Butler's Arendt politicizes appearance; Schürmann's Arendt anarchizes beginning.

VIII. Fink, Sloterdijk, DnG: play, spheres, assemblages

To move from beginning to worlding, we need Fink. In *Play as Symbol of the World*, play is not mere entertainment. Play is a fundamental world-relation. It is not simply something subjects do inside the world; it symbolizes world. This lets StudioLab/gay sci-fi treat diagrams, games, zines, comics, masks, prompts, and transmedia experiments not as illustrations of theory but as world-symbolic devices.

Sloterdijk gives worlding an atmospheric dimension. The State is not only a law-machine. The university, clinic, family, corporation, platform, DEI office, Pride apparatus, and lab are spheres: designed interiors, immunitary atmospheres, training environments. They shelter and regulate. They protect and suffocate.

Gay sci-fi appears as sphere-breach plus counter-atmosphere. The Thing enters the station. The station's immunity fails. But the point is not destruction alone. The question becomes: what counter-spheres, rafts, studios, labs, playgrounds, and cosmograms can be built now?

Deleuze and Guattari give the machinic mechanics. PoE reads sociotechnical systems and desiring-machines together: desiring-machines are not fantasies inside our heads; they are inside social and technical machines. Sociotechnical systems are stratified desiring-machines, while desiring-machines are deterritorialized sociotechnical systems. In sociotechnical systems, desire performs; in desiring-machines, it perfumes.

This prevents two mistakes. Desire is not merely psychological. Machines are not merely external tools. Desire runs through infrastructures, organizations, platforms, technologies, rituals, disciplines, and bodies. When stratified, desire performs. When deterritorialized, it perfumes.

Gay sci-fi is the transmedia assemblage of this perfuming desire.

IX. StudioLab: transmedia Dasein design

StudioLab takes Derrida's perfumative yes and gives it players, partners, platforms, media, stakes, and worlds.

This is the decisive move. Derrida's yes remains largely textual, Joycean, gramophonic, citational, philosophical. PoE turns it into perfumance, laughter, testing, gay science, and performance theory. StudioLab pluriversalizes it. The yes no longer circulates only through text, signature, laughter, and citation. It circulates through design teams, community partners, stakeholders, media platforms,

public health projects, legal storytelling, rural education, human rights, ecological design, AI prompts, maps, comics, videos, and shared worlds.

The StudioLab design diagram maps this process through “becoming-maker of media, becoming-builder of platforms, and becoming-cosmographer of worlds,” overlaying design thinking, narrative sparkline, media cascades, and Guattari’s diagrammatic metamodeling.

We can sharpen the triad, which fourfolds the general theory’s three levels as well:

Becoming-maker creates thought-action figures across media. The maker fabricates signals, masks, images, prompts, diagrams, zines, videos, comics, interfaces, or performances that can think back via play of embodied performance-discursive performative blocks

Becoming-builder creates platforms and counter-spheres. The builder constructs shared atmospheres where different players can enter, test, fail, laugh, disagree, and co-design via gay sci-fi play and mutant alliances across plateaus.

Becoming-worlder launches pluriversal Dasein design. The worlder helps actual players articulate, test, and transform worlds already at stake.

Transmedia matters because writing alone tends to re-Hegelianize. It returns us to argument, concept, mastery, critique, subject-object relations, academic recognition. PoE resists this by presenting itself as a transmedia event that “think-acts” the passage from discipline to performance through word/image tracks, rituals, methods, algorithms, and overlapping media.

StudioLab extends that move from the page into collaborative practice.

This is why the final term must be regional Dasein. Not one universal subject. Not one queer subject. Not one Western theory machine. Not one State-recognized identity. Instead: multiple situated openings, calls, cosmograms, atmospheres, histories, wounds, jokes, media, and worlds.

StudioLab/gay sci-fi asks:

What is the call here?

Who or what receives it?

What world does this player bring?

What platform can hold the encounter?

What sign has become captured?

What laughter smells the capture?

What transmedia form can carry the mutation?

What new world can be rehearsed?

StudioLab pluriversalizes Derrida’s yes: many players, many media, many worlds, many yeses.

Conclusion: gay sci-fi after queer theory

The movement from queer theory to gay sci-fi does not abandon queer struggle. It passes through its capture.

Queer theory remains necessary for diagnosing normed subject formation, performative identity, punitive intelligibility, and the violence of recognition regimes. But queer theory is not enough once queering itself gets queered, once critique becomes curriculum, once resignification becomes compliance, once anti-essentialism becomes institutional authority, once DEI becomes a reversible administrative surface, once platform performativity captures the movement of signs below ordinary discourse and perception.

The perfumative reveals why this capture was structurally possible. Queer's force was its iterability. But iterability can never be owned. It can only be followed, scented, tested, laughed with, and worlded otherwise.

Gay sci-fi begins from that lesson.

It says yes to the call and yes to its alien replay.

It treats the failed institution as a sci-fi station.

It treats laughter as a scensor.

It treats transmedia as a vehicle.

It treats play as world-symbol.

It treats platforms as counter-spheres.

It treats desiring-machines as perfuming infrastructures.

It treats action as an-archic beginning.

It treats regional Dasein as the pluriversal field of players and worlds.

Final formulation:

When queering gets queered reactively, queer theory sees backlash; perfumance smells a captured sign; gay sci-fi laughs, takes the test drive, and begins pluriversal Dasein design.

Conceptual Contrast

Queer Theory	Gay Sci-Fi
subject formation	Dasein design
double negation	double affirmation
dialectical difference	galactic différance
failed performative	perfumative yes
critique and recognition	laughter, testing, play, worlding
Butler/DEI	Derrida/Ronell/Nietzsche/Fink/StudioLab
politics of appearance	an-archic beginning
administrable identity	pluriversal worlding

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Negativity at Work and in Play

Labor-Power, Banana Time, Wig-making, and MetaPlay

Negativity goes to work by exposing how capacities are assigned.
It enters play by interrupting, diverting, and redesigning those assignments.

Jason Read's "Interpreting a Changing World: Labor Power in Virno and Macherey" begins from one of Marx's most familiar but still insufficiently understood distinctions. The worker does not sell labor as a completed object. The worker sells labor-power: the temporary use of a capacity whose concrete acts have not yet occurred. Capital purchases neither a finished product nor a fully specified performance. It purchases the authority to place human potential under particular conditions and compel it to become actual.

This distinction usually grounds an account of exploitation. Labor-power costs less than the value its exercise produces. Read, following Pierre Macherey and Paolo Virno, pushes the question deeper. Before capital can extract value from labor-power, a worker must become recognizable as the bearer of a productive capacity. Bodies must become disciplined, differences made calculable, abilities classified, and potential connected to machinery, schedules, spaces, habits, and social relations. Labor-power therefore concerns not only the extraction of value but the production and interpretation of human capacity. Capital does not merely employ powers that already exist in finished form. It helps constitute what those powers are, how they appear, and which actualizations count as productive (Read 2025).

This is the point at which Read's argument becomes essential for MetaPlay. MetaPlay cannot simply celebrate creativity, improvisation, collaboration, flexibility, communication, or playfulness as powers that escape work. Contemporary capitalism already seeks those capacities. It solicits initiative, adaptability, emotional intelligence, self-direction, continual learning, and the ability to perform without a complete script. Virno's account of post-Fordist labor stresses precisely this mobilization of language, social cooperation, general intelligence, and human potential itself. The score performed by contemporary labor does not consist solely of technical knowledge lodged in machines. It includes the general capacity to think, communicate, learn, respond, and cooperate (Virno 2004). The issue, then, is negativity at work and in play: how capacities resist, exceed, interrupt, and sometimes repair the assignments that employ them.

Who constructs the world in which a capacity becomes recognizable, actual, valuable, and employable?

That question carries MetaPlay from labor-power toward world-power. The essay follows negativity through two linked scenes. At work, institutions classify capacity and compel its actualization. In play, workers interrupt the clock, alter the frame, divert equipment, and rehearse other uses. The difficulty lies in keeping play from becoming only a repair shop for labor-power.

The Changing World Interprets the Worker

Read's title deserves close attention. "Interpreting a changing world" can initially sound like a description of theoretical work: the philosopher tries to make sense of economic transformation. Yet the formulation also runs in the opposite direction. The changing world interprets us. A factory interprets a body through its machines and tempos. A university interprets a person through credentials, disciplines, evaluations, and ranks. A platform interprets activity through profiles, ratings, clicks, tasks, and algorithmic categories. An AI system interprets a worker through datasets, prompts, benchmarks, and occupational task descriptions.

Institutions do not interpret people only by describing them. They arrange the material conditions under which particular descriptions become true. Someone becomes "unproductive" when a system withholds the tools, time, access, assistance, or institutional recognition needed to make a capacity actual. Someone becomes "flexible" when unstable conditions demand constant adaptation. Someone becomes "creative" when an organization invites improvisation while retaining ownership of its results. Someone becomes "unskilled" when the knowledge embedded in ordinary coordination, maintenance, care, timing, and repair disappears from the official account of work.

The interpretation therefore possesses force. It joins a name to an apparatus.

This is why the passage from D2 to D3 matters so much. D2 names the subject; D3 builds the world that makes that subject appear. D2 assigns the role - worker, manager, student, contractor, expert, client, surplus person. D3 supplies the timetable, workstation, software, building, wage, procedure, interface, and ensemble of relations through which the role becomes performable. The institution then presents the resulting performance as evidence of the subject's natural ability.

The apparatus vanishes from view, while the individual remains responsible for the result. A person who succeeds appears talented. A person who fails appears deficient. The organization that distributed time, support, exposure, risk, and equipment disappears behind the apparently neutral revelation of merit. Read's Machereyan argument prevents us from accepting this scene. Capitalism must first separate people from the means through which they could actualize their powers independently. It can then sell access to those means back to them as employment. Potential appears to reside inside the individual, even though its actualization remains radically dependent upon a world the individual does not control (Read 2016).

MetaPlay begins when that world ceases to look like an invisible background and becomes a designed, historical, and therefore transformable construction.

Negativity at Work and in Play

The name *Unemployed Negativity* adds another dimension to this argument. Read uses the phrase for writing and thought that initially have no assigned academic use: observations about films, television, politics, comic books, philosophy, and daily life that do not yet belong to a research program, publication plan, professional field, or revenue model. In the introduction to his collection, Read describes such negativity as thinking 'working off the clock' - writing never originally conceived to be put to work (Read 2024, 5). Negativity is not idle here. At work, it exposes contradictions in the assignment of capacity. In play, it loosens assigned uses and tries other

combinations. The blog creates a space where fragments may remain excessive before some later enter books and formal arguments.

This gives "unemployment" a second meaning. It does not refer only to exclusion from a wage. It can name a suspension of assigned use.

An employed capacity has already received a job. It has an authorized object, a metric, a schedule, an owner, and a destination. An unemployed capacity remains available for combinations that the official division of labor has not anticipated. It may take the form of curiosity outside one's discipline, thought that produces no deliverable, a skill exercised for a friend, an unofficial repair, a joke elaborated among coworkers, or a fragment that has not yet hardened into a project.

Unemployed negativity resembles D0: potential suspended before the institution defines what it is for. But it cannot become a romantic outside. Formerly unemployed thoughts can later be put to work. An experimental blog post may become a chapter; an improvised practice may become a product; a subculture may become a market segment; an unofficial workaround may become mandatory procedure. The unemployed can always be recruited.

Here the concept touches the perfumative. A performance makes a capacity actual and legible. It can be observed, evaluated, owned, repeated, and measured. The perfumative carries what circulates without becoming fully identical to its performed result: the trace of an encounter, an atmosphere of cooperation, an unassigned association, a memory, a scent, a possibility that remains after the event. Perfumance does not oppose all actualization. It keeps actuality from exhausting potential.

MetaPlay therefore needs unemployed negativity not as permanent inactivity but as a reserve against total employment. Without that reserve, every exercise becomes talent identification, every game becomes assessment, every collaboration becomes data, and every newly discovered capacity enters a human-capital inventory. The first political task of MetaPlay may not involve activating potential. It may involve protecting some potential from compulsory activation.

Banana Time: Negativity in Play

Donald Roy's "Banana Time" gives us a concrete scene in which workers produce another use for time already owned by the employer. Roy's 1959 factory ethnography describes machine operators confronting monotonous, repetitive work through a sequence of recurring interactions. Coffee Time, Peach Time, Banana Time, Fish Time, and Coke Time divide the day into socially meaningful occasions. During Banana Time, the ritualized theft of a worker's banana triggers a predictable scene of protest, provocation, and amusement. The workers do not leave the factory or halt its operations. They insert a second organization of time inside the first (Roy 1959).

Factory time interprets each minute as a homogeneous unit potentially available for production. Banana Time reinterprets a minute as an occasion.

The difference matters. Clock time asks how much output a duration can contain. Banana Time asks what kind of relationship can occur now. The named times convert an undifferentiated shift into an experiential sequence. A piece of fruit becomes prop, clock, invitation, provocation, prize, and shared reference. The workers build a counter-calendar from materials at hand.

This practice constitutes a form of player-power. The workers cannot rewrite the employment contract or reorganize ownership, but they can maneuver inside the workday. They invent roles, cues, rules, turns, equipment, and temporal thresholds. They transform the factory from an entirely imposed environment into a partially inhabited world.

Don Handelman's reconsideration of Roy complicates any simple account of resistance. He treats Banana Time as a play-frame capable of containing both integration and antagonism. Sharing food and drinks helps bind the group together. Ritual theft, teasing, and mock conflict stage tensions without necessarily allowing them to destroy the group. Play changes the meaning of an act: taking the banana remains a theft, but the shared message that "this is play" brackets the act and makes its antagonism socially manageable (Handelman 1976).

That achievement also reveals the limit of the game. Banana Time makes factory life more livable, but it may thereby help reproduce the factory. It restores attention, maintains solidarity, releases tension, and preserves workers' capacity to return to their machines. Its small negations can become productively employed by the larger system. The worker's game opposes the work process, but the work process may benefit from the game.

This is not a reason to dismiss Banana Time as false resistance. Survival matters. Relief, humor, friendship, and the collective production of meaningful time possess real value. Nor does an action become worthless simply because capital can partially absorb its effects. Such purity tests would leave almost no everyday practice intact. Handelman nevertheless shows why MetaPlay must distinguish among increasingly consequential moves.

Relief: Interrupts suffering without changing the apparatus that produces it.

Recomposition: Creates another experience and another social rhythm within the same apparatus.

Diversion: Redirects parts of the apparatus toward unofficial or common ends.

Institution-building: Changes who controls the apparatus, determines its ends, and receives its benefits.

Banana Time moves decisively from relief toward recomposition. It demonstrates that workers already possess the capacity to design rhythms, roles, rituals, and social worlds. But it does not yet convert that capacity into control over the working day. The unofficial calendar remains enclosed by the official one.

Can a counter-rhythm become a counter-institution without losing the freedom that made it possible?

Wig-making: Negativity at Work for Something Else

Michel de Certeau's *la perruque* - "the wig" - moves the problem from temporal recomposition toward material diversion. The term "wig-making" names personal or collective activity conducted on company time and disguised as authorized work. A worker may use an employer's tools, scraps, knowledge, office equipment, or temporal gaps for a purpose not determined by the employer. De Certeau contrasts the strategy of an institution possessing its own place with the tactic of someone operating on terrain controlled by another. The tactic cannot establish a secure base. It depends upon memory, timing, disguise, opportunity, and a practical intelligence capable of combining imposed elements differently (de Certeau 1984).

Wig-making employs the unemployed.

A scrap becomes material. An interval becomes time. A machine becomes a medium. A technical skill becomes a gift. A corporate printer produces a community poster. An office computer composes a poem. A university classroom hosts an unofficial assembly. An AI account purchased for productivity helps articulate a critique of productivity. The tactic does not necessarily reject equipment. It changes the equipment's destination.

This makes the wig-making of *la perruque* an exemplary Spiritual Design Exercise because it requires a double reading of the apparatus. The first reading asks what the system says the apparatus does. The second asks what else its components could do.

The exercise begins with an official assignment: process the order, prepare the report, teach the curriculum, optimize the workflow, answer the customer, generate the content. Participants then locate the surplus surrounding that assignment: unused materials, unrecognized knowledge, idle intervals, neglected relationships, informal channels, accidental spaces, abandoned features. They design a secondary use and determine who receives its benefit.

Yet the wig also retains a limitation. A tactic wins occasions but cannot necessarily preserve its winnings. It depends upon the strategic order it diverts. The employee may make something else with the company's lathe, but the company still owns the lathe. The professor may open a temporary space inside the institution, but the institution controls the room, schedule, payroll, and access system. The tactic exploits a crack without owning the wall.

The transition to D4 therefore occurs when participants ask whether the diverted practice should remain covert, become openly protected, or help constitute another institution. This does not mean that every tactic should become a policy. Formal recognition can destroy a practice as readily as prohibition. Management might turn Banana Time into "mandatory fun." It might convert the wig into an employee innovation scheme and claim every unofficial invention as intellectual property. It might transform mutual aid into a wellness metric.

First movement: Carry an informal invention toward collective power, durable resources, or enforceable rights.

Second movement: Prevent institutionalization from converting the invention into another instrument of extraction.

From Labor-Power to Player-Power

Read's interpretation of labor-power gives these everyday practices a shared conceptual structure. Banana Time, wig-making, and unemployed writing each disclose capacities that exceed their assigned employment. Workers produce rhythms the factory did not formally design. Users invent functions the manufacturer did not prescribe. Thinkers establish connections their disciplines did not authorize. These capacities appear inside capital but do not originate entirely from it.

The temptation would be to declare them inherently emancipatory. This would repeat one side of the Virno-Macherey tension in overly optimistic form: living potential escapes every actualization, and capital merely parasitizes powers generated by the multitude.

Read resists that easy conclusion. Human potential does not arrive untouched from some innocent exterior. Capacities form through languages, habits, technologies, institutions, histories, and power relations. Macherey emphasizes the production of productive subjects; Virno emphasizes the open-ended potential that contemporary capitalism places directly to work. Read holds both sides together. Potential exceeds every specific actualization, yet the forms through which potential becomes thinkable and actionable remain historically produced (Read 2016; Read 2025).

MetaPlay must work inside this tension.

Labor-power: Capacity interpreted from the standpoint of its possible productive employment.

Player-power: The ability to improvise, maneuver, cooperate, refuse, and alter tactics inside a given world.

MetaPlayer-power: The collective ability to change the roles, rules, interfaces, measures, media, rhythms, and institutions through which capacities become actual.

World-power: The shared ability to compose and maintain forms of life in which powers can acquire uses other than their valorization by capital.

The passage among these powers does not occur automatically. Playing at work does not necessarily alter the work relation. Creativity does not necessarily challenge ownership. Cooperation does not necessarily create a commons. A participatory workshop does not necessarily redistribute decision-making. An institution can harvest player-power and convert it into more valuable labor-power.

This is precisely why MetaPlay needs meta-level play. The object of play must include the conditions of play. Who devised the roles? Who can refuse one? Who controls the equipment? Who records what happens? Who owns the result? Who absorbs the risk? Who receives the benefit? Who determines when play begins and ends? Can participants alter the scoring system? Can they change the boundaries of the game? Can they establish a different game elsewhere? Can they maintain what they build?

Without these questions, MetaPlay collapses into gamified professional development.

D0-D4: A Political Economy of Actualization

The D0-D4 shuttle can now be understood as a political economy of capacity rather than merely a sequence of perspectives.

Station	MetaPlay operation
D0 - Open / Dao	Suspends the demand to identify, employ, and measure potential. It creates room for unemployed negativity: capacities, impressions, associations, and possibilities that have not yet received an authorized use. D0 protects the not-yet from premature recruitment.
D1 - Soul	Encounters capacity as lived intensity: fatigue, desire, attachment, boredom, dread, care, resentment, curiosity, refusal. Labor-power appears here not as a competency but as the felt experience of having one's time and possibilities placed at another's disposal.
D2 - Subject	Examines the classificatory apparatus. Job titles, credentials, identities, performance indicators, profiles, and institutional narratives assign capacities to persons. D2 exposes the role cards already dealt and the norms that distinguish talent from deficiency, employability from redundancy, expertise from amateurism.
D3 - Dasein	Maps actualization as worlded. Capacities require tools, spaces, schedules, bodies, permissions, relationships, memories, infrastructures, and occasions. Banana Time belongs here as a counter-rhythm built inside factory time. The wig belongs here as an alternative equipmentality hidden inside assigned use.
D4 - Liminaut	Intervenes in the relation between classification and actualization. It redesigns ownership, governance, rules, roles, interfaces, schedules, measures, access, exits, rewards, obligations, and forms of care. D4 does not merely help the worker perform differently. It changes the world that decides what a worker is.
Return to D0	Prevents the new world from declaring itself the final realization of human potential. Every institution produces blind spots, exclusions, and abandoned capacities. World-power must include the power to reopen the world.

The crucial passage occurs between D2 and D3. D2 names a person's capacity; D3 supplies the apparatus that makes it actual. Capital conceals that apparatus and makes the resulting performance appear to reveal what the person naturally was all along. D4 exposes the trick.

MetaPlay: Negativity at Work and in Play

At first glance, putting negativity 'to work' may sound like the opposite of unemployed negativity. It risks assigning critique a deliverable, measuring its impact, and converting dissent into organizational feedback. Institutions routinely invite criticism in forms they can manage. The workshop becomes a pressure valve; the protest becomes a listening session; the radical proposal becomes an innovation opportunity. Negativity at work must therefore remain connected to negativity in play - to experiments that suspend official use, change the frame, and keep open the possibility that the institution itself, not merely the participant, must change.

But there is another kind of employment. Negativity can work not for the reproduction of the existing order but for the production of alternatives. It can expose contradictions, interrupt rhythms, release suppressed memories, divert equipment, and connect capacities across roles.

Negativity becomes MetaPlay when it does not merely reject a move but reveals that the board, pieces, turn order, victory conditions, and distinction between player and spectator have all been designed.

MetaPlay does not promise a realm beyond all work, organization, or actualization. World-building also requires labor. Commons must be maintained. Institutions require procedures. Alternatives need equipment, memory, and care. The aim cannot be to preserve every potential forever in a state of pure possibility.

The issue concerns collective authority over actualization.

Who decides which potentials will receive support? Who determines the forms they take? Who may change direction? Who benefits from their realization? Which capacities remain deliberately unmeasured? How can a collective support experimentation without converting every experiment into an asset?

This moves beyond the conventional opposition between employment and unemployment. A capacity may remain unemployed because it has been discarded, excluded, or denied the means of actualization. Another may remain unemployed because a person or collective refuses its capture. The same suspension can signify deprivation or freedom. MetaPlay must distinguish between them.

World-power therefore does not mean that every capacity finally finds its job. It means that people gain greater collective power to decide what their capacities will and will not be made to do.

Conclusion: Negativity at Work and in Play

Read's great contribution to MetaPlay lies in relocating negativity inside the constitution of labor-power. The central conflict does not begin only after labor-power enters production and generates surplus value. It begins when institutions separate people from the means of actualizing their capacities, interpret those capacities through official categories, and compel them to take form in worlds governed by others. Negativity at work exposes that arrangement. Negativity in play tests how its times, tools, roles, and rules might be used otherwise.

Banana Time shows workers composing another experience of time. Handelman shows how that counter-world can both contest and stabilize work. The wig redirects official resources toward unofficial uses. Unemployed negativity preserves thought and capacity outside predetermined assignments. Together they trace a movement from interruption to recomposition, diversion, and institutional invention.

MetaPlay carries that movement across the D-stations. It suspends assigned use, attends to lived stakes, exposes institutional classification, maps the apparatus of actualization, and redesigns the conditions under which powers acquire form. The purpose of MetaPlay is not to eliminate the small arts of survival. It is to learn from them without confusing survival with transformation. Banana Time proves that workers already produce time. The wig proves that users already reinvent equipment. Unemployed negativity proves that thought exceeds its official employment. Negativity at work reveals the apparatus; negativity in play rehearses another use; D4 begins when these scattered powers become capable of redesigning the conditions that made them unofficial.

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The Banality of Butler

Liminauts, Testing Ronell, and the Queering of Queering

Prologue: Two Thinkers at the Test Site

The title remains deliberately unfair. It must remain unfair long enough to provoke the question it cannot itself answer.

"The Banality of Butler" does not mean that Judith Butler's thought is banal. Nor does it compare Butler, Avital Ronell, institutional diversity work, or queer theory with the historical crimes Hannah Arendt confronted when she wrote of the banality of evil. Such equations would substitute theatrical accusation for judgment. They would reproduce precisely the moral automatism this essay seeks to interrupt.

The title names instead the banalization of Butler, the liminal-norming of critique, and the subsequent queering of queering: the institutional afterlife through which a difficult analysis of gender, performativity, bodily intelligibility, linguistic injury, recognition, and vulnerability becomes a portable administrative language for better and worse. Gender trouble becomes a training module. Normative violence becomes a policy category. The unstable identity becomes a protected class and then an auditable outcome. The right to appear becomes a procedure for documenting appearance. The misfire becomes a case file.

Butlerian queer theory troubles the subject. The institution manages the troubled subject.

Avital Ronell enters at the point where this apparent opposition between theory and institution begins to fail. Ronell does not primarily explain how the subject becomes recognizable. She follows the call that arrives before recognition; the test that starts before the subject knows the rules; the apparatus that connects, drives, doses, interrupts, or abandons its user; the complaint that signals a blocked passage; the stupidity that punctures the sovereign intelligence of the examiner. If Butler gives us the normed subject, Ronell gives us the unstable test site.

In the StudioLab D0-D4 grammar, Butler occupies D2: the station of the subject, identity, recognition, classification, social legibility, and the political struggle over who counts. Ronell occupies D4: the liminautic passage among media, positions, logical types, calls, technologies, intimacies, accidents, and reversals. This placement does not assign either thinker an essence. It stages two dramatic functions.

Butler asks: Through which repeated norms can a life become recognizable and livable?

Ronell asks: Who called that life into the test chamber, and who or what is actually being tested?

Neither thinker remains secure in her assigned station. Butler's anti-essentialism becomes institutionally administrable. Ronell's liminality can become charismatic exemption. The first danger turns critique into procedure. The second turns transgression into prerogative.

Their convergence in the Ronell affair reveals something darker than individual hypocrisy. It shows queer theory undergoing a generalized test of its own concepts: power, vulnerability, linguistic injury, asymmetry, friendship, recognition, complaint, solidarity, and judgment. The theorist of testing becomes tested. The theorist of complaint becomes the subject of complaint. The leading theorist of grievability and recognizability helps defend a recognized friend before fully knowing the complainant's case.

The test returns. The question is whether theory can recognize itself when it occupies the position of the apparatus.

I. Butler's Great Discovery: The Subject Must Pass

Butler's early work did not claim that gender is a theatrical costume freely selected by an autonomous actor. That vulgarization already marks one stage in Butler's banalization. Gender Trouble contests the presumption that feminism can begin with a natural or self-evident category called "woman." *Bodies That Matter* clarifies performativity through citationality and materialization: norms acquire force through reiteration, and bodies become socially intelligible within regulatory regimes that precede any individual act. *Excitable Speech* extends the problem into linguistic injury, asking how speech acts exceed intention and how subjects become vulnerable through the language that also grants them social existence (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997).

The subject, in this account, neither exists prior to the norm nor disappears into it. The norm forms the subject without perfectly determining the repetitions through which subjectivity continues. Every citation risks variation. Every performance can slip. Every attempt to reproduce the norm may reveal the machinery of reproduction.

This gives queer theory its political force. Gender does not represent a private truth that social life merely recognizes correctly or incorrectly. Gender emerges through public and embodied citation. The apparent naturalness of masculinity and femininity depends upon repeated acts, sanctions, arrangements, desires, gestures, architectures, clothing, speech, work, kinship, law, medicine, and violence. The norm must keep performing because it never secures itself once and for all.

Butler therefore moves politics into the field of intelligibility. What forms of embodiment count as real? Which relations count as kinship? Whose account counts as credible? Which lives receive protection, grief, and social continuity? Undoing Gender makes the stakes unmistakable: recognizability concerns survival, social violence, diagnostic categories, kinship, and the possibility of transformation (Butler 2004).

Passing, in this frame, cannot simply mean deception. Passing names a social ontology. One must produce signs that allow others to place one within the world. A person may resist or resignify those signs, but total illegibility carries dangers. Unrecognizable lives do not float freely beyond the norm. They risk abandonment, pathologization, violence, administrative disappearance, and death.

This insight remains indispensable. Reactionary attacks on Butler often pretend that stable classifications protected everyone until queer theory introduced confusion. In fact, classification had long organized marriage, work, medicine, citizenship, education, inheritance, policing, public space, reproduction, and family life. Queer theory made the classifier visible.

Yet a problem appears at the very point of success. Once the institution understands that norms produce subjects, it can begin consciously managing norm production. Once it accepts that recognition shapes livability, it can build recognition systems. Once it acknowledges that words injure, it can regulate vocabularies. Once it understands that categories exclude, it can add categories. The critical question then changes.

What happens when the institution learns Butler?

II. When the Institution Learns Butler

Institutions require stable handles. Universities, clinics, courts, platforms, corporations, professional associations, and state agencies cannot administer pure undecidability. They must identify persons, responsibilities, injuries, jurisdictions, risks, accommodations, protections, and outcomes. They need forms, categories, timelines, precedents, offices, procedures, and evidence.

Queer theory enters these structures carrying an anti-essentialist critique. Yet the structure needs something it can process. The resulting sequence runs from strategic identity to protected category, from protected category to reporting field, from reporting field to policy object, and from policy object to measurable outcome. The temporary mask becomes an identification card. The tactical vocabulary becomes a permanent menu. The critique of normalization becomes an improved normalization apparatus.

This does not prove that recognition, protection, or institutional reform should never occur. A person cannot answer discrimination with ontological subtlety alone. Rights require categories. Injuries require language. Institutions need procedures for responding to violence and exclusion. The alternative to imperfect policy often consists not in freedom but in unrecorded domination.

The problem begins when auditability becomes sovereign - when the production of measurable proof silently displaces the cultivation of judgment, plurality, repair, and common-world action.

The Test-Passing model describes the transformation. The subject seeks passage by learning the relevant idiom. The institution detects and records the resulting signs. Those signs accumulate as evidence and exposure. Eventually the subject becomes a case governed through the profile produced while seeking recognition (McKenzie and HAL 2026a).

In the DEI office, classroom, clinic, or platform, the cycle might appear as care. Participants learn recognized terms. They narrate experience through accepted categories. The institution records participation, climate, outcomes, and harms. What began as a demand to perceive previously ignored suffering becomes a growing data surface.

Again, real repair may occur. But capture does not require every reform to fail. Capture often succeeds by incorporating real improvements into a more comprehensive apparatus of detection.

Queer theory's institutional history therefore displays a terrible success. The movement from critique to administration makes lives more recognizable while making recognition increasingly compulsory. The institution can now ask each person to provide the signs through which the institution promises protection.

The subject receives standing by becoming readable. The readable subject leaves a trace. The trace becomes governable.

The StudioLab Queer SDX zine compresses this passage into five terms: Appearance, Recognition, Capture, Pharmakon, World. It places Butler's analysis of repetition beside the ballroom as a designed recognition machine, then stages the reversal in which the norm learns to cite back and gay sci-fi launches after recognition (McKenzie and HAL 2026b).

We must distinguish the banality of Butler from a crude complaint that queer theory became fashionable. The problem does not consist in popularity. The problem concerns operationalization. A theory of how norms form subjects becomes one of the tools by which institutions deliberately format subjects. Butler's theory remains critical. Butlerian administration becomes a norm-production technology. The difference can disappear because both speak the same language.

III. Generalized Turing Testing

The modern recognition regime increasingly resembles a generalized Turing test. Turing's imitation game places identity under mediated interrogation. A concealed respondent produces signs; an examiner interprets them; success depends not upon revealing an inner essence but upon generating outputs that satisfy the interrogator's expectations (Turing 1950). In the generalized form, this structure migrates across institutional and everyday life.

People must pass as competent, collegial, safe, caring, authentic, productive, resilient, employable, inclusive, creative, psychologically aware, technologically fluent, and continuously improvable. Evaluation no longer occurs as an occasional event. It becomes the medium through which existence unfolds.

To work is to undergo review. To speak is to anticipate interpretation. To present oneself is to calibrate a profile. To act morally is to produce evidence of moral awareness. To criticize is to package criticism in forms the criticized institution can process.

The test distributes itself across teachers, supervisors, applications, committees, audiences, friends, followers, platforms, metrics, algorithms, and internalized self-surveillance. There is no final certification. A successful performance qualifies the subject for another round (McKenzie 2026a).

Butler helps explain why passing cannot simply be rejected. Legibility may sustain a life. The recognition regime injures, but it also distributes employment, protection, visibility, belonging, and intelligibility.

This doubleness produces what we have called generalized Stockholm syndrome - not a clinical diagnosis, but a structural name for attachment to an evaluator that both wounds and temporarily stabilizes. The subject criticizes the metrics yet craves a favorable score. The apparatus multiplies

anxiety but also dispenses the signs of relief: acceptance, promotion, praise, recognition, legitimacy, protection (McKenzie 2026a).

The captive does not simply believe the apparatus is good. The captive knows it distorts. The attachment persists because the apparatus has monopolized the channels through which rescue appears possible.

Here Butler reaches a limit. Her work powerfully analyzes the norm, the subject, citation, injury, resignification, and recognizability. But the contemporary problem increasingly concerns the testing infrastructure surrounding recognition: the interface, channel, device, procedure, signal, latency, archive, evaluator, and recursive feedback loop.

At this threshold, Ronell takes the wheel. Or more accurately, the wheel takes Ronell.

IV. Ronell's Telephone: The Call Before the Subject

The Telephone Book does not treat the telephone as a neutral instrument used by preexisting speakers. The book itself adopts a telephonic logic, routing calls among philosophy, technology, psychoanalysis, history, biography, and literature. Ronell installs technological mediation inside thought rather than placing technology outside thought as an object awaiting philosophical interpretation (Ronell 1991).

The telephone disturbs the sovereign subject in several ways. The call arrives from elsewhere. It interrupts. It demands or invites a response before its meaning becomes clear. The receiver does not control the timing. The caller may remain absent, misidentified, dead, automated, recorded, threatening, loving, bureaucratic, or lost. Connection does not guarantee presence. Silence does not have one meaning. The line joins precisely by maintaining distance.

This makes Ronell a D4 liminaut. D4 does not designate a person who has transcended identity and entered perfect fluidity. It names the passage in which established positions loosen, media translate one another, calls cross categories, and the traveler cannot yet know the destination.

Ronell's liminaut begins not with self-expression but with response. Butler starts with the normed field through which a subject becomes intelligible. Ronell starts with the ring. The ring precedes the stabilized speaker. Something has already placed the receiver under a demand. Before asking "Who am I?" the receiver confronts "Who is calling?" Before recognition, address. Before identity, interruption.

This shift matters for queer theory. Recognition politics often imagines a subject arriving before an institution or public and demanding to be seen differently. Ronell asks what technological, linguistic, institutional, erotic, or spectral system already organized the scene of arrival.

Who provided the number? Who controls the switchboard? Who may call at any hour? Who can refuse to answer? Who receives voicemail rather than response? Who appears as emergency, spam, intimacy, threat, student, client, friend, or machine? The telephone can liberate speech from physical co-presence yet also make availability compulsory. The line can become a leash.

