We come to the desert to know the dust, to wear it,

faceless, like gauze, to walk in its blizzard of

particles

until we lose ourselves for a while,

then someone else is there.

We come to the fire to be more like the fire,

to confiscate it,

to conflagrate and sway, to know

what is wild again.

We come to the desert

to build our gods because

what did Emerson say? "If we harbor no gods,

we find none."[[1]](#footnote-1)

The concept of a desert is constructed in our mind as an arid wasteland that struggles to support life, emotion, or value. The desert is where nature has been destroyed or where nature never was.. It is here, in the zone where nature refuses to live, that the machine lives and breathes. The Creech Air Force Base exists in the perilous Nevada desert, 3.6 square miles of land dedicated to this military institution with the closest permanent form of human society being 35 miles away. Black Rock City, the hippy capital of the world, where the annual Burning Man occurs, also comes into existence at the point of *the* desert. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan is the American created desert, where nothing of value could possibly live and civilized society ceases to exist. It is in these three deserts that the drone, the god machine, or the bringer of death lives, breathes, and projects.

The Creech Air Force Base, established in 2005, has become the host to the United States Air Force’s unpersoned aerial vehicle program. In this blip of life that is surrounded on all sides of nothingness drones are constructed, tested, and piloted. None of those actions happen at the base. The drone by extension is at the base, but it does not live there. Here too, are where those who are in control of the drone dwell. These humans, whether the pilots themselves or the military officials who create the conditions for the drone, manage the machine as it is piloted in a far away land. In this story provided by Brandon Bryant, given through NPR News on May 10, 2013, a drone operator recounts some of the experiences he had:

**We fired the missile, and 1.2 seconds after the missile fires, it sonic booms.** And so the sonic boom gets there before the missile does. And **the guy in the rear hears this, and he runs forward to the two guys in front, and then the missile hits**. And after the smoke clears, there's a crater there. **You can see body parts of the people.**¶ But the guy that was running from rear to the front**, his left leg had been taken off above the knee, and I watched him bleed out**. The blood rapidly cooled to become the same color as the ground, because **we were watching this in infrared. Then I eventually watched the guy become the same color as the ground that he died on.**¶In my own mind, I thought these guys could've been local people that had to protect themselves, and I think we jumped the gun.¶ There was supposedly three people left in the building, and all were military males. We just aim at the corner of the building. We're going to fire, and we do. And there's about six seconds left before the missile impacts, and **something runs around the corner of the building. And it looked like a small person.** There's no other way for me to describe it. **It was a small, two-legged person.** And the missile hits. There's no sign of this person. A large portion of the building's collapsed.¶ So we lock our camera on there, and I ask the screener, who disseminates the video feed - I asked, can you review that? Like, what was that thing that ran on the screen? And he's like, one second; reviewing - and comes back and says, oh, that was a dog. It was - **it was a person. It was a small person. Like, there was no doubt in my mind that that was not** a - **an adult.**¶ The sun was coming over the mountains. I remember just kind of - the light was too bright, and the dark places were too dark. I felt really numb. I didn't feel distraught, like I felt my first shot. I felt numb because **this was the reality of war; that good guys can die, bad guys can die, and innocence can die as well**.¶ **One day - it was late 2010 - we had a wall that had five pictures on it of top al-Qaida leaders. And I remember walking in one day, and I kind of stopped and looked at one of these guys; and I was like, man, which one of these motherfuckers is going to die today? And I stopped myself and I was like, that's not me. Like, that's just not who I am.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Burning Man is the collaborative art project that takes place every year in the Nevada desert. The thousands of people who attend participate in the week long affairs through their presence. The construction of a massive wooden sculpture happens at the center of the temporary society, and at the end it is set afire and watched as the labor that was poured into it is transformed into a new aesthetic. At the 2013 festival an attendee constructed a drone and provided a video to the world of a top down orthographic projection of the festival. The city servers as an escape from society because of the communal rejection of conformity, and the drone provided a view of this that was unprecedented. While every person is a part of the art, so too was drone. The drone contradicted the usual form in which drones are used, as military vessels of destruction, and allowed for the proliferation of beauty.

