On Wings of Imagination: The Power of Imagination Politics

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ABSTRACT

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On Wings of Imagination: The Power of Imagination Politics

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Imagination is used in the colloquial, everyday lives of people, where the concept functions as a detachment between the metaphysical and the physical. Imagination as a concept is therefore powerful, whereas Political Science and other fields use imagination more in the colloquial sense. This work seeks to illuminate the potential conceptual power of imagination in Political Science by analyzing the structure of imagination and its purpose, referring to imagination's temporal characteristic, its roots in experience, and as a pathway to the many futures and the process of *becoming* that challenge normative reiterations. This claim changes Political Science by emphasizing the performative intention of invoking imaginative power in revolutionizing and rendering future possibilities that extend beyond the realm of normative functional power.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those people and scholars who enact and engage with imagination as well as, overarchingly, to marginalized people whose stories and interconnected futures are important.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my partner-in-crime and my other homely entities for their emotional and conceptual help. I would moreover like to thank scholars and writers that invoke the imagination, keeping me thinking imaginatively. I would lastly thank my Committee Chair and Members for their participation in this process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Imagine

The use of imagination is present in different academic fields and every day circumstances, whether in political science, music, or even colloquialisms. John Lennon's song, "Imagine," uses imagination to present listeners with the dichotomy of reality and a possible future,[1] where the artist asks listeners to undertake a radical normative project. Benedict Anderson uses imagination to represent the intangible connections between people that exceed their physical limitations, such as a common identity—nationality—never seeing the full extent of its population; the people are left to imagine the rest of the nation.[2] English-speakers, as an example, use imagination colloquially both in positive and more sinister ways. These types of examples warrant closer examination because the use of imagination as a concept is definitively intentional and yet, the concept's political intricacies and implications are less transparent to those who listen to the invocation of imagination; invoking imagination is easy, in comparison to the difficulty of unraveling the performative function of imagination.[3] The question is then, "What is imagination doing?"[4]

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[1] John Lennon, "Imagine,"
[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* New York: Verso, 2016.
[3] See works on performativity, such as Judith Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics." *AIBR* (Antropólogos Iberoamericanos) 4 (3): i-xiii, 2009.
[4] Ibid.

Imagination is said, idealized, and interpreted as having linguistic meaning, and therefore presents an opportunity to analyze the power of imagination from different perspectives and methods, due to its reoccurring importance. Said differently, imagination has conceptual power that is linked to how often, where (contextually), how widely (across disciplines), and to what end (purpose) the concept is used. People use imagination to experience the material through immaterial rendition or reject those reaches into immaterial spaces as a disconnect from the physical realities and its subjective limitations.

The permeability of imagination depicts how useful the concept is to everyday life, but moreover on how people rely on imagination to revolutionize—or render—the material and to bridge gaps between that material and the immaterial. It is this permeability that allows for those within Political Science and its subfields—including International Relations (IR)—to use imagination with or without knowledge of the full scope of conceptual power that the imagination holds. Even in the colloquial way that political scientists use imagination, the concept strengthens arguments through imagination's ability to make connections between abstraction and reality; between the impossible and the possible; and as an exactment of a "miracle,"[5] against the

[5] Hannah Arendt, "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," *Chicago Review* (Chicago Review), Vol 14:1, 1960, 28-46.

machinations of reality. Imagination is then the explanatory power behind the beforementioned connections.

R. B. J. Walker identifies that, "…theories of [IR] as a discourse systematically reifies an historically specific spatial ontology… [expressing and affirming] the presence and absence of political life inside and outside the modern state as the only ground on which structural necessities can be understood and new realms of freedom and history can be revealed."[6] Walker argues that IR's theory-based explanatory powers are limited both structurally and historically, citing a stifled "political imagination."[7] This stifled imagination is predicated on the social science's reliance on theory without attributing those theories discursive context within the sociopolitical spatial-temporality of origin. In other words, Political Science uses contextually derived/Orientalized theory[8] and broadly applies those theories across times and spaces.

Political scientists and subsequent IR scholars should consequently use imagination more and with performative intention, showing connections between the impossible (and possible) and reality, and thereafter disaggregating historicized/damaging theories and highlighting the power of imagination within their own work. This intentional use is connected to the performative function of imagination,

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[6] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory,* Cambridge University Press, 1993, ix
[7] Ibid, 5.
[8] See also Edward Saïd, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books: Random House. 1979.

challenging in both senses how the concept of normativity is discussed within Political Science and IR as: 1) how things, society, or interactions *should* be or, 2) the Foucauldian understanding of systems of power, which reaffirms the status quo with the intent to reinforce the centralization of power, [9] such as heteronormativity reinforcing heterosexual dominance over "pathologized," deviant sexual narratives.[10] In the way that the latter normativity is understood, imagination directly contests the productions of knowledge that systematically remain a cyclical reaffirmation of what is by striving to understand what *could* be rather than the *should* that denotes power of the dominant constructors, meaning the writers of history or the normative victors. These systems of power are undermined by possibility and the fluidity of narrative that imagination promotes through the destabilization of linear time-space. Imagination performs similarly, then, to the fluidity of Feminism,[11] "queerness,"[12] and Afrofuturism, and operates with the same critical lens that deconstructs mainstream, normative narratives. Imagination destabilizes linear space-time through the connections of the future, present, and past by flattening the image and folding the imaginative occurrences regarding time and their geographic

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[9] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* New York, Vintage, 1977.
[10] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I,* translated by Robert Hurley, New York, Vintage, 1990.
[11] J. Ann. Tickner, "On the Frontlines or Sidelines of Knowledge and Power? Feminist Practices of Responsible Scholarship," *International Studies*, Vol 8, 2006, 383-395.
[12] Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History*, Icon Books, 2016.

positionality. An example of this is the dialogic[13] connection of imagination, where two bodies may imagine similar imaginative depictions, speaking an imaginative language across space-time. This is a discursive that transcends the limitations of physicality, where similarities in experiences or processing allows for the interlocution of possibilities; people discursively translate metaphysics.

Conversely, political scientists should also be wary of those who reject the concept of imagination as a useful conceptual tool, systematically entrenching power within reality and consequently pigeon-holing theses into singular categories of power: a more classical realist understanding of power.[14]

The power of imagination is present in both optimistic and more pessimistic iterations because of its linguistic meaning. The more pessimistic iteration confirms the ability/power of imagination to separate the material from the immaterial by presenting the futility of imagining beyond the connection to the physical. This physical space does not necessarily specifically mean the body because that would severely limit the scope of imagination's power, limited to a termed existence, such as the human lifespan or even the life of Earth. The bodily existence is superseded by a metaphysical existence that is the larger defining mechanism to the body. This should be conceptualized as an

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[13] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, e.d. by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 2014.
[14] See also Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?: An introduction to Theories of International Conflict*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013, 374-376.

encompassment, where the metaphysical space encircles the physical space and presumes the connection between the two. They are connected in that one space without the other would fundamentally change the characteristic of either the metaphysical or physical.

Temporality functions here as the metaphysical space that imagination occupies. This mechanism gives life meaning by establishing a definability or context, whereas life without time is in a dual state of concurrent death and life that supposes inexistence. Physical reality is real insofar as it is temporal or contextualized by the temporal; imagination is only so useful as it is rooted in temporality. Imagination not rooted in temporality and the real, then, is an abstract that is uninterpretable or uncontextualized. The concept of *nothingness*, for example, cannot be abstracted outside of the context of time because the nothing is contrasted against the something. This means that how people understand *nothingness* is in relation to their experience of something, and the lack of that something is directly tied to their physical reality, meaning that the abstraction is not as abstract as it would appear. *True-nothingness* cannot be defined or contextualized—or even named—because it is not the absence that is presumed by some sort of existence but the lack of both existence and non-existence, i.e., *true-nothingness* does not exist and becomes the false *nothingness* when people attempt to conceptualize (contextualize) it; *nothingness* exists because people will it to.

Exercising the Imagination

Imagine sitting in a valley that lies within a mountain range, snow dashed and peppered with evergreen trees. The surrounding air is as crisp as a fresh gala apple and

the lake water glistens in the warm sun that contrasts the cool, yet gentle breeze, as if it were a synergistic machination; but the valley is "becoming." [15] *The yellow flower field dances and petals flutter like a flurry of feet to the beat of the bachata wind, while various insects of various color seemingly float above the plane of flora, darting or gliding, and seeming….*

This imagination exercise simply builds an experience for the reader (a physical reality), to which the reader fills in the missing information with their own experiential imagery, rendering that which is abstract experiences into a mental physicality. This mental space is not equivalent to the metaphysical as one might expect from its characteristic of intangibility—one cannot touch thoughts as though they were piano keys, yet—but it is the mental space's positionality within the body that defines it as the physical, i.e., the brain communicates as a "computational material."[16] Imagination is powerful, in that the one hundred words above create the context to which a reader interprets and defines, in their own way, which gaps to fill in the spaces of ambiguity. The mountains, for instance, may take different shapes and sizes, or the acreage of the valley, along with the size of the meadow, are left to the imaginary devices. Even the concepts of *yellow* that seemingly exist outside of the realm of ambiguity take on varying

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[15] Foreshadowing concepts later to come.

[16] David Eagleman, *The Brain: The Story of You*, Penguin Random House, LLC: Pantheon Books, New York, 2015, 1

hues, saturations, shades (darkness), and luminance, which depend on the individual experience and ability.

These ambiguous voids require an act of rendition to contextualize a connection to a physical space and with less rendition—or less connection to the physical—the picture becomes less visceral. The lack of clouds within the contextualization allows for the reader to either insert some cloud coverage or for clouds to not exist. Cloud prevalence exists here because the reader imagines the space being filled or does not exist because a context has not been provided, leaving a void of ambiguity that is—most likely—filled with some shade of blue sky but otherwise unoccupied, "becoming" a flat image.

Lacking real context provides the realization that without a connection to reality, the imagined space is either filled by a reality or the space *is* not and cannot "become" an image; the space has no future and never had a past. For one to supplement the imagined exercise, creating a context for birds existing requires a physical experience that connects real and abstract. Those animals have otherwise no "footprint" in the created world and never existed in the past of that world (the imagined exercise) or the future of it, without reconstructing/revolutionizing the imagined space. Ambiguous voids are then either filled with reality through imagination or never exist; they are *abstract-nothingness*, or dissolved minerals in an endless sea.

