(Be)Longing and Resisting: A Narrative Excavation of Critical Ontogeny

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved March 2012 by the
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May, 2012

ABSTRACT

The present study is a narrative representation of two individuals – one, a prison abolitionist living in the Phoenix area and, the other, myself as a writer and scholar – and their development of, negotiations with, desires for, and problematic performances of critical dispositions within the contemporary social order. In initiating this research, I framed my process as an exploration of the ways in which people who commit themselves to organized counter-hegemonic movements have developed critical dispositions despite their immersion in the normative discourse of American public schools and the relentless public pedagogies of neoliberal subjectivity and psyche. In essence, I wondered how people had gained both the capacity to perceive – however fleetingly – an outside to doxic structuration and, more difficult yet, to sacrifice the psychic comfort these structures promise for the risky work of creating a more just social order. Via psychoanalytic understandings of identity and desire, these stories explore and represent the primordial learning, experiences, and traumas that guided my informants to resist or reject dominant ontological narratives and normative cultural scripts in order to explore and maintain space – albeit exilic – for their own axiological and ethical development and, ultimately, to take up positions of active, educative resistance.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to “Jeanie,” “Maylie,” “Michael,” and the people and families they help at the cost of their own comfort, safety, and rest.

I also want to dedicate the stories herein to my grandmother, Gloria Burdick. I wish you were here to read them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank, with all that I have, Jonel Elizabeth Thaller, Weston Ratcliffe Burdick, and Eliza Ray Burdick, for their patience, kindness, and love over the past 6 years. The sacrifices you've all made for me have not gone unnoticed, and I hope I can give you all as much as you've given me. I promise to be there so much more now that this document is done.

Thanks also to my parents, Steve and Marie Burdick, who never faulted me for the choices I've made, even the ones that were plainly bad. And thank you for supporting every dream I've had with happiness and without reservation. I appreciate you more than you'll ever know.

I would also like to thank my chair, Tom Barone, who has been a guide and a friend in the precise ways that I needed him to be. Most importantly, I want to mention Tom's incredible humility and patience, both qualities I hope to replicate in some small way in my own writing and teaching. Enjoy retirement, Tom, and thanks for sticking around to see me finish!

Jenny Sandlin, from two timid geeks meeting at Balcones to two timid geeks who can't seem to stop texting each other… what would my life be like without you? Thanks for the love and the lawlz. BFFery is always a given.

Karen Anijar – the first curriculum studies faculty member I met at Arizona State – you've been unbelievable in your earnestness and your capability to help me see through my own myopias. You taught me to make everything and anything an occasion for theorizing. Thanks for Boehner, the apocalypse, and zombies, especially when I needed them most.

Stephanie Springgay, thank you for taking this Springgay/Freedman groupie under your wing. I wanted you on this committee from the first time I saw you present in Chicago and read *Curriculum and the Cultural Body*. Your approach to your work and to the arts has continually inspired me to think about my thinking, writing, and being in profoundly complicated and productive ways. Plus, you really know your way around dessert pastries.

I must also thank Jeremy Moreland, my supervisor and colleague at University of Phoenix, for the long discussions about methodology, scholarship, and Apple products. Two people could not be more opposite on paper and similar in person.

Thanks to all of the scholars, theorists, friends, confidants, and conference roommates I've met over the past six years. Any list would certainly be incomplete, but I do want to mention (in no order… except for Jules, of course) Julie Maudlin, Brian Schultz, Michael O'Malley, Jason Wallin, Debra Freedman, Cole Reilly, Morna McDermott, Jenn Milam, Kris Sloan, Will Letts, Erik Malewski, Toby Daspit, Jim Jupp, and Jason Lukasik specifically. You are the ones that made this possible and amazing.

Finally, thanks are owed to all of the friends I had growing up, who conspired with me, listened to Jawbreaker records ad infinitum, helped me shave strange patterns in my hair, and skateboarded through the long Arizona summers. And, in this group, I'd like to mention Mike Meeks, Matt Elsbecker, and Steve Reed specifically. You are a huge part of making me who I am today.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL CONFESSIONS

Introduction

I have an incredible amount of books on my shelf written by education and curriculum theorists who claim that the relationship between public schooling and the notion of education is synecdochical at best (e.g. Apple, 2004; Barone, 2000; Counts, 1978; Eisner, 1998; Freire, 1993, 1994; Giroux, 1997; Greene, 1995; Macedo, 1994; McLaren, 1994; Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Pinar, 2004; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). At worst, they say, it is adversarial, with schools substituting curiosity with accuracy, critical dialogue with meiutic funneling, and imagination with assent. Romaine Rolland (as cited in Silverman, 2009), a friend and correspondent of Freud's, claimed that by "canalizing" spirituality, drawing it off from its main tributary, churches sabotage their own capacity as places where transcendence might be found; in much the same manner, schools potentially evacuate themselves of education via their commitments to decidedly anti-intellectual, anti-human ends.

Ivan Illich (1971) argues, and the history of American policy and curricular decisions attests (Spring, 2004), that American public schools are, and have largely always been, sites that serve to transmit dominant ideology, reinforce extant power relationships, and maintain unequal distributions of capital. Students find themselves molded into a field of prefigured destinies, entering into a program of training to fulfill a secular, economic dharma. The previously cited germinal and contemporary education and curriculum theorists have made cogent arguments that reveal the arbitrary and often anti-humanistic elements of the

institution of schooling. These authors posit that education – to fulfill its moral obligations – must either be designed to foster the ability to imagine one's life into existence beyond the confines of the known (in the case of the phenomenologically oriented curriculum theorists), or it must work to create a more equitable social configuration (as per those theories with commitments to Marxian analyses). However, under the pressures of policy, funding cuts, and a rote, instrumentalist curriculum, it would seem that the public school as a laboratory for either actualization or democracy has become an increasingly remote possibility within the American landscape.

Searching for some space in which education can achieve democratic ends, scholars working in the genre of *public pedagogy* (Brady, 2006; O'Malley, Burdick, & Sandlin, 2010; Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010) expanded inquiry into educational spaces and phenomenon beyond schools' walls. Albeit a vast and conceptually and politically diverse genre within educational inquiry, public pedagogy scholarship generally seeks to locate the ways in which sites not commonly associated with educational outcomes or activities act as spaces of teaching and how individuals respond to and engage with these educations. According to O'Malley, Burdick, and Sandlin, these forms of curricula and pedagogies exist

> in institutions other than schools, such as museums, zoos, libraries, and public parks; in informal educational sites such as popular culture, media, commercial spaces, and the Internet; and in/through figures and sites of activism, including "public intellectuals," grass-roots social activism, and various social movements. (p. 696)

Despite contemporary (Sandlin & Milam, 2008; Burdick & Sandlin, 2010)

and historical (Dewey, 1916; see also Schubert, 2010) engagements with the public sphere's capacity as a space for critical discourse and the development of a democratic citizenry, much of the field's conceptualization can be attributed to the contributions of Henry A. Giroux, whose work has been both prolific and groundbreaking in understanding the ways in which dominant cultural scripts are reproduced via popular culture and the everyday practices of "citizenship" under the sign of neoliberalism. Popular culture sites, such as Hollywood cinema (2001a, 2001b, 2003) and Disney (1999) were the subjects of Giroux's earlier public pedagogy work; however, as the genres he explored continued to replicate similar ideological configurations, Giroux's attention expanded to understanding the whole of culture itself as rapidly being transmogrified by the onset of neoliberalism, the late form of capitalism that conflates economic determinism with social and psychic identity (2004a, 2004b).

While still firmly entrenched in a critical media literacy project, Giroux's article, *Neoliberalism and the Disappearance of the Social in* Ghost World (2003) illustrates a fundamental shift in his approach to the study of public pedagogy. His subject for this piece, the film *Ghost World*, offers cogent insights into a social issue – this time, the alienation experienced by young girls graduating high school and entering into a vapid, consumerist, and normalizing social order. Giroux readily praises the film for its tacit representation of the gradual decay of critical perspectives and the inevitable numbness of work-life in the character Enid; however, his larger critique all but eradicates this positive aspect of the film. He states,

> *Ghost World* is notable for the way in which it become complicitous with a dominant discourse that too easily functions pedagogically, in spite of its emphasis on youth resistance among teenage girls, to depoliticise their rebellion by displacing the realm of the social as a crucial political concept that provides them with a sense of what it might mean to struggle both individually and collectively for a more just and democratic future (p. 157).

The paragraphs directly following this quote shift the discourse toward an engaged analysis of the distribution of wealth in the country (even including demographic data), within which Giroux argues that the realities behind the miniscule economic prospects for U.S. children could have been somehow communicated in the space of *Ghost World* (p. 158).

Clearly the economic climate within the United States reproduces vast gulfs between the wealthy and the poor, and equally clear is the notion that critical educators should interrogate this reproduction at every possible occasion for intervention. However, it seems odd that Giroux (2003) would assail a Hollywood film, produced and sold as part of the culture industry, for not engaging in a critical polemic of social class, especially when that kind of analysis would call for a drastically different aesthetic than that featured in *Ghost World*. Giroux's critique, then, might be viewed as his exhaustion of the genre of film as a site for analyzing public pedagogy without consistently repeating the lament for what is not, and perhaps cannot, be present. Further, reading his work in this way presents research into popular culture – perhaps the entire corpus of "public" space – as a site of possibility with the need to consistently temper analyses in light of the economic conditions of late capitalism.

Recent criticism by Glenn Savage (2010) must also be figured into the

work of scholars who look to non-school-based sites of education. Savage notes that the term "public" becomes a dubious signifier within the present moment, as the onslaught of late capitalism and a renewed libertarian political movement seeks to privatize all public space and, by proxy, all spaces of potential resistance. As Pinar (2010) notes in his foreword to the *Handbook of Public Pedagogy*, the spaces valorized by critical public pedagogy research and theorizing, "while portrayed as inviting in this collection, may prove to be even less hospitable to education than the school historically has been" (p. xviii).

Exacerbating further the problems faced in teaching and learning for social change in any location, Žižek (1989) maintains that contemporary Western culture is simultaneously ideological and post-ideological, noting that the prevailing ideology is that of cynicism: people no longer believe in ideological *truth*; they do not take ideological propositions seriously.

> The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself . . . Cynical distance is just one way—one of many ways—to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them*. (p. 33, emphasis in original)

Thus, whereas individuals (we/I) might be conscious of and savvy about the deplorable state of material relations and of the presence of ideological control, they (we/I) still do nothing to address it. Such a psychic state helps to explain why individuals in the United States can fervently hold to ideological positions even when those positions actively work against them in a material sense—voting against class interests under the aegis of morality and, for example, the

romanticization of foreign nations' revolt against perceived power while the same stance is vilified and masked domestically. The unconscious fears the loss of its shared ideological fantasy, as this fantasy makes the world comfortably knowable, and despite evidence of alienation and psychic violence enacted in this space, we are unwilling to exchange what comfort we have for greater relations of freedom.

More damning, perhaps, is the possibility of curriculum and education scholars' own work falling into the loop of cynical logic – what Lacan (2007) called "the discourse of the hysteric," within which the dominating master signifier becomes the obsessive and totalizing desirous object of critical discourse. Is radical scholarship simply a comfortable space for acting as if we are outside of fantastic construct? Does the institution provide us with Žižek's (1989) ironic space – a distance that is sanctioned within the dominant discourse as contrapuntal, but accounted for nevertheless? Do we mold ourselves out of the same clay we claim to break? Or, do some truly traverse the fantasy of dominant culture, imagining metaphors for being that problematize, even disturb, the ubiquities of alienation, domination, and cultural psychosis?

Responding

The present study is a narrative representation of two individuals' negotiations with, desires for, and problematic performances of critical dispositions within the contemporary social order. In initiating this research, I framed my process as an exploration of the ways in which people who commit themselves to organized counter-hegemonic movements have developed critical dispositions despite their immersion in the normative discourse of American

public schools and the relentless public pedagogies of neoliberal subjectivity and psyche (Giroux, 2004a). In essence, I wondered how people had gained both the capacity to perceive – however fleetingly – an outside to doxic (Bourdieu, 1977) structuration and, more difficult yet, to sacrifice the psychic *comfort* (Marcuse, 1992) these structures promise for the risky work of creating a more just social order. My goal was, thus, to develop critical stories about how these individuals have produced and maintain their identification with and desire for their respective causes in spite of the overwhelming centrifugal force of dominant culture. And, via my interest in psychoanalytic understandings of identity and desire, I wanted these stories to explore and represent the primordial learning, experiences, and traumas that guided my informants to resist or reject dominant ontological narratives and normative cultural scripts in order to explore and maintain space – albeit exilic (Said, 1993, 1994) – for their own axiological and ethical development and, ultimately, to take up positions of active, potentially educative resistance.

When I first conceptualized this research, I did so via this metaphor of exile developed by Edward Said (1993, 1994) and utilized in curriculum work by Giroux (2004a), He (2010), and Dimitriadis (2010), among others. Said (1994) referred to this condition as

> a model for the intellectual who is tempted, and even beset and overwhelmed, by the rewards of accommodation, yea-saying, settling in. Even if one is not an actual immigrant or expatriate, it is still possible to think as one, to imagine and investigate in spite of barriers, and always to move away from the centralizing authorities towards the margins, where you see things that are usually lost on minds that have never traveled beyond the conventional and the comfortable. (p. 63)

However, through the analysis and story-crafting processes, I have become more aware of the romanticized, overdeterministic, and even privileged elements of any theory that attempts to funnel the activity and sensation of a particular individual – especially one laden with a term as suspect as intellectual – into categorical statements. Said's work establishes the category of intellectual exile as a special, rarified space, but the theoretical proclivities of psychoanalysis (notably Freud (1986/1933) and Lacan (2006; Fink, 1995) suggest that we are always already existing as split subjects, divided either via the problems of interiority and exteriority in the process of socialization (à la Freud's tensions between Eros and reality), the parsing of symbolization that occurs via the entry into language, or the nigh-endless conflicting and confounding streams of desire that wash over the social psyche/body. In these discourses, we are perpetually exiled from our-selves, and the alien and alienated demeanor that Said describes becomes a manifestation of unfulfilled desire. In essence, we are in-between signification, unable to fully inhabit the deleterious metaphors of the commonsensical world and materially/linguistically barred from fully traversing fantasy into new possibilities.

Via this theoretical vantage point of psychoanalysis, I came to this research with the notion that desire – even that which is directed at improving the lives of other people – finds its origin within the primal scenes of trauma that accompany identity development. That is, for psychoanalysis, our lives are lived as palimpsests, with repressed elements of fundamental, traumatic experiences

continually returning and informing our development (or arrest) as individuals. Lacan (2006, Fink, 1995), the theorist whose work guides the majority of my research, saw the entry into language and differentiation – as well as the social space they delineate and maintain – as a sort of fall from grace that rends an individual's psyche into fragments and overwhelmingly restricts our access to undifferentiated understandings and conceptualizations (what Lacan calls the Real). Thus, for Lacan, these early moments of identity development and language acquisition – all traumatic in their shearing of the Real – take on cosmological status for a child. They do nothing short of create the world as it can be known. As an example of this process, one that takes up the polarity of gender in representational bathroom door signage, he writes,

> . . . Gentlemen and Ladies will henceforth be two homelands toward which each of their souls will take flight on divergent wings, and regarding which it will be impossible for them to reach an agreement since, being in fact the same homeland, neither can give ground regarding the one's unsurpassed excellence without detracting from the other's glory (p. 417).

Gender is not the only homeland, however, as the composite assemblage of selfhood exists within the fixity and totality of language. Lacan's later work (much of which has yet to be translated and transcribed) begins to address the sociological ramifications of the linguistic necessity of self definition and the resultant *othering* that identity entails, and these concepts have been readily taken up by education scholars, including Bracher (1993), Cho (2009), and jagodzinski (2004, 2006) and cultural theorists (Zizek, 1991, 1989). Collectively, these individuals have sought to explore the pedagogical and curricular metaphysics

that undergird relationships between what Mills (2000/1959) described as *troubles*, which "properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of his [sic] immediate milieu" and *issues*, which "have to do with the organization of many such milieux into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life" (p. 8).

In a different articulation of psychoanalytic work in education, Pitt and Britzman (2003) took up the Freudian concept of "deferred action," which suggests that learning never occurs at the direct moment of experience, but rather that objects of educational development are worked on by the unconscious longitudinally and relationally to other experiences and phenomenon. They write, "[our research] is told in the strange time of deferred action, a psychoanalytic concept that heightens the problem of how emotional significance and new ideas are made from past and present experiences . . . the force of an event is felt before it can be understood, and a current event may take its force and revisions from an earlier scene" (p. 758). The lineage of knowing developed in this statement constructs a phenomenological, situated sense of both knowledge and action that is grounded in foundational, even primordial, constructs of identity and Being: an inextricable link between the rending of identity development and the ways in which an individual responds and comprehends experience. From this perspective, several commonsensical ways of understanding resistance and the relationships between pedagogy and politics within the field of curriculum studies become increasingly complex. As some of the critiques of critical pedagogy have

illustrated (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiner, 2007), theorizing and teaching the content of politics in no way assures a form of critical transfer, especially if these educational endeavors are enacted polemically.

Thus, the work presented herein was developed to add to these scholars' work by circumscribing an enhanced psychoanalytic understanding of the ontogeny of the critical self, a self that is able to connect the personal traumas of her own existence to the social facts of domination and who is able to see the relationship of everyday life to anti-human, exploitative, neoliberal, patriarchal, racist, and heterosexist (to name a few) structures. As Pitt and Britzman (2003) note, "psychoanalytic research posits education as an exemplary site where the crisis of representation that is outside meets the crisis of representation that is inside" (p. 756). In essence, I hope herein to discuss and *occupy* (to use the metaphor grassroots resistance has taken up at the time of this writing) the foundations of critical dispositions and pedagogies in a way that decouples them from the space of political commitment and the multiplicity of identity configurations that necessitates these allegiances.

This is not to say that I naïvely wish to eschew politics. Rather, I agree with Ranciere's (2010) argument that "politics invents new forms of collective enunciation; it reframes the given by inventing new ways to make sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and the invisible . . ." (p. 139); accordingly, in my project I sought to understand the undiscussed pedagogical "hinge" (Ellsworth, 2005) that simultaneous allows political discourse to achieve these ends and illuminates this discourse's status as an always-already failed

attempt to effect an ethical relationship to the Other and to the Other that lives within the self.

Respondents

In researching and writing this piece, I chose to work with an individual ensconced in pedagogical capacities outside of schools due to my aforementioned criticism of schools and schooling as a constantly dimming space for the kind of educational possibility found in the work of Dewey (1916), Freire (1970), Ellsworth (2005), and especially Felman (1983). Emphasis on schools largely

> reduce[s] educational practice and theory to the confining space of existing cultural models and vocabulary of teaching, learning, and curriculum . . . they offer a bounded possibility of what *counts* as education, most often metonymically collapsing the very concept of *education* into the practice of *schooling*. (Burdick & Sandlin, 2010, p. 350)

Essentially, my concern with participants who work in schools is that, regardless of their espoused axiological, political, or ethical commitments, they still perform within the confines of the dominant signifier of education and its ordinal images, metaphors, and practices of teaching and learning. In contrast, my hope for this study resides in the articulation of pedagogical and curricular forms that have yet to be – and possibly resist sublimation to – the constellation of the educational known. This is not to say that the individual I did partner with in creating this text is not – and was not – affected by her time in schools. In fact, discussions of schools and schooling came up on several occasions (potentially appearing due to my credentials), and elements of these discussions were used as frames upon which to write stories/chapters. Two stories from my participant, in particular, *A*

Public Education Campaign of a Slightly Different Kind and *This Particular Crime of Expression*, were based in conversations we had about institutional forms of education and the ways in which they were negotiated. Further, several of the autoethnographic pieces I include deal with my schooling, the fallout I experienced in dropping out of high school, and the ways in which this "decision" has influenced my approaches to education and educational inquiry.

Jeanie

For the first half of the study (note that these *halves* are not demarcated as such in the representative work, nor are they intended to be mathematically equal, if such a thing could be measured), I observed, followed, dialogued with, read the work of, and interviewed Jeanie Hildt, a self-professed prison abolitionist, who maintains multiple blogs dedicated to education and resistance around prisons, networks and coordinates with local and national anti-prison movements, acts as an advocate for prisoners and victims of prison violence, participates in protests for a broad range of related causes, and regularly chalks anti-police and anti-prison messages on the downtown Arizona cityscape.

My initial searches for participants were less than fruitful: most of my emails and phone messages went unanswered, and when I did get a response, I was directed to community relations managers, rather than activists, or I was given the number of people who had recently been jailed (largely as part of the ongoing protests in Northern Arizona regarding sacred land usage by private firms). However, upon meeting Jeanie at Tempe's Ironwood Infoshop (the story of this meeting is recounted in this dissertation, as is a description of infoshops in

general) during an educational session on prisoners' rights, and hearing the ways in which she described her life and her work, I realized that she both met and productively complicated my criteria for a potential participant. I approached her to participate in the study, and she agreed. I emailed Jeanie the requisite recruitment script and informational letter that evening, and she invited me to the pre-trial hearing of Kevin Gerster, a corrections officer who had recently leaned his foot into the neck of a mentally ill prisoner, causing the man to black out for several minutes. For the following three months, I went with Jeanie and Michael (her main partner in activist work) across the state to city hall hearings for private prisons, read Jeanie's blog entries, listened to her speak on public radio, spent time with Jeanie at her home, interviewed her at a local coffee shop, and met her at her own pre-trial hearing.

In our conversations, my observations, and her writings, I began to understand what I feel is a powerful and frequently surprising account, not only of the ways in which critical dispositions are formed, but also how they are maintained and how they are shattered. From this point, I decided that my study of activist being and becoming beyond my experiences would focus exclusively on Jeanie, as her stories provided a rich, complicated space for theorizing the potentially naïve ways we view critical education and romanticize the performative space of the activist and the Saidian exile (Said, 1993, 1994). As a final note, when I was drafting this dissertation, Jeanie was in the sentencing phase of the criminal trial detailed herein, and the chapter titles I use throughout the narrative all come directly from the e-mail she sent the judge as her statement.

Upon reading this e-mail, which was posted to all of her blogs, I was struck with how much the story I had wanted to tell was already manifest in her unique language and style.

Jake

To assist in both recovering the experiences that led me to want to conduct this research, and to provide readers with an account of my positionality as the writer/researcher, I have also interwoven several pieces of writing that represent what I am terming *auto/archeological inquiry* as the other *half* of this dissertation. Drawing on Foucault's (1971) notion of the historical, genealogical nature of knowledge, this project involved locating and analyzing my past (largely creative) writing in order to both re/construct the experiences, ideas, and emotions at play within these pieces and to look for the "latent" desirous impetuses (Freud, 1986; Žižek, 1991) behind the language I produced in these pieces – not as an attempt at imposing a final, analytical/critical reading of my past as a heuristic for the rest of the text, but rather, as a means of foregrounding and reflecting upon my memory of being inside/outside of schooling and culture, as well as of the psycho-social forces that potentially undergird my own critical perspective.

Via this process, it has been my attempt to excavate elements of a selfhood of my own historical past – a prior state of being and knowing that, although chronologically earlier in terms of learning and development, I do not view as hierarchically inferior. Rather, my attempt here is to address the processes of my own life – and by proxy, the lives of my research participants – as a complicated process, one that cannot be adequately understood via linear chronologies, but

that must be recognized as a series of movements that denote difference, rather than progress in the traditional sense. I relate these movements to the dialectical relationship between self and social, subjectivity and objectivity, modern and postmodern found in the work of Pinar (2004; Pinar & Grumet, 1974) and the scholars that have contributed to his "reconceptualization" of the curriculum field. Whereas I agree with Pinar's autobiographical process as a means of exploring of the manifestations of power and historical structures that delimit and deform understandings of the self, the social, and the political activity that bridges the two, my ultimate goal of my auto/archeological work is not the resuscitation of a stable understanding of my-self. Rather, my hope is to engage in what jagodzinski (2004) calls "a 'traversal of fantasy,' a recognition of its powerful hold over the psyche, which then leads to a new beginning" (p. 41), with the fantasy at hand being the notion of a linear, consistent, historical notion of the self-in-development.

The auto/archeological pieces serve as a series of interchapters/interludes throughout Jeanie's central narrative, with the specific function of "objectifying" myself as the researcher, instrument, and writer of the study – an active character within the production of the text's meaning and an individual who can also be read as determined by his own desires and lackings. Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) ideas regarding reflexivity, combined with readings in narrative/arts-based research (Richardson, 1999; Behar, 1996) and conversations with my committee have helped me to realize this process as likened to the role of an artist-in-training, an emphasis on my becoming-as-critical-pedagogue while I

work to understand Jeanie's development in the same capacity. Accordingly, by undertaking this auto/archeological project, I attempt to unearth metaphorically the foundational desire/historical development that drives me to study this particular population in this particular way with these particular questions and framework. By making this discussion of the self an additional voice, as well as an embedded story in the research, I hope to turn the sense of bracketing outward as well, allowing readers to produce their own understandings of the specific interests, myopia, and dispositions I might bring to the research process and text.

Bodies in the Desert

During the course of writing these narratives, a third section emerged as part of my narrative structure. Comprised of stories that are neither entirely Jeanie's nor entirely Jake's, these pieces describe four deaths that have affected multiple individuals within the overall narrative. I separated these pieces out as a way to call attention to the kinds of "oceanic" (Silverman, 2009) relationships that intertwine and intersect the stories in the overall piece. In Silverman's *Flesh of My Flesh*, she describes the oceanic as return to a sort of analogic thinking, as opposed to the radical forms of differentiation that mark Western subjectivity. In her work, she locates finitude, death – both as a symbolic and material event – as something that must be brought into consciousness in order to engage in ethical, analogic relations. In short, "death is not the enemy of form but rather what animates it . . . all vital subjects are constantly emerging out of the ashes of their own extinction – the same, but different" (Silverman, p. 166). What Silverman hopes to inform, then, is a means for relating to Others at one site of common

human juncture, the inevitable experience of being finite, and at this site, to look for a means of ethical engagement beyond the psychoanalytically suspect constructs of identity and identity politics.

With these theoretical elements in mind as I wrote, the lasting effect of four particular deaths became central in the conversations I had with Jeanie, as well as in re-readings of my own prior creative work. To utilize the space that Silverman (2009) imagines for the analogic aspect of death, I elected to have these pieces stand alone in the text, potentially to be read as both relational and intersectional to the stories involving Jeanie and Jake, as all four of these bodies in the desert emerged, in some sense, as pedagogical hinges (Ellsworth, 2005) in the development of Jeanie and Jake as characters/subjects. Stories in this subset are named after specific dates, a juxtaposition with the achronal way in which the majority of the writing in the text is arranged (a narrative element I describe in depth later in this introduction).