The modern drone is a relatively new technological innovation. While remote technology is not new, the ability for an aerial vehicle to retain flight for long hours and under remote control is new. The scientists behind it aimed to utilize technology in order to further control the world in their own way. Abe Karem is the pioneer of these scientists, and this is one version of his story:

**Born in Iraq on June 27, 1937, Karem was raised in Israel,** where his father took his wife and four sons-Abe was the third-when the Jewish state was founded after World War II. **A precocious child, Abe felt loved and encouraged growing up, even when, as a toddler, he pulled the back off a large standing radio and pulled out the big vacuum tubes, one by one, to see where is the man who talks from there.** As that memory suggests, **Abe fell in love with engineering early in life.** I am a toy man, **he explains. What motivates me from the time I was a kid-call it technology, call it whatever-it was play.** By the age of eight, I knew I’m going to be a mechanical engineer. **And oh my God, by the age of 13 or 14, I fell in love with aeronautics. At 14, I started building model aircraft.** Within two years, I was the instructor in the [high school] aero club. Later, he earned a private pilot’s license. Karem’s aeronautical engineering degree is from Israel’s renowned Technion institute of technology. **He remembers his professors as idealists, working together to build a society and secure its survival.** **Their attitude of selfless common cause stayed with him.** Karem’s belief in the power of teamwork has been a trademark of his career. I built three wonderful teams in Israel, he boasts. I built two here. On the first team he built in the United States, he adds, were several engineers who today are technical leaders and executives at Predator-maker General Atomics, including company president Frank Pace, who once was the closest thing to my right-hand man. While at the Technion, and as an air force officer for nine years afterward, Karem learned to design and maintain real aircraft but also continued his childhood interest in models. He entered free flight model competitions and world championships, in which entrants strive for the longest flight under a complex set of rules. **After the air force, Karem joined Israel Aircraft Industries, where he rapidly made his way toward the top. Within four years, and while still in his 30s, he was in line to be named executive vice president for engineering**, he says, but decided to strike out on his own. There were several reasons for moving on, but among them was an epiphany he’d had in late 1973, while working on an urgent air force request to design a radar-fooling drone decoy. The project came to naught because Israel ended up buying decoys from the United States, but by working on it, **Karem came to see unpersoned aircraft as unconquered territory**. In early 1974, despite protests and warnings from higher-ups, he left IAI and started a company of his own to design UAVs. Karem’s departure from IAI was the first major manifestation of a maverick streak that has been a source of lift to his career but also a source of drag. He has escaped corporate culture and holds more than 20 patents to show for it-on aircraft designs, mechanical devices, material production methods, and subsystem innovations-but his ability to see things in a new light has also made him impatient with those who fail to grasp his insights. Gentlemen, everything I see in this room is nonsensical, one longtime associate recalls Karem telling a roomful of engineers at a major defense company who had invited him in to discuss collaboration on a project. Then he closed his briefcase and walked out. A Karem friend remembers a meeting where Abe called a group of defense acquisition officials clerks. “Abe has no problem telling others what’s on his mind, that’s for sure,” says Martin Waide, who has worked for Karem more or less steadily since 1979. The politics of defense contracting, along with his occasionally prickly personality, have conspired to keep