Stories

Stories are embodiments of the physical realm as a culmination of experiences, and yet, are disembodiments as being vested in the imaginative project of becoming. The stories that are told or not told but witnessed are rooted in the realities that they occur in and how they effect, and yet act as connections from the past to the future. Clarissa Pinkola Estés describes stories in, *Wild Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype,* as a "towering column of humanity,"[17] where the future and the present rest on the shoulders of those who came before. This depicts a tangible connection of the physical reality and the intangibility of time—of imagined spaces—where past experiences are connected to and influence present-future experiences. Pinkola Estés uses the phrase "*llamar o tocar a la puerta*" or to, "play upon an instrument of the name in order to open a door. It means using words that summon up the opening of a passageway…, she understands wild and woman, intuitively,"[18] to depict a deeper structure of human consciousness—though Pinkola Estés uses it specifically in the analysis of the psychic-archeology of women and the connection to Wild Woman.[19] A psychic-archeology that may be accessed illustrates a constructed story or memory of

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[17] Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Wild Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype,* 19.
[18] Pinkola Estés, 6.
[19] Ibid, 3.

which is beyond simple renditions of one life equivalent to one life, or as completely separable entities.

Pinkola Estés understands subjectivity through co-constitutive narratives,[20] meaning many voices—stories—come together to assert their own existence as valid; they experience and validate the life of the pack—in individuals, the collective, and the relationships between them. These co-constitutive narratives are not relegated to simply the present, however, because they are a larger part of the temporal continuum, tying itself back to the concept of the "towering column of humanity." The author limns that Wild Woman is both, "from the future and from the beginning of time,"[21] transcending the restrictions of a material existence into a concept of omnipresence and meta-physicality. The depiction of the "towering column" should not be understood as simply linear, however, but as a temporal space that is inclusive of all stories and does not assert hierarchy. The column is simply a second or third dimensional model that should be understood in terms of the fourth dimension.

This understanding of the power of stories and why they are important help decentralize the power of the present and establish meaning beyond the simplicity of rehearsing for the play of the present, connecting only to the past. It is in this understanding that a power of future—and therefore imagination—exacts as an

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[20] Ibid, 12.
[21] Ibid, 13.

instrument for becoming, in that stories cannot simply be tied to past and change the present. They enact a form of authentic change to create a future, whereas a story for stories' sake pigeon-holes humanity into a cyclical pattern of machination; "history repeats itself" is a colloquial saying.

This colloquialism, however, is only true insofar as it denounces the power of imagination to break free from the cycle, meaning that history only repeats itself if the people within the story lack imagination and anchor reality on the experiences of themselves and others. Normative power lacks the sufficient ability to break the cycle—as a sort of terminal velocity of temporal futures—through its strong emphasis on the present-to-near future. Stories, for Pinkola Estés, "set the inner life into motion,"[22] and are healings for the "psychic damage" that history wreaks on people and especially women. The term "people" here is used intentionally to make a connection between the feminist work of Pinkola Estés and the "magic of story"[23] to Afro-futurism, where story is an important function of Afro-future and is a form of healing for Afro-futurists and their listeners.

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[22] Pinkola Estés, 20.
[23] Ibid, 20.

Overview

The above sections function as a staging or prelude[24] to the story of imagination. Music, stories, and imagination converge and diverge, intertwine, and coalesce into rhythmic pieces of history, present, and future times. These stages divulge the purpose and power of imagination through a sort of "psychic-archeological"[25] dig—if I may borrow the term.

This work is moreover critical of the preponderance and conceptual stretching of "normative" writing and thinking. Normativity loses itself by attempting to overtake imagined spaces and simultaneously holding onto its conceptual power within an intended dominion. The concept is consequently stretched thin and loses its credibility within the realm of political science and its subfields. If it is understood that political science is connected to other fields through discourse, then these ramifications extend beyond the discipline.

Chapter Two will discuss how imagination contests normative and innovation power by not displacing normative and innovative functions but being depicted as encompassing. This argument becomes more salient in a temporal distinction between normativity (or the normative function) and imagination, showing normativity's

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[24] Imagine, here, this text as a sheet of music that conveys emotion, self, and a linguistic connection that transcends materiality. Think of this introductive performance as co-constitutive, where both reader and writer imagine together—yet differently—and create something unique, though neither person may know or see one another.

[25] Pinkola Estés, 3.

limitation within is range. The relationships between normativity's range and imagination's range depicts the encompassing of normativity within an imaginative cloud. Innovation, however, will be discussed less because of its inherently intuitive ties to imagination.

In Chapter Three, the concept of "becoming" represents both the connections made in Chapter Two. Hannah Arendt's use of "miracle" also comes to the forefront in explaining why imagination is important for the "becoming" existence rather than one of "being." Afrofuturism, along with similar disciplines within this chapter, will provide a living, fluid example of how imagination performs this "becoming" and how it is such a "miracle" of existence. And while simply "becoming" is a transformational and a performance[26] as an art form, political science must harken back to the original intention of the field, allowing for imagination to be operationalized in transmogrification of real people that are "being." In other words, a future that *could be*, rather than *should be*, could de-placate future iterations of "being" by becoming a-hierarchal, fluid, and critical.

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[26] E. Patrick Johnson, "Quare Studies, or "(Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother," in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader.*

CHAPTER 2: IMAGINATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: SCIENCE, NORMATIVITY, AND EMPOWERING FUTURES

Futures

Histories are important for "rooting" scholars' varieties of works in "established" and accepted/acceptable "facts," giving a sort of temporal backing to arguments both theoretical and empirical. Even how social sciences and Political Science harken back to one another in citation denotes a form of historical reference, providing previous structures upon which to add their own mortar and scholarly brick. "Traditional" Western versions and scholars of history, moreover, prioritize written histories (and *his*-story) over those of oral traditions, bodily stories,[27] and art. This is not to say that the social sciences in part do not understand these implications, and there have been contemporary efforts to challenge the traditional sense of historical accounting and discounting.

Social sciences use what is commonly referred to as history as an analytic tool: a temporal mirror. This mirror reflects previous iterations of human existence and provides examples to follow, disavow, or interpret/interrogate. People look, in other words, to history for the *jurisprudent* ordering and structures of society, reaffirming or questioning normative systems of power,[28] as well as history acting as a predictive mechanism for future iterations. Political science particularly relies on history to identify commonality in

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[27] See Janell Hobson, *Body as Evidence: Mediating Race, Globalizing Gender*, Chapter 3, Part I.
[28] See Michel Foucault's work, especially *Discipline and Punish*.

variables over time, generate theories, compare and critique old institutions with developing ones, and even providing policy recommendations as a few examples. History used in this way has harrowing implications for the implementation of policy, relations, and ideology, to provide some examples.

In the oral argument within the case of *Hodges v. Obergefell*, a lengthy discussion centered around the historical proclivity or propensity for heterosexual marriage—and, one may argue, heteronormativity—citing *en masse* human precedence for only female-male relationships.[29] Supposed learned discussions around history —at the highest levels of United States government—reflect a biased historicization, where decisions that affect the political body of the US are based on skewed notions of the human narrative as a monotonal and uniform culture. The implication is that history used in this way diminishes credibility of the court because it implicates itself in not only Eurocentric-heteronormative biases but moreover its mischaracterization of historical events, trapping the court's argument in extrapolation and overgeneralization The historical argument in *Hodges v. Obergefell*—even if rhetorically vocalizing simplistic ideological arguments—depicts a larger social problem: that history may be used as a false science to justify sociopolitical structures and hierarchies. This mutated or bent mirror illustrates what people want to hear (and write within history), equivalent to the false science of

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[29] See historical accounts of Igboland: Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London, 2015 [1987].

measuring skull sizes to determine "varying" intelligence levels across socially constructed "races." The court's decision upheld rights to same-sex marriage rather than continually reinforcing the status quo, extending those rights across states.

Stories[30] contrast history's culpability through the understanding of stories as not simply a definitive, "yes, this happened and no, that didn't!" Stories incorporate the varieties that history sidelines[31] through normative systems of power, meaning that even if a story contains mischaracterizations of events, that story simply becomes important in a different way. This different way allows for interpreters of stories—especially within social sciences—to take a story for its contributing points; even lies tell stories about who creates the story, why the story is created, and how the story interacts with other stories. In another manner of speaking, history is functionally not and should not be understood as adiscursive to non-mainstreamed stories. Stories also account for a broader understanding of instances, where a "lie" or many corroborating "lies" may provide scholars with conceptualizations of how people are responding to instances of trauma, how politics affect history, and how these stories are their own data points in bringing together the larger story. History fails scholars and people insofar as they use or view history as a siloed timeline, forgetting marginalized people that are systematically erased from history. History is not a desultory subject; it is crafted and sustained by agents of

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[30] See Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*.
[31] J. Ann Tickner, "On the Frontlines or Sidelines of Knowledge and Power?" *International Studies Review, Vol 8, 2006,* 388.

normalcy and the violence they threaten or enact therein, and those normative agents celebrate history by keeping their historical account normalized and at the forefront of discussion; and the subject of history is then the object of hierarchy. Viewing what is commonly referred to as history as story instead reapportions power in previous (and future) iterations rather than Western and masculine-dominant history. These stories are important for reintroducing the connectedness of the many pasts—forgotten and remembered—that help us understand who we are now and who we could be in the future.

This chapter connects stories and subsequent history to normativity and beyond through the concept of imagination. I first establish linkages between the social science of history and neuroscience. I then describe the temporal distinctions between normative and imaginary range as limited and encompassing, respectively, and conclude by illustrating the limitations of normativity, as both a system of power and functional devise for social sciences. This implicates the way that political scientists, especially, imagine their own identity and function as a body of discipline, and will restructure the way that futures are and *could be*[32] imagined.

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[32] See also R. B. J. Walker, "On the Spatio-temporal Conditions of Democratic Practice," in *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory,* Cambridge University Press, 1993, 154.

The Sciences: The Brain, Plasticity, and Social Science

Neuroscience helps us to understand why we are who we are.[33] It highlights, for example, different aspects of the brain that are used to calculate and interpret given data; neuroscience helps us to understand how we interact with the world. Experiences and particularly the memory of those experiences as a form of retention inform our brain about external and internal circumstances, where David Eagleman—a neuroscientist at Stanford University—would corroborate by saying that, "experience changes [the brain], and it retains the change."[34]

The main biological device that works in tandem with other parts of the brain to retain memory is called the hippocampus, seated within the temporal lobe.[35] New experiences cause our networks of neurons to flare up, initializing new neural connections that are made stronger through the hippocampus "replay[ing] those associations."[36] These connections essentially become stronger as the brain replays the mix of sensory experiences, solidifying what has happened onto our less visible bodies. This performs as a marker of who we are and how people assign "narrative on moving shapes."[37]

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[33] David Eagleman, *The Brain: The Story of You*, Pantheon Books, New York, 2015.3-34.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, 27
[36] Ibid, 23.
[37] Ibid, 134.