Narrative and (dis)Structure

The later work of Jerome Bruner (1986) is frequently cited as the entry of narrative research within the field of education. Bruner suggested that there are two forms of cognition: 1) the paradigmatic, which is funded by the rational, scientific logic that undergirds the vast wealth of educational research, and 2) the narrative, which owes more to the arts, specifically the literary arts, with its ordering logic structured by what Donald Polkinghorne (1995) called *emplottment*, the characteristic of being structured in story-like movement. Using Bruner's continuum, Polkinghorne provides meaningful distinctions regarding the

ways in which narrative, specifically stories, can be utilized in qualitative inquiry. He suggests that two subgenres of research, *analysis of narrative* and *narrative analysis*, that can provide useful contributions to the body of knowledge regarding human activity. Analysis of narrative typically owes more to Bruner's paradigmatic cognition, via its employment of a rational, logical decoding and deciphering of research participants' stories via an analytical grid devised by the researcher. Blurring the distinction between scientific inquiry and the artistic tradition of literature, narrative analysis re-creates the data derived from participants into a story constructed by the researcher in dialogue with participants. According to Polkinghorne,

> the storied finding of a narrative analytic inquiry is not a third person "objective" representation or mirrored reflection of a protagonist's or subject's life as it "actually" occurred; rather, the finding is the outcome of a series of constructions. . . . The data used in narrative inquiries are not simple descriptions of sense-impression. They are dialogical productions resulting from the interactions between subjects and the researchers. (19)

Accordingly, this study utilized *narrative analysis*, in which both the analysis and (re)presentation of the data will be made in the form of creative prosaic pieces that blur the intersection of fiction and creative non-fiction. The use of narrative analysis is intended to call attention to the fact that the notion of a critical turn in consciousness is a highly individualized phenomenon, one that may be deeply rooted in one's drives, one's desire, and in the kernel of the Real than animates these energies. Thus, it is my suspicion that there is no rote, ritualized manner by which critical ways of knowing and being emerge; rather, these events are grounded in experience and happen in the "strange time of deferred action" (Pitt

& Britzman, 2003, p. 758).

The intended outcome of this study, then, is not to provide distinct and explicit methods or tools for educators trying to impart critical dispositions upon their students. Instead, my desire is that this research problematizes the commonsensical understanding of education and learning as represented in this configuration, including the desire *to impart* as an educative ideal, a desire manifest in both dominant and resistant pedagogical forms (for examples of this symmetry, see Gore, 1994). Narrative analysis's underlying logic of ambiguity, as represented in its open-endedness and resistance to truth claims (Barone, 2001), calls for a turn away from the "one best" method of education and to an understanding of the limitlessness of human epistemology and ontology. Such an understanding cannot be achieved by quantitative or qualitative designs that seek what Richard Rorty (as cited in Barone) calls a "movement toward certainty." Theorist and therapist Bruce Fink (1997) echoes these concerns closely by contrasting psychoanalysis to other therapeutic practices: "According to Lacan, interpretation in the analytic situation should generally serve a very different purpose. *Rather than tying down one particular meaning, it should seek to suggest numerous meanings*" (p. 45, italics in original).

These characteristics of both narrative and psychoanalytic work are instructive to understanding the overall purpose I intend to achieve through this study, which is raising questions among my readers regarding the nature of education, the ways in which critical dispositions are formed, the dialectical isolation and commitment to humanity brought on by the development of critical

consciousness, and the possibilities of education beyond reproducing problematic structures. The very idea of producing ambiguity as the result of research resists Bruner's paradigmatic cognition and the research traditions that employ it. Barone (2001) quotes writer James Baldwin on this point: "the greatest achievement of art is the 'laying bare of questions which have been hidden by the answers" (p. 154). Reader-response theorist Wolfgang Iser (as cited in Barone & Eisner, 1997) accurately described the ambiguity in a text as a *gap* into which readers could take part in the construction of a text's meaning. Furthermore, by producing a text that fails to fall neatly into a categorical reading by the available cultural logic, Iser's notion of gaps is transposed from a reader's engagement with a text to a reader's engagement with the social world it replicates. Thus, the need for deep-reaching metaphor, evocative language, and verisimilitude in the narrative text take on political dimensions in critically informed stories, like those I attempt to construct in the following pages.

To bring these points into further concert with the theoretical commitments I have already discussed in this dissertation, contemporary psychoanalytic theorists also locate art and aesthetic texts as means by which to call attention to and –possibly begin the transgression of—problematic ontological fantasies and the social structures they support. In discussing the intersection of psychoanalysis and aesthetics, Pitt (2003) writes,

> imaginative works may play a more important role that we are accustomed to believing in creating the conditions for learning about social hatreds and discriminations. Art that works at the level of fantasy encourages the elaboration and enlargement of the Ego's libidinal attachments. Indeed, the political value of such works may lie more in the their structures of fantasy than in their capacity

> to "tell the truth" or maintain the fiction of "realistic" representation. (p. 80)

Similarly, Silverman's (2009) recent meditation on the role of art in destabilizing dominating signifying chains valorizes the aesthetic's capacity to engage us in the radical act of analogy – of finding our connectedness with the Other as an ethical act of re-discovering the fundamental humanness in which we all partake. The aesthetic text, including the two narratives that comprise this study, in an albeit diminished capacity, might be said serve in the role Lacan ascribes to the analyst: a space to be occupied by one's unconscious desire in the process of working though the demands that desire makes on/of us. Thus, the goals of political art and psychoanalytic therapy are coterminous to some extent – they both attempt to incite our return to a more primal state of being beneath the signifiers of identity, and in this state, to pose critical questions about the signifiers we have used to organize ourselves and our social arrangements. In the present case, these questions are intended to be directed at the notion of critical education that has been employed in both public and institutional pedagogies.

Theory in Critical Storytelling

Some researchers/storytellers, such as Chang and Roseik (2003), McLaren (2003), Lather (1997), Tanaka (1997), and Sparkes (1996), have attempted to position critical fiction alongside theoretical discourse in the research, with the purposes of both honoring the specific contributions of each discourse practice to educational research and of clearly articulating and drawing readers' attention to polemic themes within the stories. However, I argue that honoring both genres

does not absolve the inherent problems of the totalizing voice of theory; rather, the presence of a theoretical discourse necessarily changes the audience's experience of the narrative text, funneling readers toward a specific, *correct* interpretation of the text. Coulter (1999), using Bakhtinian terminology, states that "in monologue, meaning is not the product of interchange between speakers, but the expression of one person's or group's ordering of experience" (p. 6). Despite the presence of interactive, literary discourse, theoretical constructs – by virtue of their tendency to explain – produce monologic discourse. To generate imagination, critical fictions must find ways in which to call attention to the undiscussed and commonsensical without doing so in a didactic voice and sacrificing the experiential interactivity of the literary text.

In the critical stories I provide herein, the narrative text eschews rhetorical assertions in favor of metaphoric characters and the questions that these metaphors raise regarding our conceptualization of education and schooling. The purpose of critical storytelling is far too interpersonal for the impregnable discourse of theory, so through literary and metaphorical moves, critical stories seek to reveal the problematic nature of power differentials in the social order. Again, my seeming de-privileging of critical theory and its discursive practices does not seek to downplay the genre's significant contributions to the practice of educational inquiry, including the narrative projects undertaken by Lukasik (2010), Barone (2000), Kotlowitz (1991), and Kozol (1992). Rather than ascribing value to one mode of communicating the life histories (Goodson, 1995) of individuals harmed by our social structure, it is important that critical storytellers

are interested in exploring which of the two genres can best inform, shape, and speak to their research purpose. Moreover, writers of critical fiction must be able to inhabit theory and experience simultaneously, a process not unlike the recursive inward and outward flow described by contemporary curriculum theory (Pinar, 2004). Inquiry without a transgressive, dialectical, praxis-based consciousness can, on one hand, engender paradigmatically mired texts or, on the other, obscure the imagination toward a new social order. By working in the interstices of "what is" and "what might be," critical storytellers take on an imaginative consciousness, producing a narrative text that invites readers to *conspire* in imagining the world anew (Barone, 2000, 2001).

To marry these sentiments with the psychoanalytical theoretical framework I intend to utilize, we might look at each story – those told by my participants, those I construct, and those developed by the reader in response to my work – are all productions of what literary analysis calls an "unreliable narrator," (Ford (2008/1915) provides a classic example of the novel featuring an unreliable narrator) a storyteller who shapes the work of fiction to her own ends, whether conscious of this shaping or not. From a psychoanalytical perspective, we (re)create stories in the means that best address our symptoms, our fractures, and our sense of personal historicity. As Felman (2003) states, the doctrine of psychoanalysis is ultimately "the fiction of the subject," (p. 119) a selfhood constructed at the complicated interstices of the social order and personal experience. In terms of this study, I hope to re/present Jeanie's and my constructs of our resistant selves as symptomatic of personally historical or socially

produced desires, potentially even producing insight into the role of dissonance and displeasure as critical features of education: ways of breaking with the diminished *Eros* (Marcuse, 1992) of a bleak social order and socially re/produced selfhood and gaining the potential for agency.

What I came to find, in many ways, spoke to the desires I had in beginning this study and the premonitions they produced. As I have noted, upon meeting Jeanie, I was immediately interested in working with her, as her personal narrative suggested many of the conceptual aspects the psychoanalytic development and performance of *self*. As the study progressed, however, the limitations of this frame, especially the deterministic ways in which certain experiences (especially those from childhood) take primacy as ordinal forces, became apparent. Whereas Jeanie did relate the ways in which her early life and her relationships with her parents have molded her personal convictions and her species of activism, these aspects of her personality cannot be untethered from the vast array of cultural and political forces that produce identity and its articulations. The theoretical aspect of this criticism – most frequently grounded in Deleuze and Guatarri's (1983) classic work – was not unknown to me before I conducted my analyses, yet the seeming dismissal of psychoanalysis as a viable heuristic found in that critique failed, for me, to explain adequately the ways in which individuals can and do take up their familial relationships as critical, even central, to narratives of identity. And, just as the overdetermination of psychoanalysis became problematic during my research, so too did the jettisoning of Freud, as Jeanie's conversations about her life and history simultaneously took up seemingly mythologizing understandings

of parental influence and signification and resisted them as the sole locus of her identity's formation.

Diffraction: Time and Pedagogy

In her essay linking social theory to quantum science, Barad (2007) locates much of what is currently termed post-structuralism in the work of physicist Niels Bohr. Bohr, for Barad, provided the critical modifications to the theoretical contributions that have most frequently been ascribed to his student, Werner Heisenberg, These corrections, made by Bohr shortly before he severed his relationship with Heisenberg due to the latter's Nazi sympathies, provided the crucial substrate on which the widely known "uncertainty" principle rests, but that is frequently mistreated and misunderstood in popular accounts: that the uncertainty lies not in the difference between two measures, but that the act of measuring *itself* – of acquiescing to a frame with which a thing might be understood – produces these radical forms of uncertainty by excluding all other possible interpretations. Barad writes, "there is something fundamental about the nature of measurement interactions such that, given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties *become determinate*, while others are specifically excluded. Which properties become determinate is not governed by the desires or will of the experimenter, but rather by the specificity of the experimental apparatus" (p. 19). That is, to put this in the classic Heisenbergian example, its neither the particle's speed nor location that affect one another, it is the act of reducing the particle's character to a singular attribute that produces the vel of uncertainty. Responding positively to this assertion, I began to consider several

aspects of this study, including the ways in which I might select the stories and images I represent, the commonsensical way *education* is understood as a linear and chronological system of development, and the ways in which my own theoretical proclivities and desires play out across my analysis of the work and my (perhaps unintended, but nevertheless present) rhetorical hailings to my readers.

In these considerations, the determining factor that seemed the most problematic and the most constraining in terms of representation, both of these individuals' stories and of the nature of pedagogy (specifically as theorized by Ellsworth (2005) and Felman (1982)), was the concept of time. For Felman, pedagogy - as a psychoanalytic act - moves "not through linear progression, but through breakthroughs, leaps, discontinuities, regressions, and deferred action, the analytic learning process-process puts indeed in question the traditional pedagogical belief in intellectual perfectability, the progressistic view of learning as a simple one-way road from ignorance to knowledge" (p. 27). As Felman notes, the psychoanalytic view of learning rejects the causal operation to which theories and practices of education typically adhere, instead looking at the subject of pedagogy as wholly composed of assemblage of prior experiences, previous selfhoods, diffracted memories, and the unerring wages of desire, all of which do not proceed along the determinate instrumentation of linear time. Similarly (naturally, given her use of Felman in her work), Ellsworth describes pedagogy as occurring outside of temporal logics, within the transitional space/time of "a stutter, a hesitation . . . the place and time of pure relationality" (pp. 64-65)

somewhere between the self and the other, where becoming – presence – rather than being is enacted. The self-in-pedagogy, from the vantage point of these theorists, cannot be understood as a historical coordinate, but as a chronological and spatial uncertainty, a transitional phenomenon comprised of a lifetime of transitional phenomena. To this end, I elected to forgo considerations of chronological storytelling in the narratives that comprise both Jeanie's and my self-identification, instead collecting the stories around certain moments of particular meaning and placing them next to one another in ways I found meaningful within the narrative of my coming to know Jeanie and coming to explore my prior constructs of self.

In addition to these theoretical turns, some impetus and inspiration for my desire to write an achronal text came from a sort of *pilot study* I conducted via my auto/archeological process. This study, much of which is enfolded into this text, involved my review of a personal essay I wrote in 2000 and published in 2002. The piece, titled *Equidistant* (Burdick, 2002) is organized as a series of prose images, each one labeled by my and my father's age at the time the event being *image-d* unfolded. Upon re-reading the piece and exploring the networks of desire and influence by which it was structured, I recalled the graphic novel *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, which I read at 13, and which has frequently been an influence on my work and my thinking. In the graphic novel, the character Dr. Manhattan recounts his origin story (a trope of superhero genre comic books) via a similar process of image-ing, all of which unfolds via the past, present, and future of the text. Manhattan, a physicist turned quantum uberman,

perceives reality as a collapse of timelines upon each other, engaged in sort of proleptic singularity within which a Deleuzian form of becoming (rather than Hiedegerrian being) is enacted – events in the past (or future) do not enjoy a sort of primacy in the origin story. Rather, as a governing metaphor throughout the story, Moore employs the metaphor of a watch's (a clear nod to Einstein) gears, involved in a complex system of effects without clear causality or contingency, to structure Manhattan's story, one that eschews historical primacy for a systemic, ecological view of subjectivity. That is, the events of Manhattan's past, present, and future exist not within simple diachronic linearity, but as a singular, albeit sliding, knots that offer experience and event as reciprocities that are capable of movement across fourth dimensional space. In essence, this story, and the potential mimeses I used in applying it to my relationship with my father, affords the author capacity to play with the notion of the post-structural, Lacanian experience of humanity – a being that does not proceed along a clearly demarcated historical arc of progress, but rather is an amalgamation of moments which boil up, recede, lie dormant, symptomatically torment, and occasionally allow their presence to be felt directly.

Thus, via a destabilization of time, I am – again turning to Barad and her doctoral mentor Donna Haraway – hoping to mobilize the metaphor of diffraction, rather than reflection (or reflexion) as the central frame of the dual narratives unfolding throughout this piece. Diffraction, for Barad, eschews the linear, objectivist notion of representation found in the ideal of critical reflexiveness, suggesting that the simple capacity to reflect does not take into account either the

observer's own entanglement with the image under scrutiny or the structuralist *mirror of nature* implied in the reflective mode. Instead, she finds that

> reflexivity is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation and that we have a kind of access to representations that we don't have to the objects themselves. It cannot provide a way across the social constructivist's alleged unbridgeable epistemological gap between knower and known, for reflexivity is nothing more than iterative mimesis: even in its attempts to put the investigative subject back into the picture, reflexivity does nothing more than mirror mirroring. (p. 87)

To simply reflect a linear pedagogical development that either Jeanie or I underwent during our critical ontogeneses under this Baradian lens, then, would be to mime a certain, causal, historically rhythmical understanding of how events shaped our separate beings; it would be an assumption that the direct and chronological representation would somehow give my readers a direct and accurate image - an ideal pedagogy, perhaps, if the development of critical social consciousness in their students is of any value. But, as Felman and Ellsworth suggest, this is not the working of pedagogy from the psychoanalytic sense, nor is it from the experiential models forwarded by Dewey (1997/1938) and his many supporters (e.g. Schubert, 2010). It is my hope that the diffraction of time within this piece illustrates that the stories I have collected, shaped, and written about Jeanie and I are themselves diffractions, assemblages of wave-like personal, psychological, social, and cultural learnings and unlearnings that, performed together, constitute specific, but by no means essential selfhoods-in-the-making. Further, via the intersectional way I chose to represent these pieces throughout the text, it is my hope that these stories themselves break against one another, causing

a deeper yet set of diffractions, ones that illustrate my effect, as an observer replete with desire and knowledge, and allow readers to subsequently effect and performatively produce the meanings to be gleaned from these moments of our lives' intersection.

Further, I hope that this eschewal of the narrative vehicle of linear chronology implores my readers to restructure and suture the piece together along their own lines of meaning, much like the work asked of psychoanalysts, and, in the mind of Žižek, the related field of detective work. For, Žižek the detective story, along with the modern novel, represents an impasse in the capabilities of narration, "the impossibility of telling a story in a linear, consistent way, of rendering the 'realistic' continuity of events" (Žižek, p. 49, italics in original). That is, for the detective story to function, it must rebuild its narration from the evidence at hand, crafting meaning from the analytical work of stringing symbols, scraps of language, and clues together into a meaningful story. Drawing heavily from Freudian dream analysis, Žižek suggests that detective work requires a researcher to resist any pull towards discovering the absolute, final meaning of her inquiry and to instead simply "translate the objects [of inquiry] back into words" (p. 51) so as not be lead astray by false clues and red herrings. In the case of this project, I construct the crime not as a murder or burglary – examples Žižek utilizes in discussing this approach – but as a missing persons case, one that seeks to locate symbolically the "informant" and the "researcher" of this dissertation – the identity spaces Jeanie and I espoused/occupied at the time of our telling/writing and perhaps the undergirding desires that manifest beneath our

stories' content. As noted, this is not to say that my aim in writing these pieces was to uncover some sort of eternal, core identity within these individuals; rather, my hope was to explicate the unconscious desires hidden by the constructed scene of the text – to locate the self behind the self as they play out across the page. In other words, the goal was not to find these bodies, but to trace the paths they might have taken, the pedagogical stumblings and meanderings that have lead to their states of critical exile.

(Psycho)Analyses

Three phases of Lacanian theory informed the three "acts" of this novella. The first "act," *Ontogenesis*, deals with Lacanian ontology, specifically the rise of the symbolic register as a totalizing, yet inadequate, framework for representing the Real. In particular, Lacan's (2006) conceptualization of the "name-of-the-father" became a guiding principle in my understanding and arranging of the stories that Jeanie told, the experiences I shared with her in her work, and my reading of my past creative work. For Lacan, the symbolic edifice of the father represents a subject's entry into language and the definitional system of delineation, deletion, and differentiation that language manifests. The father represents a failure for a child to have total access to her (m)Other as well as the evidence that this (m)Other has a set of needs that exceeds the figuration of the child. From the Freudian perspective, Lacan is essentially translating the reality principle's trumping of the pleasure principle into a linguistic system; as such, rather than the jouissance of the Real, the child is forced to enter into a network of signifying chains, all of which ultimately fail to communicate, let alone sate, that

child's psychic desire. As Fink (1997, 1995) notes, Lacan's typical fascination with puns is operant in the French translation of name-of-the-father, *nom-de-pere,* which is pronounced almost indistinguishably from *non-de-pere*, or no-of-the-father. In many ways, then, the symbolic order functions as a mechanism of denial. Within my creative work, I located both the parental relations that Jeanie and I experienced alongside of stories of our confrontations with symbolic authority(ies) – those of the school, the corporation, the anarchist collective, and the Law itself, as well as the ways in which an excess of the Real (represented in the stories of the dead in "The People We've Relegated to the Darkness") manages to spill over, to escape pacific narration and symbolic efficacy. Collectively, these stories are intended to represent the ways in which the symbolic edifice is both installed within a subject and negotiated within acts of resistance. Thus, the ontogenesis described herein involves the coming to being of a certain set of identity dispositions via one's collective set of experiences, all of which are set into relief against the culturally mythologized location of the father, both in symbolic and biological forms.

The second "act" of the piece, *Acculturation*, centers on the symptomatic nature of resistance and non-resistance. For Lacan (2006; Fink, 1995), the symptom is always marked by repetition, the consistent and constant re-enactment of practices that simultaneously obfuscate and mark the presence of (often neurotic) desire in a subject. That is, the ego produces reenactments, namings, listings, or other forms of repetitive behavior in an attempt to mask the lack that actually constitutes its essential being. This is not to say that desire is a mark of

some form of illness or deviance; rather, for Lacan, to desire is to exist within the symbolic order, and without the evidence of desirous energies, the subject enters into foreclosure and psychosis. In his later career, Lacan develops an ethics that speaks to this condition as it plays out within constitution of identity:

> A person *is* not so much him- or herself, but rather a *desire for* him- or herself. *Being* desire, [an individual] can never be done with desire because, should he [or she] succeed, he [or she] would also be finished off. He [or she] lives, thus, according to a permanently *unsatisfied* desire, a desire that is for this reason inevitably a little painful and awkward, and which continually reminds him [or her] of the fundamental lack that lies at the heart of his [or her] being. (De Kesel, 2009, p. 3)

Accordingly, the object of therapy becomes more of a clarification of desire and the productive potential of symptomatic structures. Both Jeanie's stories and my own in this section are intended to speak to these desires and repetitions in our lives and narratives, suggesting both the ways in which we "enjoy" our symptoms (to use Žižek's (2007) understanding of how we might take up a more productive stance towards the omnipresence of lack) and the ways in which we produce repetitive narratives of self to erase the traces of our desire. Jeanie's chalking and graffiti, the voices of the town of Coolidge, the repetition of my uncle's story in my own writing – all suggested the kinds of desirous structures that Lacan named as both our dilemma and our identity.

Whereas the first two "acts" dealt with Lacanian theory directly, the final segment, *Recapitulation*, was theorized and analyzed through the work of other scholars who have interpreted Lacan's therapeutic ends as crossing a "synaptic gap" from one *metaphor* of identity to one that is more psychically beneficial (Fink, 1995, 1997; Silverman, 1995, 2009; jagodzinski, 2004). Further, as one

means to this end, Silverman (1995) invokes a psychoanalytic reading of *love* as the eclipsing of the self by the o/Other, the capacity to sublimate the braid of definitions, contingencies, and dependencies that composes identity to the ambiguities of that which is not us. Silverman (1995) writes,

> if I am to relate to the loved other outsider of the vicious logic of 'you or me,' I must accept that the image within which I would like to see myself reflected does not show me myself, but someone else. To state the matter slightly differently, I must confer ideality upon the face and lineaments of another. (p. 43)

As noted in my discussion of the "Bodies in the Desert" stories, Silverman's (2009) later work takes this conceptualization up in terms of death and the acceptance of finitude. These concepts together – eros and thanatos – produce the theoretical strand by which I organized these final pieces, centered largely on Jeanie's relationship with her brother, her mother, her condition, and Maylie, all of which became incredibly strong points of conversation as the research project entered into its last days. Jeanie's mother died, albeit quite expectedly, during the study, and during the grieving process she underwent, Jeanie's relationship with Maylie became a gravity around which she organized much of her life and work. I coupled these stories with my analysis and writing about my learning about ethics and alterity; my experiences (however minor when compared to structural and cultural domination) of Othering; my early, failed activist work; and my reflections on my desires for my father, all of which strive towards metaphoric shifts, but evidence their own fixity and stasis – all intended as a recapitulation of *Equidistant*, in some way.

However, as psychoanalysis is quick to tell us, these are only *my*

interpretations of these texts, and there are neither complete nor to be viewed as a heuristic of Jeanie's or my life. Rather, this analytic process involved a reading of "data" against both the Lacanian text and the desires that permeate and constitute my being. In this way, this is more of a text about what I want – from the individuals herein, of my readers, and from the social order that encompasses us all – than what the individuals herein desire. My intention in re/presenting this research as a narrative text, one in which meanings are open to interpretation still and the aforementioned psychoanalytic categories bleed into one another, slide across acts, and fail to account for the phenomena they purport to describe, is so that my readers can infuse the work with their own desires and lenses, so that it might be read as both informed by and informing the relational processes of pedagogy.

Ethics, Representation, and Celebration

Within narrative inquiry, attention to ethics is related to the notions of representation of participants and ownership of stories. These issues transcend the legal requirements detailed by institutional review boards or other governance bodies and begin to suggest greater epistemological dilemmas within all genres of writing and research, issues that call into question the privileging of the authorial, etic perspective over the emic voices of participants. Thus, as I construct the stories with participants, I will seek to negotiate these grey areas of ethical behavior with what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call *wakefulness*. These authors implore narrative researchers to ". . . proceed forward with a constant, alert awakeness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots,

scenarios, and unidimensional characters" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 182). It is within this spirit of wakefulness that narrative researchers achieve stories that are "honest" representations of lived experiences, "a kind of honesty achieved through a heightened empiricism, a determined scrutinizing of the world around us," (Barone, 2000, p.192) an honesty that must extend to and destabilize the authoritative voice of the researcher and allow characters to take their own lives within the text (Bakhtin, 1984). Thus, the use of constructivist notions of co-creation and the release of some authorial power during the writing of the stories, along with these notions of wakefulness and honesty, provide a framework for my study that will aid in the ethical and respectful treatment of research participants.

Beyond these concerns, however, I also wish to take up the post-colonial and post-structural feminist concerns raised by Burdick and Sandlin (2010) in their work on researching critical forms of public pedagogy. Their fears for the viability of this inquiry genre center on the ways in which educational inquiry itself works – often unknowingly – to prefigure the objects of its gaze and by doing so, to drain these objects of their revolutionary potential. This enervation is produced via what Bhabha (2004) describes as the colonialist practice of "naming," reducing discovered objects to the vocabularies, and thus the limitations, of the known. Burdick and Sandlin thus advocate for approaches to research that reject definition for the discomforting practice of

> circumscription, drawing the uncertain contours of what we *do not* know without filling in those spaces with the litany of things that we *do* . . . exploring public pedagogies for the ways they are unknowable and practice—as well as bring attention to—the silences they reveal in our understandings of curriculum and pedagogy (p. 354).

To this end, Burdick and Sandlin forward the notion of answerability, a voicing of research as a dialogic "response to the pedagogical utterances of the critical public pedagogue or pedagogy: [to] the Other to our understanding of pedagogy, learning, and education in the broadest sense" (p. 356) as the ethical obligation of critical public pedagogy researcher, an open interaction that opens both parties to the possibility of deep change without either eclipsing the Other.

It is my hope that both the collaborative and the non-didactic nature of the stories I produce with Jeanie will enable this research to stand contrapuntally to other forms of educational inquiry – as dissonant, yet still mingling, characterizations of the other ways in which critical pedagogies might be enacted. Drawing on Burdick and Sandlin's (2010) construct of *critical celebration*, I hope to narrate these stories not as portraits of false identity or misrecognized desire, but of Jeanie and Jake's split subjectivities and desirous energies being redirected towards positive social change and possible traversal of repressive fantasy.

PART II: ONTOGENETICS

5.19.2009

There's a body in the desert. Still breathing, she's been here four hours. Her fingers stretch out into the dust, errant, looking for a cool under the sun-scabbed crust. Where her legs touch together under her orange jumpsuit, there used to be a trickle of sweat, running from the overlap of skin down to the back of her knee. It dried, flesh stacked like cord to rub and chafe. Her tongue occupies her mouth, as if it isn't hers, as if this entire body was purchased by the sun, by the baked ground, the stasis of a high noon. Nearby, inside, under the hum of fluorescent lights and air conditioning, men in uniforms listened to her pleading to come in, to use the bathroom – there's testimony to that, people testified. Men in uniforms walk by her outside, telling her to shut the fuck up, to quit her whining. Her body was in transit, being moved from one prison to the next, and so on. She'd given her body for drugs, and she'd been caught, given 27 months. Now that body lies at the bottom of a cage, put there after she said she felt suicidal. A psychiatrist thought the (en plein) air would do her some good. Although she's not dead, she will be soon. Some one hundred and eight degrees in Arizona May. A dry heat.