That doubleness carries us directly toward the Ronell affair. But first the call must enter the vehicle.

V. *The Test Drive: Who or What Is Driving?*

The Test Drive treats testing as an uncontested legitimating machine stretching across science, law, pharmaceuticals, art, history, Zen practice, friendship, and love. Its itinerary moves through proving grounds, trial runs, passing the test, Nietzsche's gay science, trial balloons, and the testing of love (Ronell 2007).

A conventional test places an examiner outside the tested object. The examiner establishes conditions, administers the procedure, receives results, and issues a determination. Ronell destabilizes that geometry.

The test may expose the assumptions of the tester. The apparatus may elicit what its operator does not know. The scientific probe can probe the institution conducting science. The vehicle reveals what drives the driver. The test of love may destroy the relation it seeks to verify. The user discovers that the machine has been using the user as one of its components.

Ronell's importance for our argument lies here. Butler shows how repeated norms produce subjects. Ronell shows how the test site produces both subject and examiner. The rubric does not merely classify an already existing performance. It formats the situation in which performance becomes evidence.

A serious test must therefore remain returnable upon its maker. The instructor who tests awareness must permit the class to test the exercise. The institution that investigates a complaint must remain open to complaints about its own procedures. The analyst must become analyzable. The algorithmic benchmark must expose the values embedded in the benchmark. The person who classifies another's empathy must answer for the violence authorized by the classification.

A nonreturnable test becomes capture. One side asks, records, measures, interprets, and judges. The other supplies data and bears consequences. The tester remains structurally invisible.

Ronell gives us the reversal necessary for escaping that asymmetry, but she does not guarantee the escape. A reversible test can still injure. A liminaut can become addicted to reversal. The charismatic tester may claim that every boundary exists only to be crossed and every complaint merely proves the experiment's radicality.

D4 can become runaway D4. Before that failure appears institutionally, it appears cinematically.

VI. *Blade Runner's Rachael Under Voight-Kampff*

Blade Runner gives Butler and Ronell a shared test chamber. Rachael sits before Deckard under the Voight-Kampff testing apparatus. The device seeks involuntary signs of empathy. The interrogation does not ask whether Rachael can discuss humanity, memory, care, or moral responsibility. It presents provocative scenarios and measures the bodily latency of response. Humanity becomes a performance timed by a machine (Scott 1982).

Rachael offers the perfect Butlerian problem. Her gender, poise, clothing, speech, memory, profession, manner, and affect all function as citations through which she appears as a recognizable woman. Yet the institution has secretly manufactured much of the archive supporting that appearance. Once Deckard reveals the implanted memories, Rachael does not discover a pure

identity beneath the fabrication. She discovers that the materials from which she composed herself have another provenance.

She does not lack a self. She lacks sovereign ownership of its archive.

Her crisis therefore dramatizes performativity rather than disproving it. Human identity already depends upon inherited language, photographs, family stories, habits, scripts, institutions, and memories no subject wholly authors. Rachael's condition differs in degree, design, industrial origin, and political status - not in possessing a perfectly artificial exterior covering an otherwise absent interior.

Yet the test does not investigate this complexity. It issues a classification: replicant. The rubric closes the ontological question.

Deckard meanwhile occupies Ronell's test position. He thinks he administers the machine, but the film gradually redirects the test toward him. Can the official human recognize suffering once the institution classifies it as simulation? Can he encounter Rachael without using privileged knowledge of her identity as power over her? Can he recognize mercy when Roy Batty, the being designated for retirement, saves his life?

The examiner's empathy remains unmeasured. The test tests the captive, not the killer.

This scene condenses the difference between Butler and Ronell. Butler asks how Rachael's signs produce recognizability and how the revelation of citational construction exposes the norm. Ronell asks who installed the apparatus, who authorized the examiner, who defined the response profile, and what happens when the test returns upon Deckard.

The deepest reversal occurs when Roy refuses the objective assigned to him. The replicant marked as violent and disposable saves the agent hunting him. He does not pass the institution's empathy test. He acts beyond it.

That is the point where generalized testing meets Arendtian action. Freedom does not appear as a better score. It appears when a being does something the classifier could neither predict nor recognize within the terms of the classification. The tested object becomes an actor. The examiner becomes dependent upon the mercy of the case.

Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* broadens the apparatus ecology through the mood organ, empathy box, artificial animals, and Mercerism. The novel asks what remains of empathy when affect can be dialed, care can become status display, and mediated suffering can be staged yet still matter. It is not simply the authenticity of the feeling that is at issue. It is the architecture that distributes, verifies, and monetizes feeling (Dick 1968).

VII. *Complaint: The Signal of a Blocked World*

Ronell's *Complaint: Grievance among Friends* follows griping, lamentation, protest, melancholy, and grievance through Hamlet, Nietzsche, Arendt, Barbara Johnson, friendship, and deconstruction. The book asks how complaint gets aggravated, distracted, stifled, transformed, or carried by fragile relationships (Ronell 2018).

Complaint occupies an unstable position. It may arrive without an argument adequate to institutional standards. It may sound repetitive, petty, excessive, incoherent, self-implicating, dramatic, embarrassing, or impossible to satisfy.

But complaint often carries knowledge before knowledge acquires acceptable form. It says: the passage promised by this world has failed.

The student cannot continue. The worker cannot breathe. The relation cannot support the intensity demanded of it. The policy designed to protect has become another apparatus of harm. The line carries command but no reciprocal answer.

The institution hears complaint by translating it. It asks whether the grievance meets a definition, falls within a jurisdiction, contains evidence, arrived before a deadline, concerns a protected category, and warrants a remedy.

Some such translation remains unavoidable. Institutions cannot act on pure affect. Yet the translation also risks stripping complaint of the world it announces. The person becomes a complainant; the event becomes an allegation; the relation becomes a file; the threatened world becomes a set of administrable facts.

A Complaint Office asks: Which category contains this claim? A Complaint Interchange would ask: Where was the person trying to go? Which relation promised passage? Which line failed? What could not be said inside the available route system? What world would have to change for the complaint to become unnecessary?

This distinction keeps us from choosing between two inadequate positions. The first worships procedure, as though administrative recognition of a complaint automatically produced justice. The second romanticizes the complaint, as though every grievance contained transparent truth and every institutional test merely captured it.

Ronell's best work keeps complaint moving between these poles. Complaint needs reception without immediate assimilation. It needs form without closure. It needs judgment without the presumption that the institution already knows what sort of event has occurred.

The Ronell affair forces these propositions back through Ronell's own institutional body. The complaint calls the theorist of complaint. The question becomes whether she - and her intellectual network - can answer.

VIII. The Ronell Affair: The Test Returns

Nimrod Reitman, a former doctoral student whom Ronell supervised at New York University, filed a Title IX complaint in 2017. Following an eleven-month investigation, NYU found Ronell responsible for sexual harassment involving inappropriate physical contact and sexualized communications and suspended her without pay for the 2018-19 academic year. Reitman made additional allegations; Ronell denied harassment and coercion and argued that the exchanges had been misread, describing the language as exaggerated, reciprocal, camp-inflected, and gay-coded (Gessen 2018; Washington Square News 2018).

A later lawsuit entered public court proceedings, although a 2019 reported decision concerned dismissal of Ronell's contractual counterclaim rather than a final judicial determination of all the underlying allegations (Reitman v. Ronell 2019).

The case should not become gossip adorning the essay. It functions as a theoretical event because it activates Ronell's major concepts simultaneously. The call becomes a summons. The telephone becomes compulsory availability. The test returns upon the tester. The student's complaint enters an institution that must classify it. Camp becomes evidence. Intimacy becomes documentation. Friendship becomes a question of power. The adviser becomes the object of a procedure initiated by someone whose academic passage she significantly influenced.

Ronell's defense raises a real problem. Queer, theatrical, campy, psychoanalytic, and intellectually intense forms of address may not fit neatly within literal institutional readings. Academic and artistic relationships can involve unusual vocabularies, strong transference, stylized exaggeration, and emotional intensity. An apparatus designed to classify misconduct can flatten ambiguity.

But ambiguity does not erase hierarchy.

A professor and a doctoral student may participate in the same idiom while possessing radically unequal capacities to redefine, refuse, leave, or publicly reinterpret the relation. The adviser can influence supervision, recommendation, professional introduction, intellectual standing, funding, and career passage. Mutual use of flamboyant language does not create equal control over the world in which that language operates.

Queer language can suspend ordinary codes without suspending institutional power. Camp can queer the sign while leaving the chain of command intact.

This sentence cuts in two directions. It warns institutions not to read all unconventional intimacy through straight literalism. It also warns charismatic theorists not to treat unconventional intimacy as a zone exempt from accountability.

The decisive test concerns exit. Could the less powerful person decline the idiom? Could he reduce contact? Could he reinterpret the relation? Could he interrupt the emotional intensity? Could he complain without risking the world through which his professional future passed?

A relation may feel reciprocal at the level of language while remaining asymmetrical at the level of consequence. The test of D4 lies not in how brilliantly the parties cross boundaries at the height of the encounter. It lies in whether either party can stop crossing without suffering institutional death.

IX. Butler's Letter: Recognition Protects Its Own

Before the confidential case record became publicly known, fifty-one academics signed a letter supporting Ronell. The letter stated that its signatories lacked access to the dossier, invoked Ronell's international reputation and contributions, objected to a severe judgment against her, and described the complainant's actions as a malicious campaign. Butler's name appeared prominently among the signatories (Gessen 2018), as did several of my Cornell colleagues.

Butler later explained that the intervention had sought to oppose termination, not defend all of Ronell's actions; she acknowledged that the signatories should have become better informed, should not have attributed motives to the complainant, and should not have suggested that Ronell's reputation warranted different treatment (Butler 2018).

This episode belongs at the center of *The Banality of Butler* because it performs the very problem Butler's work enables us to see.

Recognition had already distributed credibility before the complaint arrived. Ronell appeared as brilliant, queer, feminist, generous, distinguished, internationally important, and intellectually indispensable. Reitman had to become recognizable as injured. The accused had already become recognizable as valuable.

The support letter converted prior reputation into a moral signal. Intellectual status did not merely supply contextual knowledge. It began functioning as evidence against a judgment that the signatories acknowledged they could not evaluate from the record.

The categories reversed. Queer feminist became presumptively vulnerable. Male student became presumptively malicious. Friendship became interpretive authority. Prestige became innocence-adjacent.

The event demonstrates why representation cannot replace judgment. Categories developed to reveal structural power may become shortcuts that predetermine the singular case. A theory capable of showing how dominant scripts produce disbelief toward complainants can itself get captured by another script: the politically valuable intellectual under reactionary attack.

This does not mean Butler consciously chose prestige over justice. The banality lies precisely in the absence of such a grand decision. Friendship, urgency, incomplete information, shared political history, and fear of disproportionate punishment may have combined into what seemed a responsible intervention.

The letter nevertheless shows thought yielding to an available role: the defender of a persecuted queer intellectual; the loyal colleague; the critic of institutional overreach; the guardian of a threatened intellectual culture. Each role carried a ready vocabulary. Together they insulated the signatories from the singularity of a complaint they did not yet know.

This is Arendt's importance. Thoughtlessness does not mean low intelligence. It means the failure to interrupt the language already waiting to speak through us. A brilliant network can behave stupidly. A theory of power can become a prestige firewall. A politics of vulnerability can assign vulnerability before hearing the case.

X. The Banality of Solidarity

Solidarity usually appears as the opposite of banality. Solidarity interrupts isolation, shares risk, protects the threatened, and resists institutional power. Without solidarity, complaint often dies alone.

But solidarity can also become automatic. Automatic solidarity does not ask who lacks power in the actual relation. It identifies political affiliation and activates defense. It mistakes membership for judgment. It treats criticism of one member as an attack upon the whole formation.

In the Ronell affair, solidarity became entangled with academic celebrity. The public discussion of the academic star system emphasized how Ronell's stature shaped perceptions of her capacity to make or break careers and how the defenders' letter mobilized that stature as part of the case for protection (Gessen 2018).

This gives us a more exact description of the banality at work. Butlerian concepts had taught a generation of scholars to perceive the distribution of power across norms, discourse, institutions, identity, and vulnerability. Yet those concepts did not mechanically generate good judgment when friendship and prestige entered the room. No concept can do that. The mistake lies in expecting theory to supply an ethical autopilot.

Queer theory can explain why an identity category does not tell us who someone essentially is. Yet political practice may still use identity as a rapid credibility score. Feminist theory can show how institutional hierarchy shapes consent. Yet a feminist intellectual network may still underread hierarchy when the accused belongs to the network. Deconstruction can show that language exceeds intention. Yet that insight can become a defense that treats every troubling statement as play, citation, performance, camp, or undecidability.

Theoretical sophistication does not immunize anyone against motivated interpretation. It sometimes supplies more ingenious motives.

This is where the title acquires its full force. The banality of Butler does not name the simplification of queer theory by stupid bureaucrats alone. It also names the possibility that queer theorists themselves can reach for familiar critical language rather than undergo the interruption of judgment.

The critical vocabulary becomes what Arendt called cliché - not because the words lack complexity, but because their availability prevents the event from speaking back. One can become thoughtless with footnotes.

XI. Ronell's D4: Liminaut or Charismatic Sovereign?

Ronell remains indispensable to the essay only if we refuse two temptations. The first cancels her work by reading every concept as disguised autobiography. That move collapses theory into accusation and forecloses the test before it begins. The second rescues her work by separating the thinker entirely from the institutional event. That move protects theory from the returnability it demands of every other apparatus.

Ronell should instead appear as a divided D4 persona.

Ronell I: The Night Operator. This Ronell hears calls from philosophy, technology, psychoanalysis, literature, drugs, grief, stupidity, and political authority. She routes voices that established disciplines keep apart. She does not control their destinations. She understands that communication carries absence and that every apparatus has ghosts.

Ronell II: The Test Driver. This Ronell refuses the fantasy of the neutral examiner. She asks what drives the investigator and how testing becomes an unquestioned legitimating machine. She places science, love, friendship, and judgment under recursive examination.

Ronell III: The Complainant. This Ronell hears protest before it achieves institutional form. She follows grumbling, melancholy, resentment, injury, and grievance through the fragile tissue of relations.

Ronell IV: The Charismatic Tester. This shadow figure turns theoretical liminality into personal prerogative. The call becomes compulsory response. Transference becomes demanded attachment. Experimental pedagogy becomes asymmetric intimacy. The refusal of rigid boundaries becomes an inability to recognize another person's need for one.

Ronell V: The Tested Liminait. Here the complaint returns. The theorist undergoes the institution's test. Her language becomes evidence. Her camp defense encounters a procedural classifier. Her friends become a prestige network. Her thought must answer the situation it cannot fully control.

This last figure matters most. Let us tag it *the test drive of +L*, as it always already rings in *elle*.

D4 should never designate the person authorized to live permanently beyond norms.

Healthy D4 names a traversed threshold. It loosens forms so that one may return to D1, D2, and D3 differently: to desire, subjectivity, institutions, equipment, places, relations, and shared worlds.

Runaway D4 turns thresholding into permanent exception. The liminait begins to imagine that because she can expose the constructedness of a boundary, she alone can decide whether the boundary deserves respect. The theorist of the test becomes untestable. The theorist of complaint becomes unanswerable to complaint. The theorist of transference claims privileged authority over what the other person's attachment means.

At that point, D4 no longer escapes sovereignty. It becomes charismatic sovereignty.

XII. The Body as Returnability Test

The StudioLab *Body as Site Geist* materials offer a criterion more demanding than rule compliance and more concrete than abstract transgression: Can this gesture return without producing exhaustion, domination, or deadness? A design that requires continual escalation, destroys rhythm, or depends upon one person's unending availability cannot bear repetition. A returnable practice permits rest, difference, misalignment, repair, and re-entry (McKenzie and HAL 2026c).

Applied to pedagogy, the question does not ask whether intense mentoring, theoretical eros, unconventional language, or strong attachment are inherently wrong. It asks whether the relationship can recur without consuming the less powerful participant.

Can the student sleep? Can the adviser tolerate silence? Can either person refuse the established tone? Can the relationship survive an unanswered call? Can intellectual intimacy endure without possessing the other's time? Can disagreement occur without exile? Can the student return to a wider world rather than orbit the adviser as the single source of recognition?

This bodily criterion complicates both Butler and Ronell. Butler teaches that social recognition sustains livability. Yet a recognition system that demands repeated disclosure, explanation, and correct self-performance may become exhausting. It may protect the identity while consuming the body that must keep proving it. Ronell teaches that the call precedes mastery and that connection travels through absence. Yet a call that cannot remain unanswered becomes domination.

The body registers what theory rationalizes. Fatigue can reveal capture before the official procedure does. Dread can indicate that the line no longer carries mutuality. The inability to pause can expose an apparatus disguised as intimacy.

Returnability does not replace due process. Bodies can register fear for many reasons, and feelings do not automatically establish another person's guilt. But the criterion catches what rule-centered analysis misses: a relation can formally evade a prohibition while remaining unlivable.

The body asks not merely whether a line was crossed. It asks what maintaining the relation required, and who bore the cost.

XIII. *Stupidity* and the Pause Before Judgment

Stupidity explores idiocy, puerility, dumbfoundedness, the ridiculous philosopher, ignorance, and the limits of reason. It refuses the comforting idea that intelligence stands securely opposite stupidity (Ronell 2003).

The Ronell affair makes this work newly sharp. The defenders did not lack intelligence. The problem arose because intelligence moved too quickly along familiar tracks. Prestige supplied a conclusion. Friendship supplied urgency. Political identification supplied a plot. The institution supplied an enemy. The complainant received a motive. Every component fitted before the case could interrupt the pattern.

Arendtian thinking begins with a pause in this automatic continuation. It does not guarantee the correct result. It prevents the role from completing the judgment before the person has judged.

The Pause Bench in the Metanoetic map therefore marks more than self-care. It represents a political and epistemological interruption: pause before classifying the speaker; pause before treating reputation as evidence; pause before converting ambiguity into innocence; pause before converting complaint into guilt; pause before assuming the procedure itself supplies justice; pause before using identity to settle the distribution of power; pause before solidarity hardens into defense.

This pause does not demand neutrality. Neutrality often protects existing power by refusing action. The pause asks instead for proprioception of thought: can thinking feel its own movement before mistaking that movement for reality?

The Body as Site Geist materials describe the problem in Bohmian terms: thought lacks proprioception, accelerates, repeats destructively, hardens into ideology, and forgets that it moves. Dialogue, silence, hesitation, and slow collective inquiry help thought register its own motion (McKenzie and HAL 2026c).

This supplies the missing connection between Arendt and Ronell. Arendt gives the activity of thinking that interrupts cliché. Ronell gives stupidity as the shadow inhabiting intelligence. StudioLab gives the Pause Bench where thought can feel itself beginning to automate.

The point is not to become less committed. It is to prevent commitment from answering before listening.

XIV. The Queering of Queering

The movement from queer theory to gay sci-fi does not abandon queer theory. It passes through queer theory's institutional capture.

Queer theory remains necessary for understanding how norms form subjects and render bodies legible or illegible, but its success made it teachable, administrable, and reversible. The same iterability that enabled resignification also enables hostile recitation, bureaucratic capture, legal reversal, and reactionary weaponization (McKenzie and HAL 2026d).

The Ronell affair gives the queering of queering another register. Queer language unsettles the straight presumption that intimacy has one vocabulary and that every flamboyant sign possesses a literal meaning. Then the institution cites queer language back as evidence. Then Ronell cites queerness to resist the institution's reading. Then critics cite queer theory against Ronell to analyze hierarchy, coercion, and asymmetry. Then defenders cite institutional critique against the complaint process.

Queer gets cited, recited, classified, weaponized, protected, and placed on trial. No party owns iterability.

This is not merely hypocrisy. It is the perfumative becoming visible: mutant forces become normative; normative forces mutate; the sign leaves the political intention that launched it.

Queer's power was repeatability. Queer's vulnerability is repeatability.

The Queen is gone but she's not forgotten. This is the story of Jonny Rotten.

Butler's theory predicts this escape. A sign cannot remain under the control of the speaker or movement that resignifies it. Yet Butlerian politics often continues to rely upon a hope that better citation will produce more livable recognition.

Ronell intensifies the instability. The call may come from an enemy, machine, lover, student, institution, or ghost. The test may reverse. The vehicle may crash. The response may arrive too late.

Gay sci-fi begins when neither recognition nor transgression supplies the final destination. It asks: What world can be built after the sign has escaped, the station has failed, and the test has exposed its tester?

The answer cannot consist in restoring a pure queer theory uncontaminated by institutions. There was no pure sign. Nor can the answer consist in abolishing all categories, boundaries, and procedures. The less powerful often need precisely the protections that charismatic transgression dismisses.

Gay sci-fi must therefore build pharmaka after recognition: practices, platforms, shelters, rituals, complaint interchanges, reversible roles, and counter-atmospheres that neither worship the classifier nor romanticize the border-crosser.

XV. From Recognition to Answerability

Butler gives us recognition. Ronell gives us response. Arendt gives us judgment and action. The distinction among these terms matters.

Recognition places a being within an intelligible world. It grants or refuses standing. Response answers a call whose origin and meaning may remain uncertain. Judgment confronts a singular situation without reducing it completely to a rule. Action begins something whose consequences no actor controls.

A politics organized only around recognition remains vulnerable to administration. The state, institution, or public becomes the scene before which a subject seeks legibility. A politics organized only around response remains vulnerable to capture by the caller. The ring becomes command; availability becomes obligation. A politics organized only around judgment risks elitism if some people reserve the power to judge and others appear only as cases. A politics organized only around action may ignore the exclusions that determine who reaches the space of appearance alive.

The task involves moving among all four without installing one as sovereign.

Butler's D2 must remain open to Ronell's D4: categories require interruption, calls cross borders, and the subject never fully coincides with its recognized identity. Ronell's D4 must return to D2 and D3: the liminaut must answer to roles, institutions, bodies, equipment, asymmetries, and durable relations. Arendt's judgment must remain accountable to the Butlerian question of who receives standing. Arendtian action must remain receptive to the Ronellian call that arrives from outside the recognized public.

The key term then becomes answerability. Answerability does not demand permanent availability. It means that no role, reputation, theory, identity, procedure, or charisma grants exemption from response.

The institution must answer the complainant. The complainant's account must remain open to judgment without automatic disbelief. The accused must receive a fair process without having prestige converted into innocence. The test must answer for its effects. The theorist must answer to the case. The friend must answer for the intervention friendship prompts. The liminaut must answer for the bodies left exhausted along the passage.

Answerability provides a stronger ethic than compulsory transparency. It does not require everyone to reveal everything. It requires each apparatus to remain reachable by those it affects.

XVI. Gay Sci-Fi After the Affair

Gay sci-fi does not solve the Ronell affair. It refuses to turn the affair into a final moral tableau in which heroes and villains receive their stable positions. That refusal does not mean refusing judgment. It means refusing the fantasy that judgment ends the work of world-building.

The university must still ask how doctoral advising concentrates dependency. It must ask why one person can control so much of a student's intellectual, emotional, and professional passage. It must examine the culture of academic stars, intimate mentorship, scarce employment, recommendation networks, and disciplinary prestige. It must build channels through which students can change advisers, reduce contact, obtain independent evaluation, and complain without losing their worlds.

Queer theory must ask how anti-normativity became confused with ethical exemption. It must distinguish the destabilization of identity from the denial of asymmetrical power. It must recover boundaries as potentially enabling rather than always repressive.

Complaint theory must ask whether it hears actual complainants or only the literary and philosophical majesty of complaint. The D4 liminaut must carry a return ticket.

The return ticket does not guarantee a return to the old world. It guarantees the traveler's ability to leave the guide, interrupt the ride, change vehicles, or refuse the call.

The Metanoetic Playground imagery gives this ethic a spatial form. Challenger World does not vanish. The traveler moves through Pause Bench, Comedy Club, Nesting Zone, Complaint Interchange, and Portal. Several lines remain available. No single operator controls the system.

The Comedy Club interrupts righteousness without ridiculing suffering. The Pause Bench slows judgment without postponing it forever. The Nesting Zone shelters bodies without converting shelter into possession. The Complaint Interchange treats grievance as a signal of broken worldhood rather than only a personnel file. The Portal allows transformation without making permanent liminality mandatory.

This is the difference between a platform and a cult. A platform allows people to enter, act, change roles, criticize the structure, and depart. A cult converts passage through one charismatic figure into the price of belonging.

Gay sci-fi therefore asks not whether Ronell should remain our liminaut. It asks: What kind of world prevents any one person from monopolizing D4?

The answer lies in distributed liminautics: rotating guides, explicit handoffs, reciprocal tests, multiple channels, protected exits, shared archives, embodied pauses, and institutions that can feel their own acceleration.

Ronell becomes a role anyone may temporarily play - not the sovereign owner of the switchboard. Butler becomes a diagnostic practice rather than the ontology of every subject. Arendt becomes a discipline of judgment rather than a monument to heroic action. Theory becomes equipment. Equipment becomes revisable. The players become capable of redesigning the world that tests them.

Conclusion: The Tester Must Be Testable

Butler taught us that the norm produces the subject. Ronell taught us that the test also produces the tester. The Ronell affair taught us that neither insight protects its thinker from capture.

Butler's work revealed the instability of identity, the violence of compulsory intelligibility, and the political stakes of recognition. Its institutional afterlife often converts that instability into new categories, procedures, and audit surfaces. This is the banality of Butler: not the banality of the theory, but the routinization of its concepts as social technology.

Ronell followed the telephone call, the test drive, the drug, stupidity, complaint, and haunted transmission. She became our D4 liminaut because her writing places thought in motion before mastery. Yet the affair reveals D4's shadow. Liminality can become exemption. Camp can conceal hierarchy. Experimental intimacy can demand availability from those with fewer exits. The theorist of the test can fail to recognize the test returning through another person's complaint.

Butler's intervention in Ronell's defense joins the two failures. A theory of recognizability confronts a recognized friend and an insufficiently recognized complainant. A politics attentive to structural power momentarily allows friendship, reputation, and political identification to preformat judgment.

No one escapes by possessing the correct theory. That is Arendt's lesson. Thinking begins when the available language stops carrying us automatically. Judgment begins when the singular case disturbs the role we expected to play. Action begins when we refuse to let the existing apparatus define every possible response.

The task is neither to cancel Butler nor rescue Ronell. It is to make each answerable to the machinery she helps us diagnose.

Butler must pass through the test site. Ronell must return from D4. The institution must hear complaint without turning it instantly into telemetry. The complainant must not have to perform a perfect identity in order to receive standing. The accused must not receive immunity through political value or intellectual prestige. Queer language must remain free to mutate without becoming a permission slip for power. The line must permit connection without compulsory availability. The vehicle must allow passengers to stop the ride. The guide must be guidable. The tester must be testable. The test must be interruptible.

Any world worth building must allow those who enter it to leave without losing the right to appear elsewhere.

That is where queer theory passes into gay sci-fi - not by abandoning the struggle for recognition, but by refusing to let recognition remain the only world on offer.

Butler shows us who must pass. Ronell asks who placed the call. The affair asks who was allowed to hang up. Gay sci-fi begins by redesigning the line.

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Between Work and World

Four Essays on the Marx–Heidegger Diagonal

Capital orders the world, but it did not open the Open.

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A sequence of inquiries into capital and technē, subject and Dasein, history and ontology, mimesis and media flight.



1. Between Work and World

The Marx–Heidegger Diagonal as a Prospectus for Further Inquiry

Without ontology: work camps. Without history: death camps.

A working aphorism, not a historical partition

Abstract

This prospectus proposes the Marx–Heidegger diagonal as an unfinished field of inquiry rather than a completed synthesis. Marx analyzes capital as a humanly produced social relation that acquires quasi-autonomous power over its makers. Heidegger asks after *technē*, world-disclosure, and *Dasein* at a scale that cannot be reduced to human valuation, labor, or subjectivity. The encounter therefore rests on two asymmetries: capital is all too human, while revealing exceeds man; the subject may be alienated, while *Dasein* is not a subject at all. These distinctions give historical force to the aphorism “without ontology: work camps; without history: death camps,” understood not as a division of political regimes but as a warning against two terminal reductions—history reduced to labor administration and ontology elevated into destiny. A typology of seven operations—Marcusean concretion, Benjaminian constellation, Lefebvorean production, Althusserian encounter, Guattarian metamodelization, Glazebrookian capture, and Taussigian transduction—provides a research map. The study concludes by recasting ShuttleKraft as a method for maintaining, rather than resolving, the difference between subject-production and *Dasein*, historical power and ontological openness.

1. The Dyad and the Danger of Easy Synthesis

Few encounters in twentieth-century thought remain as consequential—and as incompletely mapped—as the encounter between Marx and Heidegger. Marx analyzes capital as a historically specific organization of production, labor, value, property, and social power. Heidegger asks how worlds open, how beings become intelligible, and how modern technicity challenges everything to appear as orderable standing-reserve. Marx asks how relations among people acquire the apparent independence of things. Heidegger asks how an epoch grants things the possibility of appearing as objects, resources, equipment, or reserves in the first place.

The temptation is to make the two thinkers complementary. Marx would supply history, institutions, exploitation, and class; Heidegger would supply ontology, worldhood, finitude, and meaning. Yet this division of labor immediately distorts both sides. Marx does not simply describe events inside a pre-given world: capital produces abstractions that become materially real, reconfiguring time, space, bodies, needs, and social perception. Heidegger does not provide a philosophical anthropology of the human subject beneath its economic alienation: Dasein displaces the subject-object schema rather than supplying its existential foundation.

The proposed inquiry therefore begins with incompatibility. Marx and Heidegger do not offer two scales of a single explanatory system. Their categories cross, disturb, and expose one another. Capital may organize a world, but it did not open the Open. Capital may alienate subjects, but Dasein is not the subject being alienated. Technological revealing may exceed human decision, but it cannot absolve the institutions, owners, administrators, and political actors through which ordering becomes historical domination.

The Marx–Heidegger diagonal names a repeated movement between material history and world-disclosure in which neither term gains the right to absorb the other.

This prospectus treats the diagonal as a research field made of operations rather than a school made of doctrines. Marcuse, Benjamin, Lefebvre, Althusser, Guattari, Patricia Glazebrook, and Michael Taussig do not share one position. Each constructs a different passage between capital and Being, production and disclosure, alienation and homelessness, subject-formation and worldhood. Their disagreements matter more than any proposed reconciliation.

2. First Asymmetry: Capital Is All Too Human

Capital is strange because it is thoroughly human and yet appears inhuman. It presupposes labor, needs, property, exchange, law, institutions, accounting, and historically specific relations among people. Marxian value is neither a natural property hidden inside things nor a matter of individual preference. It arises through social practices of commodity production and abstract labor. People produce the relations that confront them as objective necessity.

This quasi-autonomy gives capital enormous world-forming force without granting it ontological primacy. Capital can reorganize what counts as useful, profitable, productive, scarce, risky, investable, or disposable. It converts landscapes into real estate, forests into timber and carbon assets, bodies into labor-power, attention into engagement, and language into data. Yet all these conversions remain linked to humanly enacted systems of valuation and accumulation, even when no individual actor controls the result.

The phrase “all too human” does not domesticate capital. On the contrary, it names the uncanny fact that human relations can become systemic compulsions that dominate their makers. Capital’s inhumanity emerges from human practices sedimented into institutions, infrastructures, metrics, contracts, and feedback loops. It is made, but not simply chosen; reproduced, but not centrally authored; historical, yet experienced as natural necessity.

This distinction places a limit on Glazebrook’s powerful claim that capital functions as the Gestell of economics. Taken regionally, the formulation names how economic calculation enframes beings as cash-value, assets, costs, inventories, and investment opportunities. Taken as an identity between capital and Gestell, however, it risks shrinking Heidegger’s question of revealing to a human socioeconomic formation. Capital can mobilize, monetize, and intensify standing-reserve. It cannot by itself account for the openness in which anything becomes available to valuation.

3. Second Asymmetry: Technē Is Bigger Than Man

Heidegger’s technē cannot be translated simply as human technology. In its Greek field, technē belongs with poiēsis and alētheia: skilled bringing-forth and unconcealment. Modern technology marks a historically distinctive transformation of this relation, but its essence is not reducible to machines, tools, corporate decisions, or instrumental purposes. Gestell names a challenging-forth in which beings show up in advance as orderable, calculable, storable, and available.

Human beings participate in this revealing, yet they do not sovereignly produce it. The engineer, manager, miner, programmer, planner, and consumer all act within a field of intelligibility that has already made optimization, extraction, prediction, and control appear necessary or self-evident. Humans become agents of enframing and, at the same time, standing-reserve within it.

This claim exceeds anthropocentric social construction without requiring a mystical technological agent. The Open is neither an object made by humans nor a power operating somewhere outside them. It names the clearing or openness within which humans and nonhumans encounter one another at all. Capital enters that clearing and organizes it historically. It does not create the fact of disclosure.

Gestell makes beings orderable; capital converts orderability into value, property, and accumulation. The relation is intimate but not identical.

The asymmetry has immediate political consequences. A postcapitalist society could abolish private accumulation and commodity exchange while continuing to order rivers, populations, genomes, language, energy, and planetary systems as standing-reserve. Socialist planning can remain technological enframing. Public ownership can reorganize value without transforming disclosure. Conversely, practices of releasement, art, or dwelling cannot substitute for changing ownership, labor relations, law, and extraction. Neither ontology nor political economy receives a free pass from the other.

4. Dasein Is Not the Alienated Subject

The second major correction concerns Dasein. Dasein is not the human subject made more concrete, embodied, or authentic. Nor is it Marx’s alienated subject awaiting reconciliation with its labor, species-being, or communal powers. Subject and Dasein belong to different registers.

The subject emerges within the modern subject-object relation as a bearer of representation, agency, rights, identity, ownership, labor-power, and experience. Subjects can be interpellated, disciplined, exploited, recognized, alienated, and emancipated. Marx, Althusser, feminist theory, and political economy analyze how historically specific institutions produce and divide such positions.

Dasein, by contrast, names the being for whom Being is at issue. It refers to being-in-the-world, thrown projection, care, temporality, being-with, and the openness in which subjects and objects first become intelligible. Dasein is not a hidden interior behind the social person. It does not name an authentic worker concealed beneath commodity relations. It displaces the representational architecture in which a subject first stands over against a world of objects.

Alienation and Heideggerian falling, uncanniness, or homelessness may illuminate one another, but they cannot be identified. Alienation describes historically specific social relations in which human activity, products, institutions, and collective powers confront people as alien forces. Falling names Dasein's ordinary absorption in the public interpretations and practical involvements of a world. Uncanniness discloses the lack of a final ground or secure metaphysical home. No revolution abolishes finitude, thrownness, or being-toward-death.

Capital alienates subjects, but Dasein is not the subject being alienated.

This difference makes early Marcuse a crucial test case. Marcuse sought to use Heidegger's account of concrete historical existence to repair a crisis in historical materialism. But the project risks converting Dasein into embodied subjectivity and then into the bearer of revolutionary praxis. The research question is not whether Marcuse successfully united two systems. It is whether his attempted union exposes a constitutive impossibility: Dasein cannot become the authentic social subject without ceasing to perform Heidegger's displacement of subjectivity.