This phenomenon allows for people to prescribe "social intention" to otherwise meaningless moments, e.g., determining the sunset as a romantically warm setting, interweaving the Sun, Earth, and observer in an intimate setting of experience. The power of prescription here allows for the observer to ocularly absorb information, internalize that information, and then construct a narrative that combines arbitrary mechanics/happenchance (the rays of the Sun hitting the atmosphere) with a sociality. In other words, we assign special meanings to our experiences as a reflection of self, instance, and social experience/s. The brain's hippocampus region, "plays a key role in assembling an imagined future by recombing information from our past."[38]

Contemporary neuroscience suggests that there are two ways of conceptualizing brain development: hardwiring and livewiring.[39] The discipline limns that one of the fundamental mechanisms for how the brain works for the human species is much like the training of a bonsai. The brain has small, loose neuron connections when born and develops stronger connections over time, culminating in adult neurons that are "pruned back" and strengthened,[40] like a thick bonsai trunk or root system. These root systems signify adaptiveness to one's environment (as a younger brain) and the solidification of one's world view (as an older brain).[41] This depiction of the brain illustrates a brain that

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[38] Eagleman, ibid.
[39] Ibid, 5-8.
[40] Ibid, 8.
[41] Ibid.

learns over time yet slowly stops learning with age; you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. The phenomenon that challenges this caricature is neuroplasticity, and to understand neuroplasticity, we must first discuss plasticity.

The idea of a plasticity appears within a vast, interdisciplinary discourse including Nietzsche, Freud, Malinowski, Mauss, Obeyesekere, Kleinman, Scheper-Hughes, Cohen, and Butler, to name a few.[42] The concept refers to a malleability of reality, where people may change what is perceived as reality for one or many persons, including the self. It denotes that reality, or how it is received and therefore perceived, can be shaped with both heat and pressure, where heat is movement and pressure is intention. Nietzsche writes in *The Use and Abuse of History* that plasticity (the author uses "plastic power") is, "the power of specifically growing out of one's self, of making the past and the strange one body with the near and the present, of healing wounds, replacing what is lost, repairing broken molds."[43] The ability to redefine the self predicates plastic power as self-interactive. Plasticity as a heat and pressure metaphor makes sense then because the self is molding the new self, though we now understand that outside instances or actors also contribute to that molding. This more metaphysical understanding of plasticity is useful for how neuroscientists conceptualize neuroplasticity; Nietzsche and other scholars were not too far off the mark.

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[42] João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*, University of California Press. Kindle,14-16.
[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, Kindle Edition, Cosimo Classics, New York, 2005 [1873], Kindle Locations 55-56.

And because the brain is always receiving and processing information, heat can be conceptualized as informational movement. Information that is gathered and processed, however, does not simply exponentially accumulate, referencing earlier discussion, but rather becomes subject to the neural pruning that is a sort of pressure. This pressure, coupled with heat, allows for the malleability of reality within the brain: neuroplasticity. The more explicit device of pressure can be used to create intentional changes to the neural network of the brain. Science journalist Caroline Williams collaborated with neuroscientists and psychologist to do just that, concluding that the brain could achieve better targeted functionality through greater synergistic work between the brain's parts.[44] Williams's yearlong experiment devised that the brain can in fact change through intentional, directed forces.

History is as much discursive as two individuals chatting about daily life, scholars debating a topic, or the asymmetric power of culture and society writing on bodies. History functions, if we may imagine, as a dialogue between iterations, e.g., the past speaks to the present and the present speaks back through iteration. The discourse between past and present is, in other words, experience and retention. The present experiences and retains the past, speaking to the past, and the past speaks through offering its experiences; time is not as distant or linear as one might believe. We

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[44] Caroline Williams, *My Plastic Brain: One Woman's Yearlong Journey to Discover If Science Can Improve Her Mind,* Prometheus Books, New York, 2018 [2017], 225-227.

experience the lives of our ancestors through song, art, written pages, orations, or even culture, where our brain receives outside information that structures how to live life but also who one is. It is in this way that our brain thickens its root system to reify a world construct, leading to an unimaginative state of being, if left unchecked.

Lauren Wilcox's work, "Gendering the Cult of the Offensive," is an example of a critique in how social sciences mischaracterize history—or, in this case, the cultural history—while also criticizing problematized histories of hyper-masculinity.[45] While the problematized history is not as important for my work, Wilcox shows that Van Evera's work on the "Cult of the Offensive" falls trap to the same type of problematization of the cult: not interrogating the past-present self. This past-present self is the culmination of sociopolitical experiences, such as the cult's predisposition to favor the offense because of a gendered culture of hypermasculinity in war-making. Van Evera essentially neglected to interrogate their own past-present self (or cultural writing up their body) to pinpoint a primary causality to the cult's existence and pervasiveness.[46]

To escape the trappings that capture scholars like Van Evera, the understanding or enactment of neuroplasticity allows us to challenge these past-present self-images (Foucauldian normativities) through Nietzsche's concept of "plastic power," where people may re-imagine themselves outside of historical restraints. This plasticity of

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[45] Lauren Wilcox, "Gendering the Cult of the Offensive," *Security Studies*, Vol 18, 2009, 214.
[46] Wilcox, 214. See Wilcox's critique of Van Evera's work on the "cult of the offensive."

reality in other words allows for the critique of human-self formulation and confirmation biases towards normalcies because the narratives are malleable pieces. And because our neurons can be reshaped, people may break the molds of a consumed/ing history—of simply being self-mutilating bystanders to time—becoming imaginative beings.

Normative and Imaginative

Normative power is that which attempts to shape the world with intentional direction, i.e., this *should be*…. *Should* is the consequent word that illuminates both directionality toward a temporal locality and the source of intention. Scholars use this function in attempt to prescribe the future through a directional power, meaning that the author(s) use their own discursive power to direct the future. This normative power implicates disciplines in facilitating/accepting prescriptions through knowledge production hierarchies. Prominent scholars who promote a future, in other words, have more ability to determine future iterations than less prominent ones if even simply examining the inner structures of academia and society, i.e., academia is subject to social forces such as hyper-masculinity and heteronormativity. It is in the vein of not simply being consumers but producers of knowledge—and not in the capitalistic way—that the contestation between normative and imaginative power arises. We must, however, understand how imagination challenges normative power by encompassing and varying the directional power.

There is a distinct difference between normative and imaginative functional power. The temporal range of normative work and that of imaginative work differ on

their capacity to change the future and how they temporally operate regarding other forms of temporality. Because normative work centralizes and prioritizes certain knowledge over others, it remains contained and restrained within its own knowledge production bubble, never engaging with hidden pasts or untold (erased) stories. The Grand Narrative becomes pivotal in sustaining normative power, perpetuating the single, determined future. This means that mainstream and sidelined discourses remain in their hierarchal positionalities because of normative forces cyclically reinforcing directionality of futures.

Mikhail Bakhtin describes this differently as a process of genre versus the novel.[47] For Bakhtin, genre contorts language into homogeneity where, "genre corresponds to ideas about the privileged status of a unitary, centripetalizing language…,"[48] whereas the novel represents a *heteroglossia*—or a variety of experiences.[49] The novel as *heteroglossia* is a living form of "plastic possibilities"[50] that "shape[s] its form to languages…constantly experiment[ing] with new shapes in order to display the variety and immediacy of speech diversity."[51] Genres contrastingly entail a centripetal force of self-perpetuation, confining speech (and itself) through defining speech acts—or iterations. Genres, for Bakhtin, are dead forms that never change or become novel and

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[47] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, xxx.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid, xix-xx.
[50] Ibid, 3.
[51] Bakhtin, xxix.

lose the ability/potential for plastic power. Normativity and history reflect this same centripetal force of linear, dead self-perpetuation as a sort of self-iteration that is akin to a repetitive toy that is broken. It is maddening in the sense that the genres will continue to re-iterate cyclical productions of knowledge that reify discourses into zones of homogeneity or script; "histories," in other words, "differ from novels in that they insist on a homology between the sequence of their own telling, the form they impose to create a coherent explanation in the form of a narrative on the one hand, and the sequence of what they tell on the other."[52] Conceptualizing Bakhtin's "death through genre-tization" could be re-envisioned as a form of automation,[53] where genres systematically repeat tropes that vary insignificantly from the context of the genre. The genre of history is similarly like an ice cube that retains its shape because of the slow, unexcited atoms within, changing only when heat is applied or someone chips away at the ice, erasing marginal parts. History, genre, and normativity are, more pointedly, already "dead," automated languages and remain temporally static. Normative power encompasses, then, simply the near-future and the past that it promotes, i.e., the normative past is the normative near-future; there are zero differences between the dialogic forces.

Imagination, however, interacts beyond those restrictions and temporally connects the large, diverse past with an even larger and potentially diverse future (see Figure 1).

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[52] Bakhtin, xxviii.
[53] Referenced in Chapter 3, within discussion of Arendt's "miracles."

Imagination is then more of a plastic, living form that is performatively synonymous with the novel, challenging homologies/systems of power. Genres are metaphorically akin to Foucault's panopticon,[54] where constraining the body through forced self-discipline is constraining language—and imagination—through forced self-discipline. Homologies and systems of power are equivalent in the power to cyclically enforce self-regulation and "normality" without necessarily revealing the attributing homogenizer. Contrastingly, imagination forcibly interrogates homogeneity and systems of power through heterogeneity by breaking the cyclical productions of knowledge (see Figure 2). Imagination imagines the many futures by connecting its many pasts and always retaining a critical edge against homogeneity; normative work cannot be imaginative because it remains siloed within itself and cannot break the mold of self-discipline. It takes imagination to permeate the walls of normativity by challenging both systems of power and the processes of their creation.

[54] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*.

