

XIP

CROSS CULTURAL POETICS
NO SEVENTEEN

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BOOK REVIEWS

PUBLIC LANGUAGE & DREAMSTORIES

I ENTERED THE LISTS... DIASPORA CATALOGUES:

THE LIST, THE UNBEARABLE TERRITORY, AND TORMENTED CHRONOLOGIES

Katherine McKittrick

I entered the lists
-Frantz Fanon

Optional Reading Guide to the Lists, Territories, Tormented Chronologies

I entered the lists
-Frantz Fanon

This paper has three sections that work toward re-imagining the spatial politics of the black diaspora. These sections can be read separately, together, or in any order. The first section, 'The List,' is an excerpt of a human geography encyclopaedia entry on 'diaspora.'¹ The entry has been substantially revised, amended, and modified; it also contains many ellipses, pauses...indicating breaks, breaths, erasures, that are not found in the original. The list, with any luck, will disclose the ways in which cataloguing a material, conceptual, and imaginative site—diaspora—does little to undo, and indeed reconstitutes, our present geographic order, particularly if this cataloguing follows the guidelines set out by our presently imposed biocentric classificatory systems, wherein Man/knowing is overrepresented as the only, the strived for, versions of human/knowledge and Man-human-geographies. The list, then, can—but only if the reader likes—serve as a guide to the second section, 'The Unbearable Mistaking of the Territory for the Map,' which anxiously chronicles the limits of mapping diaspora through our present geographic order, which I suggest is overrepresented by Man/knowning-knowing/Man conceptions of space. The title of this section, as some will notice, is a reconfiguration of Sylvia Wynter's 'On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being of *Désêtre*' an article dedicated 'with apologies to June Jordan, riffing on Milan Kundera, and to Aimé Césaire, for the term *désêtre* [translated as dysbeing on the model of dysgenic].'² Also noticeable, I should mention here, is my remixing and mash-up of Wynter's phraseology-language-style with my own, with others, and with human geography disciplinary language (Sections One, Two, Three).³ I also remix, or mash-up—in Sections One and Two—the broader themes diaspora territories raise, Wynter's re-envisioned humanism, and my own thoughts on the limits of human geography/diaspora knowledges, to point toward the final section,

‘Towards a Poetics of Radical Humanness—Tormented Chronologies and a Wynteresque *Weltanschauung*.’ This final section considers how we might undo the territorial desires, and spaces, we are presently caught up in by turning to different kinds of lists: prompted Dionne Brand’s *Inventory*, this final section thinks about a reconstituted ‘tormented chronology’ as a way to perhaps imagine a new world view.

Section One: The List

I entered the lists
-Frantz Fanon

Keywords: colonialism, diaspora, displacement, exile, holocaust (Shoah), home, homeland, identity, migration, modernity, nation, transatlantic slavery

Glossary: *Creolization:* ...the coming together of diverse cultural traits or languages...a new or different (rather than subordinate/dominant) cultural practice that encompasses the social and political *relations* of two or more ethnic groups...unlike hybridity (see below)...renewed socio-spatial consequences...*Displacement:* the geographic process of being removed, exiled or marginalized... displacement can occur due to racism, sexism, homophobia, or other acts of discrimination and violence that subordinate particular communities, even though these communities may not have the means to escape...discrimination... *Homeland:* a territory to which one belongs, was born in, or is tied to ancestrally...also understood as a ‘country of origin,’ ...in the past or the present...*Hybridity:* used in social theory to challenge essentialism... produces a ‘mixed’ or ‘fused’ identity, place, culture, or area...*Migration, Migratory Subjects:* any movement of humans from one location to another... the experiential tenets of migration that...forced expulsions, colonial displacements, or economically induced movements... *Nation:*...demarcates the geographic location of a particular ethnic group...a government manages and protects...

Synopsis of Entry: ...‘diaspora’ is inherently geographical...exile, displacement, and resettlement... migratory processes and experiences as well as imagined communities... Anti-Semitism, war, transatlantic slavery, colonial violence, homophobia, or poverty, diaspora challenges and contributes to the ways in which modernity, nation, identity, and place are understood and experienced...

Diaspora Entry:... *diasperien*...the scattering of people across spaces, borders, and nations...ethnic and racial traumas as well as geographic losses, have

underwritten the scattering of people... particular groupings of people have been violently forced to leave their homeland because they are racially, ethnically, and/or religiously different from those in power...forced expulsion might be coupled with ethnic cleansing...Jewish exiles, for example, have been regarded as forced scatterings instigated by anti-Semitism, genocide, and war...in addition to physical violence that targets and expels a particular ethnic group... lack of a stable nation-space and geo-political independence, and transnational dispersals...the desire to establish and secure a location that can replace former geographic losses...WWII, Shoah...creation of Israel in 1948...neighbouring states...attendant and diasporic Middle

Eastern communities...formal and informal links with Israel, or former European communities occupied and lost during Shoah, are frequently developed within new spaces of settlement in North America, Africa, Australia, South America, and Asia...holocaust/Shoah memorials, which have been constructed in various sites internationally...African peoples...violently exiled ... expulsion and bondage...sold and transplanted into the Americas and Europe, and geographically disconnected from their former African homelands... forced geographic displacement was coupled with socio-cultural ruptures...expunged...entangled with centuries of violence wherein the question of homeland and geographic loss shapes how belonging and nationhood are experienced within the new region of relocation...human removal, death, and displacement...‘the logic of a linear evolutionary schema mapped on the nonlinear and branching histories of human *forms of life*—or cultures—all of which had been, when autocentric, the expressions of specific solutions that had been originally of adaptive advantage within the differing biogeographical and geopolitical environments in which they had found themselves, and, therefore, nonmeasurable, noncomparable, each to the other...’²⁴

settling after such exile carries with it...history of removal, death and displacement...relocation in the Americas is, at times, understood through their diasporic relationship to the middle passage, the continent of Africa and/or transatlantic slavery...debates over this...some memories too unbearable to return to, some generations rethinking the past...the Armenian community has experienced a long history of displacement and exile...centuries of ethnic and religious subordination, culminating in the massacres of 1915-1916...mass genocide and displacement...discrimination, war, poverty, colonialism, ethnic cleansing and violence have removed and moved Irish, Asian, South Asian, Caribbean, Eastern European and Middle Eastern groups from their countries of birth...war, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, and various genocides

paved the way for ... gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual communities...queer diasporas...spaces of resettlement... homophobia and heterosexual gender conventions... a 'human phenomenon' ... returns...the process of returning, whether imaginary, real, filmic or fictional... in what ways are returns possible...through travel, remembrance, imagination, remittances, yearnings, stories or songs? are past cultural practices retained upon relocation and do these cultural practices carry in them the history of violence, dispersal, and memories of home? ... Afrocentrism, Negritude, and Pan-Africanism produce links ...funds are sent 'home' to assist family and friends or to secure future departures... films that take up departures or violence, novels that remember slavery

poetry that explores forced human migrations, internet sites that map holocaust memorials and record the lives of survivors, songs that sample the music Bob Marley, and are then played on local radio stations, globally, live performances of Ghidra in the UK or Canada...diasporic returns...real, imaginary, political, economic, and creative...if diaspora fundamentally centres on the movement of people, are not all travelling cultures diasporic... if departure is voluntary, or individual rather than collective, is this diasporic process...do all diasporic subjects return to their homeland?...all diasporas are historically contingent to the specificities of time and space...four geographic themes arise...not describing a multitude of traveling cultures and individuals:

- a) Exile of a substantial population based on ethnicity, race, religion or difference that is often coupled with violence and/or genocide
- b) Loss of or displacement from homeland
- c) The mutual construction of identity and place as they are understood by migratory communities
- d) Returns

...the 'routes and roots' of diaspora experiences...diasporic cultures are not simply traveling and migrating with ease...a particular event or events—poverty, violence, war—has initiated flight and this movement is difficult psychically because it is wrapped up in loss and different types of return... exiled communities formulate their collective identities not as victims, but rather as subjects who negotiate, transgress and fracture the boundaries of and between nation, territory, and culture...difficult human migrations and border crossings that inform how exile and territorialization (the juris-

diction and regulation of land and its citizens by a particular government) underscore alternative understandings of modernity, nation, identity, and place...do not assume a clear or stable

'beginning' and 'end'...site and cite human violence, but do not explicitly locate a region of liberation or freedom at the end of diasporic travels...are concerned with nation, but are critical of borders, nationalism, and the limits the nation-state citizenship... imagine homelands and returns, but do not assume that 'home' is either returnable or innocent...'the functioning of universally applicable *laws of culture* as the veridical etiology of all the 'ills' endemic to Haiti...' ⁵

modernity...transnational flows beginning in the 15th century (colonial expansion, exploration, transatlantic slavery, indenture)...crystallized in the 17th century during ... multi-scalar social hierarchies began to shape economic, political, cultural and social systems inside and outside imperial nations...the shift away from feudal political systems, the development of the modern nation-state, and new international economic profits...systems of knowledge became increasingly based on categorization in the name of rationality, progress, and democratic liberalism...a corporeal hierarchy based on sexuality, race, ethnicity, phenotype and gender wherein the white man symbolically came to represent and embody democracy and rationality...

close studies of plants, insects, animals, women, the poor, the insane, and positivist mappings of European, indigenous and colonial physical and human geographies...'discover' and ultimately transform 'primitive' or 'non-rational' cultures or 'enlightened' justifications for racial-sexual subordination...ways of knowing bifurcated while encoding the world...trains, gas chambers, work camps, plantations, ghettos, ethnic enclaves, reservations...'the homeless, the jobless, the semi-jobless, the criminalized drug offending prison population, the damnés, the global archipelago, constituted by the Third- and Fourth-World peoples of the so called 'underdeveloped' areas of the world'⁶...the disappearance of Aboriginal cultures...what is at stake when bondage, genocide, violence and colonialism are...

progress, enlightened reason, democracy...negotiate and enlightened modernity if, in its various implementations, it negates a their worldview and figures, even prefigures, them as irrational, uncivilized and worthy of expulsion and bondage?...is often equated with democratic citizenship, technological progress and new ways of organizing the world... validated the expulsion of particular groups from their country of origin...nation is central to theorizing diasporas...forced dispersal carries with it the idea of 'displacement from' somewhere and 'displacement to' somewhere...how

diasporic communities understand themselves in relation to the nation... racial identities within a prescribed country or region (Vietnamese live in Vietnam, Germans live in Germany...

Algerians live in Algeria)... the nation, as a political bounded entity that safely houses and supports its citizens, is constantly being breached... some citizens are not, in fact, welcome or at ease within the boundaries of their country of birth... as a refugee, economic migrant, or exiled subject... fraught with ambivalence... acts of discrimination...

...not outside of modernity... the experiences of removal, travel, and returns, are indicative of how roots and routes—indeed diaspora spaces—intersect with, and therefore are indicative of, modern geographies... these processes of displacement, outer-national ties, and settlement, demonstrate the workings of modernity and the modern nation not as bounded or unchanging, but as a territory that is inflected with difference... this formulation attempts to recuperate or restore a broken past... anti-colonial struggles... how masses of people might, together, relate to this history vis-à-vis their common identities and contemporaneous political struggles against oppression... identities were and are soldered as a counter-narrative to Eurocentric modernity and the nation-state... absolutely Other or wholly different from the bourgeois hegemonic class... diaspora identities change from moment to moment and place to place... original geographic loss... can only be understood as fluid and changing: there is no satisfactory relationship with historic regions of displacement...

as they continue to experience discrimination within the nation of relocation (racial profiling, segregations, incarcerations, poverty)... neither outside modernity or the nation, diaspora identities are often conceptualized as hybrid or creolized... it is not possible to separate European and non-European versions of modernity... combine and creolize multiple points of identification, thus embodying and asserting how diversity and difference are lived and experienced as a process of entanglement... 'an ecumenically valid meaning is to be found as an imperative guide for our action in a present thus confronts us with a dimension of change even more far-reaching than the one effected in the context of Western Europe's epochal transfer of the other-worldly goal of the *civitas saecularis*...' ⁷

...fostered in cultural studies, literary criticism and critical race studies, human geographers have... diaspora as a fundamentally geographic process as it is underwritten by exiles, displacements, and regional specificities... use the term diaspora as a descriptor for movement... not exploring questions of identity, modernity, violent exile, collective histories and ambivalent

nation making...diaspora is simply synonymous with migration and immigration...those geographers interested in...trauma, displacement and identity shape and are shaping the production of space... advance a unique conceptualization of what is often called 'diaspora spaces'...diaspora and diaspora studies is focused on the highly metaphoric... diaspora is primarily theorized through the production of identity, rather than a materiality of displacement...many geographers have noted that questions of hybridity, imagined communities and returns...collective histories lack geographic specificity and political economy...frustrated with the unrepresentability of the psychic themes in diaspora studies...three-dimensionality and geographic specificity—are coupled with emotional and psychic processes...the materiality of modernity...

positivist mappings...difficult spatial conditions through which diasporic exile is a part...this critique of the unrepresentability of diaspora experiences is hasty...questions of memory, psychic attachment, past exiles, and collective histories always carry in them the materiality of displacement...the language of diaspora, one must always imagine the three-dimensionality of expulsion, in order to fully grasp the assertion that diaspora is a human phenomenon...

The Lists' Bibliography of 'Seminal' (see below) Diaspora Theorists, in APA and Mashed-Up: Books... Anderson, B. R. O. G. 1983. *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London England: Verso Editions / NLB...Brah, A. 1996. *Cartographies of diaspora: contesting identities* New York and London Routledge...Brand, D. 2001. *A map to the door of no return: notes on belonging* Toronto: Doubleday...Cohen, R. 1997. *Global diasporas: an introduction* Seattle: University of Washington Press...Davies, C. B. 1994. *Black women, writing, and identity: migrations of the subject*. London and New York: Routledge...Gilroy, P. 1993. *The black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press...Gopinath, G. 2005. *Impossible desires: queer diasporas and South Asian public cultures, perverse modernities*. Durham: Duke University Press...Habib, J. 2004. *Israel, diaspora, and the routes of national belonging*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press...Lowe, L. 1996. *Immigrant acts: on Asian American cultural politics*. Durham: Duke University Press...Patton, C., and B. Sánchez-Eppler. 2000. *Queer diasporas*. Durham: Duke University Press...**Articles in Edited Books** ...Hall, S. 1990. Cultural Identity and Diaspora In *Identity: community, culture, difference*, ed. J. Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence and Wishart...Walcott, R. 2000. 'Pedagogy and Trauma: The Middle Passage, Slavery, and the Problem of Creolization.' In *Between hope and despair: pedagogy and the remembrance of historical trauma* eds. R. I. Simon, S. Rosenberg and C. Eppert, 135-151. Lanham Rowman and Littlefield...**Articles in Journals**...Anthias, F. 1998. Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond

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Section Two: The Unbearable Mistaking of the Territory for the Map

I enter the lists
-Frantz Fanon

Last year I was invited to write an entry on 'diaspora' for the *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*. I envisioned that this task would be relatively straightforward: I had planned to provide a genealogy of sorts, tracing displacements experienced by Jewish, African, Armenian communities, outlining exiles instigated by war, violence, and then taking up contemporary debates on queer diasporas and economically induced transnational movements. I had planned to outline, furthermore, some of the central questions diaspora theorists raise: how expulsion is attached to memory and modernity, how traveling cultures are not always diasporic, how nostalgia and/or the nation underwrite many diasporas. While writing up these themes, ideas, and histories, I was asked to pay close attention to the 'Aims and Scope' provided by the *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography* editors: my entry must be detailed, authoritative and comprehensive; my entry must be inclusive and global in scope; my entry must be written in English, 4000 words in length, and be an invaluable source of information on diaspora. My entry must be multidisciplinary yet focused on the key debates in human geography. I was also asked to provide a list of defined key terms and a limited bibliography that would serve as a 'next step for the interested reader.' This bibliography and my dictionary entry, ideally, would not rely on a 'seminal work' (See 'The Lists' Bibliography' in Section One, above); an ideal entry would, then, draw on my broad knowledge of the available literature on the subject without paraphrasing any central diaspora theorists.

Since roughly the mid-1990s, and in human geography alone, there has been an expanding and expansive production of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and reference primers written in English.⁸ Excluding world and regional atlases and popular travel guides like the *Lonely Planet* series, there are dictionaries

on feminist geographies, historical geographies, modern geographies, and pre-modern geographies. There are the 'classic' human geography dictionaries, distributed by Penguin and Blackwell and interdisciplinary texts, like the encyclopaedia of housing. Human geographer Gill Valentine has co-edited, through Sage Publications, four primers on human geography, geographic methods, key geographic thinkers, and geographic concepts: what an economy this knowledge is, these lists are!⁹ These sources of geographic knowledge do not pay close attention to geographies of race and racism or what we might call alternative geographies: the middle passage, WEB Du Bois' urban studies, Toni Morrison's site of memory, are not to be found. Sporadically, some thinkers are included—Gayatri Spivak, bell hooks, Edward Said. Of course, opening up the possibility of non-white geographic knowledge is not the point of the texts—they are designed to outline and therefore fashion a particular geographic story.

Regardless, it is interesting to me that this production of knowledge within the discipline of geography is closely related to the discipline's history of positivism and exclusion, even while many human geographers are, anxiously and not, naming legacies of whiteness, colonialism, and heterosexism, that inhabit their areas of study in all sorts of ways.¹⁰ While the production of specialized handbooks, lists, and encyclopaedias are increasingly incorporated into many academic and non-academic spheres, the guidelines from the *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography* emphasizes the ways in which the production of knowledge is intimately bound to the production of space. Indeed, the work of cataloguing and naming diaspora is a mapping exercise, a renewed enlightenment exercise of classifying, finding, discovering, and documenting. This can, and at times does, make me very uneasy because there are unwritten expectations in human geography that understand that knowledge is fundamentally spatial. That is, the knowledge documented and collected is tied to a legacy of mapping 'man's inhumanity to man.'¹¹ And, given our present geographic system—wherein we are rewarded for owning things and places—spatializing the diaspora might very well involve attaching it a politics of territorialization.

What I mean by this is the geo-politics of the diaspora might be framed to incite the jurisdiction and regulation of diaspora-lands and its diaspora-citizens even though diaspora, ideally, works to undo this jurisdiction and regulation. All of the entries in the encyclopaedia—from whiteness to postcolonialism to Global Information Systems and the entry on David Harvey—are intended to literally map out, and therefore stake a claim to, some kind of space. Diaspora, then, is to be mapped through an 'unspoken disciplinary solidity and a conceptualization of geography that is reassuringly secure and familiar.'¹² To put it another way, this intellectual exercise

involved writing up the diaspora according to our present geographic system of tops and bottoms, with particular spaces for Man, and particular spaces for his human others. The intended rigor of cataloguing, classifying and mapping knowledge on the terms outlined by the *Encyclopaedia* editors means creating a detailed, comprehensive analysis for the interested reader that actually refuses interdisciplinary and creolized knowledges. Diaspora, then, risks being overrepresented precisely because it is being imagined to correspond with, rather than undo, familiar geographic patterns that frame our spatial world vis-à-vis what Sylvia Wynter calls our 'present hegemonic socio-genetic code.'¹³ Diaspora being produced in this context, she might argue, is not a producing a map but a territory, thus imprisoning and erasing diaspora subjects and bodies while simultaneously re-invigorating, indeed affirming, our racially charged classificatory geographies: spaces for us, spaces for them, spaces for diaspora, spaces for the undiasporic. Depending on how you look at it, my entry was and is a project of disavowal. That is, our present geographic system demands an authoritative diasporic map, with classificatory regions easily corresponding with their inhabitants, thus concealing the potential geographic trouble diaspora can actually do.