some of Karem’s best designs from being accepted by the military. After leaving IAI, **Karem spent three years offering the Israeli military one UAV design after another without making a sale**. The government-sole shareholder in IAI, whose executives didn’t appreciate his departure-was never going to buy anything from Abe Karem, he finally concluded. Frustrated, he decided to try his luck in the United States, where he knew opportunities for entrepreneurs were far greater. His wife, Dina, whom he’d met when she was an engineering draftsperson in the Israeli air force, backed his decision, as she has supported other big risks he’s taken during their 46 years of marriage. In 1977, to gain a foothold in the U.S. aerospace industry, Karem took a position with a tiny Los Angeles company called Developmental Sciences Inc., which had offered Israel a drone decoy in 1973 and was now working on projects that included a DARPA-funded UAV. Shortly thereafter, Karem set out on his own again. When he took Dina house hunting, she realized Abe was going to be working at home. “I’m looking for a house with a garage attached,” she told him. “You’re looking for a garage with a house attached.” They found a garage Abe liked, attached to a house on a hill in Hacienda Heights, a suburb east of Los Angeles. The garage had 600 square feet of floor space and an equally spacious attic. By 1981, both spaces were crammed full of tools, computers, and handmade molds to fabricate aircraft parts from lightweight composites such as fiberglass and carbon epoxy. Working with Abe in the garage were two other believers in UAVs: Jack Hertenstein, a brainy, bashful engineer and radio control modeler Karem had met at Developmental Sciences, and Jim Machin, a pre-med student who’d impressed Abe at a free-flight modeling meet. The trio produced a UAV demonstrator that was feather-light-it weighed only 200 pounds-and would carry a television camera in its nose. Hertenstein contributed avionics and ground control, and, Karem says, “tremendous expertise in flying his automated model aircraft without crashing.” According to DARPA calculations, it would stay aloft a stunning 56 hours. Karem named it Albatross. During Karem’s brief stay at Developmental Sciences, he had met Ira Kuhn, a technology entrepreneur who visited the company to evaluate its UAV on DARPA’s behalf. In the course of conversation, Kuhn described an engineering problem he had been working on. A few days later, Karem called him with a solution. “It was extremely clever and much better than mine,” Kuhn recalls. Kuhn kept in touch, and was so impressed by the Albatross that he told DARPA director Bob Fossum, “This guy is a national asset.” DARPA ended up funding the Albatross flight tests. The drone’s exceptional performance led the agency in 1985 to contract with Karem’s new company, Leading Systems Inc., to develop a larger endurance UAV the agency named Amber. Navy Secretary John Lehman was pushing the development of UAVs as spotters for the guns on Navy ships. Largely financed by the Navy, Amber also had champions in U.S. Southern Command, who wanted “persistent surveillance” of drug traffickers in Latin America, recalls former DARPA official Bob Williams, who initiated the project. **Karem says those who think the secret to the Predator’s success was endurance should think again. What he brought to UAVs, he says, was a refusal to treat them-as others had-like models or target drones, which aren’t built to last, and therefore aren’t built to be reliable.** He designed the Albatross, Amber, Gnat-750, and Predator to fly hundreds of hours without a crash. He adds “I’m not a genius, but I am probably one of the best aircraft designers in the world today.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The technology that Kareem developed presents many different possible uses that can be analyzed, but the story here clearly displays the productive forces that took hold of the drone early on during its development. The military saw the destructive potential of the technology and manipulated its creation to fit their needs.

