
Heavy
Processing
T.L. Cowan &
Jas Rault
p.

HEAVY PROCESSING

Fig. 1. Detail from Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion

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Heavy Processing

T.L. Cowan &
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TFQ: A Note on Terminology

Throughout this book we use the conjunction "Trans- Feminist and Queer" (TFQ). The dash and the space after it are intentional, indicating that each term puts pressure on, modifies, and is in critical combination with each other term. Trans- feminist and queer names formations of feminism and queerness that centre trans lives and analyses; transness that is inseparable from queer and feminist lives and analyses; queerness engaged with (and learning from) trans and feminist lives and analyses. TFQ scenes prioritize trans people, liberation, and cultures; are shaped by feminist anti-oppression analyses of power; are steeped in queer sexual politics; and celebrate the revolutionary and sometimes difficult connectedness of these ways of understanding and world-building. Within the context of increasingly militarized and transnationally networked hetero-colonial white supremacy, TFQ lives and ways-of-living are perpetually under siege, and often criminalized, especially those who are negatively racialized, poor, disabled, Indigenous, migrant, and refugee. We have developed and adopted TFQ as a framework that reflects our situatedness and commitments within our research communities, which also tend to be our social, artistic, and activist communities. For us, TFQ is never stable and does not come easy — the pressures on, within, and between these terms and ways of being and becoming are volatile, sometimes vicious, and always transforming. Indeed, TFQ is a vital site and an aspirational product of heavy processing. TFQ names and points to the coalitional, overlapping, and intersecting ways of making

livable lives in an often phobic and divisive world. Usually, TFQ scenes are small local and translocal worlds, under-resourced and (by necessity) over-skilled, process-oriented, and both intimate and public. These scenes are often motivated to manifest desire for social and political transformation through protests, posters, parties, picnics, performances, and processing. The TFQ worlds we are galvanized by are anti-colonial experiments towards accomplice-ship,[1] Indigenous and decolonial return,[2] and actively invested in liberation struggles on the bases of race, class, citizenship, disability, gender, and sex. In our framing of TFQ, we resist utopianism, though we thrill on its horizons, and we move back and forth between the paranoid and the reparative, the optimistic and the apocalyptic.[3] During our multiple

1 See Rudy, "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex," *Indigenous Action,* May 4, 2014, https://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/. In particular: "An accomplice as academic would seek ways to leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with, not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer."

2 We have Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's essay, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," on our minds when we gesture to Indigeneity and returns: "Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks." Land and resource theft is central to ongoing settler colonialism, and in this context, decolonization means "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life." Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 3, 21.

3 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–52; Patricia Stuelke, *The Ruse of Repair: US Neoliberal Empire and the Turn from Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021); Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); T.L. Cowan, "Transfeminist Kill/Joys: Rage, Love, and Reparative Performance," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (2014): 501–16; and Jasmine Rault, "'Ridiculizing' Power: Relajo and the Affects of Queer Activism in Mexico," *The Scholar & Feminist Online* 14, no. 2 (2017), https://sfonline.barnard.edu/ridiculizing-power-relajo-and-the-affects-of-queer-activism-in-mexico/.

decades in TFQ worlds, we also know that we (in these worlds) often do harm to each other, even or especially when we try to repair harm. But we are driven by the pleasure of the risk to responsibility, accountability, consent, and the messy, heavy process of trying to have fun — fun lives, research questions and projects, shows and performances, boundaries and exercises of sovereignty and autonomy, and always more.

For our Nan.

Heavy Processing: Needing IT[1] (more than a feeling)

This book is a prequel to the book we thought we were going to write. It started in the late 2000s and early 2010s as a jumble of feelings that fomented while we sat through digital methods workshops in digital humanities (DH), internet studies and information studies conferences, and classrooms. We went to these workshops looking for answers about how to make the research project of our dreams. We were young. We were ambitious. We were in love. We wanted to do a huge research project

1 "NEEDING IT: Solo Performance in Queer Community" was a workshop originally developed in 2012 by Dan Fishback, at BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange, as a project of the Helix Queer Performance Network, which Fishback founded and ran until it ended, in 2020. Facilitated first by Fishback, and then by Heather Maria Acs, NEEDING IT trained students in various forms of performance composition, while also introducing them to the history of queer performance in NYC, with the goal of bridging various generational gaps in the queer performance landscape. Helix, the umbrella organization that housed NEEDING IT, was a collaboration between La MaMa Experimental Theater, BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange, and the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at NYU. We use "NEEDING IT" here to extend the "IT" that we need to "Information Technologies," as well as to "Intimate Technologies." See The Helix Queer Performance Network, https://helixqpn.tumblr.com/.

building a mega-database of every trans- feminist and queer (TFQ)[2] cabaret[3] in Canada, in North America, in THE WORLD from 1991 onwards. No! From 1981 onwards. No! From FOREVER. Then we wanted to do the world's best version of Alice Pieszecki's *The Chart* (from *The L Word*),[4] but instead of who had slept with whom, our chart would be about who had performed with whom.[5] And *then* we also wanted people who had been in the audiences of these shows to sign onto our Chart, identifying themselves as audience members, so we would also chart which TFQ'ers were in the same place, at the same time, watching the same performances. And then we were going to gleefully link videos and images and everything else we could get our hands on, building an online universe (and ready-made surveillance package) on the backs of the mostly offline universes of TFQ local, grassroots performance and party cultures. We wanted to make an online research environment that would share and show TFQ cabarets as connective network technolo-

2 See our "TFQ: A Note on Terminology," which precedes this Introduction.

3 The cabaret is a lively, sometimes raunchy, politically attuned, satirical variety show central to many TFQ scenes around the world, where performers of spoken word, drag, agit-prop theater, stand-up comedy, music, dance, burlesque, and many other theatrical forms share a stage and an audience. Each performance is usually around three to five minutes and there are usually five to fifteen acts in a cabaret, which is often hosted by an emcee who comes on stage between acts to draw the show together, often taking place in a bar and followed by some kind of party. For a quick primer on TFQ cabaret performance, see T.L. Cowan, "Cabaret," *Cabaret Commons,* August 8, 2018, https://cabaretcommons.org/critical-practice/cabaret.

4 See "The Chart," *The L Word Wiki,* https://the-l-word.fandom.com/wiki/The_Chart.

5 Jen Jack Gieseking notes that, "[*t*]*he L Word's* Alice kept a massive, up-to-date diagram of the sex and relationship networks between Los Angeles lesbians that featured prominently on the show, which she launched into a radio show/podcast named 'Our Chart.' (Notably, corporate attempts to monetize larger lesbian social networks on a lesbian blog of the same name failed within two years — even though the new *L Word* exists in a world where Alice's show has become repurposed into a TV talk show sensation.)" Jen Jack Gieseking, A *Queer New York: Geographies of Lesbians, Dykes, and Queers* (New York: NYU Press, 2020), 18.

gies that are also scenes of radical pedagogy, which, at their best, serve as occasions where we learn from each other, and make friends across experiences of difference. In our hubris, we imagined a website that (by geolocating, imaging, and connecting TFQ people across locales) would put an end to white supremacy, racism, settler colonialism, homophobia, lesbophobia, ableism, transmisogyny and transphobia, sex negativity, fatphobia, sex worker exclusion, and poverty-shaming. This was our great plan.

Queer, white, young, and ambitiously naïve, we signed ourselves up for digital methods workshops to turn the dream of our chart into reality. In these early years of our collaboration, we were taught (it would be dishonest to say that we "learned") all kinds of tools to scrape, collect, organize, clean, and visualize data. Why did we fail at tools? Were we combative learners? Perhaps. We had a lot of competing feelings and — blame our training in women's, gender, and sexuality studies — knew we had something to learn from them. On the one hand, we felt a fundamental suspicion of, and resistance to, the methodological premises of innocence, speed, and data neutrality undergirding these tools and the workshops on how to use them. On the other hand, we felt our ambition to create the world's best TFQ online research site, with these tools at our fingertips. Throughout every workshop the same two sources of uneasiness returned. First, since when are tools methods? Since when do critical humanities (and social science) scholars adopt tools uncritically? There is something exciting about using fast and fancy tools, like working in a TV show version of a science lab, especially for those of us trained in the deep humanities — in the durational methods and ethics of long reading, reading again, reading more closely this time, contextualizing, researching around a text for its conditions of production, reception, possible resonances with other cultural and political phenomena, returning to the text(s) to ask more and better questions, to make more and better possible meanings.

Fictional scientists in popular culture might be beguiled by and trusting of new tools, but outside of the labs on TV, scientific researchers have a long record of critical engagement with their tools that those of us in and around the edges of DH, digital cultural studies, data studies, and information studies might learn from. For example, Science and Technology Studies (STS) has left no tool unturned, well before (but at least since) Karen Barad's deep dive into the matter of matter in quantum physics,[6] where she shows that physics (and related sciences of ontology) has been grappling with the troubling reality that the fact of "reality" — or the materiality of real things — depends on the tools used to find and measure it. What becomes knowable as real — from light to water, cellular composition to DNA — is an assemblage of the phenomena, or matter, and the apparati (the tools, machines, measuring devices, mathematical theories, conceptual frameworks) through which that real is apprehended. The matter itself changes according to the apparatus used to study it. These apparati or tools are central to the constitution of any "agential matter"[7] that we might find. When researchers are simply trained in using one or another tool to find, collect, organize, clean, analyze, and visualize phenomena, as though those tools have no effect on those phenomena — as though those phenomena are something like "raw data" that these tools will interpret[8] and researchers will simply "write up" — our TFQ interpretive apparati implode.

6 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

7 Ibid., 246.

8 Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson implore us to "[t]hink of the ways people talk and write about data. Data are familiarly 'collected,' 'entered,' 'compiled,' 'stored,' 'processed,' 'mined,' and 'interpreted.' Less obvious are the ways in which the final term in this sequence — interpretation — haunts its predecessors. At a certain level the collection and management of data may be said to presuppose interpretation. […] Data need to be imagined as data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base." Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson, "Introduction,"

This implosion speaks to the second source of our uneasiness: a growing awareness that our project itself needed an attitude (and ambition) adjustment. The data we wanted to put online came from people, in particular contexts, and both those people and contexts would be significantly affected by the digital apparati we were training to use. As we discussed this project with performers, archivists, and audience members of the scenes we thought we were going to "chart," and learned from emerging TFQ research,[9] we quickly realized (and this realization has been the only fast part of the project) that scraping people's names, images, and performance details from long-since forgotten shows, programs, posters, newsletters and event listings, and then publishing them online, would not be met with the universally celebratory reception we first imagined. Many of the people we talked to expressed serious concerns about having their participation in these scenes charted online, even though these details had previously been made public through various, mostly promotional, media. These included concerns by artists whose time in these scenes had been under different names, genders, sexes, or embodiments which our proposed project threatened to crash into their current lives. Also, there are many people previously involved in TFQ scenes who are no longer involved, or for whom some of these shows or encounters are not fond memories, but, rather, sites of harm. Using data collection, digitization, and visualization tools to chart these people, performances, and scenes in an online setting — or what

in Lisa Gitelman, ed., *"Raw Data" Is an Oxymoron* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 3.

9 At that time this research was coming mostly from graduate students or early career researchers like ourselves, especially the work of #TransformDH, and a particularly memorable encounter at the HASTAC conference in Lima, Peru (2014). See Moya Bailey, Anne Cong-Huyen, Alexis Lothian, and Amanda Phillips, "Reflections on a Movement: #TransformDH, Growing Up," *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 71–79, and Alexis Lothian, "From Transformative Works To #TransformDH: Digital Humanities as (Critical) Fandom," *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2018): 371–93.

we call the process of "onlining" — poses a serious likelihood of reproducing harm and creating new harm.[10] In short, we experienced Chart Crash. Our TFQ operating systems[11] refused to do the charting work that was technically possible, but critically troubling.

What continually strikes us about tools-centric digital methods is that the starting place is too far along in the research process or, worse, that the tools replace critical research methods altogether. Where is the reciprocal learning imperative, whereby scholars skilled in the creation and use of digital research tools are expected to take workshops in critical race, anti-colonial, crip, and TFQ research methods and information technologies? Why were we learning, from so many funding programs and institutional rewards, that the most valuable scholarship involves using these tools to create online research outputs — whether your research is about the internet or not? It felt like academic culture had moved way too fast to incentivize the building of online research environments[12] and making the internet the site for research, without *first* incentivizing training in rigorous critical methods — from anti-colonial, Black, Indigenous, critical race, TFQ, and crip studies — needed to undertake this work.[13]

10 T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "Onlining Queer Acts: Digital Research Ethics and Caring for Risky Archives," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (2018): 121–42.

11 We're gesturing to Kara Keeling's "Queer OS" here, which we take up more fully in Chapter One, "Lesbian Processing." Kara Keeling, "Queer OS," *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 2 (2014): 152–57.

12 With "online research environments" we are thinking with Michelle Moravec's powerhouse essay, "Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives." Moravec orients her research to "digital archival environments [including] both born digital and digitised analogue materials." We shift this slightly towards "online" because not all digital or digitized materials live online, and we are thinking explicitly about making materials accessible via the internet. Furthermore, the research environments we think about are not necessarily archival. Michelle Moravec, "Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives," *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, nos. 91–92 (2017): 187.

13 André Brock offers some of the critical methods we need with Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA): "CTDA requires the incorpo-

As we were researching ways to build/not build our "Chart" (which we ultimately called the Cabaret Commons[14]), we found ourselves perpetually at odds with the premise of these workshops, and at odds with our own motivations for digital research. What about the processes for accountable research that come well before this tool gets put into action? Rather than command lines and shortcuts for how to use a tool, what about critical methods to assess a tool, why and how we might use it, and what the consequences of its use might be? TFQ and minoritized researchers and research materials demand better. We need methods that can help us to collaboratively address and assess not only how, but also why, researchers get and organize their data; how our apparati shape what we recognize as data in the first place; and how we exercise accountability to the people, places, and agential matters that constitute that data. When we hear data, all we want are stories. That is, every datum that a researcher collects is and has a story, is embedded in a web of relationships that gives it meaning, and when we pick it up, we become part of that web, part of that meaning-making context of relationships. Researchers need to account for our relationships with our research materials, as well as the relationships within which those materials matter. These are the information technologies (IT) that we need. And these information technologies, as well as their associated methodological and ethical frameworks, come from many, sometimes overlapping and sometimes incommensurate, scholarly, artistic, and activist sources and genealogies. *Heavy Processing* offers one such framework, and one IT that we need.

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ration of critical theory — critical race, feminism, queer theory, and so on — to incorporate the epistemological standpoint of underserved ICT users so as to avoid deficit-based models of underrepresented populations' technology use." André Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 3 (2018): 1012, and André Brock, *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures* (New York: NYU Press, 2020).

14 We write extensively about the Cabaret Commons in Chapter 4.

Ultimately, this is not a book about the problems with workshops or tools, DH, or data studies. It is a book about the tangled TFQ cultural, scholarly, and artistic practices of heavy processing that resonate (and clash) with other process-heavy methods, which ground the digital research we keep learning from, and that we want to see more of in the world. In Chapter One, "Lesbian Processing," we focus on the ways that heavy processing has characterized lesbian-leaning TFQ culture. We trace a cultural history to propose that heavy processing is an information technology developed and claimed by lesbians, but needed by all. In Chapter Two, "Central Processing Units: Trans- Feminist and Queer Manifestos," we consider TFQ manifestos as Central Processing Units, through which we challenge each other, build our movements and our intellectual, social, artistic, and community practices, and transform critical analyses and action. In Chapter Three, "Risking IT," we suggest that heavy processing offers information technologies to counter normalized research habits of extraction and dispossession, wherein researchers take materials and knowledges from the communities with whom they work and authorize them for the primary benefit of the researchers and their institutions. We consider the risks that researchers take in adopting these habits, and we propose heavy processing and process-heavy methods as differently risky and rigorous research habits. In chapter 4, "Networked Intimate Publics (NIPS)," we describe the networks of intimate accountability that operate as heavy processing units: inward-facing publics wherein we practice and also prepare ourselves and our work for the outward-facing public. NIPS, we contend, are the information infrastructures within which heavy processing methods operate. These are durational collective inquiry practices and projects that precede and make possible TFQ scholarly, artistic, and activist work.

We write about heavy processing as an intimate information technology by which researchers risk exposure, making themselves vulnerable to the agency (refusals and transformations) of their research materials and participants and to the rewards and punishments of university regimes of academic renewal and

advancement procedures. Like any method, heavy processing can be used for good and evil. But we hope to point to what TFQ heavy processing can bring to the ongoing futures of digital and other contemporary research practices, including the pleasure, sociality, and trust in never-ending relationship-building that is always already desiring, feminized, queered.

We hope that this book will speak to research communities — students at all levels, faculty, information professionals, and the people and communities who are being, or have been, studied — and initiate or continue a conversation we can have across disciplines. In particular, we want to rethink the disciplining of internet studies, digital cultural studies, data studies, and digital humanities. Throughout the book we identify and discuss some of the process-heavy experiments that we have been part of, and that have most informed our ways of working. We hope that readers might recognize some of their own ways of working in these pages and feel supported in their insistence on refusing to take the easy, quick, and clean way through a research project in the name of efficiency or productivity. This is for people who take the difficult, careful, and dirty way through.

One might ask (and many have): "Why does everything need to be critical? Some things are just technical, just skills-based." Our answer is simply that process-heavy critical accountability is a set of skills that need to be learned and need to come first, before the beginning of any program of research. We offer *Heavy Processing* as a way backward and forward.

CHAPTER 1

Lesbian Processing

> How about the dreaded "lesbian processing" — seemingly unending conversations in which the couple overthinks, overanalyzes, and overdiscusses the relationship well past the point of usefulness?
>
> — Karen Frost, "Processing Is Real"[1]

> Another oft-recited stereotype is that lesbians are known to process everything to death. Q: How many lesbians does it take to screw in a lightbulb? A: I don't know. Should we use LEDS? What wattage? Are these recyclable? Maybe this is a sign we should be lowering our carbon footprint. Let's make a pro and con list of solar panel options and revisit this next year.
>
> — Anna Pulley, "Bed Death, U-Hauling, Processing"[2]

1 Karen Frost, "Processing Is Real: The Truth Behind Lesbian Relationship Stereotypes," *AfterEllen,* November 12, 2018, https://afterellen.com/lifestyle/503117-processing-real-truth-behind-lesbian-relationship-stereotypes.

2 Anna Pulley, "Bed Death, U-Hauling, Processing: Lesbian Stereotypes Abound — Here's the Story on 7 of Them," *Salon,* December 29, 2015, https://www.salon.com/2015/12/28/lesbians_2_partner/.

> Need to process? Sweet. Let's do it for two weeks straight without interruptions. Our tolerance for trauma is *way* up there. We can take it. Lay it on me.
>
> — Jill Gutowitz, "Quarantine Pro Tip"[3]

Over the past several years we have been practicing and theorizing a collaborative method of working with digital materials that, at first, we characterized as "process-heavy"[4] or "micro-processing"[5] — where process *is* product. Process generates knowledge and it allows us to understand our own place within and beyond the research we are doing. Process is a form of experimentation, a method, a way of learning, of gathering and sharing information, of knowing. In research presentations, we've been jokingly calling this the lesbian method of "heavy processing." This is usually good for an insider chuckle or two — the queers in the room might pay a little more attention, might see that we're talking to and about them. Recently, we've been taking our own joke seriously. We have come to think of heavy processing as a desiring, pleasurable, and hard-working set of attachments and sensibilities to relationship-based, complex knowledge formation — a kind of socio-political-aesthetic-epistemological heavy petting + heavy lifting, if you will — and reflecting on the ways that this method is in/formed by a long history of trans- feminist and queer (TFQ)[6] practices and information technologies. Of course, lesbians do not *own* processing, or process-based approaches to knowledge formation, transfer,

3 Jill Gutowitz, "Quarantine Pro Tip: Get Yourself a Lesbian," *Bustle,* March 18, 2020, https://www.bustle.com/p/quarantine-pro-tip-get-yourself-a-lesbian-22631944.

4 T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "Onlining Queer Acts: Digital Research Ethics and Caring for Risky Archives," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (2018): 121–42.

5 T.L. Cowan and Jas Rault, "Process Posts: An Introduction," *Cabaret Commons,* https://cabaretcommons.org/critical-practice/introduction-process.

6 See "TFQ: A Note on Terminology," at the start of this volume.

and cultural survivance,[7] to data,[8] ethics,[9] and ontology.[10] But we want to stay with the possibilities here for understanding process as a sexy, sometimes agonized, always committed method: an orientation towards unruly information. This is processing not only to get consent, to communicate care, to clean your data, to publish your findings or move to the next agenda item in the meeting, but as an orientation to the pleasure (sexual, emotional, political, intellectual) of complex and sometimes incommensurate information.

Heavy processing is also at the heart of so many colonial extraction economies, such as mining and refining petrochemicals from and on stolen Indigenous lands, poisoning lifeways for decades past and future, as well as of transnational agricultural economies, such as patenting and monopolizing seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, and so on, to create monocrops that can

7 See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* 3rd edn. (London: Zed Books, 2021), and Jennifer Wemigwans, *A Digital Bundle: Protecting and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge Online* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2018).

8 See Kate Crawford, Mary L. Gray, and Kate Miltner, "Critiquing Big Data: Politics, Ethics, Epistemology," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 1663–72; Cornelius Puschmann and Jean Burgess, "Metaphors of Big Data," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 1690–709; and Femke Mulder et al., "Questioning Big Data: Crowdsourcing Crisis Data towards an Inclusive Humanitarian Response," *Big Data & Society* 3, no. 2 (2016): 1–13.

9 See aline shakti franzke et al., "Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0," *Association of Internet Researchers,* 2020, https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf, and Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0)," *Association of Internet Researchers,* 2012, https://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf.

10 See Deboleena Roy, *Molecular Feminisms: Biology, Becomings, and Life in the Lab* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, nos. 7–8 (2006): 197–208; and Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

be heavily processed into cheap sugars and oils for low-nutrient foods. However, in the same way that lesbians do not own processing, neither do multinational corporations. Here, we chart our way through some of the cultural histories of heavy processing that can get buried by these pressing toxic projects, to consider its queerly life-building rather than life-destroying potentiality, while realizing that sometimes processing itself, while attempting to work through toxicity, can just make things worse.

We've probably all heard, or told, a few lesbian processing jokes, or referred to lesbian processing as a joke, as something synonymous with futile over-working, as painful, redundant, and, most of all, inefficient (see lesbian lightbulb joke above). Of course, to paraphrase another contentious truism, scratch a lesbian-processing-joke and find a misogynist.[11] That is, we probably also all recognize the seething anti-femininity in the tendency to pathologize processing as *too much:* as *over*-thinking, *over*-sensitive, *over*-analyzing, *overly*-politically correct, and *over*-discussing. Whether it's being done by lesbians or not, the worry about being seen to "process" or to engage in "processing" seems to be a worry about being thought to be either a lesbian, a feminist, a girl, a woman, a queer, a pussy, a faggot, an activist, a therapist, someone who is in therapy, a bore, a time-waster. This is true even, and perhaps especially,

11 The shorthand "scratch a gay" is a phrase (spoken under one's breath, while rolling one's eyes) we both learned in lesbian and feminist circles in the 1990s. The complete phrase, "scratch a gay, find a misogynist," refers to the common experience of being around gay men who hate, or regularly make non-loving bitchy comments about, women or femininity, including dykes and lesbians of all genders, feminine gay men, drag queens, and trans women. For example, "scratch a gay" might be heard during encounters with the "Gaytriarchy": gay men who are invested in reproducing patriarchy, but with gay men on top. This is keenly felt in LGBTQ+ organizations (including and perhaps especially endowed university organizations, institutes, and centers) in which gay men use their disproportionate economic power to reproduce the histories, interests, and values of white (gay) men who have not done the work of unlearning their own racism, sexism, and wealth biases.

within LGBTQ+ worlds. "Stop being such a lesbian" is an insider insult that is primarily about being such a *processor:* demanding more information, and wanting to give more information. That is, to be seen to process — to require more or too much information — is to be seen to be weak, vulnerable, and inefficient, overly concerned with what is equitable, overly considerate in relationships, overly sensitive, overly concerned with fairness, with respect, with not hurting each other's feelings, apologizing if you do, being accountable for your actions, and learning from mistakes. To be concerned with process usually means gaining a reputation for being a humorless pain in the ass, who just wants to talk about how everyone is *feeling,* who is difficult to work with and takes everything too seriously.

Lesbians hurt each other and others, but still, lesbian processing has a reputation for a reason. As Lisa Henderson writes in her essay about the 1994 lesbian romantic comedy *Go Fish,* the film — following the lives of "a foibled and venturesome group of lesbians"[12] — thematizes "conflict as a producer of clarity and even good faith along with its agonies (in contrast to the faux alliances and limited comfort which often emerge from effaced or evaded conflict) [with] the power of conjoining humour at one's own expense and the rare joy of lesbian address."[13] Our heavy processing joke lands as a joke/not-joke when folks in the audience share the experience of processing conflict as an agonized, yet strangely pleasurable and hilariously dogged group commitment within what Henderson calls the "lively cultural universe"[14] of lesbian existences, a universe which is nonetheless still inconsequential to most people who are not in it.

Those who are not in it may not have noticed the spate of cleverly written articles published during the first wave of the COVID-19 stay-at-home/shelter-in-place protocols in Canada and the United States, quipping either that lesbians were par-

12 Lisa Henderson, "Simple Pleasures: Lesbian Community and 'Go Fish,'" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (1999): 37–64.

13 Ibid., 62.

14 Ibid., 54.

ticularly adept at and were finding pleasure in these protocols, or that these protocols were turning everyone into lesbians. In one, entitled "Quarantine Pro Tip: Get Yourself a Lesbian," Jill Gutowitz lists the lockdown skills the lesbian has to offer, including, of course, processing: "Need to process? Sweet. Let's do it for two weeks straight without interruptions. Our tolerance for trauma is *way* up there. We can take it. Lay it on me."[15] The article, published in *Bustle,* features an image from Mae Martin's Netflix series, *Feel Good,* with two white lesbians snuggling in a bed surrounded by strings of lights (Lesbian Interiors 101), one of them awake, tormented by all the feelings. In addition to processing, which Gutowitz files under "Emotional Support," the article also claims that lesbians are great at Hoarding, Giving You Books, MacGyvering, and Sex Toys. Like all humor that leans into lesbian clichés, the joke is really that only a pandemic could make being good at lesbian things attractive to the bored and angsty house-bound heterosexual.[16] It's almost as if the pandemic forced everyone to suddenly appreciate the lesbian skillset for attending to the traumas of rapacious patriarchal capitalism.[17]

Processing is not just a couples thing, nor just a pandemic thing. While cybernetic and computational logics and rhetorics have been adopted by every scholarly field from biology to literary studies, physics to political theory,[18] it feels like the right time

15 Gutowitz, "Quarantine Pro Tip."

16 See Daisy Jones. "Sorry, Straight People: Lockdown Culture is Just Lesbian Culture," *Vice,* April 30, 2020, https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/4agkdw/sorry-straight-people-lockdown-culture-is-just-lesbian-culture.

17 We responded to this lesbians-in-the-COVID-news trend (thank you Zab Hobart) with a series of domestic portraits for an exhibit entitled "Fancy Fridays." See T.L. Cowan and Jas Rault, "Fancy Fridays," 2022, *Cabaret Commons,* https://cabaretcommons.org/exhibition-place/fancy-fridays/.

18 See Evelyn Fox Keller, *Refiguring Life: Metaphors of Twentieth-Century Biology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Lily E. Kay, *Who Wrote the Book of Life? A History of the Genetic Code* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

for some distinctly anti-cybernetic lesbian information technologies to be brought to bear on digital cultural studies. Heavy processing is at once software and hardware,[19] motherboard and operating system — an information processing system that took root in 1960s and 1970s lesbian feminist consciousness-raising, offering a method of information processing that steadfastly refused (or ignored) the prevailing logics of the computational information era with which it is historically coterminous. Our interest here is to attend to heavy processing as a lesbian-leaning TFQ method of being together (not always done well) and to identify this as one genealogy for the many calls for better processing, for better information politics in contemporary justice-oriented digital research methods.

Surprisingly (to us), it seems that very little has been written about lesbian processing. Ann Cvetkovich has mentioned it in the context of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF, also known as "MichFest" or just "Michigan"), where she observes that "lesbian processing is often viewed derisively, not least by dykes themselves."[20] Cvetkovich presciently notes that even though lesbian processing aims to create transformation through conflict and controversy, it can "end up domesticating controversy in the process of welcoming it."[21] While she turns her attention to another controversy at MichFest, Cvetkovich does not mention the conflict that MichFest is most notorious for, and which is perhaps the most protracted public example

2005); and Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason since 1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

19 For a thorough unpacking of the techno-cultural history and contemporary life of this software/hardware divide, see Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

20 Ann Cvetkovich, "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory: Incest, Lesbianism and Therapeutic Culture," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 4 (1995): 354. A revised version of this article was included as a chapter entitled "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory: Incest, Lesbianism and Therapeutic Culture" in Cvetkovich's game-changing book, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

21 Cvetkovich "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory" (1995), 354.

of a failure of lesbian processing: the festival organizers' painful insistence on excluding trans women, maintaining (in a mind-crushing misreading of Simone de Beauvoir) its "womyn-born womyn" policy, despite the epic efforts of trans-feminists from at least 1992–2015[22] to reform this policy. Even after 23 years of processing the conflict, organizers chose to shut down rather than transform.[23]

MichFest was founded by Lisa Vogel, her sister Kristie Vogel, and friend Mary Kindig in 1976 and it ran annually for 40 years. There is nothing we can say about this festival that does not feel reductive to us. For example, it was a weeklong music festival that prioritized building and sustaining culture by and for women. At some point the festival leaders decided to implement a "womyn-born-womyn" policy that tacitly and explicitly (and painfully) excluded trans women especially, but also called into question the belonging of transmen and non-binary people. Each year, hundreds (and over the years, thousands) of people who identified (sometimes strategically) in some way as "womyn" worked to create, build, and staff the festival, spending many weeks (or months) on "The Land" before and after the event itself. MichFest was and is a cultural signifier for anti-racist queer lesbian feminist utopianism; but it has also come to stand in for the painful emergence and calcification of anti-trans, essentialist lesbian feminist politics. For some, MichFest was the space and time they learned about loving trans people, or becoming trans people; for some, it was the space and time they painfully learned about how lesbian and feminist cultural politics might be used to justify fearing, hating, and excluding

22 For background on some of this trans-feminist activism, see the archive of the journal *TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism* at the Digital Transgender Archive, https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/col/8910jt68c.

23 For more on this history, see Genny Beemyn and Mickey Eliason, "The Intersections of Trans Women and Lesbian Identities, Communities, and Movements," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 1–7, and Elizabeth Currans, "Transgender Women Belong Here: Contested Feminist Visions at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival," *Feminist Studies* 46, no. 2 (2020): 459–88.

trans people. The festival was a lot of big transformative things for a lot of people, and we will not be able to account for even a fraction of those things.

Perhaps due to the fact that it was organized in the United States, or because it ran for an epic 40 years, or because so many people went, worked, or performed there and then brought ideas and stories home with them, MichFest has had an outsized influence on lesbian, feminist, and trans cultural politics and feelings. As Elizabeth Currans puts it:

> MichFest occupies a central position in narratives about twentieth- and twenty-first-century feminist views of transgender women and is therefore a crucial site about which to develop nuanced discussions. Many people tell stories about MichFest. Some of these are based in personal experience, but many are not. Whether or not someone attended MichFest is supposed to reveal something about them—whether or not they support transgender people, whether or not they support women's spaces, and whether or not they are part of a specific feminist subculture.[24]

Even if you were not a regular festival participant (and neither of us were), or were iced out by the festival's womyn-born-womyn intention (which we both felt, in solidarity with trans women), if you were active in trans, queer, lesbian, and feminist scenes between the 1990s and until well beyond the last year of the festival in 2015 (as we both were) it is likely that you have some strong feelings about it (as we both do).

Over the course of writing and revising this chapter, we struggled with how to write about MichFest. Initially, we merely gestured to Michigan "elliptically." Our punctum books editor, Eileen Fradenburg Joy, gently noted our prevarication and asked us to say more. We decided to include here what we would have written as our "excuse for the elliptical" to Eileen. We were hesitant to write much about Michigan because neither of us were

24 Currans, "Transgender Women Belong Here," 461.

directly involved in or actively invested in MichFest, or in Camp Trans. It felt that the elliptical (nodding to the ones in the know) was the only way we could gesture towards MichFest as a site of intense and protracted conflict, without exacerbating the harm that has already been done over the years by the festival reinforcing transmisogyny, refusing to change its policy excluding the participation of trans women.[25] So many trans and trans-allied people we know and love have such big feelings about their many years attending and working at the festival, about fighting for years from within and from across the road at Camp Trans, and so many are still grieving the loss of the festival as a space that held them, and as site for (more) potential trans-feminist and lesbian political and cultural solidarity, care, transformation, and celebration.

T.L. went to Michigan once in 1998 and was a spaced-out first-timer, who did not know what the hell was going on, but then found out what was going on and never went again. Jas never attended, having only learned of its existence through the work of people at Camp Trans. Over the past twenty years, we have both felt shocked whenever we encountered people who were still attending or performing at the festival throughout the 2000s, even though many or most of the ongoing participants we met were trying to resist from the inside, to change minds and policy, and to make MichFest a trans- feminist, lesbian, and queer space. And we have gotten into big, tearful friendship break-ups over Michigan. So, while we write at length throughout this book about cultural phenomena that we know of only anecdotally and/or from published accounts, somehow we both feel like sinking our teeth into, and dining out on, the pain-

25 Trans- feminist responses to MichFest were centrally important to us, including Red Durkin, "Petition: Boycott MWMF Until the Organizers Fully Include Trans Women," Change.org, March 21, 2013, https://www.change.org/p/indigo-girls-and-other-michfest-2013-performers-boycott-mwmf-until-the-organizers-fully-include-trans-women, and Imogen Binnie, "We See Through You #18," *Keep Your Bridges Burning,* September 2013, http://web.archive.org/web/20150305014522/www.keepyourbridgesburning.com/2013/09/we-see-through-you-18/.

ful processing of Michigan would leave a bad taste. Our major reluctance to write at length about MichFest is likely informed by our shared rage when mainstream writers feed off the harm feminists have done to each other (at MichFest and beyond) in order to build their meaty careers.[26]

In 1977, one year after founding the festival, Lisa Vogel co-signed another notorious failure of processing, the "Open Letter to Olivia [Records Collective]." The Olivia Records Collective was an anticapitalist lesbian feminist record label created in 1973 that ran successfully until the mid-1980s. As Cristan Williams puts it, "[t]he Collective was widely seen as the powerhouse behind the 1970s women's music movement. It was also a trans-inclusive space."[27] In their "Open Letter to Olivia," the signatories write, "concerning your decision to employ Sandy Stone […]. We feel it was deceptive not to share this process with the women's community."[28] Ostensibly concerned with "sharing process," the letter represents a then recent surge in anti-trans sentiment running through some segments of lesbian and feminist scenes in 1977. In a beautiful essay on "The Transfeminist 1970s,"[29] Finn Enke shows that trans women, like folk singer, activist, organizer, and author Beth Elliot[30] and sound engineer, software developer, theorist, author, and performance

26 For a response to this phenomenon, see T.L. Cowan, "Transfeminist Kill/joys on the Land," *Helix Queer Performance Network,* 2013, https://helix-qpn.tumblr.com/post/93881622387/transfeminist-killjoys-on-the-land.