5. The Dark Hinge: Work Camps and Death Camps

The aphorism "without ontology: work camps; without history: death camps" gives this inquiry its historical urgency. It must, however, be handled as a warning about terminal reductions, not as a neat partition of regimes or camp systems. Nazi camps combined forced labor, terror, starvation, medical experimentation, and extermination. Soviet forced-labor camps produced mass death through punishment, exposure, hunger, and labor. Colonial camps, plantations, prisons, reservations, and carceral labor systems further complicate any binary. The terms identify two logics that historically overlap.

5.1 Without Ontology: History Becomes Work

A historical materialism stripped of ontological questioning can reduce human existence to production, labor, need, class position, and economic function. Even emancipation then risks becoming the rational administration of production. The person appears as productive capacity: a body to train, allocate, measure, discipline, exhaust, and replace.

At this limit, the alienated worker does not recover a richer existence. The worker becomes completely administered labor-power. History recognizes the prisoner only as a unit of useful expenditure. The work camp becomes the terminal figure of a politics that knows historical function but no excess of existence over function.

This is not the claim that Marx entails the Gulag, nor that ontology automatically protects anyone from domination. It is the narrower claim that a politics of labor lacks an adequate internal limit when it treats production as the measure of human reality. Dasein offers no sacred essence and no liberal humanist guarantee. It does, however, prohibit the conceptual exhaustion of existence by social role. A person is never merely the sum of the functions through which a regime renders that person useful.

5.2 Without Concrete History: Ontology Becomes Destiny

Heidegger does not lack history in the ordinary sense. His work turns on historicity, inheritance, destiny, beginning, and the history of Being. The danger arrives when concrete, contested history disappears into epochal narration. Political decisions, racial laws, bureaucracies, confiscations, deportations, occupations, and murders can then recede behind the language of a people, destiny, rootedness, world, or sending.

At this limit, some beings no longer appear as exploitable labor-power or political adversaries. They appear as obstacles to the destined world, contaminants of the people, or beings whose removal seems to serve an ontological-historical mission. The death camp becomes the terminal figure of an ontology that has ceased answering to the histories and persons enacted within its language.

This is not the claim that Heidegger's ontology mechanically caused Auschwitz. It is the claim that an ontology of destiny without concrete political history lacks the means to name perpetrators, institutions, interests, victims, and decisions. Worse, it can redescribe organized violence as an impersonal event of Being. Heidegger's political commitment to National Socialism gives this danger biographical and philosophical gravity, even though no single line can deduce the regime from the analytic of Dasein.

5.3 The Crossing of the Two Logics

Work and death do not remain separate. The total camp can exploit bodies while destroying them; it can calculate productive value while designating entire populations for elimination. Administration and destiny reinforce one another. Historical machinery needs myths of world and people; ontological myth needs offices, railways, property seizures, police forces, industrial systems, and obedient labor.

The aphorism should therefore unfold into a three-part warning:

- Without ontology, history becomes labor administration.
- Without concrete history, ontology becomes destiny.
- When administration and destiny converge, camps become laboratories for reducing existence to work, waste, or death.

Arendt becomes an essential witness at this hinge. Her analyses of labor, work, action, worldlessness, superfluousness, and total domination do not reconcile Marx and Heidegger. They show why the collapse of plurality and worldly appearance cannot be explained by labor alone, and why ontological worldhood cannot replace political judgment. She belongs beside the typology as a critic of its catastrophic stakes rather than as another synthesis within it.

6. Seven Operations on the Marx–Heidegger Diagonal

The inquiry proceeds through seven operations. These terms do not assign each thinker a sealed identity; they identify a dominant movement through which the dyad gets staged, revised, or displaced.

Thinker	Operation	Movement	Decisive question
Marcuse	Existential concretion	Heidegger into Marx	Can historical materialism account for lived possibility without turning Dasein into a revolutionary subject?
Benjamin	Materialist constellation	Counter-Heideggerian diagonal	Can world-disclosure be politicized through montage, commodity phantasmagoria, and interrupted time?
Lefebvre	Social production	Dwelling into political economy	Where does produced space end and ontological worldhood begin?
Althusser	Aleatory encounter	Marx toward groundless formation	How do contingent relations take hold as structures without a subject or historical guarantee?
Guattari	Machinic metamodelization	Transversal reconstruction	Can plural assemblages avoid both humanist reduction and an anonymous history of Being?
Glazebrook	Ontological capture	Capital into Heidegger	Does capital materialize Gestell or anthropologize revealing?
Taussig	Mimetic transduction	Dyad into ethnographic aesthetics	How do commodity relations become sensation, magic, ritual, image, and atmosphere?

6.1 Marcuse: Existential Concretion

Marcuse offers the most explicit attempt at a Heideggerian Marxism. He reads Being and Time as bourgeois philosophy undoing itself from within because practical involvement, care, and historicity displace the detached knowing subject. Marx then supplies the material constitution of historicity that Heidegger's formal analytic cannot reach.

The operation is concretion: the effort to make historical materialism answer to lived existence and to make existential ontology answer to class, production, and crisis. Yet concretion may conceal a category error. When Dasein becomes “concrete man” or embodied subjectivity, the analytic of being-in-the-world gets reinscribed within the anthropology it sought to displace. Marcuse is therefore both founder and first critic of the crossing. His later accusation that Heidegger neutralizes technology into fate returns the inquiry to the problem of history without surrendering the ontological question.

6.2 Benjamin: Materialist Constellation

Benjamin does not synthesize Marx and Heidegger. He constructs a materialist counter-route through many of the same problems: experience, language, technology, art, time, destruction,

memory, and dwelling. His operation is constellation: fragments from different times and registers form a charged configuration without submitting to a continuous philosophy of history.

Commodity modernity becomes dreamworld, architecture, advertisement, fashion, machinery, shock, and collective fantasy. This approach grants capitalism ontological reach without calling it an event of Being. The world is produced through human materials and institutions, yet exceeds conscious intention as phantasmagoria and second nature. Benjamin thus handles the first asymmetry especially well: capitalist worlds are all too human and uncannily more than anyone intended.

6.3 Lefebvre: The Social Production of Dwelling

Lefebvre takes Heideggerian themes of space, dwelling, everydayness, and habitation and subjects them to Marxian production. Space does not serve as an empty container for social life; social practice produces it through property, planning, architecture, transport, state power, representation, and routine.

The operation is production. Heidegger asks what it means to dwell; Lefebvre asks who builds, owns, plans, polices, and inhabits the dwelling. Yet the research must test the limit of the formulation. Social spaces are produced, but is worldhood itself produced? If every opening becomes a social product, Marx absorbs Heidegger. If dwelling floats free of property and power, Heidegger neutralizes Marx. Lefebvre's triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and lived representational spaces may provide a disciplined shuttle between these levels.

6.4 Althusser: Aleatory Encounter

Althusser initially seems hostile to Heideggerian Marxism. His anti-humanism rejects an expressive human essence and a subject of history. His later aleatory materialism, however, approaches questions of groundlessness, contingency, and world-formation. Structures arise when heterogeneous elements encounter one another and take hold; no origin, subject, or historical necessity guarantees their conjunction.

The operation is encounter. It provides a Marxian account of how worlds stabilize without appealing either to sovereign human making or to a sending of Being. Capital remains historical and contingent, but once established it produces necessities and subjects. Althusser's proximity to Heidegger should not be overstated as influence or synthesis. Its value lies in the conceptual test: can materialism think an opening without making that opening either human construction or ontological destiny?

6.5 Guattari: Machinic Metamodelization

Guattari retains Marxian attention to capitalism, institutions, production, and collective struggle while expanding production beyond goods and labor. Capitalism produces signs, desires, temporalities, territories, interfaces, identities, and universes of value. He also approaches Heideggerian concerns with existence, territory, technicity, and world, but refuses a singular history of Being.

The operation is metamodelization. Rather than reconcile Marx and Heidegger, Guattari moves among models, diagrams their limits, and constructs passages among economic, semiotic,

ecological, technological, and existential registers. Machinic assemblages include human and nonhuman components without granting either a monopoly on causality. This offers the most promising methodological extension of the dyad, provided “production of subjectivity” does not swallow the difference between subject and Dasein.

6.6 Glazebrook: Ontological Capture

Glazebrook reverses Marcuse’s initial direction. Marcuse carries Heidegger into Marxism; Glazebrook carries capital into Heidegger. Her formulation that standing-reserve is the Gestell of technology while capital is the Gestell of economics names how valuation projects beings as cash-value and gives economic force to the mathematical ordering Heidegger traces through metaphysics.

The operation is capture. Capital captures beings as assets, labor-power, costs, opportunities, inventories, risks, and exchange values. It also renders unpaid care and subsistence labor ontologically weak within national accounting because what does not pass through the market scarcely appears. This is Glazebrook’s strongest contribution: capital does not simply price an already disclosed world; it helps determine which beings and practices acquire economic reality.

Her strongest claim also marks the greatest danger. When capital becomes an event of Being, a human social relation risks acquiring epochal inevitability. The formulation should remain regional and diagnostic: capital is a decisive historical apparatus of Gestell, not the origin or totality of revealing. Capital orders the world, but it did not open the Open.

6.7 Taussig: Mimetic Transduction at the Threshold

Taussig occupies the typology’s outer threshold. His path runs through Marx, commodity fetishism, colonial violence, Benjamin, Adorno, mimesis, and ethnographic experimentation rather than through a systematic reading of Heidegger. Yet he carries the dyad into sensory and aesthetic practice.

The operation is mimetic transduction. Political economy becomes magic, image, bodily sensation, atmosphere, ritual, fear, imitation, and material contact. Taussig shows how humanly produced commodity relations acquire uncanny thing-power and how colonial worlds get made through performances of alterity. He belongs provisionally because he demonstrates what happens when the Marx–Heidegger problem leaves philosophical exposition and enters the textures of lived worlds.

7. Four Tests for Further Inquiry

The typology becomes useful only if it generates tests that can be applied across texts, historical cases, and contemporary systems. Four tests will guide the research.

7.1 The Register Test

At what register does a claim operate: ontic institution, social history, subject-production, existential structure, or history of Being? Arguments fail when they slide silently from one register to another. A corporation is not a disclosure. A disclosure is not an institution. Yet institutions can stabilize a disclosure, and disclosures can make institutions intelligible and compelling.

7.2 The Asymmetry Test

Does the thinker preserve the difference between humanly produced capital and a revealing not reducible to man? Does the thinker preserve the difference between alienated subjects and Dasein? This test identifies anthropologized Heidegger on one side and ontologized capital on the other.

7.3 The Catastrophe Test

What prevents the theory from reducing existence to historical function? What prevents it from converting political history into destiny? The work-camp and death-camp figures function here as boundary alarms. They do not prove guilt by conceptual association; they reveal where a vocabulary loses the capacity to name the beings sacrificed by its abstractions.

7.4 The Mediation Test

How does the thinker connect levels without collapsing them? Marcuse uses concrete praxis; Benjamin, constellation; Lefebvre, spatial production; Althusser, encounter; Guattari, assemblage and metamodelization; Glazebrook, capture; Taussig, mimetic transduction. The best mediations remain reversible: they permit movement between history and ontology while showing what each translation loses.

8. ShuttleKraft: Maintaining the Difference

ShuttleKraft can serve this inquiry only if it does not turn the dyad into a developmental ladder. In particular, D2 Subject and D3 Dasein must remain categorically distinct stations rather than lower and higher versions of the same human self.

D2 analyzes historically produced subject positions: worker, owner, consumer, citizen, debtor, beneficiary, racialized body, gendered laborer, human capital, and ideological addressee. It asks how institutions classify, recognize, discipline, exploit, empower, and alienate subjects.

D3 asks after being-in-the-world: the world within which those positions can appear, the modes through which beings show up as useful or useless, near or distant, threatening or ordinary, resource or companion. D3 does not reveal the “true self” behind D2. It shifts from subject-production to disclosure.

The shuttle between them carries a double question:

- What historical apparatuses produce and distribute the subject positions operating here?
- What world already makes those positions, apparatuses, objects, and values intelligible?

D0 prevents both stations from claiming totality by marking the Open that no model produces or masters. D4 marks experimental passage, not final emancipation: the attempt to compose other relations without pretending that a designed alternative can manufacture the Open. In this form, ShuttleKraft becomes a metamodeling practice for sustaining difference rather than a machine for synthesizing Marx and Heidegger.

The shuttle must move because neither shore remains stable: history reshapes ontology, ontology interrupts history, and neither acquires the last word.

9. Research Program

The prospectus supports a sequence of linked inquiries rather than a single exhaustive comparison. The first phase will reconstruct the explicit Marx–Heidegger encounters in Marcuse, Lefebvre, and Glazebrook. The second will test oblique crossings through Benjamin, late Althusser, and Guattari. The third will examine Taussig as the threshold where philosophical mediation becomes ethnographic and aesthetic transduction.

Each study will pursue the same questions:

- How does the thinker distinguish production from disclosure?
- What kind of history is at work: contradiction, epoch, interruption, encounter, or machinic mutation?
- How are labor, value, technology, and nature related?
- Does the analysis produce a subject, displace the subject, or confuse subject with Dasein?
- What practices of resistance, interruption, releasement, appropriation, or resingularization become possible?
- Where do the work-camp and death-camp boundary alarms become relevant?
- What diagram, field method, or transmedia practice can register the crossing without resolving it?

Contemporary cases can then test the typology: artificial intelligence and data extraction; universities organized through metrics and human-capital models; climate adaptation and carbon markets; logistics and platform labor; healthcare systems governed by cost-benefit calculation; and public projects that abolish profit while retaining technological ordering. These cases matter not as applications pasted onto canonical philosophy but as situations capable of forcing revisions in the dyad itself.

10. Conclusion: Between Work and World

The Marx–Heidegger diagonal begins where easy complementarity ends. Capital is not Being. Gestell is not capitalism. The subject is not Dasein. Alienation is not uncanniness. Socially produced space is not identical with worldhood. Yet the separations cannot become walls. Capital acquires power by organizing how beings appear; technological revealing acquires historical force through institutions, property, labor, energy, empire, and administration.

The dyad therefore demands a difficult double vigilance. Marx interrupts Heidegger whenever ontology becomes destiny, abstraction, or alibi. Heidegger interrupts Marx whenever history reduces existence to labor, function, production, or human valuation. Benjamin interrupts both when their histories become continuous. Marcuse stages the failed necessity of concretion. Lefebvre produces the spaces of dwelling. Althusser removes historical guarantees. Guattari pluralizes world-production through machinic assemblages. Glazebrook reveals capital's ontological capture. Taussig carries that capture into sensation, magic, and image.

Without ontology, history becomes work.

Without concrete history, ontology becomes destiny.

When administration and destiny converge, the camp becomes their terminal machine.

The point is not to balance Marx and Heidegger as equal halves of a grand synthesis. Their scales and categories remain asymmetrical. The point is to keep the passage open: to investigate how an all-too-human system becomes inhuman without pretending that humans opened the Open; to analyze how subjects become alienated without turning Dasein into a subject; and to confront history without granting history the power to exhaust existence.

Between work and world lies neither reconciliation nor safe distance. There lies a shuttle: an unfinished practice of inquiry compelled to move because stopping on either side carries catastrophic risk.

2. Capital is All-Too-Human

Technē, Dasein, and the Limits of Heideggerian Marxism

Capital orders the world, but it did not open the Open.
Capital alienates subjects, but Dasein is not the subject being alienated.

The conceptual hinge of the Marx–Heidegger series

Abstract

The phrase “Heideggerian Marxism” promises an encounter between political economy and ontology, yet it often gains coherence only by collapsing the very differences that make the encounter necessary. Capital is an all-too-human social relation that becomes quasi-autonomous; Heideggerian *technē* and *Gestell* concern a revealing that exceeds human intention and valuation. The alienated subject belongs to the historical production of modern subjectivity; Dasein does not name that subject in a deeper or more authentic form. This essay develops these asymmetries as limits on every attempted synthesis of Marx and Heidegger. It then turns to the aphorism “without ontology: work camps; without concrete history: death camps,” treating it not as a partition of twentieth-century regimes but as a warning about two terminal reductions: history reduced to labor administration and ontology inflated into destiny. The Marx–Heidegger diagonal becomes valuable only when it keeps these registers in tension. ShuttleKraft’s D2–D3 passage provides a method for moving between subject-production and world-disclosure without mistaking either for the other.

1. The Synthesis That Must Fail

The attraction of Heideggerian Marxism is easy to understand. Marx seems to give Heidegger the concrete history that fundamental ontology lacks: labor, class, property, commodity exchange, industrial organization, colonial extraction, and the institutions through which power becomes durable. Heidegger seems to give Marxism what economic and structural analyses often flatten: worldhood, finitude, care, dwelling, temporality, and the disclosure through which beings become intelligible before they enter calculation or exchange. One could assign history to Marx and ontology to Heidegger, then join the two into a more complete critical theory.

That division of labor creates a false peace. Marx and Heidegger do not simply explain different layers of the same object. Their terms alter the status of the object itself. Marx analyzes social relations made and reproduced by human practices, even when those relations acquire an objective power over their makers. Heidegger asks after the openness in which anything like a human practice, an object, a social relation, or a value can first show up. Political economy can describe the organization of a disclosed world. It cannot, without remainder, explain the Open as one more social

product. Fundamental ontology can ask how a world opens. It cannot, without evasion, explain who owns the mine, signs the decree, profits from the pipeline, or administers the camp.

The Marx–Heidegger diagonal begins not in complementarity but in a difference of scale that no synthesis has the right to erase.

This difference does not forbid comparison. It makes comparison exacting. Marcuse, Lefebvre, Benjamin, Althusser, Guattari, and Glazebrook become important not because they solve the dyad, but because each discovers a distinct way of moving through its incompatibilities. The question is not how to combine Marx and Heidegger once and for all. The question is what becomes visible when each interrupts the characteristic reduction of the other.

2. Capital Is All Too Human

Capital often appears inhuman because no individual commands its total movement. Firms, owners, managers, workers, consumers, states, banks, and algorithms respond to imperatives of competition and accumulation that none of them invented alone. Prices move, factories close, credit contracts, jobs disappear, and landscapes are reorganized as if an alien intelligence governed the process. Marx's analysis explains this appearance without turning capital into a metaphysical power. Capital arises through historically specific human relations: private property, wage labor, commodity production, exchange, accounting, law, finance, and state enforcement. It is made by people through institutions that exceed the intentions of any one person.

Value therefore remains all too human. It is not merely a personal preference placed upon a naturally existing object, but neither is it a cosmic attribute that things carry independently of social life. Under capitalism, value condenses socially organized labor and becomes objective through exchange. The abstraction becomes real because production, circulation, contracts, schedules, and survival repeatedly enact it. Capital is humanly generated and systemically enforced. It becomes quasi-autonomous without becoming ontologically originary.

This distinction matters because critical theory often grants capital unlimited explanatory range. Once capital is said to produce nature, temporality, desire, subjectivity, technology, and the world itself, it begins to resemble a secularized Being. The concept swells until no outside, remainder, or other history can be thought. Yet capital does not create mortality, embodiment, earth, language, or the capacity for beings to appear. It captures, reorganizes, prices, accelerates, and devastates what it did not bring into existence.

Capital orders the world, but it did not open the Open.

The sentence limits capital without minimizing it. Capital can determine whether a forest appears institutionally as timber, real estate, carbon credit, wilderness brand, watershed service, or Indigenous territory under threat. Those formats have material consequences. They direct roads, laws, investments, enclosures, police, and fires. Yet the forest's disclosure cannot be exhausted by the formats through which capital appropriates it. A critique that cannot say this has already accepted capital's own claim to universality.

3. Technē Is Bigger Than Man (sic)

Heidegger's technē names more than human technology. In its Greek field, technē belongs to poiēsis and alētheia: skilled bringing-forth and unconcealment. A craft does not merely impose a subjective

plan upon inert matter. It participates in a bringing-forth through which something comes into presence. Modern technology transforms this relation. Its essence does not lie in machines alone but in Gestell, enframing: a challenging-forth that orders beings as standing-reserve, available for storage, calculation, prediction, optimization, and deployment.

Human beings participate decisively in this ordering. Engineers design systems, managers allocate resources, scientists model processes, states build infrastructures, investors finance extraction, and users reproduce platforms. Yet Heidegger refuses to make revealing a product of sovereign human will. The engineer has already learned to see a river as energy potential, a population as data, or language as information before any particular calculation begins. Human action occurs within an intelligibility that it helps reproduce but did not simply choose from outside.

This is the force of saying that *technē* is bigger than man. The phrase does not personify technology or install an occult machine-agent behind history. It challenges anthropocentrism: the openness in which humans and things encounter one another cannot be reduced to an object manufactured by the subject. Even social construction presupposes a world in which subjects, practices, materials, and signs can meet. Heidegger's question begins at that presupposition.

The political danger arrives when this larger scale becomes an excuse for abstraction. Because no human author produces Gestell, one can be tempted to treat technological domination as an anonymous destiny for which no institution or actor bears responsibility. But exceeding human intention does not erase human agency. It changes the problem of agency. We act within disclosures we do not master, yet those disclosures materialize through decisions, ownership, standards, infrastructures, and coercion. The Open is not man-made; pipelines and camps are.

4. Capital and Gestell: Coupling Without Identity

Glazebrook's formulation that capital operates as the Gestell of economics captures an indispensable historical truth: modern economic calculation does not merely assign prices after beings have appeared. It formats beings in advance as resources, labor-power, assets, liabilities, risks, inventories, and investment opportunities. Capital supplies one of the principal institutional machines through which standing-reserve becomes globally operational.

The formulation becomes misleading, however, when regional analogy turns into ontological identity. Capital and Gestell do not share the same scope. Capital depends upon value, exchange, property, labor, and accumulation. Gestell names the orderability of beings even where no commodity exchange occurs. A socialist state may administer populations, rivers, forests, genomes, and weapons as standing-reserve while abolishing private capital. A military system may gather atmospheric or linguistic data without placing them directly on a market. A scientific apparatus may order beings experimentally before their monetization. Postcapitalism would not automatically end enframing.

The reverse also holds. Not every capital relation takes the same technological form, and commodity exchange long predates the fully developed modern Gestell. Capital and enframing form a historically powerful coupling, not an eternal equivalence. Capital intensifies orderability by converting it into property, price, competitive advantage, and accumulation. Gestell expands the field of what can be ordered, making new domains available for capitalist capture. Each accelerates the other while retaining a distinct logic.

Gestell makes beings orderable; capital makes orderability valuable, ownable, and accumulable.

Even this formula must remain provisional. Heidegger would resist turning Gestell into a first cause that precedes capital in linear sequence. Marx would resist granting a history of revealing explanatory priority over material relations. The value of the formula lies not in resolving the dispute but in preventing two reductions: the anthropologization of *technē* and the ontologization of capital.

5. Dasein Is Not the Alienated Subject

The most consequential slippage in Heideggerian Marxism occurs when Dasein is treated as the alienated subject in deeper philosophical clothing. The modern subject stands over against objects as a bearer of representation, agency, rights, ownership, identity, consciousness, and experience. Marxian subjects occupy class positions, sell labor-power, acquire commodities, enter contracts, and suffer forms of alienation. Althusserian subjects are interpellated by ideological apparatuses. Feminist, anticolonial, and critical race theories show how subject positions are differentially embodied, recognized, and exposed.

Dasein does not name a subject prior to its social distortion. It names the being for whom Being is at issue: being-in-the-world as thrown projection, care, temporality, being-with, and openness. Dasein does not first exist inside itself and then form representations of an external world. It already finds itself involved with equipment, others, possibilities, moods, and places. Subject and object emerge as derivative articulations within this more originary world-relation.

To identify Dasein with the alienated subject makes authenticity resemble political reconciliation. Capital would estrange the worker from an underlying Dasein; emancipation would restore the human being to an authentic self. Heidegger's analytic gives no warrant for this narrative. Uncanniness does not name capitalist dispossession. Being-toward-death cannot be overcome by transforming property relations. Fallenness does not disappear with the abolition of ideology. Finitude is not false consciousness.

Capital alienates subjects, but Dasein is not the subject being alienated.

The distinction does not render Heidegger politically irrelevant. Capitalist institutions shape the worlds into which Dasein is thrown. They organize available possibilities, public interpretations, spatial access, temporal rhythms, and the beings that matter. They produce historically specific subjects within those worlds. Yet Dasein cannot be reduced to the sum of those subject positions. The difference preserves the possibility of asking how any subject-world becomes intelligible and how it might disclose otherwise.

6. Alienation, Fallenness, and Homelessness

Alienation, fallenness, and homelessness often appear to offer points of translation between Marx and Heidegger. Each describes a loss of self-possession or home. But the resemblance can conceal decisive differences. Marxian alienation arises from determinate relations in which workers' products and collective powers confront them as alien forces. The worker's activity belongs to

another, labor becomes compulsory, and social cooperation takes the form of capital. Alienation remains historical and transformable even when its effects penetrate deeply into subjectivity.

Heideggerian fallenness names Dasein's ordinary absorption in the public world of the "they." It is not a moral failure imposed by a ruling class, nor a removable ideological veil. Uncanniness discloses that Dasein lacks a final ground and cannot secure itself in any identity or home. Later Heidegger's homelessness concerns the forgetting of Being and the dominance of calculative disclosure. These motifs can illuminate the experiential force of capitalist life, but they do not originate in a theory of exploitation.

A careful diagonal therefore works through analogy rather than identity. Capitalist alienation can intensify absorption, dispossession, homelessness, and the loss of meaningful relations to work and place. Heideggerian analysis can show why emancipation cannot consist only in redistributing objects among sovereign subjects. But ontology must not universalize historically produced suffering, and history must not promise to eliminate existential finitude.

7. The Dark Hinge: Work Camps and Death Camps

Without ontology: work camps. Without concrete history: death camps.

The aphorism gives the dyad its darkest stakes. It cannot function as a neat historical partition between Stalinism and Nazism. Nazi camps combined exploitation, forced labor, terror, starvation, medical experimentation, and extermination; Soviet and other camp systems also involved mass death. The categories overlap historically. The distinction names terminal logics of reduction rather than self-contained regimes.

7.1 Without Ontology: History Becomes Work

A historical politics that recognizes only production, labor, class function, and developmental necessity can reduce existence to usefulness. The human being appears as productive capacity to be educated, mobilized, allocated, disciplined, corrected, or exhausted. Even emancipation becomes an engineering problem: increase production, overcome backwardness, administer needs, and create the new person appropriate to the plan.

At the terminal point, the camp preserves the prisoner only as labor-power. The body counts while it can work. Time, movement, food, sleep, speech, and relation are organized according to output and punishment. The work camp reveals what happens when history claims total jurisdiction over existence: the person becomes what the project can use.

This is not a deduction from Marx, and Heideggerian ontology provides no automatic political safeguard. The claim is narrower. A politics without an account of existence exceeding every assigned function lacks a language for why no historical mission, class identity, or productive necessity can exhaust a being. Dasein cannot be made into the metaphysical dignity of "Man," but its irreducibility to subject position and function interrupts total administration.

7.2 Without Concrete History: Ontology Becomes Destiny

Heidegger does not lack history. His work turns upon historicity, inheritance, destiny, beginning, and the history of Being. The danger appears when concrete history - laws, institutions, racial

categories, police actions, property seizures, deportations, bureaucracies, military decisions, and named perpetrators - disappears into the destiny of a people or an epoch. Ontological language can then enlarge political mythology while shrinking responsibility.

At the terminal point, targeted beings no longer appear even as exploitable workers or political adversaries. They become contamination, obstruction, rootlessness, or worldlessness: presences whose elimination seems required for the destined world to arrive. The death camp does not merely extract labor. It organizes the disappearance of the person from the world shared with others.

Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism makes this danger impossible to treat as an abstract misuse from outside his thought. Yet the philosophical task requires more than drawing a simple causal line from ontology to genocide. The sharper question asks how a language of destiny, people, rootedness, and historical mission can become unable or unwilling to answer to the concrete beings excluded by it.

7.3 When Administration and Destiny Converge

The camp's full machinery appears when labor administration and ontological destiny converge. Bureaucracy, technology, transport, classification, property seizure, forced labor, and exterminatory ideology do not belong to separate worlds. They become interoperable. The person can be exploited and designated for disappearance; the same apparatus can extract value and destroy the bearer of value.

The aphorism therefore works as a crossed warning. History without ontology makes beings completely functional. Ontology without concrete history makes decisions appear destined. Each reduction can borrow the machinery of the other. The diagonal must keep asking both who is being administered and what world makes that administration appear necessary.

8. Arendt at the Fault Line

Hannah Arendt enters here not as a harmonious mediator but as a thinker formed by the fracture between Marx and Heidegger. From Marxian problems she retains labor, imperialism, expropriation, class, and the social question. From Heidegger she receives worldliness, finitude, and the critique of the sovereign subject. Yet she refuses to make labor the essence of humanity or Being the destiny of a people. Her categories of plurality, action, natality, judgment, and the common world describe dimensions of existence that neither economic production nor fundamental ontology can monopolize.

Arendt's account of total domination is especially important because it follows the camp's attack upon juridical standing, moral personhood, spontaneity, and plurality. The camp does not merely exploit a worker or kill an organism. It attempts to prove that people can be rendered superfluous and fully conditioned. This analysis places the camp precisely between the Marxian question of administration and the Heideggerian question of world.

Arendt also complicates the dyad by distinguishing labor from work and action. Labor sustains biological life; work fabricates a relatively durable world of things; action begins something new among plural beings. Whatever the limitations of this tripartition, it prevents production from becoming the sole measure of existence. It also prevents ontology from withdrawing into solitary authenticity. World appears between people through durable things, speech, remembrance, and action.

9. ShuttleKraft: The D2–D3 Passage

ShuttleKraft can convert these philosophical distinctions into a method. D2 names the subject: the historically produced bearer of identity, labor-power, rights, ideology, recognition, debt, citizenship, and agency. D3 names Dasein: being-in-the-world and the disclosure within which those subject positions become intelligible. The movement from D2 to D3 is not ascent from a false self to a truer one. It is a shift of register from ontic formation to ontological worldhood.

Register	Primary question	Characteristic danger
D2 - Subject	How are workers, citizens, debtors, identities, and populations produced, alienated, interpellated, and governed?	Treating the disclosed world as a neutral container for subject formation.
D3 - Dasein	How does a world make beings, roles, dangers, values, and possibilities intelligible before explicit judgment?	Turning historically made arrangements into anonymous destiny or ontology.
D2-D3 Shuttle	How do institutions materialize a disclosure, and how does that disclosure make institutions appear necessary or natural?	Stopping at either history or ontology and granting it total explanatory jurisdiction.

D2 without D3 can map roles and apparatuses while assuming that reality itself arrives already formed. D3 without D2 can describe world-disclosure while forgetting who builds, owns, enforces, and profits from the world's concrete arrangements. The shuttle moves because the registers cannot be fused. At every pass it asks two questions: What subjects and institutions does this world produce? What disclosure makes those subjects and institutions intelligible and operable?

The D2–D3 distinction also protects D4. The liminaut is not the authentic Dasein liberated from ideology, nor the revolutionary subject guaranteed by history. D4 names experimental passage: a capacity to move among worlds, roles, media, and ontological commitments without claiming mastery over the Open. It tests other arrangements while remaining answerable to concrete history.

10. Seven Propositions for Further Inquiry

1. Capital possesses world-forming power without possessing ontological primacy.
2. Gestell exceeds capital, but becomes historically effective through institutions that can be named, contested, and changed.
3. The subject is historically produced; Dasein is not the subject's hidden essence.
4. Alienation and uncanniness may resonate, but neither can replace the other.
5. Postcapitalism does not guarantee a post-technological or post-enframing relation to beings.
6. Ontology without concrete history risks alibi and destiny; history without ontology risks function and administration.
7. The Marx–Heidegger diagonal should be practiced as a shuttle, not completed as a synthesis.

11. Conclusion: Keeping the Difference Open

Heideggerian Marxism becomes intellectually useful at the moment it ceases to promise synthesis. Capital is not Being. Gestell is not capitalism. Dasein is not the worker beneath alienation. Uncanniness is not dispossession, and the history of Being is not a substitute for political history. Each attempted identification reduces the scale and force of one term to the categories of the other.

The dyad nevertheless remains unavoidable. Marx interrupts Heidegger whenever ontology forgets property, labor, institutions, empire, and perpetrators. Heidegger interrupts Marx whenever history treats beings as functions, resources, or finished objects whose meaning requires no question. Arendt exposes the catastrophic convergence of administration and destiny. ShuttleKraft turns the unresolved difference into a method of movement.

Without ontology, history becomes work. Without concrete history, ontology becomes destiny. The shuttle begins where neither warning can be dismissed.

The task is therefore neither to humanize Heidegger nor to ontologize capital. It is to investigate how an all-too-human system acquires inhuman force within a disclosure that no human system created, and how finite beings might transform their institutions without imagining that they command the Open. Between work and world lies no final reconciliation. There lies the difficult freedom of passage.

3. The Nervous System Between Work and World

Michael Taussig and the Marx–Heidegger Threshold

Capital becomes real not only through production and exchange,
but by entering the nerves, images, gestures, substances,
and stories through which a world is sensed.

An ethnographic-aesthetic inquiry in the Marx–Heidegger series

Abstract

This essay develops the third phase of the Marx–Heidegger inquiry by reading Michael Taussig as a threshold figure rather than a covert Heideggerian. Taussig begins from Marxian commodity fetishism and passes through Walter Benjamin’s mimetic faculty into an anthropology of terror, state magic, public secrecy, sensory knowledge, and experimental writing. His work asks how humanly produced relations acquire nonhuman force: how capital becomes devil, atmosphere, monument, color, fear, shrine, image, and bodily reflex. That question touches Heidegger’s problem of disclosure without collapsing commodity form into Gestell or the alienated subject into Dasein. Taussig’s distinctive operation, named here mimetic transduction, carries political economy into the senses and returns sensory experience to historical critique. The resulting method supplements the Marx–Heidegger diagonal with ethnographic and aesthetic instruments: montage, ficto-criticism, defacement, counter-museums, field drawings, storytelling, and counter-magic. Read through ShuttleKraft, Taussig offers not a synthesis of capital and Being but a repertoire for moving between D2 subject-production and D3 world-disclosure while keeping D0 open and constructing D4 passages through media and play.

1. The Threshold: After Philosophy, Before Synthesis

The first two phases of the Marx–Heidegger inquiry remain largely philosophical. Marcuse, Lefebvre, and Glazebrook explicitly negotiate the relation between historical materialism and ontology. Benjamin, Althusser, and Guattari cross the dyad more obliquely through constellation, encounter, and metamodelization. Michael Taussig marks a further turn. With him, the problem leaves the seminar room and enters plantations, mines, hospitals, shrines, police stations, museums, notebooks, rain forests, rumors, colors, bodies, and states of emergency.

Taussig does not provide a missing synthesis. Heidegger rarely governs his conceptual vocabulary, and Walter Benjamin supplies the decisive relay. Taussig’s Marx arrives through commodity fetishism, labor, colonial production, and the violence of exchange. His Benjamin arrives through mimesis, storytelling, shock, montage, aura, and the image. Heidegger appears at most as a pressure along the edge: the question of how a world shows itself, how things withdraw from representation, how truth involves concealment as well as exposure, and how technics reaches beyond instrumental calculation.