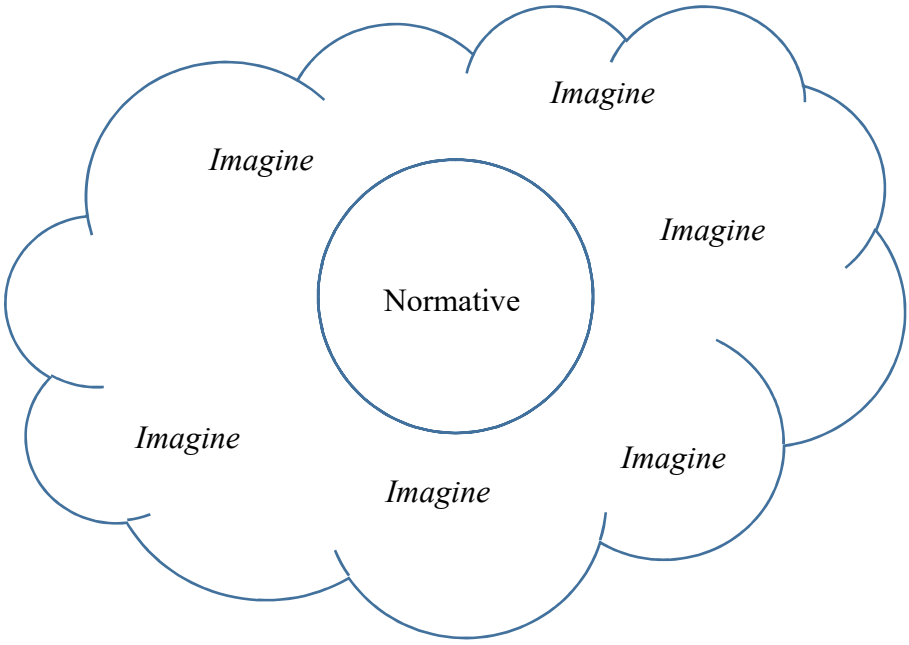

Figure 1. Imagination encompassing normativity.

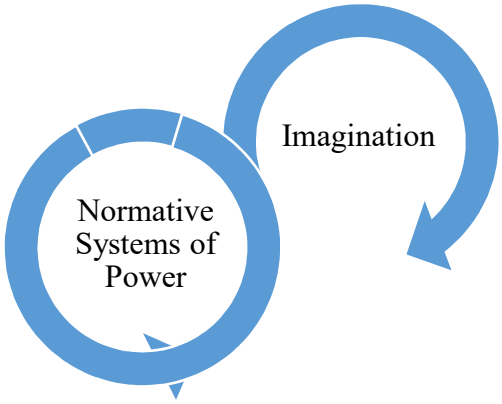

Figure 2. A model of Cyclical Knowledge of Production versus Imagination.

Limitations of Normative Inputs

While normative functionality does not encompass future iterations beyond its scope, it does function at the near-future temporality. Normative inputs—or people conjuring *should* as a performative tool—more greatly affect the near future by acting as a lever. Imagine, for example, that you must push over two dissimilar objects, if only through their shape.

One object is a toy rectangular block that has glued itself to the floor—representative of the present. On the principle assumption that we are on the above the toy block, the best angles of attack are just above the base and the tip of the block. Normative functional power works in this way, knocking over the block by attacking the weak points of normativity. This space between two angles of attack is a zone of normative self-discipline, where the now-pushed over block remains on its side and becomes more difficult to move in a larger capacity; its zone of self-discipline is limited in spatiality. One may roll over the block, changing the side that it is on—rolling history through the genre of its retained shape—but never achieving shape transmogrification. The rectangle may change shape without using a second device to impede or propel upwards the block, returning it to a previous iteration.

The other toy block is spherical in structure, referencing futures that have no determined structure and pasts that are connected to the futures through the spherical nature. The ball, in other words, signifies the multi-directional possibility of inputs, where no voice is an object of power; a finger may move the ball at whichever place as

the potentiality for cyclical systems of power constantly changes upon each input, changing the direction and distance traveled at will. The ball is the imaginative cloud, whereas the block is the normative bubble within Figure 1.

Another, more simple metaphor is the wobbly pencil.[55] When taking up the pencil, holding it by the eraser, the shaking of said pencil creates a key optical illusion: the fulcrum of the movement remains in the lower end of the pencil, just above the eraser mechanism. This immovability signifies normative power, where the fulcrum and tip of the pencil does not move as much as the foible of the pencil and the eraser (normative inputs/pressure). Normative inputs, in other words, more greatly affect the foible than any other part, where the foible represents the near-future and the tip represents distant futures. In this model, nothing really changes. It appears there is change by the fact that there is discernable movement, but the movement reverts to its dichotomous position of moving back and forth.

Using normativity as a functional power within social sciences such as Political Science simply moves the foible, creating circular, insignificant, and easily reversible change. Normative work, by describing what *should be*, moves the pencil at its fulcrum, attempting to adjust the future but lacking ability to do so, since normative functional power disregards the heteroglossia of pasts and futures. Normativity without imagination

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[55] See Figure 3. Imagined Space.

functions as self-conversing and therefore is not dialogic, lacking ability to speak to possible futures and hidden pasts.

Merits of Imaginative Functional Power

Normative functional power derives itself from establishing and reaffirming *certain* trajectories, where those trajectories' authors have power in determining a narrative. Authorship implicates those who would prescribe futures by allowing scholars to trace the processes of narrative development and propagation, e.g., Lisa Lowe's book, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, traces the development of liberalism and that concepts "intimate" ties to the slave trade, colonialism, imperialism, and the Opium Wars.[56] Lowe's book uses the method of process-tracing through historical explanations,[57] examining the interconnectedness of European conceptual developments and their oppressive campaigns overseas. The European understanding of how the world *should be* viewed conceptually mutated their ability to understand the stories and iterations of other people who conceptualized the world differently. Those Europeans then used this normative functional power as a tool for the legal justification—within their own legal system—of eradication, enslavement, and conquest.

Normative functional power as *should* is then a destructive rendering of the world and its many stories. This destructive rendering is the same as the Adobe® Photoshop®

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[56] See Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Durham; London, Duke University Press, 2015.
[57] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, 2005, 205-232.

process of digital rendering because they both fundamentally disrupt the original file—or the world as it was, is, and *could be*. Unfortunately, we cannot save two original files of the world to undermine the destructive characteristics of normative functional power. Adobe® Lightroom®, however, is a non-destructive rendering program that keeps the original file intact and saves virtual copies that may be rendered in varying ways and then saved, preserving the original image but allowing for the possibility of multiple iterations of rendition. This functionality is helpful for going back to old images and re-rendering them as a different person (iteration) than when the image was taken. This type of rendering connects the past (the image taken) to the future possibilities of rendering and authorship, decentralizing power from the author of the image by undermining the determined future for the image and yet empowering the author by allowing the author to revisit themselves as a reconnection and reflecting their possible self through art as a story. The development of character is palpable from this revision of art, connecting the past through the future, where the future is the indeterminable iterations of the author and the art as a collective, constitutive piece.

Art is beautiful then not simply because of its imagery but the "living" characteristic; art survives the author and yet is the author, simultaneously. It evokes different emotions and questions a determined trajectory that some attempt to prescribe it, re-iterating itself through the connection between author, piece, and the reader/audience. Each interpreter's imagining of the meaning or connections engages with different dialogic, consistently de-genre-tizing the art and promoting a *heteroglossia*. In other

words, art performs as a core surrounded by a fluidity of being. One may not detract the art from its tangibility, where the author, piece, and its context are real and relatively static. The art holds fluidity by engaging with the ebb and flow of its audience, such as how a piece in a museum is surrounded by a transient people, migrating through the halls and interpreting the "meaning" of art pieces. The art holds not, however, a definitive meaning because it inherently engages with a varying audience who become their own authors of the art, similarly to the non-destructive rendering of Adobe® Lightroom®. The audience saves virtual (imagined) copies of the original art and create for themselves their own authorship of the piece. The art *becomes*—and consequently lives—through the re-imagining process of the dialogic. Art is beautiful because it straddles both death and life, retaining a core and a fluid membrane, respectively.

For imagination, time is and is not consequential, and possibilities are not the objects of temporal restrains. In other words, imagining the possibility of an occurrence does not relegate that imagined scene into a determined point in space, and imagination simultaneously traverses and uses all temporalities. If a person were to imagine themselves skydiving, is that imagined scene of skydiving relegated to the past or the future? The answer is that the details within the imagined space are the temporal aspects that contextualize (make more intelligible) the experience of imagination. Further contextualization coincides with more temporal rooting and less imaginative characteristics. As with the example in the introduction, imagination need not serve as a distinctive establishment of contextuality, meaning that the imagination breaks away

from the roots of reality and the simple experiences gained from that positionality. The imagination delves into spaces less physical and more metaphysical by dancing with possibility and challenging our understanding of impossibility.

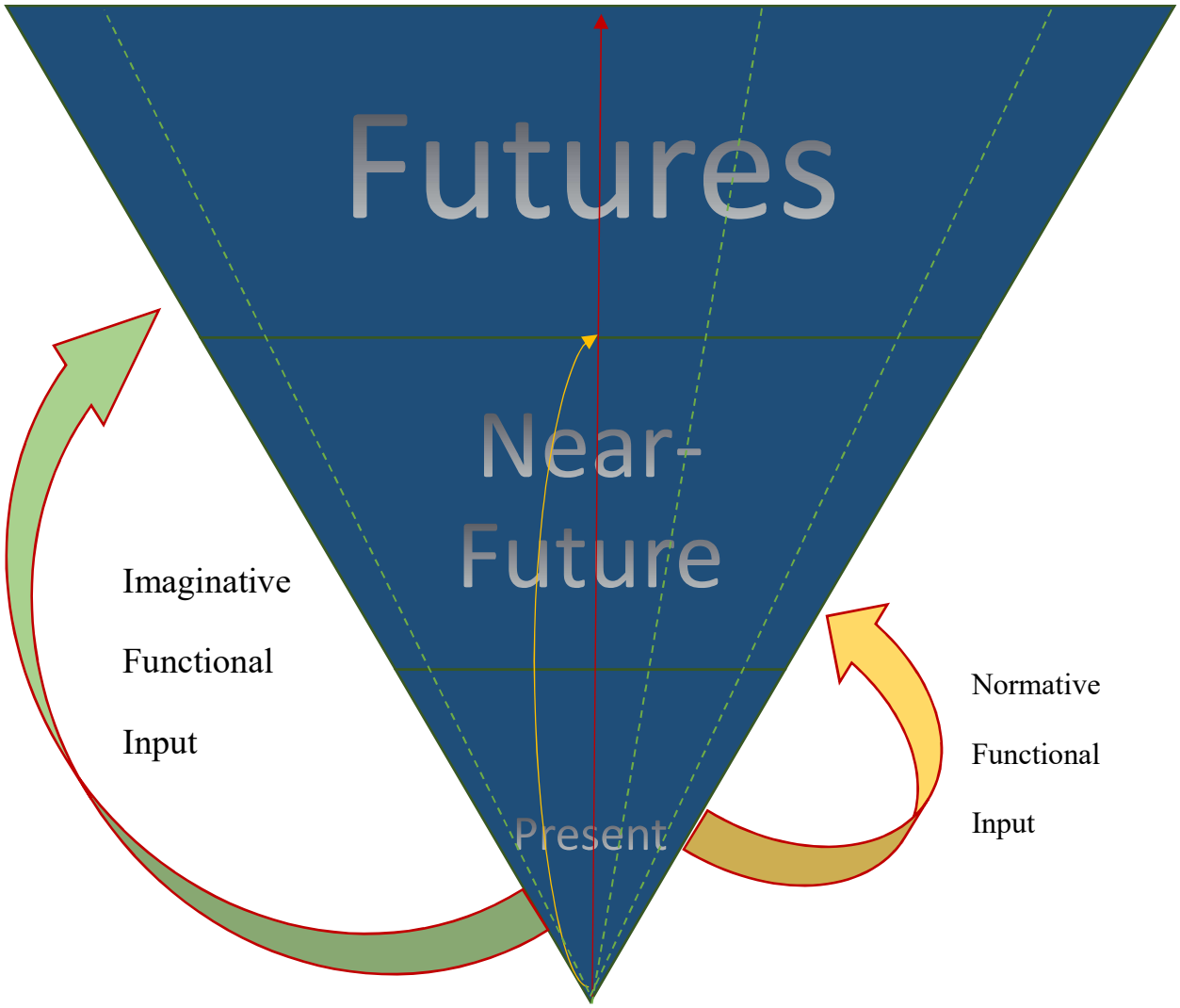

Figure 3. Imagined Space.

Discipline and the Critical Shadow

Disciplining within Political Science is synonymous with the normative functional power, addressing how political scientists write, read, conceptualize, and even theorize. It is a form of self-censure that de-imagines the field into simply an observational and normative dichotomous purpose. Identities within the social science field then become homogenized into the language of the field, reflecting a genre-tization of Political Science into an unimaginative space that prioritizes production over creativity. Other sub-fields such as International Relations suffers even more greatly by losing touch with other identities and nationalities, especially within the context of already established White-masculine institutional and structural normativity. Scholars moreover forget to interrogate their historical biases, conducting normative experiments that are predisposed to fail to change anything beyond the near-future. They consequently forget that stories are pivotal dialogues that bridge generations, identities, and struggles, and that these stories are instrumental in changing the way we understand how we think, why we think, and how we interact with one another.

Imagination as a dialogic is important for understanding how bi-discursiveness (normative-critical dialogue) is inherently adiscursive because it discounts other discursive actors by keeping the "conversation" singularly focused on normative ventures—or who owns the determined future. The life as the critical shadow then is not truly dialogic and discursive in that it does not allow for a possibility (or futures) beyond that critical dialogue with normativity. The binary relationship of contestability between hegemon and its critique is subsumed within a monolithic narrative, where the hegemon

is satisfied in retaining the critical discourse within the purview and territoriality[58] of the hegemon's future. Imagination vaults the territorial boundaries of the hegemon, escaping the gaze of normative forces by imagining beyond and without them. The escape of imaginative forces is important for collectively undermining normativity but also as a connecting device between imagining entities as collaborative, dialogic forces that traverse and intersect imaginative futures.

History and Political Science could work together to formulate better ways of imaginatively tying together stories and science to restructure how people understand and interact with each other, using "plastic power" and neuroplastic concepts to intentionally instigate social/scholastic change. This change empowers futures—and possibilities—by connecting stories and imagination.

[58] Conceptualizing time as a space of territorial claim.

CHAPTER 3: OPERATIONALIZING IMAGINATION

Community

Imaginative functional power allows us to understand the scope of infinite possibilities, not every instance of iteration but at least the depth of the futures and those futures' connection to the past. People or groups of people—marginalized by normativity and its functional power—utilize imaginative functional power as a direct challenge to their oppressors and their hegemonically determined narrative. These groups use imagination to also coalesce themselves through a similar connection between past and future: experiencing violence, microaggressions, and memory of trauma while envisioning both the futures outside of violence and futures contrasting the normative structures of narrative, where "[c]ommunity is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling, and kinship; a historical relation to futurity is restricted to generational narrative and reproduction."[59]

On the surface, this "imagined community"[60] lives in and for the critical shadow, trapped in living as anti-mainstream forces. But while it may be true that the critical shadow does remain, imaginative functional power keeps the communities both self-critical to their own potentiality of normativity and *becoming*.

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[59] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader, Chp 10, 1998, 169.*
See also John D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States.

[60] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

These communities interconnect with other similarly imaginative groups to form larger conglomerate communities in solidarity with differing experiential memories and a common idea of a deconstructed future. In other words, these communities create webs of social support and interdependent institutions of societal change, bridging physical realities with more metaphysical realities to come. These social structures are better able to contest the ability of normative forces to appropriate critical groups into their normalcy, corrupting those groups and implicating them within normativity by reinforcing a slightly varying narrative that is still inherently exclusive. The previously critical communities being subsumed—or annexed—into normativity opportunistically portrays normative forces as the benevolent king, while also strengthening the social network of normativity by giving those appropriated communities a stake in upholding normalcy.

Subsuming and annexation depicts the power differential within normativity, illustrating an inner core and inner periphery, but annexation particularly demonstrates a definitive domain and intentional overtaking. The annexation of imaginative communities shows that normative functional power and its operators can explicitly appropriate critical forces in a sort of land-grab, where social capital and their networks are stolen for the entrenchment of a determined narrative. Of course, the will for annexation may either come from critical or normative forces as a direct will to be normal or as direct will to counteract power contestation. Subsuming occurs more implicitly, where critical forces become normal through the incorrect idea of "winning the fight," subordinating the

group's identity to that of the inner core normative forces. In other words, social change occurs more over time as social acceptance builds and with more indirect intervention (subsuming) rather than the direct intervention of law forcing social change (annexation).

This chapter details the operationalization of imagination. I will first discuss Hannah Arendt's concept of "perform[ing] miracles,"[61] where Arendt's use of "miracle" explains why imagination is important for the process of a "becoming" existence rather than one of simply "being." Afrofuturism, within this chapter, will provide a living, fluid example of how imagination performs this "becoming" and how it is such a "miracle" of existence. And while simply "becoming" is a transformational and a performance[62] as an art form, political science must harken back to the original intention of the field, allowing for imagination to be operationalized in transmogrification of real people that are "being." In other words, a future that *could be*, rather than *should be*, could de-placate future iterations of "being" by becoming a-hierarchal, fluid, and critical. Science fiction (Sci-fi) writing enacts this functionality of imagining and becoming by presenting to their audience different ways of both understanding/interrogating reality and conceptualizing different or alternative futures/pasts—as a connected imaginative space.

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[61] Arendt, 46.

[62] See E. Patrick Johnson's work on performance in, "Quare Studies, or "(Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother," in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader.*

Miracles

Hannah Arendt, in her work "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," establishes against fascism and totalitarianism—alongside a mass society—that history and politics are full of "infinite improbabilities" or "miracles."[63] These aforementioned political structures seek to censure the possibility of "miracles" to, "engulf all culture, the whole world of durable things, and to abolish the standards of excellence without which no thing can ever be produced" and "driven to stifle initiative and spontaneity as such, that is, the element of action and freedom present in all activities which are not mere laboring."[64]

The author's life experiences with World War II and Germany, particularly reflected in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*,[65] represents her world view as conscious of the dangers of political structures working in tandem with a mass society that is demobilized outside of what the state needs.[66] This relationship between state and society is then a parasitic symbiosis, where the state feeds from the labor-ridden society without necessary will to exist outside of that labor. This society is essentially a static ghost of itself, not simply a fluid interculturally dialogic entity but a society that operates mechanically as clockwork. And while Arendt's

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[63] Arendt, 44.
[64] Ibid, 45.
[65] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* 1963.
[66] Arendt, "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," 44-46.

discussion of action, excellence, and freedom are outside of the scope of this work and more belong within explicitly Political Theory discourses, the processes of these political structures to "automat[e]"[67] society into subjects (and objects) of a definitive narrative of life is reflective of the previous discussion of normative functional power within this work.

Transformations into automated societies depict the transformation into a state of *being*, where normative forces—especially in relation to state power—adiscursively create the boundaries of normalcy and the hierarchal structures of power by eliminating variances, therein; they reform social spaces into de-imagined spaces. These de-imagined spaces are essentially post-social spaces, where discourse/stories/narratives outside of the state/system is marginalized and ostracized as incongruent with "society." The plurality of imagined communities is subsumed or annexed into a conglomerate state, consolidating imaginative power into normative power by hierarchizing futures into a core conceptualization. The state, for example, creates homogenized identities—citizen, comrade, brother and sister (as more loosely homogenized)—to explicitly deconstruct social variances and experiences, molding plastic bodies into an identifiable and predictable, predetermined shape. The produced body is trained to, either from birth or through discursive coercion, toil for the state and its subordinate society. Differently stated, there are no complex differences between this produced body and that of common

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[67] Arendt, ibid.

machinery; humans are created to work, work, cease to be able to work, and then considered dead,[68] regardless of physical status. The future and its connection to history—as it is normatively so-called—then becomes more predictable, directable, and editable, as if the state and the international system were directors of a movie, showing people what they can only see, telling people what they (actors) *should be* and *should be* doing, and orchestrating the story as a reflection of the entity's self. And while we cannot discount the state as a tool for individual actors, we must also account for the individual actor as a tool for the state as a self-preserving device. The state model of governance reflects its power to uphold itself as a system of power through discussions on world government, where it is difficult to discuss international coexistence outside of community→state→international community/society→world governance linear developments.[69] For example, is it not telling that an internationally viable anarchic society cannot exist in this normative world and that the sovereign state is simply contrasted against the backdrop of international anarchy[70]?

Skeptics of imaginative power may postulate that developments of systems of power stem from imaginative functional power, insofar as the Patriarchy or the state where imagined entities. Yet, it is the normative establishment of these systems and their

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[68] Arendt, 46.
[69] See authors such as Hedley Bull, "Society and Anarchy in International Relations," New York, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2000.
[70] Ibid.

violence to uphold these systems that corrupted their imaginative power, violently suppressing other imaginations and twisting into uncritical determinisms.[71] Systems of power are only malicious in their "systematic" and automated assertion of power, especially regarding violence against the body and its imagination. In other words, power as we understand it cannot be eradicated (or *could* it…who knows…?) but systems can be destabilized because they are created, and particularly because they were created by humans. These systems are undermined by imagining outside of the systems, exerting a collective imagined power against oppression and a determined "life."

Circling back to Arendt's "miracles," possibility, and imaginative functional power, it is important to see how imagination functions to destabilize the prescribed narratives by, "…bring[ing] about the infinitely improbable and establish[ing] it as reality."[72] I would go beyond this conception, however, by arguing that the reality is not purely the pinnacle of miracles because simply establishing reality is not the goal of imaginative power. Machinations—or normativities—seek to translate reality as its own interlocutor, rebuking *heteroglossia*, to produce a constructed order rather than interrogating knowledge. Imaginative functional power operates to establish or interrogate possibilities and impossibilities outside of what is reality, and then consequently establish those imagined spaces within realities, challenging normativities

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[71] See for example George Orwell's *1984*.
[72] Arendt, 46.

and their operators; the physical individual reality interrogates the metaphysical spaces, which then interrogate physical communal realities and again interrogate metaphysical spaces, cycling back to individual realities. The imagination performs miracles by interacting with the "infinitely improbable" and even impossible, abstracting[73] what and how people are conditioned into less-plastic bodies. It is through the process of imaginative annealing that we may heat up the metalized mechanisms and soften them, bending bodies back into their plastic forms and challenging the rigidity and mechanization of society. Every imaginative iteration is then a form of miracle that is inherently improbable due to the surmounting power of normativity and machination. These miracles help people *become* something that they were not necessarily designed or conditioned to do, such as fly or travel into space, or help them *become* something outside of the conditions of normativity, such as a leader, poet, or a traveler in their own imagined terms. Imaginative functional power operates both performatively and as performance.[74]

Becoming

T. Garner references Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming* as, "both an ontological and an ethical position that involves movement from stable, 'molar' entity to indeterminable, 'molecular' nonidentity, extending beyond the limits of dominant

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[73] As in people's imagination functioning as an abstraction to centralized ideas and concepts.
[74] Referencing Judith Butler and E. Patrick Johnson's performativity and performance, respectively, hinting at the metaphysical and physical impacts of imagination.

corporeal and conceptual logics."[75] This concept and the performance of it is then counter to the narrative of determined beginnings and ends: birth and death, realizing a more fluid form of the body and how it exists—and continues to exist—in ways that challenge solidifying social forces/constructions. This *becoming* is characteristically similarly to Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* and Arendt's "miracles,"[76] contesting a core-ization of any given body; e.g., the person, language, or different levels of society; and the peripheralizing of "other" bodies. These bodies are inherently in a state of transition, changing

Michelle Obama, in her book *Becoming*, references *becoming* as, "…forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self. The journey doesn't end."[77] This definition comprehensively details a continuous process of development, operating as an always moving structure. The author also recounts the processes of normalization, "…becoming *known*…" and "becoming known for being someone's wife and as someone involved with politics, which made it doubly and triply weird."[78] The First Lady's identity began to dissolve in elevated and visceral systems of power of Patriarchy as a wife and mother; "visibility,"[79] in reference to the systems of

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[75] T. Garner, "Becoming," Transgender Studies Quarterly, Vol 1, Number 1-2, Keywords, 2014, 30-32. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane. University of Minnesota Press, 1983 [1972]; and –*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, *1987* [1980].
[76] I order these chronologically to this work's use of them.
[77] Michelle Obama, *Becoming*, Crown Publishing Group, Kindle, 2018, 418.
[78] Ibid, 241.
[79] Ibid.

power over the body; and a panoptic subjectivity,[80] where her politics were policed by both surveillance of the masses and a self-discipline.

Within Michelle Obama's experience as a First Lady or even as a wife of a senator, "other parts of [her] were dissolving from view,"[81] depicting the harsh realities of normativity stagnating identity as monolithic and unchanging; she became simply a shadow to the Patriarchal-masculine system of power, where even her own achievements were called into question because of her husband's status and power.[82] The author's story illustrates many marginalized people's stories, showing how identities are subsumed and annexed into normativity or completely rejected, pointing to real instances of people attempting to, "shape [her] story in a cynical way."[83] Michelle Obama's life, with respect to her elevated visibility to the public, became more visibly subjectable to acts of normative functional power's violence, attempting either to reshape her identity/personhood or simply to erase it. The author, however, identified that she did not want to be a static shadow of Senator/President Obama; she wanted to grab the reins and continue in her own way, living her own life.[84] And as she states, "[b]ecoming is never giving up on the idea that there's more growing to be done,"[85] where, "…being willing to

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[80] See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
[81] Obama, 241.
[82] Ibid. Michelle Obama's work promotion was depicted unjustifiably by some news outlets as a form of corruption, citing Barack Obama's position at the time.
[83] Ibid.
[84] See the back cover of the physical edition of Michelle Obama's book.
[85] Ibid, 418.

know and hear others…,"[86] represents the growth developed by interacting discursively rather than simply *being* present—or as an adiscursive machine.

In the word becoming, "be-" denotes a status of existence, while "-coming" illustrates the direction and intention as a transformational performance. The word represents and celebrates a static reality with a fluid possibility. *Becoming* is then inherently transformational and a performance—or an art form—where the body is a fluid and plastic and yet that *becoming* also has intention and direction. Framing *becoming* as an imaginative exercise in power allows us to understand how that *becoming* functions against the static normative power that censures metaphysical self-transcendence/actualization. This more explicitly imagined *becoming* counteracts the status of simply *being* by de-internalizing normative systems of power, while decentralizing and destabilizing the identity of normative operatives. If, for example, the state was to question and reject the definition upon itself as the sovereign monopoly on violence—or even simply as the sovereign—then the state *could be* re-imagined as operating outside of and against that normative prescription, recreating its image within different possibilities or in reflection of what are perceived to be impossibilities; I imagine, therefore becoming. Essentially, by imagining the body outside of its physical restraints, something new is created, coming to perform a transformation beyond its original self and beyond those normative forces that create and shape its body. And

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[86] Obama, 421.

because it is re-imagined, it connects to a larger network/collective that imagines itself tentative futures; the state *could be* Afro-futurist, feminist, disembodied, and/or queered or "quared."[87]

Futures

Science Fiction (or Sci-Fi) writing, movies, and television have been at the forefront of exercising the imagination. Writers such as Octavia E. Butler, Isaac Asimov, George Orwell, Gene Roddenberry, and Ursula K. LeGuin created stories that propelled a whirlwind of imaginative thought, with some of the ideas translating directly into technological advancements or promoting social change.

As a part of pop culture, Star Trek (especially Star Trek: The Next Generation (TNG)) inspired—or in some ways perpetuated—people's ideas about society and its possible directionality. Star Trek: TNG, for example, wrote in a few challenges to heteronormative masculinity by showing a male-presenting character wearing a female officer's uniform—albeit, contained in the background and usually in passing. And while we can critique their use of transient, backdrop characters, we must still also note its contextual importance as being presented to a mass audience in the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Representing Trans/Drag people—because the identity of the characters are not discussed throughout the show—depicts a future that *could be* more accepting of then and still currently marginalized groups.

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[87] See E. Patrick Johnson's discussion on "quared."

Octavia E. Butler in *Xenogenesis* approaches sex categories as non-binary and grapples with questions of humanity's viability and if there is a need to survive, or if that need is simply a want.[88] Octavia Butler's future imagines a world that continued killing itself to near extinction, only to be spared though the evolution—and consequent extinction—of humanity into another species. O. Butler depicts for their audience a bleak yet dehumanized story, focusing on shared experiences and metamorphosis into something beyond human.

While these are some examples of Sci-Fi's challenges to normativity, many authors/scholars have worked to depict the many worlds that exist beyond simple reality. As previously discussed, the future is important for these writers because those futures reflect authorship and the dialogic connection between the many stories of the pasts and the many directions that the future may hold. The stories reflect, as Pinkola Estés writes, both the psychic-archeology of the writers and their processes of using their stories to heal "psychic damages."[89] These psychic-archeological digs and the healings of psychic damages—especially because the writers are operating in imagined spaces—are not always simply tied back to the writer themselves but may reflect dig/healing of the imagined community. This means that even if the Sci-Fi writer does not identify with certain marginalized groups, they can still be conduits for the voices of those groups,

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[88] Octavia E. Butler, *Xenogenesis*, Warner Books Inc., New York, 1989.
[89] Pinkola Estés, 20.

giving them agency in the futures that exist beyond the normative reality and determined future. Sci-Fi is then novel, in the sense that it intentionally pervades the cracks in normative systems of power, attacking in a centralized narrative's weak point: temporality. If a movie, for example, depicts a society a thousand years into the future and nothing has really changed, does that spark excitement and wonder? Would the film performance do anything, besides illustrating the futility of people's lives? Sci-Fi performatively operates at these levels showing both interconnectedness of imagined communities and the temporal range—or span—that is available, consequently allowing us to imagine beyond that, even. Sci-Fi operationalizes what *could be* within popular culture.

Afro-futurism engages with operationalizing futures beyond Afro-Anglo relationships and oppressions. The concept envisions, "an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation…"[90] and as Ingrid LaFleur states, "'…as a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens'…."[91] Afro-futurism embraces technology as a conduit of re-imagining the black body and re-engineering it or their surroundings toward the purpose of evolutionary revolution. Womack cites Afro-futurism as a means to

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[90] Ytasha L. Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, Chicago Review Press, Kindle, loc. 107-118.
[91] Ibid, citing Ingrid LaFleur's TEDx talk in Brooklyn, New York.

> redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future. Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs. In some cases, it's a total reenvisioning of the past and speculation about the future rife with cultural critiques.[92]

Many Sci-Fi depictions represented very few African-decedent people, if even "non-Euro" peoples.[93] For a different future, Afro-futurism operates within both the past and the future to counteract hierarchies and oppressive social constraints that have, throughout history, temporally bound the potential Afro-future of the people to particularly Westernized constructs. Afro-futurist creators work to both heal real and psychic damages, while psychically digging for themselves a deeper identity beyond colonialism/post-colonialism, slavery/reparations, or racism/post-racial society. These artists imagine their community amongst the stars or interconnected with cybertronics, as automatons—not to be confused with automations—or as leaders amongst humanity. This futurism is about empowering a disempowered people.

For Afro-futurism, the concepts of *becoming* and imagination are important tools for contesting their normative constraints. Ryan Coogler's depiction of *Black Panther*

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[92] Womack, ibid.
[93] Ibid, loc. 94.

showed that black power—such as the actual Black Panther group[94]—repeated the historical mold of white violence, and that the oppressed becoming the oppressor is simply retaining the mantle of whiteness, where black identity exists within the white construction of history and their determined future. Violence and the maintenance of state power represents a reaffirmation of white power; the colonized becoming the colonizer is still the colonized. White thought and normativity seeps into attempts at an Afro-future by feeding off the frustration of a prescribed black people. Coogler illustrates a post-white imagined future for the Marvel universe—and ours—by connecting the imagined communities of Africans and the African-American diaspora into a Pan-African futurism, developing African-American communities through cooperation and connected stories.

Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones expand the idea of Afrofuturism into Astro-Blackness, where, "a person's black state of consciousness, released from the confining and crippling slave or colonial mentality, becomes aware of the multitude and varied possibilities and probabilities within the universe."[95] Black consciousness is then more aware of directionality and intention in relation to how power is enacted upon the body and how those bodies—and the technological body that develops alongside

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[94] Not simply as a refutation and admonishment to the Black Panther group but more as a sympathetic understanding of the emotions and real fears that those people held, while remaining self-critical to the normative goals of the group….

[95] Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones, *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*, Kindle, loc 17, citing Rollins 2015, 1)

them[96]—may use their own imagined power to push back and escape those social constraints. Astro-Blackness envisions this imagined consciousness as a social network emphasizes the importance of *becoming* beyond social prescriptions—or other conscious social networks that enforce a hierarchic certain way of existing.

A key idea of imaginative power, in connecting the immaterial and the material, is the concept of imagination extending the physical beyond its physical and normative limitations, where normative forces dictate "realities" and censure other possible futures through the dichotomization of possibility and impossibility. In other words, normative forces present the definition of what is and is not possible rather than interrogating/imagining the impossible. Normative narratives are then simply physical reiterations of certain wanted/existing "realities" that do not engage with what is beyond prescribed reality/physical space. Normative functional power is restricted in its scope by not being able to escape its own gravitational pull back to the determined narrative;[97] the long-run future remains the same when the short-run sees clear change. The escape velocity of normative power's long-run prescription is then imaginative functional power, where the centralizing force of determining futures (normativity) is escaped by straddling both physical and metaphysical spaces of possibility and impossibility. We challenge then what is considered definitively impossible by imagining ourselves as both possible

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[96] Anderson and Jones, citing Hayles, 2012.
[97] Reference Figure 3, the gold line curving back into the normative narrative.

and impossible *becoming*, as (trans)ient[98] beings; possibility is the core to the fluidity of impossibility, where the possible is always critiqued by what is perceived as impossible. Impossibility is then the critical edge that challenges normativity, yet whose purpose lies beyond that of simple critique, existing as the imagined space that we traverse. Our (trans)ient ability creates possibility for Arendt's "miracles" to be actualized through imagination, whereas non-(trans)itory existence would reflect George Orwell's *1984*—or a machined existence that does not (trans)gress constructed walls/consciousness.

Imagined—and imaginative—consciousnesses contest both physical "realities" and restrictions, where determined "realities" justify the reification of static, machined society. Differently said, reality as a given discounts probabilities by delineating a divisive binary between the possible and impossible rather than including the possible within the impossible. Does imagining the impossible necessarily mean that it is impossible, broadly, e.g., if we imagine gravity working as the opposite force that exists within our reality, allowing people to float, does that imagined scene not exist within the impossible space? In other words, when people imagine impossible scenes that counteract realities they become imaginatively possible, and yet that imagined possibility is physically restrained by "real" forces, remaining physically impossible.

The argument that "nature" is, for example, a fixed system rather than one that is malleable and self-changing perpetuates a terminal view of a machined system. While the

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[98] Garner, 31.

concept of the nature of "nature" is a topic for a potentially different work/discipline, constraining the definition to a singularity de-(trans)mogrifies "nature" into a monolithic system, as if humans have not been problematic in the reconstruction–and characteristically destruction—of nature's realities. Deeming life and death as a systematic characteristic of nature, for example, disregards imagined futures beyond the binary of life and death, whereas processes of *becoming* traverse the processes of continuity—or the nothingness of beginnings and ends. When the state "dies" does it not simply *become* something else, as a part of a larger whole, as an atomization of the entity, or as a part of divided particularities; do states truly "die" an erased death? If the state is normatively prescribed within the monolithic of nature as the binary of life and death, then constructively it must be because the normative power erases its existence through the reification of normative force's "reality." A given history similarly de-(trans)mogrifies society into a monolithic existence, where normative constraints solidify positionalities into a monolithic Orientation[99] toward a given future, further solidifying a binary between normative forces and their "oriental"[100] shadows.

Imagining ourselves in the context of Astro-Blackness's techno-geneses[101] allows for the ability to transcend the normative power of the present/reality—of temporal, technological restrictions—into a being beyond that static description and prescription.

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[99] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* Duke University Press, 2006, Kindle, loc. 45.
[100] See Edward Saïd's *Orientalism.*
[101] Anderson and Jones, loc. 17.

We exist then in zones of both possibility and impossibility; normative and imaginative; and past, present, and future, being in two/multiple positionalities at one time, i.e., we can exist physically and metaphysically, straddling both spaces simultaneously. It is this instance of physical reality and imagined extension that harkens back to the connectedness between the possible and impossible; of physical and metaphysical positionalities, where (trans)mogrification is negotiated between these spaces.

Feminist and queer Sci-Fi similarly work to dismantle heteronormativity. Susanna Sturgis illustrates these writers as those, "…who imagined women grappling with the logical conclusions of patriarchal culture: violence against women, ecological collapse, nuclear holocaust, [C]hristian fundamentalism, [and] state repression."[102] These writers created worlds that decentralized the masculine figure—some removing it completely—and de-problematized issues of gender,[103] imagining spaces of healing and futures without repression, similarly to Afro-futurism. The imagination for Sci-Fi writers as Sturgis postulates, "is like a muscle that needs regular warming up and stretching exercise. Deferred, it grows world-bound; if unused long enough, it atrophies."[104] And while I identify the imagination as more of a latent ability within the brain—upon my limited research and own theories—Sturgis's illustration is true along the lines of

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[102] Susanna Sturgis, "Editorial Memories & Visions, or Why Does a Bright Feminist Like You Read That Stuff Anyway?" in, *Memories and Visions: Women's Fantasy & Science Fiction*, e.d. by Susanna J. Sturgis, The Crossing Press, Freedom, California, 1989, 1.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, 7.

oppression, where the imagination can be "chained" by experiences.[105] Sites of trauma are then either promoters or suppressors of the imagination. But if the imagination also provides healing of those traumas, normative power cannot be considered all-encompassing.

Afro-futurist and feminist imaginative writings operate co-constitutively to sanction normative functional power through a discursive connectivity between the communities within the imagined spaces. They operate—optimistically—together to establish their identities beyond the realities toward a future that is inclusive to them and others. And while other identities intersect with these communities, these imaginative forces must understand and promote the intersections of identity, such as blackness, womanhood, LGBTQI community members, and disabled people, to keep the critical edge and reject their own potentiality for normalizing.

Referring to Pinkola Estés's ladder of stories, I would postulate along these lines that while looking down we may understand the constructions that have been rend upon our bodies and how we more naturally iterate or exist, we may also look up at future possibilities, like branches to the bonsai of our neuroplasticity. In other words, while the trunk of the tree and its roots are important for providing contextual nutrients, those nutrients need a purpose—an outlet. We do or do not dictate where those nutrients go, but if we want to imagine beyond the trunk, we must either develop more roots or more

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[105] Womack, loc. 201.

branches. Simply feeding the trunk substantively does much less than understanding more about the pasts or imagining the many futures, and the trunk consequently grow better thereafter, healthier and stronger. This is my contestation to normative functional power through imaginative functional power. To appropriate a disciplinary saying,[106] we are placing the trunk before both the roots and the branches that hold the leaves, killing the whole plant.

[106] "Placing the forest before the trees…."

CHAPTER 4: TOWARD IMAGINATION: A CONCLUSION(?)

Methodology, Intentionality, and Intelligibility

This work reflects a phenomenological approach to IR, with the explicit focus on the spatial-temporal "importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions."[107] It operates to place the connectedness of these aspects at the forefront of Political Science—and especially IR—conversation. With respect to imagination, these aspects de-condition the contemporary will-to-normativity, otherwise known as the re-centering gravitational pull. Imagination performs an escape from the overuse of normative policy formation and conceptualizations of what "is" and what "is not" by destabilizing such stagnant formulations, contesting determinations for the future, and engaging dialogically across space-times.

The phenomenon of imaginative functional power allows us to conceptualize multiple positionalities within a central plane that has no determined directionality, meaning that (trans)mogrification is conceptually at the crux of how the imagination traverses and connects differing futures, straddling both different space-times and ways of *becoming*. Visualize, for example, the 2nd dimension, where a point by itself does not indicate direction and therefore has all potentials (possibilities) yet remains static and interrogates its own imaginative "impossibilities by being both everywhere and "one-

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[107] Ahmed, loc. 36.

where," occupying all and one space-time, simultaneously. The discipline as a (trans)mogrifying entity similarly could entail a restructuring of Political Science's function as interrogating politics more holistically rather than simply working within the confines of normativity as a tool of normative forces; the central point remains while critical fluidity challenges and moves the core(s). This imaginative claim reflects a disciplinary positionality of everywhere and "one-where," inherently connecting "core and periphery" (as they are contemporary conceptualized). However, the difference is the de-territorialized zone of core and periphery, where both zones are permeable through their interconnectedness and (trans)mogrification. Political Science and IR then could function better by incorporating more spatial-temporal studies that focus on the imaginative functional power of political entities, de-stabilizing their own imago[108] and empowering futures rather than re-empowering a future.

Typically, this type of work would entail a detailed literature review, where I would constitute the convergent and divergent conceptualizations of imagination and its associated characteristics, with a particularly focus on delineating my definitional use of imagination against other definitions—depicting to which encampment I belong. From my conceptualization of imagination, however, I find that this encampment is antithetical to the performative work of this piece, constraining my definition as well as disregarding other important ways of conceptualizing imagination and its aspects; their stories are just

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[108] See the use of "imago" by Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, loc 105.

as important as mine. It is in this understanding of performatively counteracting constraint, negative affect,[109] and hierarchies of knowledge that I attempt to justify a deviation from pursing/using the literature. Surveying the literature and presenting it to the audience dictates which stories are more prevalent than others, where if I were to offer *The Iconic Imagination*[110]as a source of my understanding of imagination, our experience of imagination would both be more physically rooted within the experiences from that encampment and disjointed from the metaphysical connectivity. This work would lose its quintessential performative nature by characterizing a narrowing of the imagination into here and there, rather than a larger engagement that challenges directional Orientations. I do not want to "orient" the audience toward prominent scholars and their conceptions but show contrastingly the deconstructed possibilities for imagination to disorient, creating a connection between the roots and the flowers of the plant—referencing the aforementioned metaphor.