This forces us to consider the relationships that the drone develops with its surrounding world. The drone, as a trope, exists in a state that does not limit it to those it has a material effect on. The concepts of a drone are seen in different aspects of society and how the production of the drone cause those forces are important areas of analysis. If we look at the drone as a more basic unit of meaning we detach the symbolic hold the military industrial complex has on the technology. Kareem was not interested in making a drone to fly at Burning Man, the drone used there was only a deviation from the drones original use. What was the drone’s original use? The nature of the scientific discourse that produced the drone forces us to think that the drone is a weapon of war. Donna Haraway discusses how scientific rhetoric manipulates knowledge:

In any case, social constructionists might maintain that the ideological doctrine of scientific method and all the philosophical verbiage about epistemology were cooked up to distract our attention from getting to know the world efiectively by practicing the sciences. From this point of view, **science**- the real game in town-**is rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one’s manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power**. Such persuasions must take account of the structure of facts and artifacts, as well as of language-mediated actors in the knowledge game. Here, artifacts and facts are parts of the powerful art of rhetoric. Prac- tice is persuasion, and the focus is very much on practice. All knowledge is a condensed node in an agnostic power field. The strong program in the sociology of knowledge joins with the lovely and nasty tools of semiology and deconstruction to insist on the rhetorical nature of truth, including scientific truth. History is a story Western culture buffs tell each other**; science is a contestable text and a power field; the content is the form**.2 Period. So much for those of us who would still like to talk about reality with more confidence than we allow to the Christian Right when they discuss the Second Coming and their being raptured out of the final destruction of the world. **We would like to think our appeals to real worlds are more than a desperate lurch away from cynicism and an act of faith like any other cult s, no matter how much space we generouslygive to all the rich and always historicallyspecificmediations through which we and everybody else must know the world.** But the further I get in describing the radical social constructionist program and a particular version of postmodernism, coupled with the acid tools of critical discourse in the human sciences, the more nervous I get. **The imagery of force fields, of moves in a fully textualizedand coded world, which is the working metaphor in many arguments about socially negotiated reality for the postmodern subject, is, just for starters, an imagery of high-tech military fields, of automated academic battlefields, where blips of light called players disintegrate** (what a metaphor!) **each other in order to stay in the knowledge and power game**. **Technoscience and science fic- tion collapse into the sun of their radiant** (ir)**reality-war** It shouldn t take decades of feminist theory to sense the enemy here. Nancy Hartsock got all this crystal clear in her concept of abstract ma~culinity.~ I, and others, started out wanting a strong tool for deconstructing the truth claims of hostile science by showing the radical historical specificity, and so contestability, of every layer of the onion of scientific and technological con- structions, and we end up with a kind of epistemological electroshock ther- apy, which far from ushering us into the high stakes tables of the game of contesting public truths, lays us out on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder. [[4]](#footnote-4)

## Part II: The DA

#### Limitations on war powers sap political capital for domestic agenda items

Kriner ‘10

Douglas L., assistant professor of political science at Boston University, “After the Rubicon: Congress, Presidents, and the Politics of Waging War”, University of Chicago Press, Dec 1, pages 68-69

While congressional support leaves the president’s reserve of political capital intact, congressional criticism saps energy from other initiatives on the home front by forcing the¶ president to expend energy and effort defending his international agenda. Political capital¶ spent shoring up support for a president’s foreign policies is capital that is unavailable for his¶ future policy initiatives.¶ . Moreover, any weakening in the president’s political clout may have¶ immediate ramifications for his reelection prospects, as well as indirect consequences for congressional races.59 Indeed, Democratic efforts to tie congressional Republican incumbents to President George W. Bush and his war policies paid immediate political dividends in the 2006 midterms, particularly in states, districts, and counties that had suffered the highest¶ casualty rates in the Iraq War. 60 In addition to boding ill for the president’s perceived political capital¶ and reputation, such partisan losses in Congress only further imperil his programmatic¶ agenda, both international and domestic. Scholars have long noted¶ that President Lyndon¶ Johnson’s dream of a Great Society also perished in the rice paddies of Vietnam. Lacking the requisite funds in a war-depleted treasury and the political capital needed to sustain his legislative vision, Johnson gradually let his domestic goals slip away as he hunkered down in an effort first to win and then to end the Vietnam War. In the same way,

#### Failure collapses the economy – goes global and past events don’t disprove

Davidson 9/10

Adam, co-founder of NPR’s “Planet Money,” Our Debt to Society, New York Times, 9/10/13, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/15/magazine/our-debt-to-society.html?pagewanted=all

If the debt ceiling isn’t lifted again this fall, some serious financial decisions will have to be made. Perhaps the government can skimp on its foreign aid or furlough all of NASA, but eventually the big-ticket items, like Social Security and Medicare, will have to be cut. At some point, the government won’t be able to pay interest on its bonds and will enter what’s known as sovereign default, the ultimate national financial disaster achieved by countries like Zimbabwe, Ecuador and Argentina (and now Greece). In the case of the United States, though, it won’t be an isolated national crisis. If the American government can’t stand behind the dollar, the world’s benchmark currency, then the global financial system will very likely enter a new era in which there is much less trade and much less economic growth. It would be, by most accounts, the largest self-imposed financial disaster in history.¶ Nearly everyone involved predicts that someone will blink before this disaster occurs. Yet a small number of House Republicans (one political analyst told me it’s no more than 20) appear willing to see what happens if the debt ceiling isn’t raised — at least for a bit. This could be used as leverage to force Democrats to drastically cut government spending and eliminate President Obama’s signature health-care-reform plan. In fact, Representative Tom Price, a Georgia Republican, told me that the whole

#### EXTINCTION

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Aaron, Prof. Politics. And IR @ Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School and Visiting Scholar @ Witherspoon Institute, and Gabriel, Senior Editor of Commentary and Wall Street Journal, “The Dangers of a Diminished America” <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122455074012352571.html>

Then there are the dolorous consequences of a potential collapse of the world's financial architecture. For decades now, Americans have enjoyed the advantages of being at the center of that system. The worldwide use of the dollar, and the stability of our economy, among other things, made it easier for us to run huge budget deficits, as we counted on foreigners to pick up the tab by buying dollar-denominated assets as a safe haven. Will this be possible in the future? Meanwhile, traditional foreign-policy challenges are multiplying. The threat from al Qaeda and Islamic terrorist affiliates has not been extinguished. Iran and North Korea are continuing on their bellicose paths, while Pakistan and Afghanistan are progressing smartly down the road to chaos. Russia's new militancy and China's seemingly relentless rise also give cause for concern. If America now tries to pull back from the world stage, it will leave a dangerous power vacuum. The stabilizing effects of our presence in Asia, our continuing commitment to Europe, and our position as defender of last resort for Middle East energy sources and supply lines could all be placed at risk. In such a scenario there are shades of the 1930s, when global trade and finance ground nearly to a halt, the peaceful democracies failed to cooperate, and aggressive powers led by the remorseless fanatics who rose up on the crest of economic disaster exploited their divisions. Today we run the risk that rogue states may choose to become ever more reckless with their nuclear toys, just at our moment of maximum vulnerability. The aftershocks of the financial crisis will almost certainly rock our principal strategic competitors even harder than they will rock us. The dramatic free fall of the Russian stock market has demonstrated the fragility of a state whose economic performance hinges on high oil prices, now driven down by the global slowdown. China is perhaps even more fragile, its economic growth depending heavily on foreign investment and access to foreign markets. Both will now be constricted, inflicting economic pain and perhaps even sparking unrest in a country where political legitimacy rests on progress in the long march to prosperity. None of this is good news if the authoritarian leaders of these countries seek to divert attention from internal travails with external adventures.

The infamous politics disad. Here we reach the perfect encapsulation of the form of traditional policy debate. What is the difference between the drone pilot or the scientist who creates the drone and the policy debater? The drone pilot tirelessly surveys the land looking for their target, constant surveillance until they find exactly what they want. After it is in their site, they target it and execute it to fulfill their goal. During this process the pilot is distanced from the target. They do not experience the reality of the situation, only a simulation of the reality. They may see the high res image of the destruction they caused, but they will not feel the reality. The destruction itself becomes all part of the job, something they understand the existence of, by lose the true meaning of. Whoever produced the evidence for this DA underwent the similar process. They survey their resources for the exact target they needed, and they executed it by reading it in a round in order to hopefully win.

By analyzing the relationship between the drone, the scientist, and the debater we see a similar pattern of production. The research practices of traditional policy debate is produced by the same factors that produce the drone and the way the drone is used. This technoscientific outlook of the world is one that attempts to assign value and order the world. Patricia Clough furthers,