27 Cristan Williams, "TERF Hate and Sandy Stone," *TransAdvocate,* August 16, 2014, https://www.transadvocate.com/terf-violence-and-sandy-stone_n_14360.htm.

28 "Open Letter to Olivia [Records Collective]," *Sister: West Coast Feminist Newspaper* 8, no. 3 (June–July 1977): 6.

29 Finn Enke, "Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2018): 9–29.

30 For more on Beth Elliot's work with the San Francisco chapter of the lesbian feminist organization, Daughters of Bilitis, including her work organizing the 1973 West Coast Lesbian Conference and being invited to perform there before being targeted for attack by an emerging anti-trans contingent, see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), especially chapter 4, "The Difficult Decades," 91–120.

artist Sandy Stone,[31] were central to lesbian organizing in the 1970s. Rather than reflecting some long-standing friction, Enke finds that this anti-trans schism was engineered (rather than discovered) in the late '70s. As Enke explains, it was "[n]ew, young members [of lesbian organizations], politicized through adherence to an emerging separatist politics, and in their refusal of sexism and male dominance,"[32] who insisted on and thus created a division between trans women and non-trans lesbians.

In response to this open letter, "the Women of Olivia Records" defended Stone and their decision not to announce her hire more broadly: "If Sandy were to become a focus of controversy, we all felt we needed a period of time in which to develop a foundation of mutual trust and support and a solid working relationship to help us withstand that turmoil."[33] Dedicating time to building mutual trust, support and relationships was central to the Olivia Records Collective. As Stone recalls, "they invited me to hang and stay for a few days, which I did. One thing led to another, and I wound up being invited to join the collective, which was what you did instead of getting hired."[34] For the Olivia Records collective, this hanging out (staying) was called processing.

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31 Allucquére Rosanne Stone, familiarly known as Sandy Stone, is a legend and genius. You can learn more about her anywhere information is found but we recommend starting with her own writing. Perhaps begin with Stone's "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10, no. 2 (1992): 150–76. And then enjoy Sandy Stone, "Guerrilla," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 92–96. Also see Allucquère Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). In 2024 Stone was inducted into the USA National Women's Hall of Fame: see Wallace Baine, "From Hell to the Hall of Fame: The Astonishing Story of Sandy Stone," *Lookout Santa Cruz,* April 28, 2024, http://lookout.co/sandy-stone-womens-hall-of-fame-first-transgender-woman-computer-science-music/.

32 Enke, "Collective Memory," 16.

33 Women of Olivia Records, "Olivia Replies," *Sister: West Coast Feminist Newspaper* 8, no. 3 (June–July 1977): 6.

34 Zackary Drucker, "Sandy Stone on Living Among Lesbian Separatists as a Trans Woman in the 70s," *Vice,* December 19, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/zmd5k5/sandy-stone-biography-transgender-history. Stone says a bit more about the very intentional and involved process of joining

While an interest in lesbian and feminist processing rarely shows up in academic publications,[35] as anyone who has spent time in the archives will tell you, it is everywhere in 1970s lesbian and feminist organizational documents and publications. One example is "Olivia: We Don't Just Process Records," published in a 1976 issue of *Sisters: Westcoast Feminist Newspaper* (the same paper that published the Open Letter and Reply one year later). On behalf of the Olivia Records collective, Ginny Berson explains, "the two elements we consider vital to our survival: collectivity and accountability."[36] Processing is the key to arriving at these vital elements and takes months (or years) of "getting to know each other by talking about our politics" and

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the Collective in this 2014 interview with Cristan Williams: "When I was first approached by representatives of Olivia Records, which I think was in 1974, I immediately told them that I was trans and in fact, they had already heard that I was trans from Leslie Ann Jones, who was an assistant recording engineer in San Francisco. So, we were already in clear communication about the fact that I was trans and they were very open to working with me. They mostly wanted to know if our politics agreed and whether or not I could work with a lesbian separatist collective. They badly needed engineering skills. The collective was very clear that they considered me to be a woman. We spent a long time — about a year, maybe more — in which we got to know each other and by the time that I actually joined the collective, we felt that we knew all that we needed to know about how we were going to get along together. And so, I joined the collective and went to live with them in Wilshire District of LA, where we had three houses: two next to each other and one across the street. There were 13 members of the collective after a while. I think that when I joined there were 11" (Williams, "TERF Hate and Sandy Stone").

35 However, it does seem that lesbian feminists and their processing are having a bit of a moment in the early 2020s with new work coming out, including Mairead Sullivan's *Lesbian Death: Desire and Danger Between Feminist and Queer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); Sabine LeBel, "Lesbian Processing at the End of the World: Lesbian Identity and Queer Environmental Futurity," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 26, no. 2 (2022): 159–73; and Lazz Kinnamon, "'We Stayed Up All Night Rapping': Toward a History of Feminist Consciousness-Raising, 1964–1986," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* forthcoming.

36 Ginny Berson, "Olivia: We Don't Just Process Records," *Sister: West Coast Feminist Newspaper* 7, no. 2 (1976): 8.

developing a shared "analysis of what makes the world run"[37] before embarking on a project. As they warn, "To come up with a project first, and then an analysis, could lead to lots of trouble, and is one of the main reasons why collectives don't last."[38] Collective process precedes not just product, but even project. And this process takes time:

> We spent time deciding whether ours would be an open or closed collective, how new people would be brought in, how people would be hired and fired and how they would be paid. We spent time deciding how we would be accountable to the community. And then we made plans for our first record.[39]

Before making a plan, they made a process. A process that involved spending time together, "hanging out" (as Stone puts it), developing a shared analysis, and building mutual trust, support, relationships, and accountability.

In her essay on Lizzie Borden's beloved film, *Born in Flames* (1983),[40] Christina Hanhardt invites us into the seemingly endless times and feels of process:

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37 Ibid., 9.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 *Born in Flames* (directed by Lizzie Borden in 1983) is, for us, a foundational and fabulous text about lesbian and feminist processing as an action method, a "kind of sci-fi and also kind of a documentary": Craig Willse and Dean Spade, "We Are *Born in Flames*," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 23, no. 1 (2013): 3. If you have not seen the film, or have forgotten about it, we echo Willse and Spade, who, in their Introduction to "We Are *Born in Flames*," a 2013 dossier of essays about the film in the journal *Women & Performance,* advise: "[F]irst of all, go watch it. It will blow your mind" (ibid., 2). Shot over the previous decade prior to its 1983 release, and set in an imagined post-revolutionary-socialist future New York City in which racism and sexism still shape everyday life, *Born in Flames* "chooses the vantage point of various women and groups of women — diverse in terms of race, age, and political commitments — who are resisting, organizing, and agitating" (ibid.). The film moves from scene to scene centering collectively produced feminist and lesbian information technologies, including talking to each other, listening, responding, fighting, and talking to each other more.

> There is one feature of lesbian feminism and radical politics that might be worth generalizing about: a proclivity for what is often called processing. In [the film] *Born in Flames* women are mostly talking, debating, and making plans. For anyone who has been to such a meeting, you likely have experienced that moment of clarity when, four hours in, you realize that this might go on forever and there really will be no future. But at the end of an individual campaign that may or may not have been won, the process of making arguments and of building a group can feel like a win even if the world at large can prove to be worse than it was when you began.[41]

This "proclivity" is not especially oriented to a "win" and not conventionally productive. It doesn't always result in a product, but it makes room for, spends time with, values, and revels in the work of working together. Furthermore, "processing" or building relationships is not only about "getting a yes" in terms of consent for a research project, or a decision within a collaboration.

Audra Simpson has been one of the most influential scholars writing about the information you get from a "no" — when your research subjects, the sources of your data, refuse to give you the information you asked for. In her essay "On Ethnographic Refusal," Simpson reflects on the complex ways in which "Kahnawakero:non, the 'people of Kahnawake,' had refused the authority of the state at almost every turn,"[42] including the settler colonial state that may have resonated with the questions she — herself Kahnawake Mohawk — was asking. She learns from her research subjects' answers to her questions a complex,

41 Christina B. Hanhardt, "LAUREL and Harvey: Screening Militant Gay Liberalism and Lesbian Feminist Radicalism circa 1980," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 23, no. 1 (2013): 32.

42 Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9 (2007): 73.

> quadrupleness to consciousness and an endless play, that went something like this: "I am me, I am what you think I am and I am who this person to the right of me thinks I am and you are all full of shit and then maybe I will tell you to your face." There was a definite core that seemed to reveal itself at the point of refusal and that refusal was arrived at, of course, at the very limit of the discourse. Anthropology in such a context is, I think, sometimes really funny.[43]

As is media studies. Hilarious. If you gather a few people committed to TFQ cultural protocols and ethics into a room to process born-digital artifacts or digitized materials, to discuss whether to post an image online, how to caption an image, whose consent needs to be given in order to post an image (or story) online, what harm looks like in networked digital culture (and so on), this may not, to paraphrase Hanhardt, get us to a "win" (or a generalizable action plan) or to a "yes" or even a clear "no," but it will likely aid the exploration of every difficult and pleasurable angle of the question such that, four hours (or four years) in, you realize this may never end. Instead, it will take us to what Simpson calls "the very limit of the discourse" where the information created and gathered during the processing is more important and valuable than the place to which we were ostensibly trying to arrive. Unlike other forms of processing data or materials that aim to "clean" data to remove contradiction, heavy processing functions as an information technology that guides you to conflicting and complicated information. It seeks out and aims for messy and dirty data. Heavy processing gives you the information you need to see what was wrong with the questions you were asking to begin with.

Processing is like a traffic circle. Sometimes (often) other people don't want to talk about what you want to talk about. And as difficult as it may be to hear "no" (or to be ignored or to receive silence), let's remember, feminists: "no" means "no." Silence or no reply (radio silence) means "no." "Not right now"

43 Ibid., 74.

means "no." There are so many quiet refusals that mean "no." Backing off or backing away, and leaving someone (or a group of people) the hell alone is just as important to heavy processing as the endless meeting. You may end up going around and around. But also, there are many exits, and you need to yield to the signal. Forcing non-consensual processing — being that processing bully — is not so different from forcing a "yes." If someone (or a group of people) does not enthusiastically and regularly consent to heavy processing, even when we really feel like they should, we need to step back and consider why that might be.

"Know when to hold 'em. Know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away. Know when to run."[44] Kenny Rogers probably wasn't a lesbian, but there are so many drag king Kennies, he's got honorary status.

Coercive and non-consensual processing is a bad information technology. Following and thinking with the collaborative design and community-building work of "The Consentful Tech Project"[45] (which we first encountered in workshops at the truly amazing Allied Media Conference[46]), consent can be defined by the FRIES principles, articulated by Planned Parenthood: Freely Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, and Specific. Research projects and online research environments need to be "built with consent at their core, and [need to] support the self-determination of people who use and are affected by these technologies."[47] Heavy processing is one of these consentful technologies.

Rather than researching forward towards a product, or the finish line of a project, when you are into heavy processing you find yourselves just as often researching backward, directing your inquiry to the research questions themselves. Because

44 Kenny Rogers, "The Gambler," *The Gambler* (United Artists, 1978).

45 Una Lee and Dann Toliver, "The Consentful Tech Project," https://www.consentfultech.io/. See also their zine, "Building Consentful Tech," 2017, https://www.consentfultech.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Building-Consentful-Tech.pdf.

46 We write more about The Allied Media Conference in chapter 4.

47 Lee and Toliver, "Building Consentful Tech," 8.

heavy processing is oriented to always finding more — more perspectives, angles, feelings, relations, objections, supports, stakeholders, contexts. Heavy processing is a technology of gathering, or rather, managing, big data where every single datum is understood to come from somewhere worth learning from. For heavy processing, there is no such thing as TMI (Too Much Information), only NEI (Not Enough Information).[48] Heavy processing might be understood as a maximalist research method, consistent with the long and proud lesbian feminist tradition of making a mountain out of a molehill. This often means shrinking our research questions and scope of data collection in order to magnify both, to look at our questions and data from more angles. Sure, it's overwhelming, perhaps even absurd when compared with research methods that prioritize efficiency and concision, paired with impact metrics for the broadest possible circulation and citation. Being open to what we might find when we make such a big deal out of conflicting, emotional, and even confused data that other research methods discard, is a care-full and curiosity-based method. This maximalist way of working makes research (and researchers) open to finding or making "a big fat hairy surprise of a thing that you never ever thought could be sexy [or interesting or important] to you."[49]

The Processing Room: Inside Killjoy's Kastle

> Get ready for a tsunami of processing!
>
> — Moynan King, "Playing Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide"[50]

48 We are inspired by Marika Cifor's attention to the embodied excesses in queer and trans archives in "Stains and Remains: Liveliness, Materiality, and the Archival Lives of Queer Bodies," *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, nos. 91–92 (2017): 5–21, and "Presence, Absence, and Victoria's Hair: Examining Affect and Embodiment in Trans Archives," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2015): 645–49.

49 Allyson Mitchell, "Susanne Luhmann Talks with Allyson Mitchell," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 31, no. 2 (2007): 104.

50 Moynan King, "Playing Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide, or Performing Monstrosity in Killjoy's Kastle," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle:*

> Isn't it a hallmark of lesbian experience to leaven what makes us high, what beckons us to soar, with hard questions about what you're *actually* feeling? No, tell me what you're really feeling.
>
> — Karen Tongson, "On the Cusp of the Kastle"[51]

> While structures make things conditional, processes open them up to what can't yet be known: a nascent knock at the door that attracts our curiosity.
>
> — Emelie Chhangur, "Lesbianizing the Institution"[52]

As a maximalist artist, Allyson Mitchell has built her research-creation career on Too Much, what she calls Deep Lez aesthetic/political projects.[53] Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House,[54] one of her installation collaborations with Dierdre Logue, gives the terrifying specter of processing a starring role. "Get ready for a tsunami of processing!"[55] Moynan King declares, playing one of the Demented Women's Studies Professors greeting and ushering groups through the installation. In *Inside Killjoy's Kastle: Dykey Ghosts, Feminist Monsters, and Other Lesbian Hauntings,* Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney

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Dykey Ghosts, Feminist Monsters, and Other Lesbian Hauntings, eds. Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney (Vancouver: UBC Press and Art Gallery of York University, 2019), 104.

51 Karen Tongson, "On the Cusp of the Kastle," in *Inside the Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 121.

52 Emelie Chhangur, "Lesbianizing the Institution: The Haunting Effects of Killjoy Hospitality at the Art Gallery of York University," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 32–36.

53 See Elizabeth Freeman's deep dive into Mitchell's Deep Lez political aesthetics in "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 59–93. In a monumental reading of Mitchell's earlier maximalist feminist sculptures and installations, Freeman approaches Deep Lez as "a catchphrase cum artistic vision cum political movement, [that] works temporal drag toward geologic time… the time of feminism and other dinosaurs, of fossilized icons and sedimented layers of meaning" (85).

54 We refer to the installation as Killjoy's Kastle throughout.

55 King, "Playing Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide," 104.

describe Killjoy's Kastle as "a large-scale, multimedia, walk-through installation and performance that evokes all the fright in lesbian-feminist histories so that we might unpack, reject, or critically recover these stories for the queer present."[56] We attended the opening night of Killjoy's Kastle in Toronto,[57] and while we were not involved in its creation, it felt like everyone we knew was involved in some way, and the opening of the exhibition was intensely anticipated within artsy feminist queer and dyke worlds in both Toronto and New York. As we stood in line waiting for our turn to enter, it was clear to us that this was going to be an epic experience. Perhaps we all could have predicted that the opening night of the Toronto installation would be just the beginning of a multi-city, many-headed, six-year (and then some) processing journey.[58] *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* the book we think with here, is an edited collection of performance scripts and critical reflections from many of the project's contributors and co-creators, but to us, it reads like a generously public performance of heavy processing, a gift.

Killjoy's Kastle is massive in scale. For the Toronto installation alone, there are sixty-four performers credited (those who performed every night), another twelve "pop-up" performers (those who added special performances for at least one night), plus sixty-two production collaborators, including twenty-five people in the "Community Consultation Think Tank."[59] The project was supported by the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) and installed outside of an established gallery space, a huge warehouse on Toronto's west side.[60] On the first night, over

56 Cait McKinney and Allyson Mitchell, "Lesbian Rule: Welcome to the Hell House," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 4.

57 This installation ran from October 13–30, 2013.

58 The exhibition continued through three more installations: at the British Film Institute in London, England (March 20–31, 2014), Plummer Park in Los Angeles, California (October 16–30, 2015), and Icebox Performance Space in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (October 16–27, 2019).

59 "Collaborator Credits," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 197–99.

60 In her chapter for *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* curator Emelie Chhangur writes that the curatorial and supporting role that the AGYU played in the devel-

700 visitors (including us) came through, and over the course of its two weeks in Toronto, the show attracted more than 4,300 visitors.[61]

Taking inspiration from, and parodying, Evangelical Christian hell houses that stage a series of horrors, including "scenes of homosexuality, abortion, and other bodily 'sins,'"[62] Killjoy's Kastle is an immersive (indoor and outdoor) installation. As Mitchell and McKinney write,

> for visitors, the kastle [sic] experience begins in the very long lineup to get into the house. Guests are greeted by Undead Pro-choice Activists, Tree-Hugging Anti-logging Defenders, Gender Queer Drag Queens, Rape Revenge Advocates, "Because I Am a Ghoul" Security Supporters, and the ghost of radical feminist Valerie Solanas, each cajoling the audience while they wait to get in. The "house" is constructed with an entrance and exit facade and includes dividing walls, lighting, and a sound system. But what really brings the space

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opment and manifestation of Killjoy's Kastle was processual rather than financial, characterized by accepting an invitation to be hosted, rather than issuing an invitation to host. She explains,

> Let's be fair (and generous!). I never invited Allyson Mitchell to do a project. She invited me. She invited me, and by association the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU), into her house — her lesbian, feminist hell house — as guests. She said at our very first meeting: "I'm not asking for money. I simply want to feel supported and my project protected.". . . [I]nstead of simply "showing" *Killjoy's Kastle* at the AGYU, we welcomed those processes, points of view, and polyvocal practices so intrinsic — and challenging — to the making of *Killjoy's Kastle* into our home. Practicing hospitality meant "instituting" the processual pedagogy of the art project by (un)structuring gallery procedures to meet its methodological demands. While structures make things conditional, processes open them up to what can't yet be known: a nascent knock at the door that attracts our curiosity. *Killjoy's Kastle* modelled a form of radical hospitality that opened a door at the AGYU (Chhangur, "Lesbianizing the Institution," 36).

61 McKinney and Mitchell, "Lesbian Rule," 6.

62 Ibid., 4.

> to life inside are the various performers and scenes that the visitors encounter.[63]

These scenes and characters include "The Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas," "The 'Lesbian' Zombie Folksingers," "The Big Trubs Earth Mother with Menstrual Blood," "The Ball Bustas," "The Dank Cave Monster," "Da Carpet Muncha," "The Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies," "The Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party," and many, many more "ghosts, ghouls, monsters, political indoctrinators, and lesbian avengers."[64] The halls, walls, and dank holes were full of custom-made objects, images, sounds, and signs, all (figuratively and literally) stuffed with politics and feelings (and political feelings). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the final room in the haunted house would be The Processing Room, where visitors would be dropped off by their tour guides and passed into the care of "Real Life Feminist Killjoys."

But, of course, the processing neither started nor ended in The Processing Room. As Mitchell and McKinney explain,

63 Ibid., 5.

64 Ibid., 5–6. Moynan King offers a glimpse of what one would encounter within the Kastle walls:

> Inside the kastle proper, you're taken through a series of circuitous passages and introduced to a variety of exhibits, creatures, and images. In the first section alone, you're bombarded with sounds, sights, and ideologies. If you look one way, you will see a mirrored chamber filled with half-naked women (the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers) chanting and crying out in ecstasy. Turn around, and you'll see a small carpeted nook where a trans man (the Carpet Muncher) sits gnawing on a piece of shag rug, reading Pat Califia's Macho Sluts, his beard glistening with pussy juice. Look a few feet over, and you'll find a stairway that leads to the Terrifying Tunnel of Two Adult Women in Love. And right in the middle of it all is a monstrous plush goddess (the Big Trubs Earth Mother) with a horde of kittens emerging from her split-open belly and apples bobbing in her menstrual blood in a bucket between her legs. (King, "Playing Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide," 91–92.)

> Over the course of its three iterations, Killjoy's Kastle shouldered a tremendous representational burden — how to playfully evoke the tremendous love and also horror in lesbian-feminist history without reproducing racism and transphobia or relying on one monolithic narrative as reference point. The project misstepped, made adjustments, and worked to respond to criticisms from community members, many of which were articulated online or through processing sessions in person with the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys at the kastle's exit. Over the course of its three iterations, scenes in the kastle centred more stories and performances by feminists of colour and trans people within its haunted halls. This work is not over.[65]

What Hanhardt calls this "proclivity for processing"[66] is certainly not locked away in the history (or past) of lesbian feminist cultural practice. Indeed, *Inside Killjoy's Kastle* is an extension of the processing that was staged in the show's final room, but was also embedded from the inception of the project, in the creation of materials, the developing of scripts, and the installation itself, which continued online, and as of the writing of this book, has not stopped.[67] Perhaps the measure of processing's success is that it does not end.

Another measure of heavy processing's success is how much people keep needing it. After playing a "Real Life Feminist Killjoy" in the The Processing Room, Karen Tongson writes, "[i]sn't it a hallmark of lesbian experience to leaven what makes us high, what beckons us to soar, with hard questions about

65 McKinney and Mitchell, "Lesbian Rule," 12.

66 Hanhardt, "LAUREL and Harvey," 32.

67 As Sabine LeBel puts it, "[a]fter the first iteration in Toronto, there was a large and somewhat contentious reaction from different members of the queer community, much of which took place via Facebook. In particular, Killjoy's Kastle was perceived as white-centric and transphobic." Sabine LeBel, "Lesbian Processing at the End of the World: Lesbian Identity and Queer Environmental Futurity," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 26, no. 2 (2022): 164.

what you're *actually* feeling? No, tell me what you're really feeling. Some guests aptly noted ours was the scariest room of all."[68] For Tongson, working in the final room of the Kastle in the LA installation, the surprise was not the scary Processing Room itself, but the fact that so much processing was indeed initiated there:

> I was struck by the genuine traumas that needed work and care in the wake of moving through the kastle. Lots of gay boys expressed both titillation and disgust at "having to see a real-life vagina for the first time." Several gung-ho drinkers of the witches' piss were shocked to realize the concoction had alcohol and wanted earnestly to work through what it meant to break one's sobriety, even unwittingly, for the first time in over a decade. (The alcohol was extracted in subsequent performances.) Older lesbians were brought to tears talking about the graveyard of lesbian venues, realizing how much the gathering places of their youth, of their prime, had been disappeared by capitalism, the creative classes, and even the cultural transformations within LGBTQ+ communities themselves. What I anticipated would only be a pantomime, or parodic re-enactment of the work we all do with students, community members, and patients, made itself apparent as the real thing — an even realer set of encounters with people we didn't know or understand within our institutional contexts or preexisting worlds.[69]

Tongson draws attention here to the contexts and worlds that are necessary to doing "the real thing." That is, processing is not a quick formulaic checkbox that can be added to a project — if that project involves humans, or other materials — but a commitment to (and a pleasure in) the "hard questions" that take time and do not always go where you want or expect them to go. In her experience working in the processing room (at the Kas-

68 Tongson, "On the Cusp of the Kastle," 121.
69 Ibid., 122.

tle installations in Toronto and Los Angeles), Ann Cvetkovich yearns for time: "it's a sham to imply that processing could be done so quickly… [without] really getting the input from people or performing the back and forth that I consider central to processing."[70] That is, her role (and perhaps the Kastle overall) could provoke but not really process processing. Processing is a durational act. As performance art, sometimes there is room (or a room) for this. In research culture, it's hard to justify the time and space for "hard feelings."

When we went through Killjoy's Kastle on its first night in Toronto with our friend, the artist Michèle Pearson Clarke,[71] we walked away with heads close together, at once appreciative for what Mitchell and Logue and their collaborators were working towards, but also angry about some of the things we'd seen and heard, and some of the things we hadn't. We were hurt by what felt like the project's nostalgia for a lesbian feminism that seemed still so tied to, in love with, a white-washed history and trans-exclusionary politics, aesthetics, and even jokes. And we were not alone. In all directions leading away from the Kastle, there were groups of us, in varying (in)formations of *still fucking talking about it.* And indeed, many years later we are still talking about it. Many of the criticisms were posted online — to blogs and Facebook pages — and we follow Mitchell and McKinney in not publishing or linking to them here, partly because most of the posts were deleted by their authors (a clear sign to us that they do not want their words circulated out of context), and largely because we are less interested in rehashing the details of these painfully necessary criticisms and conflicts than we are in attending to the ways that both the show and the book foreground, invite, and perform heavy processing. Sabine LeBel offers an excellent analysis of the ongoingness of the processing instigated and embraced by this show, and continued with

70 Ann Cvetkovich, "Processing Killjoy's Kastle: A Deep Lez Performance," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 128.

71 See Michèle Pearson Clarke's website at https://www.michelepearsonclarke.com/.

Inside Killjoy's Kastle, "an important archive of public lesbian processing."[72] We have not sat down in a group, with Mitchell and Logue, with everyone who went (or refused to go) to the Kastle installations, but the imperfections and disappointments, hurt and anger, mixed with the thrill and appreciation for such a mammoth collaborative effort — such a beautiful attempt to bring to life an excellent and hilarious idea — become the texture of dyke-oriented queer culture, relationships and art-making, and the fabric of future processing. Even when we love something — perhaps especially when we love — there seems to be a shared urgent sexual-political orientation to ever more room(s) for neverending processing.

In her reflections on working in the Processing Room, Kyla Wazana Tompkins considers her own positionality as it shifted over time:

> I remember during the last two rounds of ideological wars — the race wars and the sex wars — that I was on the angry/wounded/not-yet-institutionalized side of the issue, and I then sounded a lot like the generation coming up now, a generation who are doing a lot of the necessary and exhausting push work around trans issues. Now, I'm that cliché — a tenured gender studies professor — and I'm on the other side of things.[73]

72 LeBel, "Lesbian Processing the End of the World," 164. LeBel describes the criticisms of the show, along with Mitchell's responses, in more detail than we provide here: the ways that some visitors thought the show "put white lesbian history at its center, to the exclusion of Black and racialized lesbian histories"; included racist figures (i.e., the "zombie white girl Temagami tree hugger with dreads"); presented transphobic tropes (i.e., in one room, white plaster "truck nutz" were smashed by the Ball Bustas); and the ways that Mitchell responded to criticism by removing figures/characters from the show and issuing public apologies and accountability statements where "[s]he took personal responsibility and situated the project in the racist and transphobic histories of lesbian feminism" (165).

73 Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Reflections of a Real-Life Feminist Killjoy: Ball-Busters and the Recurring Trauma of Intergenerational Queer-Feminist Life," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 143.

Tompkins stays with the conflict and anger — the exhausting, necessary, generous work that makes up much of lesbian and feminist processing culture and history. Following Audre Lorde, Tompkins thinks through anger and woundedness as a source of information, as a gift for feminist futures. Thinking through conflicting intergenerational feelings and directions that she felt herself felt pulled by, Tompkins makes an argument for paying close and textured attention to generational anger as a recurrent "sign of shifts in feminist thinking […] recognizing that intergenerational anger is a key mechanism through which feminist thought develops dialectically and it might just be the key to opening up new possibilities for building on past feminist praxis while undoing the exclusions of current thinking."[74] Rather than ignoring these tensions, Tompkins charts her own cognitive transformations. That is, Tompkins writes out the trajectory of her own process as an invitation for more processing (more information from conflict, anger, and woundedness).

The ghastly and ghostly performances that enlivened and haunted the massive installation included crowd-controllers ("The Dead Lesbian Crowd Comptrollers"[75]) and tour guides who developed their own scripts, routines, and personae to usher visitors through the Kastle.[76] In our case, we were put into our tour group by performance artist Felice Shays, playing her interpretation of the fiery Valerie Solanas. As Shays explains in "Valerie Solanas as the Goddamned Welcoming Committee," her interpretation and performance required a great amount of processing about this troubling and troubled Dead Lesbian. Solanas is an iconic character: a playwright, author, and actor who wrote and self-published the *SCUM Manifesto* in 1967,[77]

74 Ibid.

75 Mitchell and McKinney, "Lesbian Rule," 5.

76 For more on the developmental processes of "Killjoy's Kastle," see Helena Reckitt, "Inside Job: Learning, Collaboration, and Queer-Feminist Contagion in Killjoy's Kastle," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 60–79.

77 After selling her Manifesto in the streets of New York City for a year, it was first published commercially in 1968: Valerie Solanas, *S.C.U.M. (Society for*

was for a time part of Andy Warhol's milieu, and famously shot (but did not kill) Warhol in 1968. Like most feminist manifestos, *SCUM* is as fantastic as it is troubling:

> Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.[78]

Fueled by rage (at patriarchy, capitalism, heterosexism), serving hope and insight but also blunt sex-essentialism and unthematized whiteness, Solanas blazes for nearly twelve thousand words through a range of reasons why women can and must eliminate men and "destroy the male sex." As Shays recounts:

> Valerie [Solanas] needs to tell them they're scum and useless. Felice [Shays] needs to tell them a few rules. Valerie says Fuck Off. Felice says Welcome…. I wrote my own script. I didn't actually write it down until I had to go back to New York and someone else was going to play Valerie. I never memorized it. I wanted it fresh like improv. Every person who went through the kastle doors met Valerie, and I met each of the thousands of them. And I changed my words because of them. Valerie would have spit on my softness.[79]

Shays originally wrote the script in the tone and spirit of Solanas, but in the actual performance, and in relation to the thousands of visitors she welcomed, she realised that she needed to make changes. To reflect and foreground the importance of

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Cutting Up Men) Manifesto (New York: Olympia Press, 1968). It has been published, excerpted, and translated many times since, including Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2015).

78 Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto,* 57.

79 Felice Shays, "Valerie Solanas as the Goddamned Welcoming Committee," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 80–81.

this process, Shays published her script with cuts and additions flagged.[80]

Shays shows the importance of processing and conflict (and processing conflict) as a method of and for change. She wants to do justice to Solanas, who "had plenty more to say than 'kill men' and was undeniably witty and sharp, even if you hated her proposed methods of revolution."[81] She also wants to keep the fire that characterizes both Solanas and Shays: "patriarchal bullshit is beyond real, and tepid language makes me wince."[82] But performing full-force Solanas brings her into conflict with her own TFQ values, and potentially into conflict with the TFQ people she meets: "I couldn't stomach being a gruff asshole all night" and Solanas's jarring essentialism "stuck in my throat."[83] Processing these conflicting desires and values leads her to make changes to her original script, just as her performance demands processing from the visitors she welcomes:

> Let the only light that exists be the light that emanates from your cunts (ADDED: or assholes) and shines up to the sky leading us to the magnificent truth! (SOMETIMES CUT NEXT LINE: If you don't have a cunt [ADDED: or an asshole] [CUT: I pity you], stand near someone who does.) […] You are, all of you — not just the beautiful, groovy freaks you came here with — are now a group. A band — a clan. So, through lesbian processing, you will come up with your group name.[84]

Shays carefully reworks and rewrites Solanas's vitriolic text and sets a different kind of tone. For example, by adding "assholes" to her script, Shays shifts the text towards trans and queer understandings and experiences of sex and gender and lots of different ways of relating to, and having or not having, cunts. To

80 Felice Shays, "Valerie Solanas Script," in *Inside Killjoy's Kastle,* eds. Mitchell and McKinney, 82–84.
81 Shays, "Valerie Solanas as the Goddamned Welcoming Committee," 81.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Shays, "Valerie Solanas Script," 83.

us, it seems quite clear that Shays is doing the TFQ work (learned from lots of heavy processing) of not assuming what kinds of feelings and anatomies each visitor might be hol(d)ing, packing, or tucking.

A focus on process over product is central to many TFQ organizational, artistic, political, and cultural practices.[85] Over the past decade of thinking about and working on TFQ online archives, collaboration, and research protocols, we have realized that the process you undertake as you design and build a thing may sometimes (or even often) lead you to a baleful conclusion: the thing (the site, the app, the platform, the data scrape, the publication, and so on) that you've been working on still needs more work, still needs more rigorous reciprocity, and still needs more accountability to and contributions from the people whose lives and materials you are studying, or archiving.

We propose what so many activists, scholars, community organizers, and artists are also proposing in one way or another: that before you can identify your protocols, your ethics, or your method, you need some heavy processing. You need listening and talking and asking for more information. Method might be understood as the procedures by which you go about your research, or which tools you're using and how (i.e., data collecting and visualization software, content management systems, and so on). Process, especially heavy processing, allows us to come to understand which archives or data we want to collect in the first place and why; which bodies are attached to this data and whether the platform from which you are collecting it is evil (and why or why not that matters); what kinds of a priori agreements and values are built into your chosen tools (and why or why not that matters); what does this data or archive *not* tell you (i.e., the context of who the data is attached to); or what the impacts of your research might be on the people who may or not know that they are implicated in your research. Process is checking in multiple times during each stage of research or creation to reassess commitments, to find out if everyone still con-

85 Cowan and Rault. "Process Posts."

sents to participation, if the tools are good or actually too evil, and if there is new information that we need to think about. We admit, heavy processing is not great at deadlines.

CHAPTER 2

Central Processing Units: Trans- Feminist and Queer Manifestos

> Feminists are rendered an always already obsolete technology that isn't working properly.
>
> — Sarah Sharma, "Manifesto for the Broken Machine"[1]

> We refuse to operate under the assumption that risk and harm associated with data practices can be bounded to mean the same thing for everyone, everywhere, at every time. We commit to acknowledging how historical and systemic patterns of violence and exploitation produce differential vulnerabilities for communities.
>
> — "Feminist Data Manifest-No"[2]

1 Sarah Sharma, "Manifesto for the Broken Machine," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 35, no. 2 (2020): 173.

2 Marika Cifor, Patricia Garcia, T.L. Cowan, Jas Rault, Tonia Sutherland, Anita Say Chan, Jennifer Rode, Anna Lauren Hoffman, Niloufar Salehi, and Lisa Nakamura, "Feminist Data Manifest-No," *Feminist Data Manifest-No,* 2019, https://www.manifestno.com.

In August 2019 we were invited by Patricia Garcia and Marika Cifor to join the Feminist Data Workshop.[3] Along with other Feminist and Critical Race Studies scholars of data cultures, politics, and economies — Tonia Sutherland, Anna Lauren Hoffman, Anita Say Chan, Niloufar Salehi, Jennifer Rhode, and Lisa Nakamura — we happily took part in three days of conversations which culminated in all of us spending an extra half-day together making a first draft of the "Feminist Data Manifest-No." Both during the days leading up to this collective and collaborative writing project and in the months following, as we re-wrote the Manifest-No, as well as in the months following its launch in November 2019, we did a lot of processing: a lot of talking about what would make it into the "Manifest-No" and how it would be structured. We clarified what we meant by talking, writing things out, then talking and writing into each other's words as we drafted and re-drafted. To us, it is clear that process-heavy collaborative creation works not just as a conduit through which we get our ideas clearly on the page, but also as a practice of iterative design and theory-building. In this chapter we propose that the collaborative manifesto-making process is a TFQ mode through which co-conspirators come up with ideas and change them — as we work on them and work them over — through difficult, draining, *and* dazzling conversations on and off the page.

This was not our first manifesto. As a writing team, we have come to think of manifestos as Central Processing Units (CPUs). T.L. wrote the "GLITTERfesto,"[4] in which Jas had a significant hand, we are two of the authors of the FemTechNet manifesto,[5] and T.L. is a co-author with Prateeksha Singh of the EFECT man-

3 A seminar awarded and supported by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWG) at the University of Michigan.

4 T.L. Cowan, "GLITTERfesto: An Open Call in Trinity Formation for a Revolutionary Movement of Activist Performance Based on the Premise That Social Justice Is Fabulous," *Canadian Theatre Review* 150 (April 2012): 17–21.

5 FemTechNet Collective, "Manifesto," *FemTechNet,* 2014, https://femtechnet.org/publications/manifesto/.

ifesto.[6] Why write in manifesto form? The CPU is the component which performs the processing inside a computer, and for us, the feminist manifesto form is often the site, source, product, and generator of a whole lot of processing. Even when written by one (or two or more) people, we understand feminist manifestos as the output of hundreds of hours of process, of working in close conversation, collaboration, conflict, and contradiction with others. Manifestos are also fire-starters for even more processing, more conversations in pursuit of understanding and accountability, as well as a reminder of unresolved differences of analysis both within Trans- Feminist and Queer (TFQ)[7] worlds and beyond.

Shortly after the launch of the "Feminist Data Manifest-No," several of the authors began to compile the "Manifest-No Playlist,"[8] a collection of manifestos or similarly provocative texts that have shaped the current moment in Feminist Data Studies, Information Technologies, Science and Technology Studies, and Critical Digital Methods. The "Manifest-No Playlist" is drawn from ideas and contributions from our networks, solicited through Facebook and Twitter. In addition to texts that self-identify as manifestos, the playlist also includes speeches, zines, essays, and plenty of other textual-literary forms. One of the ways that we framed our call for manifestos was in a post on our social media explaining that the "Feminist Data Manifest-No" was doing its "family tree." Perhaps that is why we received the names of so many texts that might not typically be understood as manifestos, but, when read together, make sense as a collection, or manifestation, of a TFQ manifesto sensibility. Reading through the dozens of texts collected, it became clear that our contributors interpreted (as do we) the term manifesto

6 Prateeksha Singh and T.L. Cowan, "Manifesto — EFECT," *Experiments in Feminist Ethical Collaborative Tools & Technologies (EFECT),* 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20220121135633/https://efect.ca/?page_id=1218.

7 See our "TFQ: A Note on Terminology," in this volume, for a more detailed explanation of our framing of trans- feminist and queer (TFQ).

8 T.L. Cowan, Marika Cifor, and Jessica Lapp, "Manifest-No Playlist," *Feminist Data Manifest-No,* 2020, https://www.manifestno.com/playlist.

in what the Oxford English Dictionary calls its "extended use": "manifesto, *n.* In extended use: a book or other work by a private individual [or collective] supporting a cause, propounding a theory or argument, or promoting a certain lifestyle."[9] In the Introduction to the "Manifest-No Playlist," we explain how manifestos function as information technology, and as feminist processors:

> manifestos are how feminists talk to each other, clarify our thinking. These are documents oriented to feminist accomplices, as we tweak our ideas, share risk, understand how privilege works to make life easier for white, cis-, settler, monied, educated, non-disabled women and queers than for Indigenous, Trans- Black and Brown, poor, working-class and disabled women and queers. Manifestos have been how we push our analysis and action forward, how we challenge each other, how we build our movements, our intellectual, social, artistic, community practices. They are how we confront and resist white supremacy, ableism, transphobia and transmisogyny, homophobia, class privilege and resource-hoarding within feminist worlds, and how we speak to others, beyond feminist worlds about these manifestations, practices and structures of oppressive power. Manifestos have helped us to come to understand life in the digital era, in the era of big data, and to make connections between earlier structures of power, domination and oppression and liberation, joy, delight, solidarity, desire and pleasure. They also help us to respond, to refuse, to build our commitments. Manifestos are ways that we communicate rage and disappointment, abandonment and neglect by other feminists. Are they not one way that we yell at each other and demand better from each other? Certainly, manifestos are a way that we imag-

9 *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "Manifesto, n.," https://www.oed.com/dictionary/manifesto_n.

> ine and build new worlds and figure out how we want to be together in this world, as we learn from our mistakes.[10]

Manifestos and their kin are the ultimate heavy processing genre. We draw from this Playlist, as an archive of heavy processing, to learn about and articulate this way of working together: this way of coming to understand what we are working on, why we are doing it at all, and why, indeed we are doing it *together*.

By calling in these texts, we are not seeking to create a new totalizing catchphrase, or to re-classify everything here as heavy processing. Rather, by naming our influences, we hope to evince, imagine, and build affinities based on ways of working, rather than based on more traditionally-defined academic disciplines, subject matter, nation, period, genre, and so on. This becomes especially important for making connections within and across academic practice. As we have indicated in an earlier essay, we believe that engaging with digital technologies in/as our research offers us a rare opportunity to defamiliarize and contest our often-exploitative disciplinary practices and research norms.[11]

Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House,"[12] while perhaps not usually read as a manifesto, is a text that bears special consideration as a central processing unit. In its initial iteration, it was an address that calls for more processing and better action on the part of the white academic feminist organizers of the New York University Institute for the Humanities in 1979. While so many of us have been reading and teaching this text for decades, we want to consider what it can

10 T.L. Cowan, Jas Rault, Patricia Garcia, and Tonia Sutherland, "Introduction: Feminist Data Manifest-No Playlist," *Feminist Data Manifest-No,* 2020, https://www.manifestno.com/playlist.

11 T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "Onlining Queer Acts: Digital Research Ethics and Caring for Risky Archives," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (2018): 121–42.

12 Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984), 105–9.

teach us about our digital research present. Lorde begins her address by offering some context. She accepted the Institute's invitation to speak "with the understanding that [she] would be commenting on papers dealing with the role of difference within the lives of American women: difference of race, sexuality, class, and age. The absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political." She continues, "[i]t is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians."[13] We want to suggest that Lorde's rejection of the terms of this gathering — its arrogant exclusion of anyone who was not a white, straight, monied woman — is a call for more and better input. This conference had insufficient information.

What we are calling heavy processing is inspired by Lorde's demand for better information technologies: for better tools for speaking and listening, for paying attention to how a gathering is designed, to whose knowledge, experience, and information is solicited, who is welcome to speak and who is doing the listening. When "poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians" are excluded from feminist discussion, that discussion lacks the information that difference offers, or as Lorde puts it, it lacks "a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic."[14] Heavy processing is this dialectical discussion, which requires difference, creativity, and interdependence. As Lorde insists, "only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters."[15] Heavy processing is this seeking, this valuation of interdependent differences to build the courage and sustenance to act.

13 Ibid., 105.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.

As Cait McKinney reminds us in *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies,*[16] Lorde developed a theory of information that has been largely overlooked. Turning to the "Uses of the Erotic," McKinney takes up Lorde's argument that,

> the erotic "is a source of power *and information*" through which women can know the world differently in intimate collaboration. Lorde's use of the term 'information' is not generally remarked on in turns to her theory of the erotic. Information implies that the erotic is in part a communication practice: the erotic transmits actionable knowledge between a scene and a woman who has opened herself to this kind of knowledge.[17]

Consentful heavy processing is a communication practice and information technology that can open us to this kind of knowledge. From Lorde we learn to orient ourselves to the intimate communication of difference — to more and different information. As McKinney explains, "[a]s an erotic practice, providing access to information is more than just helping divergent publics find what they are looking for; it is a world-making gesture constructed by specific media interfaces and technologies to which users might open themselves."[18] We want to suggest that heavy processing can be understood as one of the lesbian media interfaces and technologies that McKinney traces back to Lorde.

In "The Uses of Anger," Lorde also recognizes that "[a]nger is loaded with information and energy."[19] In particular, she writes of the anger of women of color in the face of the racism and narcissism of white women within the feminist movement, and in

16 Cait McKinney, *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

17 Ibid., 21.

18 Ibid., 21–22.

19 Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984), 121.

consciousness-raising groups. As Lorde explains, "[a]ny discussion among women about racism must include the recognition and the use of anger. It must be direct and creative because it is crucial. We cannot allow our fear of anger to deflect us nor to seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty."[20] Processing information through, as, and in anger requires feminist communication technologies for processing this information directly, creatively, honestly, and intimately, especially to deal with racism within feminist organizing and in feminist relationships.[21]

The information and experience that produces — and is then communicated through — anger also requires feminist technologies of listening that process information into something more useful than (white) guilt. As Lorde writes:

> Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it becomes no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.[22]

It strikes us that when we begin to think about heavy processing as an information technology, this enables a whole range of possibilities for communication, learning, and action. As queer white settler scholars who first encountered Lorde's *Sister Outsider* in Women's Studies undergraduate classes in Canada in the

20 Ibid., 128–29.

21 SaraEllen Strongman writes that "the importance of interracial sex and/or sexual attraction might be an integral part of cross-racial feminist work," especially as lesbian relationships informed Lorde's politics and the way she processed information across difference. SaraEllen Strongman, "'Creating Justice between Us': Audre Lorde's Theory of the Erotic as Coalitional Politics in the Women's Movement," *Feminist Theory* 19, no. 1 (2018): 41.

22 Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," 130.

1990s, Lorde's theory of information has shaped our adult lives, our pedagogy, and our research priorities and values. We have both carried Lorde's essays and speeches as powerful tools in the neverending process of retraining ourselves against the racist, white supremacist settler colonial beliefs that imprinted us in our childhoods and that we have absorbed throughout our lives. Trust between women of color and white women, between Indigenous people and settlers, between heterosexual women and queers, between trans and non-trans feminists, between tenured (monied, resourced) and precariously employed (unmonied, de- and under-resourced) scholars, artists, and activists, can only be built with a respect for the learning that is possible when we understand how information is not *only* communicated in a lowkey vibe, a quiet tone, with a calm demeanor, a disembodied voice, or sitting still and pretty in pearls (though much awe to femmes who can pull off some raging pearls). Sometimes information yells. Sometimes information is seriously pissed off. Manifestos teach us this.

We might think of heavy processing as an information technology that runs what Kara Keeling has called a "Queer OS."[23] For Keeling, this operating system,

> takes historical, sociocultural, conceptual phenomena that currently shape our realities in deep and profound ways, such as race, gender, class, citizenship, and ability (to name those among the most active in the United States today), to be mutually constitutive with sexuality and with media and information technologies, thereby making it impossible to think any of them in isolation.[24]

Of course, this is an operating system that already exists and has been running work at the intersections of TFQ scholarship, arts, and activism for many years now. And manifestos might be the CPU that runs this TFQ OS. We turn to TFQ manifestos to

23 Kara Keeling, "Queer OS," *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 2 (2014): 152–57.
24 Ibid., 153.

consider histories of scholarship, art, activism, and community organizing *together* as a set of process-heavy efforts, analyses, and praxes that power the OS.

* * *

The work we draw together here helps us to identify and break the common-sense research norms that are co-constitutive with centuries-in-the-making social, geopolitical, sexual, cultural, and economic violence. For Keeling, "*queer* offers a way of making perceptible presently uncommon senses" that "would be hospitable to, perhaps indeed crafted from, just and eccentric orientations within it."[25] Perhaps heavy processing, or a proclivity for and commitment to dialectical discussion sparked by difference and creativity, might just be one of the technologies Keeling had in mind when she writes about Queer OS as "a society-level operating system […] to facilitate and support imaginative, unexpected, and ethical relations between and among living beings and the environment, even when they have little, and perhaps nothing, in common."[26] Heavy processing describes a collective attempt to listen, speak, and build understanding interdisciplinarily, intergenerationally, and across differences of race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, Indigeneity, and nation.

Painful Realization, Pleasure

Transformation always involves loss — the loss of what you thought you knew, who you thought you were, who and what you felt safe with — and this is painful. In "The Transfeminist Manifesto," Emi Koyama writes, "[e]very time a group of women previously silenced begins to speak out, other feminists are challenged to rethink their ideas of whom they represent

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 154.

and what they stand for."[27] Furthermore, "[w]hile this process sometimes leads to a painful realization of our own biases and internalized oppressions as feminists, it eventually benefits the movement by widening our perspectives and constituency."[28] Koyama identifies the exclusionary tendencies of (white, cisgender) feminism and emphasizes the reparative act of speaking (and speaking out) as a painful challenge for collective knowledge transformation. Indeed, feminist processing deals in pain because "realizing our own biases" and "widening our perspectives" means learning. As Dina Georgis explains:

> This is a learning made from the encounter with the hard-to-name affect and therefore involves making a relationship to the otherness of knowledge. Learning, in this sense, is the crisis of not being able to hold on to what you think you know and bearing it enough to make way for insight.[29]

In *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East,* Georgis calls those hard-to-name affects queer, and learning means being undone by the queer disruption of otherness, of the dissolution of what you think you know. What we learn from Georgis is that when the story that I've told (to myself) about myself — my relations to others, my place in the world, who, how, and what I am — is put into crisis by the experience of (an encounter with) hard-to-name affects, a challenging otherness (sometimes the challenge issued by others), I can either hold on to my story (to what I think I know), or I can bear the crisis of letting it go for long enough to make way for something new (perhaps a better story). Heavy processing invites us into this painful, risky, transformative, relational experience of learning — of creating the better story.

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27 Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto," in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005), 15.

28 Ibid.

29 Dina Georgis, *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 17.

To engage in heavy processing is, again borrowing Lorde's words, to "descend into the chaos of knowledge" and to "return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being."[30] A willingness to attend to (*descend into*) the chaotic nature of knowledge and how we might bring that knowledge to bear on our futures — our relationships, politics, research, aesthetics, and ways of working — is a TFQ processing core. It all requires a bit of hope and a perverse orientation to the painful pleasure of complexity. In "Whose Feminism is it Anyway?," Koyama notes, "It is not the lack of knowledge or information that keeps oppression going; it is the lack of feminist compassion, conscience and principle."[31] As an information technology, heavy processing is not only about accessing, collecting, storing, sharing, and circulating information, but about being transformed by that information.

More information is not always better information. One of the central fallacies of liberalism is the promise that all information will be treated equally, and so access to more information will necessarily lead to fair and just decisions.[32] This has never been true.[33] Heavy processing is a technology designed to recalibrate common sense valuations of information — where, as Keeling has put it, "common senses […] secure those presently hegemonic social relations that can be characterized by domination, exploitation, oppression, and other violences."[34] Heavy processing works by creating value and desire for information, bodies, materials, and feelings that are regularly, and hegemoni-

30 Lorde, "The Master's Tools," 111–12.

31 Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate," *The Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (2020): 735–44.

32 For notes on the "fallacies of liberalism," see Jasmine Rault, "Window Walls and Other Tricks of Transparency: Digital, Colonial, and Architectural Modernity," *American Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2020): 937–60.

33 Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

34 Keeling, "Queer OS," 154.

cally, devalued and understood as excessive — reorienting us to uncommon, excessive senses.[35]

In "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto,"[36] Sandy Stone offers us a gleaming gem. Reflecting on the emergence of Queer Theory, she writes, "beginnings are most delicate and critical periods in which, while the foundation stones are still exposed, it is necessary to pay exquisite attention to detail."[37] Heavy processing requires not only exquisite attention to detail, but an orientation to the pleasure in these foundation stones — an attraction to the details of citation, decision-making, planning, creating, feeling, and organizing that allows you to experience it *as exquisite.* This is echoed in the Zine Librarian's Code of Ethics, where the authors brag, "[t]his document emerges from years of challenging and joyous conversations."[38] It is a special kind of orientation that experiences the pleasure of this way of working, and this special pleasure comes from a rigorous commitment to this orientation.

Let's be clear: heavy processing is high maintenance. It is a form of working that constantly interrogates relations of power, our complicity in those relations, and our commitments to imagine and enact their transformation. As the Lesbian Aveng-

35 Amber Musser's work on "affective excess" and brown jouissance helps us rethink the labor, value, and desire of/for uncommon senses: "brown jouissance offers a way to rethink labor and value. If the commodity is produced when the labor that produces objects is absented, remembering that brown jouissance is labor allows us to revalue labor as an entity unto itself instead of dwelling on the commodity. This focus on labor and its fleshiness—its affective excess—is distinct from the fetish's emphasis on objects and the logic of substitution. It does not rely on ontological insecurity, but rather insists on valuing the unruly (possibly aggressive) fleshiness of materiality." Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 159.

36 Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10, no. 2 (1992): 150–76.

37 Ibid., 168.

38 Heidy Berthoud et al., *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics Zine* (2015), 19, https://www.zinelibraries.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EthicsZine-rev-20151105.pdf.

ers note, the "LACROP [Lesbian Avengers Civil Rights Organizing Project] model is one in which each lesbian is a part of the decision-making process — each member helps determine what should be done and how. It is not a model of leaders and followers."[39] Formed in 1992, with the gallant mission of,

> [f]ighting for the visibility and survival of lesbians everywhere, the Lesbian Avengers demanded school boards teach about lesbian lives, took over homophobic radio and TV stations, crisscrossed the U.S. in pride rides, unleashed plagues of crickets on ungodly ministries, integrated homecoming parades, and marched en masse in cities from Washington, D.C. and New Orleans to Vancouver and London.[40]

While dedicated to "fabulous, no-apologies action"[41] that can respond rapidly to the urgent politics of the moment, their Handbooks demonstrate an overwhelming attention to the much less obviously fabulous details of process.[42] As they

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39 Lesbian Avengers, *Out Against the Right: An Organizing Handbook,* n.d., https://www.lesbianavengers.com/handbooks/LACROP_handbook.shtml.

40 Kelly Cogswell, "Preface," in *The Lesbian Avenger Handbook: A Handy Guide to Homemade Revolution,* 3rd edn., 2011, http://www.lesbianavengers.com/handbooks/Lesbian_Avenger_handbook3.shtml#PREFACE.

41 Lesbian Avengers, *Out Against the Right.*

42 For example, see their description of "Planning an Action":

> The purpose of an action is to make our demands known, win change and involve as many lesbians as possible in all aspects of organizing.
>
> When Avengers have an idea for an action, they can bring a precise, specific proposal to the floor, or they can come to the floor with a vague idea and pass around a sign-up sheet for those interested in developing the project. Those who sign up then meet separately as a committee and return to the group with a specific proposal. This way the large group discussion will revolve around a concrete proposal creating a framework for a more constructive and satisfying, task-oriented discussion.
>
> Once the large picture of an action is approved by the Avengers, the committee gets to work on specifics. It is in committee that all the brilliant, wacky ideas can come to fruition. Every action planning committee needs two co-coordinators who are responsible for following up with everyone who took on tasks, and for presenting the action to the floor

acknowledge, "[o]ur approach can be very trying. It can take a lot of time to make group decisions, while there are also some decisions which have to be made quickly without lots of time for processing."[43] Even moving quickly takes a foundation of patience and time: time for explicit attention to the details of power within a group, and conscientiously, collectively signing on for the uncomfortable work of taking turns running meetings, making coffee, taking notes, booking and cleaning the space, speaking to the press, drafting the documents, and so on. Rather than simply falling into the default settings of leaders and followers, heavy processing means figuring out how the meeting (or project) is going to run, and who is going to do what, before it even gets started.

Reducing Harm Reproduction

The Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) documents these commitments in their "Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols." CLEAR signals their "orientation to process" as meaning,

> two things: first, we are focused on processes and methods rather than outcomes and findings as processes and methods are an opportunity to insert feminist politics/practices; and secondly, that we are devoted to change, and to flexible processes instead of fixed and rigid structures or rules for doing things. There are important differences between a rule bound structure and a system of processes and practices. The former is authoritative and resists humility, and the latter is

at each step. (Lesbian Avengers, "Planning an Action," in *The Lesbian Avenger Handbook,* https://www.lesbianavengers.com/handbooks/Lesbian_Avenger_handbook3.shtml#planning)

43 Lesbian Avengers, "Working Together," *Out against the Right,* http://www.lesbianavengers.com/handbooks/LACROP_handbook.shtml#ensemble.

> situated — responsive to what is happening, when, and with whom.[44]

Prioritizing what Stone calls the "exquisite" details of process in order to generate accountable, situated, responsive, and better outcomes and findings, continues the long legacy of practices and protocols from feminist science. For example, in *Seizing the Means of Reproduction,* M. Murphy traces these politicized process-forward scientific methods through 1970s feminist self help collectives:

> Feminist self help, as a protocol feminism… assembled together bodies, feelings, tools, modes of politicization, social interactions, relations of exchange, and emerging biomedical logics converging on questions of reproductive health in the 1970s. Unlike medical protocols, offered as rational and apolitical technical achievements, feminists saturated protocols with politics. Feminist self help did not emphasize the term protocol, but instead talked of process, structure, procedures, and practice. Turning to the term protocol here helps to highlight the standardizable and transmissible components of feminist practices.[45]

Saturating protocols with politics means recognizing that every detail of the research process is bound with assemblages of power while approaching each of these details as opportunities to address and intervene in those dynamics.

For example, the details of meeting. The work of re-organizing and re-orienting our practices away from forms that center the individual, that reproduce norms of domination (even within feminist organizing), requires collectively learning other

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44 CLEAR, "Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols," 2017, 11, https://civiclaboratory.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/clear-lab-book.pdf.

45 M. Murphy, *Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Entanglements of Feminism, Health, and Technoscience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 29.

ways of working. CLEAR runs meetings using "[f]acilitation [a]s a discussion method that aims to bring collective knowledge together. […] Facilitation addresses how different people in the room are more or less likely to speak, be heard, or be interrupted, and works to address those disparities. Facilitation is not intuitive. It's a skill, and it has to be trained."[46] This attention to the learned skills of facilitating discussion, of running a meeting so that more people can speak and be heard — to have better input and output — has long been central to feminist research process and protocol. For example, the Lesbian Avengers had rigorous feminist training for their meeting facilitators and changed facilitators every four weeks. An orientation to heavy processing means recognizing that even the smallest of details in how we work together can reproduce and normalize abusive relations of power and create bad findings, bad feelings, false outcomes, and incomplete information. "Seizing the means of reproduction," to riff on Murphy, refers not only to reproductive health and justice, but also to which forms of organizing and which research values we choose to reproduce, and which we choose to prevent or ditch.

In their "Crip Technoscience Manifesto," Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch remind us that transformation and reinvention of knowledge are bound up with the transformation and reinvention of materiality and worlds.[47] They call "attention to the powerful, messy, non-innocent, contradictory, and nevertheless crucial work of crip technoscience: practices of critique, alteration, and reinvention of our material-discursive world."[48] Reading through the texts gathered in the Manifest-No Playlist, we see reference again and again to crucial transformational knowledge practices; training, skills-building, methods, and protocols that are required for building better ways of building knowledge, and better material-discursive worlds. These often

46 CLEAR, "Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) Lab Book," 33.

47 Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch, "Crip Technoscience Manifesto," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–33.

48 Ibid., 2.

require a recognition of the ways of working that we hope to not reproduce, while defining and identifying what we choose and commit to instead.

Seeking out and working against what Lorde identifies as "the theory of racist feminism" is to refuse the Master's Tools for dividing and conquering, and commit to an information technology of "define and empower."[49] It strikes us that this is the method we tried to materialize in the "Feminist Data Manifest-No." Each statement in the "Manifest-No" is constituted by a refusal paired with a commitment, or set of commitments, and this configuration works as "critique, alteration, reinvention."[50] Process begins with critique, crisis, and conflict, generating new information; it then takes that information and works towards a new, altered analysis. This new analysis creates a change in direction, tactics, and commitments, and produces a transformed way of working: better sets of questions, and more accountable ways of doing things and being in the world. Heavy processing is not afraid to reinvent protocols and relationships, renew trust and respect, and redesign and reconstruct spaces and norms.

Each of the thirty-two statements of the "Feminist Data Manifest-No" identifies a critique, crisis, and/or conflict that grounds a refusal and a commitment to transformative, accountable ways of working. "It refuses harmful data regimes and commits to new data futures."[51] For example, the first statement reads:

> We refuse to operate under the assumption that risk and harm associated with data practices can be bounded to mean the same thing for everyone, everywhere, at every time. We commit to acknowledging how historical and systemic patterns of violence and exploitation produce differential vulnerabilities for communities.

49 Lorde, "The Master's Tools," 106.
50 Hamraie and Fritsch, "Crip Technoscience Manifesto," 2.
51 Cifor et al., "Feminist Data Manifest-No."

The "Feminist Data Manifest-No" is part of a justice-oriented movement among scholars of digital culture, data, platforms, information systems, social media, archives, and internet studies, which is aimed at developing harm reduction methods for research and technological design. These scholars and the research communities they work with (students, research participants, and collaborators) are increasingly calling for process-heavy methods that work toward better accountability to collaborators, and are rooted in understandings and experiences of the harms that current data practices — in research and industry — can reproduce. These ways of working are informed by the recognition that process-lite methods tend to enact harm in research communities, particularly in communities that are over-researched and under-resourced, such as those that are Indigenous, impoverished, and disabled, including also sex workers, trans and queer people, and social media-makers, especially Black, Indigenous, and other racialized-minoritized creators.

In "The Provenance of Protest: Conceptualizing Records Creation in Archives of Feminist Materials,"[52] Jessica Lapp draws on heavy processing methods to practice and reflect upon her work with two TFQ community-based online archives.[53] Working specifically in the context of archival studies and archives creation and management, and informed by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's foundational essays on the ethics of care and radical empathy in archival work and scholarship,[54] Lapp draws

52 Jessica M. Lapp, "The Provenance of Protest: Conceptualizing Records Creation in Archives of Feminist Materials" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2020).

53 Lapp works with "Alternative Toronto," founded and managed by Lilian Radovac, http://www.alternativetoronto.ca, and also with "Rise Up! a digital archive of feminist activism," created by the Feminist Digital Archive collective in Toronto (Amy Gottlieb, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail, and Maureen FitzGerald), https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/.

54 Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "Neither a Beginning nor An End: Applying an Ethics of Care to Digital Archival Collections," in *The Routledge International Handbook of New Digital Practices in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Heritage Sites,* eds. Hannah Lewi et al.

on heavy processing methods to study "how considerations of safety, privacy, access, and control are configured archivally through feminist frameworks."[55] In particular, Lapp puts heavy processing to work to refute the "devil may care" More Product, Less Process (MPLP) model, introduced by archival scholars Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner in 2005.[56] Lapp notes that MPLP "makes recommendations for streamlining archival work, decreasing processing backlog, and simplifying archival processing practices to improve productivity."[57] Lapp's analysis is incredibly helpful to those of us not directly trained in archives, to understand the policy and practice stakes of the MPLP model:

> Where Greene and Meissner lose most readers is in their insistence on productivity as the primary measure of archival success, and in their distinct disinterest in considering issues of third party privacy, the handling of sensitive information, and building reciprocal relationships with those who are implicated, documented, or otherwise entangled with the records in their care. In other words, MPLP contends that archival process impinges on archival product when it means archivists are taking their time to carefully evaluate, consider, and document their decision making, and it suggests that archival process enables archival productivity when expediency and efficiency are considered the ultimate metrics of archival success.[58]

Lapp draws the conclusion that the "MPLP model is anathema to feminist archival practice where the process is first and foremost, prefiguring practice in distinct and important ways. Without careful process, the product is not worthwhile, whether it's

(London: Routledge, 2019), 159–68, and Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 23–43.

55 Lapp, "The Provenance of Protest," 72.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 72–73.

the creation of a digital platform, an open-stacks area, or an oral history project."[59] By putting heavy processing into contact with MPLP, Lapp makes clear how evaluations of productivity, archival value, and rigor need to shift away from the hyper-productive model, towards a process-based, harm reduction model that cares for "those who are implicated, documented and otherwise entangled with the records."[60] As an archival and information management practice, heavy processing interrupts such conventionalized "metrics of success" and introduces less rushed, more rigorous methods of harm reduction where accountability, rather than rapid production, is the mark of success.

Renewed or reinvigorated commitments to harm reduction in research cultures might be in response to the augmentation of harm, risk, and dispossession enabled by internet economies, by platform capitalism but also online research publications and projects. This relatively new environment of online research — both where we find materials and where we put materials — has intensified very old, normalized, legitimized, familiar, and foundational forms of harm, including extraction, theft, surveillance, and the exposure of culturally sensitive materials.[61] And this intensification has reinvigorated collective calls

59 Ibid., 73.

60 Ibid.

61 For more on harmful digital research practices, see Tonia Sutherland, *Resurrecting the Black Body: Race and the Digital Aterlife* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023); Dorothy Kim, "Digital Humanities, Intersectionality, and the Ethics of Harm," in *Intersectionality in Digital Humanities,* eds. Barbara Bordalejo and Roopika Risam (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 45–58; Kimberly Christen, "Does Information Really Want to Be Free? Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Question of Openness," *International Journal of Communication* 6, (2012): 2870–93, https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1618; Melanie Walsh, "The Challenges and Possibilities of Social Media Data: New Directions in Literary Studies and the Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2023,* eds. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023), 275–94; and Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads," *Social Text* 36, no. 4 (2018): 57–79. See also Dorothy Kim and Adeline Koh, eds., *Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities* (Earth:

(within and beyond academic research cultures) for more processing and more accountability, for better digital methods to use information and tools in better ways. As Ravynn K. Stringfield notes, "too often projects exist simply because they can, with no regard for the potential harm it may do."[62] The call for more processing has, necessarily, come with the call for researchers to interrogate relations of power within a research project, and to unrush research output timelines, to make time for research process.

For example, in 2015, the Centre for Solutions to Online Violence (CSOV) and The Digital Alchemists built a set of tools for researchers, educators, and journalists thinking of using social media in their classrooms, projects, or publications, particularly focusing on the ways that mis-use of social media posts constitutes a form of violence.[63] In "Research Ethics for Social Media in the Classroom," they write:

> Frequently, heightened attention by journalists, researchers, and others opens up a social media user to harassment, threats of violence, and violence. For this reason, the ethical approach to conducting social media research *even as a student* is to ask for consent before using someone else's social media content in your research project. *Just because someone has posted on a social media site, does not mean that they have consented to become targets, and exposing social media users*

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punctum books, 2021). Several contributions in Kim and Koh's *Alternative Historiographies* thematize harm done with and by digital research projects, environments, and economies. See especially David Golumbia and Dorothy Kim, "Digital Humanities and/as White Supremacy: A Conversation about Reckonings" (35–78); Arun Jacob, "Punching Holes in the International Busa Machine Narrative" (121–44); Dorothy Kim, "Embodying the Database: Race, Gender, and Social Justice" (145–202); Domenico Fiormonte, "Taxation against Overrepresentation? The Consequences of Monolingualism for Digital Humanities" (333–36); and Ravynn K. Stringfield "Breaking and (Re)Making" (475–78).

62 Ravynn K. Stringfield "Breaking and (Re)Making," 477.

63 See the Centre for Solutions to Online Violence (CSOV) on the *FemTechNet* website at https://www.femtechnet.org/csov/.

> *including your students — especially those targeted for race- and gender-based attacks — is one possible harmful outcome of a class assignment*.[64]

In an effort to interrupt the academic, and journalistic, practice of treating all social media content as non-copyrighted texts to be mined, scraped, collected, and recirculated without permission, the CSOV and the Digital Alchemists offer pedagogical resources to attune researchers to the relationships, and relations of power, that we enter when we study social media. The CSOV tool that most directly calls for better processing is the Respect Wheel, produced by the Digital Alchemists (Bianca Laureno, I'Nasah Crockett, Maegan Ortiz, Jessica Marie Johnson, Sydette Harry, Izetta Mobley, and Danielle Cole):

> This guide is intended to help creators slow down and consider the ways they cite and utilize information both on and off the web. Any educator, social media user, researcher, artist and/or writer could benefit from taking the time to consider these questions when utilizing citation in their work, particularly if it comes from marginalized individuals and/or communities.[65]

The race to pitch new research projects, publish research results, and launch new research sites — often in order to find and keep employment, win and renew grant funds, and for other forms of professional academic security — propels and normalizes a rushed, often panicked, research temporality. The Alchemists recalibrate research temporalities from the perspective of broader research communities, including the people whose

64 Center for Solutions to Online Violence and The Digital Alchemists, "Research Ethics for Social Media in the Classroom," 2016, 1, https://www.femtechnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Research-Ethics-For-Students-Teachers_Social-Media-in-the-Classroom_DA-CSOV_2016-1.pdf. Emphasis in original.

65 CSOV and The Digital Alchemists, "Respect Wheel," *FemTechNet,* http://femtechnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Respect-color.png.

work becomes the data, evidence, or other research materials. Produced in the form of sixty questions distributed across eight rubrics — Self-Awareness, Equity, Communication, Self-Care, Intention vs. Impact, Accountability, and Solidarity — the Respect Wheel gives researchers a helping hand when initiating their research process, by doing the work of researching backwards and inwards. That is, before we set out on a research project, we need to ask ourselves questions like:

> Who do you work for? Are you being paid for your work? Was the person/people being cited paid for their work? What communities are you citing from? Do you plan to cite the communities you've gained knowledge from at all? Is it accessible to communities with limited access? How can your work be used to gain more equitable access to resources for the communities you may be making a career from? Why are you creating what you are creating? If your work cites or focuses on a particular community or group, are you willing to receive critique around the language or use of citation? How can you best protect those you cite or utilize for shaping a project from a potential negative impact? Who receives credit for their work and who doesn't? Did you inform the person you were using their work? Are you willing to have a conversation about how you may/not be able to use the work? Are you willing to accept NO for an answer?[66]

These questions are an invitation to refuse conventionalized academic and journalistic research processes, and commit to what we are calling heavy processing. Taking up these questions might stall or stop a project altogether, while the researcher(s) take the time to reorient the project's commitments, away from the academic or journalistic clock, and towards the people who make the knowledges, cultures, arts, and movements that our research claims to value.

66 Ibid.

Heavy processing has consequences for researchers: it involves listening to research communities and prioritizing the risk analysis and desired benefits of research participants and collaborators over those of the researcher's career, brand, or professional prestige. Having been in precarious academic appointments ourselves for many years, we know that many researchers are not securely employed, and might feel just as insecure as their research participants (at times even more insecure). For this reason, in one of our first essays about digital research methods and ethics, "The Labour of Being Studied,"[67] we proposed a set of processing questions that seek to unsettle some of the economic disparities that are normalized within research culture. Before undertaking a project together, we suggest that the initial research process include conversations about the economic conditions shaping the lives of everyone involved in the research. Rather than operate as if everyone in the project shares the same set of conditions and stakes, we suggest that researchers and research participants might answer questions that describe their employment stability or precarity, monthly income and expenses, relationships to home ownership and housing security, inherited wealth and debt, what they want or need from the project, and what they consider fair remuneration for their research work. This is heavy processing to account for disparities, or shared negotiations, of class and economic context, of desire and labor conditions, that can build a more accountable foundation from which to undertake a research project, with other academics, but also with activists, organizers, communities, and artists. In addition to building consentful relationships, heavy processing can help us recognize and contend with the many forms of power that inflect, inform, and distort our research.

67 T.L. Cowan and Jas Rault, "The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 14, no. 3 (2014): 471–88, http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/labour-being-studied-free-love-economy.

Indeed, such questions might intervene in the faux cultural capital logics of an exposure economy, in which academics coax (and hoax) underpaid artists, activists, and media-makers to do work for free in exchange for the caché of "exposure," such as being included in academic publications or events. On many stages and in many conversations, the artist Alexis O'Hara has recalled "the myriad times that an event producer or researcher justifies a low artist fee, with the promise that the show or the project will give 'great exposure,' implying this will lead to better, bigger gigs that someone else will pay well for in the future. But this future never comes. I'm sorry, people *die* from exposure."[68]

Fail to Deliver

Heavy processing is not an efficient information technology. Refusing efficiency, it operates as what Sarah Sharma calls the Broken Machine. In "Manifesto for the Broken Machine," Sharma traces some of the techbro-cultural[69] conflations of technology with women, and asks, "What happens when the machine world no longer reciprocates man's love and instead questions his power?"[70] When "[f]eminists are rendered an always already obsolete technology that isn't working properly,"[71] we find the ripe imaginative grounds for a technological revolution we can get behind. The Broken Machine refuses to work properly because "social injustice is inextricable from the

68 Alexis O'Hara, email correspondence, September 23, 2022. As a hilarious and insightful performer and cabaret emcee, O'Hara makes this joke/not joke about the economics of being an artist on many stages. See also Alexis O'Hara, "The Righteous Clamour of Cabaret Tollé," *Canadian Theatre Review* 166, no. 1 (2016): 40–46, and Alexis O'Hara's website, http://www.dyslex6.com/.

69 Our framing of "techbro-cultural" (a spin on techno-cultural) picks up on Sarah Sharma's use of "tech-bro culture" in, "Introduction: A Feminist Medium Is the Message," *Re-Understanding Media: Feminist Extensions of Marshall McLuhan,* eds. Sarah Sharma and Rianka Singh (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 4.

70 Sharma, "Manifesto for the Broken Machine," 173.

71 Ibid.

specific machine logics of reigning technologies. And if the medium is indeed the message, then the perspective of the Broken Machine also offers feminism a mode of resistance."[72] Rather than processing an initial set of information and spitting out an expected result — a finished project, a final product — the Broken Machine might choose to permanently set itself on heavy processing mode and never achieve nor even seek to achieve any of these deliverables. Broken machines fail to deliver.

Taking up Keeling's Queer OS in terms similar to Sharma's Broken Machine, Fiona Barnett, Zach Blas, micha cárdenas, Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, and Margaret Rhee explain, Queer OS "embraces uncertainty. It welcomes crashes."[73] Queer OS will only accept apps that prioritize "Process, not product: Queer OS apps are not black-boxed and they are not commodities; rather, they are collectively worked on, never in a state of completion."[74] Broken research machines, running on a TFQ OS, for example, might choose to work backward: to go back for more information, interrogate their conditions of formation, ask for context and consent, and find ways to reciprocate before they will even start to process the input. Broken Machines are self-critical about how they might process information differently. Broken Machines talk to each other and ask questions of themselves.

Broken Machines process together: "What greater threat to the abuser than to learn that their machines would talk to other machines? You can almost hear the haunting sound of the true new machine learning going something like this: 'Me too, me too, me too.'"[75] They talk to each other to generate new power sources:

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72 Sarah Sharma, "Critical Time," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 10, nos. 2–3 (2013): 174.

73 Fiona Barnett, Zach Blas, micha cárdenas, Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, and Margaret Rhee, "QueerOS: A User's Manual," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016,* eds. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 54.

74 Ibid., 55.

75 Sharma, "Manifesto for the Broken Machine," 175.

> Broken Machines have capacity for others when others are drained because they seek and find communal care rather than return to those original power sources that are simultaneously draining. Convenience, time-saving, and reveling in the novel temporal modes of new technologies are a technocapitalist and patriarchal ploy. The Broken Machine knows this.[76]

This time-consuming, inconvenient, heavy processing — talking and researching ourselves beyond technocapitalist patriarchal power networks — is our sustainable renewable energy. As a function of the Broken Machine, heavy processes work to divest our energies from unsustainable systems, power sources, and research projects. As a form of intentional malfunction, they not only fail to produce and reproduce output in common sense ways, but also unsettle and break the codes of our contemporary research cultures and knowledge economies.

76 Ibid., 176.

CHAPTER 3

Risking IT: Breaking Up with Compulsory Dispossessivity

> The only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one.
>
> — Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons*[1]

Heavy processing is a set of structural knowledge-making practices that come from and are informed by many intellectual and movement-building traditions, including, but not exclusive to, Trans- Feminist and Queer (TFQ)[2] political and scholarly activism. We situate heavy processing as an information technology in order to understand it amongst the "fundamental information processes such as the acquisition of information and its

1 Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), 26.

2 See our "TFQ: A Note on Terminology," in this volume, for a more detailed explanation of our framing of Trans- Feminist and Queer (TFQ).

storage, manipulation, retrieval, dissemination,[3] or usage."[4] Within Information Studies, information itself tends to be defined basically as "processed data that improves our knowledge, enabling us to take decisions and initiate actions."[5] Quite simply, we want to draw attention to the multiple, old and new, genealogies which show that better information — from which we create better knowledges and better stories, make better decisions, and take better actions — is not just processed but heavy-processed. As Patrick Keilty and Rebecca Dean put it, Information Studies "must engage with cultural and humanistic modes of inquiry if we are to understand the connection between information, technology, and culture."[6] We see heavy processing as one of these cultural and humanistic modes. As we write in the "Feminist Data Manifest-No," "data [and information] is both an interpretation and in need of interpretation."[7] (Thank you, Joan Scott.[8])

Tanya E. Clement notes that the study of "information-as-process" is the study of "the systems of power and influence that

3 We would use the term "circulation" here. We've been pitched in a long and, it seems, losing battle to reconsider the reproduction of this widespread term, "dissemination," to ask whether it is always the best choice with its semen/seed-spreading etymological resonances. We get into it a little bit here: T.L. Cowan and Jas Rault, "Introduction: Metaphors as Meaning and Method in Technoculture," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 8, no. 2 (2022): 1–22.

4 Josef Schuster Alfons, ed., *Understanding Information: From the Big Bang to Big Data* (Cham: Springer, 2017), vii. For an overview of feminist and queer information studies, see Patrick Keilty and Rebecca Dean, eds., *Feminist and Queer Information Studies Reader* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2013).

5 Ramesh Nagarajan, "Take Control of Your Commute with Google Maps," *Google Blog,* October 1, 2018, https://blog.google/products/maps/take-control-your-commute-google-maps/.

6 Patrick Keilty and Rebecca Dean, eds., *Feminist and Queer Information Studies Reader* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2013), 5.

7 Marika Cifor et al., "Feminist Data Manifest-No," *Feminist Data Manifest-No,* 2019, https://www.manifestno.com.

8 As Scott writes, "experience is at once already an interpretation *and* something that needs interpretation." Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 797.

shape information systems and therefore knowledge production, identity construction, and intersubjectivity."[9] The heavy part of heavy-processing works to contend with and divest from the prevailing systems of power and influence that shape the information with which we produce knowledge. Valuing heavy processing over productivity is risky. Heavy processing might mean divesting from systems of power and influence (by which we complete our PhD dissertations in a "timely manner," by which we are funded, published, hired, and promoted) to prioritize social systems of accountability, uncertainty, self-critique, deferred authority, non-extractive knowledge making and sharing, resource redistribution and reparation, fair labor, and reciprocality.[10]

The rigor of heavy processing is a time-sensitive, time-intensive, sense-intensive, and labor-intensive method that asks researchers, perhaps especially those working in digital (humanities) projects, to turn against many of the standards of rigor (and speed) guiding contemporary scholarship. As the Assembly of First Nations puts it, in "Ethics in First Nations Research," "[i]n many cases, it takes more time and money to conduct research ethically. For researchers attempting to

9 Tanya E. Clement, "Where Is Methodology in Digital Humanities?," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, eds. Matthew K. Gold and Laura F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 154–55.

10 We are not alone in thinking about these divestments and the costs and risks of reorienting our research priorities. See, for example, Mary Elizabeth Luka and Mélanie Millette, "(Re)Framing Big Data: Activating Situated Knowledges and a Feminist Ethics of Care in Social Media Research," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 2 (2018); Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 23–43; Dorothy Kim and Jesse Stommel, eds., *Disrupting the Digital Humanities* (Earth: punctum books, 2018); Michael Zimmer and Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda, eds., *Internet Research Ethics for the Social Age: New Challenges, Cases, and Contexts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017); Michelle Moravec, "Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives," *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, nos. 91–92 (2017): 186–201; and Jacqueline Wernimont and Elizabeth M. Losh, eds., *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

conduct themselves in an ethical fashion, it will be necessary to withstand pressure to complete projects according to rigid funding timelines and external expectations for publication."[11] The time and money clash between productivity and ethics is a familiar one.

Jessie Daniels and Polly Thistlethwaite discuss the limitations imposed by the academic funding clock as they reflect on the community feedback they received about their "participatory, open, online course" (POOC), offered in 2013, titled "Reassessing Inequality and Re-Imagining the 21st-Century: East Harlem Focus."[12] The project attempted to be engaged with and embedded in the East Harlem community in New York City, and was created, with the best of scholarly-activist intentions, to build and deliver a "truly open," participatory, online course "in a way that resisted the imperative to monetize the experience."[13] However, the community engagement relationships suffered from temporal and financial limitations, as The Assembly of First Nations might have predicted would happen. Daniels and Thistlethwaite write:

> The #InQ13 collective [their course hashtag] […] included 18 community partners in East Harlem, and here we were less successful. The community partners we spoke with had

11 Assembly of First Nations, "Ethics in First Nations Research," March 2009, 31, https://www.ktpathways.ca/system/files/resources/2019-02/rp-research_ethics_final.pdf.

12 Jessie Daniels and Polly Thistlethwaite, *Being a Scholar in the Digital Era: Transforming Scholarly Practice for the Public Good* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), 48. This graduate course was offered, for credit, through the City University of New York's Graduate Center (CUNY), but was also available for public participation (as a non-credit course): "Students who sought credit for the course enrolled in the usual way through the university. The course was open to the non-academic community for participation. About half of the in-person sessions were held at a CUNY campus in East Harlem and these were open to the community; anyone could watch videos of the course sessions online; and anyone could access the readings assigned for the course online" (Daniels and Thistlethwaite, *Being a Scholar in the Digital Era,* 49).

13 Ibid., 48.

> several complaints about our project, all of them entirely valid. They said that we had come to them too late in the process, which we had. Our project, only funded for one calendar year, sometimes operated at a breakneck pace that was not conducive to the long, cautious process of relationship building necessary for community engagement. Several distrusted the university as a whole and, more specifically, objected to a course about East Harlem that was taught by CUNY faculty rather than by residents of the neighborhood. This highlighted the inequality between the university and the community we wanted to engage. If we had had the luxury of more time, we could have found more innovative ways to staff the course.[14]

Their "participatory" and "open" project, which sought to work against academic gentrification and alienation, was only funded for one year, an impossible amount of time to make anything truly participatory or open. Daniels and Thistlethwaite's reflections highlight the ways that academic temporalities work against the heavy processing required for networked, online, and offline community-partnered research and teaching, since our projects are generally contingent upon grants and the restrictions they bring with them. The criticisms the #InQ13 organizers received had to do with belated contact with community members, and that the high speed required to build and complete a project in grant time led to it being neither as *participatory,* nor as *open,* as the organizers (and partners) would have hoped. We appreciate and learn from Daniels and Thistlethwaite's honest reporting-back, as a form of feminist, queer processing and accountability.

Daniels and Thistlethwaite's story describes a common paradox. On the one hand, when we respect the timelines set out by academic grants, and demonstrate good research habits, we risk disrespecting and not establishing, or breaking, trust with research partners and participants, while possibly gaining institutional respect for delivering outcomes in the expected

14 Ibid., 54.

timeframe. On the other hand, when we respect the necessary temporality of research relationship-building and accountability, we risk losing grant opportunities. We also risk failing to deliver expected outcomes by expected deadlines and losing (or not gaining) professional respect, as well as getting a reputation for having bad research habits. This is a paradox of respectability and accountability politics: how can we remain ethically accountable to our research partners and subjects while negotiating the demand to respect institutional priorities?

We have held (and continue to hold) multiple short-term and long-term, smaller and larger grants. Indeed, we believe in the equitable resource redistribution made (somewhat) possible by acquiring institutional money to pay for minoritized information projects. Grant writing is a TFQ method! But most of our academic grants, and most of the universities administering our grants, make it almost impossible for us to use the funds for work with minoritized research partners. We can't "incentivize participation" by fairly paying people for their artistic, activist, community-based research expertise and time due to various forms of heavy bureaucracy. Even when we manage to justify some kind of payment, the university demands financial and citizenship forensics from these partners, such as invasive details on assigned names, working permits, visas, bank accounts, and so on. Often, this is the kind of information that minoritized research partners simply cannot provide. We are forced to get creative. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten put it succinctly: "The only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one."[15] Universities truly are centers for innovation. As Danielle Cole, Izetta Autumn Mobley, Jacqueline Wernimont, Moya Bailey, T.L. Cowan, and Veronica Paredes write in "Accounting & Accountability: Feminist Grant Administration and Coalitional Fair Finance,"[16] this creativity can be inspired by having many

15 Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons,* 26.

16 Danielle Cole et al., "Accounting and Accountability: Feminist Grant Administration and Coalitional Fair Finance," in *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities,* eds. Elizabeth Losh

conversations with trusted faculty and administrators about how to negotiate the often contradictory relationship between our grants and our research priorities. Grant administration in TFQ and other minoritized research environments is far from straightforward and itself requires a lot of heavy processing to navigate university accounting procedures and policies in order to, as best as possible, reflect our TFQ accountability protocols and practices.

Moreover, when it comes to grants (and other kinds of submissions), we find ourselves applying for extensions and extensions-on-extensions to add more, enough, time. Given the temporal conditions created by academic administrative demands, the extension is itself a provisional heavy processing method. Indeed, the extension email is a whole TFQ crip information technology, albeit an imperfect one. By necessity, many of us with chronic illnesses and cognitive "disorders" know that asking for extensions from faculty members when we are students, and from administrators and editors when we are faculty, is a request for a lifeline that will only sometimes be made available to us. Even at the risk of gaining a reputation for poor time-management skills (the horror!), we believe that there is no shame in the extension request. Embrace the stigma! Indeed, by the power of repetition, we have learned to say that we need more time with an affect that approximates dignity. As editors and faculty members, we have also learned to plan projects anticipating them: when we give people due dates, we expect they will need extensions. Heavy processing needs Too Much Information (TMI) and Too Much Time (TMT)! However, we don't want to be glib about extension requests, as if they are easy to make. Having an ease with, and capacity for, making extension requests is often (usually) a benefit of racial and class privilege, especially the privilege of having an inter-generational history in the academy (in which family members or close mentors can advise us about how and when to make extension requests).

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and Jacqueline Wernimont (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 57–70.

And from experience we know that extension time itself can be loaded with anxiety, shame, crisis, and other intense difficulties, which may result in yet another extension request. We find it helpful to be reminded that "missed deadlines are a better indicator of systemic injustices than individual vices because time itself is not experienced equally."[17] Collaborative process-heavy extension-thinking might be a way to collectivize and externalize these systemic inequities, rather than individualize and internalize them.

Much of our thinking about bending, extending, and pausing research time is informed by (and experienced through) disability justice and crip ways of knowing, doing, and being. Moya Bailey's essay, "The Ethics of Pace,"[18] draws our attention to the disabling effects of the need for speed:

> Our insistence on moving faster, both physically and in production, can actually slow us down as more people experience the drag caused by the friction of an impossible expectation of pace. And why must we move faster? To what end? The need to move quickly simply for the sake of moving quickly

17 Brian Tweed and Collin Bjork, "Deadlines/Due Dates as Inequity Generators — The Emergence of Pluriversities (Part 2)," *Equity Through Education,* August 17, 2022, https://www.equitythrougheducation.nz/latest-news/2022/8/17/deadlinesdue-dates-as-inequity-generators-the-emergence-of-pluriversities-part-2. As Tweed and Collin explain,

> it's not just disabled staff and students who are disadvantaged by the injustices of university time. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, scholars who identify as men kept churning out manuscripts, while women's manuscript submissions plummeted in many fields. Low-income students and minorities, too, were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in ways that took more time away from their studying and threatened to impact their ability to pass their courses and graduate. Called "temporal regimes" (Bjork & Buhre, 2021), these unequal and unjust experiences of time are the reason that due dates and deadlines are so harmful — they amplify the racism, sexism, classism, and ablism that already deprive the most vulnerable in our communities of their basic rights and dignities.

18 Moya Bailey, "The Ethics of Pace," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021): 285–99.

> is not a compelling reason to do so. Capitalism's insistence on profits over people seems to be a major force behind the seemingly unquestioned ethos to make us produce more and faster.[19]

As we have learned from moving a project too quickly — to meet that dreaded "last call" for a journal issue submission deadline or the due date for a final report for a grant — we can make mistakes that are difficult or impossible to repair, especially in the context of our research relationships. Building research relationships means pacing our projects at "the speed of trust," because, as Bailey explains, "plans will fall apart if we move faster than people can depend on one another."[20] We have found this to be true many times over. People, relationships, research, and research projects get hurt or are no longer able to keep going when we move faster than trust-time.[21] Certainly, we have also struggled when working with people who wanted to (or needed to, or were able to) work much faster than we do, or can. For this reason, we think of heavy processing as a practice of pace. It is a research temporality that accounts for the value of rigorous and sense-intensive reflection, and gives all participants the time they need to weigh-in and listen to each other, and to account for and "atten[d] to how race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability inform our work together," even in (perhaps especially in) projects that do not explicitly thematize justice-oriented research.[22]

We have come to think of heavy processing as a critical digital method that, by attempting to push back against the invented

19 Ibid., 286.

20 Ibid., 292.

21 Ibid., 287. Bailey is tracking the "speed of trust" from adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico: AK Press, 2017), 30.

22 Bailey, "The Ethics of Pace," 287. See Elizabeth Freeman's work on "chrononormativity": "the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity." Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

and compulsory academic clock, is necessary for the most rigorous digital (and not only digital) scholarship. For example, how many online application platforms (jobs, grants, admissions) include a countdown clock prominently displayed, as an engineered feature? The temporal automation of these platforms makes it fully possible to eliminate the need for human administrators to contend with the time-sensitive, and sense-intensive variables of circumstance, disorder, and disaster that so many research teams face when working on an application. The application "portal" that closes itself when the clock runs out has become a defense against extension requests, with human administrators often not authorized to override the power of the portal. While not always automated, applications and other scholarly reporting procedures have long enforced the time-date stamp to exert administrative management priorities on research temporalities, arguably an incompatible relationship, in which administrative labor requires definitive deadlines in order to initiate assessment protocols (of peer review, convening adjudication committees, and so on). We are old enough to remember the frantic race to the post office before closing time because of "must be postmarked by" due dates.

The rigidity of completion timelines are designed to apply and enforce a fairness principle that is, in fact, not fair at all. Due dates can be understood as "inequity generators"[23] that benefit the most well-resourced scholars and, like so many of the administrative logics that run academic work, are designed for the individual scholar whose ability to meet universal due dates is supported by a range of privileges that only very few can assume (including, but not limited to, a "faculty wife" who takes care of the emotional and material needs of that individual scholar's everyday life). Trust-time is designed for the labor-intensive and time-sensitive work of relationship-based research contexts, and is radically divergent from the ubiquitous administrative logic of *one-due-date-to-rule-them-all.* It's not that our heavy processing methods make us particularly

23 Tweed and Bjork, "Deadlines/Due Dates as Inequity Generators."

successful at changing these ubiquitous temporal imperatives. However, they can help to re-pace our research practices to value time-sensitive and sense-intensive approaches to scholarly rigor, which may reduce some of the harms that we and our students, colleagues, and collaborators experience when our ways of working are threatened by university administrative operating systems.

To navigate these temporal imperatives, heavy processing offers an additional information technology: the process-focused post, paper, or presentation. In the absence of a "final" outcome, researchers can turn process-based research into blog posts, short essays, book chapters, refereed articles, work-in-progress presentations at conferences and workshops, and other "deliverables" that reflect on the knowledges that the process is making. Truly, for seven years we posted, published, and presented our reasons for *not* delivering an online research project, for which we had received considerable funding, before we ever produced a public-facing manifestation of the project.[24] The "process-post" or a process-heavy piece of scholarly writing might begin by asking some of these questions: What is your process? Who is involved in your process? What are you learning from it? What do you need in order to do your work well and in a good way?[25] Rigorous answers to questions like these

24 We write more about this project in chapter 4, "Networked Intimate Publics (NIPS)."

25 With thanks to Anishinaabe and other Indigenous scholars, working "in a good way" refers, especially in Canada, to research that follows Indigenous protocols: embedded and time-intensive practices for building relationships, trust, and respect. In her description of research methods based on *Anishinaabe mno-bimaadiziwin* (the way of a good life), Cindy Peltier explains that "a framework for conducting work with Indigenous peoples in a good way [is] one that is rooted in a relational way of being." Cindy Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods with Participatory Action Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17, no. 1 (2018). For more on doing research "in a good way," see Doris Peltier et al., "A Journey of Doing Research 'In a Good Way': Partnership, Ceremony, and Reflections Contributing to the Care and Wellbeing of Indigenous Women Living with HIV in Canada," *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 11, no. 4 (2020): 1–19. See also the

are important research contributions that we can make as we are doing the process-heavy work itself.

Hard Habits to Break

In the fields of information studies, critical data, and digital studies, Indigenous research and community leadership has continued to demonstrate that the most rigorous methods for generating better, more accountable, and more true knowledges are process- and protocol-heavy. For example, the Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA) draws attention to some of the under-processed assumptions fueling scholarly (and other) enthusiasm for open access and open data. GIDA argues that "the current movement toward open data and open science does not fully engage with Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests," and they have proposed the principles of CARE (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics) to supplement the existing FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).[26] The FAIR principles emerged from growing international collaborations between researchers in education, government, science, medicine, libraries, museums, and archives to build digital infrastructure and standards for storing, sharing, and using data. As GIDA puts it, "The emphasis on greater data sharing alone creates a tension for Indigenous Peoples who are also asserting greater control over the application and use of Indigenous data and Indigenous Knowledge for collective benefit."[27] Whereas FAIR principles are concerned with technical applications for increased access and operability that prioritize

Memorial University guide, "For Researchers: Doing Indigenous Research in a Good Way," *Memorial University,* n.d., https://www.mun.ca/research/indigenous-research-at-memorial/for-researchers-doing-indigenous-research/.

26 Research Data Alliance International Indigenous Data Sovereignty Interest Group, "CARE Principles of Indigenous Data Governance," *Global Indigenous Data Alliance,* 2019, https://www.gida-global.org/care.

27 Ibid.

end-users, CARE principles prioritize processual values that are grounded in Indigenous sovereignty and cultural protocols.

GIDA researchers developed the CARE principles to complement "mainstream" "data-centric principles" with Indigenous frameworks that are "people- and purpose-oriented."[28] As Stephanie Russo Carroll and collaborators explain:

> While both Indigenous and mainstream principles identified data centric principles (such as those named in the FAIR Principles), the Indigenous frameworks emphasized people- and purpose-oriented principles…. The CARE Principles are designed to be complementary to the FAIR Principles and guide the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in data processes that strengthen Indigenous control for improved discovery, access, use, reuse, and attribution in contemporary data landscapes.[29]

Guiding researchers towards "the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in data processes" means introducing a significant shift in (settler) colonial research approaches to data and information. This involves a temporal shift towards time- and sense-intensive research partnerships. For example, this means taking responsibility to ensure that partnerships are "built around long-term relationships and community investments"[30] and working at an ethical pace that enables "learning the history of research relationships in the community, determining community-defined needs for future research relationships and going beyond the minimum required protections."[31] As Lydia Jennings and collaborators write, "It is critical to recognize historical research

28 Stephanie Carroll et al., "The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance," *Data Science Journal* 19, no. 43 (2020): https://datascience.codata.org/articles/10.5334/dsj-2020-043.

29 Ibid.

30 Lydia Jennings et al., "Applying the 'CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance' to Ecology and Biodiversity Research," *Nature Ecology & Evolution* 7, no. 10 (2023): 1548.

31 Ibid., 1549–50.

harms and to identify ways to maximize positive research outcomes. Worldviews and ethics frameworks differ across communities. Thus, researchers need to learn appropriately deemed methods of applying these frameworks to guide research in each community."[32] CARE-based practices require a research temporality that allows all participants to learn about and take into account harmful research histories and habits, to learn from existing methods and relationships within communities, and to work towards future community needs connected to these research materials and relationships. While most institutional research timelines — for grants, scholarships, degree completion, tenure and promotion, and so on — are served well by data-centric principles (grab the data and run), CARE demands that the time-intensive commitment to "including Indigenous Peoples in data processes"[33] determine the pace of a project. Extending the CARE principles, it feels like common sense that paying respect to past and future relationships is crucial to any contemporary work. However, settler research culture has incentivized centuries-old habits of disrespect, habits which have shaped institutional academic evaluative norms, and thus may feel very hard (and risky) to break.

Settler research culture has devalued, dismissed, and undermined Indigenous processes and protocols in the pursuit of individual reputation, field formation, and intellectual and institutional property. Writing about the necessity for the CARE Principles framework, and following Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work in *Decolonizing Methodologies* on legacies of Indigenous research practices, Carroll and collaborators note:

> Indigenous Peoples have always been "researchers," demonstrated by their collecting, analyzing, and managing data for decision-making, knowledge transfer, and other uses. Historical and ongoing colonialism disrupted, co-opted, and

32 Ibid., 1549.
33 Carroll et al., "The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance."

> suppressed Indigenous research methodologies and methods.[34]

Scholarly research has been central to the project of (settler) colonial white supremacy, justifying and normalizing settler claims to ownership, domination, and dominion. These claims are built on the long histories of what Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls "the white possessive,"[35] where whiteness is understood to be constituted through the ongoing theft of and claim to possess and own Indigenous lands and resources. "The white possessive" also denotes the orientation to always more theft and possession: "For centuries, the logics of [white] possession have treated the earth and its Indigenous peoples as something that is always predisposed to being possessed and exploited."[36] Settler colonial domination appetites feed on collective, compulsory, and habitual theft and dispossession, and academic logics of white possession are sustained by the disregard and disdain for Indigenous lifeways, including traditional protocols and community processes.

White possessiveness has also become the model for how academic systems expect researchers to approach all minoritized communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous): as potential intellectual property to be appropriated and possessed by and for the benefit of an individual researcher or institution, while normalizing and masking the system's own logics of domination. Combined, practiced and trained disregard and disdain are the imperial–colonial information technologies that steal land, extract data, and sustain colonial information logics: treating materials as if they have no inherent value and belong to no one, removing information from its contexts, and replacing community ownership with individual intellectual property, all under the benevolent auspices of saving sensitive materials

34 Ibid.

35 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

36 Ibid., 192.

and knowledges. Data collected and circulated in this way may very well be "findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR)," but not necessarily fair in the sense of equitable. Even when research projects are not primarily oriented within or towards Indigenous communities, all research structures need to be reshaped in order to dismantle the domination habits of academic knowledge production.

The pull towards scaled-up open-access research economies is sustained by settler colonial assumptions that everything should be accessible (to white settlers). As we've learned from scholars like Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, refusal is a generative praxis of Indigenous survivance, and in the context of digital design and scholarship, this praxis often takes the form of saying "no" to the settler colonial insistence that "information wants to be free."[37] Refusal is a "no" to coercive settler colonial

37 Kimberly Christen, "Does Information Really Want to Be Free? Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Question of Openness," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 2870–93. To see this praxis of refusal in action, as the ongoing design principle of an online Content Management System, see Mukurtu, "[t]he free, mobile, and open source platform built with Indigenous communities to manage and share digital cultural heritage," at https://mukurtu.org/. See also Local Contexts, an online research environment that "supports Indigenous communities to manage their intellectual and cultural property, cultural heritage, environmental data and genetic resources within digital environments. Local Contexts recognizes the inherent sovereignty that Indigenous communities have over knowledge and data that comes from their lands, territories, and waters." "Local Contexts — Grounding Indigenous Rights," *Local Contexts,* https://localcontexts.org/. For more on Black and Indigenous praxes and politics of refusal, see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis, 2014); and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities,* eds. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2014), 223–48.

logics of recognition, access, inclusion, and participation, and a "yes" to Indigenous resource and information management and anti-colonial research priorities. As a form of Indigenous information management, refusal means setting limits around what information can be shared — what should be accessible to all, what needs protecting — and provides a fundamental challenge to liberal settler colonial versions of truth and justice. As Audra Simpson puts it:

> To speak of limits in such a way makes some liberal thinkers uncomfortable, and may, to them, seem dangerous. When access to information, to knowledge, to the intellectual commons is controlled by the people who generate that information, it can be seen as a violation of shared standards of justice and truth.[38]

Indeed, if liberal values of justice and truth are violated when Indigenous, Black, and "other communities of overstudied Others"[39] refuse to share access to their things — resources, knowledges, and information that they have cultivated, cared for, and generated — we see quite starkly the extent to which liberalism is designed to protect white (settler) colonial property, possessions, value, and a mundane common sense of goodness.[40] For those trained and rewarded in the logics of settler colonial white possession, refusing to share information (with white people and institutions) might be experienced as not just confusing but insulting, offensive, or dangerous, as a form of hiding or lying, a betrayal of the liberal-colonial assumption that transparency equals honesty, truth, and justice.

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38 Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9 (2007): 74.

39 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 223.

40 For more on settler colonial common sense, see Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

Liberal colonial white possessiveness is not only a set of logics but also, and perhaps mostly, a set of emotional or affective attachments and habits. The scholarly *feeling* that we should be free to access any research materials that we desire — that our research is exposing injustice in order to create justice, that we should be entitled and trusted to take any information from any context to contribute to this righteous project of justice and truth — is supported by an extensive academic infrastructure of data policies (data-centric approaches to access), ethics review boards (get that consent, or call it "public domain"), and advancement, awards, and promotion (originality of individual authorship/authority). This is a prevailing affective infrastructure that we have come to think of as compulsory dispossessive normativity: the emotional and more-than-rational sense of entitlement that fuels, compels, and rewards extractive intellectual occupations. Educational institutions reproduce the domination logics and structures of power that form them (religious orders, the patriarchal family, the nation-state). In order to belong to, and in, these institutions, we must internalize what Sara Ahmed calls "feelings of structure": experiencing structures of domination as happiness, goodness, and rightness, and thus desirable.[41] These structures of domination are conventionalized as ideal research practices, so that when you're not doing domination, you're not doing research right. At every turn, we are trained and rewarded for reproducing longstanding and ongoing acquisitional, abductive,[42] possessive, and extractive habits that bolster and normalize settler colonialism. Even more, we

41 Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 226. See also Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

42 See M. Murphy, "Abduction, Reproduction, and Postcolonial Infrastructures of Data," *The Scholar & Feminist Online,* August 24, 2016, https://sfonline.barnard.edu/michelle-murphy-abduction-reproduction-and-postcolonial-infrastructures-of-data/.

are expected to experience and feel them as true, just, good, and right.[43] These are hard habits to break.

TFQ scholars, artists, and activists have long articulated modes of refusing the compulsory reproduction of desired and desiring embodiments, acceptable affective attachments and expressions, and expected temporalities. These TFQ worldmakers have taken up the concept of compulsion, and compulsoriness, to articulate the ways that these embodiments, desires, attachments, orientations, and temporalities are neither entirely forced nor freely chosen. Conceptual frameworks like compulsory heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, cis-normativity, homonormativity, and settler colonial hetero- and homonormativity[44] help us to

43 See Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive;* Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* 3rd edn. (London: Zed Books, 2021); Jen Evans and Emma Lee, eds., *Indigenous Women's Voices: 20 Years on from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's* Decolonizing Methodologies (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); M. Murphy, "Unsettling Care: Troubling Transnational Itineraries of Care in Feminist Health Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 5 (2015): 717–37; and Kai Recollet, *Choreographies of the Fall* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, forthcoming).

44 While it is impossible to reverse engineer the accumulative formulation of "compulsory dispossessive normativity," some of the texts that have shaped our thinking include Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980)," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 11–48; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Duc Hien Nguyen, "The Political Economy of Heteronormativity," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 55, no. 1 (March 2023): 112–31; Robert McRuer, "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities,* eds. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Bruegge-mann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: Modern Languages Association of America, 2002), 88–99; Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*; Karine Espineira and Marie-Hélène/Sam Bourcier, "Transfeminism: Something Else, Somewhere Else," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3, nos. 1–2 (2016): 84–94; Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* 100 (2008): 144–57; Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight*

understand not only the vast network of intimate, social, political and economic forces that punish us (some much more than white monied others) for failing or refusing to love our oppressions (or our oppressiveness), but also the intricate ways that we are seduced into feeling like there are no other ways to be, that the (gendered, sexualized, and racialized) maldistribution of life chances is natural, normal, inevitable, and ideal.

For us, Judith Butler's early writings on compulsory gender, sexual, and racial performativity keep feeling helpful in our attempts to describe the ways that the force of colonial dispossession becomes internalized, individualized, and compulsively reiterated, as well as the ways that this compelled reiteration is integral to our intelligibility, our survival, within academic careers and rewards structures. As we know, this compulsive performance of authorized knowledge — justified newness, "ground-breaking," "new-frontiers," originality — reveals, especially as it tries to hide, its incompleteness and fragility. If we take some liberties with Butler, we might say: "that [settler knowledge] is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it 'knows' its own possibility of becoming undone: hence, its compulsion to repeat which is at once a foreclosure of that which threatens its coherence."[45] We are compelled to repeat, reproduce, and normalize the violences of settler coloniality in/as our research habits in order to sustain the illusion of settler colonial stability and inevitability.

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of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012); Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics,* ed. Dana D. Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 11–48; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); and Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1 (2010): 105–31.

45 Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories,* ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 23.

However, even though these modes are normalized, they are not inevitable. Our framing of "compulsory dispossessive normativity" (or, if you prefer a perversely indulgent portmanteau, "compulsory dispossessivity") draws together Moreton-Robinson's work on white possessiveness and TFQ understandings of normativity and compulsoriness.[46] Doing the heavy processing work of drawing these frameworks together might help us to collectively imagine and enact research practices and structures that do not normalize systems of exploitation, and that render settler possessiveness unfathomable. We believe that the normalized compulsion to digital reproduction — the compelled urge to digitize, network, and online previously not-online materials, as well as the incentives to extract, scrape, and mine for bigger and bigger data — might offer researchers the opportunity to defamiliarize and denaturalize our participation in academic systems of exploitation. Rather than participating at the scale and speed (always bigger, always faster) that digital techno-culture normalizes, we can reject the norms of massification and acceleration, in order to severely and fabulously recast our research orientations, habits, protocols, and relationships.

Heavy Processing: Ceremony, Citation, Memory

Jennifer Wemigwans's book, *A Digital Bundle: Protecting and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge Online,* is deeply instructive for scholars working to divest from colonial information technologies even as we engage with the affordances of online archi-

46 Trans- feminist and queer studies and social movements — not coincidentally emerging primarily from these settler colonial cultures and geographies — have contributed to this effort of maintaining (and enforcing) the social, political, legal, and cultural assumptions, logics, and norms of white ownership. This is a central function of what Scott Morgensen calls "settler homonationalism" (Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism," 105). We are concerned with how these assumptions and expectations migrate into norms and habits of digital dispossession in the ongoing work of possessive colonial knowledge formation.

tectures and digital networks.[47] Wemigwans connects Indigenous traditional knowledges of renewal, preservation, and intergenerational transfer to "the field of new technologies and Internet studies,"[48] and she reflects on the creation of her website, FourDirectionsTeachings.com, as an effort to online Traditional Knowledge in ways that follow Indigenous protocols. She introduces the concept of the "digital bundle" to distinguish her project from settler colonial forms of using and putting Indigenous materials online. As she explains, "we have to be mindful of the care and passing on of bundles (whether physical bundles, special bundles of knowledge, or the gifts that we receive at birth), that they are sacred things, and that there is, or at least could be, a ceremony to go along with that process."[49] Whether it be a "metaphorical bundle of knowledge or a physical bundle of items," Wemigwans emphasizes contextually-embedded ceremonial processes of transfer, transformation, and responsibility to explain the ways that a "bundle" comes from somewhere, and binds one's responsibilities to that somewhere: "a bundle is most often associated with the manifestation of a very important and sacred thing that is spiritual, and not just physical, in nature."[50] A bundle is not simply an object, or collection of objects, but a gift with deep roots in place and context given in a way and by a person (or persons or more-than-persons) authorized by that context. For example:

> FourDirectionsTeachings.com can be considered as a digital bundle because it is a collection of teachings by respected Elders and Traditional Teachers who have shared Indigenous Knowledge that is highly regarded and valued by diverse Indigenous communities. These communities see FourDirectionsTeachings.com as a representation of Indigenous Knowledge ultimately derived from sacred sources—knowl-

47 Jennifer Wemigwans, *A Digital Bundle: Protecting and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge Online* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2018).

48 Ibid., 2.

49 Wemigwans, *A Digital Bundle,* 35.

50 Ibid., 35–36.

> edge that must be respected, cared for, and passed down for future generations and hence has the attributes of a community bundle.[51]

Understanding the Traditional Knowledges gathered online at FourDirectionsTeachings.com as "digital bundles" means learning that some forms of knowledge are not free for the taking, even when discovered through freely available online sources. This shift to understanding situated information as belonging and bound to specific communities, accessible exclusively through their own processes and protocols, involves a radical divestment from settler colonial digital research protocols which encourage us to treat "found" materials as resources to be extracted from their origins and framing contexts (think scanning and tagging, data mining, text mining, affect mining) and circulated to as wide an audience as possible. Working from an epistemic position of Indigenous resurgence, Wemigwans asks,

> [b]eyond safeguarding cultural heritage, how do we protect the flow of communication and access to Indigenous Knowledge for the next seven generations? Knowing that net neutrality is not a given and that access to the Internet and ICTs is not a government guarantee, how do Indigenous Peoples safeguard freedom of expression and access to Indigenous Knowledge online for future generations?[52]

In the context of the genocidal project of settler colonialism, Indigenous Knowledges (like Indigenous people, lands, and lifeways) are not safe. Neither ICT industry standards, governmental communications policies, nor well-intentioned international research initiatives dedicated to data justice, management, and stewardship can be entrusted with Indigenous Knowledge, life, well-being, and futures. Wemigwans situates the responsibility for and complexity of both safeguarding *and* communicating

51 Ibid., 36.
52 Ibid., 2.

Indigenous Knowledge within an expansive understanding of security and temporality. Ensuring future generations' access to Indigenous Knowledge means respecting, protecting, and keeping safe the sacred ceremonial processes and contextual values by which these knowledges have been held and passed on for centuries.

As Wemigwans makes clear, when working with Indigenous Knowledge, there is an important distinction between sacred and personal knowledges, and they involve very different kinds of protocols:

> Sacred teachings consist of Traditional Knowledge passed on through ceremonial protocols. Only Elders and Traditional Teachers who have been gifted the Indigenous Knowledge and teachings in this way can share those teachings publicly and transfer them. This type of Indigenous Knowledge is often considered as belonging to the community and held in trust by Knowledge Keepers and Elders expected to abide by the cultural protocols entrusted to that knowledge.
>
> Personal knowledge is acquired through individual educational pursuits, empirical processes, or the gifts that one is born with or has received through revealed knowledge, which includes spiritual knowledge gained through dreams, visions, intuitions, and meditations. Personal knowledge is not bounded by the cultural protocols of the community in the way that Traditional Knowledge is.[53]

This distinction between personal and Traditional knowledge is helpful in making connections but not equivalences, across different minoritized community knowledges and epistemic practices. TFQ heavy processing is not the same as Indigenous knowledge-transfer protocols. While TFQ heavy processing is concerned with CARE principles, and breaking the habits of compulsory dispossessivity, we must insist on remembering that what we are talking about in settler colonial TFQ com-

53 Ibid., 3.

munities does not compare to the sacred ways of working that Wemigwans and many others identify as "ceremonial protocols" led by Elders, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keepers for knowledge transfer, remediation, and safe-keeping. The connection we make here between TFQ community methods and Indigenous protocols is not to claim sameness, but, rather, to identify a possible set of affinities. There are many different kinds of what might be broadly (and, usefully, we hope) characterized as heavy processing, or process-heavy research practices. It is our hope that identifying this affinity for ways of heavy processing between TFQ and Indigenous communities might allow us to work together across fields and research communities of origin to rethink research cultures, economies, temporalities, and measures of what gets understood as scholarly rigor.[54]

As a settler scholar who has practiced protocol-rich methods for designing digital content management projects with collaborators "from six tribes — Colville, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, Umatilla, Yakama, and Warm Spring," Kimberly Christen proposes a way of working that she calls ETHICS (Engage, Talk, Help, Invest, Create, Support), a "framework for respectful digital archiving projects that create not just records, but relationships."[55] This six-part approach to building ethical digital archives with Indigenous Peoples and their materials involves the process-heavy commitment to relationships and accountability. We would add that each of these ETHICS practices can inform digitizing, researching, finding, using and/or onlining minoritized peoples' cultural materials. The second practice, "Talk," resonates especially for our heavy-process affinity tracing: "Start by talk-

54 Following Chela Sandoval's lead, we are "looking for the lines of force and affinity such writings share that link them with the theories, hopes, desires, and aims of decolonizing sex, gender, race, ethnic, and identity liberationists." Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.

55 Kimberly Christen, "Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities,* ed. Jentery Sayers (New York: Routledge, 2018), 411.

ing face-to-face with all interested parties. And then talk some more, and talk a little bit more. Often specific needs will unfold over the course of several in-person gatherings."[56] The commitment to talking and more talking, over time, through several different meetings in different settings, is a significant step away from the settler colonial governmental discourse on the "duty to consult" — where consultation, or what Jas calls "consultative dispossession,"[57] has historically and consistently worked against the interests of Indigenous Peoples. Christen notes that researchers doing community-based work for museums, archives, and universities need to meet outside those institutions: "go to the communities you want to engage, attend their public meetings, and do not have all your interactions in a university setting. Power rests in places."[58] As Christen clarifies further, prioritizing relationships means turning away from the general "'get it, curate it, share it' model and expand[ing] it to include *cultural, ethical, and historical checks* at each step," and "then we get a workflow that encourages collaboration, relies on historical specificity, and has ethical considerations embedded at every step. Finding or discovery should not be guided by a search paradigm that disregards the colonial histories of collection or upholds notions of access that privilege the public domain."[59] Committing to and practicing process-heavy digital research habits — which have built-in workflows (and concomitant timelines) for cultural-historical "checks," collaboration, and talking at every step — can be understood as part of the research design process for defamiliarizing and not reproducing the colonial histories of collection and entitled expectations for public access.

For those of us working in digital research environments, this relationship-forward, context-specific, heavy-process criti-

56 Ibid., 410.

57 Jasmine Rault, "Window Walls and Other Tricks of Transparency: Digital, Colonial, and Architectural Modernity," *American Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2020): 953.

58 Christen, "Relationships, Not Records," 410.

59 Ibid., 407, italics in original.

cal research methodology needs to be applied as much to our materials as to the digital tools we use and the knowledge systems that these tools reproduce. Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Heitman draw attention to the ways that humanities data are processed through settler colonial information technologies when they write, "From ink and quill maps representing the New World to the carefully stratified layers of an archeological site, data in the humanities are always subject to the systems of knowledge that were used to capture, represent, and disseminate them."[60] Such systems of knowledge are baked into most of our digital research methods and tools, including the technologies that have enabled so much of the field of the digital humanities:

> The advent of digital data aggregation, linked open data and computer vision (machine reading) techniques also raise additional concerns with the regard to the reuse and circulation of Native American and Indigenous data. Machine learning processes used to classify and categorize digital images rely on the segmentation of patterns. This can include the physical segmentation of bodies of Native people (e.g., faces, heads) — a form of violence that mirrors colonial practices where Natives are treated as less than human through segmented image representation (e.g., scalps, severed limbs, etc.). What's more, these computational processes further decontextualize and reappropriate culturally sensitive images of Native people, places, and practices.[61]

If the information technologies upon which we rely — from the systems of knowledge our academic disciplines inherit and enforce, to the digital tools we employ — reproduce settler colonial, anti-Black, and anti-TFQ logics, violence, and relations of power, we need to stop, step back, and invest in some heavy pro-

60 Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Heitman, "Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data," *Journal of Cultural Analytics* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1.

61 Ibid., 8.

cessing towards the creation of new information temporalities and technologies.

We frame heavy processing as an information technology to draw attention to ways of working against the violences performed by other information technologies and other data processes. We hope to indicate the ways that process-heavy research methods and protocols might operate as a countermeasure against predictive machine learning (algorithms) and other digital information technologies that reproduce epistemic and physical violence. In "Making a Killing: On Race, Ritual, and (Re)Membering in Digital Culture,"[62] Tonia Sutherland takes up the mechanisms by which networked digital platforms reproduce and profit from spectacles of Black suffering and death. Thinking about the need for mourning rituals and data reclamation in the aftermath of police killings of Black Americans, Sutherland carefully follows the digital visual reproduction and circulation of the death of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown, killed by a Ferguson (Missouri) law enforcement officer in 2014: "the hypervisual circumstances of Brown's death and the four hours that his body lay exposed on the street, and the ensuing documentary practices usurped community mourning rituals that would typically preserve and extend community bonds."[63] Sutherland puts the often-predatory and malicious digital documentation of dead and dying Black bodies into the context of African American and ancient rituals for grieving and homegoing:

> Black Americans have specific rituals around grieving, mourning, and death, and for many, death is not seen as an ending but as an important transitional ritual. Because for black Americans grief frequently occurs in the context of a substantially shorter life expectancy than for white Ameri-

62 Tonia Sutherland, "Making a Killing: On Race, Ritual, and (Re)Membering in Digital Culture," *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture* 46, no. 1 (2017): 32–40.

63 Ibid., 34.

> cans, that grief is often experienced alongside entanglements of anger, resentment, and feelings of injustice. […] For communities under the siege of what looks like state-sponsored violence and otherwise in crisis, controlling post-mortem narratives and images of the deceased is one way to re(member) the dead.[64]

Sutherland draws attention to the ways that past and present technologies — from postcards to autoplay — for the mass and uncontrolled circulation of images of violent Black death (of many, many Black deaths) are, largely, compulsive and compulsory dispossessive remediation processes that serve and sustain white supremacy. Rather than processing in ways that center the grieving families and communities and put control of these images and stories in their hands, the digital image complex — while fed by humans taking and uploading photographs and videos — is fueled and accelerated by AI and other information technologies that treat all images as data to be sorted and coded for search engine optimization. This process cleans human-centered grief, rage, and injustice, as well as attachment, joy, love, kinship, and collective and personal memory from the data. Algorithmic processes of search engines and online social media platforms reproduce images and videos for a maximalized, undifferentiated mass audience and they have no capacity to consider and make decisions based on the vastly different impacts and attachments these images acquire between those family and community members in mourning, their comrades and accomplices, curious onlookers, complicit bystanders, and outright haters.

As Sutherland explains, it is not necessarily the images themselves that dishonor the heaviness of these state-sanctioned, or police- and state-involved deaths, but the remediation technologies of automated and infinite recirculation that capitalize on and propel white supremacy, which claims entitlement to know, own, control, and humiliate Black bodies in life and death.

64 Ibid., 34–35.

Whiteness and racial capitalism thrive on the platform economies of these information technologies responding to the ever-repeating, expanding, rapacious, and decontextualized visual consumption of Black death(s) as a national and global obsession.[65] Corporate information technologies recalibrate digital visuality and human- and machine-circulation of images in heartless ways. For example, as Sutherland finds, "[i]n the years since Brown's death, Google Images has created several classes of filters for photographs of Brown such as 'dead,' '4 hours,' and 'the street.'"[66] These filters process images in the service of consumption and data harvesting, not mourning or remembering. Sutherland argues that,

> while communities of color have long engaged in ritual practices of (re)membering and bearing witness to violent acts as modes of resistance and mourning; in digital spaces these practices have been appropriated to reinforce systems of white supremacist power and racial inequality, re-inscribing structural and systemic racism.[67]

Platforms like Facebook, for example, might seem to offer space for, play host to, replicate, and even encourage online gatherings that foster community mourning; however, "the spectacle of black death that replays itself without purpose or context is traumatic."[68] These platforms not only "make a killing" from Black death(s) but, by stripping the images of their life-contexts, they also reproduce unsafety for Black, Indigenous, trans-, and other hate-targeted people.

The process of creating safety and context is offloaded from the platform to the users (people) most harmed. The hybrid online-offline, emotional-technological ritual work of remembering and grieving in and beyond digital culture, Sutherland

65 Ibid., 34.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 33.
68 Ibid., 38.

explains, "becomes the urgent matter of binding the uncontrollable, an intentional act of making the trauma, and the space where the trauma is encountered, safe."[69] For Sutherland, this becomes the "emotional labor" of "bearing witness," and of seeking out these uncontrollable "digital records and creat[ing] safe spaces in which to experience them,"[70] and of creating new forms of ritual. Safe-making is risky work, implicating and risking one's own wellbeing in the research process and outcomes.

Sutherland's practice has been central to our understanding of what we call "Risking IT" in the title of this chapter. As Sutherland describes her own process, we see and feel this as both a mode of human-computer interaction and a human-centered information system that involves absorbing and processing the heaviness of a moment, of a history, of collective futurity. Sutherland's work and her own processing of these images operate like a counter-program and counter-process to the automated replay and sorting of SEO and other algorithmic processes. Sutherland (also a co-author of the "Feminist Data Manifest-No") explains the weight of having to resist automation and the circulation of images and data in perpetuity. Her counter-process "prepares corpuses of data to be laid to rest when they are not being used in service to the people about whom they were created."[71] In *Resurrecting the Black Body: Race and the Digital Afterlife,* Sutherland further grounds the heaviness of this research in the context of bounded networked connections, relationships, and realities, and offers some recourse to the manufactured uncontrollability of massive and automated digital visual economies of anti-Black racism. She writes, "Preserving community memory for Black memory workers therefore is not just a vocation—rather, it is an invocation, a conjuring, a calling forth."[72]

In "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads," Jessica Marie Johnson writes

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Cifor et al., "Feminist Data Manifest-No."

72 Tonia Sutherland, *Resurrecting the Black Body: Race and the Digital Afterlife* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023), 148.

that "black digital practice is the interface by which black freedom struggles challenge reproduction of black death and commodification, countering the presumed neutrality of the digital."[73] This challenge is issued by centering Black life and futurity, even when focusing on death, enslavement, and dehumanization. As Johnson explains:

> Black digital practice requires researchers to witness and remark on the marked and unmarked bodies, the ones that defy computation, and finds ways to hold the null values up to the light. It compels designers to collaborate with the living descendants of the enslaved, who still claim as ancestor and kin those who can only be rendered in databases as "1" or a single pièce d'Inde.[74]

Johnson situates Black digital (and data) work within long histories of Black freedom practices (media use and creation, activism, scholarship), which call the researcher into relation and collaboration with lives past, present, and future. This work of collaboration, "challenges slavery scholars and digital humanists to feel this pain and infuse their work with a methodology and praxis that centers the descendants of the enslaved, grapples with the uncomfortable, messy, and unquantifiable, and in doing so, refuses disposability."[75] This process requires complexity, time, compassion, the feeling-knowing that even the long-passed have life, and putting the needs of descendants at the top of a priority list. What we are calling heavy processing might resonate with what Johnson identifies as "refusing disposability." Heavy processing requires that researchers hold the weight of research materials, collaborators' feelings, needs, and desired outcomes as consequential to our work, not as information that

73 Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads," *Social Text* 36, no. 4 (2018): 58–59.
74 Ibid., 70–71.
75 Ibid., 71.

we can choose to take or leave as it suits our academic ambitions, timeline, or budget clock.

Engaging in heavy processing as the norm — not the exception — in the digital humanities, science and technology studies, information studies, digital media studies, social media studies, and data studies would mean that, rather than looking for the "clean" line through a research problem or question, researchers would understand all of this work as inherently entangled, embodied, context-rich, and consequential. Jacqueline Wernimont concludes *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media,*

> with a call to rematerialize data, to make it into something that one can touch, feel, own, give, share, and spend time with […] allow[ing] us to engage mediation with a different ethos [… so] that we might imagine a resistant engagement that acknowledges the violence, and confronts it to imagine alternative ways of being, becoming, and dying with our media.[76]

Our thinking about heavy processing has been influenced by a Vibrant Lives workshop called "Hearing Eugenics" (created by Wernimont, Jessica Rajko, and Eileen Standley), which we attended at the 2016 FemTechNet conference at the University of Michigan. In it, we heard (or, experienced sonifications of) the heavy data on eugenic sterilization in California (1921–1953), pitching age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity through coded variations of electronic sound. For us, unlike reading (or being read) a spreadsheet containing names, numbers, and demographic details, experiencing this data through sound brought the weight of this information, these people and histories, to bear on our bodies in ways that we found we could not shake off or move past. As Wernimont writes, sounding the records of this grievous history "prompts listeners to consider how listen-

76 Jacqueline Wernimont, *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 163.

ing fits into reparative justice for the victims of sterilization."[77] In the various research projects, workshops, and experiments devised by Vibrant Lives, heavy numbers become processed through multiple media and embodied engagements — in sound, movement patterns and exercises, haptic designs, and textile weaving — as information technologies that "rematerialize data."

Heavy processing is a characteristic shared by many innovative materialist feminist information technologies, including "duoethnography," a "feminist methodological tool for collaboratively researching complex and everyday interactions between users, devices, and data, sites, and socio-technical systems,"[78] designed and practiced by Marika Cifor and Patricia Garcia (also co-authors of the "Feminist Data Manifest-No"). Working together to study gendered bias in the "universal design" of fitness-tracking devices, Cifor and Garcia use journaling, shared notes, and other "personal" forms, to "propose and describe four facets of the methodology: relationality, difference, dialogic process, and critical subjectivity."[79] Not unlike the feminist manifestos and feminist research environments like CLEAR that we discuss in chapter 2, the "collaborative intentionality of duoethnography […] views the personal as a valuable site of knowledge production, positions knowledge formation as a dialogic process, and promotes alternative ways of knowing and meaning making"[80] in Science and Technology Studies (STS) and the study of digital technoculture. Usually, TMI implies an aversion to too much *personal* information. But Cifor and Garcia's

77 Jacqueline Wernimont, "Hearing Eugenics," *Sounding Out!,* July 18, 2016, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2016/07/18/hearing-eugenics/.

78 Patricia Garcia and Marika Cifor, "Expanding Our Reflexive Toolbox: Collaborative Possibilities for Examining Socio-Technical Systems Using Duoethnography," *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 3, no. CSCW (November 7, 2019): 1–23. See also, Marika Cifor and Patricia Garcia, "Gendered by Design: A Duoethnographic Study of Personal Fitness Tracking Systems," *ACM Transactions on Social Computing* 2, no. 4 (2020): 1–22.

79 Ibid., 1.

80 Ibid.

duoethnography insists on crossing the TMI threshold, moving into the NEI (Not, or Never, Enough Information) territory of heavy processing. Not only does heavy processing require us to deal with heaviness in accountable, creative, non-derivative, and non-disposing ways, it also requires us to put our bodies on the line and to attend to research as risky, embodied, personal, entangled, complicated, and contradictory.

Ultimately, contending with the heaviness of our materials will lead us to increasingly heavy processes. Returning to the TMI/NEI threshold, we are reminded of Jen Jack Gieseking's research on data visualization of the "lives of trans- youth through Tumblr posts."[81] This is a project that Gieseking initiated many years ago, but as they write, their "research to date has been limited because it soon became apparent that studying patterns of text without being aware of the context of trans youths' experiences lead to the misinterpretation of their experiences and arguments."[82] Even though it is certainly the disciplinary norm to anonymously — and ostensibly, invisibly and objectively — extract data created or left by social media users, and to publish whatever findings suit the researcher's narrative or needs, Gieseking decided this was NEI. Rather than relying on industry-standard digital tools for data visualizations, pattern identification, and subsequent research conclusions, which abstract these stories from "living individuals," Gieseking is developing process-heavy methods to avoid decontextualizing trans youths' Tumblr "conversations and stories."[83] Gieseking's research remains rigorously in flux as they develop a,

> future participatory action research project [that] will involve trans youth offering insights and feedback on these in-process data visualizations, with the goal of creating a systematic series of ethical guidelines (per and across data visualization

81 Jack Gieseking, "Privacy in Public: Visualizing the Lives of Trans Youth through Tumblr Posts," *Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory* (DREC), May 10, 2020, http://www.drecollab.org/privacy-in-public/.

82 Gieseking, "Privacy in Public."

83 Ibid.

> platforms/approaches) in order to strengthen digital humanities research on behalf of social justice.[84]

Learning from almost a decade of researching "trans Tumblr," Gieseking is designing a research process that includes collaboration with trans youth who may be invested in the outcomes of research that could have relevance to their past, present, and future lives. TFQ heavy processing is attentive to the ways that extraction research logics are also justified by abstraction logics, which insist on the anonymity and inanimacy of data, along with the objectivity of researchers and their tools. Extraction and abstraction, however, are the research processes necessary for severing lives from data.

Risking IT (that is, risking heavy processing information technologies) means breaking up with compulsory dispossessivity and moving in with intimate accountability — Uhauling, if we've got the chops for it.[85] This break-up might be messy, and we might lose some stuff in the process (i.e., a grant, a job, a colleague), and without a doubt this can be scary and heartbreaking. If we really commit to inhabiting our TFQ process-heavy orientations, we find worlds of people are already there waiting for us, in and beyond the universities or other institutions where we work, thrilling on the research that makes knowledges in relationship-building and -growing. But, as we chronicle in the next chapter, to make it through this breakup, we need to hold on to our NIPS.

84 Ibid.

85 See lesbian Uhaul joke in chapter 1 of this volume.

CHAPTER 4

Networked Intimate Publics (NIPS)

> There's a structure in Castrima that glitters.
>
> — N.K. Jemisin, *The Fifth Season*[1]

In *The Fifth Season,* N.K. Jemisin imagines a subterranean community called Castrima, a hidden place that is built and sustained by the energies and skills of the most powerful, rare, reviled, and endangered specimens of humanity: the orogenes. *The Fifth Season* is the first book in Jemisin's Broken Earth trilogy, which follows Essun, a stealth orogene who is traveling through the volatile landscape of the series' sci-fi world, shattered by seismic ruptures which portend a long winter (the titular "fifth season"). Orogenes have the power to harness and direct the earth's elements: they have the ability to create and control earthquakes and can also radically transform temperatures to burn or freeze everything and everyone around them. In childhood, and throughout their lives, orogenes can accidentally destroy the lands and comms (communities) around them when they feel intense emotions. Essun is banished from her home comm when her orogenic powers are discovered, and she sets out on a journey from one life-threatening scenario to another, in search of her daughter, whom her non-orogenic hus-

1 N.K. Jemisin, *The Fifth Season* (New York: Orbit, 2015), 444.

band has kidnapped after killing their son, upon discovering the children's orogeny. Along the way, she joins up with two unlikely companions: Hoa, a mysterious young boy, and a commless trans woman named Tonkee. As befits the sci-fi genre, both turn out to have special powers (Hoa is an ancient being who can control and destroy animate/living stones and Tonkee is a genius geologist), and they combine forces to help Essun seek out a hidden comm, Castrima, "the place with all the orogenes."[2]

From the surface, Castrima is invisible, buried below ruins. Essun observes with disappointment and worry that the place seems abandoned. It doesn't even appear to be a comm. The road "vanishes completely near the middle of town" and "you can't see anything here."[3] It appears to have no way of protecting itself: "Worse, it doesn't have a wall. Not a stone pile, not a wire fence, not even a few sharpened sticks jabbed into the ground around the town perimeter. […] All the buildings are in wildly varied styles."[4] These varied styles concern her because "[t]his comm's visual message is… confused. Uncaring, maybe. Something you can't interpret."[5] She asks her companion, Hoa, "You sure this is the right place?"[6] These surface ruins turn out to be an architecture of safety. When Ykka, Castrima's Head Woman, invites the travelers into the marvelous underground, the built environment of Castrima, they "make the paradigm shift then: The abandoned village up there *is* the comm's wall. Camouflage rather than a barrier."[7]

Essun's description of finding Castrima might sound familiar to anyone who has tried to find the queer bar in an unknown town or city, being a traveler and finding that bar (probably called Secrets), or the feminist bookstore, or the trans-friendly shopping area in a strip mall, or a run-down, nondescript, frankly shitty little spot that looks like nothing at all from the

2 Ibid., 264.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 265.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 334.

outside. Jemisin conjures the feeling of being welcomed into the secret inner world that sparks this place into life, of seeing what has been and is being built by the people who make it, protect it, and keep it running:

> Castrima is a vast, vaulted cavern that is full of glowing crystal shafts the size of tree trunks. Big tree trunks. Or buildings. Big buildings. They jut forth from the walls in an utterly haphazard jumble: different lengths, different circumferences. […] They form struts and roads too steep to climb, going in directions that make no sense. It is as if someone found an architect, made her build a city out of the most beautiful materials available, then threw those buildings into a box and jumbled them up for laughs. And they're definitely living in it.[8]

To the uninitiated eye, Castrima looks cluttered, chaotic, disorienting. It makes no sense. But, Ykka explains, "This is what we're trying to do here in Castrima: survive. Same as anyone. We're just willing to innovate a little."[9] An underground city without oxygen, constructed from unmalleable crystal that easily shatters, is not, as Essun and her travel companions understand it, possible. Only when Essun starts to understand how decisions get made and resources shared does she realize these inner workings are built on trust, mutual aid, and reciprocal responsibility and that these relationships are the technological structures that make Castrima inhabitable. It is not only the crystal that glistens and glows, "[t]here's a structure in Castrima that glitters."[10]

8 Ibid., 338.
9 Ibid., 342.
10 Ibid., 444.

Female-Presenting NIPS

Castrima's glittering technology of survival, which might appear from the outside as confusing, chaotic rubble, or just nothing, strikes us as a brilliant description of, and analogy for, what we call Networked Intimate Publics (NIPS): those networks of intimate accountability that form an inward-facing public in order to practice — to prepare ourselves and our work for the outward-facing public. These are infrastructures for durational collective inquiry practices that buttress trans- feminist and queer (TFQ)[11] scholarly, artistic, and activist work.

Like heavy processing, our concept of NIPS also started as a sort of joke, a throwback to the 2004 Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake Superbowl "Nipplegate." During the mega-event of the half-time show, Jackson's breast was briefly exposed at the end of a dance number in which the two stars performed Timberlake's hit song "Rock Your Body." Conservative politicians in the United States responded with on-brand predatory racist and sexist outrage, demonizing Jackson (but not Timberlake) as a threat to American decency, ultimately morally mandating her (but not his) popstar career out of existence. "Hide your nips!" became an ironic cautionary joke/not joke, as the uneven consequences for the two stars became apparent.[12] Sixteen years later, "hide your nips" would gain even more bitter significance in the wake of the 2018 introduction of the sex-worker and trans- and queer- targeting FOSTA-SESTA[13] laws in the United States. Osten-

11 See our "TFQ: A Note on Terminology," in this volume, for a more detailed explanation of our framing of Trans- Feminist and Queer (TFQ).

12 Rob Sheffield, "How Nipplegate Created YouTube," *Rolling Stone,* February 11, 2020, https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/youtube-origin-nipplegate-janet-jackson-justin-timberlake-949019/.

13 FOSTA (Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act) and SESTA (Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act). For a good discussion of the ways these laws criminalize sex workers, see Danielle Blunt and Ariel Wolf, "Erased: The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA and the Removal of Backpage on Sex Workers," *Anti-Trafficking Review* 14 (2020): 117–21. For an introduction to the ways FOSTA-SESTA contributes to violence against trans and queer people, see Anna North, "The LGBTQ Rights Issue 2020 Democrats Still Aren't Talking about," *Vox,*

sibly invoked as a joint measure to "fight online sex trafficking" and to "stop enabling sex traffickers," these laws made online service providers liable for user-generated content and responsible for banning anything that may be perceived as advertising sex. Since online content moderators (both AI and human) have difficulty identifying images circulated in the context of sex trafficking, FOSTA-SESTA led to sweeping new community guidelines and prohibitions against anything that might be perceived as nudity and sexual content, thus effectively creating a legal framework to eradicate the online communities of two non-trafficked groups: sex workers[14] who used their online profiles and ads to screen clients and create safer working conditions for themselves and each other, and queer and trans people who used sites like Tumblr to create and sustain vital visual cultures of identity exploration. As Tumblr announced to its users on December 3, 2018, "Our new Community Guidelines will go into effect on December 17, 2018. Newly uploaded content flagged as adult will no longer be allowed on Tumblr. We'll

November 4, 2019, https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/11/4/20913671/sex-work-workers-lgbtq-fosta-sesta-2020.

14 Drawing on the work of Stacey Hannem and Alex Tigchelaar's "Sex Work is Real Work" research project (in collaboration with with REAL: Resources, Education, Advocacy for Local Sex Work), we use these terms according to the understanding that,

> sex work [i]s distinct from human trafficking (which implies coercion), this deliberate framing focuses on individuals who view their activities as labor — *a voluntary means of providing for him/herself.* This choice reflects REAL's perspective that individuals who define their experience as trafficking or coerced sexual exploitation face very different challenges than those who consider themselves to be engaged in sex work. However, this should not be taken to mean that understanding sex work as a form of labor frames it as necessarily empowering or positive, any more than work as, for example, a barista or housecleaner should be understood as empowering. (Stacey Hannem and Alex Tigchelaar, "Doing It in Public: Dilemmas of Images, Voice, and Constructing Publics in Public Sociology on Sex Work," *Symbolic Interaction* 39, no. 4 [2016]: 643)

also begin flagging and removing existing adult content with the ultimate goal of removing as much of it as we can."[15]

With the passing of this double-barreled law, the banned adult content "primarily includes photos, videos, or GIFS that show real-life human genitals or female-presenting nipples, and any content — including photos, videos, GIFS and illustrations — that depicts sex acts."[16] This effectively outlawed TFQ communities' accustomed terms of use.[17] Similar to the political fury following Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" in 2004, the public display of "female-presenting nipples" is targeted as dangerous.

Tumblr, an online microblogging platform that had, from its launch in 2007, been embraced by trans people as a platform for individual and collective self-expression, did not defend itself as a "trans technology,"[18] despite its massive and loyal user-base of trans people posting transition photos, stories, and other trans lifelines. While Tumblr stipulated that some "examples of exceptions that are still permitted are exposed female-presenting nipples in connection with breastfeeding, birth or afterbirth moments, and health-related situations, such as post-mastectomy or gender confirmation surgery,"[19] many Tumblr users protested, indicating that these exceptions imposed significant restrictions on their collective practices of presenting themselves (including their chests) beyond a medical context on the platform; furthermore, the qualifier of "female" created an impossible bind to trans people across experiences and embodi-

15 "Updates to Tumblr's Community Guidelines," *Tumblr Support Blog,* December 3, 2018, https://www.tumblr.com/@support/180758979032/updates-to-tumblrs-community-guidelines.

16 Ibid.

17 Cookie Cyboid, "Want To Know Why Tumblr Is Cracking Down On Sex? Look To FOSTA/SESTA," *Medium,* December 25, 2018, https://medium.com/the-establishment/want-to-know-why-tumblr-is-cracking-down-on-sex-look-to-fosta-sesta-15c4174944a6.

18 Oliver L. Haimson et al., "Tumblr Was a Trans Technology: The Meaning, Importance, History, and Future of Trans Technologies," *Feminist Media Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021): 345–61.

19 "Updates to Tumblr's Community Guidelines."

ments of gender and sex. All of this made us even more pro-nips than we already were.

We latched onto nips as a site of trouble, and started considering how NIPS (Networked Intimate Publics) might work as a framework to account for the tensions between what is and what is not exposed, and for the agency of and within acts of exposure. With Haimson, Dame-Griff, Capello, and Richter, we are also thinking about "how future social technologies can learn from [pre-2018 Tumblr] to welcome, and perhaps even design for, trans communities."[20] Amidst the banning of nipples and the generalized trans- and racist misogyny against female-presenting online existence,[21] we need technologies of TFQ NIPS, developed well before the internet, to help us build life-affirming and harm-reducing ways to collectively navigate the contemporary realities of our hybrid online-offline livelihoods, embodiments, and existences.

In Chapter 2, we describe manifestos as feminist Central Processing Units (CPUS) and one of the public forms that heavy processing can take. That is, we understand manifestos as technologies by which "feminists talk to each other […] yell at each other, and demand better from each other" in public. In this final chapter, we consider the Castrima-esque inward-facing and outward-facing orientations of heavy processing in the context of digital culture and increasingly compulsory "networked publics."[22] We focus on the rigors and pleasures of TFQ NIPS as the working-together conditions through which any artistic, activist and/or scholarly works (including manifestos)

20 Haimson et al., "'Tumblr Was a Trans Technology,'" 346.

21 For excellent research on the various ways FOSTA-SESTA led to the deplatforming and shadow banning of sex workers, see Amber Davisson and Kiernan Alati, "'Difficult to Just Exist': Social Media Platform Community Guidelines and the Free Speech Rights of Sex Workers," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 1 (2024).

22 danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites,* ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 39–58.

are created and released into the larger world. Artistic, activist, and academic NIPs are uniquely focused simultaneously on inward- and outward-facing practices: inward-facing critical practices like getting to know each other, drafting, rehearsal, review, building trust, having disagreements, being corrected, learning how to listen, meeting, processing, and protocol-building, *and* on outward-facing critical practices like public exhibitions, demonstrations, performances, interventions, and publications.[23] NIPs run on methods of heavy processing, and heavy processing relies on building and cultivating NIPs. You can't have one without the other.

NIPs and the work that takes place within them are rarely made public, but they are the incubators through which TFQ work becomes public. NIPs are comprised of people supporting, challenging, changing, protecting, and loving each other and our ideas before anyone or thing makes it to the stage, the wall, the screen, the classroom, the book. While scholarly, artistic, and activist value tends to be vested in the fantasy of indi-

23 In our work designing and building the *Cabaret Commons,* "critical" and "practices" are keywords that guide our protocols. On "critical," Carina Emilia (Islandia) Guzmán writes,

> [m]aking the show happen is critical. Creating, performing, and showing up are critical. The dialogue is portable, it is happening as we perform, as we watch, think, write. Understanding what does not work, engaging with mistakes, having a feminist spectatorship, practicing critical generosity, reparative reading and criticality is what we are here for. A critical relationship with cabaret is a socially, politically, sexually, culturally, physically transformative and transforming practice. (Islandia [Carina Emilia] Guzmán, "Critical," *Cabaret Commons,* October 8, 2018, https://cabaretcommons.org/critical-practice/critical.)

On "practice," Stephen Lawson writes,

> [p]ractice and practising are intrinsically linked, the doing and undoing, an engaged and never ending pursuit, a mode of being, an action or a ritual that can be repeated but never perfected. The practice is where the public and private intersect, often on the backs of unpaid labour, a labour that sometimes involves love, at other times an obsessive repetition and treacherous deconstruction in the attempt to reach the impossible complete articulation. (Stephen Lawson, "Practice," *Cabaret Commons,* November 8, 2018, https://cabaretcommons.org/critical-practice/practice)

vidual genius, NIPs are the semi-secret intellectual, emotional, and material resource-sharing collaborations that make genius possible. NIPs are the experimental and volatile "we" that underwrites any TFQ artistic, activist, scholarly "I."

NIPs are a way for us to articulate the vexed relationship that TFQ scenes navigate between offline, or not-exclusively online, local-facing work — shows, flyers, posters, zines, books, and so on — and work that is made for the undifferentiated public of the internet. Many of the TFQ cultural modes and methods of taking care of each other and practicing accountability do not translate easily to the context-collapsing public-facing internet. These modes and methods include, but are not limited to: expecting, practicing, protecting, and reveling in risky behaviors, ideas, fashions, performances, politics, jokes, bodies (and bawdies); supporting but also challenging each other; fighting, hooking up, and breaking up; and going to that party/protest/meeting/café, even knowing that ex who you can't stand and who can't stand you will be there, because you're less committed to avoiding that ex than you are to building and being built by these TFQ alter-worlds[24] as the only way to imagine surviving, thriving, and fighting amidst the daily indignities and violences of regular public life. TFQ people have been compelled to develop both a demand for and a wariness of public life alongside a fluency with variegated strategies of concealment and protection as practices of care (care of the self, but often even more, care of the companion friends and strangers building these TFQ worlds with, through, and for you).[25]

We have tended to characterize heavy processing as a decidedly inward-facing method: the long, slow, often painful, some-

24 This term resonates with M. Murphy's concept of "alterlife" as a way to account for the "expansive chemical relations of settler colonialism" that describes both "an entrapment in and a response to each other's life supports and conditions." M. Murphy, "Alterlife and Decolonial Chemical Relations," *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (2017): 497, 498.

25 Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018) is essential reading for this work.

times pleasurable work of building relationships outside of the public eye. Now we turn our attention to the role of heavy processing in creating the conditions of possibility for TFQ life in public, ideas in public, and aesthetics in public. We see NIPS as the glittering, dirty,[26] glowing, confusing, cluttered communication structures that help us mind (negotiate and mediate) the gap between heavy processing — experimenting with analyses of the tendernesses, vulnerabilities, fears, joys, anxieties, humiliations, risks, successes, and failures, experienced and observed — and the public works we make from these analyses.

We have had the good fortune of building and being invited into several NIPS in our lives, both together and as co-independent people. We first started formulating our ideas about intimate accountability networks with a handful of feminist scholars at The New School in New York City between 2013 and 2015. Together we applied for and used funds from a couple of small grants of about $4,000 to meet for working dinners every month or two at a corner table in a West Village restaurant to check in with each other on career and other concerns, to read and respond to early and delicate forms of each other's works (including email drafts, writing for presentation or publication, creative projects, vague ideas for public programming, and so on), and to host a few excellent events. Indeed, although the grants were primarily awarded to fund these public-facing events with invited speakers drawing appreciative audiences, the real goal, and success, of these funded projects was in building and exercising shared commitments to intersectional, interdisciplinary, cross-rank feminist collaboration and the redistribution of risks, resources, and rewards.

Three lessons emerge from this experience for us. First, the public or professional outcomes we created had integrity. We worked effectively together to pull the events off and we hosted

26 As Cowan writes in the GLITTERfesto, "Glitter is shiny dirt." T.L. Cowan, "GLITTERfesto: An Open Call in Trinity Formation for a Revolutionary Movement of Activist Performance Based on the Premise That Social Justice Is Fabulous," *Canadian Theatre Review* 150 (April 2012): 21.

the events with an openness and generosity that we rarely experienced in the New York City academic scene. This was a professional network that was more interested in building relationships than professional profiles, more about cooperative sandcastle creation than competitive ladder-climbing. Anecdotally, this means that we tried to be nice to people we met, remembering their names when we saw them again, and not spending our time at academic events looking over the shoulder of the person we were talking with to see if there was someone more important in the room, no matter what institution they were working at, no matter who their graduate supervisor had been, no matter if they were staff or faculty, had a permanent or a precarious position. Second, the funds led to an even more important outcome than the events we produced: they went toward a much greater TFQ good of creating a NIP. That is, getting our hands on some funding to pay for a few meals where we could spend the time to check in: to learn what was happening in each person's (professional and personal) life, what was driving or obstructing their public-facing work (of teaching, publishing, administrative policymaking, exhibiting, performing), how we could support each other across our very different roles and ranks at our universities (as adjunct, limited term, or tenured faculty, as "equity officer," or programming manager). And third, the affective and intellectual success of our outward-facing events was entirely dependent upon the intimate accountability, tenderness, and compassion for each other that we had built during those working dinners in which we spent much more time checking in than we did event planning. Checking in feeds event planning. Also, food is a feminist method.

We also learned a lot about NIPS from our experiences as early members and eventual co-facilitators of the Feminist Technology Network (FemTechNet). As a network, from 2013-2016, we created many outward-facing projects, including the Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC), a website, dozens of video dialogues posted online, conference panels, in-person and hybrid meet-ups, blogs, collaboratively written publications, successful and unsuccessful grants, and much,

much more.[27] None of this would have been possible without the deliberate, painstaking, intimate accountability labors of building trust with each other by showing up to those meetings and doing a lot of heavy processing.[28] We met together weekly or bi-weekly on Fridays, sometimes (but rarely) in person, usually online over Bluejeans (squatting on the institutional subscription shared by one FemTechNet member), again checking in, and working through project ideas and iterations created by small clusters (committees) within the larger network. The senior scholars of FemTechNet modeled for us cross-rank solidarity, resource sharing, and redistribution as academic survival tactics and economies in the context of vast disparities in professional opportunities, security, access, and income. There were so many differences — of opinions, plans, backgrounds, professional and political positions, in what people wanted and needed from this network experiment. But it seemed to us that

27 Some of this outward-facing work is recorded on the FemTechNet website at https://www.femtechnet.org/. For more on FemTechNet's outward facing work, see Alexandra Juhasz and Anne Balsamo, "An Idea Whose Time Is Here: FemTechNet, A Distributed Online Collaborative Course (DOCC)," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 1, no. 1 (2012): https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/26291; Elizabeth Losh, "Together Apart: FemTechNet and Feminist Online Collectives," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 31, no. 3 (2016): 133–39; and Karen T. Keifer-Boyd, "FemTechNet Distributed Open Collaborative Course: Performing Difference, Exquisite Engendering, and Feminist Mapping," in *Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement,* ed. Ryan Shin (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 278–96.

28 For more on FemTechNet's practices, see the FemTechNet Roadshow blog series with essays by Jasmine Rault, Lisa Brundage and Emily Sherwood, alex cruse, Maria-Belén Ordóñez, T.L. Cowan, K.J. Surkan, Karen Keifer-Boyd, sky croeser, and Melissa Meade and Cricket Keating: "FemTechNet Roadshow Table of Contents," *FemTechNet,* August 11, 2015, https://www.femtechnet.org/2015/08/femtechnet-roadshow-table-of-contents/; FemTechNet Collective, "FemTechNet: A Collective Statement on Teaching and Learning Race, Feminism, and Technology," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 39, no. 1 (2018): 24–41; and the contributions by Veronica Paredes and T.L. Cowan in Dorothy Kim et al., "Race, Gender, and the Technological Turn: A Roundtable on Digitizing Revolution," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 39, no. 1 (2018): 149–77.

what kept people coming back, what hooked people to the work, was a driving desire to "mak[e] the accessible, open, accountable, transformative and transforming educational institutions of our dreams."[29] Like so many before and after us, we were trying to build the university that our universities seem to render impossible; or, to build the research and teaching conditions that no university — invested as they are and always have been in missions of heterocolonial, patriarchal, racial, and class management and reproduction — would ever provide.[30] The project that drew people to FemTechNet, like our little New School group, was not any particular outcome or outward-facing event, publication, or presence. It was the project of trying (and often failing) to build relationships that would serve as resources for our individual (and collective) outward-facing work, whether that be publication, teaching, exhibition, website development, public programming, or events hosting.

In 2016, after several years of working within and across various university contexts, FemTechNet shifted its network orientation from academic institutions to the Allied Media Conference (AMC), a Detroit-based, activist-driven annual gathering that could include but was not oriented to academic professions.[31] For twenty-three years, AMC was beloved, especially in

29 FemTechNet, "Manifesto," *FemTechNet,* 2014, https://femtechnet.org/publications/manifesto/.

30 This resonates for us with Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's *Undercommons* and la paperson's *A Third University is Possible,* but also with the Women's School (1972–1992). See Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013); la paperson (K. Wayne Yang), *A Third University Is Possible* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Jasmine Rault, "Feminist," *FemTechNet: FTN Roadshow Blog Series,* May 19, 2015, https://www.femtechnet.org/2015/05/ftn-keyword-blog-series-feminist/; and Say Burgin, "White Women, Anti-Imperialist Feminism and the Story of Race within the US Women's Liberation Movement," *Women's History Review* 25, no. 5 (2016): 756–70.

31 FemTechNet worked together (via online meetings, mostly) throughout the year, building its Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC) and other unique collaborative pedagogical, research, and research-creation projects. From 2013–2015, we also organized network gatherings at sum-

the US and Canada, as an anti-racist, Black, Indigenous, TFQ-led "community-designed experiment in visionary organizing, community care and social justice coalition-building toward liberation."[32] We spend more time on the NIPS technologies of AMC below, but we want to briefly point to AMC's role in the transformation of FemTechNet. The shift from presenting FemTechNet's work and worth to academic-professional organizations, associations, and institutions to bringing our work into conversation with AMC realigned FemTechNet's accountability within and to anti-racist TFQ and crip media activist networks. This was a move away from primary accountability to (while also trying to break) academic logics, even though most of the FemTechNet-ers involved in this shift were still students or faculty in colleges and universities. Within the prevailing, predominant whiteness of FemTechNet, one of the many standing committees began as the Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Committee, which its members transformed into the Situated Critical Race and Media (SCRAM) collective. Propelled by the vision, commitments, labor, and momentum of SCRAM, FemTechNet organized our first Network Gathering at AMC in 2017.[33] Network Gath-

mer workshops, which were hosted in different "nodes" across locales and different time zones, in the US and Canada. The nodes worked together synchronously and asynchronously, with each site also devising projects that participants in that locale wanted to work on. For example, the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Working Group (later, *SCRAM*: Situated Critical Race & Media) was initiated by the West Coast gathering in 2014. These hosting sites included people's homes, the School of Media Studies at The New School in New York City, Yale University, and the Institute for Research on Women & Girls (IRWG) at the University of Michigan. In 2016 FemTechNet held a large network conference organized at the University of Michigan.

32 Allied Media Projects Team, "Sunsetting the AMC," *Allied Media Conference,* April 30, 2023, https://amc.alliedmedia.org/sunsetting-the-amc. The Allied Media Conference ran annually for 23 years, and has officially come to a close in 2023. See the link above to read more about their decision to "sunset the AMC."

33 While proposals for Network Gatherings were reviewed, selected, and hosted by the larger Allied Media Conference, they took place one day before the official conference began, could be "open" or "closed" (as in,

erings were central to the work of AMC, and while they ran as semi-independent collateral events, this space and time was set aside so networks could focus on their inner workings, making them more able to make good decisions about what aspects of the network they would share with the larger conference, and the larger world beyond the conscientious and consent-driven AMC big hug universe.

While many FemTechNet participants took part in the larger conference that year — forming panels to present research and workshops to share methods — the day-long Network Gathering was dedicated to inviting participation "for mutual care and kick-ass projects."[34] The Gathering was oriented less to showing off our work for professional advancement (the underlying promise of most academic conference presentations), than to building networks that can "support each other and create online spaces that value ethics, care, reciprocity, safety and privacy at their core."[35] As longtime FemTechNet organizer and SCRAM co-founder, Veronica Paredes, explains, "in place of [FemTechNet's] outcome-focused shared vision and dedication to learning projects, SCRAM focuses on racial and social justice, multimodal praxis-based scholarship, and community building."[36] As friends and admirers of SCRAM, we have learned so much about rigorous intimate accountability from this collective, about the care-full relationship-building work that needs to happen

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open to newcomers or not) and dedicated to whatever work that any network/group/coalition wanted to do.

34 "FemTechNet Network Gathering @ Allied Media Conference," Call for Participation announcement, internal FemTechNet organizational archive (private), 2017. This call was circulated as widely as we could manage, through our various activist, artistic, academic, and pedagogical networks. At the time of writing, it still seems to exist in a few accessible places online, including on the blog for the University of Oregon's New Media and Culture Certificate, at https://newmediaculture.uoregon.edu/2017/04/12/femtech-network-gathering-allied-media-conference/.

35 Ibid.

36 Veronica Paredes, "Natural Metaphors for Network Gathering: Technologies of Meeting at the Allied Media Conference," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 8, no. 2 (2022): 1–21.

before and beyond any public-facing "outcome" is developed, about generative refusal ("SCRAM," as in, "no, this meeting is not open to everyone"; "SCRAM," as in, "go away"), and about strategic sharing. One can read, for example, their "Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook,"[37] as well as their initially inward-facing love letters to each other, which they have made outward-facing in presentations and online through their own NIPS processes.[38] SCRAM is a structure that glitters.

Our accounts of these NIPS are brief, because we do not want to author-ize these stories; we do not believe that they are our stories, or not *only* our stories to tell. For us, citational politics are complicated when solo-author, or in our case duo-author, accounts claim authority to the story of many. However, we want to account for the ways that these NIPS have been central to our idea-formations and to our current and ongoing networked intimate publics.

A Public, Not *The* Public

Since 2011, when we received our first Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Development Grant for a project entitled "Feeling Speculative in Digital Space," we have been developing our thinking and practices about TFQ digital archiving. This first grant was product-oriented. We thought we were going to build an online research environment called the Cabaret Commons, which we promised would be an "Online Archive, Anecdotal Encyclopedia & Gossip Rag for Trans- Feminist and Queer Artists, Activ-

37 Anne Cong-Huyen et al., "FemTechNet Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook," *Scalar,* https://scalar.usc.edu/works/ftn-ethnic-studies-pedagogy-workbook-/index.

38 SCRAM (Alexandrina Agloro, Anne Cong-Huyen, George Hoagland, Kristy H.A. Kang, Veronica Paredes, and Hong-An Wu), "Love Letters," *Media Map Lab,* n.d., https://www.mediamaplab.com/#filter=.love-letters.

ists, and Audiences."[39] However, as we have written elsewhere,[40] we soon realized that what we initially thought was going to be a marvelous, outward-facing, whole-wide-world extravaganza of TFQ cabaret and other performance materials was, in fact, not a good idea at all.[41] We came to understand that so many of the small-world TFQ performance spaces and scenes that we were part of as performers, organizers, and audience members, were themselves actually NIPS. That is, they were shows and parties created for *a public,* but not *the public.* In Performance Studies terms, this is akin to the difference Richard Schechner has identified between an integral audience and an accidental audience. An integral audience is a public of "people who know each other, are involved with each other, support each other," and are in some way "necessary to the work of the show."[42] An accidental audience, on the other hand, is *the* (general) public of people who come to see a publicly-advertised, open-to-all show without knowing anyone involved or feeling obliged to attend, and for whom the material of the performance as well as its

39 T.L. Cowan, Dayna McLeod, and Jasmine Rault, "Cabaret Commons: An Online Archive & Anecdotal Encyclopedia for Trans- Feminist and Queer Artists, Activists and Audiences," *The Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory* (CWRC), n.d., https://cwrc.ca/project/cabaret-commons.

40 See Dayna McLeod, Jasmine Rault, and T.L. Cowan, "Speculative Praxis Towards a Queer Feminist Digital Archive: A Collaborative Research-Creation Project," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 5 (July 2014): https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/26990; T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy," *ephemera: theory & politics in organization* 14, no. 3 (2014): 471–88, http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/labour-being-studied-free-love-economy; T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "Onlining Queer Acts: Digital Research Ethics and Caring for Risky Archives," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (2018): 121–42; and T.L. Cowan, "Don't You Know That Digitization Is Not Enough? Digitization Is Not Enough! Building Accountable Archives and the Digital Dilemma of the Cabaret Commons," in *Moving Archives,* ed. Linda M. Morra (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020), 43–56.

41 See our Introduction in this volume for more on what we first thought this project would look like.

42 Richard Schechner, "Selective Inattention: A Traditional Way of Spectating Now Part of the Avant-Garde," *Performing Arts Journal* 1, no. 1 (1976): 13.

integral audience are new or unfamiliar. Schechner also notes that the integral audience (audience members "in the know") becomes part of the spectacle for an accidental audience, and so will likely also be conspicuous and keenly observed. Importantly, unlike the integral audience, the accidental audience has no responsibility to or for the performers or performance. Over the past decade we have been researching what this difference means for TFQ archives and research cultures in digital environments, which can collapse *a* public (an integral audience) with *the* public (an accidental audience).

Even though we have both been deeply immersed in TFQ performance cultures as organizers, performers, and spectators, or perhaps because of our immersion in these scenes, we had normalized the "integralness" and intimacy of the audiences who were part of the cabaret worlds, worlds we proposed to expose to the whole wide world of accidental, not in-the-know audiences through our online research environment. Learning from a familiar experience, one we share with many of our TFQ performer comrades, of receiving a hostile (or worse, indifferent) reception when we bring our "big hits" (with our home audience) to non-TFQ audiences, or even a TFQ audience in a different scene or city, we realized that our initial plans did not account for the intimate responsibilities that local scenes make with and for each other. So, creating an open-access archive of cabaret materials (videos, photos, playbills, posters, organizational correspondence, etc.), or the Cabaret Commons as we first imagined it, would expose these materials and people to potential audiences so far beyond their local contexts, that the project risked creating far more harm than good. This led us to shift the scale and focus of our research: rather than a mass-digitization project of archival materials from small TFQ cabaret scenes, we began to cultivate NIPS as our research infrastructure and heavy processing as our method, to reflect and respect the infrastructures and processes of intimate responsibility and accountability that sustain these scenes and keep them safe (or as safe as possible). Thinking with and about NIPS helps us to account for the fact that these small-scale local performance

scenes were *a* public and not *the* public; a TFQ public cultivated for experimentations of identities and embodiments, as much as experiments in aesthetic, political, and comedic forms, which are not yet or not ever intended for the public. Additionally, as we indicate above, we realized that every good TFQ thing we had ever been part of was always made in and by a NIP, usually with the help of a lot of heavy processing. We would be nowhere and have nothing without NIPS.

Scholars of digital culture have long been tracking shifting understandings and practices of publics and privacy. What feels like many internet lifetimes ago, in 2011, danah boyd offered the concept of "networked publics" to describe a new understanding of social life in public that is enabled, or afforded, by online social networking sites.[43] boyd's study explained how, for the most part, participants on these sites cannot know, or often lose track of, who their audiences are, even when they might assume they are addressing an intended (or integral) audience of friends and carefully chosen acquaintances. In the context of this networked architecture, their posts can be taken up by anyone, from friends of friends to curious strangers to hostile unchosen family trolls to stranger trolls, bots or not. As a result, our interactions are neither private nor public in ways that we have known before. After so many years, increasingly predatory data practices, disinformation campaigns, hashtag-galvanized social movements, "algorithms of oppression,"[44] "automated inequalities,"[45] and "engineered inequities"[46] have made boyd's analysis of the changing conditions of public, private, and social life introduced by these networks seems almost quaint. Her conclusion reads as jarringly understated prescience: "As social network sites and other genres of social media become increas-

43 boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics," 39–58.

44 Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

45 Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).

46 Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

ingly widespread, the distinctions between networked publics and publics will become increasingly blurry."[47] Indeed, when every broadcast media company, politician, university, protest movement, coffee shop, backyard gallery, living room cabaret, pop-up trans bar, fashion show, feminist bookstore, queer barber, organic micro-farm, and drag queen brunch and story hour has a website and social media profiles, the distinctions between "public" and "networked public" seem like history lessons. And for those of us who know that moving into any public (pre- or hyper-networked) involves navigating the entitled violences of white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, carceral, colonial, capitalist nationalisms (thank you, bell hooks),[48] this has meant returning to and repurposing existing, pre-digital, TFQ methods (heavy processing and NIPS) for emergent media environments.

Digital network technologies are sometimes celebrated as media of connectivity, offering a broader impact, and more specifically, offering TFQ people a way out of, or respite from, localized alienation, hostility, harassment, and violence. However, these same digital affordances and platforms, which enable larger audiences and connections, have proven to serve as tools for increased or ongoing forms of alienation, regulation, surveillance, exploitation, hostility, harassment, and violence.[49] It

47 boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics," 55.

48 bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), and bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

49 See Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016); Aristea Fotopoulou, "Translocal Connectivity and Political Identity: Brighton Queer Cultural Activism," in *Communicative Approaches to Politics and Ethics in Europe,* eds. Nico Carpenter et al. (Estonia: Tartu University Press, 2009), 165–78; Aristea Fotopoulou, *Feminist Activism and Digital Networks: Between Empowerment and Vulnerability* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Aristea Fotopoulou and Kate O'Riordan, "Introduction: Queer Feminist Media Praxis," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 5 (July 2014): https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/26818; *The Digital Alchemists,* "The Respect Wheel," Center for Solutions to Online Violence (CSOV), 2016, http://femtechnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Respect-color.png; David B. Nieborg and Thomas Poell, "The Platformization of Cultural

has never been and is still not safe for TFQ people to be in public, especially when embodying anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, racialized, Black, Indigenous, and disabled modes in a large-world public — networked or not. Of course, it is often not safe for these same people to be in private home-worlds either, if we consider the ongoing and normalized domestic violences of heteropatriarchal non-chosen families and the economic logics driving the privatization and upward distribution of resources and life chances.[50] Whether denied or refusing the retreat into given structures of privacy, and well-schooled in the dangers of given structures of public life, TFQ people create, cultivate, and cling to NIPS.

While heavy processing is rarely obvious in public — and often seems antithetical, impossible, and scary to do in the collapsed contexts of social media[51] — the effects of this repurposed method are everywhere evident in TFQ public life, or life in public. TFQ publics are all over the place if you know what you're looking and feeling for, but what is harder to see are the networks of heavy processing intimacies that inform, ground, feed, and sustain these publics. Indeed, we would wager that any single TFQ publication, blog post, manifesto, tweet, TikTok video, event posting and invitation, hashtag, performance,

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Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 11 (2018): 4275–92; Robert Payne, *The Promiscuity of Network Culture: Queer Theory and Digital Media* (New York: Routledge, 2014); and Sonja Vivienne and Jean Burgess, "The Digital Storyteller's Stage: Queer Everyday Activists Negotiating Privacy and Publicness," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56, no. 3 (2012): 362–77.

50 Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 2011).

51 Writing about teens and social media in her book *It's Complicated,* danah boyd states that "a context collapse occurs when people are forced to grapple simultaneously with otherwise unrelated social contexts that are rooted in different norms and seemingly demand different social responses." danah boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 31. For more on context collapse, see also Alice E. Marwick and danah boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience," *New Media & Society* 13, no. 1 (2011): 114–33.

performance artist, cabaret, theater production, loudmouth at a meeting, bookstore, café or bar, and professor professing or grad student researching and writing has been shaped by networked TFQ information intimacies that run on heavy processing. These networks are where we learn, rehearse, and test-run our information: our ideas, politics, fashions, and lives. What distinguishes NIPs from a group of close friends — though this is what they sometimes are or become — is that they are geared to making work for (and preparing participants and their materials for) life in public. The public life of our research or creative publications, artworks, and performances, as well as our curating, teaching, institutional, and administrative roles necessarily involve participation in under-differentiated or context-collapsed and networked publics.

In 2017, after a decade of trying to get two good jobs in a city where we could make (and find) the kind of TFQ research, creative, activist, and social life we need to live, we got lucky with jobs at the University of Toronto. Since then, we have applied for dozens of grants and been awarded a few to support research on TFQ digital methods and ethics. With this relative employment stability and the resources afforded by this funding, we initiated the Trans-Feminist Queer Digital Praxis Workshop (TFQ DPW). The TFQ DPW does not have its own website or even its own room.[52] However, it is the relational research infrastructure for the Cabaret Commons — which, in 2018, got its first public-facing website after several non-public proof-of-concept sites — and the Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory (DREC).[53] DREC is a site that we created as a co-thinking space for the kinds of research ethics and methods questions that were helping us to resist for so long the "annual productivity report"

52 Thanks to the TFQ institutional labors of those who have been at University of Toronto longer than us, we do have access to a shared room on campus. Specifically, thank you, Elspeth Brown, for your indefatigable work to create space and resources for TFQ faculty and students at Toronto through creatively mobilizing institutional support for "the digital humanities."

53 *The Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory* (DREC), http://www.drecollab.org/.

pressure to launch an outward-facing Cabaret Commons. DREC is an online publication place for telling stories about process-heavy research from the perspective and expertise of the over-researched, and is dedicated to thinking and conversing expansively about research ethics from a justice framework. Rather than work as an assembly line for the fast and frequent publication of materials on these two research environments, the TFQ DPW is a heavy processing NIP: time and space for checking in, for trying out ideas, and for hearing what is happening in the lives and minds of the graduate students, contingent and tenure-stream faculty, artists, activists, web designers, and graphic designers who make up the network. It is also the context within which we have incubated and cultivated the ideas and materials that become public on DREC and the Cabaret Commons. That is, in order to bring work to the accidental publics of the internet, on DREC and Cabaret Commons, we need the integral, inward-facing, heavy processing NIP of the TFQ DPW: part mutual mentorship; part professional support; part writing collective; part buddy-system, social life, and snack time; and part editorial board and design team. Learning from and about this way of working together is as much the research as the essays and exhibits we make.

We keep applying for academic grants to sustain the work of NIP building, but there is an ongoing tension. Academic (and most other) funding bodies expect and require outcomes and deliverables on a discrete timeline — publications, exhibitions, websites, digital archives, conference presentations (etc.) — and NIPS expect and require heavy processing that will *likely* result in some kind of outward-facing outcome, but we can only pretend to predict what, and when, that may be. So we continue to develop these speculative humanities and social science fiction documents to get the funds to pay for the lunches and dinners and sometimes travel costs (bus, train, flight, rental car, hotels, "hospitality honoraria" for roommates or house-shares) or connective technologies (headphones, speakers, computers, ethernet cords, wifi extenders, data plans) to facilitate the work of experimenting with and designing new gathering and com-

munication technologies in each NIP configuration. Each NIP is designed to mobilize local expertises, and each design emerges from the dynamics, needs, and expectations of the people and groups involved. These dynamics, needs, and expectations can only be understood and made useful through extended conversations, experiments in relating, getting to know the people in the project, and building trust and protocols. That is, through heavy processing.

"How We Could Have Done Things Differently"

> You know, it doesn't matter how brilliant you are if you're only useful to yourself.
>
> — The Collective Eye, "The Joy of Belonging Together"[54]

In the summer of 2022, as we were completing the manuscript for this book, we traveled to Kassel, Germany (thank you, grants) to catch a glimpse of one of the largest NIP experiments ever: documenta fifteen, directed by the Jakarta-based Indonesian activist-artist collective, ruangrupa. In the sixty-seven-year history of this quinquennial art fair, documenta has never before been directed by a collective. documenta started in 1955, based on the idea of re-connecting Germany to the rest of the world after WWII, and as an opportunity to exhibit the art that had been designated "degenerate" by the Nazis. Throughout its history as a non-commercial art fair, it has showcased, set the stage for, and orchestrated debates and controversies in contemporary art, often explicitly making curatorial connections between art and politics, and has also been understood to wield immense influence in art worlds and markets in Europe and beyond.

On the surface, it seemed that the radical departure that ruangrupa would make as a curatorial collective would be that, rather than curating individual artists, they decided to invite

54 The Collective Eye, *The Collective Eye in Conversation with ruangrupa: Thoughts on Collective Practice* (Berlin: Distanz Verlag, 2022), 46.

other activist-artist collectives,[55] drawing primarily on networks of artist-activist collectives across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceana, many with TFQ cultural politics. As "an association of friends who unconditionally combine art with the ups and downs of everyday life in Indonesia and facilitate art in an urban context,"[56] ruangrupa's curatorial vision imagined documenta fifteen as an extension of their ongoing work, "based on a holistic social, spatial, and personal practice strongly connected to Indonesian culture, in which friendship, solidarity, sustainability, and community are central." Over one thousand artist-activists took part in the 100-day experiment in collaboration, organized around ruangrupa's foundational praxis, the Indonesian practice and structure of *lumbung* (a communal rice barn),[57] where the "principles of collectivity, resource building and equitable distribution are pivotal to the curatorial work and impact the entire process — the structure, self-image and appearance of documenta fifteen."[58] When asked if *lumbung* is a metaphor, ruangrupa member RA clarifies, "Yes, we call it software."[59] *lumbung* is a technology for fairness and trust within communities, a mode of the co-inhabitation of risk and riches.

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55 As ruangrupa tells it: "After documenta accepted our invitation to join our journey and to become part of our ekosistem, we decided — with their opportunities and support — to keep on extending invitations to different people." ruangrupa, *documenta fifteen: Handbook* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2022), 16.

56 The Collective Eye, *The Collective Eye in Conversation with ruangrupa,* back cover.

57 "lumbung is the concrete practice of ruangrupa for documenta fifteen and beyond. Translated from Indonesian, it means 'rice barn.' In Indonesian rural communities, the surplus harvest is stored in communal rice barns and distributed for the benefit of the community according to jointly defined criteria. This principle stands for the living and working practice of ruangrupa and is used for an interdisciplinary and collaborative work on artistic projects." ruangrupa, "LUMBUNG," in "Glossary," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/glossary/.

58 ruangrupa, "About documenta fifteen," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/about/.

59 The Collective Eye, *The Collective Eye in Conversation with ruangrupa,* 91. In The Collective Eye's (TCE) interviews with ruangrupa members, each

We made our way to Kassel, curious to see how ruangrupa's practices transformed, and were transformed by, this art fair. What we found and felt were so many glittering NIPS negotiating the tensions of an institution (documenta), a city (Kassel), and audiences that were not prepared for the impacts these heavy-processing units would have on "the structure, self-image and appearance of documenta fifteen."[60] To our eyes, ruangrupa and the hundreds of participating artist-activist collectives they gathered were navigating these tensions — the risks and riches of participating in such a high-profile, international art fair in Germany — while remaining grounded in their primary commitments and orientations to the process-heavy local expertise of various NIPS. While there were massive numbers of works in this large, multi-sited exhibition, the overwhelming content of the show was process, in particular, the different processes and protocols grounding each of the invited activist-artist collectives.

As an art fair based on the creation of a collective of collectives, ruangrupa's documenta fifteen put anti-colonial, anti-capitalist process, versus product, on display, offering structures and resources that both document and invite collective work. ruangrupa distributed the documenta funding equally to each invited collective, and each collective could do with it what they wanted. Some used the funds to sustain their local work (such as paying rent or buying land), some created gardens, collective housing, bars, parties, kitchens, and printing presses in Kassel. We were thrilled to see that the "art on walls" was mostly activist network materials draped, mounted, and planted across the monumental spaces of documenta's exhibition halls, the surrounding grounds, and off-site venues. The city-wide exhibitions were installed across Kassel in parks, storefronts, old factory buildings, an unused nineteenth-century indoor

member is identified only with initials, so we have maintained this de-individuating naming practice in our references.

60 Ibid.

swimming pool,[61] the grounds of a youth hostel,[62] floating on the river,[63] and filling the art museums. For example, the works on display included vibrant textile art in the form of large-scale silkscreens, collective-action banners,[64] activist graphic novels

61 The grand old indoor swimming pool, Hallenbad Ost, and its grounds is where the "Indonesian collective Taring Padi presents its archive across 600 square meters. Informed by working-class experiences, the collective regards organization, education, and agitation as its primary tasks. This retrospective showcases artworks from a twenty-two-year period and includes large-format banners, woodcut posters, and wayang kardus (life-size cardboard puppets)." "Taring Padi," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/taring-padi/.

62 Argentina-based Serigrafistas Queer draped large silk screens printed with mottos that reflect their collective values, installed at their "Rancho Cuir," a rural editorial-meeting-living space they created and inhabited behind the Sandershaus (hostel): "its form and function evolving during the 100-day event in response to the activities and needs generated through inhabiting the space" throughout documenta fifteen. "Serigrafistas Queer," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/serigrafistas-queer/.

63 Black Quantum Futurism installed an interactive platform, "The Clepsydra Stage (2022)," on the Fulda River that runs through Kassel. See "Black Quantum Futurism," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/black-quantum-futurism/.

64 Banners by the *foundationClass*collective were printed with slogans and questions for a visionary anti-racist arts education and collective practice. *foundationClass is "an art educational platform and resistance toolkit designed to facilitate access to art academies for people who have immigrated to Germany and are affected by racism. *foundationClass embraces ongoing movements for transformation and resilience by evolving toward an environment that calls for sustainable patterns of assembly and solidarity." "*foundationClass*collective," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/foundationclasscollective/.

For example, banners were printed with messages, including, "Crush The Culture of Othering," and "We are creating our personal narrative(s), we want to express ourselves. *foundationClass*collective can't be seen as one entity and can only be seen as many. Wir sind viele jede*r einzelne von uns," and "My biography seems to more interesting than my art." Their exhibit also included the re-mediation in the form of a two-channel video and fabric quilts made from images and screenings taken from meeting minutes and post-it notes inscribed with take-aways from their collective process.

painted on silk,[65] a photo book on large room-dividers,[66] a field of protest signs, a video screening studio — a "hollow construction" — created with huge blocks made of textile waste,[67] and so much more. In their artist statement on the documenta fifteen website, the Nairobi-based "Nest Collective" explains:

> Although their work often responds to and is aware of interconnected issues on a global scale, the collective primarily addresses Kenyan young men and women. Nevertheless, they are excited when their work speaks to other audiences as well.[68]

65 Select drawings from Berlin-based artist Nino Bulling's graphic novel *abfackeln* (*firebugs*). In addition to this installation, "together with the Lebanon-based collective Samandal Comics, they [Bulling] are conducting a workshop with queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming artists that culminates in a collaboratively-created series of books, *Samandal*." "Nino Bulling," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/nino-bulling/.

66 Fehras Publishing Practices "initiates installations, films, publications and lectures aiming to extend the notion of publishing, such as *Borrowed Faces* (2019–ongoing), which addresses cultural practices during the Cold War. Queering the usual ways these archival narratives are shared, Borrowed Faces tells the story of three fictional characters — Afaf Samra, Hala Haddad, and Huda Al-Wadi — who become friends." For the 2nd edition, commissioned by documenta fifteen, the collective "focuses on the Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement and their publishing practices. It also observes the counter-project, the American CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom, and its intervention in cultural production. The narrative woven among Beirut, Cairo, Bandung, Rome, Paris, New York, and Moscow is guided by a feminist discussion around the role of intellectual women during the 1960s." "Fehras Publishing Practices," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/fehras-publishing-practices/.

67 Nairobi-based Nest Collective's "Return to Sender — Delivery Details (2022)" was installed on the long manicured lawn that connects Karlsaue Park to the massive, stately, eighteenth-century Orangerie building. "The Nest Collective," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/the-nest-collective/.

68 "The Nest Collective," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/the-nest-collective/.

While the collective is "excited" when their work speaks to an accidental audience, their main address is to an integral audience of young Kenyans. We saw this again and again: the installations featured materials created in process-based, community-building work done in and for the collectives' own local contexts.

Throughout documenta fifteen, the "object" of the workshops, installations, and exhibition tours was the collectives' processes of working together. Process as object(ive). Process in focus. Process on display. As art critic Skye Arundhati Thomas notes, "the invited participants […] were gaining the most from this exhibition. Viewers looking for single doses of authorship, or formalized art objects, rarely found any, and this seemed to be the point: to resist the demands, to ease the pressure, of an art market oriented toward the production of objects."[69] This collective of collectives transformed the art fair's conventions of spectatorship and curatorial acquisition into a "structure, self-image and appearance"[70] that glittered with heavy processing and largely refused individual prestige or collectible products, and could look confusing from the outside, like chaos, like rubble. This struck us as a phenomenal, maximalist experiment in demonstrating — rather than exhibiting — the work of NIPS. It also struck us as risky. Showing the work of NIPS to the accidental audience of art fair visitors felt like a walking-around version of that experience when a Twitter post from or about a locally famous art star, political project, or small-scene live performance all of a sudden goes viral. From a locally engaged integral public to the accidental public. Thrilling! But also quite chilling.[71] Mind the gap.

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69 Skye Arundhati Thomas, "'The Double Bind': On Documenta 15," *Art Agenda,* August 3, 2022, https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/482210/the-double-bind-on-documenta-15.

70 ruangrupa, "About documenta fifteen."

71 For more on the internet reception theory and up-scaling of TFQ performance and other small-world acts and materials, see T.L. Cowan, "X-Reception: Re-Mediating Trans-Feminist and Queer Performance Art," in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History,*

Unsurprisingly, several TFQ installations at documenta fifteen anticipated this gap (between integral and accidental publics) and planned their exhibits accordingly. For instance, Party Office b2b Fadescha, "an anti-caste, anti-racist, trans*feminist art and social space in New Delhi, India," installed Queer Time: Kinships & Architectures (curated by their After Party Collective, led by Vidisha-Fadescha and Shaunak Mahbubani).[72] This underground space of a dungeon party was "created by and for Trans* BIPoC and neuro-divergent people, centering our safety and joy,"[73] and included a bar and DJ booth, semi-private BDSM[74] rooms, a dance floor, and a resting and reading room with TFQ zines, books, and catalogs. "Code of Conduct" placards, approximately six feet tall, were installed beside each entrance to this space, and were spotlit throughout the otherwise dark rooms. Functioning as both installation piece and public service announcement, the "Code of Conduct" placards inform visitors of the collective's protocols for the space, including "enthusiastic, continuous consent" in the "mutual pleasure" of kinkster play, the availability of Safe Use and Access information, as well as an Awareness Team — "identifiable by reflective hand bands" — available to help visitors "avoid unsafe situations."[75] A neon sign in pink lettering, installed on a wall along one of the dungeon's passageways connecting two rooms, reads as a threshold statement:

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ed. Kathryn Brown (London: Routledge, 2020), 155–66. Cowan's essay relies heavily on Beth Coleman's framing of "X-Reality" as "a continuum of exchanges between virtual and real spaces" and as an "extension of agency." Beth Coleman, *Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 3–4.

72 "Party Office b2b Fadescha," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/party-office-b2b-fadescha/. We refer to Party Office b2b Fadescha in the shortened form, Party Office, from this point forward.

73 Party Office, "Code of Conduct" (exhibition placard), Queer Time: Kinships & Architectures installation, documenta fifteen, 2022.

74 BDSM comprises a range of sexual practices, primarily including bondage, discipline, domination, submission, and sadomasochism.

75 Party Office, "Code of Conduct."

> We invite you to consider us kinksters as those who find pleasure in pain and heal our traumas through submission; we make choices and boundaries, we practice collective agency and mutual pleasure. We kinksters are not degenerates, your judgements are places where we fight to free ourselves.[76]

Like a manifesto, the sign speaks of the collective's values and practices. The direct address of the sign — "We invite you to consider us kinksters" and "your judgements are places where we fight to free ourselves" — also anticipates the accidental audience of the large art fair. It simultaneously welcomes, educates, and alerts accidental visitors unfamiliar with TFQ kink that they are the outsiders in this space, while also operating as a defense mechanism to protect the intentions of the collective installation.

The Code of Conduct placard, neon sign, and other mechanisms for attempting to communicate and put into practice NIPS-esque pleasure and safety protocols, could not do the work of protecting participating artists from attack. On July 4, 2022, Party Office announced that, "having had multiple firsthand experiences of transphobic and racist aggressions by the people in the city of Kassel, the visitors at the exhibition, the security employed by the institution as well as the management team," they had "suspended all its live public programs since 19th June."[77] Party Office was not alone in navigating institutional and institutionalized "transphobic and racist aggressions" at this documenta. ruangrupa, along with all of the participating collectives, issued several joint statements calling for the documenta Supervisory Board to address ongoing "direct racist and transphobic incidents" along with "structural racism and neglect… through issues related to visas, inhospitality, and neglect of data and communication related to artists and

76 Party Office, neon sign, in Queer Time: Kinships & Architectures, installation, documenta fifteen, 2022

77 @partyofficehq, *Instagram,* July 4, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CfmGKnyousI/?hl=en.

workers that identify as BIPOC, nonbinary, and trans."[78] The experiment in attempting to apply collective intimate account-

78 lumbung community, "Censorship Must Be Refused: Letter from Lumbung Community," *e-flux,* July 27, 2022, https://www.e-flux.com/notes/481665/censorship-must-be-refused-letter-from-lumbung-community; lumbung community, "We Are Angry, We Are Sad, We Are Tired, We Are United," *WE REFUSE,* September 10, 2022, https://werefusewearеangry.wordpress.com/2022/09/10/we-are-angry-we-are-sad-we-are-tired-we-are-united/; and ruangrupa, "Anti-semitism Accusations against documenta: A Scandal About a Rumor," *WE REFUSE,* September 9, 2022, https://werefusewearеangry.wordpress.com/2022/09/09/anti-semitism-accusations-against-documenta-a-scandal-about-a-rumor/. As ruangrupa explains in their open letter, "Anti-Semitism Accusations against documenta," much of the racism and transphobia directed at documenta fifteen collectives was framed as accusations of anti-semitism: "When any criticism of Israeli state action is routinely demonized and equated with anti-Semitism, one can only expect that demonization to be challenged. This challenging comes primarily from those who are affected by the Israeli state's human rights violations. The German culture of equating anti-Zionism and even non-Zionism with anti-Semitism excludes, smears, and silences Palestinians and non-Zionist Jews from the fight against anti-Semitism by declaring them to be themselves anti-Semites." Throughout the scheduled run of documenta fifteen, ruangrupa faced escalating pressure from the German press, publics, and government to cancel public talks and censor artist collectives' work. By the end of July 2022, two months before the show closed, the director general of documenta fifteen, Sabine Schormann, was forced to resign. The next year, in November 2023, Mumbai-based author and curator, Ranjit Hoskoté, announced his resignation from the Finding Committee for documenta sixteen, citing "[t]he monstrous charge of anti-Semitism [that] has been brought against my name in Germany," and explaining, "[i]t is clear to me that there is no room, in this toxic atmosphere, for a nuanced discussion of the issues at stake." Ranjit Hoskoté, "Documenta Resignation Letter," *e-flux,* November 13, 2023, https://www.e-flux.com/notes/575318/documenta-resignation-letter. Three days after Hoskoté resigned, the remaining members of the Finding Committee also resigned, issuing a public letter citing the "over-simplification of complex realities and its resulting restrictive limitations, which has been prevalent since documenta15 [sic]" and concluding that, "[i]n the current circumstances we do not believe that there is a space in Germany for an open exchange of ideas and the development of complex and nuanced artistic approaches that documenta artists and curators deserve." Simon Njami, Gong Yan, Kathrin Rhomberg, and María Inés Rodríguez, "Documenta Resignation Letter," *e-flux,* November 16, 2023, https://www.e-flux.com/notes/575919/documenta-resignation-letter.

ability processes to a non-collective institution like documenta, and bringing the locally-engaged expertise and inward-facing knowledges and practices to a mega outward-facing public is very risky. Indeed, as most TFQ people know, it's dangerous to have your NIPS out in public.

From the many printed and online publications that they created and circulated, it was also clear that ruangrupa anticipated these risks, and tried to create collective processes for keeping themselves, the participating artists, as well as the integral and accidental audiences safe. For example, ruangrupa's *documenta fifteen: Handbook* might be understood as a manual in heavy processing. The introductory essays, diagrams, and artwork, which take up forty pages before the index of venues, collectives, artists, and exhibits, reveal "the important collective processes that preceded [documenta fifteen] and that permeate the show without necessarily being visible to the naked eye."[79] However, ruangrupa explains that they still struggle to enact their commitments to collective process in the context of the institution and market of documenta*:* "documenta fifteen is still using the language of, and can be understood as, a conventional artistic mega-event, despite the attempts to approach it in a more bottom-up, organic, and accessible way. It is our hope that you, as visitors, can feel the differences in your own experiences."[80] Throughout the *Handbook,* ruangrupa offers an account of their largely invisible, process-heavy, collective way of working, and what has been sacrificed as they became part of the pre-existing documenta machine.

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79 ruangrupa, *documenta fifteen,* 9. Another important entry in the heavy processing that followed documenta fifteen is Ronald Kolb, "documenta fifteen's Lumbung: The Bumpy Road on the Third Way: Fragmentary Thoughts on the Threats and Troubles of Commons and Commoning in Contemporary Art and Knowledge Production," *On Curating* 54 (November 2022): 57–94, https://on-curating.org/issue-54-reader/documenta-fifteens-lumbung-the-bumpy-road-on-the-third-way-fragmentary-thoughts-on-the-threats-and-troubles-of-commons-and-commoning-in-contemporary-art-and-knowledge-production.html.

80 Ibid., 40.

Making our way through the many documenta fifteen locations around Kassel, each collective's exhibit seemed designed primarily to communicate their methods of working, which was then transformed into a display-able work. For example, Gudskul, one of the collectives of collectives, exhibited a prototype of a role-playing tabletop game called "Speculative Collective Board Game," designed by Noorlintang "Nori" Suminar and Wiratame.[81] The exhibition wall panel and the playbook on display explain the overall structure of the game:

> Throughout the game, members will have the opportunity to perform personal project(s), collective project(s), or help other member's project(s) that will be decided by rolling the dice and the negotiation between the members in the collective. By completing tasks on the projects, members and the collective may be rewarded with money token(s), knowledge(s) token, collective token(s), or bonding point(s). At the end of each round, the collective will face a challenge that will test the collective's dynamics. The game objective is to experience the process of cooperating, sharing resources, problem solving and decision making in art collective practice.[82]

This game is an exercise in heavy processing and the only winner is the collective, or the team that develops the most successful processes for sharing resources, problem solving, and deci-

81 The exhibit's wall panel also included information about the material construction of the game ("upcycled plastic game items") and names the full list of creators: Gesyada Siregar, Noorlintang "Nori" Suminar, Wiratama, MG Pringgotono, Ade Darmawan, Budi "Bungen" Mulya, JJ Adibrata, Saleh Husein, Anita "Bonit" Purniawati, Dwi "Ube" Wicaksono, Wahyudi "Wacil," Aldino, Robby, Henryco Lumba, Untung, Marcellina DKP, Angga Wijaya, Moch. Hasrul, Rifandi Nugroho, Amy Zahrawaan, Adhni Dhigelz, Greta Lumbanraja, Cemara Chrisalit, Al Ghorie, Ajeng Nurul Aini, Kania Anisa, Amad "Ape" Hafid Hidayatur Rohman, Duta Adipati, M. Fabian "Icen," Ocin Atrian, Bitang Muhammad Ramadhan (Gudskul, "Speculative Collective Board Game," documenta fifteen, 2022).

82 Gudskul, "Speculative Collective Board Game." Exhibit wall panel.

sion making. And finding decision-making processes that work for everyone is truly an exercise of intense and difficult bonding. For example, one Collective Challenge card reads:

> Timespan: 7 minutes
>
> Your collective is invited to do a project abroad. However, the organizer can only accommodate to fly few representatives. Many of the members are interested, available and capable to do this project. How do you decide which members should go?
>
> Action: All members gather in the Nongkrong Space, discuss the situation, and find the answer to the challenge. Write down on a Resolution Card how your collective will resolve the challenge.
>
> Reward(s): if the collective finds a resolution to the challenge that all members agree on, Bonding Meter goes up 1 level, Money Tokens increase by 3 tokens and Collective Token increases by 4 tokens.
>
> Consequence(s): If failed or ignored, Bonding Meter goes down 2 levels and Collective Token reduces by 2 Tokens.[83]

There are no right answers, only right processes for any specific collective's needs. *The Speculative Collective Board Game* makes (unbuyable)[84] hay from the question of evaluative criteria, pres-

83 Gudskul, "Speculative Collective Board Game." Exhibit game card.

84 As far as we can tell, the exhibit version of the "Speculative Collective Board Game" is a prototype, and the game is not for sale. Believe us, we have tried. T.L. scoured the documenta gift shop, asked gift shop staff, and searched online for a place to buy this game in a box. The fact that you cannot buy this game (yet), and the non-mass production of this game, reminds us of the ways that Gudskul and other ruangrupa collectives are shifting the expectations for art objects (and their copies) and resisting the marketization of art. Instead, it is the idea of the game and its processes that visitors can take home. Since documenta fifteen, it appears that Gud-

tige, or ownership for collective-based work. It is only through heavy-processing work that your NIP can level up.

While ruangrupa attempted to bring documenta into its *ekosistem,* throughout the hundred days of the fair, and even well before, it became clear that collective (or NIP) ways of working are largely incompatible with the mega-event scale and the-show-must-go-on temporality of documenta. Across and within the collectives' installations, it felt like ruangrupa had been successful in building an ekosistem, or "collaborative network structures through which knowledge, resources, ideas, and programs are shared and linked."[85] However, the "Kassel-ekosistem," which ruangrupa had been cultivating for five years, was not able to support itself in the face of internal and external conflict and attack. For instance, in a reflective essay entitled, "How We Could Have Done Things Differently," ruangrupa explains that "the hardest part of constituting lumbung is building trust and affinities. Our trust-building phase between actors of documenta fifteen has not been enough."[86]

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this trust-building phase, as this is how a group of people (or a group of groups) working together in shared understanding and practices of intimate accountability become a NIP, or in *lumbung* terms, come to work together in ways that build on the "princi-

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skul has been invited to give livestreamed game play-through workshops with the Speculative Collective Board Game, including in 2022, as part of Asia Art Archive's "The Collective School, an exhibition and series of public programmes that explore artist-driven and collective models of learning." Asia Art Archive, "Livestreamed Gaming and Workshop | Speculative Collective Board Game," 2022, https://aaa.org.hk/en/programmes/programmes/livestreamed-gaming-and-workshop-speculative-collective-board-game, and Asia Art Archive, "Speculative Collective Board Game," 2024, https://www.aaa-a.org/programs/speculative-collective-board-game.

85 "Ekosistem is the Indonesian term for ecosystem, developed in reference to, but not synonymous with, the ecological concept of ecosystem. 'Ekosistem' or 'ecosystem' describes collaborative network structures through which knowledge, resources, ideas, and programs are shared and linked." ruangrupa, "EKOSISTEM," in "Glossary," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/glossary/?entry=ekosistem/.

86 Ibid., 40.

ple [of] cooperation, based on generosity and empathy."[87] From the outset, ruangrupa stated that the "common goal" across the three networks that make up the documenta fifteen *lumbung*—"lumbung inter-lokal, Kassel ekosistem and lumbung Indonesia"—would be "to achieve lasting platforms for sustainable action that exist beyond documenta fifteen."[88]

Concerns about temporality, sustainability, and scale are central to ruangrupa's methods, and similar to the research temporalities and "trust-time" we write about in Chapter 3, the scale and pace of documenta fifteen did not allow "the actors of documenta fifteen" (including participating collectives and artists/activists, visitors/audiences, the inhabitants of the city of Kassel, documenta officials, German journalists, politicians, and policy-makers), enough time and practice to build trust and affinities. Of course, all the time in the world is not long enough to make some actors trustworthy. Indeed, most institutional organizations are not going to participate in, nor be transformed by, heavy processing. Sometimes we just need to protect our NIPs and get out of there.

Intimate Technologies

Our emphasis on the *intimacy* of intimate publics signals the important valances of sociality, organization, and working and being together that rely on carefully cultivated forms of connection and accountability as techniques, technologies, and

87 The Collective Eye, *The Collective Eye in Conversation with ruangrupa,* 91.

88 ruangrupa describes the network structure for documenta fifteen as follows: "The ideas and values of documenta fifteen's lumbung practice are realized in three networks: lumbung inter-lokal, Kassel ekosistem and lumbung Indonesia. While lumbung inter-lokal networks worldwide, Kassel ekosistem and lumbung Indonesia are anchored in their respective locations. Their common goal is to achieve lasting platforms for sustainable action that exist beyond documenta fifteen." ruangrupa, "NETWORK LUMBUNG MEMBERS," *documenta fifteen,* 2022, https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-network/.

temporalities for minoritized cultural survival and survivance.[89] The intimacies that we have in mind are infrastructures and networks of care, relationship building, trust (and lust), as well as distributed expertise, resources, and publicity. NIPs are different from the "intimate publics" Lauren Berlant has written about, or the "networked intimacies" that scholars of digital culture have taken up. Berlant tracks the ways that the performance and mass mediation of intimate feelings is marketed to a public, and how this marketing of intimacy transforms both the public sphere and politics in the United States. While Berlant's expansive work on intimate publics follows a complex range of affective attachments and their psychic, social, and political implications, their analysis revolves around the assumptions and effects of public, and consumable, forms of intimacy: "What makes a public sphere intimate is an expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff *already* share a worldview and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience."[90] We, on the other hand, want to draw

89 See Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Sarah Ahmed, *Complaint!* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021); Beth Coleman, "Race as Technology," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 24, no. 1 (2009): 177–207; Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Lisa Nakamura, "The Unwanted Labour of Social Media: Women of Colour Call Out Culture As Venture Community Management," *New Formations* 86 (2015): 106–12; Kadji Amin, "Temporality," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 219–22; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Gracen Mikus Brilmyer, "'I'm Also Prepared to Not Find Me. It's Great When I Do, but It Doesn't Hurt If I Don't': Crip Time and Anticipatory Erasure for Disabled Archival Users," *Archival Science* 22, no. 2 (2022): 167–88.

90 Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), viii. For more of Berlant's work on "intimate publics," see Lauren Berlant,

attention to the non-public, inward-facing, small-scale, often small-group heavy processing that constitutes intimate working relationships as the conditions from which TFQ publics emerge. That is, we are concerned less by the intimacies that are already public, and how they mobilize or market particular attachments and genres of community or subjectivity, than we are in considering the networks of intimacy that enable the outward-facing, public expression of TFQ ideas, fashions, aesthetics, politics, and research.

When digital media studies refer to networked intimacy, mediated intimacy, virtual intimacy, or digital intimacy, they tend to mean hook-up apps,[91] friendship in the digital sphere,[92] formations of online communities, or online elements of social movements.[93] Across this work, scholars focus on the social, emotional, and sexual forms of contact, connection, and "fleeting moments of authenticity"[94] that people form with the help of social media, chatrooms, and dating apps. In *Digital Intimate Publics and Social Media,* Amy Dobson, Brady Robards,

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The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) and "Intimacy: A Special Issue," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 281–88.

91 See, for example, Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); Lik Sam Chan, "Ambivalence in Networked Intimacy: Observations from Gay Men Using Mobile Dating Apps," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 7 (2018): 2566–81; and Joan Scott, "Networked Intimacy, Data-Driven Dating, and Gendered Social Meaning in the Online Sexual Marketplace," *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 66–72.

92 See, for example, Deborah Chambers, "Networked Intimacy: Algorithmic Friendship and Scalable Sociality," *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (2017): 26–36.

93 See, among others, Dominique Adams-Santos, "'Something a Bit More Personal': Digital Storytelling and Intimacy among Queer Black Women," *Sexualities* 23, no. 8 (2020): 1434–56; Manolo Farci et al., "Networked Intimacy: Intimacy and Friendship among Italian Facebook Users," *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 5 (2017): 784–801; and Shenila Khoja-Moolji, "Becoming an 'Intimate Publics': Exploring the Affective Intensities of Hashtag Feminism," *Feminist Media Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 347–50.

94 McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies,* 65.

and Nicholas Carah offer a comprehensive overview of the field of digital and networked intimacies, drawing attention to TFQ intimate expressions, relationalities, and world-building that find and form new publics through social media, and the ways that social media platforms capitalize on and extract value from these new counter-hegemonic intimate publics. In beautiful TFQ style, they conclude,

> What is required is further attention to the political stakes of the publicness of relations and infrastructures of digital intimacy. The problem, as we have argued, is not that social media has somehow made intimate life too public, but rather that intimate life on social media is *not public enough*.[95]

When commercial platforms capitalize on the data produced from users' intimate and affective expressions and interactions to train their algorithms, sell data to unknown numbers of marketing companies, curtail access, and sort users into algorithmically determined bubbles, we can see that these digital intimacies might take place in a kind of public that is, nonetheless, privately owned, managed, and platform-profitable.

We need NIPS to work out, in smaller, inward-facing networks, how best to navigate this digital public of private platforms, in our research, creative, professional, social, sexual, and political works. Most research on intimate publics and intimacy in digital culture focuses on expressions of intimacy that have already been made public, how people use networked technologies to express and create intimacies, and how these technologies capture and capitalize on these intimacies. But what about the ways that intimacies — heavy-processing relationships — shape, hone, rehearse, and revise the expressions that make it into the networked outward-facing public to begin with? The intimacy

95 Amy Shields Dobson, Brady Robards, and Nicholas Carah, "Digital Intimate Publics and Social Media: Towards Theorising Public Lives on Private Platforms," in *Digital Intimate Publics and Social Media,* eds. Amy Shields Dobson, Brady Robards, and Nicholas Carah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 23.

in NIPS is not an affective genre of communication deployed to gain or grow a public following — to increase attention, attachment, or interest. Instead, we mean intimacy as a set of specialized skills, information technologies, and infrastructures for fostering — building desire for and pleasure in — accountability. For many TFQ NIPS, prioritizing and practicing this intimacy means reducing or scaling down a public presence, and turning inward exactly when a project, organization, profile, or artistic practice is gaining public traction, or has sped up or scaled up in a way that, as ruangrupa puts it, "brings unsustainable consequences."[96]

The Allied Media Conference (AMC) is a network of nested intimate publics that is continually re-thinking itself at the level of scale, temporality, publicity, and accountability. After twenty years of producing an annual gathering for a "network of media makers, artists, educators, and technologists working for social justice,"[97] the Detroit-based AMC announced in 2018 that it would be taking a year off: a "chrysalis year."[98] The conference had been growing every year and had never limited registration. However, in 2018, AMC found itself with 1,000 more registered participants than in 2017, for a total of over 3,000 participants. As they put it, "[t]he scale of the AMC in 2018 was breathtaking, and also challenging."[99] Rather than measuring success on growth figures — the metric used in platform capitalist economies, where bigger is better, more users equates to better business, more investors, more profits, and a bigger reputation — AMC measures success in terms of community accountability. The organizing collective stated that "AMC is about critical connections, not critical mass. […] We know we have a responsibility to grow with intention rather than to simply let growth happen."[100]

96 ruangrupa, *documenta fifteen: Handbook,* 42.

97 Allied Media Projects, "We're Seeking a Network Liason!," *Allied Media Projects,* 2023, https://alliedmedia.org/network-liason.

98 Allied Media Projects, "A Chrysalis Year," *Allied Media Projects,* September 14, 2018, https://alliedmedia.org/news/chrysalis-year.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

The collective refused to allow AMC to become an organization that would be too big to support the communities it set out to support, primarily Detroit-based TFQ people of color working as media artists and activists, and their networks. In 2019, the full organization (AMC plus the community media programs in Detroit that make up Allied Media Projects) was still in a "chrysalis process," celebrating by processing the responsibility that comes with growth: "There are also risks to this growth. We risk becoming a mechanized institution, growing for the sake of growth and out of alignment with the heart of who we are."[101] By the end of 2019, the organization planned for biennial (rather than annual) AMC gatherings to start in 2020, sponsoring smaller conferences, called "AMSeeds," during the off-years, with network organizers in communities beyond Detroit. When COVID-19 made the 2020 in-person gathering impossible, AMC asked for suggestions from participants, postponed the conference by one month, and hosted an online version that remained astoundingly accountable to its communities, while also cutting back on its programming in order to deliver "accessibility, safety, ease & care, support for presenters and AMC magic."[102]

In 2020, we returned to AMC with some of our Feminist Data Manifest-No collaborators. By July of that year, we had all attended a few academic conferences that had hastily "pivoted" online. Granted, even in their pre- and post-COVID (in-person) forms, few academic conferences prioritize things like "accessibility, safety, ease & care, support for presenters and […] magic," so it is not surprising that most virtual versions of conferences felt so bad. Rather than simply making it technologically possible to communicate, AMC worked to online its radical infrastructure, relational commitments, and protocols for gathering *as well as* the various materials presented in the network gatherings, panels, workshops, and parties. Panel, Workshop,

101 Allied Media Projects, "One Chrysalis Leads to Another," *Allied Media Projects,* March 28, 2019, https://alliedmedia.org/news/one-chrysalis-leads-another.

102 Allied Media Projects, "New AMC Dates!," email correspondence, May 11, 2020.

and Network Gathering organizers became online hosts, and were given pre-conference training in "radical hospitality" for a Zoom environment — learning to "'open the doors,' welcome people in, get them what they need."[103] This mandatory training was offered as a collaboration between AMC and the People's Hub, an "online movement school […] founded on the belief that change becomes possible when those closest to the problem work together to build power and identify solutions."[104] The AMC online training gave hosts tactics and skills for "reducing mental load," "centering access and equity," "supporting everyone to participate & lead," and critically, for "holding technology as a set of tools for engagement, not the end in itself."[105] Each gathering or panel, therefore, was able to put into practice TFQ antiracist and crip-informed facilitation methods and skills. These skills tend to be neglected in other online conferences either because they were never a priority in the first place, or all good intentions can get lost in the shift to technological solutions. Without these protocols for radical hospitality, when the host is so preoccupied with the technological affordances and limitations of the platform (i.e., figuring out how to share a screen with sound), the technologies of intimacy tend to be neglected.

At AMC 2020, Hosts and Tech Support Leads familiarized participants with the Zoom interface, its affordances (i.e., how to change your posted name and pronouns, how to raise your hand), and limitations (i.e., emojis were all yellow), providing synchronous, in-panel tech support, translation, and captions (well before this became anything close to commonplace practice), as well as space for breaks and interruptions. Spanish-English interpretation was provided for each session by default, ASL interpreters were available by request, and hosts were assisted in "preparing, creating and practicing access" by creating shared protocols: "Don't voice during breaks; Voice descriptions for

103 PeoplesHub, "Radical Hospitality Training," online slideshow shared during training, July 15, 2020.

104 PeoplesHub, "About PeoplesHub," *PeoplesHub,* n.d., https://www.peopleshub.org/about.

105 PeoplesHub, "Radical Hospitality Training."

all visual content (including text); Ask people to say/sign their names before speaking; Speak at a slower pace; Assume not everyone can hear/see."[106] The effort of translating and transmediating crip-informed activist protocols to an online gathering environment was not the norm in July 2020 when we wrote the first draft of *Heavy Processing,* and even as we complete this writing in 2024 it is certainly still uncommon for academic gatherings.

As our FemTechNet comrade and SCRAM co-founder Veronica Paredes explains, AMC develops "technologies, or praxes, of gathering" where the questions of "*[h]ow* a group meets and gathers warrants deliberation. It also holds influence over *who* comprises the group in subtle but important ways."[107] AMC prioritizes these technologies of gathering and ensures that participants value these skills as much as the information that might be shared. To us this felt like the heavy processing mode of conference organizing — perhaps we can call it *heavy organizing?* It meant dedicating a lot of time, effort, and resources to making the gathering accountable to its own commitments, as well as to its participants, by giving everyone the tools, knowledges, and support to build network intimacy, and by operating at a scale that could bear the weight of this organizational processing.

* * *

In our research with and participation in many TFQ artist, activist, and academic NIPS, including AMC, we have repeatedly observed (and participated in) collective decisions to pause, or turn away from, the network's outward-facing activities just as the network was getting big. TFQ NIPS' decisions about scale, and processes for accountability, happen in the context of digital cultural and capitalist norms which reward and compel an impulse to more: more sharing, storage, data, followers, users, friends,

106 Ibid.

107 Veronica Paredes, "Natural Metaphors for Network Gathering: Technologies of Meeting at the Allied Media Conference," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 8, no. 2 (2022): 4.

expansion, exposure, extraction, profits, investors, supporters, press coverage, retweets, likes, loves, laughs, outrage emojis, general affective buy-in, global circulation, and citations.[108] In the context of this "platformization of cultural production,"[109] TFQ networks regularly make the collective decision to pause and reconsider their scale, to shrink the scope of their projects, precisely when capitalist logic would indicate an opportunity to level up influence and exposure — in short, to slow down, just as they were accelerating. These decisions about scale and temporality are also happening in the context of increasingly transnational sexual norms which compel and reward more women's and LGBT participation in neoliberal commercial and national projects and publics of coloniality, racism, militarism, individualism, and privatization.[110] Staying small and opting out of these

108 See Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," *Cultural Politics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 51–74, and "Feminism, Communicative Capitalism, and the Inadequacies of Radical Democracy," in *Radical Democracy and the Internet,* eds. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 226–45; Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2018); and Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58.

109 David B. Nieborg and Thomas Poell, "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 11 (2018): 4275–92. See also Thomas Poell, David B. Nieborg, and Brooke Erin Duffy, *Platforms and Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021).

110 See OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon, eds., *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2012); Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); and Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

larger projects and publics are tactical decisions that reflect intimacy and accountability as sustaining network values.

From NIPs to NAPs (Networked Accountable Publics)

> This movement work, including the personal work of relationship building, also defined the bookstores as counter-capitalist, inefficient by business standards while astoundingly productive for feminist movement building.
>
> — Kristen Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*[111]

NIPs run on heavy processing technologies programmed for complex practices of accountability. And these technologies, along with the NIPs they build and sustain, have a long TFQ history. We can see this NIPs-building work in the history of the feminist bookstore movement, or what Kristen Hogan calls "the complex theory and history of lesbian antiracism and feminist accountability."[112] In *The Feminist Bookstore Movement,* Hogan carefully weaves the story of thirty years of "feminist bookwomen's" innovations in anti-racist lesbian and feminist movement building. Noting that "accountability remains at the core of feminist negotiations,"[113] from the earliest days of the 1970s feminist bookstore movement to contemporary online "hashtag feminism,"[114] Hogan details the loving, sometimes painful, laborious experiments in building intimate, local, and translocal networks of feminist analysis, reading, writing, publishing, and movement-building. These experiments were grounded in "difficult conversations,"[115] both face-to-face synchronous conversations amongst bookstore staff and larger community collectives that convened at the bookstores, and mediated asynchronous conversations, published in the monthly newsletter, *Feminist*

111 Kristen Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 45.
112 Ibid., xv.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., xvi.
115 Ibid., xvii.

Bookstore News (FBN). As Hogan reflects, "Of course these conversations sometimes ended disastrously, painfully. Yet the process of having these conversations, sharing them through the *FBN,* and having them again was part of the commitment bookwomen had made to attempt feminist accountability to their communities and each other."[116] While the bookstores were public-facing enterprises, selling feminist publications in an effort to build feminist publics, it would be a mistake to read them simply as commercial enterprises, small businesses only, or feminist start-ups, because their priorities were developing inward-facing, heavy processing technologies of accountability and movement building, much more than they were business-building. Hogan explains,

> What happened inside the bookstores, in collective and staff meetings, was as important to bookstore identity as what readers saw when they visited the bookstore. […] [L]etters to *FBN* refer to the hours bookstore staff and collective members spent in meetings together learning to be allies; the process was as important as the result. This movement work, including the personal work of relationship building, also defined the bookstores as counter-capitalist, inefficient by business standards while astoundingly productive for feminist movement building.[117]

Dedicated more to movement-making than money-making, feminist bookstores had a public face (the shops themselves), open to anyone who accidentally or deliberately chose to engage, but the majority of the work went to the heavy processing of relationship building in order to create a shared theory of lesbian antiracism and feminist accountability which could be put into practice and public circulation on bookshelves, in publications, and via sales.

116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., 44–45.

The feminist bookstore movement offers a good example of NIPs as each individual shop was a kind of hub for working out local needs, conflicts, and priorities — ranging from who worked in the bookstore and how the bookstore worked, to processing and planning interventions into the racism of local lesbian bars, trans-exclusionary events, and the homophobia of local city or state policies. These heavy processing nodes were networked by *Feminist Bookstore News.* The bookstores and bookwomen were dedicated to creating and publicly circulating feminist values, analyses, and aesthetics, but it was through the intimate internal work — housed or galvanized by each bookstore — that those values, analyses, and aesthetics were developed. What Hogan's research reveals (and this will be already well-known to anyone who participated in this work) is that the network of feminist bookstores that made up the movement was a nested infrastructure of networked labors that centered the intimate trust project of relationship building and learning to be allies, which was also intense, intentional, perhaps seemingly interminable, inward-facing net-work that made each local store and the larger movement possible.

What we learn from the feminist bookstore movement, ruangrupa at *documenta,* AMC, FemTechNet, SCRAM, and our own TFQ DPW is that intimate accountability does not come easily or "naturally." It is not a *given* when people come together to work toward TFQ anti-racist, anti-colonial, crip, anti-capitalist goals. Instead, intimate accountability is the aspirational product of technologies of heavy processing, and these technologies both build and rely on NIPs for their functionality. Again, NIPs are the (infra)structures that glitter. At different times for different reasons, a NIP might be dedicated to this or that outcome — producing a conference, launching a website or digital archive, publishing a book, running a bookstore — but its primary and only consistent goal is producing the skills, expertise, desire for, and pleasure in intimate accountability. As Ann Russo explains, in *Feminist Accountability: Disrupting Violence and Transforming Power,* when the structure is built well, "taking accountability

can become something we yearn to do rather than something we run away from."[118]

What does accountable scholarly praxis look and feel like for researchers of and in networked digital environments? Grounding her analysis in her decades-long "participation in antiracist, feminist, and queer, antiviolence critical-consciousness community building, organizing, and activism," Russo writes that "the most important lesson I have learned is that our praxis often reproduces the very power dynamics that we are seeking to transform."[119] We see this reproduction of power dynamics in research contexts all of the time. For example, TFQ digital scholarship is typically produced, evaluated, and rewarded within institutional cultures that demand journal articles or books based on empirical research that tends to extract knowledge from research participants and transfer authorship and authority to the researcher, rarely to the research participants. This research is often conducted in the context of vast wealth and life-chances disparities between researchers and research participants, and university research ethics and logics, like private and commercial platform ethics and logics, refuse accountability for what we have called "the labour of being studied."[120]

While a great deal of academic research across disciplines focuses on social problems and injustices happening outside the university, the majority of this research does not methodologically, structurally, or conceptually account for the paradox at the center of this research: that, despite supporting social justice-curious research, ultimately universities and research norms perpetuate inequity and reproduce injustice through evaluative measures, the real estate hoarding and accrual of settler colonial equity, the creation of segregated town and gown geographies and economies, and so on. While Russo is not explicitly

118 Ann Russo, *Feminist Accountability: Disrupting Violence and Transforming Power* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 20.

119 Ibid., 1.

120 T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy," *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 14, no. 3 (2014): 471–88.

addressing the context of university research, her accountability framework is on point:

> Rather than a practice of locating the problem outside of ourselves and the movements [and institutions] with which we affiliate, it is a practice of awareness about how our ideas, organizations, policies, and activism are often embedded in the logics and structures of power. This awareness creates the potential for taking active accountability in ways that lead to change and transformation.[121]

In this framework, accountability is not simply a matter of individual responsibility but an alertness to and desire for "cultivat[ing] compassionate consciousness and skills to address these structural inequities as they manifest in our identities and relationships as well as in our theorizing, research, organizations, political visions, and strategies."[122] Ideally, the yearning, or desire, that motivates this work is not a punitive impulse to "calling out individual or organizational failures as anomalies, but rather about making visible the fault lines of structural inequities that distort and undercut the relational possibilities for individual and social action and transformation."[123] Thinking with Hogan and Russo, we are drawn to heavy processing as an educational technology for learning to yearn for accountability and NIPs as the structures that value accountability as a rigorous mode of inquiry.

We think of a NIP as a research design infratructure that holds the time necessary for located accountability. For this reason, we find ourselves also thinking of these formations as Networked Accountable Publics (NAPs): durational incubators for accountability in the research we do, our relationships with other researchers, as well as with our broader research communities. We introduce NAPs here to highlight the need for rest and

121 Russo, *Feminist Accountability,* 11.
122 Ibid., 10.
123 Ibid.

recovery and to pay attention to the different energy levels of those involved in a collaboration. When pressed to distinguish between these terms, we think of NIPS as a way to focus on the scales and spaces required for the intimacy of research, collaboration, and network-building. NAPS, on the other hand, allows us to focus more on the temporality of research, collaboration, and network-building, and draws from a crip-informed disability justice model.[124] However, in truth, NIPS and NAPS are very closely related, complementary ways of expressing the same kind of thing: creating collaborations that are scaled and timed in ways that respect the relationships of those involved, above and beyond institutionally-incentivized expansion and acceleration.

Lucy Suchman frames "located accountability" as an alternative technocultural design process to the "detached intimacy that characterizes much of scientific and technical production work."[125] This "detached intimacy" describes a design paradigm "in which one can be deeply engaged, but which remains largely self-referential, cut off from others who might seriously challenge aspects of the community's practice."[126] NIPS seek out these challenges and yearn for NAPS. Our digital research environments are typically designed to overcome or obscure the locatedness of researchers, research subjects, and materials,

124 We have also learned about the importance of naps from Tricia Hersey's revolutionary The Nap Ministry (https://www.instagram.com/thenapministry/), and her book *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto* (New York: Little, Brown, 2022). As she writes in *Rest Is Resistance:* "Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy" (28). Invoking the importance of rest against a "grind culture" that "has made us all human machines, willing and ready to donate our lives to a capitalist system that thrives by placing profits over people" (22), Hersey teaches the importance of rest from a Black and spiritual perspective. Here we want to acknowledge the importance of her work in improving our shared analyses of resisting grind culture; with *Heavy Processing,* we hope to bring a TFQ perspective that can also help develop a set of anti-grind research practices.

125 Lucy Suchman, "Located Accountabilities in Technology Production," *Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems* 14, no. 2 (2002): 95.

126 Ibid.

and tend to encourage the dreaded "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere," where "this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters."[127] In place of objectivity — which stands in for rigor (i.e., how rigorously did you distance yourself from your research?) — Suchman proposes "knowledges in dynamic production, reproduction and transformation, for which we are all responsible."[128]

As Humanities scholars, we may not be programming and designing the Content Management Systems (CMS) where our materials live online, which is why NIPs are so fundamental to creating online research environments in responsible ways: to make systems through which design decisions are collectively made about content and information management, and where we are accountable to our research communities. NIPs methods follow Suchman's call to refuse the prevailing order of technology production that is based "not in acknowledgement and cultivation of these networks but in their denial, in favor of the myth of the lone creator of new technology on the one hand, and the passive recipients of new technology on the other."[129] In a NIP's way of working, research design and implementation experiments are processes necessarily accountable to, and never detached from, the research communities that are implicated in the inquiry project, with the assumption that there are no "passive recipients," of the outward-facing research, the outward outcomes. As opposed to "design from nowhere," NIPs, or NAPs, are information design systems located in the dynamics of compassionate research and intimate research relationships.

Working within NIPs scale and on NAPs time, heavy processing research and design methods take responsibility for the ways that artistic and activist knowledges become re-packaged and repurposed within an academic context. For example, within an artistic NIP, the ideas that foment the design and production

127 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 189.
128 Suchman, "Located Accountabilities in Technology Production," 95.
129 Ibid., 92.

of an online cabaret (for example, a political variety show) are put to work in the service of that set of performances. When a scholar wants to harness those ideas, energies, and knowledges and repackage them in a knowledge transfer design that is separate from the performance itself, the design of that knowledge repackaging can take many forms. Conventionally, a researcher interviews the curators, organizers, or artists of the show, builds a theoretical framework around the ideas offered up by the research participants, and literally wraps their words inside her own, packaged within the framework inspired and informed by the work of the artists, but which will ultimately bestow authority to the scholar who becomes the author of the work.

We have been experimenting with different models for engaging artistic, activist, and collaboratively generated work. When we first conceived of the Cabaret Commons, we imagined that creating an open-access online repository of TFQ grassroots cabaret materials (documentation of performances, promotional materials, organizational documents, audience reactions and memories, all the gossip) would allow us to give credit to the artists, community organizers, and audiences whose labors and expertise we value, without wrapping them all up inside our authorial voice and academic credit system. Once we began scanning and uploading this material to a private server, and talked to the people represented by those materials, we quickly reconsidered our enthusiasm to expose all of these previously not-online materials to the volatile internet world of accidental audiences and surveillant data capitalism. So, rather than create an archive of non-contextualized TFQ materials, we have been experimenting with more context-rich onlining methods including critical conversations, process posts, an exhibition portal, and editorial support for the authoring of knowledges by the artists and community organizers themselves. Rather than creating a space where we post all our own or other researchers' writing about these works, we support artists and organizers to present their own materials in whatever form they can imagine (i.e., in solo-authored writing, co-authored conversational interviews, photography, audio, and/or video).

For example, when researching how TFQ artists and audiences continued to gather for cabarets and concerts during the COVID-19 pandemic, T.L. went to and participated in many Zoom cabarets and concerts,[130] curious about how "live" performance would fare in the context of online cabaret curation and production, and in performance and on the domestic stages (in bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, basements, and gazebos) where they took place. The scene of the online cabaret — of TFQ artists performing for the small screen rather than for the small stage — created a new kind of networked intimate public, one that connected artists and audiences across locales breaking some of the isolation many people felt during the many months and years of stay-at-home orders and closed "live" cabaret and concert venues. Realizing that this was a new performance form, necessitated by pandemic protocols, T.L. began interviewing cabaret producers, and through the publishing platform of Cabaret Commons, used NIP technologies to write about these shows in an intensely collaborative, rather than individually authorial, way. She focused on one of the earliest online cabarets she had seen, "Passoverboard! A live-Zoom coronabaret of music + drag," which was hosted, curated, and produced in April 2020, by Peaches LePoz (aka Peaches LePox, aka Jordan Arseneault) and Douche LeDouche (aka Laura Boo).[131] Both artists are hard-working and beloved cabaret legends in Montréal, having co-organized many cabarets over the years. The typical approach to this kind of research would have been to interview several producers, come up with a knowledge framework, write an academic article as quickly as possible, and then try to get published in a top-ranked journal as one of the scholars first out

130 For more on this research, see T.L. Cowan, "Holding for Applause: On Queer Cabaret in Pandemic Times," *Avidly,* December 22, 2020, https://avidly.larbpublishingworkshop.org/2020/12/22/holding-for-applause-on-queer-cabaret-in-pandemic-times/.

131 See the full introduction and interview: Laura Boo and Jordan Arseneault in conversation with T.L. Cowan, "'Cabaret Where We Live': Queer Cabaret in Early COVID Times," *Cabaret Commons,* September 5, 2020, https://cabaretcommons.org/critical-practice/cabaret-where-we-live-2.

of the gate in theorizing online pandemic performance. However, our Cabaret Commons methods are designed to divert this interview-to-journal slippy-slide.

T.L.'s interview with Laura Boo (Douche LeDouche) and Jordan Arseneault (Peaches LePoz, aka Peaches La Pox) is a case in point. Rather than cherry-pick choice bits from their long conversation, we co-edited it as a publication authorized by Boo and Arseneault, who are listed as first authors, in conversation with T.L. This method reflects Suchman's premise by accounting for "knowledges in dynamic production, reproduction and transformation, for which we are all responsible."[132] It makes the artists' ideas available to other researchers, artists, and curators — both in relation to their NIP-created practice and in their own words — on their own terms, while also indicating the ways that scholarly interest can help draw together ideas that might not otherwise become outward-facing, but which inform outward-facing activities like the creation and performance of cabaret. T.L. wrote a long introduction to this conversation (she has a lot to say about TFQ cabaret methods and their transmediation[133]), but in conversation with the TFQ

132 Suchman, "Located Accountabilities," 95.

133 See the following publications by T.L. Cowan: "The Queer Element Cabaret and Performance," *Canadian Review of Literature in Performance* 1, no. 1 (2010): http://www.litlive.ca/story/230; "Dayna McLeod's Post-Nationalist Beaver and the Cabaret Phenomenology of Putting Out," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 25 (2011): 230–39; "'I Remember… I Was Wearing Leather Pants': Archiving the Repertoire of Feminist Cabaret in Canada," in *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women's Archives,* eds. Linda Morra and Jessica Schagerl (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 65–86; "Cabaret at Grunt: Up Your Community," *(Queer) Intersections: Vancouver Performance in the 1990s,* 2012, http://performance.gruntarchives.org/essay-cabaret-at-grunt.html; "Feminist Cabaret and the Politics of Scene-Making," in *More Caught in the Act: An Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women,* eds. Johanna Householder and Tanya Mars (Toronto: Éditions Artexte, 2016), 501–16; "'Run with Whatever You Can Carry': Cross-Platform Materials and Methods in Performance Studies–Meets–Digital Humanities," *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2018): 649–55; "The Internet of Bawdies: Transmedial Drag and the Onlining of Trans- Feminist and Queer Performance Archives, a Workshop Essay," *First Monday* 23, no. 7

DPW and the Cabaret Commons editorial collective, especially the co-managing editors of the Cabaret Commons, TFQ performance and archives scholars Carina Emilia (Islandia) Guzmán and Stephen Lawson, we considered how best to foreground the knowledges, practices, and words of the artists featured in this interview. After many conversations, we decided that the long introduction should be published separately, as its own post, so that the interview placed the knowledge-transfer emphasis on the artist-authors. This is a heavy processing method that took a great deal of time and certainly we were not first out of the gate with some fresh hot take on pandemic performance. Co-editing a long document, lags in everyone's availability, a Cabaret Commons site crash, redesign and reconstruction (all long stories of heavy processing methods within the TFQ DPW), and other delays (scrambling to help each other survive this ongoing pandemic) meant that it was a year and a half from when the interview took place, to when it was accessible online.[134] Not the speedy delivery promised by digital publishing! In the end, the work reflects the largesse of Boo and Arseneault's collaboration and production, and is a platform for their own theory-building

(2018): https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/9256/7459; "Insubordinate, Indiscrete, Interdisciplinary: Cabaret Methods, Adjunct Methods, and Technologies of Fabulous," *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne/Canadian Art Review* 43, no. 1 (2018): 95–98; and "Don't You Know That Digitization Is Not Enough? Digitization Is Not Enough! Building Accountable Archives and the Digital Dilemma of the Cabaret Commons," in *Moving Archives,* ed. Linda Morra (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2020), 43–56. See also Paul Couillard and T.L. Cowan, "Demonstrating the Ineffable," in *Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation,* ed. Natalie Loveless (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2020), 151–64, and T.L. Cowan, Moynan King, and Miriam Ginnestier, "Edgy + Hysteria: Not Like Sisters, or How Montreal's Edgy Women and Toronto's Hysteria Festivals Got It On Across Space and Time," *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches Théâtrales Au Canada* 40, nos. 1–2 (2019): 118–34.

134 Cabaret Commons experienced a full site crash in September 2020, just after we had concluded the interview and introduction and begun the onlining process for these texts. Ultimately, it was not until Fall 2021 that we had an operational site again, and these pieces were launched.

and storytelling about their long collaborative history of making at-home cabarets, or "cabaret where I live." As Boo explains,

> because I came out of this punk house kind of world where, when there's no venues and people don't let you be who you want to be and what you're doing has no value and you can't work, you can't make money off of it, you just do it in your house for whoever will show.[135]

In the context of the interview, Boo and Arsenault's work is not repackaged, subsumed, and consumed in the service of one researcher's (T.L.'s) authorial voice. But this process took a lot of extra labor-of-being-studied and patience from Boo and Arsenault. For us, this practice of information and technological design adds to the movement for informatic networks, or an "extended set of working relations,"[136] which are intentional, organic mechanisms for growing intimacy and trust, and for whom "the question at each next turn becomes: How do we proceed in a responsible way?"[137] As we write in Chapter 1 of this book, this might mean not proceeding at all, stopping, pausing, or reversing: asking questions about our questions, researching backwards. Or, in the timeless words of Missy Elliott: "Is it worth it? Let me work it / I put my thang down, flip it and reverse it."[138]

NIPS Scale and NAPS Time

For us, each experience of building or being invited into a TFQ working-together relationship has necessarily involved the slow-burn, getting-to-know-you, getting-to-trust-you viability dance of collaboration-and-friendship-making: is this going to turn into something? Will we keep liking each other? What will we do when we are frustrated by each other, or when we don't

135 Boo, Arseneault, and Cowan, "'Cabaret Where We Live.'"
136 Suchman, "Located Accountabilities," 94.
137 Ibid.
138 Missy Elliott, "Work It," *Under Construction* (Goldmind Elektra, 2002).

agree? What happens when we hurt each other's feelings? How will we deal with conflict? Who am I as a collaborator? Who are you as a collaborator? Will our working styles, and what we need from this collaboration, be compatible? Will we have generosity and compassion and patience with each other? Will we agree on the thing we are trying to make together? What happens if we don't agree? Can we find a project timeline and way of working that takes into consideration our different energy and focus levels? Can we respect the various ways we all need to rest and recover? What will we do if someone has a life crisis? How do we share responsibility and credit for the processes and the work we make? Can we agree to scale and time the project for intimate accountability, for NIPS and NAPS?

Certainly, not all collaborations, and not all friendships, turn into NIPS. In the first instance, it is possible to collaborate and create outward-facing materials, without ever thinking about, attending to, or investing in the work of intimate accountability. In the second instance, most friend units are not also driven to extend the intimacies of friendship in order to connect with larger networks of academics, artists, activists, and so on for the purpose of building a conference, a book, a cabaret, or other kinds of outward-facing inquiry projects. We are interested in the collaborations and friendships that work as NIPS (and NAPS).

The need for "critical compassion"[139] in digital scholarship is essential if we want to account for the disproportionate consequences that the scale of online exposure can bring to research participants and materials, including especially the people and materials that make up TFQ artistic and activist research communities. Jennifer Douglas takes up friendship as a digital method for "enacting compassionate research practices,"[140] in which reversing and redirecting is a way of working (it).

139 Russo, *Feminist Accountability,* 10.

140 Jennifer Douglas, "Research from the Heart: Friendship and Compassion as Personal Research Values," *Australian Feminist Studies* 36, no. 108 (2021): 120.

Explaining why she decided to not publish her very personally invested research on online grief communities, Douglas writes:

> Several times I tried to write an article about aspirational archives and online grief communities but each time I found myself incapable of finishing: *it simply felt wrong*…. Could I really put them on display and open them up for scrutiny? Sure, they were not closed spaces, but did that make them truly public? The thought of turning a research lens on these community spaces made me profoundly uncomfortable.[141]

We have described a similar affective response, that shock of discomfort, as we grappled with our decision to *not* online archival material from TFQ performance events to the Cabaret Commons: even though we had REB (Research Ethics Board) approval to publish online archival materials (photos, videos, posters, and so on) from events that had been ostensibly "public," "the TFQ Research Ethics Board *in our minds* kept returning the project with a big *Think Better About This* red stamp."[142] We realized that we had to study the intimate accountabilities that made those performances possible in the first place, rather than splash these materials out on our research website just because we had access to them. In the same way that the performance materials we had access to (and did not publish online) were documentation of events that happened in *a* public, but not *the* public, Douglas explains that her decision to not publish her research about grief blogs was informed by the risks of upscaled exposure.[143]

These risks are not only about drawing hostile attention — of the sort all TFQ Indigenous, crip, anti-racist people, and especially women of color, always already navigate online (and

141 Ibid., 115, emphasis in original.

142 Cowan and Rault, "Onlining Queer Acts," 124.

143 Cowan has explored at length the problems of opening up community-based "public" materials to the "infinite variables of reception (and circulation) opened by bringing performance materials — especially minoritized materials — online" (Cowan, "X-Reception," 159).

offline) — but are more precisely the risks of violating the networks and relationships of intimate accountability that you may have built in and through your research. Linking her work with the "Feminist Data Manifest-No," Douglas writes:

> Here, the connection between a body and her data, or the traces she leaves through her actions or presence online, is emphasized, so that as researchers, we have to think about the person behind the post. This is a kind of consideration that goes beyond determining how we can attain informed consent from community posters, contributors and lurkers, or how we can ensure confidentiality in publication of findings, to considering whether even beginning to make those efforts is a violation of friendship or a repudiation of care.[144]

We are willing to entertain the possibility that if you are reading this book, you are invested in accounting for and repairing rather than reproducing harm, in pitching our bodies, and our bodies of research, toward anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-carceral, crip TFQ thriving, as a value greater than your own individual professional thriving. We are also quite sure that you know, or have sensed, that there are better (and worse) ways to do this work, and furthermore, that you've felt when this work is going well, and also felt those "uncomfortable" or painful pangs when it is not. The framework we offer here for TFQ methods of heavy processing, specifically for digital materials, depends on the NIPS and NAPS we have been invited into, built, and cultivated. These NIPS and NAPS work by studying those senses, those pangs and pains, and taking those orientations to the slow thrilling work of relationship-building seriously, and to understand these as central methods for doing rigorous research, digital and otherwise.

When we think of the scale that heavy processing calibrates, it begins with the scale of friendship, the scale of a few. As Anna Sexton and Dolly Sen write, "bound up in recognising friendship as opportunity and constraint is the realization that to be

144 Douglas, "Research from the Heart," 115.

intimately involved to the point of friendship with those we research alongside also carries with it a question of capacity: there is a limit to the number of people we can hold close, and be committed to."[145] This scale operates on the heavy processing temporality of trust (trust-time)[146] for making the relationship bond strong, for engaging "dialectical tensions."[147] Understanding differences as generative in our ways of working, ideas, energy levels, and often very starkly asymmetrical life experiences that bring us to the project in the first place means we may have a chance to learn together in the differences and tensions that collaboration invites, if we make the space and time to pay attention to them. Friendship as a mode of inquiry is necessarily durational and exclusive, "a form of relating and conducting co-inquiry that names, chooses, and privileges the few."[148] Our framing of NIPs is certainly a framing in which friendship is involved; or, rather, it certainly is framed by very involved friendships. However, unlike most friendships, NIPs are also oriented toward the possibility or hope of creating outward-facing materials: works that reach and connect beyond the NIP. And this involves creating networks of intimate accountability that can extend beyond the few, or can be more expansive than modes of friendship may imply.

NIPs and NAPs see relationships of trust as the most valuable elements of any research and/or creation project. ruangrupa is explicit about this value. When asked "What remains of what you've done in the places where you've worked?," ruangrupa member AD responds:

145 Anna Sexton and Dolly Sen, "More Voice, Less Ventriloquism: Exploring the Relational Dynamics in a Participatory Archive of Mental Health Recovery," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 8 (2018): 885.

146 For more on trust temporalities, see Moya Bailey, "The Ethics of Pace," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021): 285–99, and adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico: AK Press, 2017).

147 Lisa M. Tillmann-Healy, "Friendship as Method," *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, no. 5 (2003): 730.

148 Sexton and Sen, "More Voice, Less Ventriloquism," 885.

> What's important to us is whether we made friends out of it. That we have conversations, stay in touch, hang out together, and trust each other. A project is more like a tool for friendship. […] When playing, hanging out, cooking together, there are also many interpersonal relationships and power relations that we're always consciously and unconsciously trying to parody and break with.[149]

Friendship, AD explains, is a complicated term for ruangrupa, "insofar as we suffered a lot during the Suharto regime because of friendships in the form of nepotism."[150] Writing a review of documenta fifteen for *Art in America,* Minh Nguyen pokes at friendship as art, noting, "[f]riendship-as-praxis is tricky: it's subjective, exclusionary by nature, and, in some cases, a veil for nepotism."[151] Nguyen observes, "participants in this Documenta — predominantly from outside major cultural and economic centers—are less cliques based on intergenerational wealth or MFA cohorts, and more groups that have long collaborated without funding or fanfare. They have convened to address specific local needs by creating social organizations where they were absent."[152] These NIPS, with their local expertise and aesthetics, were convened by ruangrupa in a model of friendship that attempts to break abusive power relations, but were met by "shambolic and prosecutorial reactions [that] only affirm the hegemonic absurdities the exhibition was responding to in the first place."[153] This experiment of attempting to bring the small-world works of NIPS to the big-world public is still very much a work-in-progress. We went to documenta fifteen to learn about (what we see as) NIPS around the world, and how

149 The Collective Eye, *The Collective Eye in Conversation with ruangrupa,* 30–31.

150 Ibid., 31.

151 Minh Nguyen, "Friendship and Antagonism: Documenta 15," *Art in America,* August 2, 2022, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/documenta-15-review-lumbung-ruangrupa-1234635632/.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

they manifest their work to a larger public. As an experiment in scaling up exposure, just like any open access or public online site, the attacks against artists in documenta fifteen remind us of the risks involved in the transition from inward-facing NIPS to outward-facing public work.

The complex histories bound up in the term "comrade" puts a helpful spin on the ways we might think about research friendships, intimacies, and accountabilities, toward the creation of outward-facing materials and public interventions. Jodi Dean's *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging* helps to build our sense of what research intimate accountabilities might mean. Dean writes that "the term comrade indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal."[154] Comradeship, she goes on, "binds action, and in this binding, this solidarity, it collectivizes and directs action in light of a shared vision for the future."[155] Justice-oriented, non-extractive, accountable TFQ scholarly, activist, and artistic work is driven by this sort of "shared vision for the future," and at its best is grounded in and fueled by the "absorbing work of political struggle [that] creates its own intimacies, its own attachments and intensities."[156] Comradeship speaks to the closeness, intimacy, and accountability that can "engender […] [the] discipline, joy, courage, and enthusiasm"[157] necessary to continuing the work of politicized scholarly, artistic, and activist struggle.

Following Frank Wilderson's *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*,[158] a study of the comradeship of Black and white South African anti-apartheid workers, Dean tries to parse the difference between comrades and friends:

154 Jodi Dean, *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging* (London: Verso, 2019), 10.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid., 51.
157 Ibid., 17.
158 Frank B. Wilderson, *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2008).

> Comrades are bound through their work toward a common goal, not through something merely personal. […] Comradeship abstracts from the specifics of individual lives, from the uniqueness of lived experience. Friendship doesn't. […] Comradeship is different — it's about the politics, the struggle, the discipline of common work, and the deep sense of connection and accountability that results.[159]

Dean's study leads us to comradeship as a mode of inquiry and action, one that relies on intimacy and accountability.[160] Dean and others note that while you choose your friends, you do not choose your comrades: "In contrast to the narrow exclusivity of friendship, comradeship is broad. […] Comradeship extends from intimate relations all the way to relations with those we don't know personally at all. Anyone can be a comrade, whether or not they like me, whether or not they are like me."[161] These distinctions strike us as both useful and somewhat troubling for TFQ NIPS. For one, the unchosen-ness of comradeship might sit sourly, and sadly, with those of us with traumatic unchosen families, or for those of us who have felt non-consensual pressure to be in comradeship with an oppressive or abusive person, in the name of a purportedly shared goal.

Moreover, because one is not born TFQ but, usually in politicized struggle, becomes TFQ through networks of friends, lovers, exes, and strangers whom you need and who need you, the politics and the common work are inseparable from the "merely personal." The dismissal or demonization of collective work as merely personal is deeply reminiscent of the familiar patronizingly hostile reception that TFQ concerns receive — let's say, for instance, in the context of universities, arts organizations, or funding bodies.

159 Dean, *Comrade,* 51.

160 A shift from friendship as a mode of inquiry (see Tillmann-Healy, "Friendship as Method," 730).

161 Dean, *Comrade,* 51.

For example, a true story: TFQ academic colleagues, who are also friends, work together as a NIP to raise funds and expand opportunities for TFQ scholars, artists, and community organizers on a university campus. Efforts to undermine this work take the casually paranoid form of accusation that this is the self-serving cliquish power-grab of a bunch of lesbians who are sleeping together. To be vilified as an orgiastic lesbian cabal is, indeed, a rite of passage for any public-facing, female-ish-presenting TFQ NIP. Of course, we believe that orgiastic TFQ cabals making good stuff in and beyond bad institutions is a goal to strive for. But when leveled as an accusation, we find ourselves in the odd situation of not quite knowing how best to respond: do you deny that you are orgiastic, that you are lesbian, that you are a cabal? Who would ever want to deny any of these things? Or do you warn all future colleagues that collaborating with you might turn them into queer sex partiers (or partners), and risk exponentially increasing invitations for collaboration? End of story.

Ultimately, what "comrade," as "a figure of political relation," brings to our framing of NIPS is the linking of politicized desire, intimacy, *and* accountability. What friendship, as a "method of inquiry," brings is critical compassion and trust. TFQ NIPS hold these two modes of relating in tension: one propelled by an outward-orientation to "goals" and the other held by an inward-orientation to trust. While NIPS, as intimate units of research, desire, trust, and accountability, far precede the internet, one of the reasons we most need NIPS now is to help us account for the pressing digital conditions of academic, artistic, and activist life. That is, our lives and our works are enmeshed in conditions of networked digital culture, and whether we use the internet or not, the internet is always there to use us. We cannot think of any outward-facing work that is safe from the internet. Every book, article, performance, talk, screening, exhibition, or even the less-obviously outward-facing materials of email, text message, Google document, voice message, lecture, and seminar runs the risk of showing up in either predictable or unexpected contexts online. Doing research, art, and activism in such a digi-

tal environment means protecting our NIPS, where these heavy processing nodes of intimate accountability are the only tools and technologies worth investing in. As a model for networked intimate information and accountable publics, NIPS are — like the inverted world of Castrima — a survival structure.

CONCLUSION

Gravidtas

> It had been a stormy meeting and Lindsay was glad when it was over.
>
> — Val McDermid, *Common Murder*[1]

In this book we trace and value long genealogies and vast affinities of heavy processing and processing-heavy methods as innovations in information technology (operating systems, central processing units, network designs). We hope to open the fields of information studies, data studies, digital media studies, and digital humanities (to name only the most obvious) to critical digital methods, to information infrastructures that have been largely overlooked by academic research outside of "area studies" (women's and gender studies, critical race and ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, and so on). We rely heavily on activist, artistic, and scholarly work that has come before — work about and not about digital materials — which critically informs our thinking on digital research methods.

A few years ago, a peer review we received included the following statement:

1 Val McDermid, *Common Murder* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 35 (originally published in London by The Women's Press, 1989).

> This piece is *gravid with* citation. In a sense, this is to be expected, given the authors' concern with responsible archiving practices. But at times it is hard to tell how and to what extent the piece is intervening. […] The takeaway from this should be: given that the majority of the essay is given over to examples and citations, *if* there is an original theoretical argument being made in this piece, I want to be clearer about what it is.[2]

Thank you, anonymous reviewer. We have received variations on this comment for years, but this one was given with the most flourish and has, ultimately, been most helpful. First, let's consider *gravid*. The most common meaning of "gravid" is "pregnant, heavy with young."[3] Its etymology extends to the Latin "gravidus," meaning "burdened, heavy."[4] As white scholars raised and educated in settler colonial contexts and institutions, our work is as much about breaking the cycle of white settler reproduction — losing our kin, as Christina Sharpe puts it[5] — as it is about taking on the heaviness of the violences enacted and systematized for our protection.[6]

In Chapter 1, we write that for heavy processing, there is no such thing as TMI (Too Much Information), only NEI (Not Enough Information). The same goes for citation. There is never enough citation, and citation is never enough.[7] Again, to gain

2 Emphasis in original.

3 *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "Gravid, adj.," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81046.

4 Ibid.

5 Christina Sharpe, "Lose Your Kin," *The New Inquiry,* November 16, 2016, https://thenewinquiry.com/lose-your-kin/.

6 See, for example, Judith Taylor, "Murdering White Men and the Work of White Women," *The Star,* June 16, 2020, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/06/16/murdering-white-men-and-the-work-of-white-women.html, and Alexis Shotwell, "Claiming Bad Kin," *Alexis Shotwell,* March 2, 2018, https://alexisshotwell.com/2018/03/02/claiming-bad-kin/.

7 See T.L. Cowan, "#93, Citation is Not Enough," *Media Praxis,* ed. Alexandra Juhasz, April 22, 2017, https://aljean.wordpress.com/2017/04/22/93-citation-is-not-enough-100hardtruths-fakenews/; Sara Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points," *feministkilljoys,* September 11, 2013, https://feministkilljoys.

a reputation for being into processing, is to be negatively and queerly feminized as a lesbian, a feminist, a girl, a woman, a queer, a pussy, a faggot, an activist, a therapist, or someone who is in therapy. Thus, for our citational practice to be feminized as gravid, as pregnant, heavy with young, burdened, is surprisingly generative as a way to understand our process-heavy way of working. However, rather than being heavy with young (although certainly some of the people we cite are younger than we are), we are heavy with what has come before, heavy with genealogy. We are not particularly concerned with making an "original theoretical argument" here, and believe that much of the expectation for "originality" in Western academia is a colonial trick of pretending that knowledge is the result of individual genius, rather than always the result of a community of thinkers. If we make an original contribution here, it might be the paths backwards that we trace across multiple genealogies of process-heavy research methods, bringing the long-derided history of lesbian processing within calling distance of other knowledge traditions. We have tried to trace some of the genealogies that have been most salient to us, up to the time of writing in the early 2020s. We have deliberately not aimed for a comprehensive study of every possible process-heavy method that we have observed or that might be out there. But we hope people will feel emboldened to claim their own processes and use whatever is useful here, to make additions and objections, and that *Heavy Processing* will be part of a long conversation, which will include an abundance of eating, drinking, walking, rolling, lounging, listening, and talking.

As you reach the end of this book, you may feel a bit like Scottish mystery novelist Val McDermid's intrepid lesbian journalist-sleuth, Lindsay Gordon, who in the 1989 whodunit *Common Murder,* set in a women's peace camp (the only-loosely

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com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/; Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); and Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

fictionalized Greenham Common[8]), *was glad the meeting was over.* But, as Lindsay learns in each of her adventures and across many kinds of relationships,[9] the questions we ask — and the seemingly endless conversations we have — might not get us the information we think we want, but they will lead us to better questions. All it takes is a lot of processing.

8 See Sasha Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London: Cassell, 2000), and Lily Wakefield, "Meet the Lesbians Who Founded an Anti-Nuclear Utopia in the Throes of the Cold War," *PinkNews,* October 19, 2021, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/10/19/greenham-common-peace-camp-lesbian/.

9 McDermid has published six novels (1987–2003) in the Lindsay Gordon series. *Common Murder* is second in the series. We are pleased to report that McDermid has written a new lesbian journalist–sleuth with the Allie Burns series, including *1979* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2021) and *1989* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2022).

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