I argue that it is important to understand the mechanics of how power among/within literatures are operating before delving into the literature unwittingly. This work has attempted to—and hopefully has—separated normative and imaginative power, showing what pieces of literature inherently reinforce normativity and those that imagine outside of that reinforcement; this is a performative primer to the art that will constitute

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[109] See *affect* in Sara Ahmed, "Queer Feelings," *Queer Studies Reader*, Routledge, 2004.
[110] See Douglas Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination,* Bloomsbury, 2016.

future *becomings*/iterations. It acts similarly to how some scholars view number of citations as both and indicator of prevalence and an understanding of core vis-à-vis peripheral works, as a sort of "pre-discursive" venture. Said differently, it is important for scholars to understand the different ways that impressions[111] filter or "prime" (as in the psychological effect) information and skew those moments of experiential intake toward a normative juncture rather than an imaginative one. And without understanding the effects of priming, knowledge simply perpetuates itself cyclically, dulling the critical edge that we are able to develop and engage with.

The relationships between the literature and my work, to include any reproductions of knowledge, are indicative of the dialogic power of imagination, connecting different ideas without scholars/scholarship necessarily being in direct contact.[112] It is a metaphysical intention of this writing to establish connections without physical intimacies of encampment, depicting a clearer discursive—and imaginative dialogic—sociopolitical experience than divisive normative history that de-atomizes social experiences to monotonal conceptualizations. The concept of a metaphysical dialogic literature is important to evoke because metaphysical connections of similar, yet dissimilar, stories create connections beyond the physical limitations, i.e., I could not read every work to illustrate the complex stories of imagination without alluding to a

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[111] Ahmed (2004), 423.

[112] Two people may conceptualize, for example, a definition similarly, yet have not partaken in the same social spaces, physically met, or even experienced the same life.

canonized literature that censured that imagination as my own form of normativity. The performative nature of this piece is to decentralize the power of canonical disciplining into imaginative interconnectivity and the empowerment of different futures. This work is then a reflection of how I conceptually engage with imagination and imaginative functional power.

This work furthermore decentralizes the state in IR by connecting identity and discourse to spatial-temporality. Identity and discourses are important analytical points within IR because they point to larger issues within the international system. These stories indicate changes, disparities, and power within the system, and these stories always indicate. Where some social scientists would throw "lies" out as extraneous qualitative data, those social scientists could interrogate the instances of "lies" to develop more robust understandings of social behavior or implications. These "lies" are then data points that are intelligible and interrogatable, leading to insights that would otherwise be removed from analysis, potentially missing key parts of the larger social story. Remembering that all stories have importance de-marginalizes and de-hierarchizes connections between pasts and futures, empowering people and disempowering the state—and Political Scientists as a part of that state—as a tool of marginalization and hierarchy—a tool of normativity.

This work is lastly a performance of imagination, both critiquing the normative performativity of Political Science and engaging with discourses beyond such normativity. I imagine a different future for my discipline, where marginalized writers,

scholars, researchers, and people could experience constructive discipline rather than those disciplines that seek to deconstruct and reconstruct bodies in the imago of Political Science, as reflections of the discipline instead of reflections of their experiences and imagination. If we are to understand these two spatial-temporalities as straddled, then we can conceptualize the power of discipline to detach bodies from their imaginative functional power and moreover their communities, reifying normativities directly onto bodies—branding marginalized social scientists as complicit in enforcing systems of power. I refuse this branding upon my body and imagine the interconnectedness of my/our stories as a possibility of rejoining my siblings in a dialogic; that I may be (trans)ient and both everywhere and "one-where;" where I may envision beyond the scars written upon my body, challenging the enslavement of this body to automation; and when I may enact my "miracle."

Would it that I may dance with the *bachata* wind, on wings of imagination….

CHAPTER 5: THE LITERATURE ON IR AND IMAGINATION

IR

International Relations is plagued with questions of identity in relation to the discipline's self and toward other Political Science disciplines. Questions of soft disciplinary boundaries, relevance, and methodology cast doubt on the ability for IR to engage with its contestable *raison d'être*: academic interrogation of the relationships of nations and their parts, to include super-national entities. "Traditional thinking in [International Relations] as reflected by the theories of world-government, collective security, and balance of power," as Lijphart describes, "shows a high degree of both interdependence and reliance on a common image of the world,"[113] indicative of how IR scholars produce through similar means of production yet discounts the variances among them. The problem, however, is more insidious than simply a traditional versus non-traditional dichotomy; it is in the exertion and operation of hardline disciplinary power. King writes, for example, that "political scientists give up grappling with dilemmas of power and governance…and make their own pastiche of the natural sciences, " and that, "…any graduate student learns early on, one must first 'fill a hole in the literature' and only later figure out whether it was worth filling."[114] In other words, Political Science and

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[113] Lijphart, Arend, "The Structure of the Theoretical Revolution in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly,* 18; 1, 1974, 49.
[114] King, Charles, "The Decline of International Studies: Why Flying Blind is Dangerous," *Foreign Affairs*, 94, 93.

its practitioners construct forms of automation that dictate how to be "good" or "bad" political scientists, included or excluded from the discipline—and especially among sub-disciplinary delineations.

Goodin similarly describes how the disciplining of academia is important for "offer[ing] standards that can provide grounds for control, chastisement, and even occasional mortification,"[115] signaling acceptable levels of "academic" violence. Political scientist should critically question, however, if those "academic" violences/abuses simply remain within the bounds of academia, adiscursively, or if they permeate beyond the territoriality of the university, the conference, or the literature. Robert Keohane's[116] entrenchment against Tickner[117] (1997; 2005) depicts a permeability of societal violence and academic engagement, such as Keohane's "joke" "[at] what is called, ironically in light of feminist theory, the 'domestic' level."[118] The two social spaces are not disaggregated from one another, where "traditional" and "common image of the world" elude to overarching depictions of political scientist commonality in background and future. IR is furthermore, in Schmidt's illustration, "characteristically immune from

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[115] Robert E. Goodin, "The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political* Science, Oxford University Press, 2009, 8

[116] [116] Robert Keohane, Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations Between International Relations and Feminist Theory, International Studies Quarterly, 42; 1, 1998

[117] See J. Ann Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists," *International Studies Quarterly,* 41; 4, 1997, 611-632.
See also Tickner 2005.

[118] Keohane, 193.

meta-theoretical self-reflection,"[119] and that, "…despite ambiguities about its boundaries, [IR] has a distinct professional academic identity with an identifiable discourse. In the end, the question of whether [IR] is a discipline is no more an interesting question than whether political science is a definable field."[120] What this stoned/reified identity seemingly constitutes is the long tradition that is reflective of traditional power structures within society. In other words, IR has hardline difficulty in the disidentification/disembodiment of the sub-discipline from its own historical conceptualization. Bull similarly feeds into this reconstitution of traditional approaches to IR by separating the "[classical approach…] to theorizing that derives from philosophy, history, and law, and that is characterized above all by explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgment and by the assumptions,"[121] from how the., "scientific approach has progressed from being a fringe activity in the academic study of international relations to such a position that it is at least possible to argue that it has become the orthodox methodology of the subject."[122] Even the contestation of "scientific" modes of inquiry, here, are seeded in exclusionary constructions: philosophy, history, and law. Walker (1987) derives a contesting conclusion to the problematization of the scientific method

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[119] Brian Schmidt, "The Historiography of Academic International Relations," *Review of International Studies,* 20; 4, 349.
[120] Ibid, 365
See also Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10; 2, 126-127.
[121] Hedley Bull, International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach, World Politics, 18; 3, 1966, 361.
[122] Ibid, 363.

and "epistemology that, in its claim to a universalistically designated model of science, affirms the principle of identity,"[123] where Walker chides idealism within IR as a force of conglomerating narrative and realism as expressive of "important ontological principles of pluralism, becoming, and difference."[124] Isacoff contrastingly considers John Dewey's "pragmatist approach toward history" as understanding of "historical knowledge as socially constructed, but not necessarily to the exclusion of alternative perspectives."[125]

Collectively, these scholars illustrate the contestability of IR's disciplinary identity, fighting for legitimacy within the hierarchies of a methodological intersection(ality) as empowerment and/or disempowerment of differing scholarships; IR's identity is constructed and therefore political. I moreover traverse here the literature on both Political Science and IR because the problems of the discipline mostly extend upon the sub-discipline because of its inclusion within the field, though some scholars point to different methodological crossovers from other disciplines[126]

Tickner similarly discusses the contestability of IR's disciplinary identity but through the lens of inclusive methodology from a discursive progression, where "[w]hat makes feminist research unique, however, is a distinctive methodological perspective that

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[123] Walker, "Realism, Change, and International Political Theory," *International Studies Quarterly,* 31; 1, 1987, 78.
[124] Ibid, 79.
[125] Jonathan B. Isacoff, "On the Historical Imagination of International Relations: The Case for a `Deweyan Reconstruction,'" 2002,
[126] See Tickner, 2005, 1-4; Shaul R. Shenhav," Political Narratives and Political Reality," *International Political Science Review,* 27; 3, 2006, 245–262

fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines."[127] Critical feminist IR scholarship then challenges the identity of IR similarly to the other, previous scholarship but seeks to include methodological variations that decentralize masculine, scientific (empiricist) power.[128] Inclusion and plurality are essential functions for IR as Walker (1987) similarly details that for the sub-discipline "…much of the strength of [international political theory] comes from the plurality of its theoretical orientations."[129] The ever-changing identity of IR, for these scholars, is then a by-product of inclusivity and plurality rather than a simple need of methodological hierarchy. Difference is important for inclusionary scholarship because constructing a standard[130] simply reifies the constructed aspect of knowledge and the hierarchies of power, therein.

Imagination in IR

Delving deeper, the literature on imagination in IR and its connection to metatheoretical realms challenges the intrinsic and "natural" formation of identity. Latimer and Skeggs depicts an open futurity and a maintenance of criticality that rests on the politics of imagination,[131] Park-Kang offers imaginative fiction writing as a (fictional)

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[127] Tickner, 2005, 3.
[128] Ibid, 2-3.
[129] Walker, 1987, 68.
[130] Tickner, 2005, 3.
[131] Latimer and Beverly Skeggs, "The Politics of Imagination: Keeping Open *and* Critical," *The Sociological Review*, 59; 3, 2011, 393-410.

narrative, empathic approach to IR,[132] L.H.M. Ling decentralizes traditional notions of IR scholarship through a fable approach to engaging with IR, and Rosenburg attempts to deploy sociological imagination by C. Wright Mills.[133] The imagination in IR is then about upending the gatekeeping junctures that holds IR scholarship in a monolithic performance, a repetitive play, and a dance with one "good"[134] interpretation.

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[132] Sungju Park-Kang, "Fictional IR and imagination: Advancing narrative approaches," *Review of International Studies,* 41; 2, 2014, 361-381.
[133] Justin Rosenberg, "The International Imagination: IR Theory and 'Classic Social Analysis,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 23; 1, 1994, 85-86.
See also C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000 [1959],
[134] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil: On the Genealogy of Mortality*, translated by Adrian Del Caro, 2014.

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