Real Criminal Damage

Jeanie

It's 1974, and Jeanie is dangling her spindly legs over a wall made of coarse volcanic rock and cement. Behind her, the ragged asphalt parking lot juts into the low scrub brush and Piñon pines of the Arizona high country, encroached on all sides by dotted patches of long, coarse grass. Jeanie's father stands on the edge of the lot where the tar loses its hold and the black rocks dissipate into the landscape. He is taking her picture, angling his feet every so often in the same grinding rasp their tires had made on the loose rock a few minutes before. The sun is behind him, and the soft pink of her arms washes into the white of her shirtsleeves. In front of her, the Grand Canyon's bruised purples and reds lay muted in distance. The air gives the view a photograph's texture before it's ever committed to film – grainy, hollow, partial. Jeanie knocks her heels against the wall, letting the rubber of her soles propel her feet back out with every strike.

This is the last picture before they leave to go back to Okinawa, where her father is stationed. Her brother Andy waits in the car with the stewardess, the woman her father had met on his last visit to the states. This trip was the stewardess's idea. It would bring them all together, give them a chance to get to know each other.

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Seven months earlier, Jeanie's mother was packing the kids' bags. They were in D.C. then, her father working at the Pentagon between flights to Vietnam. The winter snow kept the kids inside and made the walls of the house feel

swollen, congested. Her mother's bags had already been packed. She never made a secret of her intentions, and new suitcases would make their way to a stack by the front door over the course of the week. She filled the bags with non-essential items first – pictures, books, papers – then her good clothes, then finally her everyday clothes. The morning she packed the last tops off the hangers, she began to pack Andy's things, moving to Jeanie's room later in the afternoon.

Jeanie, still playing with toys not yet packed, doesn't look up when she asks, "Where are we going?"

"Fountain Hills. In Arizona."

"This morning?"

"The flight leaves this evening."

"Why are you putting up all of my stuff now?"

Her mother keeps working. Her brother starts shouting from the other room. He's angry that his stuff is packed and there's nothing to do. His episodes are more frequent these days.

Jeanie's parents had met at Oberlin in the early 60s; her father wanted to get a graduate degree to teach piano, and her mother was working on her undergraduate in psychology. After they met, they decided to travel and get married rather than finish school. Jeanie's father had studied East Asian languages at University of Michigan, and they had both wanted to see Japan. They stayed with a Japanese family, promising this family's father that they would sponsor their son, Yaso, that he could come to America as soon as he was old enough for college. Jeanie's parents fell in love with Japan, and her father found work for

American Army Intelligence in Okinawa. Five years and two children later, the aspiring piano teacher was a key consultant for Army operations in Vietnam. They were moved to Washington so he could work at the Pentagon. Yaso would arrive two years later, in 1971, and her father would keep his promise to Yaso's family for the time being.

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It's August in Phoenix, August of 2011, and Jeanie's car doesn't have air conditioning. Instead, it has one streak of blue paint across the top of the windshield and one across the top of the rear window. On these blue streaks, painted in large, blue-with-white-outline, cartoonish letters are two messages:

Homes Not Jails – on the windshield.

Imagine A World Without Prisons – on the rear window.

The first time I rode in this car, Jeanie told me that the messages were there to encourage people. "I want everyone to do their own crazy shit," she says. "I don't really expect to change people's minds, but, really, imagine no prisons. Panhandlers give me a thumbs up when I'm on the freeway ramps. It lets them know someone thinks they're humans, not pieces of shit." After a pause, "Other people are like, what kind of lunatic would write that on her car."

Now, driving west down the I-10, the same paint keeps some of the late-day sun off of us, but with the slow summer heat, busted ac vents, and the smoke coming from Jeanie's hand-rolled cigarette, we keep the windows down. It's 5 o'clock on a Thursday, and we're skimming past rush hour traffic in the carpool lane. We're headed to a city called Goodyear, to the first of five public hearings

across the state to present proposals for new private prisons. Jeanie drives fast. The moving air booms loudly around us, forcing us to yell instead of talk. She takes off her diminutive black cowboy hat, tucks it between her leg and the seat, and applies more pressure to the gas. She doesn't want to miss her chance to sign in as a speaker. I'm in the front seat, trying to keep my notepad from flapping in the current with the end of my palm, and trying not to write so obviously with the same hand. I feel invasive writing everything Jeanie says, and, sometimes, I notice her watching me write. Michael, Jeanie's self-styled protégé, is in the back, flattened against the back of my seat, straining to hear. Jeanie is telling us about her childhood. Excitedly, she announces, "My family was infiltrated by the CIA. A woman who pretended to be a stewardess." She pulls the car into the high occupancy lane, and we go even faster. My notepad's flapping makes it impossible to write with one hand.

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When he eventually came over from Japan, Yaso helped take care of Jeanie and her brother while Jeanie's father spent long hours at the Pentagon. Later in life, Jeanie would be careful to note that her father was always just a piano teacher from Oberlin who never meant to be a career soldier. Vietnam had moved too fast for him to anticipate. Those nights in Washington, Yaso would cook and Jeanie's mother would clean, the kids off watching television or playing outside. Jeanie's father would get home after the kids had fallen asleep, Yaso in the kitchen, lights dim, studying. Other nights, Yaso would walk the kids to the corner market, buying them ice cream and candies, telling Jeanie about Japan, the

place she was born and that she left too early to remember. He'd mention the names of places and Andy would laugh and call her "made in Japan," crowing that he was the real American in the family, like their father. As winter got closer and the nights earlier, Yaso would begin to make their desserts at home. They would eat together at the same table he'd use to study.

On one evening, Jeanie's father came home early enough to talk with his wife. She was finishing dishes, and Yaso had gone out with his friends. After he went upstairs to change and kiss the kids while they slept, Jeanie's mother had told him about Yaso's friends. She said they were Japanese, but kind of hippy. Not like all the other hippies, but kind of weird. They'd been nice and thanked her for inviting them in, and Yaso had apologized for his friend Nao, who was "in good" with the campus' Chinese Communist Party. Jeanie's father had seemed concerned, and her mother apologized. He told her it wasn't her fault. That it was probably no big deal.

He reported it to his supervisor the next morning at 06:04, right after setting his things down at his desk. The supervisor had told him he needed to get Yaso out of his house, no matter what he'd promised the family. Jeanie's father told him he needed the day to think about it. He returned the next morning at 06:08, told his supervisor that his word was his bond, and was on a plane for reassignment to Vietnam at 11:00. The family, with Yaso, would remain in Washington.

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On the dashboard, their colors dampened by the blue of the paint,

handmade paper flowers keep blowing into my seat and threatening to fly out of the window. When I'd met Jeanie that afternoon, she was outside, getting bags and books out of her car. She'd set a coffee can filled with the paper flowers on the roof of the car. Written on bright orange construction paper and taped around the can was "Roses from Prison by Donny." The flowers, each a straw adorned with green construction paper leaves and carefully cut pink, red, white, and blue petal circlets, reflected in the paint on her roof that wasn't yet eaten by time and weather. Jeanie tells me that one of her clients on the inside had sent them to her. She raises her head to move her hat's brim, squints to look at them, and laughs a small laugh to me. She wears a black vest over a bright blue tank top, dark, baggy carpenter pants that fail to hide her skinny frame on top of red converse low-tops. Under her hat, reddish-blonde hair, matted with sweat, sticks to her skin. She takes the flowers from the car, cradling them under arm, bags in hand. I open the chain link gate to her apartments and follow her inside.

Photo 1. Roses from Donny

Jeanie yells to Maylie, who's in the other room, and I can hear her Chihuahua scratching at the door to greet us.

"I'm back. Jake's here, so be decent. Michael's on his way, then we're going to the Goodyear hearing."

Maylie yells back – "You ok?"

Jeanie smiles at me. "Fine. Did the Senator's office call yet?"

"No."

"Tell me when they do. Call my cell phone right away."

Jeanie lowers her voice, telling me that the state cut off Maylie's disability check one week after she filed a wrongful death suit for her son, Dana. The reason

she was given was that she couldn't provide evidence of her eligibility, which would require her to get a job. She can't get a job because she's been in constant pain for the past two years, which is why she's on disability. Jeanie will later tell me that Maylie wakes up at night crying, that some days she can't even talk because she's in so much pain. Even when I ask, Jeanie never tells me exactly what's wrong with her. There are always pill containers on the counters in the house, some with Jeanie's name, some with Maylie's, different shapes and heights lined up like a tiny skyline.

I notice that the apartment is more unpacked this time. Jeanie is in the kitchen, grabbing long cans of iced green tea from the freezer and loading them into her small fabric cooler. This is a small ritual of ours. Jeanie packing her drinks, supplies, and video camera. Me looking around the room, trying to remember everything I can for when I write about this place.

Maylie's chair is in the same spot as it was the last time I was here, by the windows, already reclined, ashtray nearby on the side table. There's a collection of movies on a rack in the corner – *Matewan*, *Voices of Katrina* – some books stacked on the end table – anarchism, political theory, prison research. *Aside from the chair, all Jeanie's things*, I write in my notebook. On the wall above the computer are two pieces of particleboard, painted with people's names and the words *Arizona Department of Corrections*. I take a picture, and Jeanie comes back in the room while I am getting the shot.

"Whose names are these?"

She looks up at the boards, "The dead." A few beats later, "I was high on

mushrooms one night and I decided to dismantle and reappropriate my bookshelf."

The names are written in the same varied colors and puffy style as Jeanie's chalk drawings and the messages on her car.

Photo 2. Deconstructed Book Shelf

"Here, too," she says, tapping her foot on a cardboard storage box under the computer desk. On the top of the box, in marker, are many of the names from the wall and a piece of paper with the word *DEAD* in all capital letters.

Jeanie looks down at the box. "That's all my research on the people who've died. Michael got most of it for me."

I see Dana's name on the box, on the wall, and Jeanie continues to pack. I write in my notebook, all the while feeling like I am doing something suspect. Michael shows up a few minutes later, knocking once and slowly letting himself

in. We smile at each other and give quiet hellos. Jeanie notices him, puts her bags down by the door, and they hug. She yells to the next room, "Michael's here." Maylie comes out from her room, the Chihuahua racing around her legs.

"Hey sweetie." She speaks quietly, smiling. She embraces him tightly after Jeanie lets go.

"Hey. Did the senator call?"

"Not yet."

"Did you try that smoked salmon I brought over?"

"I did. I never liked fish – but that salmon, that was good." She says, pronouncing the L in salmon loudly each time.

"I'll bring more of that salmon over next time."

"Please do, please do. You'll take care of her, right? Not let her get arrested? If she does her crazy shit and gets arrested, you call me first."

"I can't speak for the police, but I'll call you first if anything goes down."

I become acutely aware of my presence in the room. I am standing with no reason to stand. Because the apartment is so small, I am wedged in a small space between the computer desk and the wall. They chat a bit more, and we leave, Jeanie stopping to turn Maylie's music on for her through the computer's speakers. Jeanie leaves the apartment, locks the door, and shakes it hard to make sure it's fast. We reach the car, and Michael offers me the front seat. "You're the one who needs to hear."

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Jeanie's father tells his family he'll come home from Vietnam every

chance he gets. The third time he lands in Washington, his wife is waiting at the airport. She's there to ask for a divorce. It's partly the absence and partly the nightly news, the escalation in Vietnam. It was what they were against at Oberlin, in Japan, and now they're both part of it. He promised it wouldn't get this way, and he says that his work has nothing to do with what she's seeing on television. It doesn't matter. She's taking the kids to Arizona with her, even though she doesn't know how she'll handle them on her own. She has family in Fountain Hills, so that will help. They drive home. She starts to pack. He starts to drink, something he'd been doing more of since his reassignment. The suitcases begin their slow stack in the hallway.

Seven months later, Jeanie's mother is calling Atlanta, where her ex-husband has been reassigned. She was right. She can't handle the kids, and she's already bought their train tickets to go back. She's staying here in the desert. Jeanie is twelve, and Andy is ten, and they've both been asked to leave two schools already. Behavior issues. Where she's living now, there just aren't any more options. She figures their father's benefits will get them the care they need, get them to someone who can help. When they get to the station in Atlanta, her father and a strange woman meet Jeanie and her brother. A military stewardess he'd met on one flight to Okinawa. Although it hasn't been long since their last meeting, he looks older, slumped. The stewardess greets them with presents – trinkets they give to kids on commercial flights. She promises that they have a wonderful summer ahead of them, a trip to see the Southwest, and not just the little corner they just left.

That night, after her brother has gone to sleep, Jeanie's sits on the floor in front of her father. He's watching television and sipping his drink down to where the ice slides into his face. He looks down to her. "I know you are just getting used to things, and I know I just met her, but Cheryl might be staying around for a while. I want this trip to be a test. I want to see if she's right for us." Jeanie makes a small smile.

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When we arrive at Goodyear High School, where the auditorium is being used to house the public forum, I mention how surprised I am at the full parking lot.

"Nah, this one was gonna be big," Jeanie says, "Not Coolidge big or Eloy big, but these people already have Perryvale, and it's been pretty hotly debated."

Our conversation turns to schools and the politics of education in Arizona. We start talking about the situation in Tucson, where ethnic studies is under censure. Michael went down to protest with the students. We talk about Huppenthal, the Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Because the lot is so full, we have to circle back and park near the street. Jeanie says more people will see the writing on her car that way anyhow.

Getting out of the car, and walking to the Goodyear High School auditorium, Michael mentions to me that Kotterman, the candidate who opposed Huppenthal, is no good either.

"She's a fabrication, a collection of loose promises. You can look up all of the blatant politicking she's done. She really wasn't going to be any better."

"Well, I voted for her," I say. "I really wanted whatever alternative we had." I feel that's the wrong answer. I say it anyhow.

"Yeah. I know a lot of people who did," Michael replies. I think it's a reconciliation.

We walk across the cracked asphalt, over a curb, and through a fresh raked patch of desert gravel. Mexican Birds of Paradise line the fences, and Palo Verde trees squat in the medians of the parking lot. Between the car and the entrance to the auditorium, there's only the crunch and churn of loose rock. It sounds like snow between our feet. We stop talking from the noise and the heat. I feel relieved.

Outside of the auditorium doors, two young women in pressed white shirts and charcoal-slate slacks are thanking people for coming out to support the new prison. They're talking to a few men in suits as we walk up, but as we get closer, they intentionally step away from these men to greet us, despite the likelihood that our costumes—Jeanie in her cowboy hat and "outlaw garb" and Michael and I in t-shirts and ripped shorts—give away our intentions. They usher us inside, where a plastic folding table holds two neatly ordered stacks of signs. In one stack, "Yes To New Jobs," and the other, "Yes to New Prison." All three of us eagerly take one of each. Jeanie finds the sign up sheet for speakers, and we make our way deeper inside.

Photo 3. Goodyear Lobby

As Michael and I find seats, Jeanie circles the theater, looking closely at the people who are assembling at two tables on the stage, and scanning the crowd. She eventually sits next to me and begins to tell me the names of everyone she knows. “The people at that table are Department of Corrections, and that’s the Director, Chuck Ryan. He’s the one who interviewed me before he knew I wasn’t just some college kid. That other table are the GEO Corp people, I think. They’re supposed to sit at separate tables like this.” She motions to the front row. “That’s

Marcie Ehlers, NAACP, and those two kids are Marty and Trina – they do excellent work down in Tucson and Eloy." She moves over next to Michael. The two discuss what they make of the crowd, but I can't quite hear what they're saying, and I don't recognize most of the names I do hear. Jeanie talks to Michael until the hearing begins. Then, she takes her camera around the room, moving to the front of the stage to film the GEO officials as they talk, turning around now and then to film the audience.

The GEO people begin their pitch, talking about the pressing need for more beds, 50,000 at the facility they want to build. They flip through a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate their performance record, noting that they've opened so many facilities that they can't fit them on a map. From large-scale corrections to halfway houses, this company is the biggest name in facilities. That's on a slide, and the director of public relations reads it word for word, slowly. He's a man with a Texas accent that laces its way through his speech, pulling his words to a crawl while he accents with his hands. He tells the audience that GEO is the only public company that operates internationally, a testament to diversity.

The architect is next, and uses an image of eight concentric circles to describe the security measures he's drawn up–Dante's inferno, Jeanie whispers– the best design possible, more than the RFP ever called for. He talks about looped-top fences, corded cable detection systems, microwave-based sensors, cell phone jammers, staff circulation. He stops to answer questions as they come up. He says they care about security, reputation, and community and that they

wouldn't submit something they weren't proud of. He spends a lot of time talking about the community of Goodyear and how this prison could figure big in its future.

The CEO is the last to speak. He's a tall man, whose knees stick out at odd angles while he sits waiting. His cheekbones rest high on his face, a constant squinting smile. Standing at the edge the stage in a dark blue suit, he starts out by telling us that he's accountable to everyone here and to prisoners, to clients, constituents, and community.

"Politicians know that GEO is a company of professionals who care about the local people they serve. We provide scholarships – almost a half million to date – and we will do so for this community. Ten thousand dollars for every thousand beds we offer. We participate in local charities, and we grow local economies. In the prison business, there are two controversial times: opening a prison and closing a prison. All this means to us is that these facilities are the economic engines for communities." He provides a stock analysis. He thanks the audience, to emphatic clapping, and the public forum begins.

There are white men in jeans and buttoned-high plaid shirts, seemingly unfazed by the sun's desire to make itself felt well into the night, who talk about the economy and the fact that we have to take work when it comes. A few of them talk about how good it would be to work for a company like GEO. When they do, Michael looks up from his book – a comparison of the fall of the USSR and the current state of American economics – and whispers, "plant." These men bring the signs provided at the door up with them, and they sit in the audience with their

wives and children after they've spoken.

There are other people who argue that they also want the jobs and the prison, but just not here, not by their schools, by their children, in their backyards. They talk about how close the prison is to the local elementary school. One woman asks if any of us have seen the kind of people who visit prisons. She asks us if we really want them here, in this neighborhood. These people also talk about how Perryvale prison's developers lied to Avondale, the town three freeway exits to the West, where the women's prison was built. Never more than 500 beds, they said, and now it's over 2000.

A couple of people get up to argue that we can't stop progress, so we should embrace it. "These people did something to get in trouble," one of them says, "and we can't worry about that."

Finally, there are the protesters, most of whom Jeanie pointed out to me as we came in. One man who came late, and who signed the speaking roster at the front of the stage while other people spoke, hugs Jeanie when he sees her. After the event is over, he stays late and asks the GEO board to talk with him about the research he's done on their company and the various cover-ups he's documented. When they refuse to speak to him any more, he turns to us, smiling, and asks if we want a comic book he made about for-profit prisons. He says he's sorry for being late, but he came from Kansas to be here.

Chuck Ryan calls Jeanie's name to speak. She walks to the stage and takes the microphone. Behind her, the people in suits, now tired from almost two hours of this public forum, look disinterestedly down at her.

My name is Jeanie Hildt. I don't live here in the Goodyear area. I'm from Phoenix. I am not in the construction industry. I don't have an investment in this prison being built. For the past two years I've been focusing a great deal of energy on examining human rights abuses that have been occurring in the Arizona Department of Correction's prisons. The first time I heard of Goodyear, in fact, was over Marcia Powell's death. I can rattle off a number of names of women who died at Perryvale prison, through neglect, through abuse, but I'll save that for another time. I appreciate the folks who have come to express their concern for the safety of the communities, as well as the folks who are concerned about jobs. I have serious concerns about prison privatization. To begin with, one being the for-profit motive always trumps human rights. In fact, Israel won't allow any of these private prisons to operate in their country because they found too much contradiction between maintaining human rights and making a profit. America – we have a long ways to go.

Some of the other concerns that I have are that there are some 5000 women at Perryvale prison now who are not being taken care of the way they should be. The Department of Corrections has full jurisdiction over that, and yet abuses and deaths continue to happen. I don't know how we'll have any more transparency with private prisons being in place. It's hard enough to get transparency with a state prison operator. As to jobs, when you talk about building prisons, and you're not looking at who's going to be responsible for protecting the rights of the people who are going to be in those prisons, I mean, I think there's an abdication of responsibility there, and it's easy I guess if you're not in the community that's

responsible for that prison. There are many things that Arizona could be building other than prisons. There are many fields of dreams here, and if people could, for a minute, imagine not having a prison built, then we might be able to generate some better ideas of things to build. Better ideas of places for our children to work.

I guess that the last thing I would say is that I write a blog, and I have documented over the course of the past couple of years the deaths in the prisons, the abuses in prisons, concerns about private prisons. I've followed these guys here – GEO group, CCA, all those folks. Feel free to search the blog for deaths in custody. That'll turn up a lot of information on what's happening to folks in prison. The Department of Corrections has done a great propaganda campaign to scare you all about how all the people in prison, 94% of the people in prison, belong there because they are the dangerous sort of repeat offenders. But there are a great many people, particularly in Perryvale, who are more vulnerable in there than many of us are out here. There is sexual abuse going on, there is gross mental neglect going on, and in isolation and solitary cells, women are killing themselves. Lasasha Cherry, Geshall Fernandez? Those are real people. These are also members of our communities, maybe more members of my community from Phoenix, than members of the Goodyear community, but there's a huge responsibility that comes with taking on a prison. And, I would encourage the people of Goodyear – those of you who have any concern whatsoever about that responsibility – to organize a prison oversight commission through the existing prison you've got. And certainly if you end up with another prison, a private

prison, you're gonna need a lot of help in getting oversight on this prison since the state isn't doing it. If anyone has any questions later, please look me up. Thank you.

Applause.

Director Ryan stands up again, his suit starting to wrinkle from the long night, and calls the next speaker.

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After their trip through Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Zion, the Painted Desert, and Santa Fe, Jeanie and her newly minted family drive home to Atlanta. On a stop outside of Houston, down a long stretch of the I-10, Jeanie and her brother get a moment away to talk.

"Dad wanted this to be a family trip."

"Yeah. He told me that, too. I dunno."

"He's getting a lot worse. At least she's here, and she doesn't fall asleep at 7:00."

"Yeah."

"So, what do you think?"

"It's better, I guess."

When they get back to Atlanta, Cheryl has to return to work and to her apartment in DC, but days later, her father gets transferred back to Okinawa. He works it out with Cheryl. She'll sell the car and take care of the little odds and ends for them before they leave. But one day, there's a Dear John letter waiting, folded tightly around the check for the car.

Jeanie's father gets another message. This time, it's from his commanding officer. He's to report at 06:00 to the hospital for alcohol abuse. The officers put Jeanie and Andy up at the base for two weeks. They are happy all the while, pancake breakfasts and extra blankets on the couch. But, as Jeanie remembers it, they asked a lot of questions. What was Yaso like? Did your dad stay out all night? Did he have a lot of friends? Do you know what your mother is up to? Two weeks later, Jeanie's dad was released. Then, six weeks in Valley Forge. Then, to a desk job in Wisconsin.

Years later, he told Jeanie that that Cheryl was a CIA agent, trying to figure out whether the divorce and his alcoholism had compromised anything. Jeanie remembers this as more than conjecture. The stewardess knew information that no one could have known.

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When we leave the public hearing, it's cooled a bit to 95 degrees. We keep the windows open down the I-10, back East, back to Phoenix. Michael and Jeanie talk about the people they saw. The names they know. I can't write it down on the flapping of my pages, but I listen to them talk. People coming into office. People leaving office. Jeanie says she writes Chuck Ryan all the time, only stopping herself when she feels like she's stalking him. She laughs. She says that her other work, her chalking, doesn't seem to have an impact, that only the prisoners seem to respond to any kind of public message. Off to the side of the freeway, bright signs light the car's interior and then dwindle, over and over again. Chain shops. Theme restaurants. Home Depot. An entirety of what this city is like these days.

Equidistant

Jake

I'm nineteen, watching bruises crawl across my father's face like they're long cockroaches under his skin. My four fingers are drawn perfectly across his forehead and down to the top of his cheek. We're in the garage, the side room that he built with a door and a lock to keep my mother and me out. I'm on the outside of the doorframe, and he's sitting in a chair, holding his face together. The Phoenix winter night slides under the garage door, and my bare feet ache against cooled concrete. I don't notice how the blood under my nose clumps into maroon pebbles or how the knot on my head wants to break through the skin. My uncle's with my dad—his brother, the paramedic—patching him up. While he checks my father's eyes, he asks me to look at what I've done and tells me that he'd leave too if I were his son. And I'm listening, captivated, breathing steam out of a throat striped with red finger marks. I try to explain that he came at me first, and my fist clenches, knuckles drawn white, a negative of my father's face. My hand is as numb as my feet, and neither of the two men is listening to me.

This was the night he told us he'd found someone else and was moving in with her. That he'd paid for a new house with my college money. That the girl he was going to live with was still in college. I can still hear all of that, but I don't remember hitting him. I told him what I thought, and he moved his hand from the doorknob to my neck. The only thing I felt was the scrape of Spanish tile grout when I dropped back on it. From the floor that was worth a second mortgage, I watched my mother beg him to stay with us.

I'm eight, on the back patio with my father. It's a still summer night, after monsoon rain, smelling like a last leg air conditioner. My father's telling me how he and I are mathematically perfect. He was born in nineteen forty-seven and I was born in nineteen seventy-four. While I'm eight, he's thirty-five; our digits always add up to the same single number. Zero plus eight and three plus five, perfect math. We watch a cicada hatch from its shell and force the blood into its wings. I'm too young to know that my father's high.

I'm twenty-five and he's fifty-two, and my fiancée has just left me for someone else. I've elevated seven thousand feet by train to Flagstaff, and I'm breathing rice paper air. I call my parents and tell them what's happened. Dad thinks I'm going to kill myself because I used to listen to Kurt Cobain. He sends me an e-mail that just says, "Love you Jake," but I can't stop crying after I read it. The message took less than a minute to write and less than a second to get to me. It's not even real, just a DNA string of ones and zeros, but I wait more than three months to delete it.

I'm nineteen and he's forty-six; it's two months before we fight. My father drove to California with the window down and got Bell's palsy. His face runs like syrup off his skull. He's ashamed of himself. I feel horrible for him. He wears large rimmed, out of style hats, hoping they'll steal attention from the soup underneath. After he heals, I'll put my fist across the same area, peeling it back again. He's meeting the girl he's going to leave us for. She's telling him that he's still handsome. She's giving him crystal meth for the nostril that's still round. He's giving her the money to get that medicine.

I'm ten and he's thirty-seven. I'm standing on one leg in a gym, punching my karate instructor in the stomach. The instructor is smiling and telling me that it's all about discipline. When I'm done, I sweat footprints across the safety mats to where I'm supposed to meet my father. He wanted us to both get gym passes so we could work out together, but he's not there. It's an hour later when he finally pulls up outside.

Days later, in my kitchen, my mother is having coffee with a blond woman I've never seen before. They're both crying and holding their heads in their hands, neither one saying anything. After the woman leaves, my mother tells me that they're both in love with my father, and that he met her at the gym. Dad comes home that night with presents for me, and my parents fight while I play with Star Wars figures and spin board game spinners, sliding plastic pieces past GO.

I'm three and he's thirty. He's running to the hospital with me in his arms. It's the first clear memory I have. I'm watching palm trees go by overhead. I've fallen down some stairs, and he's too frightened to get in a car. The hospital is more than five miles away. I know; I've driven the route since then.

I'm twenty and he's forty-seven. The math still works; you just have to add his numbers one more time. I'm telling my first serious girlfriend that I cheated on her. We're parked outside of my parents' house, and while I tell her, I get distracted by a bush across the street that looks like a face when the wind blows. She's yelling at me, but still calling me babe, and it sounds so stupid. Hunched over at the wheel of her car, she reaches and tries to touch my chest, but

twists her fingers into my shirt. I get out of her car. The bush outside still looks like a person, but blurry now under dust-colored streetlights. The desert makes us all look exactly alike.

I'm twenty-six and he's fifty-three. I sit in a psychologist's office and tell her about how afraid I am of people leaving me. Watching her computer's screensaver connect lines across the monitor, I tell her that I'm an abusive person.

Dad's written me another e-mail, and I can't delete it this time. He tells me how he gets awkward when I'm around, and how I'm too smart for him. But, there's another letter in the regular mail with ink that didn't have time to dry before the paper was folded. And through Rorschach-smeared type, I learn I've been rejected from the University in California. I tear that one up and read my father's instead.

Yesterday, while I was waiting to turn right in my car, I started crying.

I'm four and he's thirty-one. We've moved to the north edge of Phoenix. We don't build a backyard fence because we don't have neighbors yet. Past our grocery store, there's a cactus and an abandoned car wrecked with rust and bee-bee holes. My father and I walk to where my elementary school is being built. He writes my name in drying cement with his finger, wiping his hand on his jeans afterwards. He takes me back there to see my name every week until school starts.

When we're not exploring the desert, he's drawing a picture of my family opening our new front door to the heat outside. He leaves the space beyond our figures blank, bleached by the summer. He frames the drawing, but the city grows up around us.

A Public Education Campaign of a Slightly Different Kind

Jeanie

The first time we meet, it's in the threadbare shade of a Palo Verde under the stupefying sun of late July—Jeanie with her black cowboy hat and a blue bandana taut around her neck, and me in a red polo and dark blue jeans, the things I wear to my office job on casual Fridays. I ask when this place opens. She answers that the anarchists are always late. We exchange knowing laughs and wait, as the sun takes its share of us. People I know arrive, the ones who told me to come here, to do my research here, to see what they've been doing. They've baked vegan brownies, and they expect a lot of people tonight. We stand, shifting our weight from knee to knee to stave off the heat. The icing on the brownies is beginning to melt.

I've been looking for somewhere to do my research, *someone* to research, all summer, writing emails, sending letters with my vita attached and worlds of sincerity inscribed, but no one's answered. I decided to take the advice to come here as an act of beginning desperation. The *here* I am at is the *Ironwood Infoshop*, an anarchist-run space for collaboration and discussion groups. The idea emerged from similar sites sponsored by the anarchist movement in Europe, designed to give room for thought and action, political literature and, above all, teaching. I found out about infoshops in June, in New Orleans, when I visited the *Rail*, a hodgepodge of reading materials and guarded friendliness hidden in a warehouse just south of the Mississippi and west of the French Quarter. The *Rail* – as I understand, now defunct – was a small, wooden storefront propped up by

two-by-fours in the center of a massive brick-and-cement warehouse, its books and zines and flyers and bicycles overflowing beyond its doors-within-doors. My wife and I flipped through reading materials while the people who "worked" the shop chatted in the background. The interior of the shop was a kudzu climb of paper – fliers, notices, zines, sign up sheets, pictures of lost animals and people – circling the wood trellis, blooming at oddly stapled angles.

The *Ironwood* in Phoenix is less than a gamble at this point. I am beginning to negotiate the whole idea of studying activists and activisms, and I am beginning to start looking elsewhere. It's hard when the socialists and the anarchists won't return your e-mails, dispiriting when the LGBTQU group in Tucson transfers your request to the *Community Manager*, who writes to tell you that they'll be in touch and, after six messages, stops responding. I came here to see what I could salvage from the original idea, to see how infoshops operated as spaces of resistance/education/dissertation completing, hoping that these anarchists were different somehow than the people I knew as a kid, than the anarchist *I* was as a kid. In a dust-and-gravel parking lot, part of the crumbled remains of a well-regarded Tempe bar, we wait for 5:00 to become 5:39, and the doors open.

•••

When Jeanie met Michael, she was sure he was a cop. He was the only person who had, in her three months attending the Phoenix Anarchist Coalition functions, tried to befriend her. Not with smiles or with hellos, but "I really like what you're trying to do" and "How are you framing your work in regard to

economics?" Jeanie had found this group in Phoenix after trying for months to find support in protesting human rights violations within Arizona prisons. She had figured that the anarchists would be on her side. As she listened and watched more, she began to find them similar to people at a Quaker high school she'd attended for six months before being asked to leave. Both groups talked about community and solidarity, and both were filled with people who were nearly impossible to access if you weren't already *in*.

It had been two months since Marsha Powell was lifted from the baked dirt of her outdoor cell and Jeanie had felt something needed to be done to keep the public's attention. She had gone to check out the anarchists after reading about them in her university classes with Dr. Derosa, a professor with whom she'd spent long hours vetting her protests. After Marcia Powell, it seemed critical – frantic, that was her word – to get help in sending some sort of message out there. Jeanie had been tired, she'd had headaches and weight loss. Her doctor suggested she get tested for Leukemia. This left her wondering how she might live her life if she only had a few years to go. During classes and doctor's appointments, Marcia Powell wouldn't leave her mind: a woman diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, a drug user who'd offered her body at times for those drugs. A person whom Jeanie could have been. A person Jeanie had been, now dead, and in death, threatening to eclipse all of Jeanie's life. The images wouldn't stop. Dead, left alone, without water, a toilet, or reprieve from the sun. Loaded with behavioral meds that dried her skin on a normal day. When she read the story in the paper, Jeanie thought everybody should be as distressed as she was and feel the same

urgency in doing something about it.

Jeanie asked for only a few minutes to talk at the anarchist meeting where she first met Michael. She told her story, told Marcia Powell's story, and described how she saw the prisons as the front for a greater struggle against capitalism and racism. She gave out business cards with her blog addresses on the back. Michael took one, as did a few other people. Jeanie was looking for some concrete ideas. Instead, as she remembers, the anarchists just wanted to fight with Nazis in the streets. Just like I did when I was young.

•••

The event Jeanie holds at the infoshop is called *Prison Watching 101*. The Ironwood is a refurbished Internet café, a coffee shop fitted with booths and tables but with an extra room left open for meetings. In the meeting room, there's a mismatch of seating, chairs discarded from their former homes—kitchen table chairs, couches, futons, the odd cat-scratched and upholstery-leaking recliner. All are arranged in a half circle and angled toward a small patch of cinderblock wall painted white for projecting films. The walls are sparse, dotted with graffitied faces and symbols—some overtly anarchist, others coded with images that represent hacktivist groups, animal rights groups, and so on. On the side of the room opposite the screen, there's a metal-frame kitchen shelf filled with books, maybe 25, all of which I'll later learn were donated by Jeanie. A cork poster board with only a few tacked flyers flanks the shelf. A ways from the *Rail*, I think. We sit for a while.

It becomes obvious that Jeanie is the leader of this event, and she tells us

we should wait to see if more people show up. While we wait, we decide to introduce ourselves and talk about the reasons we're here. Two women who are likely the only people older than me in the room begin. They're here as envoys from their church group. They meet every third Saturday at the Hyatt down the road to talk about prisoners' rights. They hand me a flyer that says, "Pray to end abuse."

The other attendees have a variety of rationales for being there. One man had a terrible experience after he was falsely – he adds the word every time – accused of having child pornography. Two people want to discuss the racial disproportions of prisons and instances of prison violence. The woman who baked brownies is there to talk about how prison meals should be vegan. Michael, who is busy setting up the projector, talks about how he's been working with Jeanie for the past six months, collecting research from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Justice, trying to get the ACLU to file law suits against Arizona's public and private prisons. I tell everyone I'm an educational researcher and talk about my interest in activism. I mention some things I've learned about the relationship between schools and prisons. Jeanie tells me we've really got to talk after this is over.

At about an hour after we were slated to start, Jeanie introduces herself:

"My name is Jeanie Hildt, and before I became involved in prisons, I got my sort of professional start working with the homeless population as a social worker in Ann Arbor, and this work quickly became radicalized after funding for mental health facilities was cut. We'd find abandon homes and work out squatting

systems to make sure everyone had a bed."

Between the clients, the ever-present crises, and the subversion, she burned out quickly. She quit, moving out to Arizona where her mother and brother lived, and decided to study social work formally. Her program of study didn't last long. She became interested in things like the death panel in the Bible belt and women's resistance efforts in the American slavery era. She met a professor, Dr. Derosa, who cared about all the same things and took his class on social movements. They became fast friends mostly, she thought, because she was a few years his elder and had more to offer than the 18-year-olds who shared her classes. He was the first person she called when she decided to drop out, one class short of her first real degree. Marcia Powell had died, and Jeanie couldn't bear just to be in school any more.

•••

In October, the anarchists declare every day *Police Brutality Day*. For the first week of the month, Jeanie had been up late chalking anti-police messages on the sidewalk leading to the Phoenix Police Department. Her goal was to call attention to the death of Danny Rodriguez, an unarmed man in Tucson who'd been tazered twice, pepper sprayed, forced to watch his dog shot to death, then killed by a police officer as he ran away. On those nights, she'd blog about the injustices enacted by the police state, and she'd march with dozens of people to demand a response. The protesters were lead by Danny Rodriguez's mother in chants of *Justicia Ahora*. The police feared rioting; violence might break out. Eventually, charges were brought against the officer that killed Danny Rodriguez.

Jeanie blogged about the protests, the heartbreak, and the power that comes from raising one's voice. In the same month, Shawn Drenk, a Phoenix police officer, was killed in the line of duty. At the anarchist meeting on the day after he died, the anarchists cheered. "Any dead cop is a good cop," they said.

Jeanie begins to plan her own protest. When she gets her time to talk, she asks for people to come out to the Department of Corrections building on November 1st. She talks about the success they had in getting some justice for Danny Rodriguez's family and how it's time to get justice for the families of all of the people who have been killed or have committed suicide in prison.

But before she gives back the microphone, she says, "You know, I hear a lot of people cheering for Shawn Drenk's death, here and on Facebook, and that really upsets me. We shouldn't be cheering people's deaths. That's like playing war. You know? We need to be fighting real power. You do not celebrate a person's murder. I don't care who that person is. I don't care what uniform they're wearing. You know, my father wore a uniform. He was military intelligence. He would be top on your hit list. Anyhow, thanks for the time."

•••

On the night that I first met Jeanie at the Ironwood, she tells us about Marcia Powell, running through details of her case that she's clearly memorized – the names of guards who'd testified, the dates of different court decisions, the woman's body temperature when they'd finally autopsied her.

"I was profoundly disturbed by what happened in Perryvale. I identified with that woman's dependency and with her choices. I didn't know what to do, so

I started to blog. I looked for narratives about local resistance, and I found the prison abolitionist movement. We call ourselves this to draw attention to the link between our work, race, and this country's history of criminalizing Black people."

She elucidates further, drawing out the connections between racism and corrections, what she calls the classic example of differences in cocaine and crack cocaine sentencing policy – "Guess who uses which version of the same drug, and guess which version carries the more severe sentence?" – and her belief that racial equality cannot happen without a dismantling of the entire prison state.

Jeanie began to blog because she found power in making her own media. As a result, she had been invited to talk with the Director of the Department of Corrections, a man named Charles Ryan. She went to the meeting and describes it in stages, moving quickly from Ryan's realization that Jeanie wasn't a *real* journalist, to wondering if she could still help him get his message out there, to understanding that she was definitely not on his side. All of which took about seven minutes. The remainder of the scheduled hour became a "bit of an interrogation," with "Chuck" finding out what Jeanie knew, whom she knew, and whether or not she was more than just another college kid on a mission.

When Jeanie talks about her meeting with Charles Ryan, she pauses, then says, "You know, these prisoners are cannon fodder. They're experimental animals. I'm absolutely convinced, and it makes me sound kinda nuts, but I am absolutely convinced that when Chuck Ryan was in Iraq, he was learning how to deal with insurgents the way that he deals with gang members. I think he was practicing his work on them – the work that he did here in Arizona before he left.

And, when he came back, he brought more shit with him. And that's why the violence is so bad in the prisons – he's intentionally doing this shit. I wish I could prove it."

•••

Jeanie plans her demonstration in the park across the street from the Department of Corrections. Along with the anarchist community, she invites the family members of dead inmates, the people she's come to call her clients. She'd helped them find legal resources, psychological help, financial help, ways to be heard, ways to cope, and now she'd asked them to become vulnerable again. Come out and fight back. Jeanie saw them at the center of the movement she was trying to engage – a movement larger than the prisons, with its roots in classism, homophobia, and racism, and its ends in fascism.

"I was looking for the front lines of the revolution, and I stumbled into the prisons," she would tell me. "None of these struggles in Arizona are independent of each other – the indigenous, the immigrant, the youth stuff in Tucson – but that seemed to escape the typical radical perspective. In fact, Michael was the only one who got it, who saw the lines between all this shit. But, before he started helping me, I just felt like I was taking on more than I could handle. Over my fucking head – I mean really – these are problems of magnitude that entire systems can't solve, much less one person."

On the day of her protest, a day in early December, when the summer has finally come to a rest and the downtown corridors of Phoenix are flush with a cool, dry wind, twelve people showed up—mostly the families. The only

anarchists there were those who'd been out of town when the message went out to boycott Jeanie. *The pig lover. The military intelligence kid*. Michael was there, too, and he asked Jeanie what she had expected to happen when she spoke up for a cop.

"But they left these family members hanging out there to fucking dry," she said.

"This is *your* priority," he responded. "*You're* the one organizing this. This is not the community's fault, you know – you organize something that nobody shows up to." He said these words to her without emotion, quietly, as he tends to speak, then turned and left.

Michael surprised Jeanie with this. She spent her afternoon apologizing to family members who'd made signs and held old photographs of dead relatives, images of their sons and daughters and husbands and friends in better moments. And now this. Now this is her fault. She'd put these people in harm's way, out in the desert wind and away from their jobs, their homes. On display for nothing more than a few passing gazes and the numb reminder that the people whose pictures they held still didn't matter.

Jeanie didn't go to another anarchist meeting for a long time. Instead, she called some of the people who she'd expected to come and told them to fuck off. She called them pretend revolutionaries. Then, she took mushrooms and tore her bookcase apart to paint the names of the dead. Alone, she'd hit the streets at 3AM to chalk sidewalks and hang banners. And she brought a camera in case she ran into any police. She told me she loved the freedom of being alone, the thrill of

being caught.

"You know, a lot of the time I think the compulsion to chalk is no fun whatsoever without the possibility that a cop might come and get bent out of shape about it. And that's what I get off on – the whole confrontation with the cops."

She starts laughing.

"And I'm realizing that it's kind of embarrassing now, but anyway, I do get off on it. And, especially when I found out how sick my mom was, I just wanted to fucking fight. I wanted to fight."

•••

Jeanie begins her lesson at the Ironwood by describing prison watching.

"There's a whole blogging community dedicated to prison watching. I got hooked in with a friend from Amsterdam. Actually, I've never met her, but she read my stuff on my other blogs, and she asked me if I wanted to write the Arizona Prison Watch. She's got all of these blog domain names *parked*, reserved. Like, there's a Nevada domain and a Utah domain, just no one does those ones yet."

We sit in our semi-circle of cast-off chairs. One man who showed up late kicks his worn recliner back into prone, takes off his shoes, and cracks his toes loudly. Jeanie continues.

"So, basically prison watching is shining a light on the prisons and amplifying the voices of prisoners. The point is to let the prisoners drive the movement, to help get the narrative of oppression and resistance out where other

people can get it. And, blogs have been the technology that has helped us do this work. The Department of Corrections is putting their own narrative out there. They have people who do PR work all day long, trying to spin the need for prisons and create communities of fear."

We open a discussion on the narratives of the police state, the war on drugs as cultural genocide, the links to Abu Gharib. Jeanie says she's here for recruitment as much as education, that she needs people to write blogs, to read the files coming out of the prisons, to start reporting out – bearing witness and educating the public on what prisons really are and do. She also needs people to help her write the prisoners and their families.

"We need to let them know they're not in the dark. That someone out here's fighting for them. That they haven't been forgotten or betrayed. These prisoners and these families all feel like they've been left for dead, and I can't keep up with telling them all that they aren't alone."

Jeanie says the difference in prisons needs to be made on a communal rather than institutional level because we have no chance at making institutional change. Michael stops her to say that the film is ready, but he wants to leave the lights on so he can pass around a sign up sheet for volunteers to help. He tells us that anything we can do will be tremendous, as it's just the two of them at that time.

•••

Several days after the failed protest, Michael called Jeanie at the number she left on her card. She's surprised at first, so she doesn't ask why he's

interested. After his comments at the demonstration, she's beginning to think he's not a cop, but wonders what he else he could be. He asks to meet, and she tells him to come to her apartment. He brings a backpack full of books, but they talk before looking at them. Sitting on her apartment floor, Michael explains that she doesn't know the community, that Jeanie never really organized them. She just expected them to all jump on board because it was a cause and because it was one that set people against the state. He explains that these are insular people and that she needs to learn their names and their lives before she can ask anything of them – who's in a relationship with whom, who was married to whom, whose kid is whose, who hates who – all of it matters in this family.

She doesn't care about any of this, and he can read her growing disinterest. He tells her that he gets it, gets why that doesn't matter to her. He tells her that he gets her cause, that he sees the ways the prisons are linked to the schools, to the lawmakers, to race, to gender. He tells her he wants to help, but she has to begin to understand the community if they're going to get anywhere. They look through the books he brought. Stuff he's been reading about prisons, political theories of the prison state, and the ways anarchists have already been trying to fight the carceral system around the world. They talk, and Jeanie borrows some of the books. She reads a few, ignores a few others, and decides that Michael isn't a cop after all.

•••

Before the film starts, Jeanie goes outside to smoke. I follow her and wait around sheepishly while she talks to her anarchist friends. They're talking about

how the infoshop is going and who showed up to artwalk last week. Jeanie tells them about some graffiti she did in her alley last Friday night. Eventually, I stop standing there quietly and ask if I can talk to her for a minute. I tell her what my study is about and how I think she'd be ideal for what I am trying to do. I tell her that if she's interested, I'll need to send a form telling her about her rights and my responsibilities. She gives me a card with her email address and three blog addresses. She says, "Sure. Sounds good," and goes back inside. I wait until everyone's back inside, open my notebook, and start trying to remember everything that just happened.

•••

Jeanie brings two worn grocery bags filled with photocopies into her apartment. Inside the bags, multicolored post-it notes have lost their glue and papers have begun to shift and bend over on themselves. She sets the bags on the ground, making sure they don't slump over and spill. She calls Michael.

"Hey. It's Jean. Are you guys busy? Cool. I got the third and fourth sets from the DOC. When do you think you can help me start to look through all this shit. Cool. Yeah, just be aware, this is really heartwrenching shit when you get into it. Yeah. Yeah. I can't believe they let me copy all of it. I think that secretary is gonna get fired. Yeah. Heh. Cool. See you then."

Jeanie sits down, slides out a box from under her computer desk, and takes out a sheet of printer paper and a black marker. She carefully tears the sheet into thirds then writes *DEAD* in uppercase letters.

Photo 4. The Dead

Bonds

Jake

Twenty-one years ago, when I was a junior in high school and long before I'd enroll in a doctoral program, I am failing Chemistry. I haven't done homework for this class in weeks – I might never have done any – but at the moment, there's nothing more mesmerizing for me than what the teacher, Mr. Smith, is saying. I crane in across my desk, leaning in on an arm cast I'd gotten from falling off my skateboard in the summer. Despite my attention on Mr. Smith, I'm writing song lyrics on the back of my notebook with my good hand. This kind of writing has become autonomic to me – I dig in the pen so that the cardboard fibers on the back of the notebook flake away. In class, we're discussing atomic bonds, the ways in which elements hold together: how matter exists on its most basic levels. It's 1991, and Mr. Smith, wearing a flat top and a moustache in their last days of social acceptability, is animated at the front of the room, smiling and sitting on girls' desks in the front row from time to time.

"As they spin, the electrons form a field that keeps the protons centered in the nucleus. They hold the whole thing together, so their charges must be both balanced and equal at all times. Can ya guess what would happen if you stopped the electrons from spinning?"

"Disintegration?"

I say the word without hesitation. I tend to finish other people's sentences when I'm engaged with what they're saying; it's like I need to say it for them. In most of my classes, I tend to talk frequently, excitedly. For this reason, my

teachers are always telling me how bright I am, how I could be fluent in a language, how they can't figure out why I do so well on tests – a string of words waiting for the inexorable "however" that will signal the change over to what they really want to talk about. "Where's the investment?" my school counselor would say after she'd close my file and slowly place her hands flat on her desktop. Her under-bagged eyes piercing behind tortoise shell glasses, and the pale gold of her cheap brooch reflecting fluorescent light, she speaks evenly: "We can't invest in you until you invest in us."

In chemistry, Mr. Smith points at me with a dry erase marker. He holds it as though it were the barrel of a gun.

"Bingo. Yes. Disintegration is exactly what would happen, but not like the movies. I watch a lot of movies, and I saw one sci-fi – *they* always get *everything* wrong – where the guy would use his 'disintegration ray' and people would turn into little piles of dust. But that's not true at all. If the electrons were stopped, the protons would release the matter's solid state. It would just become light. Light and energy, not dust, as dust is still made up of atoms. Any solid thing could just vanish, if you knew how to stop its electrons."

My mind wanders to Dr. Manhattan, a superhero from the *Watchmen* comics I read in junior high. Dr. Manhattan's origin centered on his disintegration. I remembered the line he spoke in the comic – *the light is taking me to pieces* – and I repeat it under my breath while Mr. Smith is talking. In his transformation, Manhattan had been given god-like powers, but he'd lost his humanity as a result of the exchange – he lived in his own past, present, and

future simultaneously, which produced an indifference to the affairs of other people, even those he'd loved. My favorite chapter of *Watchmen* centered around Manhattan's self-imposed exile to Mars and his achronological reflection on his life – a series of memories he linked to overlay of cogs that comprise a watch.

"Good, Jake. Maybe if you just did your homework – any of it – you wouldn't be failing out of my class and out of this school."

Weeks before, on the first day of class, Mr. Smith gave us personality tests as an "icebreaker." He told us that we had to ace this test to be one of those kids who can come to his house on the weekends to eat pizza and do fun experiments, squeezing his face into a rehearsed smile. It's the "four temperaments" test, and my score tells me that I'm primarily phlegmatic, with a sizeable spike of melancholy. Mr. Smith reads though the descriptions of each temperament, lingering on his own – choleric – to describe his expectations of us.

"I am an action person, and I believe that we should use any means at our disposal to get things done. I will not do anything illegal or immoral, but anything else is fair game *if* it gets the job done."

He reads the sanguine type, smirking, "We've got a lot of you in this class, I can tell. We'll have fun in here." He reads melancholy quickly, but does pause to mention how being analytical is key to doing good chemistry – "these are your detail folks, and I can appreciate that." When he gets to phlegmatic, he asks for people with this personality type to raise their hands. I do, but he doesn't see me. I am the only one with my hand up.

"Good. I mean there's nothing wrong with these folks, but I just don't get

them and don't like to work with them." He doesn't read my type's description. We move on to the course schedule, to the homework I'll never do, to the tests I won't show up to take. To the business of being a school.

•••

I'm in my gifted first grade class. It's not *my* school, though. They bus me and two other children up to Mountain Ridge, a school a few miles to the North, because Mirage Elementary doesn't have a gifted program. We stay here for half of the day, starting at 9:00 and going through lunch. The two other kids and I do science projects in the early morning, work on reading after that, and then we write before lunch. We eat lunch after the other kids at this school are done. I pry open my *Clash of the Titans* lunch box and eat quietly with the other kids and our teacher. My feet dangle and kick in place under the lunch table. We don't talk much.

One day before lunch, my teacher asks to talk with me about a story I had turned in to her for writing lessons earlier that week. I had written about a man who was shrunk down to insect size, and he was forced to fight now-gigantic grasshoppers and ants. I had done my best to describe the massive creatures and the languid fight scenes, seeking inspiration from my nascent comic collection, but my teacher had been upset. She said that I had made up the word "scabbard" because she had never heard of it before. She told me that we needed to use real words if we wanted to write well and that making up words was like lying. I stay in this class for the remainder of the year, striking tuning forks and observing their vibrations, watching the teacher to make sure I'm doing the right thing. I am

not asked to come back to the program in second grade.

•••

In high school, my mother started looking through my notebooks and folders, worried about me because I was not doing well and because the counselors thought I was "seriously depressed." She finds a notebook with song lyrics on the back and calls for me come and talk to her. The song is called "Intentions," and it's by a punk band called *Fifteen*. The song is about getting older and dreading the prospect of living a life that revolves around work and acquisition. She tells me that she felt the same way when she was younger. That everyone does.

I tell her, "But that's the point – if we all feel this way, why do we still do the things we hate?"

"You stop hating them after a while. It's just the way things are."

"So you're happy about the way things just are?"

"Well, no Jake. But, no one is. You can't worry about being happy. You're a bright boy, and you'll be fine."

•••

The next year, my senior year, I drop out. It's the end of the semester, and my guidance counselor tells me that I'll need to take another two years to make up for missing credits. She tells me that staying will be twice the burden on them than it is on me. I leave on the last day of classes, out the door, exit the building. The contours of outside are erased in the radiant wake of the May Arizona sun as I make my way though the parking lot and into the street.

Later that year, I wait for some message to come about how they would help me graduate if I came back. Some statement that it was illegal for me not to attend. By October, neither message is coming, and I write an essay.

Why don't I return to high school?

Nearly every everything in my life at this point in time rebounds itself into that question.

Now I am going to answer myself and the countless droves that burden me with the same frowns and speeches regarding public education.

Firstly, everything taught there is run through the meat grinder of censorship, leaving only thinly cut strips of biased fact with hints of liberalism thrown in for flavor. History books are geared to a white, Christian outlook, not an American point of view. We are taught to pity the savages known as Indians for their shortcoming, but never feel an ounce of regret, because it was God's will to murder a culture whilst manifesting destiny.

It teaches a system structure of behavior modification, through both negative and positive reinforcement, giving punishment and reward for the appropriate action. It teaches us to respect and obey the opinions of those we directly oppose. If a school took its discipline money and put it into programs promoting something worthwhile, maybe then students would have less time on their hands to create real problems.

But, worst of all is the attitude and mentality of the "students." School spirit is a precursor to separation, competition, and worst of all, blind pride.

Some 18 years later, I reflect on the day I wrote these words. I am editing

a book on curriculum and thinking up an introduction to a section titled "Revitalizing Education." I write about a song that I listened to on that day with my best friend. The song, *School*, spoke to us about our shared frustrations about dropping out. What I don't write about is how we confessed to each other how scared we were. How we both weren't sure if we should have given in so easily. How we didn't tell most of our families about leaving school. On a yellow notepad in my room, my friend drew a picture of a school building personified into a menacing stare. We don't talk much about school after that day. I keep his drawing.

The People We've Relegated to the Darkness

Jeanie

In our last long conversation before I begin to write these stories, I ask Jeanie what she wants me to write, what she'd like this story to be. It doesn't take her long to respond.

"The families. You need to talk about the people who have died in prison and their families. That's why I started blogging so much. Because we forget that there are people in prisons, people who are loved."

Jeanie tells me to give the stories of the names she writes. Her stuff isn't nearly as important, she says. I read her blogs, find too many of these stories to tell, and set to writing the ones that she reports on during the months I am riding along with her:

Psalm

Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul.

This is the first line of the psalm that Mike Atencio reads at his brother Marty's funeral. He says it jumped out at him as he flipped through scripture. When they were kids in Alamagordo, Marty, the older brother, had been a practical joker. He was always messing with his family, but he always had the charm to get out of it. He would get sad sometimes, when he was a teenager, and he would get angry, too. They really didn't think much about it until he asked them to take him to a doctor. That was the first time anyone in the family could remember hearing of bi-polar disorder or manic episodes, or the medication that Marty would need to take care of himself. It had seemed like an easy solution.

Buy the meds, and he's fine. Fine enough to join the Army. Fine enough for honorable discharge. Fine enough to have kids and join the family business. All he needed to do was take the meds.

Let them be as chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord chase them.

On December 15th, 2009, Marty Atencio had two run-ins with the police. The first time, he was yelling at the clerk of a 7-11 downtown. It didn't seem like he was mad at anything or anyone in particular, but he was agitated enough for the clerk to call the cops. When they got there, Marty left without incident. That was written in the report. Also in the report was a note that Marty had seemed distracted and confused. A mental issue, not drugs – the reporting officer was clear on this matter. On the second encounter, a woman called the police because Marty was kicking at a door. When she told him to stop, he pointed a cell phone at her. *Aggressively*, she said. He yelled at her for a few minutes, inches from her face. A car drove by, and he began to run after it. She told the police she was afraid he would hit her. She wanted to press charges. When they arrested him, he went again without incident, looking for someone to hold his phone when he got into the car. After he'd come home from the service, Marty often forgot to take his pills. He hadn't seen anything really traumatic during his service, stationed in Hawaii, but his brother remembers him having a tough time transitioning back. He'd never gotten into trouble with the police before, though. Nothing like that. In the days before the arrest, they'd all been hopeful. They'd seen that he was beginning to turn things around.

Let not them that are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me.

A few hours after he was arrested, Marty Atencio was taken to a "safe cell" where he was beaten, tasered, and stripped. He hadn't seen a judge. He hadn't even gone all the way through intake. Videos surface. In them, Marty was calm, surrounded by a buzzing, growing mass of sheriffs and detention officers. He stands against a wall with a semi-circle of men around him. He crosses his arms once, scratching his forearm a little. The men close the circle around him and force his face up against the wall. There are so many men that not everyone can get to Marty, and the others pace the outside of the pile, craning their necks to see what's happening on the inside. Marty is dragged to the ground, his back folding over, his teeth gritted white, visible despite the grain of the security camera. Then, he is completely smothered by the pile. Three other officers stand at the edge, casually watching. One pulls on a pair of blue latex medical gloves. The pile slowly writhes around the room. More men pile in the room. Some of the officers reach to their belts to pull out taser guns, sticking them into the mass of bodies cautiously. One officer whips his knee into Marty's head and face.

When the men finally break, Marty isn't moving. People continue to flow into the room, some in medical scrubs. The police strip off his clothes, standard procedure for suspects with clear mental issues, a precaution against suicide. Another video shows the officers taking his nude body into the safe cell. He is still not moving. He only appears to breathe once. They leave him in the cell, unconscious, for ten minutes. A suicide watch, as it's called in the sheriff's office report. The final clip shows the same men again surrounding him, this time administering CPR.

Marty was rushed to the hospital and put on life support, which his brother says was just a formality–he was dead before he left the jail. After his memorial service, after his brother reads the psalm, Marty is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery. Taps is played. A salute is fired into the air. His parents are given the American flag from the coffin. In the presence of his brother, his sister, his uncles, and his children, Marty is laid to rest with full military honors.

Neither let them wink with the eye that Hate me without cause.

In 1994, some time after Marty returns stateside, he stays up late. He's cutting up a religious tract given to him by a chaplain on his way home—a glossy folded pamphlet, nicer than the ones they'd given out on the way there. *I guess we earned the good paper now.* He's cutting carefully, circumscribing detailed points of light illuminating from an angel's face and delicately curled locks of hair. When he's done, the wood grain of the kitchen table appears through the head-shaped hole. He takes out his VA card and some glue. He carefully positions the angel's face over his own and trims the pieces that don't fit the frame, then drips some glue on the paper. He presses it a few times between his fingertips, and uses a tissue to wipe away the excess that seeps out around the sides. He waits as the glue dries. When it's done, he picks up the card, says *thank you*, and slips it into his wallet. He sets his wallet on the kitchen counter, takes his medication, and heads off to sleep in his own bed.

Children

Forrest Day had settled into the idea of being a mother—a 16-year-old mother—about a month before her baby died. She had faced the counselors at

school, her parents, reality television that claimed to speak for her life, the conversations about her future and what was best for her. She'd been warned about the consequences of sex, but it was what it was. She wondered if motherhood might be nothing like the crushing monotony everyone who gave her lectures had described. When the baby died, all of eight months old, she hadn't been out partying. She hadn't been high. She was distracted in the next room writing. There wasn't all that much water. The drain was unplugged. She was looking for a towel, but thought of how to finish a poem she'd been working on for months. Elijah was splashing his bath, and then he wasn't. Too young to be a mother; old enough to be tried as an adult.

The state attorney gave her a plea deal. The law said she had to be tried as an adult. Felony child abuse. Facing decades in prison, she decided not to got to court and agreed to seven months probation. She still wanted to be a mother, to try and move past what had happened. She planned her second child, got pregnant, then violated her parole by failing to participate in an assistance program and having contact with minors—all before her 18th birthday, still a child, still an adult. Forrest had asked to keep the new baby, telling the judge that her family and her boyfriend would take care of it while she was away. There was a conference, all off the record. She could give birth in a hospital, but was allowed contact for only one hour. Then, the baby was to be given to a guardian. *Ad Litem* the court documents called it. Any contact after that hour was a violation, a crime in its own right, a violation of the child's best interests.

Forrest gave birth to her daughter, held the baby girl, and went to prison to

serve a three-and-a-half year sentence for her original charge of child abuse. Two babies lost, Forrest Day killed herself in the Perryvale main yard in January of 2012. Nineteen years old now, finally an adult by law. Local news reports all talked about her troubled history. One of her friends posted a message to Jeanie's blog.

Forrest wasn't a bad person, she had a lapse in judgment, just like millions of other 16 year old kids do every day. She was funny, kind, loving, artistic and so much more. I believe that the state wanted to use her as an example to other young mothers and it backfired horribly . . . I want people everywhere to know that Forrest was an amazing young woman who wanted to go to culinary school to make her life better, but she will never get that opportunity now. I also wanted to say that Forrest gave birth to a beautiful baby girl right before she was incarcerated and the baby is the spitting image of her mommy. The family has custody of the baby, and I can only imagine that they feel very blessed by this wonder born from tragedy.

Jeanie refuses to re-post any of the media coverage of Forrest's death. She feels that the reports paint her as a "bad girl" whose fate was a matter of inevitability. "I don't accept that premise," she writes. "She acted out the way children do when troubled...and troubled children, in my book, do not belong in adult prison."

Voices

On one of her blogs, Jeanie follows a local television news series called "Watching Tony Die." The series gives an account of the suicide of a mentally ill

inmate named Tony Lester who, under the watch of the Corrections Officers at ASPC-Tucson, slit his own wrists and throat and wrote the word "voices" in his blood on an envelope in his cell. Tony was arrested in 2007 for assaulting two of his friends. The assault was a result of these friends trying to get a knife out of Tony's hands as he held it to his own neck. When they tried to take the knife, he'd cut both of their hands. According to Tony, he was drunk, *blackout* drunk, at the time, and he'd been a cutter since he was a teenager. Things got out of hand. It was almost a year before he was declared mentally fit to stand trial, and when he finally could, he was given the maximum sentence. Twelve years. Before this sentence is handed down, his girlfriend gives birth to his daughter.

In ASPC-Tucson, he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, and the judge who had sentenced him requested that he be taken into a mental health facility. But the facility's mental health staff never met with Tony, and he was never entered into the psychiatric wing. In the official records, the corrections staff admitted that they were confused as to where to house him. The records also say Tony refused to take his medication. He was placed into the general population, in a cell with another man. The guards gave him a hygiene kit with a toothbrush, toothpaste, toilet paper, and a disposable razor. Tony asked his cellmate to break the plastic on the disposable razor. At night, in the top bunk, Tony drew the razor in long, deep lines across his groin, his wrists, and his neck. Drips of blood escaped into pools on the cell floor. His cellmate screamed for help.

Over the course of her investigation, the journalist following Tony's case

obtains interview records with the five corrections officers who responded. They're asked why no care was given to prevent his death at the scene in his cell. One says he didn't feel safe, as he couldn't see Tony's hands and wasn't sure if he had a weapon. Another claims she couldn't tell where the blood was coming from. There was just so much, she says in staccato disbelief. Tony moved his head at one point, which scared another officer. They would have had to "wallow though the blood" just to get to him. In total, they watched him bleed for 23 minutes. From a safe distance, they asked him to do or say something. A video surfaced during the investigation, possibly from a cell phone, and in it the officers can be seen walking around the room, Tony still writhing in swirl of grey sheets and darkening blood. While he bled out, they wondered aloud if he'd left a note. Later, they would call their collective actions "professional." After the investigation, one of the officers resigns. The other four are suspended for two weeks without pay. When Charles Ryan, Director of the DOC, is asked why he didn't fire the officers, he says, "It's a matter of litigation."

After watching the news series, a juror who served on Tony Lester's trial writes an anonymous post to a news website. In the post, she describes the deliberation, saying that she and a fellow juror had their doubts about convicting him the entire time, but that another juror forcefully disagreed. They were swayed to vote for guilty. The anonymous juror voices her hopes that Tony and Tony's mother and daughter can forgive her. She feels sickened by her complicity in his death. She could see how sick he was. She had thought Tony would get probation and treatment. Tony's aunt reads and responds to the post by the juror. She tells

the juror to forgive herself and, instead, turn her anger towards the system that betrayed her trust and let her nephew die. Tony will have his voice heard. She signs the post with the word *Peace*.

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On the ride back from Coolidge, Jeanie tells me that the suicides are the hardest for her. They're the hardest to take and the most difficult to explain, to the families and to herself. She talks about how the state treats "mentally ill people like me and my brother" as if they don't matter. As if they were going to be dead or trouble anyhow. She talks about Chuck Ryan, wishing she hadn't given him so many possible felonies to use against her. I ask her if she has a trial date yet, and she tells me no, but that she's afraid to check her mail. Outside, the Coolidge rain is softening to dense air. It seeps in the windows and curls the page I am writing on. My hand sweats a sticky print into where I hold the notebook flat to my knee. The sun has been down for hours, and the clouds hide the moon. I can't see what I am writing, and Jeanie's face is only illuminated with the headlights of the infrequent cars on the other side of the highway. She breathes in deeply on the humidity streaming through the windows.

"I dunno. I dunno. Fuck it all. I'm gonna live day to day," Jeanie says.

5.20.2009

Even after the body was moved to a table, under fluorescents and air conditioning, where a man she'd never met asked to turn off her life support; even after the only relative they could find refused to claim the body; even after a morgue finished the heat's work and turned her to ash – her body remains on the desert floor, surrounded by a lattice of chain link, eyes dried to parchment, framed by her own waste. Hers is not the only body still in this desert. Hers is an alidade, a way of putting the other bodies into reference, relief. A chain of blanched bones and slovenly lives, stretching for a cool under the sun-scabbed crust.

PART III: ACCULTURATION

7.7.2010 (1)

He was supposed to be there for 12 years, but they found him with puncture wounds two years in, and now he won't leave. They first said they'd found him in his cell, stabbed, alone. He was taken to a hospital, put on life support. When they eventually turned the life support off, they told his mother that, if it was any comfort, the men who did this never meant to kill him, just scare him. This kid was in a gang, and these things happen. When he was alive and in prison, he was caught with another man, of another color, and this was unacceptable. He was asked to show loyalty, to kill one of these other men, and he said he would. But he never went though with it. There are legal documents that detail what happened next. They use the words "beat down" in quotations to describe his last conscious moments. They note that the prison guards left him alone with gang members for 34 minutes. When they found him, blood was coming from all sides of his body, pooling beneath him on his bed, trickling down to the cement below. Still convulsing. Vomit mixed in the blood. Thirty-four minutes. His mother is being told that there was nothing left to do, that these things happen. They only meant to scare him. We know that much. If it's any comfort.

The Fallout from My Grandiosity and Expansiveness

Jeanie

I see Jeanie one more time before our last interview; she's in the courthouse downtown. She'd emailed a group of people, including me, to ask if they could be here. She says that she's scared and that we all might need to write some letters for her. At the end of the message, she writes, "Get there at 7:00, and we can chalk the walk together. I get there at 8, and the sidewalks are clean. I go through the sliding glass doors and x-ray station and ask for the Hildt trial at the information desk. They tell me it hasn't been scheduled yet. It might be the wrong day. Looking around, afraid I've got the wrong building, I find Jeanie sitting in the middle of rows of empty seats. Michael sits with her, reading. Maylie is at the front of the rows, pacing. I greet them and ask if I missed the chalk. Michael and Maylie smile. Jeanie thanks me for coming down, and tells me she got up too late to chalk.

The space we are in feels like a DMV office without the crowd. Long rows of teller counters, and a bank of LED displays that shine messages like 32E and 98D. We're the only people here, a mid-day Monday morning. Jeanie holds her ticket between clenched hands, 101D. I'm holding my notebook, but I remind myself not to open it in front of everyone. Michael asks me how the writing is going, when I'm going to graduate, and if I'm looking for a job yet. I tell him everything's kind of on hold with all of the other work I've got going on. He shows me the book he found on the failings of the Left. I write its name on the back cover of my notebook. We sit in our row, Maylie pacing now and then.

Jeanie sits with her hands clasped, feet drawn together. Like she's in a pew. "I'm scared," she tells me.

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Jeanie is standing in the alley behind her house, cell phone in hand, calling the police to report graffiti. Around her, on the walls, dumpsters, and asphalt are still-dripping messages in neon colors, puffy letters. They say things like *Stop SB1070*, *SOS AZ State Prisons*, *What Seams to Be the Problem Officer?* and *Sunny Phoenix Where Property has more Right to Life than People*. She tells the dispatcher, "I live on 1st Street and Commonwealth, the apartments next to Rumble's. The South side." She rolls a cigarette, squats in the shade, and waits, picking flecks of paint off her shoes. A beat cop comes 10 minutes after she calls. He tells her to wait there. She asks him what the fuck it looks like she's doing. He sits in his car and makes a call. Two detectives from the graffiti squad arrive 45 minutes later. They tell her their names, one is Maryanne Rike, the other Jeanie can never remember. They ask her why she wanted to call the police on herself.

"Two days ago, some asshole cop scuffed out the name of a kid who killed himself in prison, and I swore from that point on I wasn't laying down names in chalk anymore."

"That still doesn't explain why you called us."

"Because I want to get arrested. If I was some Mexican kid, you'd have already fucking shot me by now. But, I'm a middle class white woman. So fucking arrest me already."

The detectives make notes, take Jeanie's name, and take pictures of the

alley, the whole time seeming bored, unresponsive. After being asked repeatedly why the care about buildings and streets more than people, the one whose name Jeanie can't remember says that they see graffiti like a gateway drug. It just leads to bigger and worse things. All Jeanie wanted was a fight. She tells me as much. But nobody was taking the bait, no matter how much she escalated. No body was responding. The only calls she would get were from families. Victims. Letters from survivors of suicide, telling her how bad it is. Gay prisoners who are locked up with sex offenders on purpose. A letter from a man who was told to attack two cops, and when he didn't, the men who told him to do it put him in the ICU with a fractured collarbone and femur. He was asking her to help him get protective custody so that the next time he was out he wasn't killed. Jeanie and Michael had no idea how to help him, how to work the system that way. No matter how many rants she wrote or files she accessed, nothing happened. So, on *First Friday*, when all of the college kids and family people were out, walking the artwalk next to her alley downtown, taking in the aesthetic of the counterculture, she decided to paint.

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"My professor, Eric – Dr. Derosa – he's my reality testing. He's the person I go to when I am totally fucking lost. You know, with this work, you don't get a, a supervisor or anything."

After Jeanie dropped out of college and began her work as an activist, she had remained in touch with Dr. Derosa. For a few months, before she finally got the nerve to call her mother and let her know she'd left school, she lived in his guest room. He was a prominent political spokesperson, and he'd have politicians,

all democrats, to his house for dinner. Jeanie, in what she calls her uniform of black vests and pants, would sit with state senators and local representatives, eating and talking about the situation of Arizona, the Chicano studies program in Tucson, the disappearance of funding for mental health patients, and Marcia Powell. She gave Dr. Derosa her bank pin and her mother's phone number in case something happened when she'd leave after midnight to chalk or to hang banners on the freeway overpasses. He'd read the emails she sent to the Governor, to the Department of Justice, to the ACLU, and offer her way to channel her fits of dissolution into things that might make sense to people who didn't see the prospect of a world without prisons. When they'd talk, he'd never tell her how to do her work, but he would offer her his perspectives on how systems worked, on how people saw her, on what things people need to hear.

Jeanie tells me that she never stopped calling him "my professor," even though it had been years since she'd been in a class. I ask why.

"Maybe one reason that I still refer to him as my old professor is because I know that, on one level, it invokes the authority that Eric hates invoking. He wouldn't speak at any of the roundtables and theaters because, you know, it was all about power, having a chance to speak and, you know, him being an authority. He'd wonder, where are the people who really need to do the talking here?"

She pauses for a beat. We're in a free trade coffee shop a few blocks from her house. I buy us lunch in exchange for her time and conversation.

"So, you know . . . he likes to keep his, his work and his life separate. So, maybe that's why I refer to him still as my old professor."

She looks down at her hummus sandwich, trying to find words.

"And, he was never ashamed to be my professor. I mean, even with all of the shit I do. I don't know, but he's my friend, and he's a sweetheart. And that part of the relationship is really, really… That part of the relationship is really private. I don't want to imply that we're doing things, but he's just like that."

I tell her that I didn't think she meant it that way. She changes the subject.

"I've been really blessed to have really good supervisors over the course of my career. One of them was a cop. She was an ex-cop. She taught me to be safe. She wouldn't let me go out without someone watching my back. She would tell me when I was doing something stupid, and I would tell her 'fuck you' when she would tell me I couldn't do something with a client of mine that I thought really needed to be done, you know. We had a good relationship, and I really needed somebody who…"

Jeanie brings the plate from her lap to the table. She cups one hand into the other and looks into my eyes. Behind her thin glasses, she's holding her eyes open as wide as they can go. The lights in the café shine across her lenses, so her eyes seem to flash from white to blue over and over as she talks. Small movements ripple across her shoulders, and her necklace sways. Otherwise, she is perfectly still as she speaks to me.

"And I mean, you know, I am not working a normal job because I am disabled by virtue of my mental illness. I was incompetent. And I don't want to be going around and fucking with peoples' lives, you know. I mean, I'm not responsible for having manic depression, but I am responsible for my recovery.

You know, and I really take care of that. I'm careful about my meds; I'm careful about my moods. I'm not really good about how I eat and sleep, you know – I admit that. But, um, I really try and take care of myself because – especially if I'm isolated in these relationships with prisoners and these relationships with power – if I'm isolated, then I could go off the fucking deep end and nobody would know until somebody gets really badly hurt, and it wouldn't necessarily be me. I'm sorry. I forgot what you asked. Did that answer your question?"

Around us, in the café, a woman starts laughing loudly to her companion. The sun's angle shifts across the blinds. I'm writing in my notebook openly, and it takes me a moment to let her know that she did answer my question.

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When the courthouse clerk calls Jeanie's number, she brings documentation of her complaint to the window, slides it across the dark, chipped, fake wood finish, and waits. The clerk types, studies her screen, then types more. Maylie asks what the problem is. The clerk tells her she's just checking on which courtroom it will be, but she's sure that the hearing is for 9:45. The complaint only came after weeks of Jeanie blogging that they wouldn't arrest her. The clean up crew's estimate on the damages was over a thousand, which changed the class one misdemeanor to a class two, which could mean jail time. Six months for each count. Four counts. One night, instead of chalking, she writes on her blog:

So, the Graffiti Detectives are really here to help wayward youth, not control and punish budding revolutionaries. Right. Regardless, we never would have had the conversation we did if I was a teenage Latino male chalking the public walks in

the middle of the night instead of a middle class white woman calling my vandalism "politics" and "art"... which is what this protest was really about – my own privilege. In a year and a half of chalking the walks of Power, how is it that I've never been arrested, assaulted, or shot by a cop in this town? Not that I WANT any of those things to happen, mind you - but I see them happening to people of color and those in poverty all around me, and can't help but wonder why I get a pass, if not for the intersections of my gender, age, race and class... That I am particularly privileged by the status quo in Arizona today is fairly disturbing – and the cost of accommodating my comfort, and that of my class, compels me to resist with everything I have. I may not be the most brilliant organizer or political strategist - some folks really doubt my sanity given my engagement of the police in confrontations - but I have yet to hear one good reason why not to tackle this head-on, at every level of law enforcement.

When 9:45 comes, we head to the courtroom. Flat, white walls with hidden doors, signs that say *No Hats, No Reading Materials*, steel ceiling vents. We sit in another long pew, Peggy wringing the brim of her cowboy hat, head down. Michael reads. Maylie's knee shakes up and down, her leg vibrates the floor around us. This isn't like the clerk's stations downstairs; the room is all but filled. Men with bruised faces, entire families with children who can't stop climbing the chairs and spilling into the aisles, tattooed arms and heads and faces. Jeanie tells me that her anarchist lawyer friend's advice was to not piss off the judge.

"That seems pretty sound," I say.

"We'll see what happens." She smiles, still bending and twisting her hat in her hands. The judge arrives, and we all listen he reads crimes and gives sentences. None of the people ask for a trial date.

DUI. Mandatory license suspension and 15 days in jail.

Solicitation of a prostitute. Mandatory 15 days in jail.

Dog without papers. Please come over here and fill out form 7. There will be fines.

Graffiti, misdemeanor 1. Restitution.

Domestic assault. Mandatory counseling.

Jeanie seems calmer now, listening. Commenting on the lack of prosecution for violence against women.

Solicitation of a prostitute. Mandatory 15 days.

Assault. Mandatory 15 days.

Public consumption. Probation and fines.

Jeanie's case is called. She walks to the desk in front of the judge's stand. *Graffiti, misdemeanor 2 carries mandatory jail time, depending on damages.*

"I'd like a trial date." She cups her hands under the desk's edge, lets her elbows bend backwards.

"Do you have a lawyer?"

"No, sir."

"Would you like to be appointed a public defender?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fill out form 3, and take it down the hall to the left, room 223."

We move down the hall to the line for public defense. Jeanie asks us to stay outside. She tells us to save the support for the real trial and that the precedent is still restitution. We wait on plush benches. In front of me is a window that overlooks the long, curved sidewalks that lead into this building, lined with Palo Verdes, cement accented with clay reds and rhinestone greens. Michael reads. Maylie talks to him while he reads, asking when he can go back to the storage facility with her. A few months back, Maylie put her things into storage. The storage facility had needed to spray all of the units for termites. While her locker was being sprayed, an employee accidentally marked her things as delinquent account property. By the end of the day, as with all delinquent accounts, employees had taken everything of value from the pile of Maylie's belongings. To make up for it, the manager offered her 100 dollars and six months free rent. Jeanie had needed a place to store her things after she moved in with Maylie, so it had seemed like a decent offer. Maylie tells me all of this as I watch people wind up the sidewalks to the courthouse. An hour passes. I realize that my parking meter is due to expire, and as I go to put in more quarters, Maylie follows me to smoke. Outside, she stops at an ashtray on top of a garbage can.

"Come find me when you're done with your car. You know how to get back here, right?"

"Sure. I can find you."

"Ok, promise?"

"Sure."

I pay my meter, and when I get back, Michael and Jeanie are with Maylie

already. We're parked in different directions. I ask if they want me to stop by. Jeanie says I don't need to. I tell her I'd like to get one last interview with her before the project is over. She tells me to e-mail her, that she'll have time before the trial. She thanks me for coming, and gives me a hug.

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While we're eating at the café, Jeanie tells me that it's hard to believe the contradictions she sees in her work. Gangsters and armed robbers and murderers write her letters and tell her they're scared, that she needs to help them survive prison. "Being victimized really does something to a person. Some of them, it makes them into more of a monster, and some of them it makes more human. I mean, we all decide how we're gonna deal with trauma like that."

The two of us talk. Our last interview together.

Drop Out

Jake

Between fourth and fifth period, I hide in the bathroom. I get in the stall, lock the door, and put my feet on the floor like I am using it. When the bell rings, and the hall monitor comes in, I use one hand to hold the door open, just enough to look like it came to rest that way. I stand on the toilet bowl, holding a notebook and a piece of paper in my other hand. This is the bathroom in the special education building, where there are already bathrooms in all of the classrooms, so they'll only check once. I put the trashcan in front of the bathroom door as a distraction, just in case. The room smells like piss and old cigarettes. The floor sticks to my shorts. I sit, feet out, one leg crossed over the other, and write.

Jake Burdick - 7-17-91

I want to be everything

that you ever hated

all rolled into one

I wish I was the victorious heart

in your greatest enemy

if hate for any man ever

dwelled in your mind

turn it on me

I am sexuality

I am race

I am religion

I am gender

But I too hate

and maybe if I learn

to control this hate through you

we could reach each other

My friends and I have been reading anarchist zines and listening to political music. We begin to see the world as a place already dead for us. A place filled with hatreds against people who are *different*. We do our best with ripped clothes and dyed hair and military boots and razor cuts down our arms to be different as well. We don't want to be part of the world as it is. I begin to write poems. I remember saying that I don't have the patience for stories; poems just make their point up front.

When the bell rings again, I stand up. Legs gone to needles. Peeling my shorts off the caked floor. I walk out and move to the auditorium. A daily routine. There's no one in there during sixth period, and I can climb the catwalks and watch scraps of paper flutter down to the stage. All of my friends have already dropped out.

The Names I Lay Down

Jeanie

I'm ten minutes late because, after getting there ten minutes early, I can't figure out where to park. On the phone that weekend, Jeanie had told me she lived on 1st and Roosevelt – "next to Rumble's… do you know Rumble's?" I said that I did know, mostly because I wanted her to think I knew things like that. I park on 1st avenue because the street is lined with spaces. It's an overcast Phoenix summer morning, the heat muffled, but eating away at the dew gloss on the downtown lawns. My messenger bag, empty except for a notebook and a digital recorder, swings wildly at my hip while I run until avenues give way to streets. I get to Jeanie's apartment at 7:28, more than ten minutes late, and I knock at the wrong door. On the door is a fake brass numeral 4, and my directions say 4, but no one answers. When I knock, a black woman peeks her head out from down the hall. The high morning, monsoon-blanched sun stretches into the hallway, smears out her features. She asks if she can help me. I tell her I'm sorry if I woke her. She smiles, pulls her head inside, and shuts the door. I knock again, softer this time, worried that I'd missed Jeanie. The woman opens the door again, this time stepping out into the hall.

"You know, that's our door, too. It goes to our bedroom. It doesn't open. The design of this building makes no sense."

She lets me in. The apartment is barely furnished – more of a workstation than a living space. A computer desk dominates the common room, and a sparse collection of flyers and posters dot the not-even-off-white walls. The woman asks

me to have a seat, pulling a wood chair from a table cluttered with boxes and books. She lowers herself slowly into a small blue recliner framed by the sun coming in through the windows behind her. She's wearing a pajama top and shorts, white with yellow flowers. As she sits, the tops slides up and bunches along her stomach and her feet point out to the sides. She yells to the hallway – "Jeanie, someone's here for you." Then she asks, "What's your name?"

"Jake. Burdick."

"Jake is here for you."

"I'm the researcher guy. I'm gonna be following Jeanie around. I work with activists."

"Oh, you're going to Gerster's hearing today. I hope he hangs."

A Chihuahua puppy comes running from the hallway, tongue flopping to the side. The puppy licks my hand, and I dangle my fingers to encourage him. The woman shushes him off, tells him to get in his bed. She takes a bright blue pouch of Bugler tobacco from the table next to her, and starts to roll herself a cigarette. We don't talk for some time. The dog pants and looks off. The tobacco and rolling paper crinkle and crush.

Still intently rolling her cigarette, the woman says, "They killed my son."

"God. I am so sorry." I have no idea what to say. "God."

We sit for a while longer; she smokes, leaning her chair back deeply. Jeanie calls out from the hall. "I'm getting out of the shower. Sorry to keep you waiting, Jake. Did you check out those links I sent?"

"I did. Is that all you?"

"Yeah, with a lot of copy and pasting from other folks. Only one of the blogs gets updated regularly. AZ prison watcher."

"Still. It's a full time job, right?"

Jeanie comes out from her room, rail thin with a little boy's summer haircut. She rests her glasses on her rounded cheekbones and begins to hunt around the small space for her things. "Oh yeah. I'm lucky to get to bed at 2 AM."

She grabs her bags, some long cans of iced tea from the freezer. The Chihuahua's ears rotate with her as she walks back and forth. Maylie leans back in her chair, her smoke giving shape to the light from the window.

"Oh shit. Jake, this is Maylie Seawright. We live together. Well, we have been for a couple of weeks."

I remember Jeanie talking about Dana Seawright during her talk at the infoshop. She'd described Dana's death as violent, a gang beating, one that the guards at Lewis had allowed to happen. The warden on duty was there when they'd pulled Dana off life support. He'd told her that if it was any consolation, they never meant to kill him.

"Ok," Jeanie says to Maylie. "We're heading out because I want to chalk before the hearing. The Representative's people are going to call today. They're gonna look into your case."

Maylie has a million dollar lawsuit pending against the Department of Corrections. The week she filed that suit, she lost her disability check. Jeanie tells me she's not a conspiracy theorist, but something's just weird about that timing.

"You have to tell them the whole story. They need to make it something

they can work with, like a sound bite. Don't get too emotional, if you can help it. She's a really nice person for a politician," Jeanie tells Maylie, as she goes to the faucet, fills a glass with water, and places it on the table next to the recliner.

Maylie tells me to take care of Jeanie.

"If she gets arrested, you call me immediately. I know what to do. Immediately." She looks at me gravely.

"Ok. Not a problem." I put my bag over my shoulder and follow Jeanie out the door. The Chihuahua yaps as we leave. The door is broken at the lock, splintered back in toward the frame. I can't shut it to where the lock lines up with its mooring. Jeanie says, "Here," grabs the handle, and juts the whole door upward, jumping a bit as she does. We go to the back gate, and she shows me her car.

"Is it cool if we ride in my car? I like people to read all my crazy shit right outside of the court and the DOC."

"Of course," I say. She gets in, moves a pile of papers off the passenger seat, and unlocks my door. Inside, empty iced tea cans are cut in half for ashtrays, and the visor on my side of the car flaps in my face. Jeanie apologizes for the lack of air conditioning, saying that the vents got all fucked up when she hid a pipe in there during a traffic stop. The fuel gauge is so far past empty that I wonder if it works anymore. I wonder what riding to Winslow or Yuma will be like in this car. I think about talking her into us taking my car, rather than just giving some gas money, as we'd agreed earlier. Her building's parking lot is filled with cars just like hers, some with their insides spilling out across the yellowed crab grass that

meets the cement. Jeanie lights a cigarette before we leave, asking me if I mind.

"No. That's totally fine with me."

Jeanie only lives a few miles from the office doors of prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials to whom she's become a recurring voice. As we drive, I think about everything I should have said to Maylie when she told me her son had been killed.

•••

On Jeanie's blog, she writes about Kevin Gerster's apology. He apologized for shaming his family and the Sheriff's Office. He explained that he was just caught up in the moment. It's hard to understand how stressful the job is until you do it, he said. He does not apologize to the prisoner whom he slammed into a table face first then choked by pressing his knee into the back of his neck. That man, who had been in the throes of a manic episode, would not stop laughing, and that's what set Gerster off. He also does not apologize to the prisoner he strapped to a table and beat until his jaw was shattered. The attorney he's hired asks for probation, as these were "non-dangerous, non-repetitive" events, ones that he took responsibility for by reporting them to his supervisor. Neither Gerster nor his attorney apologizes for illegally accessing an ex-prisoner's records to get his address, and it wasn't their fault that the ex-prisoner was severely assaulted right after those records were accessed. They ask the judge to take Gerster's child care payments into account if he is sentenced to probation, as the probation fees might create tremendous hardship.

•••

Before we get to the courthouse, I ask Jeanie questions. I'm nervous. I want to get this right. I ask her how long she's been involved with the prison abolition movement. She tells me that *movement* really isn't the right word, especially in Phoenix. It's more of a network of folks, but there really isn't much holding them together. In Phoenix, it's just Jeanie. She started blogging after Marcia Powell died, and she caught the attention of the woman in Amsterdam who'd parked the prison watch domains. The woman set her up with webspace, a Paypal account for donations, and a set of traffic loggers – software that detected the address of anyone who viewed the blog. I ask her if she receives a lot of donations. She laughs and says they mostly come from her mom.

Jeanie describes her time as split into two modes: work and survival. Work includes things like responding to prisoners and families, chalking sidewalks, writing the DOC and the DOJ, hanging banners on interstate overpasses, researching dead prisoners, and making her presence known in public venues, like we're doing today. Survival consists of finding ways to pay bills, getting medicine and food, and taking care of herself and, as of lately, taking care of Maylie. Lately, Jeanie says, survival has been eating into her working time.

"My mom hasn't been well lately, and so I haven't really gotten much money from her. I never wanted to depend on her, but the fact of the matter is that she's really been my only consistent supporter for the past two years."

She tells me that work and survival became the same thing for a while when she was initially misdiagnosed with leukemia. Her work was going to be the way she lived, whatever time she had left. That's when she told her mom she was

dropping out and when she told her she'd need money to pay for rent and food and meds because she needed to spend her time working on the prisons. Someone needed to save Marcia Powell. But, as the work went on and her second set of tests came back negative, work and survival began to unravel, to oppose each other. After her mom got sick and her brother stepped in to take over her financial affairs, Jeanie couldn't make rent. She was living on couches and in Dr. Derosa's guest room, setting her computer up on any floor she was currently using.

Around that time, Maylie was referred to Jeanie. She had met with a lawyer about suing the state for her son's death, and while that lawys was in the process of dropping her case, he gave her Jeanie's card. Jeanie had contacted all of the lawyers who dealt with prisoners' issues early on in her work, feeding them what information she could get from public records to see if they'd find anything lucrative enough to follow up on. Jeanie found Maylie another lawyer within the week, and Maylie asked if she could help her find somewhere to live. They decide that sharing a space might be good for now. Maylie was still a *client* – that's the word that Jeanie uses – but the help she needed happened to involve them living together. Dr. Derosa had told her that being a real revolutionary meant forging relationships with and taking care of the people we fight for. Jeanie had figured this was as revolutionary a moment as any, so they found a place downtown, close to *work*.

Photo 5. Chalking the Walk 1

It's 7:50 when we get to the courthouse, and the hearing starts at 8:45. Jeanie parks, and I pay the meter. It's the least I can do, I say. We walk up towards the entrance together, still talking. She sets one of her bags down and asks me to stop. From the other bag, she produces a camera.

"You're gonna copwatch for me," she says, handing me the camera, flipping its screen out of the side, and showing me the record button.

"Don't record unless there's a cop. My battery sucks."

I watch, camera in one hand, notebook in the other, standing in a cutout piece of the sidewalk that's filled with gravel and a small tree. Jeanie opens her other

bag, and takes out a thick pink piece of children's sidewalk chalk.

She writes in slow evenness, dragging the chalk hard against the rough cement. The slate-scrape of the chalk echoes down the corridors of the street, sounding over the rush of traffic on the big street a few blocks over. She grates the chalk against cement, clouds of pink dust caught on the morning breeze. When she finishes the word *PROSECUTE*, she goes back to the bag, sifts through the other colors she's brought, and settles on blue for *POLICE*. People pass us. They seem to think some sort of performance is happening – Jeanie writing and me with a camera – and walk into the street to get around us.

Photo 6. Chalking the Walk 2

The slab she's chalking overlaps into one of the long, handrail lined ramps

to the courthouse, and I watch people walk a half block down to use another one. The day's heat has already started to settle on the city, and Jeanie uses the bandana around her neck to wipe sweat from her face and hands.

Photo 7. Chalking the Walk 3

When she finishes the word *BRUTALITY*, she stops for a moment. Pacing around, she looks down at the sidewalk and then at the clock on her phone. She looks up and down the street. Men in police uniforms pass us, and I flip open the camera. They use the ramp near Jeanie's work. They walk around her without looking down to read. She smiles at me and grabs another color to outline the words she's already laid. When she finishes, she takes to the next slab and writes *KEVIN GERSTER*, *MCSO*, and *ALAN KEYES*. The three parties responsible for the crime that warranted today's hearing, Jeanie says. Only one of them is on trial, though. For Jeanie, naming them keeps everything anchored to reality, to the

people, not the slogans.

By 8:15 the downtown Phoenix flows with people. Lawyers and paralegals. Administrative assistants and defendants. Professionals and people who bought their clothes just for today. Only two women coming from the corner diner stop to read the chalk, but no one uses the sidewalk here, even when the street is a blur of city buses and cabs.

Photo 8. Chalking the Walk 4

I set the camera down on its case and write in my notebook about how people can no longer negotiate the space. That it's become more than simply instrumental. The women who stop ask Jeanie who she is and what this is about.

She explains while she fishes another chalk out – yellow, to outline *MCSO*. She gives them a card. They tell her that what she's doing is *very* interesting and leave. Jeanie packs her chalks, filling as many as she can fit back into a Crayola box. She asks me if I recorded anything. I tell her I didn't think anything warranted film. She laughs and checks the time on her phone again.

Photo 9. Chalking the Walk 5

"We've gotta get going. Security here's a pain in the ass if you bring a camera. I really hope Gerster uses the front door like last time. Then I can yell at him again."

I put the camera back into its case and open my notebook again to write more on the people who won't walk here. Jeanie takes a moment to spray hairspray on the chalk. "Makes it last longer."

I suppose that people will eventually walk over the names Jeanie had put to the cement, too busy with cell phones and coffee. But while she packs her equipment, the space seems too strange, too fresh to negotiate.

•••

The lawsuit filed against the Department of Corrections for the death of Dana Seawright is flooded with names. Mostly, these are the names of the individuals on duty and assigned to his area on the night he was killed. In Lewis, just as in many of the prisons in Arizona, inmates are segregated according to race and gang affiliation, with the former sometimes contributing to the growth of the latter under the pressures of being in such close quarters. Dana was black and in the West Side City Crips, and when he was caught with a Mexican man, he was told that he needed to prove his loyalty, to beat down a Mexican inside. He fakes it. His gang doesn't fall for it, and for 34 minutes none of the names mentioned in the lawsuit - all people responsible for checking his cell every 12 minutes – passes by his door. They find him, bleeding and vomiting, stabbed and beaten. He is taken off of life support a day later. Jeanie writes, "The Department of Corrections gave her 24 hours to get his body under threat of burying him on prison grounds. They couldn't even help her find the $300 she needed to bring him home." The death is easily ruled a homicide, but the case goes rapidly cold until Maylie files suit.

Jeanie tells me Dana's story several times over our time together. According to my notes, each time, it changes a little. The first time, the Mexican Dana is with caught with is *his girlfriend*. The second, he's *a friend* from another section of the jail. The third time, she doesn't mention who the person is, but she talks about how critical the case is in understanding the intersections of the prisons and race and sexuality. I check my notes to see if I misheard her. I never figure out if it's Jeanie or me changing the story.

•••

Our entire visit to the hearing takes two hours. The portion that actually deals with Kevin Gerster and his case takes five minutes. They're remodeling the building, so all but one security checkpoint is closed. While we wait to have our bodies and bags checked, Jeanie tells me about her last trip here.

"Yeah, last time, Gerster used this entrance, and I was about five people behind him. He's a huge guy. You really can't miss him. I was yelling shit like 'DOC assaults the mentally ill' and 'free Marcia Powell,' but he was with his family, and he wouldn't look at me. I even saw him coming out of a bathroom, and I looked him in the eye and said 'I hope you go to prison,' which is kind of a big deal for a prison abolitionist."

I ask her who she wants to see her artwork – who her intended audience might be. I ask these questions clumsily, as if she's already thought about them before. As if these are answers she has at the ready. She tells me that, ultimately, she hopes the prisoners see them. She makes postcards out of all of her chalkings and sends them to the inmates who contact her.

"Just to let them know that somebody is thinking about them," she tells me.

She gets out her own notebook and thumbs it open. She hands me two postcards, both pictures of the sidewalk outside of the Dodge Theater, a local music venue. Taken from different angles, they are pictures of the same mural. Surrounded by a stain made to look like spilled blood, it says *SOS DOJ: CRIPA* with the words *Suicide* and *Homicide* trailing out in smaller pools. The colors and contrast of the image have been altered, inverted. Black light glowing, the chalks radiate against the cold dark of the sidewalk. On the back of the postcard is Jeanie's name and address, along with a quote from Arundhati Roy, one I recognize from the header to her blog:

> "Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness, and our ability to tell our own stories..."

As she shifts her bags around to put her notebook back in, I thank her, and the line moves us slowly into the building.

The courtroom is clinic cold, and the static of the constant air conditioners makes it quieter than silence. Besides the recorder and the officer ushering us in, we're the first to arrive. The officer asks if we're with the accused, and Jeanie tells him that she considers herself a victim. He points us to the seats on the left. I feel like I am not allowed to talk, that the hum and the hush model how I am supposed to inhabit this place. Jeanie tells me about all of the people she thinks

will show. I write their names as she talks, and she watches me take them down in my notebook. She talks about the prosecutor's public relations officer, a man she calls "Gameboy" because on the initial hearing, he wouldn't stop playing with his cellphone. He later told her that he knew who she was and that this case wasn't going to be tried in her blogs. Jeanie says that the whole thing's been tried in private anyhow—meetings at the bench and closed chambers conferences, nothing on the public record. She doesn't stop writing letters to the prosecutor's office, including a copy of a memo regarding the sentencing of a police officer who, in uniform, broke into and robbed a store. The sentence was one year. Jeanie writes *soft on crime* across the page with a fat red marker. The first person Jeanie recognizes is Gerster's attorney. She's young, with short, blunted brown hair. Her dark blue dress is an arrangement of perfect lines and exacting creases. The recorder asks her which case she is on the roster.

"Cuatro," she responds, sliding her papers out in front of her. "Do I have time for coffee?"

"You should be fine."

She leaves the room, walking briskly and readying money from her wallet.

Jeanie laughs. "She doesn't like me either."

•••

On the one-year anniversary of his murder, Jeanie chalks the words *Dana Seawright was loved* on a sidewalk outside of the Department of Corrections. Over this year, she has written the Department of Justice, the House Health and Human Services Committee, the Arizona Governor's office, the Department of

Corrections, the FBI, and every lawyer's office whose case load ever had a hint of work in prisons. She tells all of these offices that under Director Chuck Ryan, the homicide and suicide rates in Arizona prisons has doubled. A local newspaper is doing a story on Maylie and all that she's gone through over the past year. She's just been told she earns too much through unemployment to qualify for disability, that the two hundred and forty dollars each month put her into a new bracket in the state's new plan.

•••

The public portion of Gerster's hearing lasts for about 2 minutes. Then, both attorneys motion for a conference at the bench to ask the judge – according to Jeanie's whispers – for a new date, as they're working out a plea deal. Something without jail time. There are concerns for his safety if it were to go that route. Kevin Gerster is just as big as Jeanie described. He fits uncomfortably in the small pews of the courtroom, and when he's asked to approach the judge, he has to shuffle awkwardly sideways. His fingers are fat, and they close around a rolled set of papers tightly. His white, buttoned shirt fits awkwardly around his shoulders and sloping belly. I wonder if it's not a shirt he finds many occasions to wear. Jeanie figured this would be what happened today, but she wanted me to get a taste of how these things work when power's on your side. We get in the elevators to leave, as do the lawyers for the prosecution and defense. Both of them look over Jeanie quickly as they walk in, moving their eyes down her, then turning to face the elevator door. They're talking aloud, working out meeting plans, talking about which restaurant works for next Tuesday. I wait for Jeanie to

say something. And as the chime announcing each floor rings us downward, she finally does.

"So, why do you take everything back to the judge? When does the public get to hear any of what's going on? What's the big secret here?"

The defense lawyer turns and answers. She swivels slowly, turning on a heel. "This is all standard legal procedure. We're not doing anything out of the ordinary."

"Uh huh. Just give us a chance to know what's going on. That man hurt a lot of people."

The women don't turn again. We get off at the lobby, exiting towards different halls. When we get outside, Jeanie is surprised that her chalking is still here, still legible.

"They usually spray these down way before lunch. Hopefully, it'll mean something to someone."

We walk for a few moments in silence. Jeanie is getting her tobacco out to roll a cigarette. She starts to talk again, speaking more rapidly than her usual slow cadence.

"Someone's gotta look out for people, you know. Me and my brother could have ended up like any of these folks. I mean, there were times when I was using that I gave my body to get more drugs. I'm not proud of it now, but it happened, and I certainly didn't deserve to die like Marcia Powell or get my fucking jaw broken by some animal with a badge. I mean, sometimes I think I was the only one keeping my brother out of jail, and he probably would have lost

his life in there, with how he his."

We get into the car, me waiting for Jeanie to reach over and unlock my door with her hands. The metal of the door handle is already getting too hot to touch, with the near-noon sun overhead. She talks more about her work, saying that she *perseverates* over these prisoners. I'm struck with the word. It's one I use all the time because I just learned it a few years back from my professor. It's the kind of word I plan to use to make people think I am bright. I begin to wonder what Jeanie thinks about the whole arrangement I've asked her to enter. To let this stranger into her car and house. Into Maylie's house. All so I can watch them fight for their lives.

Jeanie's telling me about getting started with her work, about how intentional her outfit is. Her *outlaw costume*, as she calls it; the black clothing and cowboy hat with color underneath. All of it was very intentionally selected.

"I used to only wear really bright stuff," she says. We pull into her apartment's parking lot. "Come in, and we can make plans to go to some hearings for private prisons. Those'll be good for you."

•••

Jeanie meets a State Representative at a dinner at Dr. Derosa's house. He invites her because, at the time, she's living in the guest room. But, he tells her that this Rep is good. She might actually make a difference in some of the issues Jeanie is raising. The dinner isn't formal, but Jeanie's old professor reminds her to wear something appropriate, smiling knowingly and nodding as he says it. At dinner, they talk about the representative's work, and they talk about teaching, as

both she and Dr. Derosa teach classes in the same department at the university. They ask Jeanie to tell them about her work. As she talks, the representative agrees and shares her insights. Dr. Derosa is right, Jeanie thinks; this one gets it. She tells her about a new client she's working with, a woman whose son was murdered and who's now being denied disability despite her crippling and deteriorating physical and mental state. The representative gives Jeanie a number. She thinks her people can help.

•••

As I am getting up to leave her house after the hearing, Jeanie stops and sticks a picture back up onto the wall with circled scotch tape. A stilted fort, silhouetted against an Arizona sunset awash in neon pinks and blues via Jeanie's computer. She turns to me, smiling and tells me that she puts up this picture everywhere she lives.

"It's a guard tower from Perryvale Prison," she says.

I ask her why she likes to put it on her wall, especially so close to the computer where she does her work.

"It's empty."

I see the same picture on her blog later. It's the only image she posts without a caption.

What Happens to Drug People

Jake

When I answer the telephone, I accidentally say *Tokyo Bowl*. It's a habit, an automation. Too many hours at work. I stop myself before I mechanically tell the person my name and ask them what I can help them with. There's silence on the other end. Just the metallic hum that lets you know someone else is there. After a while, there's a small voice. "Jake?" I say yes. I've just come home with my girlfriend. We rented movies and, for some reason, my parents aren't home. I have no idea why I even answered the phone.

"Eddie's dead," the voice says.

"Mom?"

"No, it's Linda, but your mother's here." There's another long pause. I realize that my aunt is holding the phone away from her while she sobs. "We're at Patty's."

There's a photograph of my uncle Eddie and me that I remember as soon as I hang up the phone. I'm little. Maybe three. I've got an oversized black cowboy hat on my head, and it's covering my eyes. Eddie is next to me. He's a teenager then, mid-1970s, hair flared out on the bottom. He's laughing at me in the hat. We're standing in front of a Christmas tree at my grandparent's house downtown.

As I tell my girlfriend what's happened and ask her if she wants to come with me, I realize how much I remember about that old house. It was demolished years before Eddie died, but as I think about the picture, I remember every room.

The creak of the floors. The piles of junk and engine parts in the backyard. The mason jars that my grandfather would stuff a piece of rotten meat into to trap flies by the horses' pen. I change clothes before we go to see my family. I don't know why, but I want to wear something nice.

•••

The detective that was assigned to my uncle's investigation calls my mother. She's been trying to get ahold of him for a few weeks. He tells her that he agrees with her, that something isn't right with the case. He says he's met with his supervisor on the matter, and that he was asked to drop it. My mother tells the detective a story about her brother. She tells him how she'd only been in trouble with the law once, and it was when she was young. She had stolen a baby's bottle from Sears because her brother didn't have one. Her parents were furious. Not because she took it, but because they had to come down, to admit that they were the parents of a girl who would do such things. She doesn't know why she's explaining all of this; she just feels responsible somehow for what happened. Like she was supposed to be taking better care of him. The detective is suspicious because of the high levels of battery acid they found in my uncle's system. It wasn't unusual to find this in an overdose, but he's never really seen this much. He isn't willing to call it a murder, but he does want more time to look at everything.

•••

When we get to my aunt's house, my mother and three of her sisters are on the back patio, sitting on plastic chairs and crying into their hands. There's a

stasis, nothing is moving except for the smoke trailing off their cigarettes and their shoulders as they sob. My father is off to the side, and when he sees me, he pulls me aside.

"This is really bad, Jake. Are you ok?"

"Yeah, what happened? How did he die?"

"I don't know what happened. They found him in his truck in the middle of nowhere. Your aunt said it was an overdose."

Eddie had been on some kind of drug for as long as I could remember. In my grandparents' house, he had a side room. In that room, he'd have friends over, and they'd smoke pot all night. My father would join them. After they got high, they'd go out to throw oranges at bag ladies or steal mailboxes. These things escalated. They'd stolen a jeep and joyrode it through the desert. When it flipped, they ran, leaving one member of the gang behind. Left to die, and he did, trapped under the weight of the stolen jeep. One time when he was buying pot, my uncle rolled up the window on the dealer's arm and drove until the man let the drugs go.

The youngest of thirteen. My grandparents really didn't do much parenting after number six, letting the older kids take care of the younger ones. Eddie was one of two boys, and both would become drug addicts. On the night they found his body, my mother and aunts would debate telling my grandmother. She'd had a stroke a month before. She'd just come out of a coma. Before, she'd been a large German woman, now a collection of bones under sallow skin. We knew she'd die soon. Telling her would make it sooner. They decide not to. She passes a month later, and my mother comes into my room to tell me. She asks me

not to make fun of her when she hopes Eddie's there to greet her in heaven. She knows how I get about religion.

We don't tell my grandfather either. Not out of fear for his body; out of knowing his mind. A car had hit him when he was 30, and the doctors had warned that his ability to remember would deteriorate rapidly. He made it forty years before it did. He would have struggled to remember his son. In a year, he would be dead as well, wandering out into the desert through an accidentally unlocked door. The rescue team looked for two days; then, they became a recovery team. His body was in a desert a mile away, slumped forward, as if he was sitting there for some time. It was strange, the police told us, we'd combed that field every day. Another detective would call. There were suspicions here, too. Dogs sniffed his trail to the highway but lost it at the junction of the dirt and the street. Like he got in a car, the detective said.

But it's all dropped, just like my uncle's case. There are suspicious elements, but the aunt who was with my grandfather at the time admitted she was high when he left. The twelfth of thirteen. My uncle had already been arrested for the drugs that were in his body when it was found. A bad batch. A pothead's mistake. These deaths got less suspicious when you thought about them. As the detective would tell my mother, after she'd called him for months about my uncle, this is just what happens to drug people.

Jeanie

Photo 10. Dust Storm to Coolidge

Five miles from the turn for Coolidge, the sky goes mottled white with dust. This was the summer that the massive dust storms hit Phoenix, the summer we all learned the word *haboob*. Everyone in town liked to share their pictures of walls of dust cresting over houses and trees with their branches sagging and stained beige. Now, with temperatures over 110, in a car with painted messages about the prison state as the only respite from the heat, Jeanie, Michael, and I are engulfed in a veil of dirt. Michael tells Jeanie to turn her lights off. She wonders out loud if her taillights even work. We have to crack the windows to keep some air flowing, but when I talk, I can feel the dust coating my teeth; I grind them

together and the sound reverberates in my head, tires on gravel. Before the dust hit, we were talking about the charges Jeanie's expecting from her graffiti in the alley. It's been a few months, but she's heard nothing, and she worries that someone is trying to spin it into a bigger case. The prisoners she writes have been giving her advice on beating the system. She laughs as she tells us about their suggestions, asking why she would trust a prisoner's suggestions for staying out of trouble.

"When I'm depressed," she says, "I get paranoid. And not seeing my mom in months and knowing that she's dying has got me fucking depressed."

I ask why she hasn't seen her.

"Well, she has this friend Sue, kind of like a caregiver, but they became best friends, and Sue hates me. She met me at a really bad time and thinks I'm a parasite that just wants my mom's money. The legal situation is that my brother has financial power of attorney and Sue has medical power of attorney. I am some other fuckin' problem that they've gotta deal with. That, and I think my mother doesn't want me to see her in her current state. The last time I saw her, she was really confused. I mean, we googled the prisoners I was working with, and I told her their stories, and she understood and was really interested, but I could feel that she was slipping. I don't know if it's the chemo or the cancer, but she kept repeating the same shit or getting really quiet at weird times."

We drive south, passing the last freeway exits that lead to Phoenix suburbs. The desert scrub extends flatly out, broken occasionally by low, rocky hills.

"I don't think she wants me to see her like this. She said she was embarrassed by her condition. I have to respect that. Sue's like her life partner, and I have to respect that, too. I mean, she sustained me through all this shit. Never told me to get a real job. She just wanted to live to see me doing what I wanted to do."

When the dust begins to loom on the horizon, none of us is sure of what it is. The white blends into the low clouds and glare of the day. As it stretches above and in front of the clouds, Jeanie says, "Oh, shit," and we roll the windows to thin cracks. We're silent; the wind outside whistles through the whole car, like it's coming through the vents, the frame, the metal itself. Jeanie's speed and the confused hazard lights of the rest of the cars on the road have me gripping my door handle tightly. I let my notebook's pages flip with the wind. The dust goes to a dark brown, and the wind grates it across the hood. We come to the exit for Coolidge, slow down, and turn on to the next highway. The dust is still coming on this road, but it hangs in the air, suspended in slow motion, light compared to the ballast on the interstate.

"This is going to make for a really good story," I say.

"No shit," Jeanie replies, "It looks like fucking Mars out there. It's surreal."

We all laugh a bit.