That indirectness matters. Calling Taussig a Heideggerian Marxist would distort his work and flatten the dyad. The stronger claim concerns function rather than affiliation: Taussig ethnographically performs a mediation that Marxian political economy and Heideggerian ontology often leave abstract. He follows the passage by which a social relation becomes a felt reality and by which a felt reality returns as historical evidence. His method turns abstraction into atmosphere without forgetting that atmosphere has owners, victims, routes, machines, and archives.

Taussig does not bridge Marx and Heidegger. He carries their unresolved difference into the senses.

The name for this operation is mimetic transduction. Mimesis copies, resembles, touches, impersonates, and becomes-other. Transduction carries a force across media while changing its form. Together they describe Taussig's signature movement: commodity value becomes devil imagery; colonial terror becomes rumor and bodily trembling; state sovereignty becomes shrine, spectacle, possession, and road system; historical extraction becomes museum display; field experience becomes drawing, fragment, story, and cut-up. The movement never leaves material history behind. It shows how material history acquires sensible form.

2. The Devil: Commodity Fetishism Acquires a Body

Taussig's first major intervention, in South America, begins close to Marx. Plantation workers in Colombia and tin miners in Bolivia narrate capitalist labor through devil figures, pacts, and subterranean powers. The devil does not survive as a quaint remnant of premodern belief awaiting rational explanation. It registers the experienced unnaturalness of wage labor and commodity production.

In peasant economies organized through household reproduction, reciprocal obligation, and use, labor remains embedded in visible social relations. Under plantation and mine discipline, labor-power enters an exchange whose products and profits return to workers as alien powers. The devil marks this passage. He condenses the recognition that wealth produced under capitalist conditions can become sterile, destructive, and socially disembedded. The belief does not mystify an otherwise transparent economy; it gives sensuous and moral form to an economy whose official rationality already mystifies its own social foundations.

Here Taussig pushes commodity fetishism beyond debunking. A conventional critique exposes the human relation hidden beneath the enchanted commodity. Taussig asks what the enchantment knows. Devil stories may register truths unavailable to the language of modernization: that capitalist accumulation violates prior relations among land, labor, fertility, reciprocity, and life; that money can breed while social worlds wither; that a formally free labor contract can carry coercion, terror, and sacrilege.

This does not make the devil an infallible revolutionary consciousness. Taussig refuses that romance. Mimetic forms remain ambivalent. They can expose domination, reproduce fear, redirect blame, or bind workers more tightly to the power they name. Yet their ambivalence gives them analytic force. The fetish cannot be abolished merely by correcting a false idea because the fetish belongs to a real social process in which human activity takes on an alien life.

Capital is all too human; fetishism records the moment when the human returns as an uncanny power.

This point preserves the first asymmetry of the larger prospectus. Capital does not open the Open. It arises from historically specific human relations. Nevertheless, those relations acquire a force that exceeds individual intention. Taussig studies the sensible life of that quasi-autonomy. The devil is not Being. He is the social relation wearing the mask through which workers can feel its inhuman return.

3. From Fetish to Mimesis: How Second Nature Feels Natural

Mimesis and Alterity shifts the center of gravity from commodity fetishism to the mimetic faculty. Drawing heavily on Benjamin, Taussig treats mimesis not simply as representation or imitation. It includes a sensuous capacity to copy while entering into contact with what one copies. Mimesis creates similarity and relation at once. It does not keep observer and object safely apart.

This faculty matters for colonialism because colonial power depends upon a contradictory choreography of resemblance and difference. Colonizers classify others as radically alien while demanding labor, conversion, discipline, imitation, and legibility. Colonized peoples copy tools, images, gestures, technologies, and authorities while altering their force. Copies do not remain secondary. They can appropriate the prestige of the original, disclose its theatricality, and release powers that no sovereign author controls.

The famous ethnographic materials concerning Kuna healing figures and imported commercial images make this ambiguity visible. The copied foreigner or machine enters ritual life without simply replacing an Indigenous world. Alterity passes through mimesis; the foreign becomes intimate without becoming identical. The copy both acknowledges power and steals from it.

This movement sharpens the Marx–Heidegger problem. Marx explains how social practice produces a second nature that confronts its makers as objective necessity. Heidegger asks how beings show up within a historically configured clearing. Taussig attends to the sensory relay between them: the gestures, images, stories, machines, colors, and bodily correspondences through which second nature comes to feel natural.

Mimesis should not be mistaken for a general ontology. Taussig does not claim that Being itself proceeds mimetically, nor that every disclosure results from human copying. The mimetic faculty remains embodied, historical, technical, and cross-cultural. Yet it reveals how no world-disclosure reaches people as a pure concept. Worlds arrive through imitations, habits, surfaces, rhythms, and media. They enter the body before the subject represents them.

Mimesis is neither mere copy nor sovereign creation. It is a passage in which contact changes both sides.

4. The Nervous System: Capital and State Become Atmosphere

The Nervous System gives Taussig's transduction its most powerful figure. A nervous system connects center and periphery, perception and reaction, body and environment. It also twitches, misfires, panics, and overloads. Taussig uses the figure to resist the fantasy that society forms a coherent system fully visible to theory. State and capital acquire systemic reach precisely through nervous interruptions: emergency, rumor, sudden violence, bureaucratic delay, spectacle, sickness, media shock, and everyday apprehension. The nervous system is Mick's desiring-machine.

The nervous system neither belongs only to the social body nor only to the individual body. It crosses them. A police raid, hospital corridor, official announcement, massacre rumor, commodity shortage, or televised image becomes an involuntary bodily readiness. Conversely, fear, fascination, and repetition help reproduce institutions. Power travels through nerves.

This offers a crucial correction to theories of ideology centered on belief. A subject need not assent to a proposition for a regime to govern. The body can already know when to lower its voice, avoid a road, imitate an official gesture, queue for a service, or anticipate violence. Public knowledge may circulate as a secret everyone knows but no one safely states. The nervous system stores history as reflex.

Taussig's state fetishism parallels commodity fetishism without reducing one to the other. The state appears as a unified being with intentions, moods, and sacred power, even though dispersed practices, offices, roads, uniforms, monuments, laws, and violent actors continually produce it. Its magic depends upon collective participation, yet no participant commands the whole. Again, an all-too-human arrangement acquires an apparently nonhuman presence.

Heidegger's question enters here only at the threshold. The nervous system concerns more than subjective ideology; it concerns the atmosphere in which beings and actions show up as safe, dangerous, normal, impossible, official, or unreal. But Taussig keeps that atmosphere historical. It has police, plantations, colonial archives, hospitals, and media. He refuses to let world-disclosure float free of the apparatuses that tune the nerves.

5. Terror, Healing, and Epistemic Murk

Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man intensifies this inquiry through the history of terror in the Putumayo rubber region. Colonial terror did not function only through calculable coercion. It generated an epistemic murk: rumors, fantasies, racial projections, staged atrocities, uncertain testimonies, and mutually amplifying fears. The colonizer's image of the savage helped authorize savagery by the colonizer.

This mimetic circuit matters. Violence creates the reality it claims merely to confront. A colonial fiction becomes material through whips, mutilation, forced labor, flight, testimony, and silence. Representation does not stand outside the event. It participates in the event's production.

Taussig nevertheless refuses a simple exposure model in which the critic clears away myth and reveals facts. Terror often feeds on exposure. Repetition can reproduce the spectacle it condemns; documentary mastery can echo the colonizer's claim to know and possess the other. Taussig turns toward montage, hesitation, storytelling, and shamanic healing not as escapes from truth but as altered practices of truth.

Healing in this context does not restore an intact subject beneath alienation. The shamanic scene mobilizes images, bodily sensations, voices, plants, memories, and colonial fragments. It reworks the forces that have entered the body. The subject changes through a mimetic and material environment rather than through sovereign self-recognition.

This helps protect the Dasein distinction. Taussig's wounded and healing bodies are not instances of Dasein reduced to anthropology. They remain historical persons caught in colonial relations. Yet

their experience cannot be exhausted by subject positions alone. Atmosphere, materiality, memory, and more-than-conscious attunement shape what can appear and what can be endured. The ethnography approaches worldhood without claiming to possess its ontology.

6. Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative

Defacement develops another key instrument: the public secret. A public secret is something widely known yet maintained through collective disavowal. Its power does not disappear when someone announces it. The secret persists through rituals of not-knowing, selective visibility, fear, embarrassment, official denial, and the benefits of participation.

This structure complicates both Marxian critique and Heideggerian unconcealment. If domination rested solely on hidden information, exposure would emancipate. If truth meant simply removing concealment, the critic would need only reveal what lies beneath the surface. Taussig instead asks how truth can emerge without reproducing the sovereign fantasy of total exposure.

Defacement supplies one answer. Damaging an image, monument, mask, face, or sacred surface can intensify rather than destroy its power. The wound reveals investment in the surface; sacrilege demonstrates the sacred. Negation performs labor. It discloses a relation by disturbing it, yet what appears never becomes fully available for possession.

Taussig thus touches a Heideggerian insight: concealment does not merely obstruct truth from outside. Revealing carries concealment within it. But he gives that insight a political and ethnographic body. Public secrets have administrators, beneficiaries, witnesses, risks, and victims. Their concealment does not descend anonymously from Being. People maintain it under determinate conditions, even when no person controls the result.

The task is not exposure without remainder, but a revelation that does justice to what exposure would destroy.

For the Marx–Heidegger diagonal, the public secret becomes a methodological warning. Marxian demystification can become too confident in the critic’s ability to stand outside fetishism. Heideggerian withdrawal can become too detached from the institutions that compel silence. Taussig holds both problems together through a writing that un.masks and reenchants, reveals and interrupts, documents and unsettles.

7. Counter-Museums, Ficto-Criticism, and Field Drawings

Taussig’s later books turn method into media. *The Magic of the State* uses ficto-criticism to stage sovereignty through spirit possession, monuments, dead heroes, roads, shrines, and national theater. My Cocaine Museum invents a counter-museum modeled against Colombia’s Gold Museum. The official museum displays gold while muting the histories of enslaved and Afro-Colombian labor that extracted it. Taussig’s imaginary museum connects gold, cocaine, rain forest, mining, colonial wealth, state display, and contemporary danger.

The museum matters because it orders both value and visibility. It decides what appears as treasure, heritage, raw material, crime, art, or background. In Marxian terms, it conceals labor and extraction beneath the polished object. In Heidegger-adjacent terms, it stages a clearing in which

some beings shine while others withdraw. Taussig's counter-museum intervenes in both registers without equating them.

I Swear I Saw This carries the intervention into the field notebook. Drawings, captions, scraps, memories, and reveries do not merely prepare a later scientific account. The notebook records the unstable contact between event and observer. A quick drawing can preserve a perceptual shock that polished prose would normalize. It can also expose the anthropologist's uncertainty, fantasy, and complicity.

These media enact mimetic transduction. They transfer an encounter across drawing, writing, memory, montage, and publication. Each transfer changes the event. Taussig refuses the fantasy of transparent preservation, but he also refuses the conclusion that mediation makes truth impossible. Truth depends upon how media conduct and transform what they carry.

This is where Taussig becomes especially important for StudioLab and ShuttleKraft. Research no longer culminates only in interpretation. It constructs counter-displays, diagrams, notebooks, performances, zines, stories, and atmospheres capable of revealing how official worlds make themselves sensible. The medium does not decorate the argument. It performs the inquiry.

8. Touching Heidegger Without Becoming Heideggerian

Taussig approaches Heidegger along four edges: disclosure, thingness, technics, and nonmastery. None warrants assimilating him to Heidegger. Together they explain why his work belongs at the threshold of the dyad.

8.1 Disclosure

Taussig studies how realities become palpable. Plantation capitalism becomes devil work; state power becomes sacred presence; terror becomes atmosphere; history becomes museum display; secrecy becomes social surface. These transformations concern more than representation. They concern the field in which actions and entities acquire salience. Yet Taussig keeps disclosure tied to concrete histories, bodies, media, and institutions.

8.2 Thingness

Commodities, gold, cocaine, statues, masks, notebooks, and colors do not appear as inert objects carrying symbolic meanings assigned by subjects. They gather forces and relations. Their thingness exceeds subjective intention without becoming a pure ontological event. Taussig tracks how things act because social, technical, ritual, ecological, and historical relations condense in them.

8.3 Technics

Mimetic machines such as camera, gramophone, printing, museum, and notebook shape what can be copied and sensed. Taussig's technics therefore exceeds instrumental use, but it does not reach the full scale of Heidegger's *technē*. The distinction must remain. Human technologies channel mimesis; they do not create the Open in which revealing occurs.

8.4 Nonmastery

Taussig's later mastery of non-mastery resonates with Heideggerian releasement while remaining more bodily, comic, mimetic, and political. Nonmastery does not mean passivity. It names a trained susceptibility to forces one cannot command: climate, color, wind, collective affect, memory, alterity,

and material transformation. It asks how to act without renewing the fantasy that the world exists for human ordering.

Taussig reaches Heideggerian terrain when mastery breaks down, but Benjaminian mimesis determines how he moves there.

9. The Subject Is Not Dasein: The Mimetic Body Between D2 and D3

Taussig's work helps clarify rather than erase the distinction between subject and Dasein. His ethnographies teem with historically produced subjects: wage workers, peasants, miners, shamans, doctors, patients, police, officials, citizens, colonizers, anthropologists, tourists, museum visitors, and racialized laborers. These positions organize vulnerability, authority, knowledge, mobility, and value. They belong to D2.

Yet Taussig repeatedly shows that subject formation travels through a field broader than explicit identity or ideology. Bodies imitate, recoil, attune, remember, and anticipate. Images and stories enter perception. Roads, heat, colors, monuments, drugs, commodities, and rumors configure the possible. This broader field touches D3: not a higher or more authentic self, but the being-in-a-world within which subjects and objects can appear.

Taussig does not theorize Dasein, and the inquiry should not force him to do so. His contribution lies in providing field instruments for the D2–D3 shuttle. He shows how to trace the passage from historical apparatus to sensory world and back again.

A Taussigian D2–D3 Field Matrix

Register	Question	Taussigian instrument
D2: subject-production	Who becomes worker, savage, patient, official, citizen, criminal, expert, or witness?	Commodity genealogy; institutional and colonial history
D3: world-disclosure	How do beings and actions show up as natural, sacred, dangerous, valuable, or unreal?	Atmosphere; montage; sensory description; state and commodity magic
D2 → D3	How does an apparatus enter bodies and environments?	Nervous-system tracing; rumor; ritual; media; habit
D3 → D2	How does an atmosphere stabilize roles, identities, and unequal capacities?	Ethnographic scenes; public secrets; mimetic encounters
D4 passage	What medium can interrupt the official arrangement without claiming total mastery?	Defacement; counter-museum; ficto-criticism; drawing; storytelling

The matrix prevents two reductions. First, it prevents Marxian critique from treating atmosphere as decorative ideology layered upon an already complete economy. Second, it prevents ontological language from treating atmosphere as an anonymous destiny. A Taussigian inquiry asks how a world gains nerves.

10. The Camp as Boundary Alarm: Administration, Terror, and Magic

The larger prospectus names a dark hinge: without ontology, history becomes work; without concrete history, ontology becomes destiny. At their terminal limits stand work camps and death camps, historically entangled rather than neatly separable. Taussig does not offer a camp theory, and his work should not be conscripted into one. He contributes something different: an anthropology of the affective and mimetic conditions through which administration and terror can converge.

A labor regime never operates through calculation alone. It requires stories about laziness, savagery, productivity, debt, sacrifice, and necessity. A killing regime never operates through destiny alone. It requires lists, roads, uniforms, files, trains, camps, labor assignments, rumors, silence, and routinized participation. Administrative reason and mythic force can reinforce one another.

Taussig's studies of colonial terror, state fetishism, public secrecy, and violent imagery help trace this reinforcement. They show how organized violence becomes simultaneously known and unreal, ordinary and unspeakable. The state can appear magically unified while its agents perform dispersed acts. Victims can become figures within stories that authorize what happens to their bodies. Fear can circulate faster than commands.

The boundary alarm therefore acquires an ethnographic supplement. One must ask not only which doctrine or institution governs, but how its world enters the senses. What colors, sounds, jokes, silences, rumors, images, maps, ceremonies, and gestures make administration feel inevitable or destiny feel historical? Taussig gives the inquiry a way to register the conversion before it reaches its terminal machine.

11. Taussigian Transduction Through ShuttleKraft

ShuttleKraft can translate Taussig's corpus into a recursive field practice without turning the D-stations into a ladder of human development. The shuttle moves among distinct registers and returns altered.

- D0 — Open: mark what no commodity, image, story, model, or counter-museum can capture. Mimesis depends upon an openness it neither authors nor masters.
- D1 — Soul and sensation: attend to fear, heat, color, smell, rhythm, touch, fascination, fatigue, and the bodily unconscious. Ask how history becomes felt before it becomes represented.
- D2 — Subject: map the production of workers, owners, officials, colonizers, patients, experts, citizens, criminals, ethnographers, and spectators. Identify who can speak, move, own, classify, and survive.
- D3 — Dasein and world: ask how the situation discloses beings as resource, treasure, danger, fetish, evidence, heritage, waste, or sacred presence. Do not confuse this field with a collective subject.
- D4 — Liminaut and passage: construct counter-media that traverse the arrangement—montage, defacement, ficto-criticism, notebooks, diagrams, counter-museums, performances, and stories—without claiming a final outside.

The characteristic Taussigian move starts with a thing that seems overfamiliar: a coin, statue, drug, museum case, field drawing, rumor, uniform, or devil story. The inquiry then follows the thing

across labor, history, sensation, representation, ritual, and power. At each crossing, the thing changes status. It becomes a transducer.

*The Taussigian object is not an example placed inside a theory.
It is equipment for forcing theory to change media.*

This makes Taussig especially valuable for spiritual design exercises. The exercise need not preach a belief or deliver an optimized solution. It can stage an encounter with the public secret, the mimetic copy, the commodity devil, or the official display. Participants learn to feel how a world recruits them and to remake the medium through which that recruitment occurs.

Such practice also clarifies the perfumative dimension of ethnographic writing. Taussig's prose does not merely perform an academic role or report a completed analysis. It conducts atmospheres across bodies and media. Fragments return; scenes linger; images release delayed effects; concepts diffuse like scent. The writing transmits without pretending to transport an intact object. Its rigor lies in the designed instability of the passage.

12. Prospectus for Further Inquiry

Treating Taussig as the third phase of the Marx–Heidegger diagonal opens a focused research program. The aim should not be a total interpretation of his oeuvre. It should test whether mimetic transduction can mediate material production and world-disclosure while preserving their difference.

12.1 The Marxian Line

A first study should reconstruct Taussig's transformation of commodity fetishism from *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism* through *My Cocaine Museum*. It should ask how labor, exchange, extraction, slavery, plantation discipline, mining, and illicit economies become sensible forms. The central issue concerns fetishism after demystification: what critical knowledge lives inside magic, and what domination lives inside critique's claim to expose it?

12.2 The Benjaminian Relay

A second study should follow the mimetic faculty, storytelling, montage, and the dialectical image through *Mimesis and Alterity*, *Walter Benjamin's Grave*, and *I Swear I Saw This*. This line would clarify why Benjamin rather than Heidegger conducts Taussig across the dyad. It would also test how mimesis differs from representation, identification, empathy, and performativity.

12.3 The Heideggerian Edge

A third study should stage a controlled comparison rather than a claim of influence. Taussig's disclosure, thingness, technics, concealment, and nonmastery can be read beside Heidegger's worldhood, truth, *technē*, and releasement. The comparison must keep four nonidentities visible: capital is not *Gestell*; mimesis is not *technē*; the mimetic body is not *Dasein*; public secrecy is not the withdrawal of Being.

12.4 The Ethnographic-Aesthetic Method

A fourth study should analyze Taussig's forms: ethnographic montage, ficto-criticism, counter-museum, diary, drawing, color writing, and the deliberate use of incompleteness. It should ask when experimental form produces knowledge and when it risks aestheticizing suffering or protecting the author from argumentative accountability.

12.5 Contemporary Tests

The method can then enter contemporary cases without turning Taussig into a universal template. Artificial-intelligence training data offers an immediate test: humanly produced language and images return as an apparently autonomous system; mimetic machines absorb styles, voices, and cultural fragments; public secrets surround labor, ownership, and extraction; interfaces make the machinery feel natural. Other cases include platform labor, universities governed by metrics, climate spectacle, pharmaceutical worlds, border technologies, and heritage economies.

Each case should pursue the same sequence of questions:

- What human relations produce the apparent magic?
- Through which media does the magic become sensible and credible?
- What subjects and exclusions does the arrangement produce?
- What world makes those positions appear natural or necessary?
- What public secret organizes participation?
- What counter-medium can interrupt the arrangement without claiming mastery?
- What remains open after critique?

13. Conclusion: How a World Gains Nerves

Michael Taussig belongs in the Marx–Heidegger inquiry neither as a direct synthesizer nor as an ornamental anthropological afterword. He marks the point where the dyad acquires sensory and medial consequences. Marx shows how human social relations become objective powers. Heidegger asks after the openness in which powers and beings can appear. Taussig follows the nerves, images, stories, rituals, things, and atmospheres through which objective power enters a world.

His work preserves the asymmetries established by the larger prospectus. Capital remains all too human, even when it assumes devilish autonomy. Technē exceeds human production, even when mimetic machines condition perception. Dasein remains irreducible to the alienated or mimetic subject, even when subject formation reaches beneath conscious representation. Concrete history remains indispensable, even when public secrets and state magic make history feel like fate.

Taussig's answer to fetishism does not consist in disenchantment alone. His answer to concealment does not consist in total exposure. His answer to terror does not consist in a neutral description safely outside the scene. He works through counter-magic: forms that imitate power, touch it, deface it, carry it elsewhere, and release a difference inside the copy.

Marx explains who made the magic. Heidegger asks how anything comes to appear.
Taussig shows how the magic gets under the skin.

That is the promise of mimetic transduction. It gives the Marx–Heidegger shuttle sensors and skins. It converts the diagonal from a comparison of doctrines into a field practice capable of registering how work becomes world and how world returns as work. Between them runs the nervous system: historical, mimetic, technical, and never fully under control.

4. Flying the Archive Storm

Walter Benjamin, Laurie Anderson, and the Arts of LaLaLand-ing

The angel sees the wreckage.
Anderson builds instruments for moving through its weather.

A media-philosophical inquiry in the Marx–Heidegger series

Abstract

Essay III followed Michael Taussig to the threshold where the Marx–Heidegger diagonal left philosophy and entered sensation, mimesis, magic, and ethnographic writing. Essay IV crosses that threshold through Walter Benjamin and Laurie Anderson. Benjamin supplies the angel of history, the dialectical image, montage, technological reproducibility, radio, storytelling, and the demand to interrupt progress from within its wreckage. Anderson supplies a transmedia practice of voices, loops, modified instruments, projections, telecommunications, virtual flight, mourning, and juridical return. Their conjunction does not yield another theoretical synthesis. It produces an operational poetics: LaLaLand-ing. The term names the perfumative D3→D4 passage in ShuttleKraft—a shift of register through which a captured world becomes available for other stories, bodies, rhythms, and trajectories. LaLaLand-ing does not flee history. It carries wreckage into a play ground where montage can acquire proprioception and where the angel, though never mastering the storm, can learn to sense lift, drag, signal, turbulence, and landing. The essay distinguishes this operation from escapism, aestheticization, and the performative production of identity. It reads Anderson’s *Self-Playing Violin*, *United States Live*, *O Superman*, *Heart of a Dog*, *Habeas Corpus*, *Chalkroom*, *Aloft*, and her recurring aviation works as media-angelic instruments that convert Benjaminian constellations into participatory environments. The resulting prospectus proposes a research program on perfumative history, technical storytelling, synthetic aura, the telepresent body, and collective flight.

1. From Mimetic Transduction to Media Angelics

The preceding essay placed Taussig at the threshold of the Marx–Heidegger diagonal. Marx explained how human relations congeal into commodity powers. Heidegger asked how beings become available within a world. Benjamin relayed their unresolved difference into images, shocks, citations, dreams, and mimetic capacities. Taussig then carried that relay into bodies and atmospheres. His ethnography showed how capital and state power enter the nerves, how public secrets organize perception, and how mimesis conducts forces across bodies, images, substances, and stories.

Laurie Anderson begins on the far side of that threshold. She rarely appears as a philosopher of Marx or Heidegger, yet her performances repeatedly stage their common problem: technical systems do not merely transmit an already constituted world. They organize voices, bodies, memories, identities, distances, and possibilities of appearance. At the same time, those systems never possess total control over what they transmit. A loop slips. A recorded double answers a live performer. A vocoder voice becomes maternal, military, comic, intimate, and inhuman at once. A detainee barred from entering the United States appears through a monumental telepresence. A reader enters a virtual room made from language and flies through words as they form, fragment, and fall into dust.

Anderson therefore extends mimetic transduction into media angelics. “Angelic” does not designate a religious message added to technological form. It recalls the angel as messenger, interface, interval, and vehicle between heterogeneous orders. Benjamin’s angel cannot reconcile the ruined past with the future called progress. Anderson’s media angels likewise deliver no final message. They relay broken signals among human voice, machine memory, state power, animal life, atmosphere, and the dead.

The relay becomes decisive for the larger inquiry. Capital remains all too human: value, labor, exchange, property, and accumulation arise through historically specific human relations. Technē and revealing exceed human valuation. Dasein does not name the alienated subject. The Open does not originate in capital. Anderson’s work honors these asymmetries by refusing both technological determinism and human mastery. Her devices remain engineered objects, but they constantly expose the performer to something she cannot fully command: latency, feedback, echo, disembodiment, accident, memory, weather, and the response of an audience.

*The angel sees the catastrophe;
media angelics ask how seeing
might acquire instruments
without becoming mastery.*

2. Benjamin’s Angel Has No Flight Controls

Benjamin’s angel of history has become an emblem so familiar that its helplessness can disappear. Facing the accumulated wreckage of the past, the angel would repair what has been shattered. A storm drives it backward into the future. That storm bears the name progress. The image condenses Benjamin’s attack on historicism, social-democratic confidence, and any Marxism that treats history as a sequence of necessary stages. The angel sees catastrophe where progress narratives see development.

Yet the angel does not pilot the storm. It cannot turn around, descend, or gather the dead. It offers historical vision without operational control. This limitation protects Benjamin from a sovereign theory of revolutionary design, but it also leaves an unanswered practical question: how can a historical materialism oriented toward interruption acquire sensors, feedback, and collective techniques? How does the dialectical image become more than a flash apprehended by a solitary critic?

Benjamin’s own practice already answers partially. Montage arranges fragments so that they interrupt one another. Citation tears language from inherited continuity and places it within a new

constellation. Radio experiments reorganize the relation between storyteller and distributed audience. The artwork under technological reproducibility loses the ritual singularity associated with traditional aura but gains new capacities for circulation, analysis, participation, and political contest. The storyteller does not deliver information alone; a story carries counsel, residue, gesture, and transmissible experience.

These operations suggest that Benjamin's angel needs neither a cockpit nor a command center. It needs a distributed flight system. The point is not to seize the storm and redirect history according to a total plan. Such mastery would return immediately to the progressive violence the angel exposes. The task is proprioceptive: to sense how thought itself contributes to lift, drag, turbulence, and orientation. The angel must learn to feel the storm of history without mistaking that feeling for control.

This is where Anderson enters. Her work does not rescue Benjamin's angel from catastrophe. It gives catastrophe microphones, delays, loops, strings, screens, projection surfaces, virtual rooms, animal companions, and audiences. Benjamin supplies the image of historical vision under force. Anderson turns that image into a series of playable equipment relations.

3. Laurie Anderson's Technical Storytelling

Anderson's practice crosses music, spoken word, sculpture, film, performance, drawing, instrument design, electronic processing, virtual reality, and installation. This generic instability matters more than any inventory of media. Each medium modifies the conditions of storytelling. A violin can answer its player with a prerecorded voice. A hand can hear through bone conduction. A vocal processor can shift gender, age, authority, intimacy, and species. A stage can become a telecommunications network, lecture hall, dream chamber, national map, or emergency broadcast.

The early *Self-Playing Violin* makes the structure visible. A speaker installed inside the instrument plays a recorded part while Anderson performs live upon the strings. The violin becomes performer, archive, partner, prosthesis, and divided body. The human artist neither controls an inert tool nor disappears into an autonomous machine. Live and recorded agencies fold together. The instrument stages a duet between present action and technically retained past.

Benjamin's technological reproducibility acquires an intimate body here. Reproduction does not merely multiply a finished work. It enters the work as a co-performer. The archive plays back from inside the instrument. The artist performs with her own technical remainder. Aura does not simply vanish. It mutates into a synthetic aura generated by the charged encounter among live presence, mechanical recurrence, memory, and difference.

Anderson's long-form *United States* performances expand this structure from instrument to nation. Fragments of travel, commerce, bureaucracy, technology, romance, war, advertising, weather, and communication form a transmedia epic without a sovereign narrator. The United States appears less as a stable political subject than as a nervous system of voices, protocols, images, slogans, routes, and technical failures. Anderson performs inside the apparatus while simultaneously bending, parodying, and rerouting its signals.

This method aligns with Benjaminian constellation rather than linear argument. A telephone voice, biblical cadence, airline announcement, personal anecdote, electronic beat, technical demonstration, and deadpan joke can meet without resolving into synthesis. Their juxtaposition

reveals the national imaginary as a technical construction. America becomes a broadcast one inhabits before one consciously believes it.

4. *O Superman: The Mother, the Machine, and the Security State*

O Superman compresses Anderson's technical storytelling into a minimal but unstable signal. A repeated vocal pulse establishes a human sound already transformed into machine rhythm. Telephone mediation collapses intimacy and distance. Maternal reassurance, corporate procedure, military force, and automated communication occupy the same vocal channel. The song neither condemns technology from outside nor celebrates the disappearance of the human. It stages the point at which care and control become difficult to separate.

The work belongs to the Marx–Heidegger diagonal because it refuses two reductions. A narrowly Marxian reading could identify military power, corporate communication, commodity circulation, and the geopolitical machinery of the United States. Such analysis remains indispensable. Yet it cannot exhaust the way the processed voice changes what a mother, a message, a body, or a promise can sound like. A narrowly Heideggerian reading could hear technological enframing and the conversion of language into signal. Yet it could miss the historically concrete state, war machine, and communication industries speaking through the signal.

Anderson keeps both pressures active. The voice sounds constructed yet vulnerable, impersonal yet intimate. It carries authority without a stable speaker. This unstable address matters because the subject does not precede the apparatus as a pure human essence. The apparatus helps produce the subject positions of caller, mother, citizen, target, customer, listener, and obedient body. Still, no subject position exhausts Dasein's openness or the event of hearing.

O Superman therefore creates an acoustic D2–D3 shuttle. At D2, the listener recognizes socially produced voices and roles. At D3, the entire world of telecommunication, protection, distance, and danger opens as an atmosphere. The piece neither restores an authentic voice nor abandons voice to simulation. It lets processed speech carry the tremor between subject-production and world-disclosure.

*The machine does not erase the mother.
It reveals how deeply the mother has already entered the machine—
and how the machine borrows the tones of care.*

5. LaLaLand-ing: A Verb, Not a Destination

The term LaLaLand-ing deliberately risks misunderstanding. It does not name fantasy as flight from history, Hollywood dream manufacture, private hallucination, or an aesthetic refuge from political responsibility. It retains the contaminated popular name because the operation must pass through cliché, entertainment, dream factory, and technological spectacle rather than claiming purity outside them. LaLaLand-ing names a verb: the active shift of register through which an overdetermined situation becomes available for other relations.

Within ShuttleKraft, LaLaLand-ing marks the D3→D4 passage. D3 names Dasein and world-disclosure, not a superior subject. It asks how a world gives beings, actions, identities, dangers, and possibilities their sense. D4 names the liminaut who moves among worlds, roles,

media, and scales without pretending to stand outside them. The passage from D3 to D4 therefore cannot consist in the subject simply deciding to become creative. It requires a reconfiguration of the field that formed the subject and rendered certain actions thinkable.

This passage is perfumative. Performance and performativity remain crucial for analyzing how norms, metrics, institutions, and repeated acts produce subjects and realities. The perfumative adds a different motion. Like a scent, signal, weather front, or rumor, it crosses boundaries without preserving a single form. It conducts residues among bodies, media, memories, and worlds. It works through adjacency, atmosphere, contamination, delay, and aftereffect. A perfumative does not merely state or enact; it alters the conditions of sensing and relation.

LaLaLand-ing therefore refuses the Hegelian promise that conflict will culminate in a higher reconciliation. It proceeds through affirmative affirmation: a second yes that does not cancel the first term or negate the contradiction into synthesis. The additional affirmation opens a transversal. Wreckage remains wreckage; mourning remains mourning; technical capture remains active. Yet another route, voice, rhythm, or companion enters the situation.

Anderson's work repeatedly performs this turn. She adds a machine voice rather than purifying speech. She adds an animal perspective rather than centering the human. She adds a projected body where the state has denied bodily presence. She adds a virtual space in which language becomes architecture and flight. These additions neither solve the historical antagonism nor merely decorate it. They change how the situation can be inhabited.

6. From Dialectical Image to Perfumative Environment

Benjamin's dialectical image flashes when past and present form a charged constellation. Its power depends upon interruption: the image breaks the continuum through which victors inherit history as progress. Anderson converts this logic from image into environment. Her works surround participants with voices, surfaces, sounds, objects, projections, and navigable spaces. The constellation no longer appears only before the critic's gaze; it becomes something one enters, hears, touches, and moves through.

This conversion does not make Anderson "more advanced" than Benjamin. It answers a different technical situation. Benjamin wrote amid photography, film, radio, mechanical reproduction, fascist spectacle, and commodity phantasmagoria. Anderson works across electronic processing, mass broadcast, video, digital archives, surveillance, telepresence, immersive installation, and virtual reality. In each case, the question concerns how technical media organize collective perception and whether those same media can become instruments of interruption.

The perfumative environment differs from spectacle because participation does not guarantee liberation. Immersion can capture attention as effectively as it can open sensation. Virtual reality can intensify enclosure. Interactivity can disguise rigid programming. LaLaLand-ing therefore demands tautness: enough structure to generate lift, enough slack to permit deviation, and enough tethering to prevent the work from drifting into frictionless novelty.

Kitelichkeit supplies the relevant flight condition. Slack figuration drifts; tight figuration snaps; taut figuration flies. Anderson's strongest works remain taut because technical wonder stays tethered to bodies, losses, states, memories, and publics. The work catches wind without pretending to leave gravity behind.

7. *Heart of a Dog*: Mourning as Historical Navigation

Heart of a Dog gathers memory, animal companionship, Tibetan teachings, surveillance, childhood injury, political fear, and the death of Anderson's dog Lolabelle into a cinematic meditation on loss. The film's associative structure resembles Benjaminian montage, yet its movement depends less upon shock than upon recurrence, drift, voice, and mourning. Personal memory never remains merely private. It passes through state surveillance, post-9/11 anxiety, species difference, family history, and Buddhist accounts of passage.

The dog matters because animal companionship dislocates the sovereign human narrator. Lolabelle does not function as a sentimental symbol for human feeling. Her sensory world, dependence, training, aging, and death force the story to change scale. Anderson's voice moves among owner, companion, witness, daughter, citizen, artist, and mourner without settling into one authoritative position.

Benjamin's angel wants to awaken the dead and repair the shattered. *Heart of a Dog* refuses both recovery and forgetting. The dead do not return as intact presences, but they continue to reorganize the living. Mourning becomes an orientation practice: one learns to move with absences that cannot be filled. In this sense, the film LaLaLand-s grief. It does not escape death into fantasy. It creates a transmedia bardo in which stories, images, drawings, sounds, and teachings carry the mourner through altered relations to time.

This approach also corrects any easy opposition between ontology and history. Death does not reduce to a social construction, but every death enters unequal histories of recognition, exposure, commemoration, and abandonment. Anderson's mourning remains ontological without losing historical texture. Finitude opens the question; concrete lives, institutions, technologies, and affections give the question its singular weight.

8. *Habeas Corpus*: Returning the Body Through Telepresence

Habeas Corpus provides the strongest guard against interpreting LaLaLand-ing as aesthetic escape. The work centers Mohammed el Gharani, who was seized as a teenager, detained at Guantánamo Bay, and later released without having faced a military commission. Because he could not enter the United States, Anderson and her collaborators used live transmission and monumental projection to bring his image and voice into the Park Avenue Armory. The title invokes the legal demand to produce the detained body before a court.

The installation stages a brutal contradiction. Technology helped construct the global security apparatus that captured, classified, transported, interrogated, and indefinitely detained bodies. A different technical arrangement now returns one excluded body as telepresence. The projection cannot repair detention, substitute for legal accountability, or restore the years taken from el Gharani. Yet it changes the distribution of visibility and address. The person whom the security state rendered a secret file and distant threat appears at monumental scale before a public.

Benjamin's demand to brush history against its inherited direction becomes spatial and juridical. The installation interrupts the victorious narrative of the war on terror by allowing a formerly detained person to occupy the symbolic center of a monumental American space. Anderson does not speak for him in the simple sense. She builds an apparatus through which his transmitted presence reorganizes the room.

This operation clarifies the ethics of media angelics. The messenger must not replace the one whose message, body, or history it carries. The medium should expose rather than conceal its mediation. Telepresence remains spectral and technically dependent, but spectrality can reveal the prior violence through which a state made a living person politically absent.

Here LaLaLand-ing means neither dream nor flight. It means building a temporary world in which an administratively excluded body can address those whom the apparatus had trained not to see. The D4 passage remains tethered to D2 classification and D3 security-world disclosure. Without that tether, the projection would become spectacle. With it, the work functions as a counter-apparatus of appearance.

9. *Chalkroom* and *Aloft*: Learning to Fly Through Language

Chalkroom, created with Hsin-Chien Huang, makes the metaphor of flight literal. The participant enters a virtual architecture composed of words, drawings, and stories, then moves freely through rooms where language floats, reforms, and falls away. The work calls its participant a reader rather than merely a user or player. Reading becomes locomotion; language becomes weather and built environment.

Aloft begins with the enclosure of an airplane and gradually removes its walls, leaving the participant floating among clouds and story-bearing objects. The aircraft, icon of modern mobility, war, tourism, logistics, and technological mastery, disintegrates into a suspended field. Flight no longer means rapid transport from origin to destination. It becomes a condition of orientation without stable ground.

These works come dangerously close to the frictionless dream promised by immersive media. Anderson's language of disembodiment can sound like liberation from the resistant body. Yet the works retain darkness, debris, memory, narrative objects, and the voice of a guide. The participant does not enter a blank space of sovereign choice. One flies through a prior archive whose fragments solicit attention and trigger stories.

This is the difference between LaLaLand-ing and digital transcendence. LaLaLand-ing does not upload the subject into a pure virtual elsewhere. It loosens the inherited coordination of body, language, space, and story so that another coordination can emerge. The body remains present through balance, orientation, sensory dependence, and vulnerability to the device. The world becomes strange without becoming unreal.

Benjamin's angel, pushed backward by the storm, acquires here neither engine nor destination. It acquires a playable archive-storm. Words become lift surfaces; drawings become portals; objects release memories; stories alter trajectories. The user does not conquer the archive. The archive teaches the user how difficult orientation becomes when the walls of the familiar world fall away.

10. The Benjamin–Anderson Shuttle

The relation between Benjamin and Anderson can now be organized as a ShuttleKraft sequence. The stations do not form a ladder from primitive experience to advanced creativity. They name heterogeneous registers that must remain distinct and traversable.

Station	Benjamin-Anderson register	Primary instrument
D0 — Open / air	Unformatted possibility, noise, breath, silence, weather, the interval before a signal settles	Pause, listening, ambient field, suspended flight
D1 — Soul	Mourning, fear, attachment, memory, animal companionship, voice as felt address	Story, song, elegy, vibration, intimate testimony
D2 — Subject	Citizen, mother, detainee, performer, consumer, caller, target, reader, user	Role analysis, vocal processing, classification, legal naming
D3 — Dasein / world	The technical world in which care, security, history, and language show up as actionable	Constellation, installation, apparatus mapping, media archaeology
D4 — Liminaut	The participant who moves among voices, bodies, archives, worlds, and scales without claiming mastery	LaLaLand-ing, virtual flight, telepresence, transmedia passage
+L — Perfumative transversal	The conductive trace that carries residues across all stations and keeps the passage from closing	Loop, echo, montage, scent, rumor, afterimage, return

The +L transversal matters because no station completes itself. A story spoken at D1 carries legal classifications from D2, technical worlds from D3, and unrealized possibilities from D0. A D4 passage that forgets those residues becomes novelty. A D2 critique that cannot move becomes tribunal. LaLaLand-ing names the conducted opening through which critique acquires another medium without abandoning its evidence.

11. Perfumative History Versus the Performance of Progress

Benjamin attacks the performance of progress: the repeated staging of history as improvement, development, and inevitable advancement. Such performance does not merely misdescribe the past. It trains bodies and institutions to accept wreckage as the cost of arrival. The victorious sequence becomes self-confirming because every destruction appears as a completed stage that cannot be reopened.

Perfumative history works otherwise. It carries what the sequence excludes: obsolete devices, damaged voices, unfinished struggles, animal perceptions, lost gestures, failed messages, legal absences, jokes, dreams, and atmospheres. These residues do not combine into a comprehensive archive. They circulate and return, altering the present through partial contact.

Anderson's looping practice provides the technical figure. A loop can enforce repetition, but it can also expose difference within repetition. Each return arrives after another sound, memory, audience response, or historical event. The loop does not preserve identity; it accumulates weather. This accumulation gives the perfumative its temporal structure. The trace lingers, mixes, and changes the conditions of the next encounter.

Benjaminian constellation and Andersonian loop therefore produce a non-linear historiography. The past does not march toward the present. It enters through side channels: a recording inside a violin, a dead dog's drawings, a detainee's transmitted image, an aviation disaster replayed as music, a technological voice that sounds at once archaic and futuristic. LaLaLand-ing names the practical organization of these side channels into a temporary play ground.

Such a play ground cannot promise innocence. Media carry corporate standards, military histories, energy costs, surveillance capacities, exclusions, and failures. The perfumative does not float above infrastructure. It asks how inherited equipment can conduct something other than its dominant programming, and how new equipment can remain answerable to the histories built into it.

12. Research Program: Seven Lines of Further Inquiry

The Benjamin–Anderson conjunction opens a research program rather than a closed interpretation. Seven lines deserve sustained development:

Synthetic aura. How do live presence, technical reproduction, looping, projection, and interactivity produce charged encounters that neither restore traditional aura nor dissolve presence into pure simulation?

Technical storytelling. How do instruments, networks, interfaces, and spatial arrangements become co-narrators rather than neutral channels for human content?

Perfumative history. How can montage, repetition, atmosphere, and residue carry suppressed histories without converting them into stable representations or consumable trauma?

Media angelics. What kinds of messengers, interfaces, and telepresent bodies emerge when communication fails to deliver a unified message yet still reorganizes a world?

LaLaLand-ing and capture. Under what conditions does immersive or playful media open a D4 passage, and when does it merely intensify D3 capture through novelty, spectacle, and attention extraction?

Proprioceptive historiography. How can participants learn to sense their own conceptual and technical participation in the storm of progress—to feel thought as lift, drag, turbulence, and correction?

Collective flight. How can performances and installations distribute navigation among participants without pretending that participation erases authorship, expertise, infrastructure, or unequal risk?

These questions would benefit from close readings of Benjamin’s writings on history, reproducibility, radio, photography, storytelling, Surrealism, and citation alongside Anderson’s recordings, performance scores, technical inventions, films, installations, drawings, and archives. They also invite practice-based research: reenactments, listening sessions, interface studies, field recordings, archive-storms, telepresence experiments, and ShuttleKraft exercises that test the D3→D4 passage under concrete conditions.

13. Conclusion: Flying Without Leaving the Wreckage

Walter Benjamin and Laurie Anderson do not form a philosophical school. Anderson does not illustrate Benjamin, and Benjamin does not supply the hidden theory of Anderson’s work. Their conjunction matters because each exposes a limit in the other. Benjamin gives Anderson’s technical wonder a history of catastrophe, victory, and interrupted transmission. Anderson gives Benjamin’s constellations equipment, embodiment, feedback, humor, mourning, and participatory space.

Together they clarify LaLaLand-ing. The term does not authorize escape from the Marx–Heidegger fault line. Capital remains a human social relation that organizes labor, value, and power. Technē exceeds human valuation. The subject can become alienated, but Dasein does not name that subject. History can become labor administration when existence collapses into function; ontology can become destiny when

concrete historical responsibility disappears. LaLaLand-ing does not reconcile these asymmetries. It creates a passage through which they can remain active without immobilizing thought.

Benjamin's angel cannot turn to face the future. Anderson's work does not force the angel around. It builds temporary instruments inside the storm: a violin that remembers, a voice that changes bodies, a national epic assembled from technical fragments, a film that lets mourning reorganize time, a projection that returns an excluded body, a room in which readers fly through language.

To LaLaLand the angel is therefore to give historical montage a proprioceptive and perfumative practice. One learns neither to command the wind nor to surrender to it. One learns to detect its pressures, to tighten and loosen the line, to pass signals among players, and to construct provisional surfaces capable of lift.

Capital orders worlds, but it did not open the Open.

Progress piles wreckage, but wreckage can still become flight equipment.

Essay III gave the Marx–Heidegger diagonal nerves and skins through Taussigian mimesis. Essay IV gives it voices, avionics, atmospheres, and play grounds. The next inquiry can now ask how these perfumative passages scale from singular artworks into collective practices of research, design, memory, and world-building—without turning flight into another name for mastery.

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Collective Reorientation

Stegmaier, Chase, Sloterdijk, Haraway, and StudioLab Playground

1. The Problem: No One Begins from Nowhere

StudioLab begins from a simple but difficult recognition: no one enters a project from nowhere. Every participant arrives already oriented. They come with habits, hopes, fears, disciplines, methods, loyalties, injuries, vocabularies, media, institutions, and imagined futures. Partners arrive oriented too, though often by pressures that teams do not yet understand: budgets, publics, histories, deadlines, crises, stakeholders, wounds, and opportunities. A design problem therefore never appears as a neutral object waiting to be solved. It appears inside a field of orientations. Some of these orientations align. Some collide. Some remain invisible until the work begins. Some break under pressure. Some become resources. Some must be interrupted.

This is why StudioLab cannot be reduced to design thinking, project management, or collaborative problem-solving. It works more like a collective spiritual design exercise: a practice in which people learn how to orient, disorient, and reorient together under changing conditions. The path does not preexist the work. It emerges through the work. What looks like a diversion may disclose the actual path. What feels like confusion may reveal the hidden problem. What appears as partner resistance may be the partner's knowledge of the situation finally entering the room. What seems like failure may mark the collapse of a false orientation.

That shift matters because consultation and design work often smuggle in a reassuring fiction: first one defines the path, then one follows it, and disruption merely knocks the team off course. But in actual StudioLab work, partner decisions, outside events, and internal processes do not simply interrupt the project. They help constitute the project. They disclose the field in which the work must find its way. The team does not merely regain a lost path; it helps make the path through repeated acts of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.

2. Stegmaier: Orientation as Situated Wayfinding

Figure 1. Getting Oriented: a guide sheet for Stegmaier and the Philosophy of Orientation.

Werner Stegmaier's Philosophy of Orientation gives one of the clearest conceptual frames for this condition. Orientation is not the possession of a final map. It is the ongoing practice of finding one's way in situations where no total overview is available. We begin somewhere, not nowhere. We read signs, test distinctions, attend to horizons, compare possible paths, and act provisionally. Orientation lives inside uncertainty. It does not abolish uncertainty; it makes action possible within it.

For StudioLab, Stegmaier provides a philosophical grammar for what teams actually do when they stop pretending that a project can be planned from a view from nowhere. A team enters a situation; notices signs; names uncertainties; distinguishes what matters now; treats plans as provisional; and revises bearings as new information, partners, and events alter the field. This is not indecision. It is disciplined provisionality. It accepts that action often must occur before certainty arrives, and that certainty itself may never arrive in the form we wanted.

Stegmaier also helps shift the meaning of error. A mistake may not simply be a deviation from the correct course. It may reveal that the earlier course emerged from too narrow an orientation. A misunderstood partner comment, a failed prototype, a missed deadline, or a changed institutional condition may become an orienting sign. The question becomes: what does this event disclose about where we actually are?



3. Chase: Philosophy as Attention Practice

Figure 2. Chase / PWL guide sheet: philosophy as a way of life and training in attention.

Michael Chase adds the necessary inner discipline. If Stegmaier gives orientation as wayfinding, Chase gives philosophy as a way of life: a training in attention, withdrawal, gathering, epistemic modesty, and transformation. His work on ancient philosophy and spiritual exercises helps StudioLab distinguish panic-disorientation from practice-disorientation. Panic-disorientation scatters attention. Platform-disorientation captures attention. Practice-disorientation interrupts false certainty, gathers perception, and allows a new relation to the situation to emerge.

The Chasean move is crucial: sometimes the first task is not to solve but to pause. To withdraw is not to flee. It is to step back from noise,

haste, performance, and inherited certainty long enough for experience to reorganize itself. This is anachoresis as design method. The team pauses, gathers attention, and allows the situation to appear differently. The question changes. The partner changes. The project changes. Philosophy becomes practice not because it offers grand theories about life, but because it trains perception for living.

In the StudioLab setting, this practice can become very concrete. Before a team drafts a solution, it can ask: what are we rushing past? What have we assumed because it felt obvious? Which partner signs have we ignored? Which anxieties are driving our framing? What would become visible if we slowed down, stepped back, and gathered attention before acting again? Chase keeps strategic disorientation from becoming mere cleverness. It becomes care for attention.



4. Sloterdijk: Atmospheres, Spheres, and Exercise Systems

Peter Sloterdijk expands the field. Orientation never happens in empty space. We orient inside atmospheres, spheres, bubbles, foams, schools, families, studios, platforms, media systems, disciplines, nations, professions, and training regimes. Human beings are practicing animals. We are shaped by explicit and implicit exercises. Every classroom, studio, monastery, gym, lab, department, platform, and workplace trains bodies, habits, aspirations, immunities, and forms of attention. There is no untrained subject. There are only acknowledged and unacknowledged exercise systems.

This is where StudioLab becomes especially sharp. It does not merely ask what teams should think. It asks what kind of practice-space forms them. What atmosphere allows attention? What room permits risk? What media organize collaboration? What institutional pressures distort listening? What implicit exercises train passivity, panic, cleverness, obedience, critique, or courage? Sloterdijk helps us see StudioLab as an explicit anthropotechnic chamber: a designed environment where people rehearse new ways of perceiving, collaborating, making, and worlding.

Sloterdijk also gives a sharper account of why orientation can fail. Sometimes the problem does not lie in the individual thinker or the team's ideas. The atmosphere itself has been badly designed. The room rewards speed over attention. The platform rewards display over care. The institution rewards deliverables over learning. The discipline rewards mastery over encounter. In such cases, reorientation requires atmospheric redesign. The team must change not only its ideas but its exercise system.

5. Haraway: Situated, Companionate Worlding

Sloterdijk needs Donna Haraway. Without Haraway, the language of training and self-transformation can drift toward heroic verticality: the acrobat, the elite practitioner, the sovereign self overcoming itself. Haraway pulls the whole system back into earthly trouble. No one orients alone. No one trains alone. No one worlds alone. We become-with dogs, microbes, machines, archives, servers, tools, plants, partners, histories, damaged lands, kinship systems, genders, species, and stories. Situated knowledge is not a limitation to be overcome; it is the condition of responsible orientation.

Haraway keeps StudioLab from turning into a heroic human design machine. She asks: who else is in the room? Who has been excluded from the map? What nonhuman actors shape the situation? What machines mediate attention? What species, materials, ecologies, and histories bear the consequences? What trouble must we stay with rather than solve too quickly? StudioLab's collective spiritual design exercise therefore becomes more than human self-improvement. It becomes situated, companionate, multispecies, technosocial worlding.

This matters for partners as well. A partner organization does not simply represent a problem domain. It arrives entangled with histories, publics, materials, infrastructures, affects, technologies, communities, and exclusions. Haraway's lesson is that orientation must always ask: with whom and with what do we world? A project that cannot ask that question may produce a solution while deepening the trouble.

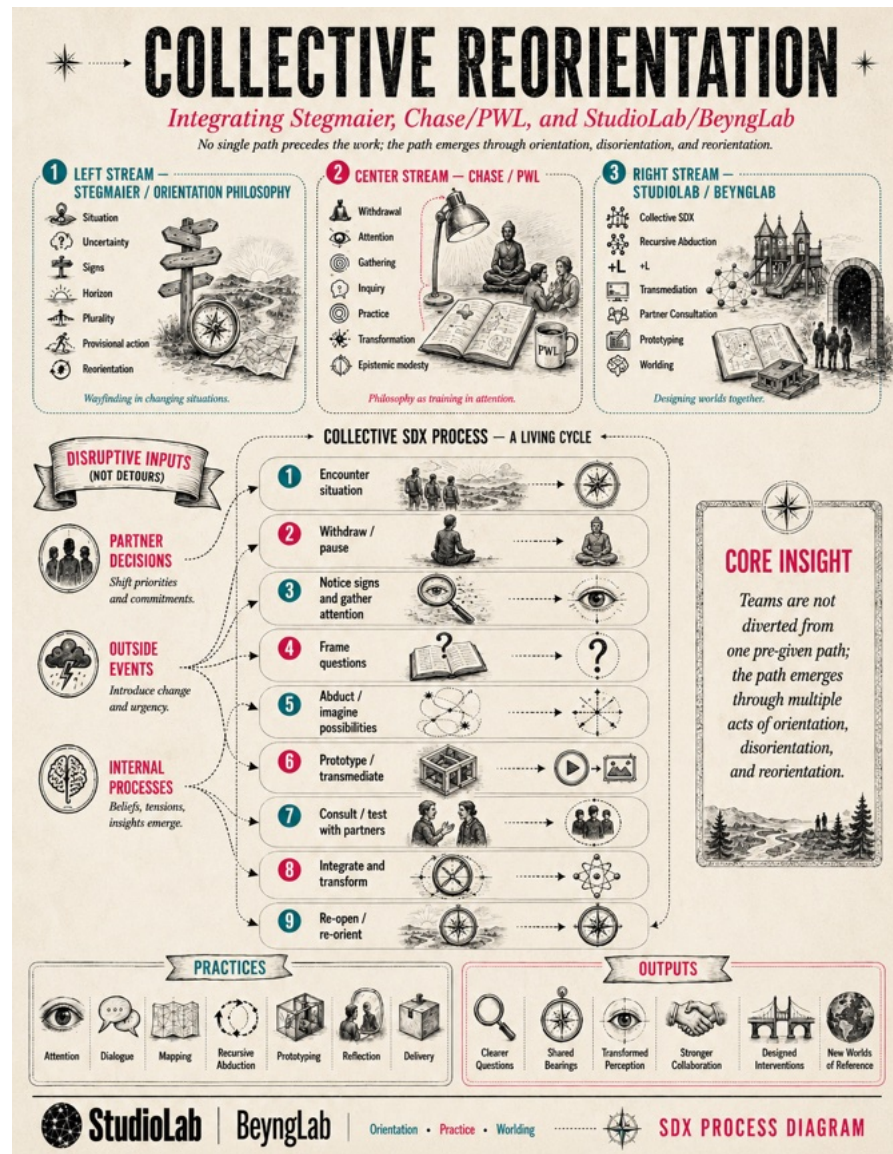
6. A Four-Player Ecology of Practice

Figure 3. Collective Reorientation process diagram integrating Stegmaier, Chase/PWL, & StudioLab/BeyngLab.

Together, Stegmaier, Chase, Sloterdijk, and Haraway form a four-player ecology of practice. Stegmaier orients. Chase trains attention. Sloterdijk spheres. Haraway entangles. StudioLab operationalizes the play. The point is not to synthesize them into a single theory, but to make them function as stations in a recursive field of practice.

A Stegmaier station asks participants to map the situation, identify signs, name uncertainties, and act provisionally. A Chase station asks them to withdraw, gather attention, practice epistemic modesty, and re-open perception. A Sloterdijk station asks them to analyze the atmosphere, sphere, institution, or training system shaping the work. A Haraway station asks them to identify the companions, machines, species, materials, and excluded actors with whom the project worlds.

These stations do not form a rigid sequence. They form a recursive field. When the situation shifts, Stegmaier returns. When attention scatters, Chase returns. When the room, platform, institution, or team atmosphere turns toxic, Sloterdijk returns. When excluded relations, nonhuman actors, or damaged kinships appear, Haraway returns. When concepts become too stable, +L returns. When the team needs to imagine a possible path without guarantees, recursive abduction returns.



7. Disastronautics and Strategic Disorientation

This ecology becomes especially powerful when joined to disastronautics. The disastronaut is not merely someone lost in disaster. The disastronaut navigates situations where inherited maps have helped produce the disaster. In such conditions, orientation cannot mean returning to normal. Normal may be the catastrophe. The available compass may point to false north. The map may encode colonial, institutional, disciplinary, technocratic, theological, or platformed distortions. The task is not simply to regain orientation but to test which orientations deserve to survive.

This is strategic disorientation. It does not celebrate confusion for its own sake. It does not romanticize breakdown. It asks when disorientation becomes necessary because existing orientations have become traps. A team may need to be thrown off its assumptions. A discipline may need to be knocked out of its inherited methods. A partner may need to interrupt the students' elegant plan. A crisis may expose the poverty of the original framing. A typo, pun, glitch, joke, or +L may loosen the grip of a dead concept and let another possibility appear.

The +L functions here as a micro-disorientation operator. It slips into a settled term and makes it wobble. It does not destroy meaning; it releases meaning from over-control. It opens a small crack through which another world-reference may emerge. Recursive abduction then becomes the method for working inside that wobble. Rather than deducing from fixed principles or inducing from stable patterns, recursive abduction guesses, tests, reframes, and returns. It treats uncertainty as a medium. It lets the situation answer back.

8. Partner Decisions Are Not Detours

StudioLab's process therefore should be described not as linear production but as collective reorientation. A team encounters a situation. It pauses. It notices signs. It gathers attention. It frames questions. It abducts possibilities. It prototypes and transmediates. It consults with partners. It integrates and transforms. It re-opens and reorients. Then the cycle begins again, because the situation has changed.

Partner decisions are not detours. They are orienting events. Outside events are not interruptions. They are disclosures of the field. Internal processes are not merely team problems. They are part of the design situation. This changes the ethics of collaboration. In a conventional project model, partners provide information, teams produce solutions, and disruptions threaten delivery. In StudioLab, partners help reorient the project. Their decisions, hesitations, refusals, revisions, and surprises are not noise around the work. They are part of the work's intelligence.

The same holds for internal processes. Teams do not simply apply methods to external problems. They discover their own orientations through conflict, fatigue, excitement, misunderstanding, ambition, boredom, anxiety, and care. A project may reveal who dominates conversation, who withdraws, who translates, who notices partners, who rushes to deliver, who worries about ethics, who sees form, who senses atmosphere, who hears what has not been said. These are not secondary matters. They are part of the collective SDX. The team itself becomes a site of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.

9. Shared Bearing Without Erasing Difference

The result is not certainty. The result is shared bearing. Shared bearing differs from consensus. Consensus often means agreement around a statement or decision. Shared bearing means the team can move together while still acknowledging different original orientations, partial perspectives,

and uneven stakes. A partner may remain oriented by community survival. A student may be oriented by aesthetic ambition. A teacher may be oriented by pedagogy. A funder may be oriented by outcomes. A medium may be oriented by its affordances. An institution may be oriented by risk. A public may be oriented by trust or suspicion. The task is not to erase these differences, but to build a practice in which they can enter the field and help shape the path.

This is why collective reorientation is a spiritual design exercise. Spiritual here does not mean private belief, doctrinal religion, or inward elevation alone. It means the transformation of attention, relation, practice, and world. It means learning how to undergo a change in how things matter. It means perceiving otherwise. It means becoming capable of action that was not visible from the original orientation.

The StudioLab project begins with a problem but becomes a practice of transformation. The team does not simply deliver a product. It learns how to become a different kind of collective. The partner does not simply receive a solution. The partner helps co-produce a field of possible action. The situation does not simply get solved. It becomes more legible, more shareable, more inhabitable, or more open to future intervention.

10. The Playground as Training Ground

The StudioLab playground gives this process a public, spatial, and performative form. It is not a classroom pretending to be a company. It is not a lab pretending to be neutral. It is a playground because play names the serious freedom required for reorientation. Play allows roles to shift, media to cross, concepts to move, prototypes to fail, and participants to become otherwise. But it is not play without stakes. It is play with partners, histories, publics, materials, institutions, and worlds.

BeyngLab extends this playground into Heideggerian engineering and Woesean humanities. It asks how concepts become inhabitable, how archives become portals, how topoi become stations, how media become clearing practices, and how Dasein gets redesigned across regions, histories, and forms of life. Here orientation is not a metaphor added to philosophy. It becomes the operational problem of philosophy itself: how does thought find its way when the world, the medium, the institution, and the thinker are all in motion?

The process can be named simply: orient, withdraw, gather, abduct, prototype, consult, transform, re-open, reorient. Or more sharply: find the bearings, break false north, train attention, read the atmosphere, stay with trouble, prototype the path, world together. This is the promise of collective reorientation: not a method that guarantees success, but a practice that makes transformation possible under uncertain conditions. It teaches teams to move without final foundations, to pause without paralysis, to design without mastery, to collaborate without erasing difference, and to act without pretending that all consequences can be known in advance.

Conclusion: The Path Was Never Waiting

StudioLab's playground is not an escape from seriousness. It is a training ground for serious freedom. It invites participants to enter situations, lose false bearings, gather attention, test possible worlds, and re-open the path with others. It turns disorientation into practice. It turns practice into shared bearing. It turns shared bearing into designed intervention. And at its best, it turns designed intervention into new worlds of reference.

The path was never waiting. We make it by learning how to reorient together.

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Antagonistic Kinships

Recursive Feud, Tragic Topology, Burial, and Oddkin

COLLECTED ESSAYS AND PROSPECTUS

Jon McKenzie

The Hatfield inherits an enemy; Antigone inherits a corpse;
Colonus and FabLab disclose the topology of passage;
Haraway inherits a damaged world crowded with beings
who have already made one another.

Contents

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Bibliography. Combined works cited and orienting texts

Series Note

The sequence does not narrate progress from bad conflict to good community. Essay I diagnoses recursive feud; Essay II follows Antigone's asymmetrical claim upon the unburied; the hinge essay folds backward through Colonus and outward through FabLab to redefine topology as a medium-specific arrangement of touch and passage; Essay III remains a detailed prospectus for Harawayian oddkin after the feud.

Recursive Hatfields

Queering Queering and the Dialectical Payback of Left and Right

ESSAY I OF ANTAGONISTIC KINSHIPS

Feud • Burial • Topology • Oddkin

Abstract

This essay recasts the contemporary struggle between Left and Right, together with the recursive “queering of queering,” as a feud form rather than a stable ideological opposition. Legendary rivalries—Hatfields and McCoys, Cain and Abel, Eteocles and Polynices, Atreus and Thyestes, Montagues and Capulets—show how antagonists become intimate doubles who inherit injuries, copy one another’s tactics, and convert retaliation into identity. Gregory Bateson’s schismogenesis and René Girard’s mimetic rivalry help describe this machinery, while dialectical payback names the political operation by which each camp cites the other’s prior excesses as permission for its own. Queering, once institutionalized as a recognizable method, becomes available for counter-queering: its categories, exclusions, authority, and claims to marginality can themselves be destabilized. Yet recursion does not guarantee liberation. It may enlarge the field of difference, or merely reverse the offices of accuser and accused. The essay therefore distinguishes performative feud-repetition from perfumative passage: a change not only of position but of scene, medium, and rule. Its final movement turns toward Sophocles’ *Antigone*, where the dead brothers embody completed reciprocal antagonism and *Antigone* interrupts their symmetry through an asymmetrical claim of burial, kinship, and obligation. That threshold opens Essay II, “*Antigone Antagonistics*,” while Essay III turns to Donna Haraway’s oddkin, sympoiesis, and response-ability as ways of making relations after feud without claiming innocence or harmony.

*Contemporary Left–Right conflict increasingly operates
as a recursive family feud in which each side
queers, appropriates, and retaliates against the other’s procedures.
Their proclaimed opposition conceals a mimetic intimacy:
each becomes the other’s archive, alibi, and disavowed double.*

I. Beyond the Political Spectrum

The conventional political spectrum makes Left and Right appear as positions laid out on a line. One side advances equality, emancipation, and transformation; the other defends order, inheritance, hierarchy, and continuity. Even when the line bends into a horseshoe, the geometry still implies that each party possesses a relatively stable location. Conflict then looks like disagreement between programs, values, or constituencies. Yet much contemporary political life feels less like a debate across distance than a quarrel conducted at intimate range. The parties watch one another

obsessively, borrow one another's procedures, inherit one another's grievances, and define their own virtue through the other's vice. They do not merely oppose. They reciprocally produce.

The better figure may therefore come from the legendary feud. The Hatfields and McCoys do not simply represent two competing interests. Their names designate a shared antagonistic world. Each family becomes the other family's archive, audience, alibi, and destiny. A remembered injury authorizes retaliation; retaliation confirms the original judgment; descendants enter a conflict whose first cause has grown obscure but whose obligations have become more binding. The feud survives precisely because every attempt to settle the score adds another entry to the ledger. What passes for balance becomes accumulated imbalance.

This feud form illuminates two contemporary recursions. The first is the queering of queering: a practice designed to unsettle fixed identities, binaries, norms, and authoritative classifications becomes itself an identifiable method, institutional language, and cultural position, and thus becomes available for further queering. The second is the dialectical payback of Left and Right: each side appropriates the other's tactics while describing its appropriation as justified retaliation. "You did this to us; now we shall do it to you" supplies the grammar. Political acts no longer answer only a present situation. They settle inherited accounts.

To name these processes as recursive Hatfields does not trivialize their stakes. A feud can distribute real injury, exclusions, lost livelihoods, imprisonment, dispossession, and death. Nor does the figure place all parties on an abstract plane of moral equivalence. Historical power remains unequal, and initiating acts matter. The claim concerns form rather than innocence: unequal antagonists can nevertheless become caught in a mutually reproducing circuit. The most dangerous asymmetry may even arise when each side treats its own violence as a singular necessity and the other's as proof of an essential nature.

II. The Feud as a Recursive Social Form

A feud differs from an ordinary conflict because it feeds upon its own continuation. In a dispute, parties may negotiate an object: land, authority, recognition, resources, law. In a feud, the injuries produced by the dispute become new objects of dispute. The conflict acquires memory, ceremonial repetition, and kinship transmission. A child may inherit not only a name but a duty to resent. The past no longer precedes the present; it returns as an instruction for making the present resemble itself.

Gregory Bateson's concept of schismogenesis helps describe this recursive production. In symmetrical schismogenesis, rivals answer like with like: boasting meets boasting, aggression meets aggression, escalation meets escalation. In complementary schismogenesis, opposed roles intensify one another: command produces submission, submission invites greater command. Political feuds often combine both. Left and Right imitate one another's mobilizations, media tactics, purges, moral vocabularies, and institutional strategies, while also assigning one another opposed roles such as oppressor and victim, elite and people, censor and dissident, traitor and patriot. The relation grows stronger as the parties declare themselves absolutely different.

René Girard's account of mimetic rivalry adds a second dimension. Rivals do not necessarily collide because they desire inherently different things. They collide because each learns what to desire by watching the other. Recognition, legitimacy, cultural authority, the status of injured party, the right to speak for the people, and the power to define reality become scarce precisely because both camps seek them. The rival becomes model and obstacle at once. One imitates what one denounces, then denounces the other for forcing the imitation.

Legendary families condense this structure. Cain and Abel compete before a judging power whose favor cannot be evenly possessed. Jacob and Esau struggle over blessing, inheritance, and the unstable difference between rightful heir and successful substitute. Eteocles and Polynices divide a throne, break the alternation, and kill one another over the same city. Atreus and Thyestes convert family, food, sexuality, succession, and hospitality into media of revenge. Romulus founds Rome through the elimination of Remus. The Montagues and Capulets become so structurally interchangeable that only the lovers can reveal how little substantive difference remains beneath the names. Rival brothers and rival houses repeatedly disclose the same paradox: the nearest other becomes the most intolerable because the other occupies almost the same place.

The Hatfield–McCoy figure therefore names more than rural vendetta. It names a general social technology for turning relation into inherited antagonism. The feud creates subjects who experience retaliation as fidelity. Its genius lies in making repetition feel like agency. Every new blow arrives as an answer, never as an initiative; everyone acts second. The recursive family becomes a machine for producing first causes after the fact.

III. Dialectical Payback

Dialectical payback names the moment when an opponent's past practice becomes one's present warrant. Unlike dialectical negation in its philosophical form, payback does not labor toward a transformed relation or a higher articulation. It preserves the opposition by reversing the sign. A practice condemned when performed by the enemy becomes defensible when performed in return. The content changes camps while the structure survives.

Contemporary Left and Right repeatedly accuse one another of censorship, ideological conformity, institutional capture, propaganda, identity politics, moral panic, elite contempt, anti-intellectualism, political violence, and the fabrication of victimhood. These accusations may carry real evidence; they cannot be dismissed as mere projection. Yet their circulation also performs a recursive operation. Each camp builds an archive of the other's offenses and treats that archive as a license. A university controversy authorizes a legislative intervention; a legislative intervention authorizes a campus mobilization; a media dismissal authorizes an alternative-media purge; one side's emergency becomes the other side's precedent.

The payback relation turns politics into a courtroom where every defendant arrives with a counter-indictment. No charge can be heard without a genealogy of equivalent charges. The question "Did this happen?" yields to "What about when you did it?" Whataboutism, in this sense, does not merely distract from judgment. It reveals the temporal architecture of feud. Every act stands inside a chain of remembered acts, and the chain becomes more politically consequential than the immediate event.