What are the politics of mapping the black diaspora and how is this done? The Harriet Tubman Centre, at York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, is one good example of diaspora mappings. The centre is described as a 'resource on the African Diaspora' while its namesake is a reminder of transatlantic slavery and fugitive slave networks and movements. The Tubman Centre is a digitalized research facility that focuses on 'the history of the African diaspora and the movement of Africans to various parts of the world, particularly the Americas and the Islamic lands of North Africa and the Middle East.'¹⁴ Also known as the slave route project, which is part of a larger UNESCO initiative to find, research, document black diasporic routes, the Centre is collecting data on the diaspora and literally mapping the historic movements of black cultures vis-à-vis a discourse of scientific rationality and objectivity. This is, I want to suggest, one way to map the black diaspora. But there are other ways, too: mapping the creative works of authors, musicians and poets, analyzing post-slave travels or the work of scholars like Edouard Glissant or CLR James or Nourbese Philip. We also, then, map the diaspora through our citation practices.

When I first began my research on black geographies I was interested in the patriarchal underpinnings of diaspora studies. Specifically, I was concerned with what black women bring to bear on the diaspora and whether or not the influential writings of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and so on, were perhaps articulating a partial view of diaspora politics through, inadvertently or not, envisioning it as a masculinist geography. Whether or not they do, is,

I think, different and equally important conversation.¹⁵ But I returned to these issues when I was writing the encyclopaedia entry: Do I include Stuart Hall and Brent Hayes Edwards in my bibliography? What about Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* or Nas' *Illmatic*, or the geography paper by Brenda Yeoh on traveling cultures in Singapore—do I decide if these are diasporic, worthy of citation? These questions are, in some ways, irrelevant to the everyday and lived political workings of diaspora—but they haunted me, nonetheless. I was being asked to resolve a geographic matter that I would prefer to understand as unresolved: again, my entry was and is a project of disavowal.

One of the reasons I was unsettled was because while I was writing the encyclopaedia entry I was engaging with two other geographic concerns: the geo-politics of the expulsion of black and poor peoples from New Orleans, and a paper by Carole Boyce Davies and Babcar M'Bow titled 'Towards an African Diaspora Citizenship: Operationalizing an Existing Global Geography.'¹⁶ Unlike the Tubman Centre and the encyclopaedia entry, I was quickly reminded of the ways in which knowledge production, and therefore the workings of the diaspora, must also be cast as unresolved. That is, my inner fears of transparent space and disavowal encroaching on black diaspora spaces are not unwarranted—but hasn't the diaspora been telling us something else as well? Hasn't this strikingly human phenomenon highlighted, called into question, and refused the positivist contours of human geography and thus worked toward creating a space and spaces for political struggle? This is not to say that black diaspora spaces are necessarily more 'accurate' or 'truthful' geographies but rather that they highlight a perspective that is not always understood through the geographic language of insides and outsides, margins and centres, the west and the rest. To give just one example, Rinaldo Walcott explains that diaspora geographies are 'tough' geographies: new poetic cartographies that redraw and remap the landscape in order to 'articulate a black presence that signals defiance, survival and renewal.'¹⁷

Diaspora, then, is tough precisely because it cuts across existing maps, all the while recognizing how these maps are constituting diaspora itself; thus, we are encouraged to consider that the material and imaginative geographies of diaspora are: boundry-less, beyond a boundary, liminal, limitless, global, unfinished, dispersed, migratory, underwater, underground, 'thrown to the four winds'¹⁸ *as these processes are inflected by the local*. Rather than affirming the act of territorialization, the geo-politics of the black diaspora allows us to work toward identifying spaces that are not normally celebrated—or even noticed—in our present geographic order. These are the texts, experiences, resistances, of those described as the 'have nots' or the wretched of the

earth; and, these places and narratives—the middle passage, the plantation, the neplantation, the slave ship, the prison, the regions of the so-called ‘underdeveloped,’ the underground—are useful precisely because they are constituted by spatial processes that not only conceal, but necessarily incite, political struggle. To put it another way, black diaspora spaces are hidden from view, *depending* on vantage point.

But I am still wary, nervous—because if cartography is a powerful indicator of disavowal and colonialism, if we are going to engage with what Avtar Brah calls ‘the cartographies of diaspora’¹⁹ and thus use the language of mapmaking to work through centuries of displacement, we might think carefully about the tools, politics, and traces of territoriality, that inform our mapping desires and intellectual projects. That is, the cartographies of diaspora, like other modern geo-political spaces, risks a return to the geographies of normalcy (insides-outsidess, spaces for us-spaces for them) precisely because our geographic imaginations are wrapped up in processes of disavowal that are translated, often embodied, as commonsense and familiar.

What is at stake, then, if we hold on to the idea that space, and therefore diaspora space, ‘just is’? What is at stake if we understand black diaspora spaces as *familiar* versions of our present geographic order: just a spatial container, like other Man-made containers. What is at stake, at least in part, is that diaspora—because it is a *human* geography—has within it the potential to be overrepresented as unwavering and static: territorial mappings, tops and bottoms, uneven geographies within diaspora are potentially sites of ownership. The undiasporic, the occasionally diasporic, the migratory, sometimes have no place here; or the undiasporic has a claim to the space *of* normalcy, while the diasporic is rendered *ungeographic*: tops and bottoms. Of course, as Gayatri Spivak and others have told us that cartography does not always already signal domination and defeat of the ‘have nots,’ the wretched of the earth—there is a context to cartographic recognition; or, what is cartographically relevant for some, is cartographically meaningless to others: women, nonwhite communities, have always produced what have been called ‘rival geographies.’²⁰ And, even though these sites are often bloody, deathly, and socially invested in a different worldview—upside down maps, song maps, maps that follow ghosts, maps that only cite time, rather than space, maps that hold in them, gifts or music or recipes—this is cartography, too: even though these rival geographies may not be included in the *Penguin Atlas of World History*, this is cartography, too. We might, then, think about how we go about spatializing the diaspora—not only by refusing to assume that space, and therefore diaspora space, ‘just is,’ but also through insisting that the diaspora is a treacherous geography if it is understood within our present classificatory system.

Diaspora needs a radically different map—and we might even re-language map/cartography—but diaspora needs another map, one that acknowledges its *unmappability* within the context of existing processes of spatial domination. To put it another way, we need to urgently hold on to the potentiality of diaspora, particularly in terms of its geo-politics, otherwise we risk removing all traces of human life from this space. There is a need to take up these innovative diaspora geographies ‘without a mandate for conquest.’²¹ Is there any way we can conceptualize, and talk about, the cartographies of the diaspora in an ethical way, one that does not replicate the patterns were set and settled in a post-1492 geographic framework? How, then, do we critically engage with old definitions and geographies ‘that have not served us, nor the earth that supports us’²² and refuse to cast these discourses as commonsense and comfortable? How then, do we envision the diaspora as a radical rival geography that notices the ways in which hegemonic practices have constituted it, but *do not inform* its political trajectories?

I want to suggest that we continue working on demystifying cartography by inhabiting it with human life, from the perspective of the species (rather than Man-Human optics).²³ This might seem an obvious demand, but we need to highlight the humanness of geography as integral to geography itself; more specifically, we need to persist in our recognition of the ways in which geography—the discipline and the practice of making space—is a not only a project that reflects old colonial patterns, it is also a project that reflects a modern human project: geography then, is not just an empty container or a violent cartography; something else is going on, there is something about geography that might also reflect the skin, bones, hair, blood, and muscles of our life forms. Additionally, while diaspora has been described as ‘inherently geographical,’²⁴ and thus tied to existing colonial spatial patterns, it also discloses sites of knowledge and struggle that are not readily available in our geographic imaginations. Diaspora geographies are political precisely when they are being understood as implicit to knowledge making and because they are, in terms of human geographies, always asserting an understanding of space and place that calls into question given classificatory locations.

If we really *believe* and trust the geo-politics of the black diaspora—Paul Gilroy’s rhizomorphic routes and roots, Stuart Hall’s ‘diaspora aesthetic,’ Carole Boyce Davies’ ‘migrations of the subject,’ Rinaldo Walcott’s assertion that dispersed peoples *always* transgress nation-state principles, Michael Franti’s plea to ‘stay human,’ Nas’ bloodstained NYC, Janet Jackson’s borderless ‘beyond the color line’ globe, Octavia Butler’s ecocidal-genocidal premonitions, and there are many many more²⁵—then this question of mapping can never be about the ownership of diaspora space. Our geographic

and philosophical work cannot be about disavowal if we trust and follow through with the spatial matters diaspora subjects impart. So, on one hand, the inherently geographical nature of diaspora might allow us to fall back on conceptions of space that seem to be pre-prescribed: the formation of ethnic enclaves, the dying, displaced and lost subjects of violence, reserves, impoverished homes, seem to easily fall into existing spatial patterns that appear to be established exclusively for the poor, the black, the nonwhite, the indigenous, *les damnés*. These local diaspora geographies are telling us that the spaces of the ‘haves’ are naturally oppositional to the ‘have nots.’ On the other hand, the inherently geographical nature of the diaspora might take us beyond this seemingly commonsense conception of space. It might, then, lead us toward a different politics, one that does not demarcate world through geographies of differential human (and non-human) codes, but rather recognizes the ways in which many diasporic subjects are working through, and therefore refusing to, bow to the longitudes and latitudes advanced by positivist and/or enlightenment categories.

This means, of course, that the diaspora is a changeable political geography. And here I ask diaspora theorists, in particular those who want to discuss diaspora politics behind closed doors, as a site/citation conceived as always already an academic project that originates, and therefore stays in (and is owned by) the academy, to notice that diaspora geographies—if we *trust* the knowledge diasporic subjects impart—in fact refuses this privatized-enclosed-demarkatable *practice* of territorialization and thus should work to *unravel-and-open-up* the diaspora territories they are so privileged to stake a claim to. Diaspora must necessarily welcome and bring into focus those identities that push up against, and fragment, the very material, metaphoric, and representational spaces of diaspora in itself. This means, too, that we need to consider that diaspora spaces are creolized spaces, produced by and through geographic encounters, painful and not, and thus bring forth a different *kind* of interrelational geo-politics. Encounters, the difficult ‘(re)birth of something new and different’ is something that diaspora geographies must continually endure.²⁶ Even though these sites and experiences are already complex, hybrid, outernational, shifting, transgressive, diaspora can also be articulated through what Alexander Weheliye describes as ‘a guardianship,’ with its citizens protective of its heteronormative individuated identifications.²⁷ Diaspora has the potential to be a hegemonic geographic project, a renewed version of Man’s classificatory-exclusionary-bourgeoisie-spaces-for-us-spaces-for-them (them-as-the-absolute-Other)—unless, I think, we fill it with human life, attend to its radical creolized potential, and continue to insist that mapping diaspora is an ethical and unresolved politic, a really human, human geography.

Section Three: Towards a Poetics of Radical Humanness—Tormented Chronologies and a Wynteresque *Weltanschauung*

I enter the lists
-Frantz Fanon

After his quarrel with History—his discussion of the Caribbean subjects' exclusion from the grand narrative of the past while their selves and bodies were in fact being violently transported through and across this History/history, and were in fact deeply implicated *in* this History—Edouard Glissant suggests that we reconstitute this 'tormented chronology.'²⁸ Looking to poetics, creative expressions, Glissant reimagines the work of history—and in this case Caribbean nonhistories—as urgent philosophical projects that refuse genre-specific disciplinary knowledges. Our inherited biocentric categories, the nonhistories, the native-nigger-Other classifications, must not be an obstacle to 'the historical organization of things' but rather invite a 'daring new methodology that responds to the needs of our situation.'²⁹ I want to take seriously Glissant's call to reconstitute our 'tormented chronology' in order to politicize and disclose the workings of 'the lists' that have been imagined within, and beyond, our inherited spaces of Otherness. Our tormented chronologies (lists, registers, entries, catalogues, cartographies) might better be understood through '*all* the perspectives of the human sciences.'³⁰ And here, we should not be distracted by Glissant's use of 'sciences,' and fear a return to another objective, measurable, listing of 'things' and 'places,' for his conception of science here is importantly human, and includes, among other intellectual spaces and processes, literatures, poetics, nonhistories, the everyday world, latent memories, explosive emotions, nature, cultural production, creativity, and beyond. What might be called an interdisciplinary-multidisciplinary approach, but more aptly an attempt to imagine the world from the perspective of the species (alongside, rather than chained to, existing academic categories for cross-inter-trans-multidisciplinary analyses), the tormented chronology, if invested with human (not Man-human) life, turns the list upside down, tears it up and glues it together, adds and discards, not with the ongoing fear disavowal (see Section Two above) but rather through pain and pleasure of what is made possible, and new, as our listings converge, confront one another, and overlap. Our present lists, and catalogues, these enlightened geo-political boundaries—the territories of diaspora, the spaces of Man and his human Others—are not only changeable and always changing (see Sections One and Two above), they have also been in conversation with reconstituted tormented chronologies as these lists, together, assert, a differently conceived 'public genealogy of resistance'³¹:

‘days the were pages of hysteria...bodiescreatingwealth...Saturday July 19, 2025: Time drags!...my skin is black.../my name is...my skin is yellow/my name is...their inner city criminalized and drug addicted ghettos, such as, exemplary, that of the Black-Poor geography of the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, one recently uncovered, together with its stranded, desperate, because a logically not-to-be-rescued-until-it-was-to-ate-and-vilified-as-looters population, given its members institutionalization as the ultimate nigger Otherness to what it is to be, normally human, in the biocentric bourgeois terms of *Man*³²

That which appears to be an authoritative guide to the always set, settled and knowable is an impossibility without, for example, pages of hysteria/my name is/2025/logically-stranded-not-to-be-rescued-vilified. Our chronologies might better be envisioned from a third vantage point, neither inside nor outside but rather through a Wynteresque *Weltanschauung* where the ‘interrelatedness of our contemporary situation put[s] forward a new world view...from the perspective of the species, and with reference to the interests of *its* well-being, rather than from the partial perspectives, and with reference to the necessarily partial interests³³ of Man *and* his human others. That is, the chronologies of our implied and inherited human categories do not simply subjugate, they incite a critical response, a *new* list not just of the tormented and how the tormented have come to be, but a new inventory/*Inventory* of the *relational* stakes of the future usability of the list, the spaces of the Other not as absolutely Other but as, to borrow from Dionne Brand, a catalogue of flesh, blood, bones and muscles, a poetics of toxic genealogies, bloody rags and soft travellers³⁴:

all this became ordinary far from where it happened

—twenty-seven in Hillah, three in fighting in Amariya, two by roadside bombing, Adhaim five by mortars in Afar, in firefight in Samarra

two, two in collision near Khallis, council member in Kirkuk, one near medical complex, two in Talarar, five by suicide bomb in Kirkuk, five

by suicide...³⁵

This inventory is pages, months, years long, not set and settled, it is still being compiled, in front of our very eyes, filled with life-death:

still in June,
in their hiatus eight killed by suicide bomb at
bus station, at least eleven killed in Shula at
restaurants, at least fifteen by car bomb...

enough numbers still to come so twenty
outside bank in Kirkuk...³⁶

All this is ordinary, far from where it happened. Can we enter the list—not as Fanon did, but rather as Dionne Brand asks us to, here, now?³⁷ And I say this not because we want to inscribe ourselves as signifiers of objective measurability, but rather to engage with a poetics of humanness, a new humanism with and beyond that Fanonian struggle. One that invests this list, this inventory, with *all* (painfully new, creolized, re-mixed, mashed), forms of human life. How is the making of an inventory—*any* inventory, list, chronicle, register—new, strident? In what ways can the tabulation of killings, suicides, bombings, bring us to a different methodological possibility, a risky encounter with our present and future human condition? How do we read and hear Brand's genocidal, ecocidal inventory as an alterable discourse, rather than commonsense reiteration of enlightenment categorizations, those static boxes containing Man and his human others that seem to be void of creativity, pleasure, hurt? In what ways can this inventory Dionne Brand asks us to encounter, speak, hear, read, and share, reverberate with human action and life? Towards, then, a convergence and opening up of *human* geographies, towards the recognition of the poetics of radical humanness accentuating the ground beneath all of our feet: 'being screams there.'³⁸

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End Notes

¹ Katherine McKittrick, 'diaspora,' in Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, London: Elsevier, under review.

² Sylvia Wynter, 'On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being of *Désêtre*,' in Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, (London and Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 108.

³ I am borrowing the 'remix' from Mark Campbell, which underwrites his forthcoming project, 'The Mixology of Caribbean Peoples in Canada'; mash-up refers to the process of layering songs on top of one another. As opposed to sampling, remixing and mash-ups use longer bars, riffs, and scores, to sonically incite a familiarity that is re-expressed in a slightly different context (through doubling or tripling musical scores on top of one another); this process produces a new/different song while also pointing to former 'unmashed' or 'unmixed' texts/sounds. I find both of these musical activities and acts useful theoretically because they point to the lived and expressive poetics of relationality—the hear-ability, the sonic grooves, of *relations*—but also because they open up a way for me to reconfigure knowledge on the page. Thus, I remix and mash-up (rather than sample) many ideas, forms, here, on the page, to hopefully add something different and complementary to diaspora debates. See also Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), as I am mashing-up his work, too.

⁴ Sylvia Wynter, 'Is Development a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A

Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,' Aguibou Y. Yasané, ed., *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 307. Wynter's emphasis.

⁵ Sylvia Wynter, 'The Pope Must Have Been Drunk The King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality, and the Caribbean Rethinking of Modernity,' Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana, eds., *Reordering Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada in the Hood*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995), 17. Wynter's emphasis.

⁶ Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,' *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3:3, (Fall 2003): 261.

⁷ Sylvia Wynter, '1492: A New World View,' in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford, eds., *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995): 14 (Wynter's emphasis).

⁸ Outside the discipline of human geography, primers, lists, and encyclopedias abound—too many to compile here, subjects range from bird guides, plant guides, cars guides and other object, animal, people guides, to the recently released *Bob Dylan Encyclopedia* by Michael Gray, (New York and London: Continuum Publishing Group, 2006), which is over 700 pages long. Amazon.com also includes statistics for the *Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*: 11% of the words in the text are 'complex' and there are, on average, 1.5 syllables per word; there are 24014 sentences in the text, and in terms of funds, there are 25634 words per dollar. The interested list-reader might also look to the Routledge 'Key Guides,' which includes texts such as: *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*, *Fifty Major Philosophers*, *Fifty Key Medieval Thinkers*, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Post-Modernity*, *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*...