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Coolidge is a town without a purpose. The people who live here either work somewhere else or don't work at all. The cotton fields around town can only

support so much. It boasts strong unemployment and a main drag filled with long-vacant llanteras and boarded-up fast food stops. These towns dot Arizona – Coolidge, Globe, Florence, Eloy – places that used to be on the road to Phoenix, and when the road changed, fell into disrepair. They are filled with people who were born and raised there. People who are too hard up to even leave to find work. Cocooned in the vast absence of the desert, the land here is cheap, and the people are willing to do anything for work. The private prison industry knows these things, and they bid to build facilities here at every chance. As the representative from the Management and Training Corporation, or MTC, the group presenting at today's hearing, happily notes, "It's a real growth industry."

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We stop at a Circle K. Jeanie and I are starving, and she needs a smoke after the stress of the drive. The dust has gone, pushed out by the rain clouds that grow dense overhead. Taped to the store's window is a flyer that urges

Photo 11. Coolidge Intersection

Coolidge to come out on the 18th, today's date, to help get the new prison built here. It also urges everyone to *Wear Your Blue Shirts*. I don't know what this means, and neither does Jeanie. I eat in the car while Jeanie smokes. Michael is telling us about the party he's planning. It's a 1986 party, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the best year ever in American film. Jeanie and I guess at what movies came out that year. The only two I am sure of are *Ferris Bueller* and *Big Trouble in Little China*. The three of us laugh as Michael lists all of the movies he'll be showing. We finish up, and set out looking for the Coolidge police department, where the hearing will be held. We find it quickly; it's the nicest building in town.

The building reminds me of the architecture used in Arizona's newer community colleges –sloping designs, sharp corners, ceiling-high windows. The trees outside are just sticks jutting from the ground, held fast with rope and stakes. The black of the asphalt looks slick, wet. Across the street is a dirt lot. Next to it is a closed body shop, its painted cement walls chipped and cracking open. The parking lot here is full, as is the one adjacent and the open field behind that. A police office directing traffic tells us to park about a quarter mile down, that the bus will bring us back. We park where he asks, but the incoming rain has cooled the air, and we decide to walk instead.

Inside, the building is even more impressive - polished cement floors, artfully undecorated cinder block walls, galvanized metal vents, lighting from pink bulbs that hang from wires. The entry room is filled with people in blue

shirts, shirts that say *Coolidge: The Right Choice!* in white font. Michael says, under his breath, that the whole town is here, and I wonder if he isn't far off. Kids kneeling on the floor, playing handheld video games, teens with their Right Choice shirts knotted at the side to pull them tight, women with strollers. We are told that there's no more room in the conference space, but that they're wheeling a television out so we can watch from the lobby. Michael and I sit against one of the walls while Jeanie paces the room, looking for people she knows. I recognize a few of the people she finds from the hearing at Goodyear. She stops to check in with us from time to time before the hearing starts, telling us what people have showed up. She mentions several names, and Michael nods. I tell her I don't know them, and she gives me their stories, how they work for the cause, if they're cool or not. On another check in, she gives us the brochure that MTC is handing out. Michael and I read it over together, laughing at the strange happy rhetoric of prisons. Our legs stretch out in mirror images of each other on the floor, one foot over the other, getting comfortable for what feels like a long night in the making. From where we sit, we can see it's raining outside now; people are still coming in large groups, pulsing from the parking lot bus.

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The majority of MTC's presentation focuses on their commitment to education. They want to help the underprivileged populations in the prisons to become meaningful contributors to society and their local communities. MTC's founder was a former educator who believes that incarceration should never fail to

be an educational experience. MTC calls their program BIONIC. Their emphasis is on degree completion, but they also teach "life and social skills" to help their inmates compete once they are on the outside. These skills classes include courses in spirituality and a fatherhood workshop, which is mandatory for all of their inmates in the BIONIC program. The representative proudly presents numbers regarding job placement and low recidivism rates. She tells us that people need more than just picking up trash on the side of the road. She tells us, talking too close to her microphone, that *real* communities take care of their own. But, in all of this, she never mentions that the BIONIC program isn't part of the proposal they've written for Coolidge. She ends her portion of the presentation by telling Coolidge how excited she is to see such support, that MTC can't wait to build their next facility here: "Bring 'em on! We'll take all we can get!"

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When the public forum begins, Jeanie again kneels to meet with Michael and me. Her clothes are wet from talking to people outside in the rain. Chuck Ryan's voice echoes behind us, but we're not listening. Jeanie says the list of speakers was huge, that it'll be a long time before it's her turn. As we're talking, she stops and listens. She puts her hand on my knee.

"Holy shit. Holy shit, that's Vivienne Haws," she says, and runs into the conference room.

I try to hear the voice, but it's faint. On the television that's broadcasting what's going on in the next room, I can see a woman talking. She's older, in a

wheelchair, and she gestures towards the table filled with MTC executives. When she finishes, there's flat applause. Jeanie comes back out and says that this was a powerful moment. A few seconds later, a man pushes the woman past us in her wheelchair. Jeanie tells me that Vivienne Haws is the mother of a man who, with his wife, was murdered in New Mexico. Their assailants escaped from a jail in Kingman after many of the security features were turned off. These were the same security features that MTC just detailed in their presentation, ones they touted with words like *innovative* and *world-class*. After her son and daughter-in-law were killed, Vivienne started doing research on MTC and the many issues that had plagued the company for years – short-staffed prisons, high turnover rates, high recidivism. Her goal was to call national attention to privatized prisons and the threat they pose to the well being of prisoners and people on the outside. She did this work in her home in Joplin, Missouri until tornados tore that home – and the town where she'd been born – into tinder. Now, she spends much of her time on the road, in places like Coolidge, Arizona, following MTC and ensuring that someone is willing to speak out. There's a bit of an uneasy hush as she leaves, crowds of blue shirts parting to let her wheelchair through.

The next several speakers are locals, many of whom say that they feel sorry for Vivienne Haws, but they want to avoid another tragedy here in Coolidge, that of a town reduced to nothing. Not by tornados, but by a seemingly endless recession. Blue shirt after blue shirt, they argue that building the prison is the right choice.

When Jeanie is called to speak, she thanks *Chuck* for the microphone:

Hi. Thank you. My name is Jeanie Hildt. I'm from Phoenix. I'm a survivor of childhood abuse, of rape, of assault, of burglary. I also work with a number of survivors of violent crime. They are survivors of prison violence. Family members who have lost their children, lost their parents, lost their loved ones in the Arizona state prisons. Under the administration of Charles Ryan, the suicide and homicide rates have at least doubled. It's hard to get clear information now on what some of these deaths under investigation are. But I wanted to appeal to the people of Coolidge. Folks, if you get a prison here, please, please, please take responsibility, not just for the perks of the prison, but take responsibility for the people in the prison. Take responsibility for human rights. There are families that can't be here to speak to ask you this, but people who are working in the business of corrections are entrusted with people's lives, not just merchandise. And, I've been doing this for a couple of years. I've been researching the state prisons for the past couple of years. I have cards with my blog address on it, if you're curious.

So please, if you get a prison, before you proceed any further, organize among yourselves – and this is amazing organization you've done – organize among yourselves and stand with citizen-based, community-based human rights oversight commissions in prisons. I don't know of any community in Arizona that does it, but you don't want to go down as being known like Eloy, where a guard was just prosecuted for sexually abusing a prisoner. You don't want to go down to be known as Goodyear, where Marcia Powell was left in a cage to die on a ten-

minute suicide watch for four hours in the sun. Be the town that cares about human rights. Thank you.

Jeanie leaves the room to loud applause. When she makes it back to us, she looks down.

"I never know what to say at these things."

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Another woman who gets up to speak mentions that she's new in town. Moved here from Show Low, but this is her home now. She talks about how wonderful the people are, how nice they are to her at the store, how cute the cops are. But she wants to make us aware of something. That there are 14 churches in town, and she's been to all of them. That's not the issue, though. The issue is that she's never been to one that was full. Fourteen churches – small ones, too, and in this town, they should be full on a Sunday morning. She thinks a prison will help fill the empty seats. Maybe then, we can get God back in our schools. She smiles broadly, and tells everyone just how much she loves it here again. She, too, gets loud applause.

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When we leave, the rain's died down to a misty drizzle, and the humidity is threatening the cool. Outside of the nicest building in Coolidge, the flags still crack loudly overhead in the wind. Our walk back to the car is giddy. We laugh about slipping in fresh mud, and we find the car in the middle of a pool of brown water and thick clay. Jeanie tells us not to worry about our feet: "This piece of shit can't get any dirtier." As we drive back to Phoenix, we talk about the night,

about the upcoming meeting in Yuma and how it might even be a bigger crowd. Before we leave the highway to merge onto the interstate, Jeanie pulls over to roll a cigarette.

"My last one." She taps the now empty Bugler bag.

"Sick of paying the corrections officers' wages?" Michael asks dryly.

"Heh. Yeah. I figure that 2 cents on each pack buys a brick, so fuck that."

Jeanie takes longer than usual, working only with the errant moonlight that escapes the clouds.

She looks up to me when she's done, lights the cigarette, and says "Man, Vivienne Haws. That poor woman has lost everything, and at her age, she still travels the entire country. I mean, most of us just wouldn't go on after the year she's had, but she makes it out to fucking Coolidge to confront power like that."

She pulls the car back on to the road and says, "Man I am scared. I'm scared of what they're gonna do to me."

"Do you have a trial date yet?" I ask.

"No. No. I don't have anything. I don't know what the fuck they're doing."

Michael speaks from the back seat, loudly to compete with the air rushing in the windows. "What about James and everyone in Flagstaff? Half of them went to jail, and nothing really came of it. They detained them for a week or something."

"None of them walked up to the head of the DOC in front of his colleagues and said 'this man kills prisoners,' though."

My notebook is balancing on my knee again, and I am trying to write their conversation down verbatim. I can't see anything inside of the car, and when I look the next day, the words travel across the lined pages in jumbles and scribbles.

Jeanie starts to ask what's going on in Flagstaff when the car jerks to the left. A grating rumble trumps the howl of the wind, and Jeanie pulls the steering wheel hard to the right. We slow down quickly, and once we're at a stop, she says, "Well, that's the last time I buy used tires."

The three of us get out to see what has happened. Trucks and semi-trailers blow past, shaking Jeanie's car every time they pass, but their light is all we initially have to work with. Jeanie finds a flashlight in the trunk, and we see that the tire is completely gone, and as it left, it took the weather lining from the underside of the body and wrapped it into part of the drivetrain. None of us knows how to fix this. Jeanie starts to pace and calls Triple A, but as she's waiting on hold, she tells us that they threatened to drop her last month, and she still hasn't paid them. Michael and I laugh. He says we're the most inadequate men possible at times like these. I was thinking the same thing. A set of headlights slows down, pulls over. A truck. A man gets out and asks us if we need to borrow any tools or need any help.

"Probably both," I say.

He goes back to his truck and returns with a tool kit. When he gets to us, he extends his hand. "Rudy."

"Jake."

"Michael, and Jeanie's on the phone."

"You all do have a spare, right?"

Michael and I look back at Jeanie, who is arguing on her cell phone 15 miles outside of the furthest edge of Phoenix, not paying attention to us in the least. Michael says, "Let me pop the trunk." Under piles of flyers, signs, spray paint, and empty boxes, we find a half-full tire, a jack, and a wrench. Rudy shines his own light on the space where the blown tire was. He tells us we're probably going to have to cut the lining off. It looks like it's going to drag, and it could take the next tire with it. He looks for a knife to lend us, saying that he doesn't want to be the one to mess with our car. Michael and I get the jack positioned and begin to raise the car. Jeanie gets off the phone. Triple A will come if we really need them, she says. She goes to greet Rudy, apologizing for being so distracted. They talk, illuminated in the slow strobe of the highway, while Michael and I cut the lining from Jeanie's car. We finish, get the spare on, and thank Rudy. He shakes our hands again, and heads back to his truck. We leave on a partially filled spare. Jeanie does not slow down.

Instead, she says, "I bet Maylie is freaking the fuck out right now. I hate leaving her for more than a few hours. I called, but she didn't answer. Maybe she's asleep. God, I hope she's asleep."

Michael leans in from the back seat. "Rudy was really cool. Glad that there are still some folks in Arizona that will actually help people in need."

"Yeah, he really was cool. I keep finding people like that, people that help me on this mission. Maylie is always talking about how the world is set against

us. She thinks that god is punishing her. But we've really been blessed. We keep finding ways to stay alive, to stay medicated, to pay rent. I mean, we're watched over. People keep finding us and helping. Like Rudy and you guys. I keep finding the people I need to do my work."

The Phoenix night is clear. There's a thin veneer of dust across the streets, but the rain never made it this far north.

Reflection

Jake

Photo 12. Self-Portrait Outside of a Men's Room in Decatur, Georgia.

No matter how close to the mirror I stand,

and regardless of the angle,

I can never adequately transpose my image

onto the man's shape.

8.2.94

The land on which he dies becomes a subdivision someday later. A gated community with a school and a park. But, when he dies, it's a dirt road teenagers use for drinking and sleeping with each other. These roads are all over the desert, etching capillary tracks out from the streets of a growing city. When they find him, the kids think it's just a stolen truck. An empty truck in the desert. Happens all the time. Until they realize there's a body inside. A three-day-gone body in the August heat. They call the police.

He pretended to be clean, so he left the house to get high. He had kids now. A job that he didn't use to fuck people over. A house downtown. He came to this road when he was younger. Still hiding it from his parents. His friends would drink beer and shoot lizards and get high, loud in the vacancy of the night. The things kids do. He's alone now, a Tuesday night. Not much partying, even in the summer. He shoots up. It's faster. He has to get home.

He dies with the car still running. Lights off. They can't see him from the highway, find this little spot. It hurts as it starts, but then there's slowness and the engine rattle of a decade-old truck. He's gone before the gas chokes out. Before the battery gives and the warning bell for the ignition stops. For three days of sunrises and sunsets. His body ebbing and falling, evaporating with the heat.

PART IV: RECAPITULATION

7.7.10 (2)

He was loved.

That's what the ground will say. Blue dust scratched into cement, caked on hard in the middle of the night. For a mother, by a daughter. While a city sleeps, the ground growing cool, losing its heat to the nighttime sky.

He was loved.

Broken and leaking because of what he did. What he would not do. All of the reports say he was "beat down" - always in quotes - his blood dripping into the sheets, through the mattress, and into the tiny pores of concrete below. Some of it still there, seeped into tiny pockets. No matter the water, no matter the bleach.

This is where the body lay.

He was loved.

There was a rationale for what happened to his body. For why his people had beaten the body to death. For no one looking in on him, no one saying stop. He knew there was risk. Loving and being loved is always also being at risk.

Mentally Ill People Like Me and My Brother

When I pick up Jeanie for our last interview, she seems resigned, understandably downcast, her mother's funeral only two weeks in the past. But as we talk, her small laugh still punctuates her comments. We head to a fair trade café – the place she wanted to go – and we talk on the way over. I offer to drive, but she wants people to see the car. She tells me that her court case and her mother's death have really put things into perspective. That she can look back on the things she's been doing over the last few months in a different light and see how bigger systems, greater forces, move. She tells me a story about a place she lived a couple of apartments before she moved in with Maylie, an apartment building run as an anarchist collective. The community made every choice, from the decisions on rent to the chores around the building to the admission of new tenants. Everything was done by consensus – not voting, she pauses to make that point – everyone had to be on board. Jeanie describes it as both a complete ordeal and a worthwhile exercise. She really learned how to start thinking about how people's needs and people's activism meet, how to motivate and mobilize. All the stuff Michael was talking about. *Working together to create something*, as she said it. So, when one of the tenants got drunk, hid behind a dumpster in the alley, and beat a fellow tenant into bloody submission with a 3-inch metal pipe, they had to all come together to decide what to do. This included the attacker. It also included the victim. Once one person gets silenced, all voices are at risk. That was the arrangement.

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When they are teenagers, Jeanie and her brother Andy are in and out of different schools, on and off medication, on and off drugs, withdrawn and manic. Their father, now remarried, just pays the bills and takes the advice of whichever principal on where to send them. One of Jeanie's stops is a mental institution for youth. A counselor had labeled her as a high suicide risk, and Jeanie agrees with her. She spends six months in the institution, and when she's released, her psychiatrist recommends a Quaker boarding school upstate.

Jeanie laughs every time she talks about it. "It sounds weird that I was a Quaker for a while, but I loved that school. It helped me get my shit together, and I still think about some of what the Quakers do as a model for a better world. You know, they actually had some great ideas about prisons."

In the Quaker school, she runs for student government. She sees this place as somewhere she can get into. Somewhere that actually means something to her. She explains that Quaker never really meant puritanical, like everyone thinks. It was still like every other high school she'd been to. She made friends with the kids who smoked pot – the other kids who were recommended to come there by principals who wanted nothing more to do with them. She liked these kids, liked how they shared so many experiences, saw something special in them as a group. She thought that within the Quaker system, they might be able to do something more than get high and listen to music. There was a chance for people like her and her brother to be heard. And, just like any other high school Jeanie had been to, there were other kids who didn't like her. She thought it was weird. The group

that hated the kids who smoked pot were all a bunch of drunks. Rich kids, she says, but all drunks. They tell the headmaster where Jeanie and her friends go to get high. They get caught, and Jeanie is suspended indefinitely.

Her father and stepmother drive up for the suspension hearing. It's mandatory, the headmaster is sure to tell them, but they already knew as much. They sit, with Jeanie, in the headmaster's office, and he recommends that she be institutionalized. They explain that's where she just came from. He tells them it didn't work. They settle on a school for behaviorally troubled teens – that's how the brochure puts it. The school has the highest student suicide rate in the state. Her brother's been going there for a year already.

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When the anarchist apartment community comes together to decide how to handle the attack, they almost unanimously agree that Edwin, the attacker, needs to leave. He can have a month to find somewhere to go, but after that, he has to be out. The only person who abstains from the conversation is Edwin. He doesn't say anything, head down, hands clasped. After the meeting, other tenants discuss how glad they are that he's leaving. Edwin has four broken down cars and, along with piles of engine pieces, they've been taking up parking and yard space for months. The month passes. For most of it, Edwin is sitting outside on the steps, surrounded by the pieces of carburetors, piston valves, and cracked blocks. None of which seems to be going anywhere.

After two months, the community decides – this time without Edwin – that Jeanie needs to be the one to actively get him out of there. Everyone else is afraid

he'll turn violent again. She approaches him on the step that night. He's had about three beers out of the six-pack that sits next to him, but she doesn't see him as a threat. She tells him that he has to go, that people won't stand for violence here and that they've all got a right to feel safe in their own home, a right he violates every night by sitting on his fucking step and drinking. He doesn't say anything. He just looks off, blinking now and then. For the next month, she stares him down as he sits outside, letting him know that she isn't just letting him live there, that he's on notice. During one of their weekly meetings, another tenant, a woman, announces that Edwin terrifies her, and she suggests they finally call the police. This request is met with shaking heads and quotes from anarchist books. It's just not how we do things, someone says. Jeanie is handling this. She's doing her best. Jeanie nods. She'll step it up. She begins to sit on the steps at night, getting to the spot before Edwin does and taking it over. He stays in his apartment.

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When she's 18, out of institutions and high schools, Jeanie starts volunteering with a local homeless initiative. She's living in Michigan, and she can't imagine surviving on the streets in winter conditions. She's well liked by the social workers and the clients. Especially the clients. Her institutional time resonates with many of them, as they spent high school in similar sequences, moving from one place to the next, diagnosis to treatment to rediagnosis – medication to drug to rehab. She makes friends. Some of them die over the winter despite her best efforts. Later that year, their budget is cut, and Jeanie's certain that more will die when it turns cold again. So, she starts driving around, looking

for unoccupied houses, stores, warehouses – anything with walls that she can get into. It becomes a network of squatted halfway houses. The social workers begin to worry about how much risk they're putting the clients into. They tell her that the police could arrest these people for squatting. She tells them that it's not snowing in jail. The tension between Jeanie and the social workers builds, and she realizes the entire project needs perpetual injustice just to survive. A lot of her colleagues would say that they want to put themselves out of business, but all they talk about is traumas and crises – responses, not changes. She leaves Michigan after they ask her to quit her volunteer job. She heads to Arizona, to live with her mother for a while, trying to find a way to figure out what she wants to do with her life.

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Jeanie knocks on Edwin's door. He opens it and lets her know that he's going to move in with his parents and that he's sorry for having caused so much shit. She can see into his living room. It's filled with more automotive parts, the floor lined with the disposable paper mechanics use to protect seats and floormats from the grease on their feet. On Edwin's kitchen table, there's a smaller motor, one for a scooter or a lawn mower, disassembled, gaskets sprawled across the chairs, greasy bolts on a plastic plate. She thinks about how filthy he always looks, not noticing it earlier because some of the anarchists cultivate that look. Edwin's eyes still aren't meeting hers, but he seems different, slumped a bit, but cleaned up. Her face softens from the stern grimace she created over the past two months. He shuts his door without her saying anything, and he moves out later

that week. A tow truck comes to pick up the stalled cars in the yard. Edwin's room is clean when they open it for the next tenant who's accepted in. Jeanie leaves the complex after a few months of meetings and communal yard work. She tells everyone she loves it here, but needs to move for work. She finds an apartment a few miles away, and gets back to her work on prisons.

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There's a phrase Jeanie repeats to me when she talks about her health. *I'm not responsible for my illness, but I am responsible for my recovery*. She says it like a mantra. Like something she had to arrive at. Like something someone once told her to say when talking about her condition. She tells me that when she moved out, her mother had talked her into going to university, to find a degree that spoke to what she wanted to do. Her brother agreed. He'd just finished his bachelor's in business, hardly resembling the boy who screamed himself to sleep some nights. Jeanie enrolled in a bachelor's of Justice Studies, something more radical than social work. People studying how the world can change – should change – to protect the lives we give over to rot in the elements.

Be/Longing and Resisting

Jake

In a doctoral curriculum course, we're reading a reflection on the philosopher Hannah Arendt's criticism of the late 50s American Civil Rights movements. At that time, Arendt's work was centered on Elizabeth Eckford, the young black woman who, attempting to enter her newly desegregated Little Rock high school in 1957, was besieged by angry white protesters, national media, and the National Guard. The images from Eckford's walk became emblematic of these historical moments, scenes of heroism in the face of intolerance, much like the figurations of Rosa Parks, King, and (albeit later in the public consciousness) Malcolm X. Yet, despite its extraordinary amount of publicity, Arendt condemned this articulation of Civil Rights due to the simple fact that the location of these cruel politics was the body of a child – a child taught her own erasure by the voices of the public, the nation, and her supporters. What we're missing here, Arendt says, is that this isn't all about race, but about a child who we – civil rights activists and opponents – have made to feel unwanted. And there's nothing more fundamental to alienation than feeling unwanted.

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I'm twelve; I am riding my brand new bicycle around the block for the first time. My parents bought it for me on my birthday – a beach cruiser, like the one I wanted when we went to the beach in San Diego. My mother tells me just to circle the block, that the cars on the bigger streets don't watch for people on bikes. I listen, riding around the street that connects to the mine without hitting

the now-crowded avenues of north Phoenix. I leave without putting my shirt on, feeling the air on my body, cooling the sweat that comes from churning my knees as hard as I can. I stand on my pedals, coasting down smooth streets in the hot May air.

When I get to the street that connects with mine, there are kids I don't know, older kids, playing. Boys and girls, a whole group of children I've never seen before. They look at me and laugh. "Hey fatty. Put a shirt on you ugly fuck." "Look at the fat boy!" "Nice bike, fat ass!" They chase after me, and I pedal harder. For a few minutes, I forgot that I was fat. I was just a kid with a new bike, riding around my neighborhood. I get home and go to my room. I don't tell my parents what happened. I don't leave the house without my shirt for years.

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When I leave high school, I spend a year drinking, playing in a band, and setting up community events with the local punk rock kids. Around Christmas, we organize to feed the homeless downtown. A friend who works at Taco Bell steals two huge boxes of freeze-dried refried beans and a large stack of tortillas. We spend a Saturday morning making burritos, putting them on Styrofoam plates, and wrapping the whole thing in tin foil.

We work until 2 that afternoon, filling both boxes with completed meals, and we bring them down to my truck. We make a few stops early in our drive, passing out plates to people sleeping behind a Circle K, people drinking on parking curbs where the wind is broken by thick oleander walls. When we get near the shelter, we still have most of our food. There are dozens of people there,

though, and we quickly run out. We apologize and tell them we can get more next week, but they call us motherfuckers and stupid kids. We get scared as they gather around the truck, and we decide to drive off as fast as we can.

We tell everyone that the event was a success, but that the situation is worse than we ever could have known. We get back to booking bands and buying records. We write lyrics and articles for each other. It's what we know and who we are.

Just as I am Crashing the Hardest and Least Able to Explain Myself

Jeanie

When her son Dana was 14, Maylie was in jail. She'd been slumming for months with her boyfriend, trying to find money for drugs, and they came up with a scheme. She'd bring Dana to the supermarket and he'd help her steal baby formula powder. No one suspected a woman with a kid, and no one watched that aisle. They'd drive across town – miles, just to be safe – and return the powder to another store. No one asked for a receipt when she told them she got it from an aunt who didn't know what kind she used. No one cared if she brought another kid with her. People had sympathy for families. That's what she and her boyfriend had counted on. She was caught when someone just happened to wander by at the wrong moment. More evidence that god had it out for her, she'd say later.

When they caught her, she couldn't pay the fines or the restitution, so she went to jail for six months – April to December, 2001. She was in jail when the terrorists hit America. That day, they broadcast the news reports over the loudspeakers and wheeled out a television to the yard. The next day, the guards had told her they were shutting down. No one knew for how long, but no one should worry. They slid a weeks' worth of rations and a couple boxes of graham crackers between her cell bars and left for two weeks. During that first day, a lot of the women yelled at the guards who were no longer there. The yelling died off quickly, replaced by ways of passing the time – talking about what they thought was happening outside, what they would do when they got out, and how it was typical to be treated like this. All the while not knowing if anything existed

outside of their prison. When the guards return, the front gate makes its familiar buzz. One woman yells out "About fucking time," and the other women laugh loudly.

While she was waiting, Maylie told god that if she got through this, got through this shit, she'd get off the streets, get a job, turn things around. And she did, finding work at a call center, despite the pain it caused her back – the result of inflamed discs that she'd started to feel when she gave birth to Dana. But, she made it through jail and she'd make it through this. She doesn't know her son has started running with gang kids, that the friends he's out with are part of the West Side City Crips. That he's met a few of the people who would murder him years later. She figures it out later, but it's too late. She knows it, but she won't admit it. He goes to jail a few times himself, once for a month, once for six. He's still a good kid. He promises – *no guns or any shit like that*. She worries, but realizes that she wasn't all that different when she was his age. When he's 23, he gets caught with enough pot to be considered a dealer. He goes to prison again, for five years this time. A lot of his friends are already there. A lot of black kids his age. He makes it three years inside before he's caught with another man, a Mexican man, and those friends ask him to prove how loyal he is.

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On the day we're supposed to go to Yuma, as I am speeding down the freeway – already late – towards Jeanie's house, she calls to cancel. We already gave up on Winslow, because it seemed like too far to go for a town that really had no chance of getting a prison. It was one of the first hearings since I started

riding along with Jeanie, and I was sure that she wasn't interested in being in a car with me for ten hours. She needed to take care of her roommate, she said. She didn't want to be gone that long. When she tells me she needs to cancel for Yuma, I expect the same reason. It's three hours each way, with at least two hours of hearing in-between. When I answer, she tells me she's on her way to Fountain Hills, that her mom died that morning, and she needs to get up there. She's really sorry. I tell her not to worry at all, and that I am the one who's sorry. She says we'll catch up later, and I get off the freeway to turn around. When I get back home, I go through all of my notes on Jeanie and her mom. About how her mother returned her to her father after the divorce, about how she financed almost all of Jeanie's work, about how she'd told Jeanie that she didn't want to see her when the cancer took her too far away. I wonder if she'll recover from this. Selfishly, I wonder if she'll talk to me again.

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At our last interview, a month after her mother is buried, I ask Jeanie about Maylie, about how she figures in to everything – Jeanie's work and her need for survival – I mention that the relationship seems important to her work.

She says, "It's really unexpected, and I was perfectly content living alone. I wanted to live alone; I did not want, you know, intimate entanglements of any kind. And, we're just friends, but I suddenly have all these responsibilities. I can't leave her alone at home sometimes because she's afraid that she'll fall. Or she's in so much pain, but she doesn't know what's causing it. Or when she goes to visit her old friends in Buckeye, I'm up all night worried about her, waiting for

her to call me to come and bring her home. There are responsibilities in this relationship that I would have run from if I knew they were coming.

But, you know, I think she's key to this movement in Arizona; I mean, her lawsuit is about race and sexuality and abuse – everything that's part of the work I do. I couldn't have told a better story about the prisons if I made it up. So, I think I'm here to help her be able to articulate it, helping her to be able to survive it. That's really what I'm all about. I spend a lot of time and energy just trying to help her get through each day. And, I gotta tell you, she has spent a lot of time and energy helping me get through each day. If I were living alone through all of this, this summer, I would have ended up camping out in Flagstaff, fighting with the *save the peaks* folks and getting arrested, put in jail there, stuff like that. Or, I would've ended up in a ball on the floor of my room, so depressed I couldn't even pick myself up to go kill myself. I think I would have just caved in without my mom.

Maylie's presence – not just having a person present – but *her* presence has really compelled me to be more kind. When I'm alone, I am raging at the fucking world – I mean, sometimes I'm dancing and having a great time – but I'm raging at the world most of the time. And her, her being present in my life has made me be more kind, more patient, more thoughtful because she makes an effort to do that for me. You know, we're both walking on, both dealing with very fragile human beings who have been through terrible losses."

Jeanie tells me that when one of them gives in, can't go on, the other takes up the slack. Gives as much comfort as she can. The two begin to eclipse one

another - a mother without her child, and a child who lost her mom. Jeanie does the dishes when Maylie hurts too much to get out of bed. Maylie empties the trash when Jeanie is crashing emotionally. Their lives take on a domestic simplicity, a way of being that's routine enough to make sense. Maylie talks to Jeanie while she's researching or writing emails to prisoners or putting together a blog post; loud when Jeanie is trying to be soft. They talk about it, work it out, and learn to live their lives in each other's proximity. But, Jeanie tells me that there are some times when grief takes hold, suffocating both of them at once, and that it hurts her ability to be an activist. In the weeks since her mother has died, Jeanie hasn't posted a blog, even a copy/paste. She tells me she can't write, not even the letters she sends to pharmaceutical companies to get Maylie discounts on her meds. Jeanie thinks it's her ADD acting up. She says she needs a visit to another psychiatrist, but that those people are so invasive, so she puts it off: "It's humiliating, it's degrading, and you spend a lot of money on people who treat you like shit, you know – *you* have to pay *them*."

"Maylie… Maylie, though," she says, "she's been beaten down so much with death. But she's got some fight, she's got some fight."

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When she is able to blog, Jeanie writes about the Maricopa County jails and Sheriff Joe Arpaio:

To use the color pink - long associated with the feminine - as a means of humiliating male prisoners is pathetic and disgusting and says a lot about not just Sheriff Arpaio's homophobia and hate for people who are gay/transgender/queer,

but his deep contempt for women in particular. How can women with any political awareness at all justify allowing Arpaio and the MCSO to continue like this?

I have a hard time understanding how the women in this state - Republicans and Dems alike - have tolerated Arpaio's misogyny for so long - much less why so many vote for him - except that the women here have been very well-trained to comply. Women's rights organizations in Arizona who aren't actively working to end mandatory pink underwear in the county jail are as much a part of the problem as Sheriff Joe himself is - they should be supporting this suit. The use of pink - the feminine - as something to abuse people with is not a petty issue - it's a symptom of the toxic attitudes towards people (not just prisoners) that defines the MCSO's culture, and it's killing folks.

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On our ride to Goodyear, Jeanie talks about why she's the right person for her work and the risk that accompanies it. She has nothing and no one. She was married once, a sort of common-law thing, but they split and he died. "Suicide," she says, marking the word with a blunted pause. She called Michael on a night when she was losing it over her mother and angry about the list of names that she kept chalking into the pavement. She asks him if she can come by his house to drop stuff off, and leaves him a set of keys, her pin number, an organ donor card, and her burial wishes. "I would have given you a will, too, but I don't have shit." She has no career, no children, and, soon, no family that will miss her all that much. The only thing that had held her back was her mother's worry. And these days, she wasn't sure if her mother was cogent enough to worry about anything

more than getting through her next treatment. Certain that she was about to lose her apartment, she wanted to ramp things up. She wanted to go for felony level disobedience. She wanted to fight.

"I mean, who, if anybody, is going to try and do something this like, like bring this kind of shit into a criminal courtroom, who better? All I have to lose is my soul, and if I don't do everything I can to stop this, I lose it anyhow. At the time, I wasn't attached to place, I wasn't attached to a person, I just wasn't attached."

But really, she tells Michael and me, all it did was confuse the police. She kept telling them different things to file in their report and, eventually, the detective whose name she can't remember had just handed her a piece of paper and a pen. Write whatever you want. We'll staple it on. They couldn't make heads of tails of her or what she wanted. When the court summons comes three months later, Jeanie asks for her full report. The court mails it to her, a photocopy of her writing tucked into the file, just like the officer had told her. Reading it again, she wouldn't have known what she was talking about either.

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Jeanie prods at the hummus sandwich she ordered while she talks. She took two, maybe three small bites when we sat down, telling me this was her favorite sandwich in town. When I turn on the recorder, she stops eating, working through her responses like they're puzzles, leaning over in her chair, hands clenched. She's in her usual outlaw costume, the black hat making her look like a frail cowherd considering her nighttime fire. The café is abuzz with people. I

worry that my recorder is picking up too much background noise, so I try to slide it closer to her. I feel strange doing so, calling attention to the fact that she's answering my questions. She doesn't look up. She tries to explain her relationship with Maylie, struggling to find all the words she wants to use.

"She's just really… for some reason, we just . . . just… *live together* really well, you know, and I think genuinely, um, a real, genuine loving relationship just formed there. I mean, and, and, ordinarily I would have like kept her at enough arm's length that she would have been a client, you know. She's a genuine human being. She is kind. She is considerate, and if she thinks you're full of shit, she will tell you. You know. She will try to do so kindly, but she will do so. She'll just tell you. I appreciate that. This way, you don't build up petty resentments, like 'you drank the last of this,' or 'ate my cereal,' or whatever.

I feel very much like she's my comrade. Like, my mission is central. You know, what she is doing with this lawsuit, and what she is doing with, with like poking and prodding people to open her son's homicide case and all of the stuff she's doing around trying to get her disability restored and that rolls the whole active stuff overlapping. The intersections of her race and poverty and her felonization–all that stuff, is so fucking powerful. She has the story, you know, all within her.

So, you know, I didn't just take her in because of charity. I took her in because she's part of my community, but I really believe that it's kind of essential to make sure she didn't end up destroyed by the state in the process of trying to fight them. I just couldn't stand by and let that happen. My bond with her is the

same bond that I've had with, that I have had with my colleagues and comrades all my life. When I refer to her, when I refer to my roommate, I often will say she is mother of a son whose life was stolen because I want everybody to know that there are mothers out there grieving the children who were killed in prison.

Maylie wakes up moaning, she wakes up crying. She walks, you know, and sits out on the chair at night. She can't sleep more than a few hours at a time. If she sleeps any longer than that, she's in horrible pain. I went through a period in my life when I had that kind of pain, and I had somebody who took care of me, bathed me, fed me. I was 80 pounds. And, I can't believe I was that blessed.

But, there's something I think is informative about being on that side of the caregiving relationship, too. I do a lot of caregiving. I mean, we trade a lot of caregiving, I should say – she feeds me, she, you know, she takes care of the house, care of me, but it's almost like living with somebody that's dying of cancer because they're in extraordinary pain, and you can't alleviate it.

Sometimes, we talk about our spiritual beliefs and crises of faith, asking when you can't alleviate somebody's suffering, why does this kind of thing keep happening? These are the kinds of really intense things that we've been through together over the last few months. It's like being in a fucking warzone with somebody. Nothing else matters. All the petty bullshit that separates us – you know, it doesn't matter."

Jeanie cries for the first and only time since we've been working together.

"Sorry – I didn't know this would be emotional for me."

She laughs, and I join in.

"God, I went on forever there. What was your question again?"

"I wanted to know how Maylie fit in to your work."

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When we get back to Jeanie and Maylie's apartment, I tell her that I am going to start writing all of this up now. That I am hoping to graduate in the Spring, but that I am really happy to go along on any protests or to any other hearings. After I leave that day, we write email and she calls once to tell me she's going to be on AM radio. She wants me to call in to ask something intelligent if the conversation becomes too idiotic. It doesn't, and I have nothing to add to what she says. My family and I go to the Occupy Phoenix Protests, and I know she and Michael are there, but I can't find them. I read her blogs daily and wait for her sentencing to be finalized. She gets hit with restitution for the damages, and she's relieved to say the least. The next week, she's arrested, along with twenty other protesters, for occupying a downtown Phoenix park overnight.

Clichés

Jake

I write my first short story in community college. It's about three pages long, two pages more than I'd ever done for anything that wasn't an assignment. I write it at my overnight job in data processing. I go into work at midnight, and I get out at 8 AM, living a life completely opposite of anyone else I know. I work alone most nights, so I focus on school. I want to write a fable. A storybook kind of thing, I tell my teacher.

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He knew that this knoll made the perfect bed to watch the stars; he'd been here long enough to know that. Taking off the oversized coat his mother had made him bring, he felt a chill that only the worst winter night could conjure up. He laid the coat on the base of the grassy lump, clumping up the portion where his head was to lay. Shifting his weight over the rocks and sticks that prodded him through the brown makeshift blanket, his eyes locked as the sky gave up its diamonds before them.

He had come here every night during the summer. His father would put grapes and a thermos of water into a backpack, and they would find their special spot as it waited for them in the night. His father would tell him stories about the beginning of all things and of the dreams that he'd once had as a boy looking to the heavens. His father had taken him here every night that summer, even when his father wasn't supposed to leave his bed anymore.

The boy asked one time, "Father, why is it, if you dream of the stars, you

work so far underground?"

His father laughed and replied, "Because even the stars lose all their magic if you have no one to dream of them with, and to have two people as wonderful as you and your mother, I need to give up the stars for a little while."

Nothing had ever meant so much to the boy as hearing that he was as important as the stars to his father, and even when his father could not come to the hill any longer, the boy would tell him of the night's splendor, always knowing that his father's smile was for him and not the pinpricks of light that shone overhead.

After the metal beast that the doctors had hooked his father up to had finally failed, the boy neglected the knoll for a while. He was afraid that his dreams would be dried up by the morning sun, chased into the void where his father had gone. Slowly, though, he felt the beckoning of the night's embrace again.

That cold night, bundled in his heavy coat, he saw all of the lights that the sky had ever offered. He dreamed of a time that he and his father would see each other again, and as he fell to sleep, the sky began to blot with grey, and the stars themselves fell to the earth in frozen dewdrops. The freeze eventually seeped its way in, and his dreams were all made true.

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My instructor returns the story to me with a checklist stapled to the front. She checks boxes that say "The story used images," "The writing was stylized," "The writing was clear," and "The writing was clichéd." She asks why I'd want to

use something as tired as coal mining to generate emotion. I really don't have a response for her. It's just what came to mind.

10.24.2011

She was moved to palliative, but they never told her daughter. The rooms there are identical to the other parts of the clinic: same beige wallpaper interrupted by turquoise diamonds, same paintings of brown women and woven baskets, same discrete curtains and wall units to hide medical machinery. There are visits from volunteers with books and social workers with animals. There's her son and best friend, both of whom requested that the daughter not be told that she'd been moved. Now they're saying they should call her. That she should be able to drive out down the long desert freeway to Fountain Hills and see the body before the arrangements are complete. They call, and she drives towards this pinpoint on a map, this place where she lived so long ago. Under the air-conditioned breeze, the subtle southwestern carpeting, the network of plumbing and cement, there's packed cool desert earth. The cold of rest, an ocean cold, deep and still.

Her daughter writes, *And thanks for joining me so wholeheartedly on this journey Mom; you are such a beautiful soul, and have been a dear friend. Thank you for believing in us all. Have a safe trip home...*

Exquisitely Vulnerable

Jeanie

On the day we leave for Coolidge, Maylie asks Jeanie not to go, not to risk getting in trouble again. She's in her chair. It's late afternoon, and the light from window behind her is muted, but still hovering through the room in dust-spotted pools.

"I'll be fine. Jake and Michael will be with me." Jeanie slides the laces through her red Converse while she sits at the computer desk.

Maylie opens her eyes big, looks at me, and asks, "You'll call me, right? If she gets arrested, you'll call. I'm the first on her speed. You know my name, right?"

I promise her that I'll call. Smiling, that I know her name. Maylie rolls another cigarette from the pouch of Bugler while Jeanie gets her tea and her camera. The Chihuahua acts asleep, but its ears pivot around the room to follow our conversation. Jeanie comes out of the kitchen, pauses, and looks at Maylie, whose eyes are now closed, head dug into the chair by the window.

Jeanie goes to the computer, closes all of the work she was doing, and opens a music program. She plays Tracy Chapman, setting three tracks on repeat and carefully adjusting the volume slider. She sets a makeshift pack of cigarettes she's already rolled on the table by the armchair. Jeanie touches Maylie's hand. Maylie doesn't stir. Jeanie moves an ashtray next to the pack, then puts Maylie's cell phone next to it. She slides a folded piece of paper under the phone and says, barely audible, "The representative's people. This is what you tell them."

Maylie's feet stretch out, toes straining.

When Jeanie stands up, her knees crack in syncopation, soft little pops to loud snaps. She grabs her things, smiles to me, and opens the door. After she locks it and double-checks the lock, we head out to her car. Michael is already there, waiting for us.

"Back to the revolution," Jeanie says.

PART V: REFRACTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

You write the lie that you'd like to be when your life looks like a book that you wouldn't read. – Blake Schwarzenbach, Jets to Brazil

Because I began this dissertation with the kind of discourse more commonly found in the genre of educational research, it seems somehow important that I end on a similar note. I keep feeling the need to explain what all of this has been. And, in many ways, I've already done just that. From my theoretical leanings and the experiences that compose me, I know what these stories are about. I know what Jeanie wants and what she isn't seeing. I know how these things map to the ideas of people like Lacan and Said, how they erase those maps, and how they fold the maps in on themselves. I know what's happening with Jeanie much better than I do Jake, as well. But I try not to tell, even as I tell, selecting these particular moments to represent. Writing in a particular style to make those representations, I spill my secrets on every page.

Part of this has something to do with the psychoanalytic tradition from which I have drawn heavily in structuring, writing, and juxtaposing these stories. For as much theoretical insight that Lacanian (or any other outgrowth of Freud's foundations) work affords, we have to be vigilant in remembering that Lacan's work was born in the clinic, with the initial intent of restoring some normative function of behavior or sensation, a normativity that is absolutely illusionary, as Foucault would remind us. In the barest form, we cannot forget that these ideas are part of a talking *cure* and, despite Freud's ontological and structuralist understanding of the mind, it was reserved for application to people who felt there

was something wrong with them.

I am by no means willing to suggest that any of the characters I have described, nor the people on whom they are based, are in some way in need of intervention – in the vein of the Saidian public intellectual emerging from the academy (see Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011) – by means of my analyses. Rather, it has been my hope to produce a psychoanalytic reading that calls into question why people would elect to live a life ridden with traumas – to call the police on oneself, for example – for the sake of possibly, though rarely, helping a fellow person. A fellow person who just happens to have been convicted of a crime. These actions certainly do strike a contrapuntal (Said, 1993) tone, but not one that should be dismissed as pathological. Freud and Lacan, later in their respective careers, both eventually saw that pathology was never divorced from social conditions.

Thus, I worked in the psychoanalytic spaces that deal explicitly with the ambiguities of desire and influence, to create narrative structures that might be read with multiple meanings. When Jeanie would say something that contradicted a previous statement or use language that struck me as peculiar for a given moment, I would use those spaces as quilting points (Lacan, 2006) – ways to get inside of the structures she had created for her identity and the corresponding world around her. In other occasions, I positioned myself as an observer within the stories themselves, an observer who is in no way immune to the forces that animate Jeanie, Maylie, and Michael, and who is potentially the most "at risk" (Barone, 2001) of losing ground to these desires. Someone who perhaps did so

more than a few times.

Questions

As I indicated in the opening of this dissertation, one element that suggests narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) is an appropriate means to conduct and represent this study is that it resolves, rather than begins, with questions. To maintain that critical feature, I want to include some – but certainly not all – of the questions that arose for me during my time with Jeanie, Maylie, and Michael, as well as those that emerged during the writing process, particularly those around ethics and representation. Of course, these are not the only possible questions I hope to raise, but I feel that they speak most directly to the project's original intent. Further, the production of an exhaustive list of the many questions I asked during this process might have the same effect as a comprehensive set of explanations of what happened in the narratives, foreclosing the invitation for my readers to come to their own opinions and meanings.

Pedagogy

As detailed earlier, one of my most trenchant concerns in researching and writing this project was the ability to find pedagogies capable of revolutionary, radical transformation. My sense remains that critical pedagogy is of must use only for mobilizing those students who have experienced the problems of privilege directly. In its most fundamental state, critical pedagogy is still *content*, and identity constructs such as whiteness, heteronormativity, and patriarchy act as symptom structures (Zizek, 1989), fully capable of erasing, incorporating, or denying evidence of their problematic aspects or of their very existence. As

Felman (1982) argues, then, an emancipatory education has to enact an *anti-pedagogy*, one in which individuals *unlearn* privilege and, with it, the ego configurations it produces. The concern, then, is how we teach the people who benefit directly from privilege and have constructed identity structures that align with, and capitalize upon, those benefits.

Accordingly, I used Jeanie's stories, as well as my own, as ways of understanding how our critical dispositions came to be. This is not to say that I equivocate the work I do with Jeanie's, but that we share similar value systems and teleological desires and, in many regards, we have both emerged from identity spaces that represent the regulative ideal of privilege. What then, were the pedagogical moments that lead us both to ask difficult questions about the social order as well as our complicity with and maintenance of that order? Have we really *unlearned* anything, or are our forms of resistance also infested with privilege? In both Jeanie's stories and my own, we located traumatic events as central in our coming to critical consciousness, but is it feasible and ethical to reconsider the larger project of emancipatory pedagogy as necessarily traumatic? Garrison (2004) takes up a similar position, suggesting that

> vulnerability and risk open us up to growth, but people also get seriously hurt that way. No one grows who would remain secure, no one grows without loss, and some will be slain. When we prune plants for their growth, we in fact injure them, sometimes fatally. (p. 94)

This quote was on my mind frequently as I worked Jeanie's stories into this dissertation, as she consistently worked concepts of death and loss into the ways she talked about her decision to take up activism. Such comments also called to

mind Silverman's (2009) position on death that I articulated in the first part of this study – a position that suggests death, precisely the death of the self, as an inroad to ethical understandings of the Other. Silverman argues for a return to primary distinctions, ones that exist below signification – the traumas of identity creation that we share within the psychoanalytical ontological scene.

Another element of pedagogy that I worked through considerably in the production and arrangement of these stories involved the notion of time, specifically the ways in which learning takes place within a refracted (Barad, 2010) and deferred (Pitt & Britzman, 2003) psychic landscape. These theories are what lead me to construct each of Jeanie's stories, as well as many of mine, as doubled narratives, pieces that represented two (or more) events in chronological asynchronicity. My intent was to suggest that the time of pedagogy can only be understood as *proleptic* (Slattery, 2006) – existing in past, present, and future simultaneously – that our cumulative store of experiences are always at play and that learning cannot be reduced to a linear, proximal event.

With this in mind, it is also crucial to consider that these theoretical inventions are neither the only available nor any more likely to correctly mirror nature than any tradition. However, this particular lens can tell a story about education that is somewhat novel and that runs against the logics of efficiency and linearism that have dominated the American imaginary for the past century (Callahan, 1962). Critical educators might use these stories as ways of rethinking the ways in which their work – despite its content – still potentially owes much to the curricular phenotypes produced by individuals like Bobbitt (see Callahan) and

Tyler (1949). Questions that might facilitate this reconsideration would attend to the following: How might educators, both public and institutional, create participatory critical work aimed at intersecting with the life histories and desirous natures of the people they hope to engage? How might we engage with our own and our students' stories of identity within a culture of standards and predetermined outcomes? Finally, as came up for me frequently in the analysis phase of this project, how do we know which stories are the most useful in producing pedagogical encounters, especially given the psychoanalytic tendency for the ego to mask its own workings?

Exile and Community

I found the work of Edward Said (1984, 1993, 1994, 2000) particularly alluring and powerful early in my career in curriculum studies, and I continue to do so. However, over the course of this study, the concept of exile became problematized on several occasions – some that I anticipated, and others I could not have possibly foreseen. In terms of the former, it became quickly apparent that Jeanie – often in a self-proclaimed space of exile – did not see this space as necessarily privileged or hospitable. Rather, her failed attempts to win support for her cause often reflected her frustration with being an outsider to the "chatty worlds" that Said (1994) describes. Whereas Said does discuss the difficulty of exile, his work does not touch on the role that this dis/position plays in enacting projects and mobilizing others towards productive social change. Must the exiled be only a theorist and an intellectual, as Said was in his dual roles of academic and public pedagogue, or are there activist spaces within the construct

that afford the opportunity for the production of like-minded communities?

Further, in the narratives Jeanie shared with me, her cohabitation with Maylie became an increasingly important feature in how her work was both conceived and enacted. Jeanie's acts of protest – chalking, voicing, and blogging – became somewhat hindered by her need to take care of Maylie's deteriorating health and crippling grief, as well as Jeanie's own emotions around the death of her mother. Yet, as Jeanie describes it, her professor had said that the real work of revolutionaries was tied up in caring relationships, and I ask if this is true in the case of those relationships that stymie our capacity for critique of macro social ills and structural oppression. In short, what happens when an individual operating in the space of Saidian exile finds herself at home again? What is our ethical obligation – as culture workers, as teachers, as public pedagogues – in the face of a dire social order and its many victims?

Lies and Meanings

I want to conclude this dissertation with a final word about the stories herein and what I learned in the process of composing them. In Laurel Richardson's (1994) often-referenced work, she suggests that the act of writing itself serves as a process of analysis, a means of creating meaningful organization for seemingly disparate particles of information. Similarly, when asked about her writing process, Flannery O'Connor claimed *Good Country People* as a story that happened to her as she wrote it – that as soon as Manly Pointer came on the scene, she realized he was going to steal Hulga's wooden leg. My experience herein has cohered greatly with both of these points. Despite hours with Jeanie, Maylie, and

Michael, hours working through transcripts and field notes, and hours reading blog posts, I didn't know how these pieces worked or what they might mean as a collection until I began writing the story about the stewardess who infiltrated Jeanie's family. As I wrote, the relationships between the characters emerged and moved and the ways in which past and present manifested in one another became apparent. What's most important to note about this is that I needed to start in a place of fiction, a moment that may never have existed - Jeanie on the wall at the Grand Canyon.

I realize now that this was my entry point into these stories precisely because it was a space of the imagination – a construction of a moment that, for me, provided the verisimilitude of a family vacation, while eventually giving way to the actual, and potentially hard to believe, story of an intelligence investigation. However true or not, the basic narrative of the stewardess story was represented as closely to Jeanie's account as possible, and the details I elected to add were created to make the story both more plausible – either as a real event or the construction of a severely depressed child who had recently been rejected by her mother.

These conscious moments of fiction, these intentional *lies*, are essential in producing the kinds of critical storytelling that I have discussed earlier in this piece, as if executed well, they offer the reader an enhanced ability to negotiate interpretations within an array of possible meanings. Critical storytellers thus attempt to enter into what Barone (2000) calls a "conspiratorial" relationship with readers, allowing *them* to produce their own meanings from aesthetic texts, a

position that seeks to challenge the primacy of inquiry paradigms that hold to certainty as a regulative ideal. This is not to say that I hope to see this kind of work supplant other modes of inquiry, but for understanding concepts as elusive and complicated as pedagogy and resistance, we need a multiplicity of perspectives, ones that point to the myriad things beyond local experience.

As the quote at the beginning of this section suggests, we constantly retell our stories in ways that better serve our lives and our listeners. And, within the scope of psychoanalytic theory, what is interesting is not what these stories say, but what they hide, what they refuse to say. Education, in its sundry forms, is a provision of these stories that creates both the commons of culture and a shared understanding of all that is to remain hidden. Narrative research, then, might be seen as a way of simply making story visible again, of allowing participation in the creations, denials, revisions, and omissions that compose ideological and identifactory structures. Such a process reflects the educational aims that the psychoanalytical scholars (e.g. Felman, 1982; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Bracher, 1993) upon whom I draw seek for education. In writing Jeanie's life and revisiting moments of my own, I felt many of the seams and sutures of my own self-concept, my own true stories and the fictions that make them possible. The lies we tell ourselves about ourselves. The pedagogies we enact every day.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Thomas Barone ED
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	06/02/2011
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	06/02/2011
IRB Protocol #:	1105006508
Study Title:	(Be)Longing and Resisting: A Narrative Excavation of Critical Ontogeny

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION LETTER

(Be)Longing and Resisting: A Narrative Excavation of Critical Ontogeny

Date

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Thomas Barone in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which individuals who commit themselves to organized social justice and activist movements have developed critical dispositions despite their immersion in the dominant and dominating cultures of schooling and the media.

To this end, I am recruiting active members and leaders of activist groups who profess espoused commitments to a progressive, social justice-oriented ideology for interview-based research. My goal in this research is to interview these individuals as a way to understand and develop critical stories around how these individuals have produced and maintain their identification with and desire for their respective causes in spite of the overwhelming and often debilitating force of dominant culture.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a minimum of two interviews that will be conducted for approximately 1 hour (for a total of 2 hours). These interviews will be audiotaped on digital recorders and then transcribed into documents. Audiotape files will be deleted at the completion of the study, and the transcriptions will not contain information that could identify you (participants will be identified by codes only). Furthermore, these transcripts will be stored safely to preserve anonymity. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. In addition, upon your permission, I would also like to spend approximately 2 weeks observing your activities in your work environment, especially those aspects of your work that incorporate educational elements. All notes from these observations will be given the same confidentiality and consent protocols as the interviews.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you must be 18 or older to participate in the study. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Although there is no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is increased insight into some of the problematic aspects of education, aspects that can potentially lead to increased injustice in American culture. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous. All identifying information will be removed or changed as soon as the interviews are transcribed, and all information from the interviews will be retained in transcribed and coded form on my personal password-protected computer only – no actual names will be stored. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your

name will not be known. In the final write-up of the research, pseudonyms and composite characters will be using in place of your name or the names of other individuals and specific sites in their stories.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The audiotape files will be deleted at the completion of the study, and the transcriptions will have no identifying information attached to them (participants will be identified by codes only).

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at either barone@asu.edu or sjburdic@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

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