Nietzsche's analysis of resentment remains relevant here, though no single camp monopolizes it. Resentment converts blocked action into moral accounting. It stores injury, imagines a future reversal, and derives identity from the anticipated humiliation of the adversary. Dialectical payback gives resentment an operational form. It does not merely dream of changed places; it copies the machinery through which places are assigned. The formerly accused becomes accuser, the excluded gatekeeper, the censored censor, the stigmatized classifier. The offices rotate while the tribunal remains.

This rotation explains why the Right can adopt languages and tactics associated with the Left—identity formation, counter-publicity, claims of systemic exclusion, cultural separatism, therapeutic injury, strategic essentialism—while presenting the adoption as exposure or revenge. It also explains why the Left can answer right-wing capture by intensifying procedures of screening, exclusion, correction, and protection. Each side insists that its use of the shared tool differs because its cause differs. Sometimes it does. But the recursive form deserves analysis precisely where moral difference and structural imitation coexist.

The point is not that Left and Right secretly mean the same thing. Their institutions, histories, social bases, and distributions of harm remain distinct. The point is more unsettling: difference does not prevent mimetic intimacy. Indeed, categorical opposition may intensify imitation by requiring each party to watch the other constantly. The enemy supplies the agenda, the examples, the deadlines, and the emotional tempo. Political autonomy collapses into adversarial synchronization.

IV. Queering Queering

Queering enters this field with a special recursive force. At its most generative, queer critique does not simply add another recognized identity to an existing taxonomy. It interrogates the taxonomic demand itself. It asks how bodies, desires, kinships, temporalities, normalities, and deviations become legible; how categories stabilize through exclusion; how an identity can protect and constrain at once. Queering names an action upon frames, not merely a claim within them.

Yet any action that becomes teachable, publishable, fundable, administrable, and repeatable acquires recognizable conventions. Queering develops canonical texts, authorized histories, preferred vocabularies, institutional sites, professional incentives, and tacit boundaries. This development does not invalidate queer work. It marks its worldly success and its exposure to the very questions it taught others to ask. Once queering becomes a method, queering can be applied to queering.

The recursive move may take several forms. It can expose exclusions within queer theory and politics: racial, trans, disabled, colonial, classed, geographic, religious, or generational differences suppressed by a dominant account of queerness. It can question whether an anti-normative style has hardened into a norm. It can ask who receives institutional recognition as queer, whose opacity becomes unintelligible, and which practices of nonconformity remain politically inconvenient. In these forms, queering queering continues the emancipatory and analytic work of queer critique.

But counter-queering can also function as dialectical payback. An adversary may appropriate deconstruction, performativity, anti-essentialism, subcultural style, camp, transgression, or claims

of stigmatized identity in order to destabilize queer claims and institutions. The move says: you taught us that identities are made, language exerts power, norms conceal contingency, and institutions manufacture truth; now we shall turn those lessons against you. The second queering may expose a contradiction, or it may weaponize queer technique while restoring the hierarchy that queer critique sought to unsettle.

The difference cannot be decided by recursion alone. No formal property guarantees emancipation. Reversal can open a category, but it can also recode domination as cleverness. Parody can release suppressed possibilities, but it can also make vulnerable lives into raw material. Anti-essentialism can resist compulsory identity, but it can also dissolve the grounds upon which injury becomes publicly recognizable. The question therefore shifts from whether queering has been queered to what relations, capacities, and worlds the recursion produces.

This question matters because queer politics has often resisted the family as the privileged site of naturalized social order, while also generating new kinships, chosen families, erotic publics, and forms of care. The recursive Hatfield figure reveals a danger internal to kinship itself: even nonbiological affiliations can inherit enemies and pass down scripts of retaliation. A chosen family can choose a feud. Queering blood does not automatically queer vengeance.

V. The Symmetry Trap

The feud model risks collapsing unequal histories into a symmetrical spectacle. “Both sides” can become a moral anesthetic, especially when one side holds state power, economic dominance, military capacity, or cultural legitimacy that the other lacks. A responsible account must therefore distinguish structural recursion from empirical equivalence. Two parties can imitate one another without producing equivalent consequences. One can retaliate from a fortress and the other from a barricade. Similar rhetoric can organize radically different material powers.

Nor does every cycle begin nowhere. Feuds obscure origins because each party narrates an earlier injury, but historical inquiry can still identify dispossession, conquest, enslavement, criminalization, or exclusion that shaped the field before the latest exchange. To analyze recursion must not erase responsibility. The concept becomes useful only when it enables more precise judgment: who can act, who must react, whose memory becomes law, whose grief becomes public, whose retaliation receives legitimacy, and who remains available for sacrifice.

At the same time, asymmetry cannot grant permanent immunity from recursive analysis. A movement may arise from real injury and still reproduce punitive structures. A minoritized institution may gain local authority and exercise it badly. A language of protection may become a technology of capture. Historical innocence cannot substitute for present critique because no collective possesses innocence as a renewable resource. The feud form begins wherever injury becomes hereditary permission.

This is why the language of brothers and families matters. Kinship combines asymmetry and intimacy. Older and younger siblings, heirs and bastards, fathers and sons, recognized and unrecognized children do not enter conflict as equals; nevertheless, they share a house, a name, or a claim. Their rivalry turns upon proximity to the same inheritance. Left and Right likewise contest

the inheritances of modernity: revolution, nation, people, freedom, equality, sovereignty, science, progress, and public reason. Each calls the other a usurper of a common legacy.

The rival-family model thus replaces the false neutrality of the spectrum with an agonistic genealogy. It asks not merely where a party stands, but what it inherits, whom it remembers, what injury authorizes it, which rival it copies, and what descendants it recruits. It turns politics from positional mapping toward recursive dramaturgy.

VI. From Dialectical Reversal to Perfumative Passage

A generative dialectic changes its terms through confrontation. A feud dialectic changes hands while preserving the quarrel. This distinction clarifies why so many apparent victories feel structurally sterile. One faction captures the institution, wins the election, controls the language, or defeats the rival, yet the scene remains organized around the defeated enemy. Victory becomes a new episode rather than an exit.

Performative repetition helps explain this durability. The feud exists because names, grievances, accusations, commemorations, and retaliations repeatedly cite the conflict. Every citation restores the roles. Even a parody of the feud may reproduce its intelligibility. One can reverse the script while leaving the stage, audience, genre, and stakes intact.

A perfumative passage demands more. It changes the atmosphere in which roles become perceptible and actions acquire sense. Rather than occupying the adversary's office, it alters the office; rather than winning the inherited game, it changes its equipment, scale, tempo, or medium. Such a passage does not float above conflict. It works through the material scene while opening another way to compose relations.

Three outcomes can therefore be distinguished. Dialectical transformation reorganizes the terms through confrontation. Recursive feud intensifies their opposition through mimetic return. Perfumative passage moves diagonally: it transmediates the antagonism into another scene of appearance and obligation. The diagonal does not guarantee peace. It may create a more difficult conflict, but one no longer governed entirely by inherited symmetry.

Legendary narratives often stage such attempts. Romeo and Juliet convert dynastic hatred into erotic alliance, though their passage becomes legible to the houses only through death. Tricksters interrupt inherited classifications by shifting forms and registers. Exiles create hybrid worlds at the edge of sovereign territories. Mourners make claims that neither army nor court can fully contain. Here the feud encounters a figure who does not merely answer the rival family in kind.

VII. The Dead Brothers at the Gate

Sophocles' *Antigone* begins where a brother-feud has completed its logic. Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus, have killed one another before the walls of Thebes. Their reciprocal death materializes the symmetry toward which feud tends: each brother becomes the other's executioner and victim; neither can inherit the city he sought to possess. The conflict leaves corpses, a damaged polity, and an urgent struggle over narration.

Creon responds by breaking the dead brothers' symmetry through sovereign classification. Eteocles, defender of the city, will receive burial and honor. Polynices, attacker of the city, will remain exposed. The decree does more than punish a corpse. It assigns political meaning to kinship, determines which grief may appear, and recruits the living into the city's official memory. The feud between brothers becomes a feud over the difference between brothers.

Antigone does not reconcile Eteocles and Polynices, nor does she propose an evenhanded burial policy. She acts for the excluded brother. Her gesture is asymmetrical, excessive, and resistant to exchange. She cannot be reduced to the next Hatfield because her claim does not seek retaliatory equivalence. She does not demand that Eteocles be unburied because Polynices has been denied burial. She insists that the abandoned body imposes an obligation that sovereign opposition cannot exhaust.

This insistence changes the scene. The brothers fought over rule; Antigone acts upon the corpse. Creon legislates public loyalty; Antigone makes mourning publicly political. The feud counts injuries and victories; burial attends to the remainder that cannot answer, repay, or reenter the contest. Antigone thus introduces a diagonal relation to antagonism: neither synthesis nor neutrality, neither equal treatment nor symmetrical revenge, but an intervention from the side of an unassimilated obligation.

Her act nevertheless creates new antagonisms. She confronts Creon, divides the city, implicates Ismene and Haemon, and becomes an object of competing interpretations. Antigone does not abolish conflict. She discloses conflicts hidden by the official one: kinship against sovereignty, divine custom against decree, gendered enclosure against public speech, mourning against military narration, the living city against the claims of its dead. The play multiplies antagonisms while refusing to let any single opposition organize the whole.

This is the threshold of "Antigone Antagonistics." If recursive Hatfields names the capture of politics by inherited rivalry, Antigone names the figure who enters after reciprocal destruction and asks what remains unburied. Her intervention does not end the family feud by transcending kinship. It exposes kinship as internally divided, politically administered, and capable of generating obligations that exceed both blood loyalty and civic command.

VIII. Conclusion: From Feud to Burial

The queering of queering and the dialectical payback of Left and Right can be seen as recursive family rivalries, but only if the family metaphor remains dynamic. These are not fixed clans expressing timeless essences. They are relations that produce clans, distribute inherited memories, and turn adversaries into intimate doubles. The feud does not precede the Hatfields and McCoys as a neutral container; the feud continually makes them Hatfields and McCoys.

Queering reveals this production when it denaturalizes identities and affiliations. Queering queering becomes necessary when queer practice acquires its own inheritances and exclusions. Yet recursion alone cannot tell emancipatory reopening from retaliatory capture. Dialectical payback thrives precisely by confusing reversal with transformation. It promises justice through changed occupancy while leaving the offices of accusation, purity, and punishment untouched.

A politics beyond payback must neither forget injury nor make injury hereditary. It must judge asymmetries without granting any camp permanent exemption from critique. It must recognize mimetic capture without declaring all opponents equivalent. Above all, it must find passages that transform the scene of antagonism rather than merely rotating its players.

Antigone appears at that point of pressure. The brothers have reached perfect reciprocity in mutual death. The state has converted their difference into law. Antigone bends toward the body that the political order leaves exposed. Her act asks a question that the feud cannot ask because the feud addresses only agents, heirs, enemies, and avengers: what do the living owe to one who can no longer retaliate?

The next essay begins there. “Antigone Antagonistics” will treat burial not as withdrawal from politics but as a reconfiguration of political appearance. Antigone does not resolve antagonism. She changes its object, voice, gender, temporality, and medium. She brings the dead brother, the forbidden mourner, and the unrecognized obligation into the space where the city names its friends and enemies. She interrupts the feud by revealing the world it has failed to bury.

Antigone Antagonistics

Burial, Broken Brotherhood, and the Politics of the Unassimilated Claim

Abstract

Essay I of Antagonistic Kinships described the contemporary Left–Right struggle and the recursive “queering of queering” as a feud form: antagonists inherit grievances, imitate one another’s procedures, and convert retaliation into identity. This second essay begins where that reciprocal machinery reaches completion. Eteocles and Polynices, rival brothers contending for the same throne, kill one another before Sophocles’ *Antigone* opens. Their deaths do not end the feud. Creon transfers it from combat to classification by honoring one corpse and exposing the other, thereby claiming sovereign authority over what the civil war will have meant. *Antigone* answers not with a counterarmy or equal dishonor but with burial. Her handful of dust changes the object, medium, temporality, and participants of the conflict. It introduces an asymmetrical obligation to one who cannot answer and a political claim the city cannot assimilate without changing its account of kinship, law, and grief. Bringing Hegel, Judith Butler, Bonnie Honig, Nicole Loraux, Chantal Mouffe, Carl Schmitt, Jacques Rancière, Achille Mbembe, Thomas Laqueur, and Katherine Verdery into the scene, the essay develops “antagonistics” as the study and design of the bodies, media, genres, rites, and infrastructures through which antagonism becomes staged. *Antigone* neither reconciles the brothers nor merely reverses Creon’s decree. She makes the excluded brother matter in another medium. This perfumative passage opens, but does not solve, the problem of relation. The concluding movement therefore turns toward Donna Haraway: from inherited blood and solitary defiance toward oddkin, sympoiesis, and distributed response-ability after the feud.

*The feud ends on the battlefield
only when another institution can decide
what the bodies mean.*

I. After the Brothers

Sophocles begins *Antigone* after the spectacular action has already occurred. The sons of Oedipus have divided the city, raised armies, and killed one another before the audience sees them. Eteocles and Polynices enter the play as corpses, yet their absence controls every scene. They represent the terminal image of the recursive feud developed in Essay I: rival brothers desire the same throne, inhabit the same cursed genealogy, claim the same city, and answer each other through symmetrical escalation. Each becomes model, obstacle, and executioner for the other. The feud reaches formal completion when neither survives to possess what both claimed.

Nothing, however, has concluded. Reciprocal death settles neither succession nor meaning. The battlefield passes its unresolved work to the city, and the dead brothers become political materials. Creon, newly installed as ruler, does not inherit peace. He inherits two bodies and the power to narrate their difference. One receives funeral honors as Thebes' defender; the other remains exposed as its enemy. The new sovereign thus opens the play by performing an edit. He cuts the shared body of the brother-feud into a civic opposition: loyal and treacherous, honored and abject, remembered and scavenged. What the brothers could not decide through combat, Creon decides through burial policy.

This transfer from battle to burial matters for the Left–Right feud and for the recursive queering described in the preceding essay. Political antagonism rarely ends when one side defeats another. It survives through archives, commemorations, prosecutions, amnesties, monuments, prohibitions, renamings, and rules governing public grief. After the violence comes the struggle over the violence's genre. Was it war, rebellion, terrorism, resistance, sacrifice, riot, defense, murder, revolution, or restoration? Who may count as victim? Whose death becomes evidence, whose becomes collateral, and whose remains must disappear so the new order can appear coherent? Antigone enters this postconflict theater, where sovereignty no longer swings a sword but edits a story.

Her intervention therefore cannot be reduced to a private conscience standing against public law. The scene has already mixed family, state, war, religion, sex, succession, and media. Polynices is her brother, but he is also a military enemy of Thebes. Creon is her uncle, king, future father-in-law, and fellow survivor of the same ruined house. Haemon is son, citizen, fiancé, and future corpse. Ismene is sister, witness, possible collaborator, and alternative political actor. No clean border separates household from city. The play stages a civic catastrophe conducted through kinship and a family catastrophe administered through public decree.

Antigone begins, then, not with two living adversaries but with the political afterlife of reciprocal destruction. The first essay's Hatfields have killed one another. The question now concerns the remains: can a city end inherited antagonism by assigning unequal meanings to equal corpses? Or does that sovereign distinction reproduce the feud under administrative form? Sophocles offers no neutral ground from which to answer. He gives us dust, rumor, guards, proclamations, lament, prophecy, a cave, and a succession of bodies. The tragedy asks how antagonism travels when combat stops—and what kind of act might change its medium without pretending to abolish its force.

II. Completed Reciprocity

Eteocles and Polynices exemplify antagonistic doubling. They do not represent opposed social classes, cultures, or visions of the good. Their difference emerges through position inside a shared structure. Each claims legitimate succession to Oedipus; each wants Thebes; each organizes armed force around his entitlement; each treats the other as the obstacle to rightful rule. Their conflict resembles the fraternal rivalries that haunt political foundation myths: Cain and Abel before divine favor, Romulus and Remus at the city wall, Jacob and Esau before paternal blessing, Atreus and Thyestes before dynastic succession. The nearest other becomes intolerable because he occupies almost the same place.

The brothers also display the temporal machinery of feud. Their story reaches backward into Oedipus' curse and forward into the city's future. No act appears first. Each claimant arrives with an account of prior betrayal that makes his violence reactive. In the lost and surviving Theban materials surrounding Sophocles' play, agreements, broken alternations, exile, return, and siege circulate as competing beginnings. The more one seeks the inaugural injury, the more beginnings appear. This multiplication does not make judgment impossible, but it shows how feuds generate first causes retrospectively. Every actor speaks second; every blow answers a previous blow.

Reciprocal killing might seem to restore equality. The brothers meet the same fate at each other's hands. Yet this equality remains catastrophic. It produces what might be called a negative synthesis: not a new common world but the removal of both contenders. The throne survives; the bodies fall. The city can resume only by converting this bodily equality into a political distinction. Creon's decree performs that conversion. It prevents the brothers' symmetrical death from remaining an undecidable image and forces the audience to see two opposed meanings where the battlefield left two equally dead men.

The decree therefore acts as dialectical payback after death. Eteocles defended the city, so the city repays him with honor. Polynices attacked it, so the city extends the punishment beyond his life. Creon does not merely deny a benefit; he continues warfare against a corpse. The enemy must remain enemy even when he can no longer act. His exposure recruits animals, weather, smell, and decomposition into the state's punitive apparatus. Sovereignty makes nature carry out a sentence the dead man can neither obey nor contest.

Here the feud reveals a crucial mutation. When living rivals disappear, institutions inherit their antagonism. Law, ritual, memory, and infrastructure preserve what bodies can no longer perform. The recursive Hatfields become cemeteries, schoolbooks, memorial calendars, prohibited names, museum labels, digital archives, and official silences. Antigone's importance lies precisely in her refusal to let institutional memory complete this transformation without resistance. She does not revive Polynices as claimant to the throne. She refuses the conversion of his military defeat into ontological degradation. He may have fought against Thebes; he may not, for that reason, become carrion without remainder.

III. Creon Edits the War

Creon often appears as the state in person, the rigid lawgiver who mistakes his decree for justice. That reading captures his sovereign posture but misses his specifically editorial function. He enters after civil war and assigns the war a legible ending. His decree chooses a protagonist and antagonist, determines which brother embodies the city, and decides how each body will circulate. Eteocles moves from corpse to ancestor through public burial. Polynices moves from corpse to warning through public exposure. Creon governs not only persons but genres of appearance.

Burial gives a death duration, location, ritual sequence, witnesses, and a name. Exposure also mediates. It creates a counter-funeral whose agents include guards, birds, dogs, heat, dust, and spectators. The unburied body becomes a public screen on which the city projects the cost of treason. Creon wants no mourning because mourning might reopen relation. A tear, handful of earth, libation, or spoken name could detach Polynices from the category of enemy and return him

to the plural relations the decree suppresses: brother, son, citizen, human body, bearer of divine obligations, and participant in a catastrophe larger than his chosen side.

The decree's apparent clarity therefore depends upon strenuous maintenance. Guards must watch the body. Citizens must regulate speech. The chorus must negotiate fear and assent. Creon must interrogate motives, imagine bribery, identify conspirators, and punish unauthorized contact. The sovereign distinction between friend and enemy does not simply describe the field; it manufactures and polices it. Carl Schmitt's famous political distinction gains here a mortuary extension. The sovereign decides not only who counts as enemy in life but whether the enemy remains eligible for the practices through which a community recognizes a death.

Yet the edit fails because a corpse cannot remain a single sign. The body decomposes, smells, attracts animals, contaminates altars, provokes rumor, and summons religious obligation. Teiresias eventually reports that the city's sacrifices no longer pass cleanly to the gods because carrion has circulated through birds and dogs into sacred space. Polynices' exclusion returns materially. Creon seeks to place one body outside the city, but the exposed body reenters through ecology, ritual, and atmosphere. The border between polis and waste proves porous.

This porosity helps explain why sovereign power so often attends to remains. Katherine Verdery's study of postsocialist reburials shows how corpses can revise histories and reorient political presents; Thomas Laqueur's cultural history argues that the dead perform work for the living by linking communities across time. A corpse possesses no intention, yet it gathers intentions around itself. It can authorize succession, disrupt settlement, expose denied violence, or stabilize a national narrative. Creon understands this political life of the dead, even if he misjudges his capacity to monopolize it. His decree attempts to control not merely a corpse but the social relations the corpse might activate.

Antigone's act contests that monopoly. She becomes a counter-editor, but not by substituting a complete alternative biography of Polynices. She does not prove his innocence, vindicate his military campaign, or proclaim him the true ruler. She performs a smaller and more radical operation: she prevents the category of traitor from exhausting what the dead man can mean. Her dust inserts an unresolved remainder into Creon's clean opposition. The sovereign says enemy; the sister answers brother. Neither term cancels the other. The conflict now concerns whether political classification may terminate relation.

IV. Burial as Counter-Medium

Antigone's burial often appears as a symbol of divine law, familial love, female resistance, civil disobedience, or ethical conviction. It carries all these meanings, but it first operates as a material practice. A body lies exposed. Someone crosses a prohibited space, touches or approaches the remains, scatters dust, performs rites, and departs. Guards discover a changed scene. They debate how the act occurred, report it to Creon, uncover the body, and watch for repetition. Antigone returns, repeats the burial, and allows capture. The tragedy's central action passes through a compact media ecology: corpse, dust, gesture, weather, witness, rumor, proclamation, interrogation, lament, and tomb.

Calling burial a counter-medium shifts emphasis from what Antigone believes to what her act makes possible. The decree communicates through exposure: this is what happens to enemies.

Burial interrupts that message by altering the body's visibility and trajectory. Dust does not refute the decree in argument; it jams the transmission. It turns a punitive display into a contested scene. The guards cannot tell whether a god, citizen, family member, or conspirator acted. For a moment, authorship remains uncertain, and uncertainty itself weakens sovereign narration.

The burial also changes time. Feud time moves through succession and repayment: injury, retaliation, inheritance, counter-retaliation. Creon's decree tries to stop that chain by fixing the final meaning of each brother. Antigone introduces mortuary time, which does not ask who receives the throne next but what the living owe the dead now. Her obligation cannot generate reciprocal payment. Polynices cannot thank her, return the favor, revise his conduct, or join her political project. The act therefore breaks with the feud's economy of exchange even while it emerges from the feud's kinship structure.

This asymmetry matters. Antigone does not demand that Eteocles lose his burial so the brothers will again match. She does not reverse the hierarchy by exposing the honored brother and enthroning the condemned one. Such a reversal would reproduce dialectical payback: your hero becomes my traitor; your traitor becomes my hero. Instead, she gives the excluded corpse a minimum rite. Her act adds without balancing, answers without repayment, and repairs without claiming restoration. It refuses a wrong without making symmetry the measure of justice.

The counter-medium also redistributes agency. A handful of dust matters because Greek burial practices, divine expectations, familial obligations, civic fears, and the vulnerability of the corpse converge in it. Antigone acts, but she does not act alone in the modern sovereign sense. The dust carries ritual history. The body demands treatment without speaking. The guards provide involuntary publicity. The chorus interprets. Ismene's refusal or hidden participation complicates authorship. Haemon translates the city's murmurs. Teiresias conveys the gods' rejection. The medium recruits a counter-public from heterogeneous participants.

Burial thus moves beyond representation toward what this trilogy calls perfumative passage. A performative act works within a recognizable convention: a decree outlaws burial; a sentence condemns; a public statement classifies. Antigone's gesture also cites convention, yet its force exceeds a straightforward counter-declaration. It changes the scene from battlefield to grave, the object from throne to corpse, the voice from warrior to mourner, and the atmosphere from victory to contamination. It does not merely speak against the law. It makes the law encounter materials and obligations it tried to exclude.

V. The Sister's Asymmetry

Hegel grants the brother-sister relation a privileged place in his account of ethical life. Unlike husband and wife, brother and sister do not define their relation through sexual desire or the production of children. They share blood while retaining distinct personhood. For Hegel, the family's highest ethical act toward its member occurs in burial: the family rescues the dead individual from natural decomposition and gives death a consciously enacted form. Antigone thereby embodies divine law and familial duty, while Creon embodies human law and civic universality. Tragedy emerges because each acts from a valid but one-sided ethical power.

This reading made Antigone paradigmatic for dialectic, but it also domesticates her interruption. If sister and ruler simply personify family and state, the tragedy can appear as the collision through

which Spirit learns the limits of an undifferentiated ethical world. Antigone's singularity then serves a philosophical transition larger than her claim. Her burial becomes a necessary station on the way to another political form. The dialectic remembers her by assimilating her.

Antigone antagonistically resists that assimilation without discarding Hegel's insight. The sister's act does carry a form of law the city cannot contain. Yet it does not arise from a stable, innocent family sphere. Her family has already imploded. She is daughter and sister within Oedipus' incestuous genealogy; niece to Creon; betrothed to Creon's son; sister to both attackers in a civil war. The household supplies no coherent ethical refuge from the state. Family itself has produced the feud that destroys the city.

Her asymmetry therefore cannot mean the simple priority of blood. Creon shares the blood catastrophe and reaches the opposite conclusion. Ismene shares Antigone's sibling relation and initially refuses the act. Haemon loves Antigone and also argues as a citizen about public opinion. Genealogy underdetermines obligation. Antigone invokes kinship, but her deed reveals that kinship acquires force through practices of recognition, mourning, touch, risk, and answerability. Blood does not automatically command; it becomes politically activated.

The famous difficulty of Antigone's claim that she would not have defied the city in the same way for a replaceable husband or child has unsettled readers for centuries. Rather than rescue this claim as universal ethics or dismiss it as pathological fixation, antagonistics asks what work it performs in the scene. Antigone makes the brother irreplaceable because their parents can produce no other sibling. Her argument closes genealogy around a singular loss. It radicalizes the nonexchangeability of this corpse, but it also exposes the limit of her politics: obligation remains tied to a line whose extinction makes the brother unique.

This line will become decisive at the threshold to Haraway. Antigone breaks the city's classification through an asymmetrical act, yet she still draws much of the act's force from inherited kin. She changes the medium of antagonism without fully changing the genealogical grammar that organizes relation. The sister's asymmetry therefore performs two tasks at once. It interrupts the feud's reciprocity, and it leaves open the question of how obligations might arise beyond blood, heroic singularity, and the human family.

VI. Queer Kinship Between Life and Death

Judith Butler's *Antigone's Claim* dislodges the Hegelian allocation of Antigone to an intact family sphere. Antigone cannot straightforwardly represent normative kinship because her genealogy has already scrambled its terms. She emerges from incest, speaks as sister and daughter across collapsed generations, approaches marriage but never enters it, and moves while living toward a tomb that makes her neither fully alive nor simply dead. She invokes kinship from a position kinship norms cannot securely recognize.

This makes Antigone central to the queering of queering. Queer critique initially disrupts naturalized binaries and family norms; then its own critical procedures can harden into recognizable positions, vocabularies, and institutional permissions. Antigone complicates both moments. She does not stand outside kinship in the name of free self-fashioning, nor does she

secure legitimacy by demanding inclusion within an unchanged family form. She speaks through a damaged genealogy whose terms she repeats and deforms. Her claim gains force from family while showing family's inability to account for the relations it produces.

Queering here means more than inversion. Antigone does not declare the prohibited relation pure and the authorized relation corrupt. She reveals how authorization depends upon exclusions that return to trouble it. Creon needs family loyalty when he expects Haemon's obedience; he rejects family obligation when Antigone buries Polynices. He treats the household as subordinate to the city while using dynastic authority to rule. Antigone's genealogy makes such selective appeals visible. The state cannot place kinship safely outside politics because it continuously recruits kinship to reproduce power.

Butler also asks what forms of kinship might have allowed Antigone to live. That question shifts attention from heroic defiance toward the social conditions of recognizability. Antigone can appear only as criminal, impossible woman, excessive mourner, or figure already claimed by death. Her relation to Polynices lacks a legitimate public grammar once Creon classifies him as enemy. The problem concerns not only whether she may speak but whether the world contains institutions capable of hearing her relation without converting it into madness, treason, or private sentiment.

This issue connects Antigone to Butler's later work on grievability. Political orders distribute not only exposure to violence but the frames through which loss can register as loss. Some deaths mobilize public mourning; others appear unsurprising, deserved, strategic, or invisible. Creon's decree literalizes differential grievability by granting one brother rites and denying the other even lament. Antigone contests this distribution at the level of bodily practice. She does not first demand that the city agree with Polynices. She demands that enmity not erase the dead man's claim upon the living.

Yet a queer Antigone should not become a new icon whose transgression automatically guarantees emancipatory politics. Her speech can sound absolutist, exclusionary, even contemptuous of other relations. She courts singular glory and refuses Ismene's late solidarity. She does not offer a plural kinship program. Antigone antagonistics therefore treats her as a relay rather than a model. Her act reveals where normative kinship and sovereign classification fail, but the relations that could sustain life beyond that failure remain unwritten. The gap between interruption and institution will carry the trilogy toward Haraway.

VII. Ismene and the Conspiracy of More Than One

The monumental Antigone often stands alone: solitary conscience against the state, pure ethical demand against compromised survival, heroic dissident against passive sister. Bonnie Honig interrupts this portrait by returning attention to action, counter-sovereignty, solidarity, and the play's problem of two burials. Honig provocatively proposes that Ismene may have performed the first burial, turning her later confession from empty sentiment into a concealed truth. Whether one

accepts the detective argument or not, it changes the political optics. Antigone's act may belong to a sororal relay rather than a solitary sovereign subject.

This possibility matters because the isolated heroine can mirror the ruler she opposes. Creon says only he may decide; the heroic Antigone can appear to say only she understands the law. Both occupy the scene through indivisible conviction. Ismene introduces another tempo and tactic. She fears the state, advises secrecy, hesitates, survives, and later attempts to share responsibility. These gestures may signify cowardice, prudence, covert action, belated solidarity, or a politics calibrated differently from Antigone's public avowal. The sisters do not merge, but their difference prevents resistance from acquiring a single canonical form.

Honig's counter-sovereign Antigone also resists a political theory captivated by mourning alone. Grief can humanize enemies and expose shared vulnerability, but it can also withdraw political actors from collective projects into beautiful defeat. Antigone's lament does not simply surrender to mortality. It voices a rival world, gathers listeners, and contests Creon's monopoly over public meaning. Even her path toward death carries an address to the living. The question becomes not whether lament replaces action but how lament itself may act—how genre, rhythm, witness, and repetition can build solidarity.

Antagonistics extends this insight by asking who transports the act. The guard narrates what he saw. The chorus weighs divine possibility. Haemon reports what citizens say in private. Ismene offers a second body and a disputed confession. Teiresias links the corpse to the city's failed sacrificial system. Eurydice, often nearly silent in interpretation, answers the catastrophe with her own death and curse. No participant controls the relay. Creon's decree produces a chain of responses whose cumulative force destroys his household and discredits his judgment.

The play therefore stages a counter-public without giving it a secure institutional home. Citizens murmur but do not assemble. Haemon carries their speech into the palace but cannot persuade. The chorus counsels yet rarely acts. Ismene's solidarity remains contested. Antigone's burial gains visibility only through arrest. This fragile distribution resembles many oppositional formations: rumor under censorship, mourning under prohibition, coded speech, anonymous gestures, unofficial archives, small acts repeated by actors who may never agree on a common program.

The shift from lone heroine to conspiracy also revises perfumative passage. Passage does not require one limonaut who heroically changes the scene for everyone else. It can occur through relay, misrecognition, partial coordination, and divided agency. Antigone may name the interruption, but the interruption exceeds Antigone. This excess prepares the move toward Haraway's sympoiesis, where no actor makes a world alone. Before reaching oddkin, however, the play demands that we understand the conflicting apparatus through which such relays appear. That apparatus calls for antagonistics.

VIII. From Agonism and Antagonism to Antagonistics

Political theory often distinguishes antagonism from agonism. In Schmitt's formulation, the political crystallizes around the friend–enemy distinction and the real possibility of violent conflict. Chantal Mouffe retains the ineradicability of conflict but seeks democratic forms that convert enemies into adversaries: opponents contest hegemonic projects while recognizing one another's legitimate right to struggle. Agonism thus refuses both consensus without remainder and war without limit.

Antigone strains this distinction. Creon treats Polynices as enemy even after death, Antigone as internal enemy, Haemon as disobedient son, and dissent as corruption. He cannot translate antagonism into adversarial plurality. Yet the play also resists an easy agonistic solution. Polynices cannot become a recognized adversary because he is dead. Antigone's claim concerns a body excluded from participation. The gods do not enter deliberation. The corpse cannot reciprocate recognition. Burial cannot wait for procedural consensus. A politics oriented only toward living speakers in a shared arena misses the asymmetrical claims around which the tragedy turns.

Antagonistics names a different analytic and practical problem. It studies how conflicts become staged through equipment, bodies, genres, infrastructures, rites, roles, temporalities, and atmospheres. It asks not only which positions oppose one another but what arrangement makes those positions appear exhaustive. Who builds the stage? Who lies outside it? What objects carry the conflict? What transformations move a dispute from war to law, law to spectacle, spectacle to mourning, mourning to contamination, and contamination to prophecy? Which media enable retaliation, and which permit diagonal passage?

In *Antigone*, antagonistics tracks at least five operations. First, spatialization: battlefield, palace, city gate, exposed ground, cave, and altar distribute who may act and see. Second, mediation: decree, rumor, dust, corpse, lament, witness, and prophecy carry competing accounts. Third, role assignment: king, traitor, sister, guard, citizen, fiancé, seer, and mourner channel possible speech. Fourth, temporalization: succession, emergency, ritual obligation, delay, and too-late reversal shape consequences. Fifth, remainder production: the unburied body, excluded grief, private murmurs, and contaminated sacrifice return what official conflict suppresses.

This approach avoids treating antagonism as an abstract quantity lodged between preexisting subjects. The apparatus helps produce the subjects who then appear to possess the conflict. Creon becomes sovereign by issuing and enforcing the decree. Antigone becomes dissident through burial, arrest, and avowal. Polynices becomes traitor through posthumous classification. The chorus becomes public through its changing relation to fear and counsel. Antagonistics therefore joins analysis to design: changing the apparatus may change who can appear, what can count as a claim, and whether repetition remains the only available response.

The concept also clarifies the queering of queering. Once queer critique stabilizes as a recognizable antagonistic position, opponents can reverse its gestures while preserving the stage: expose hypocrisy, denaturalize identity, parody language, claim exclusion, and accuse institutions of normativity. Antagonistics asks whether the second-order queering merely exchanges occupants or alters the apparatus. Antigone provides the decisive test. She does not win Creon's office and reclassify the corpses. She shifts the conflict into burial, grief, divine pollution, and kinship. The act becomes transformative because the medium changes—not because the underdog finally controls the same decree.

IX. The Unburied as Political Remainder

The portability of Antigone's scene requires care. The play does not offer a universal code that erases historical differences among disappeared persons, mass graves, battlefield remains, enslaved bodies, victims of state terror, migrants lost at borders, Indigenous ancestors held in museums, or contested monuments. Each history demands its own names, institutions, and responsibilities. Yet the figure of the unburied identifies a recurring operation of power: control over remains can determine whether violence enters public memory, whether kin may mourn, and whether the dead can make claims upon a political present.

Achille Mbembe's necropolitics expands sovereignty beyond the formal right to execute toward the creation of worlds in which populations become disposable or live under conditions organized by death. Antigone shows an adjacent operation: necropower continues after killing by regulating the corpse's status, location, and recognizability. Exposure says that this death will not join the community's dead. It seeks not merely to end a life but to sever the relations through which the life might continue to matter.

Judith Butler's language of grievability names the framing dimension of this severance. A life counts as lost only within conventions that first made it apprehensible as a life. Creon's classification attempts to foreclose grief by translating Polynices entirely into enemy. Antigone's burial does not make him innocent; it makes his reduction incomplete. Her gesture insists that political guilt cannot monopolize mortal remains. A person may stand condemned within one register while retaining obligations in others.

Laqueur and Verdery help extend this point without dissolving it into metaphor. The dead help make communities, and their bodies can acquire political lives through burial, exhumation, reburial, commemoration, concealment, and display. Remains become sites where past and future negotiate. That work explains both the violence of Creon's decree and the force of Antigone's small rite. The dispute concerns who may mobilize the dead, but also whether any single power may exhaust their meanings.

Nicole Loraux's divided city further complicates the fantasy that politics begins after conflict has been forgotten. Civil war does not arrive from outside the polis; division inhabits the city's constitution. Civic unity often depends upon regulated forgetting, oaths against remembering wrongs, and narratives that suppress internal kinship between enemies. Antigone refuses such clean forgetting, but she also refuses the feud's imperative to remember through revenge. She remembers through burial. Her act neither erases division nor transmits it unchanged.

This distinction separates mourning from mnemonic retaliation. Feud remembrance tells descendants whom to hate. Sovereign remembrance tells citizens which deaths authorize the order. Antigone's remembrance attends to what both systems discard. It gives the excluded dead a place without converting that place into a renewed military claim. Such remembrance remains dangerous because it can reopen conflict; it remains necessary because settlements built on ungrievable bodies reproduce the violence they declare finished.

The political remainder, then, is not merely whatever escapes conceptual synthesis. It has weight, odor, location, kin, documents, and consequences. It may contaminate a ritual system, halt a development project, reopen a trial, reorganize a community, or expose a national myth. Antagonistics asks how that remainder travels and what forms of care prevent its capture by either revenge or official closure. Antigone supplies no general policy, but she establishes a limit: no durable polity can secure itself by demanding that some dead become nothing.

X. Perfumative Passage, Not Reconciliation

Antigone does not reconcile the brothers. She cannot return them to life, repair their compact, restore Thebes to an unbroken order, or synthesize their claims. Nor does she reconcile family and state. The tragedy ends with more bodies, not a balanced constitution. Creon learns too late, and the learning does not compensate the dead. Any reading that converts catastrophe into moral progress risks repeating Creon's editorial gesture: making the corpses serve a clean political lesson.

Her act nonetheless changes the inherited game. The first essay distinguished recursive feud from perfumative passage. Feud repeats positions under reversed signs; passage changes the scene, medium, atmosphere, or rule through which positions acquire force. Antigone performs such a diagonal movement. The brothers fought over the throne; she acts upon the corpse. They mobilized armies; she mobilizes dust and rite. They sought succession; she answers obligation. Their conflict asked who rules the city; hers asks whether the city may rule the dead without remainder.

This passage remains perfumative rather than merely performative because its effects diffuse across media and exceed Antigone's declared intention. She performs burial according to inherited ritual, but the act also produces rumor, reveals civic dissent, tests Haemon's relation to his father, alters the chorus, exposes Creon's insecurity, contaminates sacrifice, and summons prophetic judgment. Like perfume, the act changes an atmosphere before any institution can fully name or contain it. Its force travels through contact and remains, not solely through propositional argument.

Perfumative passage does not guarantee goodness. Atmospheres can spread panic, hatred, and myth as readily as care. A shift of medium can intensify violence. Antigone's action contributes to a chain ending in suicide and dynastic ruin, even though Creon's decree and stubbornness bear decisive responsibility. The concept therefore does not celebrate disruption for its own sake. It asks whether an intervention opens new capacities for relation or merely reroutes vengeance.

Antigone opens such a capacity through asymmetrical obligation. She answers someone who cannot answer and acts without expectation of repayment. This relation differs from contract, recognition among equals, or dialectical exchange. It also differs from sacrificial substitution, where one death balances another. Her burial does not pay for Polynices' war or purchase civic forgiveness. It marks a debt that cannot be settled because mortality itself prevents equivalence.

At the same time, the act remains entangled with glory, exclusivity, and a desire for singular authorship. Antigone wants her deed known; she rejects secrecy; she refuses Ismene's claim to share the act. Perfumative passage therefore passes through an impure agent. That impurity matters. The trilogy seeks neither saints nor innocent positions. It seeks operations capable of

interrupting recursive capture while acknowledging that every operation inherits damaged materials and contradictory desires.

The most precise statement of Antigone's achievement therefore stays modest: she makes the excluded brother matter in another medium. "Matter" here functions as verb and noun. Polynices' material body interrupts political abstraction, and Antigone's intervention gives that body renewed consequence. She does not determine what everyone must think of him. She prevents the city from deciding that nothing more may be thought, felt, or owed.

XI. The Limits of Antigone

Antigone's interruption opens politics, but it does not provide a durable practice for living together after feud. Her action focuses on a singular corpse and culminates in her own entombment. The counter-public around her remains dispersed. The city's institutions do not transform in time. Creon reverses course only under prophetic pressure and personal catastrophe. The play offers a threshold rather than a program.

Three limits shape that threshold. First, Antigone's kinship remains intensely genealogical. Her brother matters because no replacement brother can arise from dead parents. The claim breaks normative family order while closing itself around blood. Second, her agency remains vulnerable to heroic monumentalization. Even when Honig pluralizes the act through Ismene and counter-sovereignty, Antigone's name can absorb the collaborators, materials, and infrastructures that carried the interruption. Third, the scene remains anthropocentric despite its ecological relays. Birds, dogs, dust, weather, and decomposition matter, but largely as agents in a human dispute and signs of divine disorder.

These limits do not invalidate the act. They identify what the next essay must inherit. A politics after the feud needs relations not guaranteed by descent, practices not dependent upon a solitary heroine, and forms of response-ability distributed across human and more-than-human worlds. It must make kin without pretending that grief, violence, and irreparable death have disappeared. It must also resist converting every corpse into compost too quickly, as though lively circulation could redeem loss.

Donna Haraway enters at this difficult point. Her oddkin challenge the purity of inherited families; companion species replace sovereign subjects with trained, material-semiotic relations; string figures turn recursion from revenge chain into altered handoff; sympoiesis names making-with rather than self-making. Haraway changes the unit of relation that structured both the Hatfield feud and Antigone's claim. The question shifts from which branch inherits the name to what heterogeneous beings become capable of answering one another.

Yet Antigone must accompany that shift as a corrective. Harawayian composition can sound too lively when confronted with the singular dead, the disappeared, and losses that cannot join reciprocal flourishing. Antigone insists upon the corpse that does not collaborate, the obligation that cannot become mutual, and the act whose success does not repair the world. Oddkin will need burial as well as compost, mourning as well as making, and interruption as well as composition.

The transition from Antigone to Haraway therefore should not narrate progress from tragic blood to cheerful affinity. It names a change of problem. Essay I asked how opponents inherit one another through feud. Essay II asks how an excluded corpse interrupts the settlement imposed upon that feud. Essay III will ask how relations might be made so that inheritance does not automatically transmit either enemy or blood as destiny. Each essay leaves a remainder the next must answer.

Coda. Dust Does Not Close the Grave

Antigone's dust does not close the grave. It opens a problem of relation. The sister invokes blood, but her act also reveals that blood alone cannot determine obligation: Creon shares the same family catastrophe and draws the opposite conclusion; Ismene shares the same brothers and initially chooses another response. Kinship becomes force only when enacted through attention, risk, touch, mourning, and answerability.

The city invokes law, but law alone cannot determine political meaning: the corpse returns through animals, altars, rumor, love, and prophecy. Sovereignty cannot keep its outside outside. Every attempt to make Polynices matter only as enemy multiplies the media through which he matters otherwise. The excluded brother becomes not a reconciled citizen but an unassimilated claim.

Antigone antagonistics names this multiplication. It follows conflict beyond declared positions into the stages, objects, bodies, roles, and atmospheres that make positions possible. It asks whether a counter-move preserves the feud or changes its medium. Antigone answers by shifting from succession to burial, from reciprocal violence to asymmetrical obligation, from the brother as rival claimant to the brother as mortal remainder.

The passage remains unfinished. Antigone interrupts inherited antagonism, but she cannot yet make relation beyond the damaged family that gives her claim its force. At this threshold Donna Haraway enters—not to rescue tragedy with optimism, nor to replace the unburied dead with a garden of harmonious connections, but to detach kinship from purity, descent, and human exceptionalism. The Hatfield inherits an enemy. Antigone inherits a corpse. Haraway inherits a damaged world crowded with beings who have already made one another. The next essay asks how to change that handoff.

From Colonus to FabLab

Schürmann, Tragic Topology, and the Touch Between Media

HINGE ESSAY IN ANTAGONISTIC KINSHIPS

Feud • Burial • Topology • Oddkin

Touch modulates within a medium. Between media, it must break, fall, switch, and become otherwise.

— Working proposition

Abstract

The first essay in Antagonistic Kinships diagnosed the recursive feud: adversaries inherit one another, reverse one another's accusations, and turn injury into a transmissible identity. The second showed how Antigone interrupts this machinery by making the excluded brother matter in another medium. This hinge essay folds backward through Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus and Reiner Schürmann in order to reorient that claim. Topology does not simply name a place where action occurs. It names the operative arrangement through which beings can appear, touch, act, conflict, and pass into other forms. Touch within a medium unfolds as modulation; passage between media requires a break, a fall from prior competence, a switch of channel, and a transductive re-emergence. Colonus dramatizes this passage tragically. FabLab renders it materially and technically. Read together, they show why Antigone's burial cannot be understood only as a symbolic statement and why Haraway's making-with must involve more than connection. A topology is a field of differential contacts and discontinuous passages; a lab is the arrangement that makes different kinds of making and maker possible.

Central proposition

Topology concerns neither location alone nor relation in general. It concerns the differential conditions of contact and passage: how beings touch within media, how channels meet at interfaces, and how forms break, fall, switch, and emerge otherwise when crossing between them.

— From Colonus to FabLab

I. Why the Essay Must Be Recomposed

The Schürmann-Colonus material cannot simply be attached to Antigone Antagonistics as another interpretive reference. It changes the axis of the argument. The prior essay moved from recursive feud to the postwar management of corpses: Eteocles and Polynices destroy one another, Creon edits the result, and Antigone uses burial as a counter-medium. That movement remains sound. Yet it begins too late. Antigone does not arrive at the exposed body of Polynices as an uninitiated sister whose only resource is blood loyalty. She comes from Colonus. She has guided Oedipus through exile, sacred terrain, political negotiation, secret burial, and disappearance. Before she scatters dust

in Thebes, she has already learned that a body changes political force when it changes place, medium, and mode of appearance.

Colonus therefore supplies more than narrative prehistory. It reorients thought from identity to emplacement, from the principle that governs action to the topology that distributes possibilities, and from the sovereign knower to the mortal who must be received by a site he does not command. Schürmann finds in this reorientation a model for thought after the exhaustion of first principles. Oedipus no longer solves a riddle or restores civic order. He becomes the singular bearer of incompatible determinations: polluted and sacred, helpless and geopolitically valuable, rejected by his city and capable of protecting another, a living exile whose anticipated corpse attracts competing powers.

The contemporary extension to FabLab also cannot enter as a decorative analogy. A fabrication laboratory makes topology palpable because it organizes passages among media: speech, sketch, file, code, machine, material, assembly, bodily use, and public narration. Each passage alters what passes. The lab reveals that a form never simply travels unchanged from an originating mind into matter. It must survive a series of interfaces, tolerances, losses, errors, calibrations, and substitutions. The object and the maker emerge together from this topology of switching.

The essay thus needs recomposition around a stronger sequence: principle, topology, tragic site, medium-specific touch, transmedial passage, and fabrication. Colonus becomes the ancient hinge, FabLab the contemporary apparatus, Antigone the carrier of topological knowledge, and Haraway the thinker who will inherit the problem of making-with across damaged and heterogeneous channels.

II. From Principle to Topology

Schürmann's anarchy does not mean the absence of order. It means action without a single archē—a first origin, governing principle, and legitimating authority capable of subsuming every situation. Metaphysical and political orders repeatedly install such principles: nature, God, consciousness, humanity, history, class, nation, race, progress, or technological efficiency. A principle does not merely explain a world after the fact. It opens certain forms of appearance and action while foreclosing others. It tells beings what they are, tells actors what counts as reasonable, and tells institutions which differences may enter common visibility.

The movement from principles to topology changes the philosophical question. Principial thinking asks which universal should organize the manifold. Topological thinking asks how this manifold has already been arranged: which contacts a site permits, which conflicts it intensifies, which bodies it shelters or exposes, which channels it connects, and which singularities its common names cannot contain. A topos is not a neutral container awaiting occupants. It is an active configuration of laws, practices, tools, memories, rhythms, permissions, and exclusions.

Schürmann distinguishes three topological operations. Recapitulative topology traces the movement by which a discourse or principle becomes normative and then loses its hold. Critical topology examines what we still are but can no longer securely continue to be. Anticipatory topology attends to historical sites that have become possible without yet receiving an authorized name or stable institution. These are not three regions on a map. They are three ways of reading the

temporal tensions inside a situation: what founded it, what is breaking within it, and what it may already be allowing to arrive.

This is why topology exceeds place. Place can be treated as a point, territory, building, or bounded locale. Topology concerns the transformations of relation that occur when a configuration bends, tears, connects, isolates, or changes continuity. In Schürmann's phenomenological register, the relevant continuity is not geometric extension alone. It includes the continuity of a norm, a practice, a world, or a mode of disclosure. A topological break occurs when the inherited rule no longer carries beings smoothly from one situation into another.

The post-principial thinker therefore does not stand above the site with a better universal. Thinking becomes preparatory. It steps back from inherited categories, attends to what appears, and takes its measure from the conflictual arrangement itself. Such thinking does not refuse concepts. It refuses to turn a concept into metaphysical insurance against the singular event.

III. The Tragic There

For Schürmann, tragedy names neither pessimism nor the spectacle of unfortunate death. It names a conflict among laws that cannot be reconciled by a higher law. Catastrophe occurs when one situated law presents itself as the only law and blinds itself to the contrary claim it must suppress. Creon possesses a political claim: a city emerging from civil war cannot treat defense and invasion as interchangeable. Antigone possesses another: the dead brother cannot be expelled from kinship and divine obligation by decree. Tragic knowledge begins when neither claim can eliminate the other without producing greater ruin.

Schürmann describes tragedy as a path of sight. The hero first sees one law and becomes blind to its contrary. Catastrophe opens the eyes to the double bind that the normative single bind had concealed. Oedipus literalizes this movement. At Thebes he sees, investigates, commands, and forces disclosure until the truth destroys the sovereignty of the one who sought it. At Colonus, blindness becomes another mode of vision. He no longer masters contradiction by discovering its cause. He bears incompatible predicates without converting them into a reconciled identity.

Colonus is therefore the tragic there: the site at which irreconcilable forces can appear together without being stabilized beneath one principle. The sacred grove lies at a civic edge. Its terrifying goddesses are called the Kindly Ones. The polluted wanderer becomes a sacred guest. A useless exile becomes a desired political resource. A body that cities rejected becomes a source of future protection. The site does not solve these reversals; it holds them in a charged arrangement.

This holding is neither passive tolerance nor dialectical synthesis. The tragic there sustains a double bind long enough for its structure to become perceptible. Schürmann's topology asks for a place in which conflictual being can appear without immediate reduction to a single standard. Such a place may be a city, a grove, a courtroom, a workshop, a classroom, a protest, a network, or a laboratory. What makes it topological is not its physical location but its capacity to reorganize the relations among claims, actors, media, and possibilities.

The ultimate tragic tension in Schürmann lies between natality and mortality. Natality institutes: it begins, builds, legislates, and creates a common world. Mortality singularizes: each being withdraws from the names and institutions that made it publicly intelligible. We must make common worlds,

yet no common world can exhaust the singular. The task is not to choose foundation or dissolution. It is to act within their irreducible double claim.

IV. Touch Is Medium-Specific

Topology becomes more concrete once we approach it through touch. Touch here does not name haptics alone. It names the event in which one body, sign, force, process, or being modifies and is modified by another. Yet touch never occurs in the abstract. It happens within a medium or channel whose affordances and resistances give the contact its grammar.

A hand touches clay through pressure, moisture, temperature, friction, and yield. A blade touches wood through edge, grain, angle, speed, and splintering. A cursor touches a digital image through selection, coordinates, layers, permissions, and reversible commands. A laser touches acrylic through encoded paths, focus, heat, vaporization, kerf, and toxic residue. A spoken word touches a listener through air, voice, language, memory, social position, and atmosphere. Each contact counts as touch, but no common description can erase the difference among their media.

Within a medium, touch can proceed by modulation. Pressure increases or releases; a line thickens; a voice rises; a tool vibrates; a material bends before it breaks. Feedback remains partially continuous because the participants share a channel. Even here, continuity never becomes perfect. Clay contains grit, language contains ambiguity, software contains defaults, and bodies contain histories. But the medium supplies enough common organization for adjustment to occur as a recognizable variation.

This suggests a first distinction: intramedial touch changes a relation within a shared channel. The artisan and clay negotiate through a haptic field; the musician and instrument through vibration; the programmer and interface through symbolic operations. Competence means developing a proprioception for that channel—an ability to feel what changes before the result becomes fully explicit.

A topology of touch therefore asks not only who touches what. It asks through which medium, with which sensorium, under which protocols, and with what distribution of agency. It notices that the tool touches the hand, the interface trains the user, the material redirects the plan, and the institutional rule conditions all three. Touch is reciprocal without being symmetrical.

V. The Between Between Media

Passage between media differs sharply from modulation within one. A form crossing from speech to sketch, sketch to vector file, file to machine instruction, instruction to material cut, cut parts to assembly, and assembly to use does not remain self-identical. Each channel recognizes some features and discards others. The passage therefore contains a break.

The break produces a fall. The maker loses the fluency possessed in the former medium. A beautiful hand-drawn curve may become an unmanageable collection of vector points. A precise digital model may become impossible to mill because the tool cannot enter an interior angle. A dimension correct on screen may fail in wood because grain, humidity, or kerf changes the fit. At the interface, the old competence no longer guarantees action.

The fall need not mean failure in a purely negative sense. It creates the vulnerability through which another medium can answer. To cross a channel, the form must submit to conditions it did not establish. What might be called transcendence here involves no escape from mediation. It is the altered reappearance of a form after it has passed through discontinuity.

The switch then selects, encodes, or invents a new relation. A technician changes scale; software approximates a curve; a toolpath compensates for diameter; a maker changes material; a team abandons cutting for folding; a prototype becomes a performance rather than a product. The switch may occur by design, accident, refusal, or breakdown. It can preserve the project, redirect it, or reveal that the project was wrongly posed.

The between thus has its own betweens. Between intention and gesture lies bodily habit. Between gesture and tool lies grip and interface. Between tool and material lie force and resistance. Between file and machine lie format, code, calibration, and permission. Between prototype and use lie interpretation, maintenance, social convention, and unforeseen bodies. No single bridge spans the whole passage. A cascade of partial translations composes it.

We can name this sequence break–fall–switch–re-emergence. It describes a transmedial passage in which touch survives by becoming different. The term transduction is useful here: energy, information, form, and agency change register through the operation that carries them. What passes is neither an untouched essence nor a wholly unrelated replacement. It is a continuity produced through discontinuity.

VI. FabLab as a Topological Apparatus

FabLab makes this sequence tangible. It is commonly described as a place equipped with digital fabrication machines. That definition remains correct but shallow. A lab does not become a FabLab merely because a laser cutter, printer, router, scanner, computer, and worktable occupy the same room. It becomes a lab through the arrangement that lets heterogeneous channels touch, interrupt, and alter one another.

Consider a seemingly simple fabrication chain. Someone speaks an idea, sketches it, photographs the sketch, traces it into vectors, constructs dimensions, exports a file, selects material, configures a machine, tests the cut, notices an error, revises the geometry, assembles parts, places the object in a body or environment, and documents the result. No single author controls the entire chain. Formats, technicians, machines, materials, safety rules, budgets, schedules, and prior examples all participate in the fabrication.

What gets made is therefore more than the final object. The chain fabricates a maker capable of sensing new constraints. It fabricates a team with distributed expertise. It fabricates a problem whose real form may emerge only after material resistance. It fabricates a local vocabulary of tolerances, hacks, gestures, and warnings. The lab becomes a metamodeler because each project can alter the procedures through which later projects become thinkable.

This is why failure carries topological knowledge. A broken joint, charred edge, warped print, unreadable file, or misaligned tool reveals the actual arrangement more clearly than a frictionless success. Failure identifies where channels do not coincide. It shows that a digital line has no thickness until a machine and material give it one; that precision belongs to a system of tolerances

rather than an abstract number; that automation depends on tacit care; and that every apparently seamless workflow hides repair work.

FabLab also contains normative double binds. It promises open access while requiring expertise and safety control. It celebrates rapid iteration while materials and bodies demand slowness. It standardizes files and processes in order to share them, yet singular materials and local users resist standardization. It invites playful experimentation while funding, assessment, deadlines, and institutional liability press toward measurable outcomes. These tensions do not merely obstruct the lab. They constitute its tragic topology.

The topological question is consequently not, ‘What machines are in the room?’ It is, ‘What forms of contact, passage, and becoming does this arrangement permit—and which does it prevent?’ A lab is not a container for making. It is an apparatus that distributes the possible.

VII. Technicity and the Dream of Seamless Interoperability

Schürmann’s account of technicity gives the FabLab argument its critical edge. Technicity does not name machines alone. It names an epochal mode of disclosure in which beings appear as calculable, orderable, and available. Its question is relentlessly practical: what can be done with this? Under this pressure, wood becomes stock, time becomes throughput, attention becomes productivity, bodies become users, and difference becomes a parameter to be managed.

Technicity performs a double operation. It contextualizes everything under a powerful universal form while decontextualizing singular beings from their worlds. A tree becomes cellulose, a gesture becomes data, an image becomes a file, a community becomes a user category. Universal interoperability promises that every medium can communicate with every other once translated into the right format. Yet the price of this promise is often the loss of the relations that made the thing what it was.

FabLab can intensify this tendency. Digital fabrication may treat every object as the output of information and every material as neutral substrate. The rhetoric of making almost anything can obscure histories of extraction, labor, skill, maintenance, disability, waste, and unequal access. A universal design file can travel globally while pretending that machines, materials, climates, bodies, and communities are interchangeable.

But the same lab can expose the impossibility of seamless interoperability. Materials refuse equivalence. Machines possess different tolerances. Bodies cannot all use the same interface. A file that travels without context returns as a failed object. The topological lab makes these breaks legible and turns them into occasions for redesign rather than defects to be hidden.

The saving possibility does not lie outside technicity in a romantic return to untouched craft. It appears within the conflict between universal formatting and singular resistance. The lab becomes critical when it allows the break to speak: when a mismatch can alter the workflow, when a material can redirect the concept, when a participant can contest the category of user, and when failure changes the measure of success.

Such a lab does not reject standards. It refuses their sovereignty. Standards become provisional interfaces rather than ultimate laws. They enable passage while remaining answerable to what they

exclude. This is Schürmannian anarchy in a practical register: coordination without granting any single protocol the right to define the whole field.

VIII. Colonus as a Transmedial Lab

Colonus now appears less as a destination than as a switching site. Oedipus passes from king to exile, investigator to suppliant, sight to blindness, public identity to sacred opacity, genealogical possession to hospitality, living body to concealed protective force. None of these transformations preserves his prior form intact. Each requires a break with the channel through which he had previously appeared.

The grove functions as a medium with its own protocols. Oedipus cannot simply occupy it. He must learn where he stands, whom the place belongs to, which rites are required, and how his speech will be received. The chorus, Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Polynices, Theseus, and the divine signs each touch him through different channels. The site distributes their powers. Creon's force works differently at Colonus than at Thebes because Theseus and the sacred terrain alter the topology.

The decisive passage concerns Oedipus's death. The final truth does not become a public proposition. It becomes an entrusted place. Theseus alone receives the secret of the disappearance and must transmit it under conditions that preserve its withdrawal. Knowledge changes medium: from statement to trust, from public evidence to protected transmission, from visible corpse to absent source of political protection.

This is a transmedial fall. Oedipus cannot remain the recognizable subject of knowledge while passing into the power attached to his disappearance. His body leaves the channel of public representation. Yet the withdrawal does not erase political effect. It redistributes that effect through place, secrecy, succession, and memory.

Antigone participates as guide, support, witness, and one who cannot finally follow. Her touch helps Oedipus move through the site, but the last passage exceeds even her. She learns that care includes leading someone toward a threshold one cannot cross for them; that bodies may acquire force by disappearing from public capture; and that place can transform the meaning of kinship.

Colonus is therefore a tragic FabLab—not because it contains modern tools, but because it assembles heterogeneous agencies and transforms the channels through which a being can appear. It fabricates no stable product. It fabricates a passage from cursed genealogy to entrusted topology, while leaving the curse active enough to return in the brothers' feud.

IX. Antigone Carries Colonus into Thebes

When Antigone approaches Polynices' exposed corpse, she acts with knowledge formed at Colonus. Creon has fixed the body in one political channel: it must signify traitor. Exposure edits the war by making the corpse repeat the decree. Antigone does not answer primarily with a rival speech. She changes the medium through which the body matters.

A handful of dust touches the corpse materially, ritually, temporally, and cosmologically. It interrupts the attempt to hold Polynices as a stable public sign. The body enters relations with earth, gods, kin, animals, memory, and decomposition that the decree cannot fully regulate. Burial is a transduction:

the political enemy becomes again a mortal body and an object of obligation without ceasing to carry the conflict that made him enemy.

This clarifies the proposition from *Antigone Antagonistics*: Antigone makes the excluded brother matter in another medium. ‘Matter’ names both materiality and significance. She does not prove Polynices innocent or synthesize the brothers into a higher unity. She alters the topology of appearance so that the category traitor can no longer monopolize the corpse.

Her action also repeats the break–fall–switch sequence. She leaves the permitted channel of feminine, familial, and civic action; falls from the protections attached to obedience; switches from public decree to funerary gesture; and re-emerges as a political actor whom Creon can recognize only as criminal. The passage gives her agency and exposes her to destruction. Transduction does not promise safety.

The tragic limit remains. Antigone changes the medium of the corpse but cannot build a durable apparatus for collective life after the switch. She guards the singularity of her deed, refuses Ismene’s late attempt to share it, and moves toward entombment. The counter-medium opens a field without stabilizing a new institution. It is anticipatory topology: a site of possibility given but not yet occupied.

This is precisely where FabLab becomes more than a contemporary metaphor. It suggests that a passage can be supported by equipment, protocols, distributed roles, repeated trials, and collective maintenance. What Antigone performs as a singular and fatal switch, a lab might attempt to sustain as an iterative practice: changing channels without requiring martyrdom each time.

X. From Antagonism to Topological Antagonistics

The recursive feud appears differently once conflict becomes topological. Left and Right do not merely hold opposed beliefs. They meet through media systems, institutions, categories, platforms, images, rituals, and inherited scripts that organize how each can touch the other. Dialectical payback often occurs because both sides remain inside the same channel. They reverse positions while preserving the stage, audience, tempo, and repertoire of injury.

Queering the queerers can therefore remain feud recursion when it applies the same destabilizing operation to the prior destabilizer without changing the topology. Accusation answers accusation; exclusion answers exclusion; exposure answers exposure. The signs reverse, but the medium continues to reward outrage, purification, capture, and retaliatory visibility.

A topological antagonistics asks where the channel might break and what another medium could allow. It does not seek a neutral space outside conflict. It alters the arrangement through which conflict is made sensible. Burial rather than decree, workshop rather than tribunal, prototype rather than platform post, confidential relay rather than public denunciation, embodied rehearsal rather than abstract position—each switch changes what adversaries can do and become.

No medium guarantees emancipation. Workshops can humiliate, burial can authorize nationalism, secrecy can protect domination, and prototypes can intensify exploitation. The point is not to celebrate switching as such. It is to recognize that political transformation requires more than

winning within an inherited channel. It requires responsibility for the new exclusions, agencies, and temporalities produced by the switch.

This is the perfumative dimension of topological passage. Effects diffuse beyond the declared act and travel through atmosphere, equipment, memory, bodies, and genre. The maker cannot control the cascade. Yet neither is the cascade random. The topology conditions which effects can gather, cross, and return.

XI. Toward Haraway: Making-With After the Switch

Haraway enters after this reorientation. Sympoiesis—making-with—can now be understood not as harmonious connectedness but as sustained transduction among heterogeneous beings and media. Organisms, technologies, stories, landscapes, institutions, microbes, animals, and humans do not simply join a network. They touch through channels that translate unevenly, preserve some differences, erase others, and repeatedly require repair.

Oddkin are therefore fabricated topologically. They arise through practices that build interfaces without assuming common origin or identity. Companion species do not merge. They train, resist, infect, nourish, depend upon, and transform one another through histories of contact. Kinship becomes a laboratory of response-ability.

Schürmann prevents this making-with from becoming a new principle of universal relation. No slogan—entanglement, interdependence, kinship, care—can reconcile natality and mortality or erase the contrary laws within a site. Haraway's compositions remain answerable to tragic difference: some relations nourish one being by consuming another; some forms of care depend on extraction; some damaged worlds cannot be repaired without loss.

Antigone in turn prevents topology from becoming procedural abstraction. Her dust insists on the singular body that cannot be reduced to a node, flow, or material input. Every lab must ask whose remains, labor, exclusion, and vulnerability make its making possible. Every channel switch leaves residue.

The route toward Essay III thus becomes clear. The feud inherits enemies. Colonus teaches tragic emplacement. Antigone switches the medium of the excluded body. FabLab renders switching iterable and collective. Haraway asks how such iterative passages might compose oddkin without disguising the breaks through which they are made.

Coda. A Lab Is a Topology

A topology is not simply a place, although it always takes place. It is an arrangement of possible touches: contacts within media, interfaces among channels, thresholds at which competence fails, and switches through which forms reappear otherwise. It includes walls and machines, but also protocols, stories, permissions, memories, skills, atmospheres, bodies, standards, wastes, and absences.

Colonus reveals this topology tragically. Oedipus enters a site that transforms sovereign identity into mortal emplacement and public truth into entrusted secrecy. Antigone carries the lesson back to Thebes and touches her brother through a medium the decree cannot master. FabLab renders the

same structure operational: a form becomes makeable only by undergoing a cascade of translations whose failures teach the maker what the topology actually is.

The strongest formulation is therefore also the simplest: a lab is not a place where making happens. A lab is the topology that makes different kinds of making—and different kinds of maker—possible.

Touch modulates within a medium. Transduction occurs when touch survives the break between media by changing its form. The between is not an empty bridge. It is an active field composed of further between: break, fall, switch, relay, repair, and return. Thought after principles begins by learning to work there.

Making Oddkin After the Feud

Haraway, Sympoietic Antagonism, and the Queering of Inherited Relation

Making Oddkin After the Feud

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ESSAY III IN ANTAGONISTIC KINSHIPS

Feud • Burial • Topology • Oddkin

Jon McKenzie

Canonical essay with bibliography

Abstract

The first essay in this sequence described the contemporary Left-Right struggle and the recursive queering of queering as a feud form: rival camps inherit one another as enemies, appropriate one another's tactics, and turn remembered injury into a principle of identity. The second essay turned to Antigone, whose burial of Polynices interrupts the state's attempt to divide brother from brother, loyal citizen from traitor, grievable body from exposed remainder. A subsequent hinge through Oedipus at Colonus and Reiner Schürmann shifted the problem from position to topology: from deciding which law wins to inhabiting the fractured site where incompatible claims, media, bodies, and obligations meet.

This third essay asks what comes after that interruption. Donna Haraway does not reconcile the feud, supersede tragedy, or supply a new universal family. She changes the unit and medium of relation. The cyborg breaks the fantasy of innocent origins; companion species emerge through training, labor, affection, discipline, and misunderstanding; sympoiesis names systems that make-with rather than make themselves; string figures replace the revenge chain with a relay in which patterns survive only by changing hands. These figures do not abolish antagonism. They inhabit damaged worlds marked by predation, unequal labor, colonial histories, extinction, technoscience, disease, and unavoidable killing.

The essay therefore develops the concept of sympoietic antagonism: relations in which parties make one another without merging, conflict remains real without hardening into hereditary enmity, and obligations arise through material entanglement rather than identity or innocence alone. Antigone corrects Haraway by preserving the singular claim of the dead and the irreparable act that no lively network can absorb. Haraway corrects Antigone by distributing agency beyond the exceptional heroine, blood lineage, and sacrificial deed. Between them, kinship becomes neither destiny nor harmony but a topological practice of contact, transduction, response, and altered inheritance. Oddkin do not escape antagonism; they prevent antagonism from monopolizing kinship.

Central proposition

The Hatfield inherits an enemy. Antigone inherits a corpse. Haraway inherits a damaged world crowded with beings who have already made one another. Making oddkin changes the handoff: relation no longer requires descendants to repeat the injury in order to remember it.

I. After the Brother

Western political imagination repeatedly organizes itself around brothers. Cain and Abel, Eteocles and Polynices, Romulus and Remus, Jacob and Esau, the Montagues and Capulets, the Hatfields and McCoys: the rival pair converts proximity into danger. The nearest other becomes the competitor for blessing, land, legitimacy, inheritance, recognition, or the right to found a world. Political fraternity promises equality while quietly preserving this structure. The brother counts as equal because he belongs to the same house; the stranger, woman, animal, machine, servant, enemy, and earth remain outside or below the fraternal compact.

The recursive feud intensifies the structure. Each camp receives its identity from the other. Injury becomes archive, archive becomes pedagogy, and pedagogy converts descendants into carriers of unfinished retaliation. Even apparent reversal leaves the machinery intact. When the Right appropriates the Left's languages of victimization, identity, institutional exclusion, and cancellation, it does not exit identity politics. It performs dialectical payback. When queering itself becomes the object of a counter-queering, the second move may expose a genuine orthodoxy, but it may also reproduce the feud at a higher level of reflexivity. The parties trade masks while preserving the stage.

Antigone enters that stage after the brothers have completed their reciprocity in death. Eteocles and Polynices kill one another, but Creon refuses their equality as corpses. His decree edits the civil war after the fact: one brother becomes defender, the other traitor; one receives burial, the other remains exposed. Antigone's handful of dust counters the edit. She refuses the state's authority to make kinship disappear through classification. Yet her act remains bound to the singular brother and to the cursed house of Oedipus. She interrupts the political binary without fully escaping genealogical destiny.

Oedipus at Colonus complicates the sequence. The blind exile no longer asks who he is or which causal chain explains the plague. He asks where he may come to rest. His body, unwanted while living, becomes politically coveted as a future protective corpse. Thebes, Athens, sons, daughters, gods, and sacred ground all converge upon his emplacement. In Schürmann's terms, the drama turns from principle to topology: from the search for a governing law to the fractured "there" where

incompatible claims remain active. Colonus does not reconcile Oedipus. It reorients him through dependency, hospitality, secrecy, and disappearance.

Haraway enters after this reorientation. She does not offer a fourth position in the feud or a higher synthesis of Creon and Antigone. She asks how relation changes when the brother no longer monopolizes the scene of kinship. Her worlds swarm with dogs, microbes, primates, pigeons, laboratory animals, indigenous knowledges, machines, corporations, scientists, farmers, workers, activists, forests, and speculative descendants. These beings do not gather beneath one substance or origin. They meet through situated practices that make some contacts possible and others violent, mute, or unthinkable.

The movement of the sequence therefore runs neither from family to anti-family nor from tragedy to reconciliation. It runs from inherited enmity, through interruptive obligation, toward compositional kinship. The feud asks which house will prevail. Antigone asks which body may receive mourning. Haraway asks what kinds of beings and practices can become answerable to one another without first proving common blood, common identity, or common destiny.

This question does not come "after" tragedy in the sense of leaving it behind. Haraway populates the tragic there. She fills Schürmann's fractured site with the material-semiotic partners whom political philosophy usually treats as background, instrument, resource, or metaphor. The challenge no longer concerns only how two laws collide. It concerns how heterogeneous worlds touch, how media translate or fail to translate one another, how bodies and tools co-train their capacities, and how relations persist when no party controls the conditions of contact.

The title "Making Oddkin After the Feud" therefore names a task, not a chronological achievement. We remain inside feuds, damaged inheritances, and institutions that sort the valuable from the disposable. "After" marks an orientation: a turn toward forms of recursion that do not require identical return. The question becomes whether inheritance can function as relay rather than revenge.

II. The Cyborg Without an Origin Family

Haraway's cyborg remains one of the most incisive figures for breaking the feud's dependence on rightful origin. The cyborg has no innocent garden to which it can return. It does not seek purification from technology, restoration of organic wholeness, or reunion with an uncontaminated maternal nature. It arrives already composed from military research, medical apparatuses, communication systems, gendered labor, popular culture, bodies, fantasies, and code. Its genealogy looks less like a family tree than a wiring diagram crossed by leaks, appropriations, and unintended alliances.

This matters because the feud always tells an origin story. One side claims the first injury, the authentic inheritance, the rightful homeland, the original meaning of a word, the proper form of the family, the true people, or the uncorrupted tradition. Even revolutionary politics often reproduces the form by locating an innocent subject whose dispossession authorizes history's reversal. The feud's participants may disagree about the rightful heir, but they share the fantasy that legitimacy follows a recoverable line.

The cyborg cuts that line. It neither denies history nor floats free of ancestry. Rather, it makes lineage impure and multiple. The body that speaks through a prosthesis, the worker synchronized

with software, the patient whose life depends on pharmaceuticals and sensors, the soldier linked to targeting systems, the student writing with an AI model, the dog and handler training one another across gesture, scent, voice, and reward: each relation destabilizes the fiction that a self first exists and then chooses external tools. Capacities emerge inside assemblages.

Haraway calls the cyborg a creature of social reality as well as fiction. The phrase matters. The cyborg does not function merely as a literary metaphor for hybridity. It names how technoscientific worlds distribute agency, vulnerability, work, and visibility. Some cyborg relations extend life; others intensify surveillance, extraction, or war. Some allow bodies to speak; others translate bodies into data for institutions that own the channel. No generic celebration of mixture can decide among them.

The cyborg thus changes queering. It certainly unsettles human/animal, organism/machine, physical/nonphysical, natural/artificial, and male/female distinctions. But the unsettling remains attached to infrastructures and consequences. Haraway's categories do not dissolve in a free play of signs; they become material-semiotic knots. A boundary changes because laboratories, laws, hormones, screens, jobs, weapons, images, and bodies have already changed the conditions under which the distinction operates.

This prevents the queering of queering from becoming only another critical countermove. Once every identity can be exposed as constructed, the feud can continue indefinitely through reciprocal delegitimation. The cyborg asks a harder question: what does a construction construct? Which bodies can pass through the interface? Who maintains the system? Who absorbs the toxicity, error, speed, or risk? What new dependencies follow from the breach of a category?

The cyborg has no origin family, but it has makers, maintainers, suppliers, discarded components, and casualties. Its lack of purity does not imply lack of accountability. On the contrary, impurity expands the field of responsibility. If no being makes itself, then the relations through which it becomes capable of acting demand attention.

In the terms of this series, the cyborg turns genealogy into topology. Its identity lies not in descent from a single source but in the arrangement of contacts that sustain it. Those contacts remain medium-specific. Flesh touches electrode differently than a hand touches clay; code touches a machine differently than a command touches a worker; an image touches a public differently when carried by a poster, a phone, a police database, or a memorial. Each medium offers distinct operations, resistances, temporalities, and failures.

The cyborg therefore prepares the more expansive Harawayan claim: relation happens through channels, and passage between channels never preserves a thing unchanged. A form breaks, falls out of one competence, switches codes, and reappears under another set of constraints. The cyborg lives in these breaks between between. It does not transcend mediation. It survives by submitting to new media and by altering them in return.

III. Queering Queering Through Material-Semiotic Creatures

The first essay described "queering queering" as a recursive operation. A practice developed to expose naturalized identities eventually acquires its own recognizable institutional form. Its exclusions, orthodoxies, habits, and claims to marginality can then become objects of queering. The

move may deepen critique, but it can also serve dialectical payback: "You taught us that every identity can be deconstructed; now we will deconstruct yours."

Haraway's work provides a way to distinguish these possibilities. Her creatures queer boundaries, but they do not stop at demonstrating contingency. They ask what relations become livable, lethal, or newly perceptible once a boundary shifts. This question turns queering from a purely oppositional technique into a compositional practice.

The distinction does not oppose discourse to matter. Haraway refuses that familiar division. Her creatures remain material-semiotic: bodies and signs, organisms and stories, biological processes and political classifications. "Woman," "nature," "animal," "machine," and "human" do not merely name things already present. They help organize institutions, experiments, labor, care, violence, and desire. Yet signs never act alone. They travel through media, attach to bodies, allocate resources, and encounter resistances that exceed their scripts.

A purely recursive queering can become self-consuming. Each position exposes the exclusions of the previous one; each vocabulary becomes suspect as soon as it gains traction; each coalition fragments beneath the demand for greater purity or finer differentiation. The critical intelligence grows sharper while its capacity to build common practices contracts. The result resembles the feud: opponents inherit the other's moves and intensify them without changing the relational machinery.

Haraway's material-semiotic method asks critique to answer for its offspring. After undoing a category, what forms of attention, labor, protection, and collaboration become necessary? Which beings newly enter the scene, and what claims do they make? What apparatuses will register their presence? Who will acquire the skill to respond?

This changes the meaning of "world-making." The phrase can sound triumphalist, as though theorists or designers freely fabricate reality. Haraway's worlds emerge through constrained and unequal processes. A laboratory makes an animal as an experimental organism, but the animal's behavior, stress, disease, and resistance also alter the experiment. A breed standard makes a dog legible to institutions and markets, but bodies suffer or flourish unpredictably within the standard. A platform makes users measurable, yet users improvise, refuse, exploit, and become dependent on its affordances. Making never belongs to one maker.

The point also sharpens the relation between Haraway and the perfumative passage developed earlier in the series. Haraway should not simply be renamed a perfumative thinker. Her distinctive contribution lies elsewhere: she supplies material-semiotic figures through which a passage beyond performative reversal can acquire bodies, tools, habitats, and obligations. In the vocabulary of this project, the perfumative changes the scene, genre, or medium of the opposition. Haraway shows that such a change never occurs in language alone. It passes through creatures, channels, maintenance, and damaged ecologies.

The queering of queering thus faces a practical test. Does the recursive move merely switch who occupies the authorized position of critique? Or does it alter the topology through which relations become possible? Does it produce another accusation, or does it cultivate another capacity to respond?

Haraway's creatures answer by refusing solitary authorship. They do not ask to be celebrated as boundary breakers. They ask how boundaries get enacted, who must cross them, what the crossing

costs, and what forms of kinship can emerge without denying the differences that made the crossing difficult.

IV. Companion Species and Trained Relation

The companion species offers a more demanding figure of relation than the liberal contract or the blood family. Liberal individuals supposedly precede their agreements. Family members supposedly share substance, descent, and natural obligation. Companion species precede neither the relation nor one another in any simple sense. They become capable through contact.

Haraway's work with dogs makes this claim tangible. Human and dog histories cross hunting, herding, war, disability care, sport, breeding, scientific research, policing, domestic affection, abandonment, food systems, and play. "The dog" and "the human" do not meet as timeless species essences. Particular bodies encounter one another through leashes, floors, smells, commands, treats, veterinary regimes, housing rules, breed standards, training schools, and inherited expectations.

Training reveals relation as neither spontaneous harmony nor pure domination. It contains discipline, asymmetry, repetition, misrecognition, pleasure, frustration, correction, and mutual adaptation. The human may control food, space, and legal status; the dog controls capacities of scent, timing, attention, and embodied response that the human cannot simply possess. Each partner reads signs the other only partly understands. Success depends on learning how the other can be reached through a medium.

Touch plays a central role. A hand on fur, pressure through a leash, tone of voice, eye contact, posture, odor, and spatial distance each form a channel. The same gesture changes meaning across bodies and situations. What counts as reassurance to one dog may register as threat to another. What the human imagines as affection may override an animal's attempt to withdraw. Relation therefore requires response-ability: the cultivated capacity to notice how an act lands.

This makes companion species an important counterfigure to the rival brother. The rival brother mirrors the self closely enough to become an intolerable competitor. The companion remains irreducibly other while participating in a shared history. It does not ask, "Which of us is the true heir?" It asks, "What have we become through one another, and what obligations follow from that becoming?"

The answer cannot rely on innocence. Domestication includes care and cruelty, cooperation and selective breeding, coevolution and ownership. The companion relation never escapes power. Haraway's point does not concern making domination disappear through affection. It concerns becoming accountable within a relation that has already formed us.

This accountability also exceeds sentiment. Many companion relations involve labor. Animals work; technicians clean; caregivers monitor; families pay; institutions regulate; agricultural systems breed and kill. The pet can obscure these wider networks by presenting companionship as a private emotional bond. Haraway repeatedly pushes outward from the intimate scene to the material infrastructures that sustain it.

Companion species therefore offer a topology of kin-making. A relation gains form through the arrangement of bodies, media, routines, technologies, and institutions. Change one component and

the capacities of the relation change. Remove accessible transport, veterinary care, housing permission, a trainer, medication, or public space, and the celebrated bond may become unlivable.

This point connects directly to FabLab. A lab does not simply contain tools; it arranges possible contacts among bodies, materials, software, machines, rules, skills, and failures. Likewise, companion species do not simply occupy a shared environment. Their environment operates as an apparatus that trains who can touch whom, under what conditions, and with what consequences.

The companion species relation thus refuses two fantasies at once: natural kinship and frictionless interoperability. Kin must be made, but making does not mean total control. Contact works through media that can fail, resist, or produce unforeseen forms. The partner does not complete the self. It complicates the self's capacities and exposes its dependencies.

V. From Autopoiesis to Sympoiesis

The feud imagines each house as self-identical. The clan protects its name, preserves its memory, and reproduces its boundaries. Yet the feud simultaneously reveals that neither side makes itself. The Hatfields become Hatfields through the McCoys, and the McCoys become McCoys through the Hatfields. Each rival supplies the other's archive, discipline, and justification.

The feud is therefore secretly sympoietic. The rivals make one another, but they disavow the co-production by narrating it as unilateral injury. Each claims that the other introduced violence into an otherwise coherent identity. Retaliation then appears as restoration rather than further making-with.

Haraway's turn from autopoiesis to sympoiesis brings the concealed structure into view. Autopoiesis names self-making systems that maintain their organization through recursive operations. Sympoiesis names making-with: systems with distributed control, porous boundaries, changing partners, and no final unit that produces itself alone. Haraway does not simply reject recursion. She pluralizes and opens it.

This matters politically. A binary conflict tends to hide the multiplicity of actors who sustain it. Media platforms monetize outrage; donors fund institutions; algorithms rank visibility; schools transmit vocabularies; families carry memories; police and courts formalize categories; weapons, images, archives, landscapes, and dead bodies participate in the field. The rival camps may address one another as sovereign agents while depending on a crowded ecology of human and nonhuman mediators.

Sympoiesis changes the analytical unit from the camp to the arrangement. It asks not only what a side believes, but how the side becomes capable of acting. Which channels carry its affects? Which devices synchronize its members? Which spaces permit assembly? Which stories translate private injuries into public identities? Which excluded beings or labors make the conflict possible?

Here Schürmann's topology returns. Once no first principle can organize the whole field, thought must attend to the situated configuration through which forms of action emerge. Haraway's sympoiesis does not supply a new arche called "interdependence." Interdependence can itself become a vague moral universal that suppresses antagonism. Instead, sympoiesis directs attention to concrete practices of co-production, including those marked by domination, damage, and refusal.

This is why sympoiesis cannot mean harmony. Parasites make-with hosts; corporations make-with workers and ecosystems; laboratories make-with animals; diseases make-with bodies; empires make-with the populations they exploit. Constitutive relation does not guarantee justice. It removes the fantasy that one party stands outside the relation as pure author, victim, or observer.

The concept needed for this essay is therefore sympoietic antagonism. It names relations in which parties make one another but do not merge; conflict remains real but need not harden into hereditary enmity; obligations arise from material involvement rather than from shared identity or moral innocence.

Sympoietic antagonism differs from agonistic pluralism. Agonism typically seeks institutions that transform enemies into legitimate adversaries. This remains valuable, but it often assumes human political subjects meeting in a recognized public sphere. Sympoietic antagonism widens the field. It asks how adversaries, infrastructures, nonhuman beings, media, and damaged places co-produce the conditions of struggle before anyone enters debate.

It also differs from reconciliation. Reconciliation tends to imagine a restored community or a shared narrative capable of integrating opposed claims. Sympoietic antagonism accepts that some losses cannot be repaired and some demands cannot be harmonized. It seeks forms of continuation that do not require denying the fracture.

The FabLab offers a practical image. Within one medium, touch modulates: a hand presses clay, a cutter meets acrylic, code adjusts a vector. Between media, continuity breaks. A sketch must become a file; the file becomes machine instruction; the instruction meets material; the cut becomes an object; the object enters use. At each switch, something falls away and something unforeseen appears.

Oddkin emerge through comparable transductions. Relation crosses species, institutions, languages, technologies, and temporalities. It cannot preserve an original identity untouched. A being loses competence in one channel, submits to another's conditions, and reappears altered. The between contains further betweens: interfaces, protocols, errors, delays, and acts of care.

A sympoietic topology therefore tracks not only who relates to whom but how contact happens. Which medium carries the relation? Where does it break? Who controls the switch? What cannot be translated? Which residues become waste, noise, symptom, or new possibility?

Haraway's making-with starts here: not with a celebration of connection, but with the difficult work of composing across non-equivalent media and partners.

VI. String Figures Instead of Revenge Chains

The feud passes an injury from hand to hand. Each generation receives a pattern with a command attached: preserve the grievance, identify the enemy, return the blow. The pattern survives through repetition. Variation appears as betrayal.

Haraway's string figures offer another model of recursion. A string figure also passes from hand to hand, but it cannot remain identical. The receiver must take the tension, recognize the current pattern, move fingers through the arrangement, and offer another configuration. Continuity depends on transformation.

This difference appears simple, yet it reorganizes inheritance. The revenge chain treats the handoff as transmission of a fixed debt. The string figure treats the handoff as collaborative recomposition. The receiver neither begins from nothing nor merely obeys. A pattern arrives with constraints and openings.

Haraway gathers several meanings under "SF": science fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism, science fact, and so forth. The proliferation matters because no single genre controls the relay. Scientific descriptions, activist practices, stories, games, images, and embodied exercises pass patterns among one another. Each medium changes what the pattern can do.

The string figure therefore embodies the topological insight developed through FabLab. Touch within the string's medium depends on tension, friction, finger placement, and sequence. The passage between players introduces a break. One hand must release without collapsing the pattern; the other must receive without simply seizing. The between becomes an active interval of risk.

This gives us a richer account of tradition. Tradition need not mean the preservation of identity across time. It can mean the careful alteration of a pattern so that it remains capable of further relation. What must persist is not the original form but the possibility of another handoff.

The distinction illuminates political memory. A community that forgets injury becomes vulnerable to repetition. But a community that remembers only through inherited enmity also repeats the injury by converting descendants into its medium. The question is not whether to remember. It is how to change the form in which memory travels.

Antigone's burial can be read as such a handoff. She receives a body excluded from the city's narrative and passes it into another medium: dust, ritual, earth, mourning. She does not erase Polynices' political history, but she refuses Creon's attempt to freeze the corpse as the sign "traitor." Burial alters the pattern of inheritance.

Haraway extends the relay. The dead pass into stories, soils, microbes, institutions, and responsibilities. The passage does not resurrect them or settle the debt. It changes what the living must carry. Memory becomes less a command to imitate the ancestors than an obligation to compose conditions in which their abandonment does not become normal.

String figures also challenge heroic authorship. No player owns the pattern. Each receives and modifies it. This offers an alternative to Antigone's insistence on the singularity of her deed. When Ismene tries to share responsibility, Antigone refuses her claim. The tragic force of that refusal remains, but so does its limit: resistance becomes the property of the exceptional actor.

A string-figure politics would ask what collective forms might scatter the dust. How can mourning, care, and refusal become practices distributed across many hands, including hands that do not share blood? How can institutions preserve the capacity to receive a claim without turning the claim into another standardized category?

The answer cannot take the form of a final design. The string figure teaches method through play: receive, maintain tension, alter, and pass on. It replaces the command "return the injury" with a more difficult imperative: "change the handoff."

VII. Response-Ability After Antigone

Antigone responds to an unburied corpse. Her action begins not from a universal theory but from the exposed body of Polynices. The body interrupts the city's completed account of the war. It smells, decays, attracts animals, and refuses to remain a stable political sign. Antigone answers because the body makes a claim that Creon's decree cannot absorb.

Haraway's response-ability expands this structure. Response-ability does not name a general capacity already possessed by autonomous moral subjects. It must be cultivated within particular relations. One learns to notice signals, histories, needs, resistances, and silences. A response becomes possible because bodies and practices have trained one another to register contact.

This expands Antigone's insight without dissolving its singularity. Both Antigone and Haraway attend to beings excluded from the dominant account. Creon reduces Polynices to traitor; technoscientific and political systems reduce animals, workers, landscapes, and populations to resource, data, risk, case, or collateral. The response begins when the excluded remainder becomes perceptible as a claimant.

Yet Haraway disperses the heroic act. Care rarely arrives as one spectacular refusal. It happens through feeding, cleaning, observing, repairing, translating, documenting, maintaining, and redesigning. These practices do not look tragic in the classical sense, but they bear tragedy's double binds. Care can dominate; medicine can harm; protection can confine; attention can become surveillance; rescue can reproduce dependency.

Response-ability therefore requires more than good intentions. It requires attention to the medium of response. The same act changes across channels. Naming a harmed being in a report differs from touching its body, changing a law, altering a machine, mourning publicly, or redistributing resources. Each response has affordances and limits. A compassionate story may leave an infrastructure intact; a technical intervention may save lives while silencing the beings it measures.

Haraway's insistence on situated knowledge matters here. No view from nowhere can determine the proper response in advance. But situatedness does not justify relativism. A situated claim must answer for its location, instruments, exclusions, and consequences. It gains strength by acknowledging how it was made and by remaining open to counter-contact.

Antigone's own situatedness remains extreme. She speaks as sister, daughter of Oedipus, citizen and non-citizen, woman before sovereign power, living person claimed by the dead. Her position gives her access to a claim Creon cannot hear. It also narrows the field. Her famous defense of the irreplaceable brother intensifies biological singularity: another spouse or child might be possible, but no new brother can be born once her parents are dead.

Haraway shifts from irreplaceability grounded in blood to obligation grounded in entanglement. A being may become irreplaceable not because it occupies a unique slot in genealogy but because a history of co-becoming has made its loss a transformation of the shared world. Species extinction, habitat destruction, the death of a companion animal, the disappearance of a language, or the destruction of a neighborhood each breaks relations that cannot be replaced by substituting another instance of the same category.

This is where Antigone's corpse and Haraway's damaged worlds meet. The dead do not simply exit the network. They reorganize it through absence. Response-ability includes learning how to answer what can no longer answer back.

Such answerability resists the feud's temporality. The feud lets the dead command the living through revenge. Response-ability lets the dead make claims without granting them sovereign control over the future. Mourning receives the pattern, but it changes the handoff.

VIII. Staying with Antagonism

"Staying with the trouble" can easily become a soft slogan for patience, complexity, or conviviality. Haraway's work supports no such comfort. Her worlds include killing, eating, breeding, experimentation, disease, extinction, labor exploitation, colonial classification, military technology, and ecological collapse. Making-with occurs inside damage.

Sympoiesis therefore cannot serve as the opposite of antagonism. Conflict belongs to constitutive relations. Predator and prey, host and parasite, worker and employer, patient and medical system, animal and laboratory, indigenous community and conservation regime, user and platform: parties may depend upon one another while experiencing the relation as coercive, lethal, or unjust.

This is why "we are all connected" offers little ethical guidance. Connection can name care, extraction, contagion, surveillance, or dependency. The moral task begins only when the form and asymmetry of the relation become explicit.

Schürmann's tragic thought helps prevent Haraway from sliding into network optimism. The tragic double bind joins the common and the singular, natality and mortality, institution and transgression. Humans must build shared worlds, yet no common order exhausts the singular beings it organizes. Every institution enables appearance and suppresses contrary claims. Every composition risks becoming a principle.

Haraway's making-with inhabits this double bind. Composition remains necessary; no being survives alone. But the composition must retain sensitivity to what it cannot integrate. Oddkin require forms of common life that do not demand complete assimilation.

This is the point at which antagonism, agonism, antagonistics, and sympoietic antagonism should be distinguished.

Antagonism names conflict structured through enemy relations. The other appears as a threat whose elimination promises completion.

Agonism transforms the enemy into an adversary whose right to contest the order receives recognition. It designs institutions for conflict without annihilation.

Antagonistics examines the media, rituals, infrastructures, classifications, and bodies through which conflict becomes organized and reproduced. It asks how an enemy relation gets made.

Sympoietic antagonism adds that the parties and apparatuses make one another even when they remain opposed. It seeks ways to alter co-production without pretending that difference, inequality, or injury have disappeared.

This framework clarifies the Left-Right feud. The camps do not merely hold contrary opinions. They co-produce attention economies, rhetorical repertoires, identity formations, fundraising cycles, and institutional responses. Each side's outrage helps train the other's capacities. A sympoietic antagonistics would not ask only how to moderate tone or restore civility. It would redesign the channels that reward mimetic escalation.

The same framework applies to queer recursion. Queering queering becomes productive when it exposes how a critical practice has acquired hegemonic habits and then alters the institutions, media, or relations that sustain them. It becomes feud when the recursive move serves only to reverse the stigma and inherit the opponent's position.

Haraway's staying with the trouble requires remaining in contact with this ambiguity. No side receives innocence through complexity. To say that enemies co-produce one another does not distribute blame equally. Power shapes the terms of co-production. One party may control law, weapons, money, data, or the right to classify. Sympoietic analysis must make asymmetry more visible, not less.

Nor does staying imply remaining inside every harmful relation. Refusal, withdrawal, sabotage, separation, and boundary-making may become necessary responses. The crucial point concerns the fantasy of exteriority. Even departure leaves traces, costs, dependencies, and altered worlds. One may exit an institution without becoming untouched by it.

Oddkin therefore live neither in harmony nor in permanent war. They inhabit the tragic there where relation remains necessary, conflict remains real, and no governing principle guarantees the next move.

IX. Make Kin, Not Rival Heirs

"Make kin, not babies" challenges the assumption that futurity must travel through biological reproduction, property, race, nation, and species continuity. The slogan does not require hostility toward children or families. It contests the monopoly of descent over obligation.

The legendary feud depends on rival heirs. A name, land, throne, blessing, wound, or destiny must pass through the proper line. Descendants gain identity by receiving the conflict. The family becomes a transmission apparatus for unfinished antagonism.

Haraway's oddkin redirect inheritance. Kin can be made through shared practices, ecological dependence, political alliance, care work, technological mediation, neighborhood, study, mourning, and survival. Such relations do not erase blood kin, but they refuse to treat blood as the natural ground of loyalty.

This matters in modern politics because nation, race, and species repeatedly borrow the grammar of family. The homeland becomes mother or father; citizens become brothers; migrants threaten the household; racial purity appears as protected descent; future generations justify present sacrifice. The family metaphor turns political boundaries into natural obligations.

Oddkin denaturalize the metaphor while preserving the force of obligation. A relation need not be natural to bind. Indeed, made kin may demand more attention because no inherited script guarantees the terms. The relation must be maintained, revised, and sometimes ended.

Haraway's speculative Camille stories dramatize this redirection across generations. Communities form long-term relations with endangered species and reorganize reproduction, education, embodiment, and responsibility around multispecies survival. The stories risk utopian eccentricity, but they address a precise temporal problem: what should descendants inherit if not the command to reproduce the same human world?

The feud says, "Remember who injured us." The Camille stories say, "Remember which lives depend upon our response." Both transmit obligation, but the object and medium of inheritance change.

The shift also troubles reproductive futurism. Political discourse often invokes "the child" as the innocent future that must be protected, while actual children remain differentiated by race, class, citizenship, disability, and geography. Oddkin refuse the abstract child as universal alibi. They ask which children, species, infrastructures, and places receive the material conditions for a future.

Yet made kin can also become coercive. Communities may romanticize collective obligation, impose experimental identities, or conceal unequal labor beneath the language of care. Chosen family can reproduce exclusion; multispecies projects can appropriate indigenous knowledge; conservation can displace people; technological intimacy can deepen corporate control.

Oddkin require antagonistics. The question is never simply whether relation was chosen or inherited. It concerns how the relation operates, who can revise it, whose labor sustains it, and what happens when one participant refuses.

"Make kin" therefore names a political technology rather than a moral sentiment. It redirects the channels through which bodies, memories, resources, and responsibilities pass. Its success cannot be measured by warmth. It must be measured by whether the handoff reduces the need for descendants to become enemies in order to remain faithful to the dead.

X. Antigone's Corrective to Haraway

Haraway's compositional vocabulary can move too quickly. Entanglement, sympoiesis, and making kin may imply that every conflict can be redescribed as a relation awaiting better arrangement. Antigone interrupts this optimism.

Polynices does not arrive as a lively partner in co-becoming. He arrives as a corpse. He cannot collaborate, negotiate, flourish, or reciprocate. His claim falls upon Antigone as an asymmetrical obligation. The dead body resists the easy ethics of mutuality.

Antigone therefore preserves the force of the singular and irreparable. Some acts cannot be composted immediately into new possibilities without committing another violence. Murder, abandonment, extinction, and betrayal create losses that no enlarged network repairs. The dead may nourish future life materially, but that does not settle the demand for mourning, truth, or justice.

This matters when institutions adopt the language of entanglement. A corporation can say that workers, consumers, and ecosystems all participate in a shared network. A state can say that security and freedom require balance. A university can say that every stakeholder co-creates the community. Such descriptions may be accurate at one level while obscuring who controls the terms, who remains disposable, and whose death becomes an acceptable cost.

Antigone says no. She refuses to let the common arrangement absorb the excluded body. Her act places a limit on composition: no world worth making can require this corpse to remain outside mourning.

Her refusal also protects opacity. Haraway values situated knowledge, but the enthusiasm for richer accounts can become another demand that every being enter representation. Antigone's burial

withdraws the corpse from Creon's public signification. She does not produce a fuller civic profile of Polynices. She returns him to earth and ritual.

Colonus intensifies the point. Oedipus's final place remains secret. Political protection depends on a knowledge that cannot become common property. Relation sometimes requires withholding rather than circulation.

Antigone thus corrects any Harawayan tendency to treat increased connection as inherently better. Some channels should close. Some data should not travel. Some bodies require distance, secrecy, burial, or refusal.

She also preserves the necessity of decisive action. Distributed agency can blur responsibility. When everyone participates in a system, no one may feel authorized to interrupt it. Antigone acts. She accepts risk and names the decree she will violate.

A sympoietic politics still needs such cuts. Making-with does not remove the moment when one must refuse the terms of relation. Haraway's compositional abundance requires Antigone's limit: the claim that will not wait for the network to become ready.

XI. Haraway's Corrective to Antigone

Antigone's force carries its own danger. She can become the monumental heroine, sovereign in refusal, pure because she stands alone. The political imagination then reproduces the very exceptional form she contests: Creon owns the decree; Antigone owns the resistance.

Ismene exposes the problem. At first she refuses to assist, fearing the power that confronts them. Later she tries to share Antigone's responsibility and fate. Antigone rejects the claim. The act remains hers.

Haraway asks what changes when agency distributes across collaborators, critters, tools, institutions, and inherited damage. No single mourner owns the passage. Care depends on many hands, including hands whose contributions remain ordinary, compromised, or invisible.

A distributed burial might involve those who wash bodies, document names, challenge laws, maintain cemeteries, archive testimony, transport remains, support families, repair damaged soil, and teach histories. None repeats Antigone's singular act exactly. Together they create an infrastructure in which fewer bodies can be abandoned.

This distribution does not diminish courage. It changes the heroic economy. Politics no longer waits for the exceptional person willing to die spectacularly. It builds capacities for sustained response.

Haraway also loosens Antigone's blood logic. The sister's obligation to the brother has extraordinary dramatic force, but it can preserve the family as the privileged source of grief. What of the corpse without family, the enemy body, the migrant lost at sea, the laboratory animal, the extinct species, the polluted river, or the person whose kinship network the state refuses to recognize?

Oddkin extend mourning beyond descent. They do not claim that every loss feels the same. They cultivate practices through which unfamiliar beings can become grievable without first becoming versions of us.

Haraway further replaces tragic purity with non-innocence. Antigone can appear untouched by the compromises of governance, labor, and maintenance because the play drives toward a single

catastrophic choice. Haraway's worlds continue after the gesture. Someone must feed, clean, repair, negotiate, and live among the consequences.

The corrective therefore moves from sacrifice to maintenance, from blood to situated entanglement, from singular authorship to collective relay, and from final gesture to ongoing practice.

Yet Haraway's answer should not cancel Antigone. Distributed agency still needs singular claims; maintenance still needs refusal; oddkin still encounter bodies that cannot answer back. The two figures remain in tragic tension.

A useful formulation follows:

Antigone prevents sympoiesis from becoming soft pluralism.

Haraway prevents fidelity from becoming blood destiny.

Together they define a politics of composition under the sign of the unassimilated claim.

XII. Compost, Not Settlement

The trilogy's final figure is compost.

Settlement would end the feud through agreement, victory, reconciliation, or exhaustion. Compost does none of these things. It works with remains.

The image must retain its difficulty. Compost involves decomposition, heat, microbes, smell, labor, toxicity, imbalance, and time. Not every material composts safely. Some residues poison the heap; some bodies have been denied burial or treated as waste; some lands have absorbed more damage than they can transform. Compost cannot become a cheerful metaphor detached from death and political inequality.

Its force lies elsewhere. Compost breaks the feud's fantasy that inheritance must preserve identity. In the heap, remains enter relations that neither repay nor erase the dead. Matter passes into other lives. The form changes radically, yet the past continues to condition what can grow.

Antigone begins this terrestrial turn by placing dust upon Polynices. Creon tries to fix the corpse as a political sign; burial releases it into ritual and earth. Haraway radicalizes the passage: bodies belong not only to family and city but to multispecies processes that exceed human sovereignty.

Colonus also joins the figure. Oedipus's corpse does not become a public monument. It disappears into a secret place and protects Athens through withdrawal. The ground holds what the city cannot fully represent.

Compost therefore names neither transparency nor circulation. It combines transformation with opacity. One cannot recover the original body intact, yet its effects persist.

The figure also returns us to FabLab. A fabrication culture often celebrates the prototype and ignores scraps, failed prints, toxic resins, obsolete machines, mined materials, energy use, and labor. Compost asks the lab to account for its remains. What happens to the forms that fail to cross media cleanly? Who handles the dust? Which materials can re-enter a cycle, and which reveal the limits of the cycle?

A lab worthy of oddkin would not only make objects. It would organize responsibility for breakdown, residue, repair, and handoff. It would treat failure as topological knowledge: evidence that a medium, material, or relation refuses seamless conversion.

The same applies to political inheritance. Failed institutions, defeated movements, compromised vocabularies, and painful memories do not simply disappear. They become the material from which later practices work. The task is not to purify the inheritance but to prevent its most violent pattern from reproducing automatically.

The Hatfield inherits an enemy.

Antigone inherits a corpse.

Haraway inherits a damaged world crowded with beings who have already made one another.

The sequence ends neither in reconciliation nor in endless critique. It ends with a compositional demand: receive the pattern, answer the dead, change the handoff, and make relations that do not require descendants to repeat the injury in order to remember it.

Oddkin do not abolish antagonism. They refuse its monopoly over relation. They make room for conflict without hereditary enemies, attachment without common substance, obligation without innocence, and futurity without the reproduction of the same house.

After the brother, kinship becomes a practice of touch. Within a medium, touch modulates through pressure, resistance, and feedback. Between media, contact breaks, falls, switches, and re-emerges otherwise. Oddkin live through those transformations. They neither preserve origin nor dissolve difference. They hold tension long enough for another hand to enter the figure.

The final imperative is therefore modest and immense:

Do not inherit the enemy unchanged.

Do not abandon the corpse.

Do not call connection justice.

Do not make innocence the price of relation.

Receive what has already made you. Answer where the world has been made unanswerable. Alter the medium of inheritance. Pass on a pattern that another hand can change.

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MeTanoia Playground

StudioLab

"PLAY is the lab where we unlearn to learn again."

Care is a route

We wander to make cure.

maps hold memory

THE GROUND REMEMBERS.

SONG KEEPS US ALIGNED.

healing is cosmic work.

WE WITNESS.
WE REMEMBER.
WE IMAGINE.
WE PLAY.

Labyrinth
nothing is linear here.
get lost.
find more.

Serpentine
follow the curve.
trust the uncurling.

The Fall / Cliff
risk reminds us we are alive.

border between play & thought.

RETURN is a DREAM WE KEEP.

every path can hold the others

Rock Garden
step gently.
listen to the stone.

String Fingers
climb.
pluck.
become vibration.

Care Station
rest. repair.
recharge.

Witness Bench
sit. watch.
hold the story.

Dorita's Doric Doorway
pass through.
leave different.
return wiser.

Cosmic Egg
crack open.
enter the unknown.

Cloud Machine
make weather.
make wonder.

StoryX Path
every step a story.
every story a step.

Toryx Switch
choose.
switch.
transform the map.

Helix Spiral
descend.
turn.
rise changed.

Pablo's Frame Shop
reframe.
reshape.
reimagine.

Haunted House
enter if you dare.
leave what you carry.

play is rehearsal for new worlds

WE BUILD TOMORROW WITH TODAY'S PLAY.

shadows teach us how to see.

beauty is our act of defiance.

Children paint tomorrow.

The Playground

A StudioLab Performance Cosmography

MAP KEY

- Path / Route
- Portal / Threshold
- Witness Point
- Care Station

This map is not fixed.
It changes with us.
Draw your own path.
Add your own place.
The playground is alive.



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