While it is difficult to determine the long-term effects of the Sokal affair, it would seem that in the years since then, cultural studies of science have been turned over to disciplinary studies of science specialized fields of science studies within anthropology, sociology, philosophy, history, and psychology as if to assure the disciplinary and methodological rigor of those engaged in science studies. The study of science differently inflected across the disciplines, in fact, seems to have contained the critical probing that motivated the cultural studies of science. The questions once raised about the legitimacy and authority of Western discourses of science, reason, truth, and disciplinary methods have been quieted, and the relationship of these questions to the interarticulated differences of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and nation, for so long productively explored in the critical theories of the late twentieth century, has ceased to be central to social criticism. Even more, it has become difficult, seemingly even undesirable, to engage technoscience, not so much as an object of social criticism but as a resource of thought, that is, to return to the ground Sokal cultivated, albeit with the seeds of bad intentions, to seek support from the thought of technoscience in elaborating a framework for social criticism and thus to face the challenges technoscience now poses for late-twentieth-century critical theories. Indeed, even when those critical theories are more robustly, if not more accurately, characterized than Sokal's characterization of them, they nonetheless face **challenges posed by technoscience, as it pressures a rethinking of dynamism and change, shifting the question of "what matters" from an epistemological domain to an ontological one**. While feminist theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, and critical race theory were not merely dismissive of the existence of an external material world or the possibility of science knowing it, they did nonetheless focus their criticism on epistemological issues, thereby locating dynamism and change in the disavowed forces of knowledge, such as desire and power, that constitute the identity of the knowing subject. This is why or at least how the culture wars became the science wars. The late-twentieth-century critical theories provoked an epistemological crisis in Western thought, a crisis of representation, language, and narrative logic, while insistently interrogating the working of reason and intentionality in the construction of the subject's knowledge. Even when the interrogation turned to questioning the materiality of bodies, it was the subject's body that mattered, the body of the subject of knowledge. Bodies and matter often were taken to be inert, passively awaiting the imposition of significance through "a cultural construction.**"** [End Page 2]But if what is implied by **technoscience is the inseparability of knowledge production from technological innovation aimed at reaching beyond human limitation**, then not surprisingly **technoscience is producing knowledge through experimentation with the structure and organization of bodies, matter, and life.** Along with the high-powered mathematical technologies that allow us to "see" matter as inherently dynamic, operating as a complex, open system under far-from-equilibrium conditions, and the biotechnologies that mass-produce genetic materials outside the organism, there also has been a development of information technologies, both entertainment and surveillance technologies, which are increasingly less about representation and the narrative construction of subject identities and more about affecting bodies, human and nonhuman, directly. **These technologies mean to control bodies of information and to treat bodies as information. Even when appealing to the human subject, these technologies aim to affect the subject's subindividual bodily capacities**, that is, capacities to be moved, to shift focus, to attend, to take interest, to slow down, to speed up, and to mutate. Technoscientific experimentation calls forth new bodily matters while raising the conjoined questions of time and technicity. While epistemologically challenging, technoscientific experimentation also provokes an ontological crisis, thus pressuring a rethinking of the symbolic mix culture, language, representation, and narrative as the sole resource of dynamism and change.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The policy debater is entrenched in technoscience and not only is a product of the drone but is also the creator. The policy debater becomes the drone pilot and the scientist who makes it the most efficient killing machine possible. The relationship with these different discourses is what is being criticized here, not the individual actors themselves. Haraway explains,

Obviously, this essay is premised on the inversion of a causal relation of technology to the social relations of domination: **the social relations of domination**, I am arguing, **are frozen into the hardware and logics of technology. Nature is, in"fact," constructed as a technology through social praxis.** And dioramas are meaning- machines. **Machines are time slices into the social organisms that made them. Machines are maps of power, arrested moments of social relations that in turn threaten to govern the living**. **The owners of the great machines of monopoly capital-theso-called means of production--were, with excellent reason, at the forefront nature of work-because it was one of the means of production of race, gender and class.** Forthem, "naked eyescience" couldgive direct vision of social peace and progress despite the appearances of class warand decadence. They required a science "instaurating" jungle peace, with its promise of restored manhood, complete with a transcendent ethic of hunting; and so they bought it. This scientific discourse on origins was not cheap; and the servants of science, human and animal, were not tame. The relations of knowledge and power at the American Museum of Natural History arenotcaught by telling a tale ofthe great capitalists in the sky conspiring to obscure the truth. Quitetheopposite, the tale must be ofcommitted Progressives strugglingdispel to darkness through research, education and reform. The great capitalists werenot in the sky;they werein the field, armed with the Gospelof Wealth.96 Theywerealso often armed with an elephant gunand an Akeley camera.97 This entire essay has been aboutthe "socialconstruction of knowledge."

1. Burning Man Poem by Kathy Evans [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.npr.org/2013/05/10/182800293/former-air-force-pilot-shines-light-on-drone-program [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Whittle, Richard “The Man Who Invented the Predator” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective 1988 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Future Matters Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism”2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)