⁹ Phil Hubbard, Rib Kitchin, and Gill Valentine, eds., *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, (London: Sage: 2004); Stuart Aiken and Gill Valentine, eds., *Approaches to Human Geography*, (London: Sage, 2006); Nicholas Clifford and Gill Valentine, eds., *Key Methods in Geography*, (London: Sage, 2003); Sarah Holloway, Stephen Rice and Gill Valentine, eds., *Key Concepts in Geography*, (London: Sage, 2003).

¹⁰ In human geography (and beyond) there have been a number of critiques of the production of geographic knowledge through primers, encyclopedias, and reference books. I only note one collection, the series of essays on the subject of 'lists' and 'key thinkers' in *Environment and Planning A: Society and Space*, 37, (2005): 161-187. On other disciplinary exclusions in human geography (racial, sexual, geographic) the literature is also fairly extensive; I cite only five of the many texts I have found useful: Ruth Wilson Gilmore, 'Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography,' *The Professional Geographer*, 54:1, (2002): 15-24; Natalie Oswan, 'Towards Radical Geographies of Complicit Queer Futures,' *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 3:2, (2004): 79-86 (which is a discussion of recent debates on queer geographies and sexuality and space); Laura Pulido, 'Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90:1, (2000): 12-40; Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake, 'Unnatural Discourse: 'Race' and Gender in Geography,' *Gender Place and Culture*, 1:2, (1994): 225-243; Lawrence Berg and Robin Kearns, 'America Unlimited,' in

Environment and Planning A: Society and Space, 16, (1998): 128-132.

¹¹ David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), 144-145.

¹² Philip Crang, Claire Dwyer and Peter Jackson, 'Transnationalism and the Spaces of Commodity Culture,' in *Progress in Human Geography*, 27:4, (2003), 446. [438-456]

¹³ Sylvia Wynter, 'On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being of *Désêtre*,' in Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, (London and Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 118.

¹⁴ <http://www.yorku.ca/nhp/intro.htm>

¹⁵ See for example: T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, 'Erasures and the Practice of Diaspora,' in *Small Axe*, 17, (March 2005): 129-133; Julia Sudbury, 'From the Point of No Return to the Women's Prison: Writing Spaces of Confinement into Diaspora Studies,' *Canadian Women's Studies*, 23:2 (2004): 154-163; Katherine McKittrick, "Who Do You Talk to, When a Body's In Trouble?": Marlene Nourbese Philip's (Un)Silencing of Black Bodies in the Diaspora,' *The Journal of Social and Cultural Geography*, 1:2, (2000): 223-236.

¹⁶ Karen Bakker, 'Katrina: The Public Transcript of Disaster,' *Environment and Planning D*, 23:6, (2005): 796-802; Neil Smith, 'There's No Such Thing As A Natural Disaster,' *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Smith>, (accessed 2006); Bruce Braun and James McCarthy, 'Hurricane Katrina and Abandoned Being,' *Environment and Planning D*, 23:6, (2005): 802-809; Carole Boyce Davies and Babcar M'Bow, 'Towards an African Diaspora Citizenship: Operationalizing an Existing Global Geography,' in Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds., *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, (Toronto: Between the Lines Press; Boston: South End Press, forthcoming, 2007); Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, 'No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean,' in Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds., *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, (Toronto: Between the Lines Press; Boston: South End Press, forthcoming, 2007).

¹⁷ Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who: Writing Black Canada*, (Toronto: Insomniac, 1997): 38.

¹⁸ 'Thrown to the four winds' is taken from Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2006), 13.

¹⁹ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

²⁰ Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith, 'Introduction: Critical Histories of Geography,' in Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith, eds., *Geography and Empire*, (New York: Blackwell, 1994): 1-8; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful'' in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Summer, and Patricia Yeager, eds., *Nationalism and Sexualities*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1992): 96-117.

²¹ Toni Morrison, *Playing in The Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, (New York: Vintage, 1992): 3.

²² Audre Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,' in her *Sister Outsider*, (Freedom, California, 1984): 123.

²³ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), especially 121-141; Rinaldo Walcott, 'Ori-

gins...Beginnings: Transatlantic Slavery,' delivered at 'Diasporic Hegemonies,' University of Toronto, October 21, 2006.

²⁴ Allison Blunt, 'Geographies of Diaspora and Mixed Descent: Anglo-Indians in India and Britain,' in the *International Journal of Population Geography*, 9, (2003): 282.

²⁵ Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities' in David Morely and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1996): 441-449; Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 1997), 29; Nas, *Illmatic*, (Sony: 1994); Janet Jackson, *Rhythm Nation 1814*, (A & M: 1989); Octavia Butler *Parable of the Sower*, (New York: Time Warner, 1993); Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Talents*. (New York: Time Warner, 1998); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Micheal Franti and Spearhead. *Stay Human*, (San Fransisco: Six Degrees, 2001).

²⁶ Rinaldo Walcott, 'Pedagogy and Trauma: The Middle Passage, Slavery, and the Problem of Creolization,' in Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, eds., *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000): 149.

²⁷ Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 196-197.

²⁸ Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, Trans., J. Michael Dash, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia): 61-65.

²⁹ Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 65.

³⁰ Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 65. My emphasis.

³¹ Marlene Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*, (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1997), 25.

³² Gayle Jones, *Corrigidora*, (Boston: Beacon Press/Bluestreak, 1975), 59; Marlene Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*, 94; Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, (New York: Time Warner, 1993), 84; Nina Simone, 'Four Women,' from her *Wild is the Wind*, (Polygram, 1996); Sylvia Wynter, correspondence with Katherine McKittrick, January 10, 2006 (Wynter's emphasis).

³³ Sylvia Wynter, '1492: A New World View,' in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford, eds., *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995): 8 (Wynter's emphasis).

³⁴ Dionne Brand, *Inventory*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2006): 17, 21, 99.

³⁵ Dionne Brand, *Inventory*, 23.

³⁶ Dionne Brand, *Inventory*, 25-26.

³⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans., Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press, [1952]1967): 114.

³⁸ Dionne Brand, *Inventory*, 97.

ZONGI! #9

M. Nourbese Philip

slaves
to the order in
destroyed
the circumstance in
fact
the property in
subject
the subject in
creature
the loss in
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to the fellow in
negro
the sustenance
in want
the arrived
in vessel
the weight
in provisions
the suffered in
die
the my in
become

Saidah, M odele, M tundu, Ibunkunle , Adeyemi

ZONGI #10

M. Nourbese Philip

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Toyin, Siphon, Adelabu, Lisabi, Fayemi, Eki

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suppose the law

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has been decided
was justified
appeared impossible
is not necessary
is another ground
need not be proved

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was a throwing overboard

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was murder
need not be proved
has been decided
is said
was justified
appeared impossible
is not necessary
is a particular circumstance
another ground

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was murder

AGAINST STRATIFICATION:

DOROTHY TRUJILLO LUSK'S OGRESS OBLIGE AND THE POETICS OF CLASS RECOMPOSITION

Roger Farr

At all times, both earlier and later, there were in Rome two types of language. One, rough and half barbarous, was found among the populace, that is, the unlearned Romans and foreigners, or those of the lower classes, and uneducated country folk. The expressions and words of this variety were rejected by writers and noble speakers, and have remained, for the most part – except for word endings – in the mouths of the Italian people, without distinction of commonness or nobility.... The other language variety was cultivated by art and was pure Latin, found among writers and noble speakers, and the learned.

— Celso Cittadini, *Vera Origine* (1601)

For us, class is not a form of stratification but a *social relation*; rather than attempting to classify people we need to understand how class is formed, as a process, within a relationship of antagonism. It is true that individuals are situated differently with regards to the fundamental social relation of how labour is pumped out of the direct producers (and that identities and perceptions of interests linked with these identities can form around these situations) ... but [class is] a relation, not (just) a stratum.

— *AUFHEBEN 16* (2003)

I am poor and demonic and I've come to help!

— Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, “Vulgar Marxism” (2001)

1. STRATIFICATION VS. THE POETICS OF CLASS RECOMPOSITION

The idea that language is a stratified system appears at the dawn of linguistic theory, and has, for the most part, remained intact in both contemporary socio-linguistics and the writing that area of study informs. Although within the field of linguistics the concept of stratification is used by different theorists to serve radically different purposes (compare, for instance Jakobson’s use

of the word to develop a taxonomy of phonemic patterning¹ to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of stratification as an "[act] of capture...of coding and reterritorialization²), making it difficult to define, it can be argued that the concept is an extension of one of the dominant myths guiding the study of language: the myth that "language reflects society." As Deborah Cameron explains, this myth underlies the influential quantitative linguistic paradigm associated with the work of Labov, which attempts to correlate variations in language use to presupposed social positions, structures, attitudes, and identities. In other words, stratification in language presupposes (or, depending on one's point of view, buttresses) a theory of social stratification. This is a problem, Cameron argues, because the "structures/divisions like class, ethnicity and gender [which] are used as a 'bottom line'" in this paradigm "stand in need of explication themselves" (81). Taking Cameron's claim as a starting point, in this essay I will argue that certain tendencies of what has been called a "class-inflected"³ poetics demythologize the idea that language and society are *necessarily* stratified, advancing instead a mode of language which works dialectically against social stratification, towards "class recomposition." The poetics of class recomposition, I argue, proceeds from an initial disclosure of the ruptures, divisions, and "fault-lines" in the language/capital/society colossus, toward a self-reflexive writing practice which seeks to intensify and, in the last instance, *overcome* the imposed categories and identities that are thought to condition it.⁴

My awareness of this tendency in contemporary writing has been informed by the work of writers associated with Vancouver's Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), in particular Dorothy Trujillo Lusk. Although her work shares a number of formal concerns with other local writers, particularly Gerald Creede, Kevin Davies, Deanna Ferguson, and Maxine Gadd,⁵ Lusk's writing is notably idiosyncratic in its mockery of academic discourse and "high-genre," its use of certain vernacular components of language, and its unwavering attention to language and class. These aspects of her writing, I will argue, work on one hand to draw together a community of readers with similar class interests (the disclosure of class stratification), while on the other, to destabilize the category of "class" itself. But before I make this argument, I need to trace the concept of stratification in linguistic theory, and then locate it more precisely in Marx's theory of class struggle.

2. LINGUISTIC STRATIFICATION IN SAUSSURE & VOLOSHINOV

The theory of linguistic stratification could be traced back to the reification of language that occurs within structuralism: the idea that language *per se* is a system of laws entirely separate from speech, and that the study of the

former can be done without recourse to the latter. This binary is axiomatic of structuralist linguistics and is the foundation upon which Saussure develops the theory of the sign. According to Saussure, stratification permeates language, literally, from the top down. Just as language “as a whole” can be divided into *langue* and *parole*, the sign as a base linguistic “entity” can be divided into sides and layers: a material “sound-image” (signifier) and a psychological “concept” (signified) which work in concert to produce social meanings. Thus, as Kristeva observes, structuralist linguistic theory “designates language as a collection of formal signs, stratified in successive layers that form systems and structures... [which means that] to study language, to grasp the multiplicity of its aspects and functions, amounts to constructing a stratified science and theory...” (10-11).

In structuralism, the idea that language is stratified remains at the level of description—it is part of an explanatory and taxonomical intent. In the work of the Russian Formalists, however, especially Bakhtin (Voloshinov), the theory of linguistic stratification is more robust, in that it pursues the social dimension of *la langue* as a system that allows communication. More specifically, in the early work of this school, *class antagonism* is said to determine the formal properties and stratification of language: “the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the *immediate conditions of their interaction*” (Voloshinov 21; emphasis added). This formal conditioning of the sign occurs because classes with opposing economic interests speak the same language (at least on the macro level); thus, the sign “becomes the arena of the class struggle” (23). In “Discourse and the Novel,” Bakhtin extends this “inner dialectic quality” from the sign to the utterance, and then again outwards to discourse and genre, through the concepts of “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces (272-73). The former force Bakhtin associates with the state, the church, and the high artistic genres; these social “strata” are shown to exercise a hierarchical and “normative-centralizing” force on language, while “the centrifugal, stratifying” forces are linked to a creative, entropic movement working towards decomposition and disunification. According to Bakhtin, it is the centrifugal forces at work in language which are responsible for its stratification; unified language collapses as new conditions and uses arise, thwarting the domination of language by any of the elevated discourses or genres. Bakhtin writes “at any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word [...], but also – and for us this is the essential point – into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, ‘professional’ and ‘generic’ languages, languages of generations and so forth” (271-272). Thus, language is stratified at all levels – from the sign up – because it is used by different social classes, for different purposes, at different times.

While it is true that the Bakhtin Circle departed from the Structuralists because of the latter's focus on the abstract grammar of *la langue*, favoring instead the living and dialogical "utterance," both theoretical models seem to agree that language is in some sense a stratified system. The premises of structuralist theory, of course, have been subjected to a rigorous critique. Derrida has argued that while the premise that the sign produces meaning through binary opposition is correct, Saussure does not provide an account of the latent process that apparently lies "behind", or "beneath," signification: difference/*différance* itself. *Différance* is thus a kind of blind-spot both inside and outside the structure. Moreover, it could be argued that a similar blind-spot lies "under" or "behind" Russian Formalism: here, the idea that language is forever decomposing into more and more layers of stratification as the result of a force being exerted by the "bottom" of the social system does not account for the latent process, or *struggle*, which animates this stratification and conditions the sign. In other words, while Formalist theory presupposes a Marxist analysis of *class antagonism*, it is at variance with a central tenet of the Marxist theory of *class struggle*: that those who labour under capital must *recompose* themselves in order to overcome the divisions imposed by capital – the "decomposition" of the working class via wages, ethnicity, gender, a reserve army, etc. – in its constant quest to accumulate surplus value.

3. STRATIFICATION & CLASS STRUGGLE IN MARX

Raymond Williams notes that there is an "ironic relation" between the premises of structuralist linguistics and those of Marxism, an "affinity" which explains why the "attempted synthesis" of these two schools of thought has had such an impact on critical theory (28). In the Marxist account, the stratification of society into classes appears historically with the enclosures: the end of collective control over the means of subsistence brought about through the collaboration of property owners and the state, and the imposition of new forms of social organization ("class"). Described by Marx as "primitive accumulation," the enclosures signaled "the process that transforms... the immediate producers into waged workers" (714). Marx theorized the enclosures as a discrete "stage" at the dawn of capitalism, in which the English countryside, some of which was held in common right, was literally enclosed by fences, uprooting peasant communities, and transforming lifeways tied to subsistence agriculture into the industrial production of commodities intended for exchange on an open market. Furthermore, for Marx, the separation of the peasant/producers from the land, and their subsequent transformation into proletariat/wage-workers, is "reflected" in the bifurcation of the commodity form; the commodity, as the basic unit

of capitalist society, is also stratified, much like Saussure's sign, into two irreconcilable poles, use value and exchange value.

However, as Williams and others have stressed, the basic structure of class exploitation was in place before the enclosures came to pass, and there is no point in history where one can identify an "organic" or "natural" society (Williams, 1973, 96). The origins of capitalist society are better theorized, then, not merely as the appearance of a system of stratification based on various "class positions," with "upper," "middle," and "lower" corresponding more or less directly to slots or functions in an economic/productive order, but rather *as a transformation in a system of practices and relationships*. Williams stresses these *relational* implications of the enclosures:

What happened was not so much 'enclosure' – the method – but more the establishment of a long-developing system, which had taken, and was to take, several other forms. The many miles of new fences and walls, the new paper rights, were the formal declaration of where the power now lay. The economic system of landlord, tenant and labourer, which had been extending its hold since the sixteenth century, was now in explicit and assertive control. Community, to survive, had then to change its terms.

We could say that this "formal declaration" is the beginning of class *decomposition*. Viewed this way, "class struggle" is a struggle for new forms of interaction and "community" – a struggle to overcome the "fences and walls" imposed by capital in its constant need to catch up with and contain the productive classes it depends upon. The category "working class" designates not a fixed "position" or "identity" (such categories are weapons utilized by capital), but the extent to which one consents "to carry out activities (including industrial work) which contribute to the maintenance of the [capitalist] system" (Clever 23). In other words, from this perspective class struggle is nothing less (though it involves much more) than the *refusal of class*, the refusal to reproduce capitalist stratification, and the attempt to circulate shared lines of opposition *across* social "strata." This recognition helps us to locate more precisely what is "oppositional" about so-called "oppositional writing."⁶ In her much-cited "Notes for an Oppositional Poetics," Erica Hunt links this theory of class struggle to poetics:

In literature – a highly stratified cultural domain – oppositional projects replicate the stratification of the culture at large. There are oppositional projects that engage language as social artefact, as art material, as powerfully transforma-

tive, which view themselves as distinct from projects that have as their explicit goal the use of language as a vehicle for the consciousness and liberation of oppressed communities. In general, the various communities, speculative and libratory, do not think of each other as having very much in common, or having much to show each other. In practice each of their language use is radically different – not in the clichéd sense of one being more open-ended than the other, but in the levels of rhetorics they employ. *More interesting is the limitations they share – limitations of the society as a whole they reproduce, even as they resist.*(203; emphasis added)

What I find so perceptive in this passage is Hunt’s linking of stratification and reproduction to the *limits* of opposition: for Hunt, the limits of oppositional writing are determined by the extent to which it “replicates” the stratification that conditions it. As we have seen, language (or linguistic theory) is often a primary site in the reproduction of stratification. This is because, as Bourdieu theorizes, class distinctions and categories are the effects of discourses which, in turn, are themselves “the product of the incorporation of the very structures to which they are applied” (23). Thus, for some oppositional avant-garde writers, including those affiliated with KSW, “class struggle begins at a linguistic level before other, more material struggles can even be contemplated” (Klobucar and Barnholden 40). Putting aside the question of whether linguistic struggles are “less material” than other types of struggle (Althusser’s essay on ISAs argues that language use is a material social practice), I want to turn now to the work of Dorothy Trujillo Lusk.

4. AGAINST STRATIFICATION: *OGRESS OBLIGE*

Ogress Oblige (Krupskaya, 2001), Lusk’s fourth book, was preceded by *Oral Tragedy* (Tsunami, 1988) *Redactive* (Talonbooks, 1990), and *Sleek Vinyl Drill* (Thuja, 2000); poems from a forthcoming manuscript currently titled *DECORUM* have appeared in *West Coast Line* and *W*. Formally and stylistically, Lusk’s work is becoming denser and less “legible,” with an increased use of nonce words,⁷ and a kind of phonic abstraction, as this “typical” piece from *DECORUM* illustrates:

DECORUM (TYPICAL)
 you loost certitude, you youthless
 louse
 you
 shield ensheltied terbonium

lice
ensnatchèd
youse titanium'rattum's amon
grelf

I bulationgs terbaccerrationgs
ditchmonde etude
demi-semi-clever
class'em

tababac a turnstim
maize merlottatoonal
continua

brava
pausa sanctos
cancrementitudenal
ownage

pushyface an
average glowbooty⁸

This piece is characteristic of Lusk's recent work in its combination of an aggressive in-your-face addressivity, a kind of visceral trash-talk ("you loost certitude, you youthless / louse / you") with a lexicon that straddles the semantic borderline distinguishing "sense" from "not-sense" ("ditchmonde etude / demi-semi-clever / class'em"). It is the open form and non-justified lines of *Ogress Oblige*, however, that mark the most obvious point of departure from her previous works, which were, with the exception of the poem "Stumps" in *Redactive*, written largely in a more prosaic form. But despite these formal differences there are some important lines of continuity in Lusk's work from the 80's and the later work collected in *Ogress*. Consider the following passages from *Redactive* (1988):

These bloody days, this godawful palace. Tangling the
illegitimated suprajactive 'wrongside' of the sheets. He
often seeks a gentle point to sit through a film – HOW to
get into synthesizer position.
("Anti Tumblehome", 7)

"Given the plentitude of this familial tendency, she mistook
the course of synthetic floathomes circling her immediate

purview and accordingly she did comport.”

(“Hysteria – A Gloss on ‘This Story’”, 60)

How are we to interpret these lines? Susan Smith Nash, in a review of *Redactive*, argues that in such passages Lusk “juxtaposes recent theoretical discourse issues with an aggressively de-signified poetic language” (1). This take on Lusk’s work appears to be confirmed by Lusk herself: in a recent interview she explains, somewhat more forcefully, that her early work was often an attempt to sabotage academic reading practices by challenging the preconceived notions of narrativity and reference operating in scholarly institutions:

“*Redactive* was a deliberate writing at cross-purposes to how people expect a poem to continue, in terms of received poetry, or in terms of whatever’s current in the theory-mill. What I really enjoy doing is taking a lot of the currently loaded terms and bugging around with them, misusing them to confound that kind of easy accessibility. Ironically, most of my friends who are involved in art-criticism and high-theory are actually quite keen on it. It was meant to confound them as much as everyone else, and to be deliberately not easily teachable.”

By aping and misusing the authoritative discourse of “theory,” Lusk’s political project of fucking with (“buggering around”) the appropriation of her labour (her writing) into what pedagogues refer to as “teachable texts,” confronts the process by which academic institutions extract surplus value from language, an accumulation which maintains class stratification, maintains the “social fact” of class. In order to defend their elite status, the users of academic discourse maintain close watch on their jargon, often preferring the exchange value of words over their use value. As any international student who flunked his “language proficiency” exam will tell us, certain uses of words – especially uses which inflect the language with non-white ethnicity or subordinate class positions – are “wrong.” Public disclosure of social stratification at the level of the utterance is prohibited. Indeed, as Janet Giltrow argues in *Academic Writing*, the standardized language of academic institutions “represents and serves scholarly situations, and the larger cultural role of these situations” (175). While the formally educated often defend standardized language practices on the grounds that they are more efficient, when viewed from a position *outside*⁹ the institution, such standards appear as sites where a privileged class reproduces its values and defends the inflated importance of its “larger cultural role.”¹⁰ Thus, in (mis)using, or

counterfeiting these words through a public disclosure of “error,” the speaker in Lusk’s poem disqualifies herself from accessing the so-called privileges of the ruling class, and threatens its reproduction. In *Redactive*, Lusk writes:

“Even at my fiercest, the basis is a misapprehension of the source’s source – so where am I taken? I should be able to read the menace of my intention. But I am ideological historical & alive despite an horizontal verbal agency and all screams that ensue.” (“First”, 21)

...an outlook which is reiterated in two poems in *Ogress Oblige*: “Let My Voice Thud Throughout the Land” (“I tend not to cite my source material / so just do your homework and get back at me” (23)), and perhaps most emphatically, in “Lumpen Prole By Choice”:

“As I lack breeding and gravitas and degrees within the
operation
of the menial forefront the resounding grief and
 unlikeliness
while
gravitational rhetorics instill seminal prescience
 in waves find me
creeping
 at the edge of the trough. (14)

...and later:

This will do me nicely, she smirked
to chary Class Mates.” (15)

Ironically, “Lumpen Prole by Choice,” works both in and against the authoritative practice of definition: as Lusk explains, despite her reservations that working with etymology is “a reactionary position” (4), she admits that “it’s a blast...fucking around with these completely asinine, baroque, Latinate figurations.” Thus, the mockery of and movement from the elevated Latinate “gravitas,” the root of which leads us, via “grief” (or “burden”), to “gravitational rhetorics,” is worth noting, as the latter construction resonates with “gravitational fields” – the region of space around an object that has mass, within which another object experiences the same force *as attraction*. “Gravitational rhetorics,” then, refers to the way in which the speaker’s “lack of breeding” and “degrees” have located her “at the edge” of a discursive field deployed by the privileged classes to maintain their positions in a stratified society. But the poem-object is not duped by this rhetorical assimilation; the poem is not, as some critics might

have it, a request for a “share of the discursive territory” (Butling 229) owned by the rich. If we missed the irony of the title of the book, the title of this poem makes Lusk’s intentions clear: “Lumpen Prole *by Choice*” – the speaker, addressing her “Class Mates,” “smirks” at the possibility that she might be assimilable: “This will do nicely.”

I do not wish to give the impression here that Lusk’s writing is advancing any kind of pure class identity, lumpenprole or otherwise. Quite the opposite. As I have said, the process of class recomposition is part of a project to destabilize the category of “class” itself, and Lusk’s work cannot be reduced to a simple yoking together of either a subject position or a collectivity. This is carefully worked out in “We’re All Friends Here’ – A Fiction of Unspeakable Horror,” a poem which records, in a somewhat uncharacteristically transparent manner,¹¹ the way in which members of the same social class *arrange themselves* in such a way as to reproduce their lot. Here, class is viewed dialectically. On the one hand, “proletariat” and “lumpenproletariat” are seen as designations referring to one’s position within capitalist society; however, because these “classes” are *inside* capital, they are also active protagonists in the system that fabricated them to begin with. Classes are therefore in the driver’s seat of their own reproduction: they have agency. As Lusk puts it, with her characteristically blunt addressivity: “It is *you* who have initiated the process / & your travails retain an oblique lineage of / documentation” (62; emphasis added).

So, what are the “travails” which provide the vehicle for the reproduction of the working class? Lusk opens “We’re All Friends Here” with an analysis of the function of “the mother” in the reproduction of capital, using a diction drawn from automotives:

“Tooling,
around in a Chevy II, cheaper parts. Half a sack and half
a tank.

This’s the accurate medical term for doughnuts.

The chassis of the mother embodying
the central contradictions
between means and relations of
production &/or sag of surplus value.”

(29)

“Tooling, / around” suggests that the poem is an act of playful disassemblage, a kind of parsing: breaking down a structure to reveal the relations between its “parts.” The first line of the second stanza takes us, via “chassis,” from the Chevy II (circa. 1962-79), a car which for me is exemplary of industrial

production and the 1970's labour crisis in auto-manufacturing,¹² to the central role of the mother in capitalist reproduction. Lusk's clever conflation of "chassis" with "mother," a merger which is the result of the ambiguous status of the participle phrase ("embodying" could modify either of its nominal antecedents), suggests that the engines of production and surplus value can only function if the mother provides the hidden frame – or, more accurately, the sagging maternal "body" – upon which the whole structure rests. This invisible "chassis" of production is in fact the *reproductive labour*, largely performed by women, which is needed to maintain a functional working class: shopping, cooking, cleaning and caring for the family so they can get back to work. Not only is this work of reproduction required to keep the cost of productive (waged) labour power as low as possible, it is unpaid and therefore represents to capital pure profit. In this way, the mother is the crux of "the production &/or sag of surplus-value."¹³

However, "We're All Friends Here" records the perspective of a mother/subject who seems either unwilling or unable (the word "sag" here captures precisely the decline of the reproductive capacity of the mother) to carry out her social and economic function. And this failure is not reduced to that of a rebellious, lyrical individual. The reproduction of the collective "We" is also shown to be in jeopardy, as is the maintenance of "business as usual" in the social-housing project in which Lusk and her daughter reside:

"At the Building Maintenance Committee meeting, I propose the construction of huge ferroconcrete animals to bear aloft trusses of well-lit street signage, thereby affiliating public safety with a reinforcement of public perception that our neighbourhood is an Urbane Theme Park." (30)

Antagonistic mockery of the sanctity of the custodial, a recurring feature of Lusk's work that Sianne Ngai has examined under the sign of "disgust", appears over and over again in this poem:

"But here and now are towels and bedding and bits of underwear that should best be hung on lines and are not. Maybe some, like me, have snuck a peewee folding rack onto their deck to air-out sordid former washrags but probably contravenes Community Standards." (31)

The “drudgery” and “slip-shod mop-up” (30) of reproductive labour is no longer hidden behind the closed doors of the home (or the *noblesse oblige* of social housing): “the arcane of reproduction,” to borrow a phrase from Leopoldina Fortunati, is disclosed, and capital’s “towels and bedding and bits of underwear” – its dirty laundry – is aired for all to see. That said, any hope that this act of public disclosure might initiate some form of organized downtime or solidarity among women (“Maybe some, like me, have snuck”), which could coalesce into a collective “We,” is quickly dispelled: it is simply “a fiction,” as the title warns. Rather than contravening “Community Standards,” the other mums fall in line and *uphold* them, rendering mum mum:

“Lulu’s barely predictable, entirely self-directed nap patterning has been denounced as a ‘schedule’ by another mum. Certainly I present within the public sphere completely whacked out & obsessive. I’m hoping I don’t sound quite so bloody smug and self-congratulatory, but
I’ll bet I do, I do
& I’ll wager I’ll witlessly antagonize umpteen other parents with everything I say, do or display on the person of my child. What a goof. I wish I was rich.” (31)

The tone here, while still antagonistic, appears to also demonstrate the effects of what Lusk elsewhere calls the “atomization of the social under Later-Than-We-*Think* Capital” (31), an atomization that is indicated by the sudden concentration of first person subjects, a striking departure from the syntax of the other poems. This confession of resignation (“What a / goof. I wish I was rich”) is the result, perhaps, of an ambivalence inherent in the project of class recomposition. On one hand, as Kevin Davies writes on the back of *Ogress*, Lusk’s writing consolidates a class position by performing the important act of recording “the various stigmata of single-parenthood, poverty, and institutional negotiation.” This Lusk accomplishes by collecting the ephemera of everyday domestic life: “Chevy II” (29), “doughnuts” (29), “towels and bedding and bits of underwear” (31), “nap[s]” (31), etc., and by showing how these social facts, once “torn from their backdrops and placed in uneasy irony next to other contradictory discourses” (Derksen 9), condition the act of writing itself:

“Much of the idiocy I embody could be ascribed to introspective drudgery, a slip-shod mop-up. Each and every sentence might just as well have stuck it out back on the homestead. Seems hardly worth the bother to write in

the dark & strain a back out of locution, so to speak. But
'tis a poor carpenter wot blames her tools." (30)

On the other hand, the poem also makes it clear that this situation is unacceptable. The language recoils at the violence of its circumstance: "allow me the honor of *yet another recital* within a mutilated coincidence of relations and intimacy – I don't prosper from what I find therein (30; emphasis in original). Indeed, because of the mothers who in their "smug" denunciations of our narrator's parenting style seem more interested in reproducing "the most deeply internalized norms that pass as trivial nuances of a taste-based public economy" (33) than in fighting against them, Lusk must maintain a vigilant – even *vigilante* – cynicism about the potential for collective agency by any subjects produced by such conditions: "I am reduced to a generic being sniping at a hostile city-state" (27), and "— am I separate or sought in an adjectival squirm of over-identificatory liaison? (53).

So, while Lusk's writing works to facilitate class identification through the collection of social facts and an opaque, class-inflected addressivity, at the same time it aligns itself with a struggle to overcome the "fact" of class stratification: it is *in and against class society*. As Clint Burnham argues, the "class-inflection" of Lusk's work marks "a political content refracted through a quickly-changing syntactical and phrasal assemblage where the solidifying of phonemes into word and words into clause/sentence is an analogy for the possibilities of counter-hegemonic politics" (1). What such a politics will look like, however, is left to Lusk's readers. There is no simple solution. Because there is no "front", "our" struggle is arranged both vertically and horizontally, along *all* fronts: "There is a catastrophe in the dishpan" (62).

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Endnotes

¹ See *Fundamentals of Language* (1975).

² See *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), p. 40.

³ I prefer the term “class-inflected” over the default notion of “class conscious” because the former focuses on language, and the latter is inappropriate for dealing with the dispersed subjectivity that characterizes Lusk’s writing. In using the term “class-inflected”, I am borrowing from an unpublished manuscript by Clint Burnham titled “Sitting in a bar on Commercial drive recently Dorothy Trujillo Lusk asked me why we had been asked to read at a launch of Dorothy Livesay’s marginal poetry or, My ex-boss’s anthology.”

⁴ “Class recomposition” is a term used by autonomist and “open” Marxists to describe how “autonomous working-class struggle overcomes capital’s divisions and forces it to reorganize” (Cleverly 66). By examining the ways in which different – or “autonomous” – social groups overcome their “decomposition” by normalized categories and divisions (class, gender, race) through a shared opposition to capitalist accumulation, the concept locates class struggle as the driving force of capitalist development, thereby reversing the perspective of both bourgeois sociology and objectivist “closed Marxism,” both of which seem more concerned with describing the ways in which capital “bears down” upon its subjects rather than the way such subjects work to recompose themselves.

⁵ As is the case with many “schools” of writers or artists, the quest for a common history or poetics among the KSW proves impossible when it comes time to grapple with the actual writing; indeed, such narratives tend to homogenize the antagonisms between the various writing practices collected under the sign of “KSW,” despite the different experiences of and approaches to class *within* the organization. For example, a comparison of Lusk’s work to that of Lisa Robertson would reveal irreconcilable differences in the ways in which problems of power and language are configured and approached.

⁶ In recent discussions of the Canadian avant-garde, the notion of “oppositional writing” is often paired with “radical,” which refers to writing with an “innovative” or “experimental” form and which works towards entrance into “*the* social imaginary” and for a “*share* of discursive territory” (Butling 229; emphasis added). Because such criticism leaves a capitalist model of society intact at all points, it reduces the sphere of “opposition” to reformist legislation.

⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the status of the nonce word, see Louis Cabri’s dissertation (U Penn.). In a chapter on P. Inman, “*ocker* for the nonce. A quibble (nonce-word pragmatics in poetry),” Cabri explains that, unlike the neologism, which serves an “instrumental function” via its ability to enter into the dictionary, the nonce word “undermines [the] institutionalizing process that socializes the word as such” (269). I extend aspects of this argument to Lusk’s work.

⁸ This poem appears in a limited edition pamphlet published by Monoecious House; see “Four Poems by Michael Barnholden, Ted Byrne, Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, Aaron Vidaver”

(2000); a PDF version is available at <<http://www.monoecious.org/>>.

⁹ I anticipate objections here about my use of “inside” and “outside” the academy. Perhaps the formulations “those on one year sabbaticals” and “those on permanent sabbaticals” would make the point more effectively.

¹⁰ For an “insider’s” first-person disavowal of such practices, and the punitive measures such disavowals can incur, see Reg Johanson, “A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of Plagiarism, Grade Inflation and Standard English.”

¹¹ I would say that of all Lusk’s writing this poem is the most autobiographical and accessible.

¹² See Zerzan.

¹³ I am relying here on an analysis of reproductive labour by Mariarosa Dalla Costa. See *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community* (1973).

KAMAU BRATHWAITE

THE SECOND-FIFTH - SIXTH DRAFT
OF FIRST FAREWELL BS •
WASHINGTON SQ PARK WEST - @PARK BARBADOS
11 MARCH 04 - WAKING BACK JUST AFTER 8.30PM

NOW MIDDAY 12 MARCH 04 PERHAPS RETTLING
[ANCESTORS]

THIS SATURDAY MORNING 3-8.40 AM 13 MARCH 04 -
MIDNIGHT AND THEN ALL NIGHT BLOCKIN BLOCKIN
TILL NINE O'CLOCK THIS SUNDAY MORNING 14 MARCH 04
- THE BS IS NOW -

WELCOME
21 MARCH 06 MORNING 7PMAL

FOR DREAM CHAD
WAKING & WALKING W/ME THIS SUNDAY MORNING
14 MARCH 04 IN NEW YORK & BEING STILL QUIETLY
HERE AS WE APPROACH MIDNIGHT 15 MARCH 04 06
ISES

i lie in the afternoon balustrade bed
of my heart dying w/in me on this <
first day of rest&bright sunshine on
the grass of the open spaces&the <<<
birch trees more silver than ever aft-
er so long after so much dark. such
a winter. with the heart trembling in

its uncertain blood&flaw of spirit . <
and i wake to find John Coltrane's
long 'DearLord' lying nxt to me in
my bed of sound @ 8:30pm on Th 11
Mar 04 tho i think is still 5:30 or at
least 7 when i went to bed to hope-<<
fully partly at least heal because i <

was too tired to stay up on working
tho it was this lovely afternoon w/its
first assurance of Spring pealing its
silence&lonely beauty thru th grass
window here in Washington Sq <<<
Park West in New York City New <
York

and i dream i'm in this dark crow or
crowd. like a kind of living moving
animal or bird in a thick leafy wood
or cloud of so many hundreds opp-
ressing&shuffling together i supp-
ose like in Queens Park Barabados
when they are plenty people like at
the Xhibition or on Xmas Mooring
Mornings or at the Madrid Tamar-
indian TrainStation in the Spanish
dis. aster of earlier today w/my<<<<
heart lookin back&tryin to force it<
way tryin thru all these various pe-
(o)ple to find its way forward and >
tryin to keep close to Rex

Nettleford so fleet of foot and i now
lounger no doubt no longer dancer
to keep up w/him any longer. and
suddenly no longer able to flit ar-
ound crowds on the edges of pave-
ments. leaning far over like a First<
Nation American high-building-co
(n)struction- worker&artist(s)
all that adrenaline of vertigo i use <

to . not able to FLY TO JAPPON <
anymore an now Rex gone. lost in
the coloureds. i wdn't be abel to get
that lift in his cyar that wd have lilt
me w/my new halt&steffer & the sin-
gle terror of that sudden lightning
of pain. of losing the virility to be

>really friendly anymore - those <<
signs&wonders of energy . gesture&
voice so attractive to estrogen people
&strangers especially women w/a tu-
ning fork for these things. anymore.
so that they no longer catch the fly
of yr eye or look behine back at yu <
in yr pants. or kno at once is yr kite
flying in a distance. so they dont gi-
ve yu a call or a xtra helpin of dish.
no pause to hear what yu say when
u speak. no paws searchin yr licenti-
ousness lice. no longer kno. ing or <
care who/whe yu are even unto the <
harp of the cellular

until the heart so hurt it feel faint. i
find myself falling into this dark pl
ace. this strange sweet feeling of fail

ure. that you can't go anymore. the
genoux of the twins of creation coll-
apsing yu sing. in onto the ground
even w/out the prayer of gravel on <
yr knees until i wake up in that op-
en space at the bottom of the hill of
the stairs like at QueenAnnesHouse

in QueensPark Barabados and they
are like plenty people i care for car-
in for me around me almost the cloc
tho i cd more feel them than see any
of then and i was of course lookin <<
for Chad. knowing (or was it hoping?) th

at when she hear they had fine me -<
since she muss have heard or known
or feel that i been lookin for her all
over the firewall but cdn't fine her <
as usual - but now here she was i gu-
ess but she was not among these for-
ums near me&around me w/they <<

dark lower(ed) voices of concern . <<
and each time i hear like a wailin or
a crying out shabeen i hold myself <
in - still here w/a hole in the grounn
because i kno it wd be her rushin <<
hopefully towards whe i was. all up-

sett all distraught&unmusicall and
i have a sense&sensé of her hair now
ball to the bone. the imperishable be
nign imperial coconut of her ancien
(t) skull. w/its kind of halo of the <
freshly cut. the fine shorn nappy fi-
laments of like dark light. a kind <

of harvest of the coil down to the bur
nish bone w/that kind of electrical <
about it. sens. sation of nervous&sor
row&the visage face almost a visor.<
now almost a eunuch of anguish esp
since she hadnt been w/me when i <<
fall to the grounn in soft mutter of <

surprise in the gutter . and her gui-
tar guide is playing inside her head

playin the guilty self of her string
(s). that she feel it. the melody of <<
her fault she feel it she feel it her fau

lt and i tellin her not/not to worry <
tho she hadnt come yet and each <<
time i hear like this first stutter th-
en wailing. i look up i look up out

of this kind of hope in my heart. li-
ke i am a small green of shoot grass
still growing. the area all around <<
hope&atone filling my whole chest
w/cavity cavity. and so i (still) have

to protect it protect it some. how. be
cause there was this soft pain of per

vaase. like an ○-

pen Everald Browndove in a cage of
vulneribble rib of my abone some. <

how. like a pale soft feathers some. <
how alone at this time. the wailin <<
gettin louder&louder indeed and <<

she was comin down thunder the <<
soft hill of the stairs at a very great
&inceasing speed as if she was the <

voice of like a great un. rolling bobble
of silk-ribbon callin out to me not
to leave her before she cd get down <

not quick. ly enough not quick. ly <
enough after all that along time of <
dreadful separation coming down <
thru the thick crowds. these dark <<
hue. man salvages moving so close <

now rustling w/that warm odoforous
shuffle together. the heat &x-
citement xpectation of trysts bro-

ken trusts&parfume promises until
at last she is down w/her arms out-<
stretching and w/this great sigh all <

around like sucking me in and i <<<
was like crying out too but it wasnt
DreamChad but my MOTHER for

the first time since she had pass. an-
(d) in the soft-light light-lilac flow-
er(ed) dress w/the bare brown arms

&the tiny little gold-rimm spectac-<
les on her sharp like little aggressiv
(e)&in. Quisitive nose we have there
now in the holograph file of the com
puter which Chad was croppin she <<
call it only a few days before. and <<
she come straight on like a wind in-
to a sugarcane field into the very <<<
CowPasture pond of my soul i will

have to call it - all this howling&<<
wailing now like a September solstic-
e into&thru my broeken&open flac
(k)ering shadow of a window - tho <
it was wasnt really that at all. juss <
me tryin to fine-tune adeQuate wor-

ds. sucking me into the cave of her
arms and her back still slightly rou
(n)ded&hump(ed) round the curve
of her shoulders of certainty and sh-
(e) nvr pause for a moment but here

i am i am off the ground off the chai
(r) it seem i now sittin on&in. to the
clear air i suppose it was but it was-
nt blue anymore but a kind of pale

dusty gold like a distant harmattan
of late afternoon like at the very gau
dy curve of a plane or a planet and i
cd feel her how warmth she is&solid
&soft &sweet &sweet-smellin &safe
&familiar w/all her memories w/in <
her playing like her tape from the <
v/beginnin so that there was no diff-
iculties w/references&conversation<
she was my MOTHER - and she <<
had me close close close in her arms
w/out pausing from down these lon-
(g) lighted stairs of passage and we
were up in the air like together ange
els i suppose we two together so so <

close so together and she was fly-in
off w/her son and i was complainin
to her *No No Mother dont do this dont <*
do this now because up until this v/las
(t) minit of transformation i thot it
was Chad who had come who was <<
comin down those steps and i was <<
tellin my Mother even as we watch <
the bluegreen ground be. low us and
the white buildings walls and the <<
Park gettin smaller and a turrable <

feelin of *leaving* which i didnt want <
didnt want to have even tho here wa-
(s) my Mother at last. takin me a-<<
way in her arms almost like in Mi-<
chelangelo somehow *pietà* after all <
he had suffer(ed) but i wanted to bew/

Chad . and i was tellin her so. as if it
wasnt my Mother who know what <
was best for me. or perhaps it was be
cause it was my Mother. who i cd <<
talk freely to. who understood&wan-
ted for me what was best for me . but

i was tellin her *No No No* put me down
Mama let me go back and how i want
see Chad until she did so because i <

kno i didnt want to go where there <
was that feelin of there. thats the on
ly way i can put it and i was back <
down by that space of the field at th-
(e) bottom of the stairs of like

QuennennsHouse in QPark and she
was gone like fading away into a <<
feeling too fading away like regret&
relief even before i cd say anything
else not even in a Quiet Thanks an

i can't even remember if Chad finall
(y) come whe this life is but i think
so tho as i say i can't remember her
being there at this time and they wa
(s) sayin things about her even whi-

le i was still lookin. like how she ha-
(d) catch some man in my absences
some *Dr Edmondson*. i remember the <
presume name clearly. and how she
was now goin have a problem wid <<

dat they was sniggerin. becau e had
ax her to give him a lift from the <<
nightroom&rumour of some concert
or lecturer in her yellow was it volks
wagen - a small cyar anyway but <<
larger moro regular than a vww <<<
back to her house like a shell hell <
(d) up to my ear so i cd hear all this
ocean we live in it wd seem - and of
course i cdnt believe them that but i
kno i wanted to ask her about it. so

i set out again lookin for her among
the all the peoples an wanderin why
she was nvr there when a needin her
when a wantin to talk to her most <<
quiet. ly and so i started to see if i <
cd get my powvrs of Mysore&Amon
-tuk back again so i cd fly again - <
thru like the blue air again. lookin
for her that way from above the tree-

tops like some kind of reconnoiterin
gaulin or glider aircraft - and the <
first few times i trie. i fall i fall back
down & make a gilded ganglia of <<

myself golden in mud&narrowmind
ed . and the bristlin loiterers of time
around the wide steps by the Park<<
House&some of the people around <
me&w/me was quarellin wounding <
w/me for not keepin myself quiet& <

eatin some food at lease some good <
cow-heal soup an try get some ress/<
get-back the rest of yr strength. so <
sometimes stammering at me w/the
frowns of hammering worry but i <<

keep on tryin&tryin to take off to <<
take off. until i find i cd get some-<
whe up off the grounn. tho people <
was still talkin&laffin after me that
i was still tryin to show-off&pompa

sett tho i cdnt even do that anymo&<
what a shame&a pity i cdnt read tha
(t) info into myself but thatwas the
chubble w/Xângó&that sort-a-pears-
on&they cdnt understann why i did
nt keep quiet - just like my aunts <<
nuse to tell us down in Mile&Quar-
ter when we was growin up

and finally after much tryin stann-
in up in front of the lovely white bal
ustrade of the QueenAnne façade li-
ne-up w/young Bajam schoolgirls <
in greenlynch&naval blue uniform

(s) lookin down at the QueensPark
Exhibition crowds. i decided to leap
up to them up there and at first@at
second i cd barely get off the groun
but eventually THERE i was. again

in beautiful flight upward. in fact i
was above them on that second floor
of the ParkHouse. well above the bal
ustrade i remember now below me. <
and they was lookin up surprise&<<

happy and i come slowly down un-
til i was standin not on the dark <<
greenheart floor w/them as i think i
had intended. but on the narrow bal
ustrade rail of the airport or ship<>

like the tight clutch-foot 4-finger <<
bird that i was. and i begin walkin <
along this real/way towards the whi

te jealousy door i kno there was at <
the end of it. and i had a chair in <<
in my head now. helpin i suppose <

to tidy the place up which these <<<
young-ladies in their school unifor-
(m) cellars&white socks was suppos
(e) to be doin and i remember one of
them handin me up her own upside-
down chair also - one of those palai-
(n) square curare wooden figuration
(s) w/the streaight back and the 3 <<
stiff strait legs of the broken symbol
trident of their nation & i take it&<
was movin towards the door of the <
plantain palace which was no long-
er a door but a kind of dump-heap <
dump-heat flour-bag iconoclast fur-

nace they was dunclin they charade
(s)&shady characters in&soon after
i was off like again a kind off Super
man of the air but w/out the red&bl-
ue costume of custom of the emperor
. just this slave-naked brown veridi-
an body w/out wings or clothes/look
in for DreamChad when i come to <

this small trash-colour clearin like
behine BobBob two-storie silver-hou
se at Pie Corner or Woodside in fro
nt of a small hut that cd have abenc
at AuntEvvy or AbenaBabbena ann-
axe door to Bobby O'Neale . and <<
outside this hut of our father was <<
sittin a high-collar high-breasted <<

farmer girlfrenn i approachin or <<
passin - i can't remember which now -when
a see she fall-off the small 3-legged
horse of the stool of her chair so i <<
rush-up to whe she is on the grounn
flow of what muss be astonishment <
w/some green flash-grass&bachelor-
button&a shame-ole-lady of the an-

cestors which she had crush w/th fa
ll . to help her up tho she get hersell
(f)-back-up quite quick-time&dust-
off she skirt-side. lookin-down -at-it
one-side&side-saddle to be certain &
was back on she stool quick-quick o'
clock. which seem somehow now nat
the high-horse anymore but like a >
likkle red painted terrier of hoarse >

protection some. how and by the <<
time i reach. askin if yu okay etc >>

she hardly apply me any attention
<<like if she wasnt spikkin any to mwe >>>

«u kno how it is!»

as if i had-do she somethin *juju* or <
maljo or even *immortal* perhaps soul-<
push or *punn-nyam-she* or otherwise <
call she to fall-off the chair&even <
perhaps hurt the likkle red terry wh
(o) wasnt even barkin heaven knows
where. and as i was movin away feel
in pretty - as yu can imajine - a 'way' -
pretty fela&bad w/the brukkins. 2 of
she seven sis. tas of steven come out
from our ole fatha(s) house or hut <
or cab. in w/it white white-lime bord
er(s) or boundaries along the sides
&markin the doorway behine whe >
she was sittin at this little tablet or >
table and i can't even tell yu if she >
was eatin or reading oranges or any
thing like that tho i don't think so.
an the two a these 2 womens starat
ONE attwackin at mwe in strong *Jamai*
ca langridge - cause they was *Jamaican*
(s) - askin me how i cd go tawkin to
Mississippi like dat as they was call
in her now in the yard of the village
- *Missy fe short* - &why de rass yu doan
leff-she-lone she nevva do-yu-nuttn
an yu see how she doan waan/she >>

doan waan taak/to/av nothin to/do/>
to-do wit-chu whatsoever now or in de
parrish of de livvin&ddead dem >>
don't? . an look how yu have she lookin >
at she Nanna - which i nvva see she >
doin yet as i look back-way across >
to whe she was still sittin at that >>>
Ayiti table of NO conversation as if
she there in '4th Traveller' . and i >
have NO IDEA who this Nanna. to >
beside mi nevva see na grandie nor

gaddie nor MarySeacool midwife >
tho of course yu nvva kno. yu nvva
kno. an praps - wriggle me dis & wriggle >
me dat - she or dem was back-they in
the cab. in of hurt . and i even start
wanderin if this Nanna was some ki-
ne of a jealousy boyfrenn or praps not
when Chad suddenly arrive in this
now lovely open space of the pasture
w/no one ells in sight in the peace of
the place and the grass i remember <

was juss turnin criss & burnin w/<<
harmattan x. cep for the vivid green
chips of the cus-cus along the bare <

feet of her foot. steps trailing her <<
here and she had this CHAIR in her
hand and she was smilin evva so subt
ile and happy as if she was really a

sperrit of peace in the place and not
the flesh and blood long-lost wife of
ago i was lookin . and all she do is
put the chair she was carrying w/so

much love &loveliness &grace down
on the grounn . simple like that . on
the green. and when i wake and was
tellin her about it. Coltrane was <<<
(still) playing the 'DearLord' of his
Festival and they was tears in my <
eyes as in my heart for such a quiet
an unXpected afternoon of clamour

&
blessing

<KB 'Welcome' from AMEMPOEMS NYC 21 March 06

THE DREAM OF A PUBLIC LANGUAGE:

MODERNITY, MANIFESTO, AND THE CITIZEN SUBJECT¹

Michael Davidson

The role of authorship in the wake of the so-called “linguistic turn” could be seen as a subset of a larger concern within modernity involving the Subject as a function of discourse. Whether framed in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, analytic philosophy, deconstruction, or Althusserian ideology critique, the linguistic turn is usually treated as a question of whether the Subject speaks or is spoken. Is the Subject the author of its own speech or a ventriloquist of institutional speech acts and ideological state apparatuses? The latter formulation, which has dominated theoretical discussion over the past ten years, leads to a conundrum: *if the Subject is constituted by and within language, how can there be a historical turn towards the latter that is not underwritten by the former?* If we are interpellated as subjects in language, can there be a moment in which this fact changes, in which we move from a humanist self to a textual Subject? These questions seem variants of Kant’s paradox that in order to know the world the subject must not be in the world it knows or the Wittgensteinian paradox that to see the world, the eye, cannot be in its own field of vision. Can we use language in such a way that our constructed status as speaking subjects does not preclude the forms and meanings writing will take? ²

Someone might dismiss such questions by observing that the problem we are addressing is that of authorship, not the Subject. The latter has been a perennial problem in philosophy, at least since Descartes, but the problem of Authorship--its invention as well as its death--seems to have a date. Michel Foucault, to take the obvious example, considers the invention of the “author function” as coinciding with the work, regarded as a commodity placed into a circuit of exchange and interpretation.³ The author is less a person than a function of institutions that determine the scope and meaning of discourses. Certain authors--Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, are “transdiscursive” in that they generate an entire circuit of discourses beyond their actual works. The death of the author occurs when the integrity of those discourses breaks down, when the “work” gives way to an intransitive writing whose reference to a historical person (via deixis, narrative, persona, verb tense) can no longer be discerned.

While I would acknowledge the significant difference between authorial and humanist Subject, I see both coinciding in the rise of modern citizenship at a moment when individuals authorize themselves through property and discursive relations rather than through the state. The Lockean definition

of the individual as that which “has a Property in his own Person” can be extended to Habermas’s idea that discursive participation in a public sphere is guaranteed to males who own property. The relationship between an individual’s ability to authorize himself in language and his ownership of the fruits of his labor—including his writings—is a cornerstone of both democratic polity and copyright law. Hence instead of assuming that the Subject/Author is constituted in the structure of language—the ghost in the machine—we might think of the linguistic turn as a series of stages in the production of a citizen Subject who authors identity through writing and publishes his opinions in public forums. This might allow us to shift the focus from a subjectivist and psychoanalytical model of the Subject, capital ‘S’, to situated subjects in discursive contexts that change focus at different stages of modernity. In this model, language would be seen not as a system of neutral signifiers but a component of social intercourse.

By invoking Habermas’s theory of rational critical debate (or what he later termed “communicative action”) I am imagining another “turn towards language” with implications for the creation of historical subjects who are also authors. Habermas defines the public sphere as a realm of private individuals who

come together...[and claim] the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.⁴

In Habermas’s view, access to this sphere was (and for him it is definitely a phenomenon that has passed) theoretically open to all citizens whose ability to participate in debate is based not on status but on the ability to reason. The primary function of a public sphere outside of the state was to enable merchants and small business owners to discuss matters of trade, but it also facilitated the exchange of cultural capital, through discussions of theater, novels, politics, and art. Thus a linkage was formed between the expansion of capitalism and the formation of aesthetics that became the basis of Marx’s and Hegel’s critique of bourgeois ideology.

As many critics have pointed out, Habermas’s formulation of the public sphere is far too narrow to accommodate constituencies who have historically been denied access to those venues where rational debate is authorized. Nancy Fraser, Michael Warner, Mary Ryan, Geoff Eley and others propose competing or “counter publics” whose claims to participation are no less important for a public and which complicate a too-easy separation

of spheres. While recognizing the limits of Habermas's formulation, these critics acknowledge his important vision of social forms based on talk and publication that could, in Nancy Fraser's terms, be "a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state."⁵ What remains salient for our concern with authorship is Habermas's belief that publics are formed in talk, debate, and conversation in specific sites (bars, coffee houses, art spaces, journals, community centers) and that the public sphere publishes its opinions, thereby extending the marketplace of ideas to larger constituencies.

We could identify several moments in which new forms of social agency emerge mark a "turn toward language." I will look at three such turns that have produced new citizen subjects in modernity. My first example is drawn from the period that Habermas sees as the high point of the bourgeois public, the mid-eighteenth-century and from a poem included in *The Annual Register* for the year 1776. *The Annual Register* epitomizes Habermas's view of a public sphere produced through the medium of print, a site where political debate and literary debate are conjoined. The 1776 edition of the book is particularly important since it contains, among other things, the first British publication of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and thus offers a moment when a new Republican citizen subject was declaring itself in print. I then turn to a figure who was not included in the Declaration's purview, the African, Olaudah Equiano, who was experiencing the grim limits of this new Republicanism even as he used the medium of his slave narrative to negotiate his participation in the public sphere of the eighteenth-century.

My second example concerns the emergence of a new feminist subject at the beginning of the twentieth-century within the historical context of the "new woman." Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" of 1914 is a riposte to the masculinist postures of the Futurists and Dadaists, and utilizes the same performative rhetoric that we identify with her colleague and lover, F.T. Marinetti. Loy's manifesto implicitly challenges Marinetti's appeal to a post-human, mechanized subject by focusing on the female body and its function in commodity society, a theme that she develops in many of her poems. Hence her "turn toward language" occurs within the avant garde's jettisoning of realist aesthetics but also within universalist claims for gendered subjects.

My third example is that of the Mexican poet and novelist, Heriberto Yépez, whose 1998 *Festival de la Frontera* installation defines the possibilities and limits of citizenship in globalization. His installation of a series of signs at the U.S. / Mexico border directs attention to the production of citizenship in the post-NAFTA era by asking viewers to define themselves in

relationship to the border by appropriating the sign in an act of vernacular criticism. If the public sphere of the eighteenth-century was produced in the atmosphere of Republican citizenship, the counter-public sphere of women in the early twentieth century was formed in the atmosphere of gender difference and marked bodies. And although the outlines of a new globalized citizen subject are still being formed, the work of border artists in the Shadow of NAFTA question whether language can imagine a truly cosmopolitan existence.

Written By Himself

In 1758 Edmund Burke began publishing *The Annual Register*, a yearly compilation of historical events, public documents, antiquarian surveys, book reviews, and poetry. Unlike *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, which caricatured manners and social mores, *The Annual Register* provided a digest of cultural information for the new middle class reading public. In his preface to the first volume Burke notes that the book will “relieve the minds of men of business” and “preserve the strenuous idleness of many from a worse employment.”⁶ To aid in this endeavor, each volume included political polemics, antiquarian lore, book reviews, and historical documents. Each issue featured a chronicle of events for the year that embodied those areas of common concern that Habermas envisioned as constituting the public sphere. For the chronicle for January 10th and 11th, of 1776, for example, the journal describes a woman in Paris who started a fire that consumed her and burned a portion of her neighborhood around the Palais and courts of justice; a review of troops by the King on Clapham Common, about to leave for battle in the new colonies; inclement weather on the Thames; the birth of a child to the Duchess of Gloucester; an Italian bookseller who was banished from London for omitting the title of “Royal” in his dedication of dramatic pieces to the Duke of Saxe-Gotha; the sentencing to death of five prisoners at the Old Bailey; an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Naples; a hand bill delivered to both houses of Parliament appealing every member to put a “speedy stop to the further effusion of the blood of our American brethren.”⁷ This conflagration of local and official, national and international, subjects in print gives a vivid sense of what public discourse resembled on the eve of America’s decision to separate from Britain.

That decision is announced fully in a section devoted to “State Papers”—legal documents, proclamations, and decrees. “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled” is the concluding item in this section, and it marks the first appearance of the manifesto in England as well as its first appearance outside of the thirteen colonies. The Declaration’s stirring language, its call to “dissolve the

political bands” which connected the colonies with Britain, its claim that “all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights” became the terms of republican citizenship, imitated in subsequent documents and proclamations throughout the long nineteenth-century. As a manifesto, the Declaration must name a constituency, a “We,” who has suffered long enough, against a “He,” King George III, whose “repeated injuries and usurpation all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states.”⁸ The fact that such an anti-royalist document could appear in a journal for public consumption is, of course, testimony to the success of the public sphere in separating itself from juridical and state apparatus.

Janet Lyon points out that manifestos like the Declaration of Independence occupy a space between “iconoclasm and iconography.” In order to found a new republic the document must imagine a constituency as a harmed minority [iconoclasm] that “probably *already* occupies the hegemonic position the text proposes to secure” and thus furthers the iconography of independence.⁹ The question arises of whether the document’s performativity “states or produces independence,” whether the Declaration, like all manifestoes, “[aims] to *invoke* even as [it addresses] charged audiences.”¹⁰ It does so, I would add, within a matrix of other documents, seemingly unrelated to national policy, that confirm and complicate the nature of citizenship.

In the section devoted to “Poetry,” for example, one discovers a poem entitled “The Death of Alico,”¹¹ by Bryant Edwards, a merchant and member of the colonial assembly who wrote the first history of the British Colonies in the Caribbean. Edwards’ poem is a sentimentalized monologue spoken by an African Slave who has been condemned for leading a rebellion in Jamaica in 1762. He addresses his beloved wife from his place of execution, telling her to calm her fears, that “Firm and unmov’d am I:--/In Freedom’s cause I bar’d my breast--/ In Freedom’s cause I die.”¹² He imagines that soon he shall rise to heaven “Where joy shall lead the circling hours / Unless too long thy stay.” The rhetoric of heavenly escape is modulated through that of slavery:

On those blest shores--a Slave no more!
In peaceful ease I’ll stray;
Or rouse to chase the mountain boar,
As unconfin’d as day!

No Christian Tyrant there is known
to mark his steps with blood,
Nor fable Mis’ry’s piercing moan

Resounds thro'ev'ry wood!¹³

Although Alico is being punished for leading a slave rebellion, the “Tyrant” he addresses is clearly marked as the Christian colonist whose religious fervor and defense of freedom were being articulated that year by the American colonists. The romantic convention of the imprisoned lover is translated into the condemned slave:

O Death, how welcome to th'opprest!
Thy kind embrace I crave;
Thou bring'st to Mis'ry's bosom Rest,
And Freedom to the Slave!

Although the author, Bryant Edwards Esquire was a defender of Creole planters against abolitionists (he published a polemical tract on the “Conduct of the Government and Colonial Assembly of Jamaica in regard to Fugitive Slaves” in 1796) he was nevertheless able to utilize a rhetoric of pathos to speak in the subaltern's voice. Around the same time that Edwards' sentimentalized version of the heroic slave is being penned, an actual American slave, Olaudah Equiano was traversing the black Atlantic in a series of ships that brought Africans like Alico to Jamaica.¹⁴ Although there is some question as to its authenticity, Equiano's narrative, written in 1789, became the prototype for subsequent slave narratives that negotiated what Henry Louis Gates has identified as a rhetorical double-voicing. In Gates' formulation, within slave narratives the naive wonder of the unlettered African is measured against the mature author who has mastered the ability to write.¹⁵ The demonstration of literacy becomes a major feature of Equiano's narrative, announced as such in the subtitle to his book: “Written by Himself.” His need to authenticate his narrative is based presumably on the fact that as a piece of property, denied the power of reason and literacy, he must validate his role as author. Perhaps the most sophisticated rhetorical device of all, however, one found in almost every other slave narrative, is the reproduction of the author's paper of manumission, signaling that this slave has been freed by legal decree: “As the form of my manumission has something peculiar in it, and expresses the absolute power and dominion one man claims over his fellow, I shall beg leave to present it before my readers at full length.”¹⁶ By including this legal document into his narrative, Equiano instantiates his status as both property and freeman. He is produced as a citizen subject within an institution of exploitation for profit, but his ability to use the paper that frees him in creating his own story signifies his knowledge of the text's power.

The ability to present himself as both subject and object, freeman and com-

modity, author of narrative and narrative of contract, is a vivid example of that double consciousness that W.E.B. duBois saw as the special province of African Americans. To the extent that Equiano is self-reflexive about the role of language and literacy in this act can be seen in a passage where he narrates his initial response to reading:

I had often seen my master and Dick employed in reading; and I had a great curiosity to talk to the books, as I thought they did; and so to learn how all things had a beginning. For that purpose I have often taken up a book, and talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been very much concerned when I found it remaining silent.¹⁷

Gates observes that through the image of a “talking book” Equiano represents “the difference in subjectivity that separates his, now lost, African world from the New World” into which he has been thrust.”¹⁸ By signifying on reading and talking, Equiano demonstrates his ability to participate in a public sphere that his master and Dick take for granted and claims a role as subject that his abject position as property denies him. He talks back to the talking book by reading subversively, turning not toward language, per se, but toward its function in sedimenting power and controlling the bodies and minds of others.

By linking Equiano’s narrative with the 1776 edition of *The Annual Register* I want to show two examples of new public identities forged through Republican imaginations of authorship. In the case of the Declaration of Independence, a collective authorship interpellates a national citizenry that is already involved in insurrectionary activities; in the case of “The Death of Alico,” a white colonial author gains his public voice by writing through the voice of a black slave. By romanticizing the “human” affective qualities of a black Jacobin, the poet humanizes the slave and provides a human vantage by which to understand slave rebellions such as that of Nat Turner or Denmark Vesey. The linguistic turn implied in both documents must be located in the publication of *The Annual Register* itself and its recording of emergent as well as residual forms of cultural meaning.

The Destruction of Virginity

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” of 1909 is staged as a birth allegory. After a night of furious writing and drinking, the poet and his young colleagues, lured by the sound of trams outside, roar off into the night in cars. Attempting to avoid two bicyclists,

Marinetti's car tips over, and he is thrown into a ditch. There, in the industrial waste, he is reborn as a Futurist:

Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair
factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and
I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese
nurse...When I came up--torn, filthy, and stinking--from
under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy
deliciously pass through my heart!¹⁹

Marinetti's industrial birth and baptism, facilitated by memories of his black Sudanese nurse, embodies an odd merging of modern industry and colonial ethnocentrism. To become a Futurist, he must rise from the maternal ditch of "old," Catholic Italy, right his car, and drive off into a metalized future:

We will glorify war--the world's only hygiene--militarism,
patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers,
beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.²⁰

The name of this future was called "The Great War." Marinetti's famous lines about "scorn for women" angered a number of feminists who had linked their project to Futurist ideals and who eventually criticized the movement's leader, causing him to omit the lines in subsequent printings. Valentine de St. Point, for example, wrote two works, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman" (1912) and "Manifesto of Lust" (1913) which take issue with Marinetti's linkage of woman with the past, tradition, domesticity. St. Point seeks a new "virility" in both men and women and invokes Furies, Amazons, Joan of Arc, Charlotte Cordays and other heroic women as exemplars.²¹ St. Point substitutes for the domestic feminine a masculine female who replicates Marinetti's virile ideal.

Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" avoids St. Point's female version of the Futurist hero and instead projects what we would today call a politics of difference. She dismisses the reform feminism of her day ("The feminist movement as at present instituted is INADEQUATE") and its call for equality of gender ("that pathetic clap-trap war cry WOMAN IS THE EQUAL OF MAN--She is NOT!").²² Instead she attacks a paternalism that by presuming protectorship of women emasculates itself: "The man who lives a life in which his activities conform to a social code which is a protectorate of the feminine element--is no longer *MASCULINE*."²³ The current alternatives for women-- "*Parasitism, & Prostitution or Negation*"--are inadequate because

they are based on dependency; rather, “Men & women are enemies, with the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the exploited.”²⁴ Loy’s use of bold font, variable typeface, and underlining create a buoyant counter rhythm to the prose and make the manifesto’s visual impact striking as a visual work. But the physical qualities of the page also register anger and impatience that cannot be contained in discursive prose.

The most radical--and disturbing--dimension to Loy’s manifesto is her recognition of the economic basis of the female body. Loy urges the “*unconditional surgical destruction of virginity*” at puberty, thereby eliminating the “principal instrument of her subjection” as commodity.²⁵ Her call for sexual liberation echoes that being expressed by Margaret Sanger, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin and other “new women” of the Progressive era, who although calling for sexual liberation nevertheless defended child-bearing as a woman’s right. But Loy’s version of this right contains a troubling eugenicist subtext: “Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex.”²⁶ Later she says that “for the harmony of the race, each individual should be the expression of an easy & ample interpenetration of the male & female temperments--free of stress.”²⁷ The theme being advanced here--that superior woman must “realize her race-responsibility” by producing children to offset those of the “degenerate members of her sex”-- suggests an affinity with other modernists--including Gertrude Stein, D.H. Lawrence, as well as Marinetti, who drew upon the writings of Francis Galton or Otto Weininger and shared a common interest in eugenicist ideas of race superiority.

While such racialist ideas were common during Loy’s day, they express the difficulty of mounting a campaign for a new feminist ideal without positing a utopian body. Marinetti had imagined his own form of post-human ideal through a mechanized incarnation in the industrial society of northern Italy, and Loy’s riposte seems to have taken her lead from this. But for Loy, who distrusted both the maternal ideal of domesticity as well as the republican attitudes of modern feminism, the challenge was to recreate the new woman through her material status as property. Her remarks about the economic meaning of female sexuality in her manifesto extend remarks made in her 1915 poem, “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots”:

Houses hold virgins
The door’s on the chain

‘Plumb streets with hearts’
‘Bore curtains with eyes’

Virgins without dots*
Stare beyond probability

See the men pass
Their hats are not ours
We take a walk
They are going somewhere
And they may look everywhere
Men's eyes look in-to things
Our eyes look out²⁸

Loy, who was living in Florence at the time, imagines young Italian women gazing into the street at men who move unencumbered in the city. The girls protect their purity for marriage because, as poor women, they lack “dots” (“dowry” in French) and thus must rely on the power of virginity. They are held in their houses, sequestered behind locked doors and curtains while the men “are going somewhere” and they “may look everywhere.” The eyes of the virgins “look out” while those of the men look “in-to things.” In a world where true subjectivity is restricted to those who have the ability to look “in,” those who may only look out are doomed to become the material world they see: Love becomes a contractual matter for which doors and locks protect valuable merchandise:

We have been taught
Love is a god
White with soft wings
 Nobody shouts
 Virgins for sale
Yet where are our coins
For buying a purchaser
Love is a god
 Marriage expensive
A secret well kept
Makes the noise of the world²⁹

The young women have been sold an image of romantic love--a god with “White...soft wings,” and although “Nobody shouts / Virgins for sale” there is no financial compensation for their patience. The image of virgins as commodities can be found in other poems of this period in which women are compared to mannequins or dolls.³⁰

The emergence of a feminist public sphere in the early twentieth-century is embodied in a manifesto that in asserting the sexual freedom of the new

woman attacks her commodification within marriage and marketplace. Loy's manifesto rejects reasoned, logical argument in favor of broad generalizations and unrealizable projects. It responds to a mercantile age where gender roles are framed through capitalist relations as well as eugenicist ideas of racial and bodily improvement. The manifesto's performative rhetoric, its willing of a new female subject into existence, rejects half measures and gradualist solutions by positing a new woman outside of legal contract and sexual economy. Although Loy often figures women as inert dolls, mannequins, and virgins in her poetry, in the manifesto, she provides a public voice, forged in the smithy of Futurist invective but versed in an era of progressive reform. .

Signs of a Global Public Sphere

My third example of a new public language illustrates the production of a subject within globalization where the nation-state is no longer able to contain and control the production of citizenship. This new subject position is defined within the terms of neoliberal trade policies, transnational capital flows, and digital information for which the Futurist machine ethos seems a quaint relic. Globalization's fantasy of fast capital, cheap labor, and unrestricted access to markets is being resisted on a number of fronts--from indigenous peoples' movements to anti globalist struggles. Not surprisingly, this revived activism is being continued in a broad coalition of artists around the world for whom neoliberalism has become just another word for US hegemony. In a world where language seems inseparable from capital, how might a turn toward language be possible that does not further the cause of globalization?

This is a question raised in Thomas Pynchon's early novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, which anticipates global crisis within a cold war optic. The novel depicts a dystopic world of anonymous suburbs, simulacral franchises, and anonymous corporations that feed on conspiracy theories and fears of information decay. Pynchon's female protagonist, Oedipa Maas, must execute the terms of her former husband, Pierce Invarariety's will, but when she begins to trace out its terms she discovers that his holdings and properties are so extensive that they begin to resemble the world itself. Oedipa's attempt to discover the terms of his estate takes her on a grail journey in which she both discovers and facilitates social entropy. The more she attempts to interpret the terms of his empire, the more she accelerates the breakdown of systems. Every time she identifies a sign that might knit the various parts of his holdings together, she succeeds in cementing that empire and furthering its control over her. *Crying* is a dark prognosis of global capitalism that has become all too familiar, in which market solutions of increased privatization across borders

destroys the very competitiveness implied in the phrase “free trade.”

The Mexican poet and novelist, Heriberto Yépez, has responded to the dark prognoses of Pynchon’s novel by creating an installation that engages the public in a critical hermeneutics. In his 1998 installation for the *Festival de la Frontera* (Border Arts Festival), he placed a series of signs constructed out of red-tinted acrylic on traffic medians, light poles and stop signs. These signs feature short poems and epigrams in Spanish and English that refer obliquely to the border-crossing experience and the questions it raises about national citizenship. Although I will focus on his 1998 installation I would call attention to more recent versions of this project in which the signs refer to the post-9/11 paranoia generated by the Patriot Act. In the 1998 version, the transparency of the signs seems to refer to the transparent borders promised by the North Atlantic Trade Agreement (NAFTA), at the same time that the words printed on their surfaces complicate that access: “They told us we were crossing the border / to prevent us from really doing it.”³¹ Here the “turn toward language” is literal. Pedestrians crossing the border decipher cryptic signs that refer, in some obscure way, to themselves as national subjects.

A few days after the signs were installed, the author, posing as an innocent bystander, interviewed people on the street, asking what they thought the signs meant, and their responses became part of the project. Yépez reports that observers assumed that the signs indicated a new civic ordinance or some sort of political propaganda. Others thought they were a new touristic device or advertising gimmick. At first Yépez was frustrated that pedestrians did not recognize the signs as poetry until he realized that like poetry, “publicity and propaganda also use word play, the power of sound, humor, sex, ideology, minimalism, typography, multi-leveled meanings so how could ordinary people, often non-literate, distinguished one of my signs from the other forms of texts which use the same language techniques.”³²

In terms of issues already raised, we could see how Yépez’s installation problematizes authorship by engaging public acts of interpretation--and disregard. As public objects, signs are subject to reinterpretation, decay, graffiti, and theft, thus turning them from aesthetic objects to vernacular elements of the built environment. Moreover, as signs they merge with the vast signage at the border, a region plastered with advertisements, public service announcements, political messages and directions. The ambiguity of deixis in Yépez’s signs points to the uneven possibilities for movement across the border, depending on whether one is a Mexican or U.S. national:

THEY TOLD US WE WERE CROSSING THE

BORDER / TO PRESENT US FROM REALLY DO-
ING IT

STREETS ARE STALKERS THAT FOL-
LOW PASSERS BY AROUND

EL MOVIMIENTO URBANO INVENTA GENTE
QUE IMAGINA ESPACIOS QUE LUEGO HABITA
(The urban movement invents the people who imagine
the spaces they then inhabit)

In this paper I have been studying the rhetoric of the manifesto in producing new publics that are then re-imagined in poetry. With Yépez, the installation itself is a kind of manifesto, utilizing the same performative language one associates with the historic avant garde. Instead of appearing in a journal or newspaper, the text is placed on the city. Instead of the collective first person (“We the people”) of previous manifestos, Yépez insists on a fluid, unstable reference: “They told us we were crossing the border / to prevent us from really doing it.” Another reads, “La ciudad se sujeta de miradas que la inventan” (the city is subject to views that invent it”). In the latter sign, placed on a bridge over the Tijuana River, the word “miradas” (views or sites) is crossed out, suggesting that the vantage in question is flexible, that the city is the product of multiple vantages for which the touristic postcard is adequate. In a photograph of this sign reproduced in *Tripwire* magazine, one can discern two children standing behind the sign, their bodies partly revealed through the transparent plastic as if to suggest the ways that signs hide individuals who are both the viewed as well as viewers of the city.

In his commentary on the installation Yépez develops a “contextual poetics” that defines work written explicitly for its placement on the “street as page.” He regards his installation as continuing an ancient tradition of public inscription on monuments, gravestones, and sculpture, but he is also aware of its extension of a modernist urbanist impulse from Baudelaire to Eliot and Benjamin in which the city itself becomes an allegory of social forces beyond its glittering surfaces and shop windows. Yépez distinguishes his work from poetry “about” the city to a poetry “on the city” by creating poems that not only chronicle the breakdown of urban space but suffer its disregard. As he says, his work moves from “Make it New” to “Make it News”

Yépez’s Frontera project takes seriously the production of Subjects within the empire that Hardt and Negri call “an archipelago of factories of society.”³³

For Yépez, this archipelago must include literal maquiladora zone that defines the U.S./ Mexico border in which commercial signage and immigration signage occupy the same space. By making the bystander a critic, the pedestrian a reader, the text dissolves into social space, the distance between poet and critic collapsed into the street. As Yépez notes, the signs eventually became covered with graffiti or were stolen, and ignored, thus merging with the detritus and movement of border spaces. The author ceases to be the creator of discrete texts but the facilitator of a discourse about public spaces, and because the author is also a border crosser himself, he locates the question of authorship within the domain of citizenship.

The implications of border arts projects for authorship are profound. If a poem resembles a traffic sign or commercial ad, does it cease to be a poem? Is there a significant difference between the poem as sign and the sign as poem? Is the manifesto the document written after the installation or the installation itself? Where does the public nature of signage end and become the poetic? At the US /Mexico border, such questions have real implications for subjectivity since there, individuals cease to be private subjects and become objects of the immigration gaze.

Conclusion: A Public Language

My title invokes Adrienne Rich's 1978 book, *The Dream of a Common Language*. The common language of which she dreams is that of a feminist community, a shared body of women's cultural productions that she defines as a "lesbian continuum." As a document of cultural feminism, Rich's book understands that a public language is owned and operated by patriarchy. Yet the alternative to a male-dominated voice can no longer be the personal and confessional domain to which women's work has been consigned:

If in this sleep I speak
it's with a voice no longer personal
(I want to say *with voices*)³⁴ (226)

At the same moment that Rich was imagining a speech "with voices" in solidarity, speech itself was undergoing that severe rupture with identity that we know as the "linguistic turn." The culture wars over identity politics and varieties of post structural linguistic theory were occurring in the poetry community as a debate over whether language is expressive speech or social, signifying system. To some extent Rich's lines invoke the idea that in dreams begin social heteroglossia ("If in this sleep I speak / it's with a voice no longer personal") as well as the politics of separatist community. What Rich thematized as a problem of identity and agency, the emergent

language poetics saw in structural terms as a matter of state power and information manipulation.

These discrepant propositions of the social can no longer be formulated as a question of a linguistic turn that locates identity either within a common language or within the matrix of signifying systems. Signification, as Yépez's installation illustrates, is itself is a structure of power upon which authors since Equiano have signified. In Habermas' formulation of the public sphere, none of my authors--Equiano, Loy, Yépez--has a voice, despite the fact that modernity is lined with the effects of their labor and the communities formed around the works they authored. The spaces of global amalgamation and production offer the possibility of a public language that speaks not only across borders but *on* the border, not through the author but through authors produced in acts of reading and interpretation. Heriberto Yépez's installation offers a tentative intervention into the power grid by placing the simplest of icons at a traffic median, making individuals in the process of becoming citizens turn toward language and read their fate there.

Footnotes

¹ This paper was delivered as a talk at the "Authorship and the Turn Toward Language" conference at the University of Tübingen, Dec. 1-4, 2005. I am grateful to the conference organizers, Barrett Watten and Bernd Engler, for inviting me to this event.

² In the mid-1980s, there was growing consensus around the fact that academic scholarship had turned away from theory, viewed as based on language, to historicism. J. Hillis Miller's 1986 MLA Presidential Address, notes that "literary study in the past few years has undergone a sudden, almost universal turn away from theory in the sense of an orientation toward language as such and has made a corresponding turn toward history, culture, society, politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social context, the material base." But this rehistoricizing of literary study did not occur in isolation from studies of the linguistic and discursive basis of texts; rather, it was enabled by the work of Russian Formalists, Semiotics, Bahktinian discourse analysis, and Lacanian theories of the subject that focused on the reciprocity between the two forms of materiality: the textual and the social. As Louis Montrose notes, Miller's definition of theory is identified with "domesticated varieties of deconstruction, conformable to formalist critical traditions in the United States" that sets itself in opposition to "ideology." Louis Montrose, "New Historicisms." *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literature Studies*. New York: The Modern Language Association, 1992. p. 395.

³ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell U Press, 1977. 114-138.

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991. p. 27.

⁵ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Ed. Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1993. p. 2.

⁶ Quoted in F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*. Vol. I, 1730-1784. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. p. 167.

⁷ "Chronicle." *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1776*. London: J. Dodsley, 1788.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 262.

⁹ Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca: Cornell U Press, 1999. P. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid*. P. 28.

¹¹ I am grateful to Lars Eckstein of the Universität Tübingen for providing me with information about Edwards' biography.

¹² *Annual Register*, p. 209.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 210.

¹⁴ Recently, there has been controversy over the integrity of Equiano's authorship and the veracity of his description of his early life in Africa. Vincent Carretta has produced documentary evidence suggesting that Equiano drew upon travelogues, novels, and accounts of slavery in fashioning his autobiography. Carretta claims that Equiano may not have been forced into slavery in Africa as he says, but born in South Carolina. The fact that Equiano may have fabricated elements of his narrative, far from discounting its integrity, reinforces my argument about the role of self-fashioning in producing a new citizen Subject. Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity." *Slavery and Abolition* 20.3 (1999). I am grateful to Bernd Engler for alerting me to this essay.

¹⁵ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford U Press, 1988. pp. 131-33.

¹⁶ *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Classic Slave Narratives*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Penguin, 1987. p. 101.

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 43.

¹⁸ Gates, p. 155.

¹⁹ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Fouding and Manifesto of Futurism, 1909." *Manifesto*, Ed. Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2001. P. 186.

²⁰ Ibid. P. 187.

²¹ Ibid. P. 214.

²² Caws, p. 611.

²³ Ibid. p. 155.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 156.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 612.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 157.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 157.

²⁸ Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*. Ed. Roger L. Conover: New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996. p. 21.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 22.

³⁰ In "Magasins du Louvre," Loy writes, "All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass // Long lines of boxes / Of dolls/ Propped against banisters." Ibid. p. 17.

³¹ Heriberto Yépez, "Contexts and Signs of an Urban Visual Poetics." *Tripwire* 4 (n.d.). n.p.

³² Ibid. n.p.

³³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 2000. p. 196.

³⁴ Adrienne Rich, "Phantasia for Elvia Shatayev." *The Fact of a Doorframe: Poems Selected and New, 1950-1984*. New York: Norton, 1984. p. 226.

5. (THAT COTTONWOOD)

Fred Wah

Orifice foreignicity
some "it" at stake
unrecognizable for the distance
or "if" is dying
beyond meaning
truth or rust
just one call gets through
in fact they started singing
the ospreys flew off
and then a raven landed
in that cottonwood
door thresh
holding "that"

34. (HEY SAILOR)

Fred Wah

what goes up
as they..
Hey sailor
wanna
see me
in the third
person let
the rivers run
let the semen
flower far
out in the open
ranging from
here to kingdom
come around
again some
time we could
try that dance
you know
the one

48. (LEG TO STAND ON)

Fred Wah

the deal is this
normal arc

potatoes
under the frozen earth

not worth
the digging

a month
in which to stay warm

phantom calisthenics
shadow eyes

calendar empty
the tumblers unlocked

a limb
to go out on

a leg
to stand

MOTHER MUSHET

Opal Palmer Adisa

She was a white sheet being pulled across the clothesline. The first time I saw her it was just turning dusk and I would have sworn that she was a duppy. Then I started to see her almost every evening. Each time she folded in on “sheself like shame-old-lady bush,” making her seem smaller than she actually was, her feet always moving like chicken legs escaping the chasing cat. She remained nameless and motherless for a long time. She didn’t seem to belong to anyone. No one indicated that they knew anything about her --it was as if she didn’t exist. When I inquired about her, blank stares were the only reply. At first I thought I was going crazy, that maybe my anger was *nyaming* at me --eating me clean to the bones. Then one day I heard the children teasing her.

“Moda Mushet,” they shouted, tossing guinep and tamarind seeds at her, “Mother Mushet, mek yu man jilt yu.”

I was too shocked to scold them, but also relieved that she did exist, that she had a name, so I just stood there and watched as she turned towards the children, stood stoically --maybe even proudly-- before erupting, her voice like nails raking over a chalkboard,

“Oonuh little rass a gwane beat oonuh. Just mek me catch yu. Oonuh must behave in school.”

Then she charged after them and they fled, legs raising dirt, their voices sailing through the air,

“Help, mad oman a chase we! Help Moda Mushet ah chase we”

Like a fool I ran after this Mother Mushet as she ran after the children. What a sight it must have been for those looking on. Anyway I didn’t catch her. She was faster than I imagined, or maybe I was just slower than I thought. However, when she turned and saw me behind her, her shriek turned to hollow fear and she ran down a lane and disappeared. I never spotted her for almost two weeks, no matter how attentively I looked out for her. Again I asked people who she was, but it was as if the cat got their tongues. I decided to bide my time. Besides, I was new in the community, not yet three months, fresh from the country, Claredon, and hadn’t divulged much about my life so far. I wasn’t ready and I suspected neither was Mother Mushet or the community to embrace me.

Image, my Granny who raised me my entire life, healthy and strong like lignun vitae branch just up and died, sitting upright in her rocking chair on the veranda shelling gugu peas for dinner. It was exactly one month after

my mother, who I didn't know and didn't even recognize in her coffin, drop dead in England, sitting on the sofa, watching television, a bowl of flour in her lap that she was kneading to make johnnycakes. The two of them dead just like that, leaving me all alone with two houses. I was so shocked I couldn't even cry. Even now, three months later, not "a eye-water" leave me eyes. Me put me hands on me head and bawled, but not a sound escaped my throat. Although I didn't want the house my mother left me, I couldn't stay in Granny's house where I was born and where I spend all my life so I decide to move into the house my mother built, right on Princess lane, near the Race Course, intended for when she retired from working in the hospital in England, and came home and settled down.

I hated her can't done. I hated her more than I was afraid of duppy. I hated her so much when I saw her in the coffin I wanted to punch in her face. I hated her until the saliva in my mouth bubbled and I wanted to spit on her. The damn bitch. She never sent for me. Every year she promised. Every year. Left me with Granny since "me was little-little," just walking, not yet two years old and she never came back and got me; she never even brought me to England to spend the summer with her like she used to promise every year. Not once. She wanted to forget about me. She pretended like I didn't exist. She went to England and married a man and had three more children that she raised. She didn't leave them. She kept them. When I was seven years old she sent the first one, a boy name Everett, to spend summer with Granny and me.

"See yu brother dere, give him a hug nu," Granny say to me, but I just look at him, skin the color of sandpaper, then walk off. He wasn't any kin to Granny and me; I didn't play with him, not once the entire summer, and I pinched him when granny wasn't looking. Then when I was ten years old she sent that same boy and a little girl that went by the name Rachel, who look just like Everett, with whom I had to share my bed. Every night I kicked them and told them to go back to England to their Mum. The last time she sent then I was thirteen, all three of them, Everett, Rachel and Charlene. I fought them, cut up all their clothes and all the clothes she sent me, and chopped off the girls' hair clean, only patches. I told Granny that if they came back to stay with us, I was going to leave and never return. Bitch. She never sent them again and all the pictures she sent of them and herself, I just tore it up and burned, except the ones that Granny hid. My life was just Granny and me and school and sometimes, church.

I passed six O'levels, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. Granny said I should continue and try for A'levels. I passed Biology, English and Math. Granny said I should apply to university and become a nurse like my mama, but I would never be anything like her so I refused. I got a job in an office, but I didn't like it. I worked for six months then I quit. Next I got a job in a bank because the branch manager went to our church; he and

Granny were friends and he knew I was bright. I trained to be a teller and that was okay counting money. I did my work and without much effort got promoted. Besides work, I was the choir assistant at church, and I visited the sick. I stayed clear of boys like Granny warned because she said that was what ruined my mother why she had to leave me and go to England to make her way. I wasn't going to become like that woman and I wasn't going to have a child and ever leave her, even with someone as sweet and kind as Granny. So my life just going, the same, day after day. The next thing I know I turn twenty years old, "almost big woman" Granny said, and I didn't know where I was going with my life.

One evening I came home from work Granny said,

"Yu mama call. She says she well want to see yu. She say she mail yu a ticket to come see her and your brother and sisters in England."

I looked at Granny like she was mad, but I don't say anything. A week later, two tickets arrived, one for Granny and one for me. Granny says,

"Child, me not flying in no iron bird. If de good lord did want me to fly, him would give me wings, but you go, go and see yu mama, ah beg yu please."

I didn't agree right away, but finally I decided to go, not to see her but to see England that we learn so much about in school. I figured I would go and see the blasted queen who used to rule us and Buckingham Palace, that Granny say is "thief money from our sugar and banana" England used to build it and Big Ben and the Museum that full of all the stuff them steal from Africa. Pastor Brown agrees with Granny, and he should know; he visited England plenty times because he has a son and a daughter who live there. So Granny called her – that woman who is suppose to be my mother-- and told her that I was coming. I took time off from work, running around to get pictures for passport and visa and all kinds of things I needed to go to England and see this woman who was my mama, even though I didn't know her because she left me from I was little-little and she never ever sent for me, until now that I am a big woman, twenty years old and don't need her anymore.

Finally the day to leave arrived and I was at the airport, assuring granny that I was coming back, and that I was not going to stay in England and leave her alone in Jamaica, like that woman who is suppose to be my mother, or her other son in Canada, my uncle Lenford, that I did love because he lived with Granny and me until I was ten, and he used to give me piggy back rides, and also used to say, "Who is dark and pretty like the sky filled with stars?" Uncle Lenford also used to hug Granny around the waist and dance with her and kiss her on the cheeks. But he also left to make a better life, and we didn't see him for five years. Then he came and visited us and he sent for me to spend Christmas with he and his wife and children, but Granny didn't go with me because she wasn't going to

fly. And every time Uncle Lenford came to visit Granny and me, he asked me if I wanted to come and live with him and his family and go to college, but I don't want to leave Granny so I always said no. And Granny other son, my bad-stick uncle Donald, who the woman Granny says is my mama helped to get up to England, and he get in with bad company and was going to be sent to jail, but escaped. The last we heard he was in Germany or somewhere in Europe or who knows because neither Uncle Lenford nor Granny and I have heard from him for over six years now and for all we know he's dead. Granny said he wasn't or she would know, her body would tell her, and although I don't quite know how her body would tell her, she did seem to know everything so if she said she would know, I believed her. So there I was at the airport and Granny and my mind one about how she raised all these children to leave her, just like how my mother left me, and I can't help but wonder why it is Jamaica can't keep her children. Seemed like Granny read my mind and said

“Jamaica just like Africa child, just like Africa. We lose all de strong and lovely ones, but yu and me will keep on.”

I told granny that we will because I was never leaving, I was going for three weeks, and then I would be back. And so we hugged and I got on the plane loaded with all kind of food stuff that I was sure that woman who was my mother didn't even remember about or want.

Bitch. She was so bad-minded she couldn't even wait until after I arrived and allow me to tell her a piece of my mind. I didn't even mind the long plane ride because almost the entire journey I was going over in my head just what I was going to say to her. Evertte, who I didn't recognize met me at the airport, and I didn't understand a word him chat. He hugged me and said, “Welcome Sis,” and I was thinking to myself, I don't care what anyone said he and I weren't related. The entire drive from the airport, Everett talking a storm and I just nodded my head, looking to see what I could in the dark, dreary night. Then I heard him say clearly,

“Mums really excited, you know mate; she's been planning for this day. Cooking lots of food and even inviting friends over to meet her Jamaican daughter.”

Same time I kissed my teeth and looked out the window. The nerve of this woman who left me and forgot about me! But I was ready for her. I was going to trace her out real good. After almost an hour driving we arrived and just as we parked an ambulance pulled off. Everett got out the car and asked a man who stood by the gate,

“What's up mate? Someone sick or something?”

I was standing by the car so I didn't hear what the man replied. He patted Everett on the back, and the next thing I knew Everett was screaming and running up the stairs, and there were lots of people and crying. Then Everett came down and got in the car and raced off without even taking

out my bags and I was left there standing, not sure what was going on, until that same man who had patted Everett on the back came and introduced himself as Mr. Hendricks, the neighbor and a fellow Jamaican. He took me inside his house and gave me tea, then told me that my mother had died watching Telly, while waiting for me to come from the airport. The saliva in my mouth scaled my tongue and I felt as if my stomach would explode. Bitch! Imagine I came all the way from Jamaica to see her, after eighteen years and she couldn't even wait until I saw her and told her a piece of my mind before dying. If I had a knife I would have cut up her body. I would have salted it. I would beat it to pulp. Bitch!

They buried her five days after I arrived. Uncle Lenford came from Canada,

but Granny still refused to come. I stayed with Mr. Hendricks and his wife the entire time. I didn't step into her house, not even the day of the funeral when everyone was over their eating. I only went to the funeral because Uncle Lenford begged me and came and got me. He led me down the aisle of the church to see her in the coffin, but I didn't know who I was looking at and just kissed my teeth. Bitch! I said under my breath. Uncle Lenford heard and whispered in my ears, "Who dark and pretty like the sky filled with stars?" I didn't feel pretty and I didn't smile and he didn't tickle my sides. The day after they buried her, the woman who was my mama, Uncle Lenford came and took me to see Big Ben and the Museum, four floors filled with Africa art; he and I agreed that England well thief bad; they weren't satisfied with stealing the people, they also sold the artifacts. After that I wanted to go back home to Jamaica and Granny. I spoke to Granny on the phone and she just cried and told me to hurry back and not let England take me too like it took her only daughter. I promised her that I would come back and not let England thief me like it stole my mama.

The following day Mr. Hendricks took me to see Buckingham Palace because he said I couldn't come all the way to England and not see where the queen lived, nor watched the changing of the guards. As I stood there, wrapped in Mrs. Hendricks' sweater, looking at shiny, clean Buckingham Palace, I said to Mr. Hendricks,

"How comes England ruled us for so long and shipped out plenty sugar to sweeten their tea and banana to give them iron to withstand the cold and they never used any of our money or our labor to build something as grand as Buckingham Palace in Jamaica?" He responded,

"That's imperialism my child, that's imperialism."

I felt in love with Mr. Hendricks in that moment, and wished he was my father because I never ever met my father. Granny said he left on a banana boat heading for England after he impregnated my mother and they never heard from him again.

Everett, Rachel and Charlene, my so-called brother and sisters tried

to talk to me, but I didn't have anything to say to them. They belonged to England and to her. She raised and kept them. I didn't want to know them. They didn't look or talk like me. The day before I left, they came and said our mother left a will, and that the house she built in Jamaican that she was planning to live in after she retired, she left for me. I told them I didn't want it, I didn't want "nothing" from her, that she was a bitch. They started to cry and said how she loved me and kept a picture of me on her bed-side table, and always talked about me and told them her Jamaican daughter was such a good child. I just cut my eyes at them and told them that talk was cheap. I didn't want to hear their stories of her. Mr. Hendricks drove me to the airport. He said he and my mama were good friends, and that she always talked about me. He could tell that I didn't want to hear about her, so he shut up and I loved him even more. He hugged me before I went to board the plane and told me that when he and Mrs. Hendricks came to Jamaica next year to live for good after thirty years in England, he would come and visit Granny and me. I told him we would welcome them.

Granny met me at the airport and I almost didn't recognize her. Her hair had turned completely white, when, before I left, she only had a few streaks of gray and she was nothing but skin and bone; she must have lost twenty pounds in just three weeks. My heart broke upon seeing Granny and I just held her tight and wouldn't let go, despite people pushing us out the way, begging excuse. Granny didn't eat much that evening, just looked at me and kept saying over and over,

"Yu come back, England don't thief yu too."

I stayed home with Granny another week before I returned to work. I made her soup and watched to make sure she drank it. We sat on the veranda and swapped stories like when I was a little girl before we got television. I hugged her around the waist and danced with her like Uncle Lenford used to do. I telephoned Uncle Lenford and begged him to come home and dance with Granny. He promised that he would come as soon as he could get time off. I took Granny to the doctor although she didn't want to go; I insisted that they do tests but everything come back normal. The doctor insisted that she was physically healthy. I kissed my teeth. What did he know? Pastor Brown visited Granny and told me that her heart was broken. Miss. Evelyn across the street stayed with her while I work, and her friends, Miss. Esmee, Sister Dorothy and Aunty Joyce looked in on her from time-to-time. Then Tuesday before I went to work she told me that she had a desire for gungu peas and that she was going to shell some and make a big pot of gungu rice and peas that would last the rest of the week. As I was leaving for work, Granny sat down on the veranda with the basin in her lap, and she seemed almost like her old self again. I kissed her on the cheek, and she reached for my hand and said,

"Me ears was ringin all last night." She paused as if to catch her

breath, then she continued, “Me think me gwane hear bad news today. Me body hasn’t been feeling well now for along time, and me mind on Donald.”

I felt as if my heart dropped down to my stomach and I asked Granny if she wanted me to stay with her and not go to work; she said no. I was feeling awful because I dreamed about Uncle Donald last night and I never dreamed about him before, and I hadn’t thought about him, except at mama’s funeral when Uncle Lenford had said, he had tried to contact him, but didn’t know how, and he hoped he was alright. So I went to work, but got really sick so left at noon. When I got home, even before I opened the gate, I could tell that something was wrong with Granny, just by the way she was sitting stiffly in her rocking chair, a blue airmail letter clutched in her hand. She died before we reach the hospital, even though I begged her to live for me. They said she had a stroke. The letter she clutched in her hand was from a Stewart Forbes, who said he just found her address, and that he was a friend of Uncle Donald, and he regretted to have to inform her that her son died two weeks ago, in Birmingham, England, where he had been hiding out, and that he had been buried, without name or family in the poor-man’s plot.

I was too sad and weak to cry. First my mama, who left me all those years, then Uncle Donald and now Granny. I was never going to set foot in England every again; it took all that Granny and I loved and wanted. Uncle Lenford and his family came, and he bawled so hard they had to carry him from the grave. My eyes remained dry like an old coconut. Everett came from England too, talking about she was his Granny too. I jumped on him, and scratched up his face; they had to pull me off of him. I told him to go back to England, talking like he had something hot in his mouth, and don’t try to steal my Granny too. Uncle Lenford begged me to come to Canada with he and his family, but I told him what Granny say,

“If is not England thief we, is Canada or America. Dem keep thieffin the best of we. Who gwane stay to look after little Jamaica?”

I told Uncle Lenford that I was going to stay; I wasn’t going anywhere. I was here for better or worse.

After the funeral and everyone left I couldn’t sleep. As soon as I fall asleep I would wake up looking for Granny. Pastor Brown watched me losing weight, when I was thin already, and he suggested that I go to Kingston and stay for a little while. That’s how I ended up in the bitch’s house. But now I like it so I am going to stay. Uncle Lenford talked about coming home soon and I reminded him that he shouldn’t wait until he retired or he might be coming home in a coffin and I was not going to his funeral. He said he heard me, and I hoped he really did.

So I am planting a garden at the house my mother built and died

and left me. Because I am outside working in the yard all the time I keep watch for Mother Mushet now that I know her name. I feel close to her. Both of us have been left. She always passes by my house in the evening, wearing all white that's gone beige with age and dirt. Where does she hold up all day? I wonder. Where is she going when she passes by my gate at nights? Is she angry about being jilted? Did a man really leave her at the altar? What does she carry in her bag, slung across her shoulder and breast? Sometimes I find myself chanting her name as I work in the garden, "Mother Mushet, Mother Mushet, who mess with you? Mother Mushet, Mother Mushet, do you need a friend?" I know I need a friend. Granny was my friend. We talked about everything, even mama and why she didn't send for me.

Early one morning, about six a.m., just as I went outside, I saw Mother Musket rushing past my gate, but in the opposite direction than she took in the evenings. Without thinking, I decided to follow her, leaving the door open for thieves to enter and walk off with what they want. I had to jog to keep up with her, yet stay far enough behind so she wouldn't see me. She led me through several alleys, and I knew I was completely lost. Then finally we came to a tenement yard, and she opened the gate, stepped in and was greeted by a large woman, with her hair plaited in two thick braids, with one child on her bosom and another hanging onto her leg.

"Morning Teacha," the woman said smiling at Mother Mushet. "Me comin just now wid yu breakfast."

I stood at the half-opened gate, my breath held in, and watched the woman, whom the children chanted, "Moda Mushet, Moda Mushet, is who jilt yu?" transform from a crabby homeless woman to a teacher. I doubt if many of the children knew what jilt meant or had stop to think that Mother Mushet's pain, whatever it was, should not be used as arsenal with which to tease her. I watched as Mother Musket straightened her back, climbed up the three steps leading to the narrow veranda and sat down, hands folded in her lap. And in a voice, both proper and sweet, she turned to the woman and said,

"Miss Sadie, I am pleased to have my breakfast now, thank you."

"Coming Teacha, coming. But in the mean time go wash yu hand."

Although Mother Mushet rose up immediately, she said,

"Miss Sadie, how many times am I to correct you on your grammar. It is no yu hand, but rather your hand. I will wash my hands and you will wash yours." Then Mother Mushet walked over to the cistern, soaped and lathered her hands, and kept rubbing them together. Then as if knowing the routine, Miss Sadie who was still indoor hollered,

"Rinse and dry them now Teacha, dem clean, rinse and dry them and tun off de pipe."

Mother Mushet did as she was told, then climbed back upon the narrow

veranda and sat where the table was set for her. Not being able to suppress my curiosity anymore, I opened the gate and stepped through and immediately Mother Mushet started to shriek and holler.

“Mama is headmaster come to ruin me.”

At first I looked about, unaware she was referring to me. The woman she called Miss Sadie, ran out with a broom brandish in her hand. Only seeing me, she stopped short:

“Is who yu?” she said glancing at Mother Mushet who was now pressed up against the wall, sheltering her face, and cowering. She didn’t give me a chance to answer. She dropped the broom, and strode over to where Mother Mushet was crumpled. Gently, she pulled her from the wall, nestled Mother Mushet’s head on her shoulder and spoke to her as if speaking to a baby.

“Hush Mama’s Darling. Me gwane beat de headmasta fah yu.”

And in that same tender manner, she led Mother Mushet through the opened door just off the veranda.

I sat on the step and waited, more curious than ever. Why did Miss Sadie call Mother Mushet Teacher, and why would the headmaster want to ruin her? I could hear Miss Sadie humming to Mother Mushet whose whimper, gradually stopped. After a while, Miss Sadie appeared, closing the door softly, behind her.

“Lady, could yu please tell me what business yu have here?”

I didn’t know what to say, so I asked.

“What is your relationship to teacher?”

“Her moda send yu?” Miss Sadie quizzed.

Realizing that this approach would not get me anywhere, I introduced myself to Miss Sadie, told her where I lived, and that often I saw Mother Mushet, as the children and people in the neighborhood call her, pass by my gate. It was at that point that one of Miss Sadie’s children started to cry, and she told me to follow her. I tagged behind, while she fed both children, then her mother who was partially paralyzed from a stroke, then while I sat in the kitchen and watched from the window, she coaxed Mother Mushet back on the veranda, and fed her also.

I spent the greater part of the day with Miss Sadie, who has been taking care of Mother Mushet for the last five years after her own mother got a stroke. Her mother had worked with Mother Mushet’s family, and cared for her, taking her to live with them when Mother Mushet got worse and her parents, specifically her father, was ashamed and wanted to hide her away. Although Mother Mushet’s family did not come to visit her, they sent money for food and her room. It was close to twenty years she had been like that. Miss Sadie didn’t know the entire story, and said I best hear it from her own mother, when she was up to talking again. I promised to come by daily and visit and help her care for her children and mother and

Mother Mushet, whom I was eager to learn more about.

It took more than three weeks for Mother Mushet to get used to me, and not cower and shriek when I entered the yard where she lived. One morning as I entered, she was having her breakfast; she stopped, looked at me, and to my surprised demanded:

“Young lady, just where do you think you are going late for school?”

I faltered. I stared at Mother Mushet, not sure exactly what to say.

“So the cat has got you tongue. Well what is your name, and speak up?”

I immediately fell into the role.

“Gemmeth Grant, Miss.”

“Miss Grant, do you know the consequence of being late? No need to answer. You will have to do extra work. Take you seat and I will get to you soon. I sat on the steps and caught Miss Sadie chuckling from the kitchen. She already told me how Mother Mushet had taught both her and her mother to read and write, and that Mother Mushet was both a good and strict teacher. I had observed her teaching Miss Sadie, and two other women who lived on the street, who had not had the opportunity to get an education when they were young, but now I was the student. After she finished her breakfast, she stood above me on the step where I sat and began her lecture.

“What we need more than anything else in this lovely, little island of ours is education. With a good education, we can stand up to anyone, even the queen. Today Miss Grant, I expect you to write a composition on the merits of a good education. You must write this in your best cursive and correct grammar. Begin.”

And from the canvass bags that she always have slung over her shoulder, she pulled out a smudged and dog-eared, exercise book, and handed it to me, with a pencil so short, there wasn't enough for my fingers to grasp. Surprised I took the book, wondering where Mother Mushet got it, but she tapped my shoulder and urged.

“Begin! Begin at once. Don't dillydally.”

I glanced at her shadow looming over me, and bent my head and pretended to write.

Although I had not intend it, I took the exercise books home with me, only seeing it after I put the newspaper and fruits I had bought down on the kitchen counter. It fell on the floor when I reached for the newspaper, and when I bent to pick it up, I saw her name, written in small neat cursive, Marcia Elizabeth Hamilton. Miss Sadie had told me that was her name. I opened the first page, my hands trembling, and the heading read, “The Importance on Being a Lady by Miss Marcia Elizabeth Hamilton.” Could this really be Mother Mushet's exercise book? It certainly looked

old enough. It was written in fountain pen, and some of words on the first page were smeared. However, I was able to read most of the eight pages of essay, standing there in my kitchen. I wasn't surprised by what she said, but it only made me more intrigued, eager to learn more about Mother Musket, whose mother, like mine had abandoned her during her greatest period of need. Here mother was a bitch, just like mine.

Daily I went to visit Miss Sadie to see Mother Mushet, trying to win her trust. When I saw her wondering the streets, talking to herself, and the children and even some men teased her, I scolded the children and told the men they should be ashamed of themselves. She never seemed to recognize me when I encountered her on the street, expect once, as she trotted by my gate I called to her, "Good morning Miss."

She slowed, turned her head, smiled at me and said, "Enjoy your lunch Miss Grant." Then she was gone again, her small ankles, showing from under her off-white, full-length skirt, that swished in harmony to her fast-paced stride.

Sadie would not relent and give me her parents' address, but I was determined to find them, and give them a piece of my mind. If what Sadie said was true, then Mother Mushet was a trained teacher who attended Shortwood Teachers' College, and taught for six years or more at Tinsopen Elementary School, until she resigned, due to her pending marriage. But she never got married. Apparently the night before the wedding, the alleged groom, married an English woman, who had recently come to the island to teach. Hearing this, my hatred for England intensified, and when Sadie had completed the story, I spat.

"Me hate dem England people. All of them thief, and thief, and thief can't done. Dem thief everything from we --our banana, our sugar, our rum, our bauxite. Dem just born thief."

Sadie had to console me, and more than ever, I strived to win Mother Mushet's trust. After more than three months, Mother Mushet trusted me.

The house that I has acquired from the mother I hated, was on the corner, and so as to dissuade thieves, the side fence that opened into a narrow street, had been erected in concrete, and at the top, broken bottles had been affixed, so that anyone attempting to scale the seven foot high fence would be sure to severely cut their hands and body, if one should brave and succeed such attempt. But it also enclosed a lively, erratically planted garden. Whenever I wasn't brooding over my hatred for my mother and the missed opportunity to let her know exactly how I felt, or missing my darling grandmother, or going to see Sadie and Mother Mushet, I worked in the garden, relishing how physical labor emptied my mind of rancor, and how thrilled I was, when I stepped out on any given morning and saw

another flowers in bloom, or the growth of a plant.

It was on such a pretty morning that I stepped out, the sun inviting, its rays mild, that I strolled around the garden, with mint tea in hand. I heard, what I at first thought, was whimpering, like a sick dog. Then it turned into ear-piercing shrieking. I looked to see where the sound was coming from and saw the hands, stuck in the jagged edge of the broken bottles on the side of the wall erected to keep out thieves.

“Jezampiece!” I hollered, wondering why anyone would choose to break into my yard in broad day light, and how could they be so desperate. Then I realized that they person was stuck, and the wild shrieking send shivers through my body. Something about the voice was recognizable. Then I heard a child’s voice shouting,

“Come look, come look! Moda Mushet a climb de fence.”

I rushed and unlocked the gate and ran around to the side of the house, and there I saw Mother Mushet, hoisted on a large barrel that was general at the corner of the street in which garbage was dumped. How she rolled it to the side of my house and turn it over to stand on the bottom perplexed me, but that she was, stuck I was certain. By now her shrieks rang through the air, and a few people appeared, clambering out their houses to see who was being murdered. My attempt to calm Mother Mushet was to no avail. I then noticed a man standing there so I grabbed hold of him and demanded.

“Go and help her down, please.”

“Me not touching that mad woman. She don’t like man. She act like everyman jilt her.”

By now Mother Mushet screams had turned to crying, and the tears ran down her face. I noticed that her clothes were ripped. By now about fifteen people were gathered. Someone instructed a child:

“Go call Nurse. Tell her Mother Mushet hurt bad.”

I remembered that a nurse lived four houses down from me. I barked at the child.

“Run!”

The child took off like fire was under his feet. Another person said.

“Lawd we ave fi help Moda Mushet before she bleed to death on Miss Gem wall.”

“Look how her clothes rip up, a bet yu some wicked man try fi do nastiness to her,” a woman moving closer to where I stood next to the barrel, offered.

I persuaded the first man that I had approached and another to help Mother Mushet down. I stood close to the upside down barrel and spoke gently to Mother Mushet.

“Morning Miss. Could you please come down and help me with my work, please Miss Teacher,” I begged like a dutiful student.

And everyone gathered, as if rehearsed, said.

“Good morning Teacha, present fah school Miss.”

Mother Mushet turned her face that had been pressed into the wall, and looked out at the crowd and said,

“Good Morning class, you may take your seats.” And this is how the two men were able to help Mother Mushet down from the wall, and pullout her hands that were stuck in the jagged broken glass, pieces of broken bottle breaking off in her hand. Nurse, who was on her way to work, arrived with iodine, and some one brought water, and Nurse did as much as she could, but said Mother Mushet needed to go to hospital. While the women, soothed her and continued to flatter her as their teachers, I, who had been in my night shift, quickly changed and got my purse. Someone else found a taxi, and with Mother Mushet in the middle between Nurse and I, the car sped off to KPH, Kingston Public Hospital.

Even though nurse worked at the hospital, Mother Mushet was not seen immediately as they were short of doctors, and more serious case, two stabbings, one man's leg barely hanging on as a result of a slip from the machete, cardiac arrest, etc. Nurse gave Mother Mushet medicine for the pain and a tranquilizer as she was getting agitated in the crowded space, while I continued to refer to here as teacher and seek her help. It was after one o'clock that Mother Mushet was finally seen by a weary doctor, who removed the broken pieces of bottle from her hands, and applied twenty stitches in all. Although reluctant, I insisted that the doctor examined Mother Mushet to see if she had been raped, and while he said there was no sperm or penetration, there was evidence of bruising around the vaginal area to suggest there was an attempt at intercourse. I corrected him and said attempted rape. At which point the weary doctor, ran his hand over his head, sighed, said,

“Listen I been seeing and hearing about Mother Mushet for years now. The problem is --there isn't enough mental care in this blasted island. Bellevue is full, and if you not off you rockers, then they can't keep you. You know how many mad people walking all over this island, daily, just like me and you. There are two mad men downtown Parade, who regularly take off their clothes and walks about the place in front of decent women and children, and nobody does anything. Maybe is one of them try to rape Mother Mushet. We'll soon have nothing but an island of mad people, screwing all over the place.” He ended disgustedly. Then called to attend to more urgent cases, he scribbled two prescriptions for Mother Mushet and hurriedly left.

It was three o'clock before I got the medicine and was taking Mother Mushet home. Nurse spotted us as we were leaving and ran to where we stood; she looked at the prescriptions and nodded approval, but told me to only give her half of the dosage of sedative. Once home, I had to almost

carry Mother Mushet inside the house. Since I had two spare bedrooms I decided I would care for Mother Mushet. I got her into bed, and undressed her. Then I got a basin of water and began to sponge her down, and as I was sponging her, the image of my mother appeared, and just like that I began to cry. At first softly, thinking it was Mother Mushet I was crying for but by the time I was through sponging her down, and dressing her in one of my own night shifts, my body wracked and I fell on Mother Mushet and cried out,

“Oh Mama I miss you so much. Why you don’t come home.” Over and over I cried, until spent, I crept on the bed and snuggled up, right there beside Mother Mushet and slept.

I came awoke, and feared that when Mother Mushet woke that she might begin to shriek and try to run, finding herself in unfamiliar surrounding. I also wanted to go and see Sadie and demand to know why she hadn’t gone to look for Mother Mushet when she didn’t show up for breakfast. Sadie often went looking for Mother Mushet at nights if she did not return home, and would lock her in the room before she went to bed, and let her out early as Mother Mushet was an earlier rises and banged and raised a racket to be let out for her regular morning walk. