

the corridor closes at both ends

dana middleton

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Committee:

Abraham Avnisan

Amaranth Borsuk

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dana middleton

University of Washington

Abstract

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Artist-in-Residence, Abraham Avnisan
School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences

the corridor closes at both ends is a poetry collection that explores control and confinement through personal experiences of queerness, gender nonconformity and prison visits within the frame of Northpointe's COMPAS recidivism questionnaire.

The writing blurs the borders of what was, what is, what isn't, and what could be, attempting to work in a space that rejects the logics of control that operate in systems, selves, language and relationships, and that are made efficient through violent acts of separation. This collection also confronts and engages with various archives: state and private data archives like the information collected from COMPAS questionnaires in the service of control, Michel Foucault's use of institutional and personal archives to expose the construction of control systems in *History of Madness*, and also what Kelly Lytle Hernández calls a rebel archive. These poems, as a part of a rebel archive, move against the gender binary and carceral logics to affirm other acts of resistance.

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I.

THE SHIP OF FOOLS

THE MADMAN ON HIS CRAZY BOAT SETS SAIL FOR THE OTHER WORLD, AND IT IS FROM THE OTHER WORLD THAT HE COMES WHEN HE DISEMBARKS. THIS ENFORCED NAVIGATION IS BOTH RIGOROUS DIVISION AND ABSOLUTE PASSAGE... HIS EXCLUSION MUST ENCLOSE HIM; IF HE CANNOT AND MUST NOT HAVE ANOTHER PRISON THAN THE THRESHOLD ITSELF, HE IS KEPT AT THE POINT OF PASSAGE.

Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*

foucault says there were many reasons for confinement during the classical age. not being married or baptized, or having money and not spending it. also the crimes of taking *licentious liberty* or simply being *vermin*. it devolves into a series of insults, why anyone deserves to be punished and forgotten—common, decrepit, girlish & old, damaged, weak, debauched, imbecile, infirm, libertine, ungrateful, dissolute, insane, incorrigible. we hear what the kings and jailers called them, but what did they call themselves? in dungeons and leprosariums, in caged-off courtyards in the winter rain, I imagine what we can't know—criminal women in their so-called second childhoods, giggling in conspiracy, building new bodies out of mud and hair that would move through walls to do their bidding, traveling the streets as joyous filth, stealing meat and smothering nobles, returning to dissolve again, beyond guilt or correction.

at the end of the middle ages in western europe, social deviants were cast out of the city and forced onto boats. popular tales called this *stultifera navis*, the ship of fools, said they were men in search of their reason. they sailed and sailed —passage, threshold, the enclosure of the outside—it's hard to tell where the metaphors met reality.

there were two shores. my deviant gender, extracted from a prickly meadow, feeling nowhere near the borders. troubling to leave and impossible to arrive, the edge blurs and then I don't know what I'll touch next, my own body, the old appendages morphing, taking on new textures and pulses, names receding in hot waves. if madness is aquatic, one day I wake up on board in that peeling grey space and my body is not the same, there are others around me, unstable, adrift on the underside, and there is no scientist to measure our levels, to locate us, and if there were, we would spill him into the unknowable sea.

but the passage that stole and sold millions is not metaphorical. there were physical ships in the water. because these ships were prisons, because San Quentin was originally a prison ship, they have put down anchors on land. slavery is undead and it wears razor wire and white bureaucrats pull it around on a boat trailer with an F-450 full of paperwork and money. and if a prisoner inside wishes to speak to the outside their voice is digitally mapped and they no longer own the secret of their whisper. they have to pay to have their whisper stolen and a print is also made of the voice on the other end and the database company spits more money into the truckbed and the white bureaucrat smiles and the anchor drags through a treeless rural area and the call is lost and the voices are being processed and the necessary paperwork is flying out and the man's smile counts the money a third time and the prisoners are seasick and carsick and homesick and there is a dead air all around

ON ALBRECHT DÜRER'S *SCORNING ETERNAL JOY*

where do I belong, looking at this fool, looking at the city he has wandered from or been cast out of, the uneven ground of the country under his bare feet? how do I understand him if I cannot see what he sees? we are both gesturing into the unknown. we have met here on this outcast ground. I carry my own set of scales, try to balance reason and desire, to prove myself through gesture. do I know about the archers at the city gates?

one reaches to position the arrow in the bow, having seen a fool approach the city's walls.

how does our relationship change, me and this other fool, now that I understand that we have been walled into the outside?

the arrows point down at our bodies.

our arms grow stronger and also weary. the woodcut immortalizes us in that outstretched moment. our bodies move out of the frame as the cities expand, as policing becomes more efficient. the archers no longer have to stretch a bow string to appear, their beady black eyes installed in all spaces.

we are gesturing at something with an invisible presence, something that has left a violent blankness around us, like the carved out, inkless spaces of the woodblock.

PREFACE TO THE 1961 EDITION OF
MICHEL FOUCAULT'S *HISTORY OF MADNESS*:
AN ERASURE

we recognize each other
in the merciless lyric
of madness,
the division of doubt

of terminal selves

to be guided by gesture
to be able to appear

inseparable
in relation
in exchange

there is no common memory
in monologue
only silence

my existence is
already a threat
long before the interrogation

extravagance

take us beyond
the question

the exterior takes shape
like tension in a tragic structure

history is nothing other
than knots

each one
simultaneously dividing
the luminous heart
of repression

is there any place
in the universe

for all that is
merely fallen

we can no longer address nothingness
as the backdrop of murmuring
a sterile beach of words
without root

a gesture is bound
to the possibility of madness

we bend toward poetry—
impossible words
in their wild state
heard from the fortress

prison
and police
give meaning to the outside

which separates insects
from time

II.
COMPAS

I AM FOR YOU WHAT YOU WANT ME TO BE AT THE
MOMENT YOU LOOK AT ME IN A WAY YOU'VE NEVER
SEEN ME BEFORE: AT EVERY INSTANT.

Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

ON NUMBERS

up in those dead offices the arbiters of justice sharpen their teeth on square terms. line by line they code and fill the enclosure, the electric barbs of little numbers on a one to ten scale. drop the number through its digital slot. place it before the black robes uncrossable as a black river—a score for fate, a score to cut the string. the number fits easily in a cell, a grid, a block. rows and rows and rows.

Current Charges

1. *Do any current offenses involve family violence?*

No Yes

2. *Which offense category represents the most serious current offense?*

Misdemeanor Non-violent Felony Violent Felony

3. *Was this person on probation or parole at the time of the current offense?*

Probation Parole Both Neither

a preposition is a locating word. I turn to you beneath the overpass because I've been adrift in my language, waiting below the hatch, opening my mouth on the edge of sleep. we have to be against whatever's timely and correct, whatever's perfect and tight. here we are inside this salty net dipping in and out of the past, above an alluvial dance, through the rip current that tows us out of this saturated night into a space that circulates beyond law or language. the words are a short dock and we depart.

4. *Based on the screener's observations, is this person a suspected or admitted gang member?*

No Yes

5. *Number of pending charges or holds?*

0 1 2 3 4+

6. *Is the current top charge felony property or fraud?*

No Yes

ON THE ARCHIVE

data was collected in order to direct the futures, in order to have building materials. stories were stacked, occluding each other, making ground where nothing solid had been. our own stories being generated automatically, our own scores. at some point the collector retreats behind a metal desk, behind a two-way mirror, behind a screen, disappears entirely from a body.

Criminal History

7. *How many times has this person been arrested before as an adult or juvenile (criminal arrests only)?*

8. *How many prior juvenile felony offense arrests?*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

9. *How many prior juvenile violent felony offense arrests?*

0 1 2+

10. *How many prior commitments to a juvenile institution?*

0 1 2+

11. *How many times has this person been arrested for a felony property offense that included an element of violence?*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

this is a non-narrative—silence extends a paranoid joy, a shiver. to be fingerprinted. to have irises scanned. to have a face album generated in iPhoto. to pass below cameras, aisle to aisle. to swipe. to search online. to double-tap. to use location services. to speak into the microphone. to speak into the database. to speak into a future that will process my crimes. to speak into a present that collects data for the future. to think of that data, stored in desert facilities, fans whirring, lights blinking, cords bundled and traversing the rooms like nerves. unprocessed. power this storage until there is capacity to analyze and synthesize on a massive scale. to think of that data, my data, still dormant. it hasn't yet been used against me as evidence. it hasn't factored into the plea they'll offer. if I ignore the future, this data is toothless. silence is a lack of information. I am still uncaptured.

12. How many prior murder/ voluntary manslaughter offense arrests as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

13. How many prior felony assault offense arrests (not murder, sex, or domestic violence) as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

14. How many prior misdemeanor assault offense arrests (not sex or domestic violence) as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

15. How many prior family violence offense arrests as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

16. How many prior sex offense arrests (with force) as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

at first I come at this project as though it is outside of myself. because prison is a thing outside of me, I think. I shudder at the cop who pulls out in front of me. he looks young in that blue SUV. I think about the time at the youth jail when some cop shoved me backwards down a hill and my head slammed onto the sidewalk. I was just standing there. I was concerned about someone else who was being arrested, also for just standing there, trying to yell to one of the kids inside. so maybe I was too close. when you get too close to something, it is no longer outside you. it is a part of you.

17. How many prior weapons offense arrests as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

18. How many prior drug trafficking/ sales offense arrests as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

19. How many prior drug possession/ use offense arrests as an adult?

0 1 2 3+

20. How many times has this person been sentenced to jail for 30 days or more?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

NOTES FROM THE VOLUNTEER TRAINING AT THE WOMEN'S PRISON

offenders may seem like ordinary people
you may feel as you get to know them, that they could even be friends
that is a signal that you may already be experiencing a level of risk

if you are asked where you live, you can say:

I live up north
I live in western Washington
I live across the bridge

the population is stunted
please do not touch the population

I don't want you to feel like you need to give an infraction for every lingering
embrace

we give infractions for inappropriate behavior
for example, the elderly population's misuse of sanitary napkins
they put them on vents to keep cold air from blowing in

if they are asking, it is likely unauthorized

the line rings directly into the control center

you are an extension of DOC
align your actions with the rules that govern

21. How many times has this person been sentenced (new commitment) to state or federal prison?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

22. How many times has this person been sentenced to probation as an adult?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

23. Has this person, while incarcerated in jail or prison, ever received serious or administrative disciplinary infractions for fighting/ threatening other inmates or staff?

No Yes

24. What was the age of this person when he or she was first arrested as an adult or juvenile (criminal arrests only)?

suddenly it is there on the slope above town. the campus with too much fencing, the treeless lawn. there are people out in the yard. strange to see them from the highway, up on their own plane, because prison is a place of exile, where people go when they are removed from highways and grocery stores and saturday afternoon dates to the reptile zoo. strange because it brings division's fabric down to chainlink and razor wire, and there are tools in every hardware store for cutting holes—but it's not about that. prison exists when it exiles the idea that we could cut holes in it, and I know this because I see the prisoners moving around in the sunlight, I say that the fence is the only thing keeping them hostage in that ulterior zone. and we keep driving and we do not cut a hole.

ON DISORIENTATION

I get dizzy over how little I understand algorithmic processes, what they are capable of, why and how they synthesize data, but I know they are well-fed on my information. I eat the algorithmic excretion like that circular snake. it is my excrement. the algorithm and I have a manipulative relationship. am I even right to assume that it couldn't understand my poems-as-answers?

Non-Compliance

25. How many times has this person violated his or her parole?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

26. How many times has this person been returned to custody while on parole?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

27. How many times has this person had a new charge/ arrest while on probation?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

in the C building there is a little mural on the wall that says *does gender really matter?* and I wish it didn't but it does, and that's what we're talking about in the classroom—how it continues to matter, how every facility and every CO have their own arbitrary rules about what marked bodies mean. on either side of the mural there are signs that say *NO TALKING* and this is the space where the question is asked. who is allowed to respond? after we've talked about the static forms we're policed into, the lysoled cells they want our bodies to become, the static scratches through a CO's radio. in the second hour, someone says, *when I transitioned, everyone around me transitioned, too.*

28. How many times has this person's probation been violated or revoked?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

29. How many times has this person failed to appear for a scheduled criminal court hearing?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

30. How many times has the person been arrested/charged w/new crime while on pretrial release (includes current)?

0 1 2 3+

during the volunteer training, the DOC coordinator calls the gender identity support program a *sign of the times*. it's not even a dog whistle—she means *going to the dogs*. and I do feel like a dog in there, sitting so quietly for three hours, such a good dog, biting no ankles through my nylon muzzle as we review all the ways a prisoner is surely human but still not deserving of friendship or trust. even after release, the DOC has a hold on their social world, the invisible fence of approval forms—they are always prisoners, always state property. there is someone else with a late dirtstache at my table and I want to piss on the signature lines with them, I want them to chew my muzzle off in the bathroom so we can lick the floors with our long tongues touching. I can tell how the church people feel, their non-reactions when I say “queer community,” something I only say around straight people, something to neutralize my vibrating presence, my bristling chin, my singular desire to crush the prison with my hot-pink jockstrapped ass.

ON ENCLOSURE

some say *there is no outside*. to be between shores, to be living on drained land. if you can just stay out of prison, then you're free—as long as you're *not dead or in jail*—wrung out on this limit, wrung out on the binary. near-sighted from the closeness of buildings and walls, the fixed scale. for a few months there is a slow installation of fake windows on the new juvie. when the cinderblocks are hidden you can believe the windows are real.

Family Criminality

31. Which of the following best describes who principally raised you?

- Both Natural Parents
- Natural Mother Only
- Natural Father Only
- Relative(s)
- Adoptive Parent(s)
- Foster Parents(s)
- Other arrangement

32. If you lived with both parents and they later separated, how old were you at the time?

- Less than 5
- 5 to 10
- 11 to 14
- 15 or older
- Does Not Apply

33. Was your father (or father figure who principally raised you) ever arrested, that you know of?

- No
- Yes

34. Was your mother (or mother figure who principally raised you) ever arrested, that you know of?

- No
- Yes

in the lobby I'm looking at the line of framed wardens and I know the prison was here before it was built—blueprint, survey, dream of domination. a network of investors casting dollar bills on fishing line. outside we lapse into whether it's *policy* that the prison denies hormones as punishment. what does it matter, if *policy* and *police* emerge together from the federal bureau of language, muscling the cinderblocks into lines on the foundation as though each one were a little warden, grey and unwavering, dictating the possibilities of life—someone mixes the cement and it sticks.

35. *Were your brothers or sisters ever arrested, that you know of?*

No Yes

36. *Was your wife/ husband/ partner ever arrested, that you know of?*

No Yes

37. *Did a parent or parent figure who raised you ever have a drug or alcohol problem?*

No Yes

38. *Was one of your parents (or parent figure who raised you) ever sent to jail or prison?*

No Yes

and then I shared a sweet warm smile with bo brown's former lover and getaway driver and everything felt right again. or everything is still fucked, settlers still occupy Duwamish land, still build slavery cages, but here we are in this sparkly room with its perpetually burning prison hearing about her wild crimes. and the smile she gives me has a warmth that has made it through confinement, through the loud blood of adrenaline, unlike the way sunlight travels decades through frozen space, but like the way it travels through filaments of hair, through the single page of a letter, the way a flame travels through city light into the new year.

ON BECOMING

data streams from me as I enter search terms, as I move beneath security cameras, as I click to accept the privacy policy. the algorithm predicts me, and perhaps through prediction, I become. boolean fruit, fleshy nodes moving toward an end.

Peers

Please think of your friends and the people you hung out with in the past few (3-6) months.

39. *How many of your friends/ acquaintances have ever been arrested?*

None Few Half Most

40. *How many of your friends/ acquaintances served time in jail or prison?*

None Few Half Most

41. *How many of your friends/ acquaintances are gang members?*

None Few Half Most

42. *How many of your friends/ acquaintances are taking illegal drugs regularly (more than a couple times a month)?*

None Few Half Most

43. *Have you ever been a gang member?*

No Yes

44. *Are you now a gang member?*

No Yes

we break time together, rubbing the similar faces of our
watches til we're riffing the beaded route with a crumpled
wake of trash. throw the service mask out—normalcy is a
jiggling jello crumb on this lurching heap, a black bag we tear
open in the street. maggots wear diapers and sway. I'm
impolite and screaming with my sunglasses on in the rain. a
quick fight over a limp flag and we lose—we know it's trash/
we're trash/ a lone cop guards the barricade/ the catapult
sends another stinking apple flaying through the crowd.

Substance Abuse

What are your usual habits in using alcohol and drugs?

45. Do you think your current/past legal problems are partly because of alcohol or drugs?

No Yes

46. Were you using alcohol or under the influence when arrested for your current offense?

No Yes

47. Were you using drugs or under the influence when arrested for your current offense?

No Yes

48. Are you currently in formal treatment for alcohol or drugs such as counseling, outpatient, inpatient, residential?

No Yes

how do I return to the sameness after exiting this universe—
everyone was exquisite. rhinestones over their faces,
monochromatic, slogging through the little flood with three
white rainboots. water pours freely and also stagnates and we
drink the lead for a while. we grab and screech in the storm
under a torn-up trash bag and how am I so happy in the
temperature drop, in the unproductive days, without a brake
on this out-of-town bloom. better to ask how to cut the
sameness away like bad sleeves or ruined drywall, how to
prune for growth.

49. *Have you ever been in formal treatment for alcohol such as counseling, outpatient, inpatient, residential?*

No Yes

50. *Have you ever been in formal treatment for drugs such as counseling, outpatient, inpatient, residential?*

No Yes

51. *Do you think you would benefit from getting treatment for alcohol?*

No Yes

52. *Do you think you would benefit from getting treatment for drugs?*

No Yes

53. *Did you use heroin, cocaine, crack or methamphetamines as a juvenile?*

No Yes

it only takes four nights to disrupt our spatial commitments, our private architectures, our need for a one-door room. in a hot climate, no one wants to live in a box of cul-de-sacs, a tunnel of dead air. the house is a body built for flow and interaction. I sleep in the middle, cradling you both as people pass through the cluttered rooms like a morning tide knocking sea litter along. there's no ideal form of love. we have to divest from the blueprint, the arrival into an answer, a fixed end.

Residence/ Stability

54. *How often do you have contact with your family (may be in person, phone, mail)?*

- No family Never Less than once/month Once per week Daily

55. *How often have you moved in the last twelve months?*

- 0 1 2 3 4 5+

56. *Do you have a regular living situation (an address where you usually stay and can be reached)?*

- No Yes

there is no pebbled beach where a tide rises and changes out bodies. it's not like moving from one house to another. everything is troubled with texture—low rhythms on a chemical level. how am I living now that my life has changed? I float on the new mood like a single-seated rowboat in commuter traffic. your clothes just under the surface, the belt loops of your jeans.

57. *How long have you been living at your current address?*

0-5 mo. 6-11 mo. 1-3 yrs. 4-5 yrs. 6+ yrs.

58. *Is there a telephone at this residence (a cell phone is an appropriate alternative)?*

No Yes

59. *Can you provide a verifiable residential address?*

No Yes

the body is also a house and we have been remodeling ourselves to become more livable, more luxurious and striking, more compatible with public crying and criminal laughter. debt will always be crouching outside, so fuck it—we go to the hardware store in mesh and chains. we pack our own little lunches. when I say livable I mean I'm confronting my own repressions, the lingering shame. don't even say that one is an entrance and one an exit. I've dressed up this dermal tube for all directions.

60. *How long have you been living in that community or neighborhood?*

0-2 mo. 3-5 mo. 6-11 mo. 1+ yrs.

61. *Do you live with family—natural parents, primary person who raised you, blood relative, spouse, children, or boy/girlfriend if living together for more than 1 year?*

No Yes

62. *Do you live with friends?*

No Yes

we have been working on our collection of alien dildos and gold chains. we have an electricity subsidy from the city. our bedrooms are painted yellow, green, pink and blue. many of the houseplants need to be repotted. we sit together in our faux furs talking about the suicides after police murders and repression, of the isolation the state creates, the way the media rallies around respectability and whiteness. the game is about waiting in the jaws while you shrivel, until you fall apart or get spit out. every few weeks I come home to air plants soaking in a bowl. when one of us takes a bath it is because we need a shroud, need to dissolve body in body.

63. *Do you live alone?*

No Yes

64. *Do you have an alias (do you sometimes call yourself by another name)?*

No Yes

I needed space from myself. all the hair trimmers for women were shaped like lipstick tubes. just a quick search to confirm that gender is still a product, pulling out my lipstick and then my lipstick trimmer like either one can align me. I look less and more like myself. I excuse myself from the table. stubble is a problem, a gateway to more lavender, more fluff, more grey lipstick. I say we want something nasty and she tells me to stand on the motorcycle and stare at her tits. I move differently, like I am sure, but my body is diffusing its own certain gestures. I pose—what to call myself on this rotating threshold?

Social Environment

Think of the neighborhood where you lived during the past few (3-6) months.

65. Is there much crime in your neighborhood?

No Yes

66. Do some of your friends or family feel they must carry a weapon to protect themselves in your neighborhood?

No Yes

67. In your neighborhood, have some of you friends or family been crime victims?

No Yes

after the neighbors' party there were pink bubble letters painted on the sidewalk. we were leaving to buy thirty feet of plastic chain. we were leaving a realm in which we're not allowed. let's break the laws. it's normal to feel monstrous in a bad way, to be the object among onlookers, to squirm under fluorescents. we'd like to dim the lights. we'd like to knock out the ceiling tiles. there is an *acab* tag on the new storefront, a *fuck bezos* on the proposed building sign and so I know there are more of us between property lines, behind payments. the question is about ownership. the law has always lived there.

68. *Do some of the people in your neighborhood feel they need to carry a weapon for protection?*

No Yes

69. *Is it easy to get drugs in your neighborhood?*

No Yes

70. *Are there gangs in your neighborhood?*

No Yes

after the visit I'm unraveled, I go downstairs with the dog. maybe it's the movement between worlds—crossing from purgatory to hell, in and out of this prison. I can't side-eye the guards. I force a courtesy smile, because if they can't lock me in they'll lock me out. we have the bodies of visitors because we choose what colors to wear, because the gates reopen. the guards make notes about our bodies—if our averted eyes lock warmly with a prisoner's, if we laugh together—if this makes them feel like the alien ones. inside and outside, my life is with trans people, all the spin we're putting into this withering continuum. I want to be done with permissions. I want us all to be done.

Education

Think of your school experiences when you were growing up.

71. Did you complete your high school diploma or GED?

No Yes

72. What was your final grade completed in school?

73. What were your usual grades in high school?

A B C D E/F Did Not Attend

74. Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?

No Yes

getting ready is like preparing a ritual. the rocking motion in all things I thought stable. even the south, my gritless childhood, unaccented, kicking spit bottles in the high school parking lot. I thought I wasn't of it but I'm still carrying it around, the small town suspicion of what I might be. to go further down, so far south the culture explodes into sequins. I have to treat my whole life like a ritual. five drops of hawthorne, a gesture towards holding myself as I am— 2,700 miles and I still leave the house wondering what they'd think of me.

75. *Did you fail or repeat a grade level?*

- No Yes

76. *How often did you have conflicts with teachers at school?*

- Never Sometimes Often

77. *How many times did you skip classes while in school?*

- Never Sometimes Often

78. *How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following: I always behaved myself in school?*

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

79. *How often did you get in fights while at school?*

- Never Sometimes Often

I shed my skin—I mean it came off in flakes, and people witnessed this process. nothing about it was quick. I had to rub myself against brick corners to get one leg loose of myself. a lot of work for little difference—anyone craning to see what I'm becoming will continue to extend. there's no tether. fake skins over the real one, real ones over the fake one until I can't tell who's growing the mustache and who's letting down hair. I don't want this molting pinned up and described. I don't want a queer taxonomy. I say both of you, none of you, all of you.

ON INTERPRETATION

doing a little t and falling in and out and around, always on the road to an impossible nowhere. mapped by data, the long setup. particular bodies mean particular things, subject to the vague policy and its varied interpretations. the surfaces of the dialogue and its green-grey slime. I'll be a criminal forever.

Vocation (Work)

Please think of your past work experiences, job experiences, and financial situation

80. Do you have a job?

No Yes

81. Do you currently have a skill, trade or profession at which you usually find work?

No Yes

82. Can you verify your employer or school (if attending)?

No Yes

83. How much have you worked or been enrolled in school in the last 12 months?

12 Months Full-time 12 months Part-time 6+ Months Full-time 0 to 6 Months PT/FT

84. Have you ever been fired from a job?

No Yes

85. About how many times have you been fired from a job?

the prison grounds are beautiful in spring. I don't want to say it like that but the rain has caused everything to grow several inches in a matter of days and the dandelions are yellow and soft between the fences. inside the complex there is a high concrete wall and it is old, yellow and spotty. over the wall, the upper ends of things, the peaks of trees and hills. a large bird has made its nest on the flat top of a loudspeaker pole. I feel kind of peaceful about it, which is wrong. I feel a distant curiosity like an anthropologist studying a museum. the familiar ancient body of the institution, the old schools and hospitals. tan painted radiators, tan painted cinderblocks, little notices pinned up with new rules. it's the metamorphic history, the immense uneven pressure that ruins the romance, exposes the pastoral violence. if repair was possible, if it could undo this smothering peace—but logics live in control towers, which remix the past and project the future over the bodies below. to break the present open like a silo of bees, like a big jar of gravel, to break it open like a prison.

86. *Right now, do you feel you need more training in a new job or career skill?*

No Yes

87. *Right now, if you were to get (or have) a good job how would you rate your chance of being successful?*

Good Fair Poor

88. *How often do you have conflicts with friends/family over money?*

Often Sometimes Never

89. *How hard is it for you to find a job ABOVE minimum wage compared to others?*

Easier Same Harder Much Harder

I feel so little
issuing edicts
against the institutional wind
I cramp up and stay down
in its bald, constant stream
I sign my name and give
the last four digits
I initial that I understand
I confirm that I have
no weapons
or contraband
I take notes from the notices

*groups of two or more
incarcerated individuals
doing calisthenics
will be interpreted as
intimidating, threatening
and antagonizing*

I show my stamp to the guard
I show a mild disinterest

to use boredom as a weapon

the doors the stamps the badges the doors
the badges the doors

not here
to rebuff his small authority
to stir his cold coffee
to dust him off
in that dark control cube

I remove my body from the room
show the number badge I've traded for my ID
one state card for another

90. How often do you have barely enough money to get by?

Often Sometimes Never

91. Has anyone accused you of not paying child support?

No Yes

92. How often do you have trouble paying bills?

No Yes

93. Do you frequently get jobs that don't pay more than minimum wage?

No Yes

94. How often do you worry about financial survival?

No Yes

the closer I get the more I understand control. there is a spike in every little cake. look at it through the window, through the regular glass of the prison classroom. and then look again. the sleepless black dome, the CO's eye, the assistant superintendent's eye, the warden's eye, looking down at any scrutiny, any concern turned back upon them. I police myself with this little spike, I eat carefully around it. the cake is good. the cake is generous. the closer I get the more technical the dance becomes. the cake will resolve us. the cake will correct us. it's violent to work like this, to move according to the sentinel's rules. I sing for the dome in signatures and boundary lines and old supremacies to cover the scuffling of my mouth which is tired of sugar and goodness.

ON FRAMEWORKS

it's impossible. one thing expands beyond that frame into the next one, under the cracks of doors, under the breath. the framework must address death. this is a way into the dizzy process, attempting something that can't be done because of everything that has already happened, because of the static of dispossession, because of irreparable disjunction, because the violent past gives way to a violent present and there is no sense to be made from it, no answers or prizes.

Leisure/ Recreation

Thinking of your leisure time in the past few (3-6) months, how often did you have the following feelings?

95. How often did you feel bored?

- Never Several times/mo Several times/wk Daily

96. How often did you feel you have nothing to do in your spare time?

- Never Several times/mo Several times/wk Daily

97. How much do you agree or disagree with the following– you feel unhappy at times?

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

98. Do you feel discouraged at times?

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

a little snake on a throne
doubled over itself

made a little crown
of rope from the internet

survived the week
by tying many little knots

there's no escape from form
even foam has structure
even fire
even the perfect hydraulic
flowing off a lowhead dam
the hiccupless use
of pronouns
my fist turning before impact

I find myself walled on all sides
I have trouble controlling my venom

a little snake
wants a warm rock
to sun its vestigial claws
wants to thrive
in its tendency towards silence
or hiss itself
inside out

99. How much do you agree or disagree with the following— you are often restless and bored?
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

100. Do you often become bored with your usual activities?
 No Yes Unsure

101. Do you feel that the things you do are boring or dull?
 No Yes Unsure

102. Is it difficult for you to keep your mind on one thing for a long time?
 No Yes Unsure

we're doing *LEATHER* poppers in the finally-california rain. all the withered moss springs up on trees. we've brought in folding chairs to sit above the dust in this freshly-spackled interior and no one has phone service and we transmit this way—the little glass bottle, the warming and sinking, needing weight, needing to offer resistance. it feels juvenile but that's just the doubt I carry from career inquiries—we're out here because we're done with credentials and progress, which is waiting for laws to make us acceptable. I will take you seriously. my face can be your seat, it can be shrieking, growling, anything. part of the fantasy is having a fantasy of me projected onto me, that suggestive energy.

Social Isolation:

Think of your social situation with friends, family, and other people in the past few (3-6) months. Did you have many friends or were you more of a loner? How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

103. *"I have friends who help me when I have troubles."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

104. *"I feel lonely."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

105. *"I have friends who enjoy doing things with me."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

106. *"No one really knows me very well."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

107. *"I feel very close to some of my friends."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

even the pups are inside tonight, crowding the floor with their rubber tails, barking a little, drinking and watching. L orders a paloma and the bartender goes to ask another bartender, who asks L what's in it. everything here's a double—the drinks, the lovers, the meanings. snake pit, layered gaze, some of us dress in drag as the gender that was imposed on us, lipstick messy and too pink, mustaches penciled in. L wears cutoffs and white fishnets under her snow pants and the linedancing lead says *baby, it's cold outside!* from behind his mask with the floppy leather ears and loose tongue. I'm in leopard print, running on that reptilian glow. my hand speaks in slight gestures to pressure and turn other bodies, which shift and escape their forms in every moment.

108. *"I often feel left out of things."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

109. *"I can find companionship when I want."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

110. *"I have a best friend I can talk with about everything."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

111. *"I have never felt sad about things in my life."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

after weeks with a damaged wrist I grab their hair again, pull their head back, sweating in the bathroom corridor wet with snow melt. the weather has made us gentle and easy, the tension accumulating into soft crystals and panting and laughter, the door opening outward and pinning us against the side wall. there is nothing more practical than hitching your jeans up so you can get properly rubbed in public, nothing more satisfying than cracking the same egg twice, knowing the way it likes to be held for a moment over the hard edge before sending it down into its own ruin, forgetting the shape of containment.

Criminal Personality:

The next few statements are about what you are like as a person, what your thoughts are, and how other people see you. There are no 'right or wrong' answers. Just indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

112. *"I am seen by others as cold and unfeeling."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

113. *"I always practice what I preach."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

114. *"The trouble with getting close to people is that they start making demands on you."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

the women's prison is like a school with razor wire. there are healthy purple cabbages in the courtyard. there is a wooded park to the north and west. the corridor closes at both ends and we are isolated until a CO remotely unlocks the far door. we are being watched. it is someone's job to watch us, to listen to us when we think we're alone in the gravel space between gates. to visit more than three times in a year, one must be trained. one woman on the inside tells us the training is about how prisoners are evil and not to be trusted. a sign explains that the doors open one at a time *to maintain internal integrity*. there are many ways to say it.

115. *"I have the ability to "sweet talk" people to get what I want."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

116. *"I have played sick to get out of something."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

117. *"I'm really good at talking my way out of problems."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

we were late to the dyke march and couldn't find it so we asked some person among the pride booths and they said to ask a cop, that the cops were here to help us. at that moment the three of us took off our human suits and began to bark and bark and bark. we barked until the person fell backwards into a tower of alaska airlines rainbow coozies, barked until the parade of bicycle cops turned on each other and bashed their chain rings on each other's shins while chanting *MOVE BACK*, barked until a giant sign materialized in our arms that said *BO BROWN IS MY HERO*. our bodies twisted and we yipped until the cops' bodies turned into glitter glue and sealed off the streets, until the dyke march became an ICE occupation. and then we rose onto the abandoned cruisers and howled until the razor wire fell away from the prison fences and the cemetery gates and the ghosts met the living in a vicious shimmer.

118. *"I have gotten involved in things I later wished I could have gotten out of."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

119. *"I feel bad if I break a promise I have made to someone."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

120. *"To get ahead in life you must always put yourself first."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

some nights it all comes together—pause the glow's tyranny, shed the digital outfits. little collisions as we slip past our control tower, the frictionless feed. there are still spaces off the platform's grid, in back rooms & upstairs ballrooms, where the small rush comes from bodies in motion, from analog approaches, from the button-ups on my horizon. whoever isn't here—I no longer care what they think of me, rolling a somersault off one branch of the spendable night, done with the logics of pursuit. let it all fall into this pit of metronomes, this pit of hotdog stands, this pit of dirty plow-snow. let's drop from one to another, let's bend this limb into a long walk back.

Anger:

121. *"Some people see me as a violent person."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

122. *"I get into trouble because I do things without thinking."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

123. *"I almost never lose my temper."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

three women who worked in the library participated in the national strike that started on september 9. we held a noise demo by the fence near one of the units. prisoners flicked their lights and leaned out of windows until the COs shut them. I imagine the three women were in solitary at the time. people shot roman candles straight forward, hoping to singe the guards, hoping the women boxed up behind cinderblocks would hear the sizzle.

124. *"If people make me angry or lose my temper, I can be dangerous."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

125. *"I have never intensely disliked anyone."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

126. *"I have a short temper and can get angry quickly."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

we stapled prison strike posters on wooden poles along the road in either direction. if visitors saw them, maybe word could get to people inside. I worried that off-duty COs would drive by, that they would get out of their flag-bearing trucks and threaten us, that someone would care enough to confront us. nothing like that happened. the posters were flimsy so we collected election signs from corners and used them as backing on the narrow poles. then we moved on to the men's prison.

who closes this nasty bag on me

and how do I
snip the drawstring
how do I claw out
like an evil infant

remove me
from this desiccating bank account
toss me
off this pacific shipment of rinsed plastic
I'm withering in the community garden
put me with my dog
and put a blanket on us

I'm getting another degree
the pacific is getting another degree
the atlantic is getting another degree
the future has already happened

loop the heartbeat in its oceanic body

how dare one ocean
be different from another
be named
how dare the outside exist
how dare the energy transfer as heat
from one body to another
and the loss let off
like steam

Criminal Attitudes:

The next statements are about your feelings and beliefs about various things. Again, there are no 'right or wrong' answers. Just indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

127. *"A hungry person has a right to steal."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

128. *"When people get into trouble with the law it's because they have no chance to get a decent job."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

129. *"When people do minor offenses or use drugs they don't hurt anyone except themselves."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

130. *"If someone insults my friends, family or group they are asking for trouble."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

131. *"When things are stolen from rich people they won't miss the stuff because insurance will cover the loss."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

the butch who brings pears and too much string cheese left over from the women's march says why she hates the pussy hats—we know why—and says there should be tushie hats instead. I imagine these ass hats puckered and sunk in the middle, this effervescent butch snatching pink hats off white feminists and slinging tushie hats from her chair as she spins through the crowd and I also imagine Jenny Durkan being held down in an intersection and gagged with all the pussy hats while scary femmes in tushie hats pee on her and she does not enjoy it, and this is a little spell against the grand juries she wielded on my friends, a spell against the grand juries to come. tushie hats are against the police, against repression, against a cis world, against same-day delivery, and are best worn with a thicker, water-based lube.

132. *"I have felt very angry at someone or something."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

133. *"Some people must be treated roughly or beaten up just to send them a clear message."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

134. *"I won't hesitate to hit or threaten people if they have done something to hurt my friends or family."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

135. *"The law doesn't help average people."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

136. *"Many people get into trouble or use drugs because society has given them no education, jobs or future."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

137. *"Some people just don't deserve any respect and should be treated like animals."*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

an enclosure is a perimeter wall, a cage, like a ribcage over lungs, say it's for my own protection. say there is a natural way to be. there is something beyond the wall, one of my arms pinned under my body and one reaching to hold you at the place between your shoulder blades. a burrow or nest, or the structures some animals find, the pre-existing conditions of attics and the insides of walls. a squirrel lived above your bedroom ceiling until its entrance was sealed off—there is only property and the shifting lines on maps.

to be in the flower pot, the walls of the dirt-banked house, to be in the uphill crawlspace of the leaky basement and not notice the rusted-out pipe from the kitchen sink until I behold the sheen of rice slime on the black plastic sheeting, the slurry pond against the back corner. a body has escaped the pipeline for this larger container, the dark hill slick and white in the headlamp beam—it's me and the microbes, me and the landlords and our careful small-stepped dance around the slip, around the shrinking parameters of what I can afford if not this.

cover the nipples on the fridge in case it offends them. close the door to kiss in case it offends them. to want something outside of privacy, to smell everyone's armpits as proof of affinity. pink light of the cloud forest, bathe me in the wispy crown, dissociating, fog of my dissipating breath, caught in the camellias, a terrarium of new leaves.

to be in the dirt-banked house, chemicals sprayed on the carpet, a self-embrace to apply the gel along shoulder blades, how I escaped the pipeline for this larger container, it's me and you and the microbes, the headlamp beam, the dark hill, the slip, the kiss steaming off nipples, camellias. let me reach for what I can't afford, and what else could I be if not this, caught beyond the perimeter wall? the sheen of my body as proof, the shifting lines some animals find. from the forest pond we behold a black plastic terrarium.

ON SEPARATION

when and where is the world that anyone can live in? I pick up a scraggly nest of lichen on the side of the trail and press into its spongy response. this is a nature preserve and at the same time a people's ancestral land and it's the composite layers, the interwoven tendrils, the writing over, that make a beautiful thing so merciless. devastation has brought me here. it offers me someone else's time and space as things produced from behind a curtain—as though there are no cobalt mines back there, no container ships, no remotely-operated missiles, no forced treaties, no loaded questions, no rent hikes, no life sentences, no patrols, no predatory loans, no colonial maps, no prisoners, no sugar mills, no exported garbage, no extraction, no war on drugs, no airstrikes, no removals, no grand juries. the curtain's folds are inexhaustible. they will hide everything from the right angle. they will put a nature preserve in front, an ethical consumption, a sustainable business, a reform bill. it's a difference in marketing, in upstage scenery, while the curtain remains—to distract us and protect the conditions for devastation. I don't mean there is no joy. there is this sea-green clump of lichen, its symbiotic filaments, its mutual mesh. I mean it's simultaneous. if there is going to be a possibility for life there can be no separation.

III.

NAVIGATION

THESE SPACES WOULD BELONG TO THE DOMAIN OF THE INHUMAN.

Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*

IN the beginning of *History of Madness*, Michel Foucault talks about the zones of exclusion beyond the edges of 15th century European towns and cities—spaces occupied by criminals, people with leprosy, the poor, the mad. their inhuman bodies are made to serve as negatives in order to construct the positive self of the “normal” citizen. they exist in the social imaginary as problems to be solved or eliminated, bodies for generating profit. as I consider my body within this history, in all its positions, deviancy and compliancy, I turn to *History of Madness* as a guide and companion in this project. Foucault’s work has helped me situate my experiences and observations of confinement within the exhausting archive of things that brings us to where we are today: carrying manufactured norms into late capitalism, building on the historical trash heap and calling it solid ground. there are the stories that make it into history books, into the official records, and there are the deviant stories told in crowds, in cells, on walls, to oneself, to no one at all. my project is about the space where illegitimate bodies confront and disrupt the official stories, where they narrate their own forms and spaces.

where Foucault charts how zones of exclusion morphed into centers of confinement—the workhouse, the mental institution, the prison, the detention center—there seems to be a clear distinction of inside / outside, of physical walls. I say *seems* because I don’t think he believed in clear distinctions like that, having been institutionalized, having been gay, having lived with and died of AIDS. Foucault knew that there is no hard binary of caged / free. what else defines exclusion and confinement beyond the old and new institutional walls? the ankle monitor, the laws of gender and sexual conformity, the laws of white supremacy, the laws of ability, the language used to capture and categorize bodies. Foucault would say that it’s not about the physical walls, it’s about the internalized walls of reason, social acceptability in the service of capitalism, and how a society is built to maintain the positions of those in power. walls divide people, but walls do not build or maintain themselves, and division does not end with the end of walls.

I want to look more closely at how language and laws work to categorize and confine people, and how those processes are normalized and made invisible. in my own experience, I have felt this first as a girl and then as a non-binary person. in the language of transness as it exists in progressive mainstream dialogues, trans people are acceptable in society if they conform to the binary, if they uphold and display masculinity and femininity in the correct ways, flawlessly, without failure, which is impossible for anyone. transitioning, that passage from one side to the other, scheduled like an express train. but what if that passage doesn't have a destination? what if the conductor refuses to follow the schedules, to move forward? in an interruption of transit, in remaining on the threshold of the closing doors, gender nonconforming people become social threats. the laws of conformity and misogyny are collectively policed.

whiteness has a similar appearance-through-disturbance. I've grown to understand how whiteness is constructed, how it obscures itself on my body and on the spaces it occupies, how it means to build me through dispossession, through the simultaneous attention on and erasure of othered, racialized bodies. as the musty confines of the gender binary closed in on me in sharp, mundane, frustrating, disorienting, disheartening, and funny ways, and as its miniature enforcements began to appear everywhere as though new, I wondered what else I wasn't seeing, what else I hadn't personally been made to bear, what modes of violence I was participating in, however unintentionally.

◇ ◇ ◇

while it is important to puncture my own innertube, to not look past and escape the turbulence of my own interactions, it is also necessary to think about scale. to understand categories and confinement, I look to contemporary practices of data collection and prediction, especially at the junctures of policing and control. efficient policing relies on data collection, which changes with new technologies—written descriptions of people's bodies, the use of early cameras in mugshots, video cameras in security monitoring, personal email and social media accounts accessed via subpoena, cell phones unlocked for border agents, body heat sensors and facial recognition

technology in airports determining risk levels. Palantir, Peter Thiel's data analysis company, is also at this juncture of collection and control. Palantir engineers software used for predictive policing, among other things— it gathers data from traffic cameras, social media, criminal records, and so on to determine who is likely to be a criminal.¹ we have reached a point in data collection and analysis where nothing feels private anymore, where everything snitches and is part of the profile—down to a location dot, an emoji, a like. we all have a digital, accumulating archive that is being stored in data centers, ready to be processed and to provide evidence of our criminal tendencies. if this is not enough horror, look at it this way—someone else, someone in power, gets to define “criminal tendencies,” what a like or an emoji signifies, what you meant by that phrase, what your connections to certain people mean for you. I am not in control of my data. you are not in control of your data. it is part of the archive of potential evidence, the overlap of private and state interests in control. companies like Palantir are treated as though they can provide a neutral reflection of reality, a synthesized collection of information that reveals the criminal pattern. however, these programs are a reflection of the conditions and impacts of confinement and exclusion. they do not show who is likely to be a criminal, but the patterns and ways in which criminality is produced by the state and capitalism. they show the specific rules and logics that must be enforced in arbitrary ways on targeted bodies in order to ensure that prisons and detention centers stay filled.

in this project, I struggled to find a way to demonstrate how the rules and logics of data collection and state / institutional language function quietly to uphold violent systems. I needed a frame to help situate my poems, something that could speak for itself in the language of control. it is difficult to write poetry that doesn't slip off the edge of what needs to be said. and I didn't want to just write poems describing the violent thing, I wanted the violent thing to appear in the body it uses as its vehicle, the paper it uses to cut through human bodies.

¹ Maha Ahmed, “Aided by Palantir, the LAPD Uses Predictive Policing to Monitor Specific People and Neighborhoods,” The Intercept, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/11/predictive-policing-surveillance-los-angeles/>.

enter COMPAS questionnaire. COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) is a software tool that uses an algorithm to determine recidivism, or how likely a previously convicted person is to commit another crime. this prediction of criminality is expressed as a 1 to 10 score, which is meant to aid judges' decisions about release or sentencing. while there are many programs like this across the U.S., which have generally escaped scrutiny, I am particularly interested in COMPAS because it is privately-owned software, which means that the company, Northpointe, doesn't have to disclose what data it is using and how it is determining the risk assessment score. however, when investigative journalists with ProPublica did an extensive study on racial bias in COMPAS scores,² Northpointe released a sample of the 137-question form.³

when I read the questions, they begin to generate a picture of living conditions, class, social values, emotional responses, and more. the questions target specific populations that are already targeted by the state, and ask the respondent manipulative, reductive queries:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following—

You feel unhappy at times?

"I have felt very angry at someone or something."

"I have played sick to get out of something."

ProPublica's COMPAS study focused on the fact that the predictive scores were racially biased and not a reliable method of determining recidivism risk. this isn't what surprises me most. of course the scores were racially biased, as a reflection of racist structures and methods. that is at the bloodless white heart of the prison industrial complex. what I didn't expect was the nature of the questions like the ones listed above. how would I answer these questions if I were filling out this form? what is the correct response to show that I'm not trying to cheat the questionnaire by

² Julia Angwin et al, "Machine Bias," ProPublica, 2016, www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing.

³ "Sample COMPAS Risk Assessment," Northpointe, 2011, www.documentcloud.org/documents/2702103-Sample-Risk-Assessment-COMPAS-CORE.html.

pretending to be acceptably good, a model citizen? should I just answer it that way, or would my score be based on how honest I seemed? would I get a bad score if I say I've never been angry or played sick? I can't come up with a solid answer. this is also true for questions like: *Is it easy to get drugs in your neighborhood?* the questions are unanswerable in the space of the COMPAS questionnaire—I mean they only exist to destabilize, to undermine, to damn the person who must answer. I want to let the full document of the questionnaire speak for itself because I think it is one of the clearer demonstrations of the U.S. carceral system: largely privatized, hidden from scrutiny, and operating entirely by dispossession, even on the level of meaning.

I began to answer the questions myself, poems-as-answers. I wanted to break the logic of the form, which only allows respondents to answer in the terms of yes / no, or a flat range of strongly agree / agree / not sure / disagree / strongly disagree. it cuts out all nuance, all detail, all variation. it cuts out what living is. and I wanted to make this cutting out, this erasure, visible to those who would not see it otherwise, who do not have to fill out the form, whose lives have not been subject to categorization and control on this level. what would it mean for anyone, for everyone, to answer these questions, to be subject to the hidden rules of the COMPAS algorithm, and to feel the unnerving scrutiny through the system's two-way mirror? confinement and control work because they hide their violence behind walls and fences, under the isolation that repression creates, and also under paper and policy, the inaccessibility of bureaucracy and vague language. what would it mean to pull the questions out of the court, to put them into the context of my life, which has certainly been criminal, which has never been criminalized?

when I began to write these poems-as-answers, what emerged was my struggle with the confines of gender. I had been taking a low dose of testosterone for a few months. it was bringing up a lot of questions for me as a non-binary person. I've mostly felt like some kind of faggy freak and that's hard to sort out through presentation, even to other queer and trans folks, who often press gendered assumptions onto each others' bodies and desires. it's hard to break away. answering the questions became an exercise in visibility, a resistance to a different kind of erasure. I was able to narrate my

internal process along with the little external changes that were highly noticeable to me and somewhat apparent to others.⁴ I was able to contextualize my body and my politics, the little moments that shift my experience and perception, the details that contradict and complicate each other, that resist category and score. in some ways, the questions and the spaces between them were where I cut a hole into the world I was building with friends and lovers.

that's kind of it, world building—I don't want to renovate old forms, old institutions. I mean to use poetry to make something else entirely. my use of the COMPAS questionnaire is complicated. I need to show it in order to destabilize it, to disorient its confident navigation, to take it out of a position of power, of obscurity, to refuse to answer in a way that allows it to produce a score. does its presence feel destabilized? maybe that depends on the reader's relationship to the questions and to the exhaustive, exhausting processes of state violence / the law. maybe that depends on what kind of world they want to be building. the beautiful thing about world building is that there doesn't have to be one world, one form, one way of being. maybe any little attempts at tearing down the imperial logics of this world are part of a collective project that makes more worlds possible.



along with different worlds, there are different archives—Foucault's archives, and what UCLA professor Kelly Lytle Hernández calls a “rebel archive,” or the expressions and acts that survive state erasure and elimination:

Comprised mostly of broken locks, secret codes, handbills, scribbled manifestos, and songs, the rebel archive found refuge in far-flung boxes and obscure remnants. But it also thrives in plain sight. The rebels' words thundered in the halls of the U.S. Congress, their resistance forced the U.S. Supreme Court to issue emergency rulings, and their rebellions broke across bars and borders, changing the world in which we live. And in the summer of 1965, an uprising against the violence of human caging in the city exploded, burning the carceral core of Los Angeles to the ground but leaving an archive of ashes and embers behind.⁵

4 with the exception of the elementary schoolers I work with, who always ask about my mustache.

5 Kelly Lytle Hernández. *City of Inmates : Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 5.

if an archive can be made of state documents, it can also be made of embers. it can be poetry and whatever happens when poetry is not enough. I want to honor Lytle Hernández's coining of the rebel archive as a term that recognizes the state's inability to erase the voices of black, brown, indigenous and undocumented people. I also want to add to the rebel archives that exist where I am, that speak and hiss against legitimacy, the state, white supremacy, the gender binary, and all the bullshit that capitalism has bestowed upon us, differently and collectively. my additions are sometimes poems, and sometimes these poems are not enough. a rebel archive is an arsenal.

I keep asking myself what poems about queerness have to do with state & prison abolition, if it makes sense to include these poems where I am joyful or satisfied or in love between the COMPAS questions. then I remind myself that queer and trans people have been, and continue to be, targeted by the state. to be trans or queer, to live against the binary, and to be joyful about it, is a joy against the state. in the past six months, as I have started visiting prisons in western Washington and have been slowly building connections with queer and trans people on the inside, I've thought about how cultivating joy and resisting isolation are necessary elements in the work of abolishing prison. fear and isolation do a lot of work to keep people burnt out, miserable and hopeless. if my poems speak to someone else, if they begin a dialogue about gender, about joy, about fear, about prison, about how the COMPAS questions make them feel, about how dancing makes them feel, I believe that is part of an abolitionist framework. if isolation and confinement make this world unbearable, joy and collective resistance allow people to see the possibility of another world opening up—not in the future, but now. some of these poems are those little worlds.

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COMPAS and Northpointe are names that bring up images of orientation and navigation— a compass and its needle. when the COMPAS questionnaire is applied to a body, it turns that body to the state's disciplinary orientation. it scales and labels the body in order to interpret it. COMPAS

provides exact coordinates, a location between two shores. and like navigation, data collection and categorizing are about charting the unknown, eliminating uncertainty, and gaining control over new terrain. Foucault opens *History of Madness* with “Stultifera Navis,” the ship of fools, a symbolic and real representation of confinement and exclusion in the Renaissance that blurs the binaries of inside / outside and walls / logics:

Navigation brought man face to face with the uncertainty of destiny, where each is left to himself and every departure might always be the last. The madman on his crazy boat sets sail for the other world, and it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. This enforced navigation is both rigorous division and absolute Passage, serving to underline in real and imaginary terms the liminal situation of the mad in medieval society. It was a highly symbolic role, made clear by the mental geography involved, where the madman was confined at the gates of the cities. His exclusion was his confinement, and if he had no prison other than the threshold itself he was still detained at this place of passage. In a highly symbolic position he is placed on the inside of the outside, or vice versa. A posture that is still his today, if we admit that what was once the visible fortress of social order is now the castle of our own consciousness.⁶

the ship of fools has become a central image in this project because of its dizzying navigation through the spaces between, its journey that is always moving away from a port, a shore, a binary, always changing positions, always being in a position of uncertainty, of unreason. as a queer, as a non-binary person, as someone aligned with anti-state politics, I do not find the passage to be easy, but I embrace the fools who are on the ship with me, these wild and relentless gems who stay out too late, laugh too much, cry too much, who don't give a fuck, care too much, suffer too much, who show one titty, grow titties, cut their titties off, who show up, throw down, bark back, who love trash and flowers and softness and don't fear depth and don't have answers. ships have long been the containers for many projects of confinement, many passages—the middle passage, colonists' ships, prison ships, and now, in the U.S., as prisons, jails, detention centers, psychiatric institutions, the broad carceral fleet. to be on my own ship of fools, to be uncertain of what comes next, to support all mutinies, to be forever against reaching any shore where the state is waiting.

6 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 11.

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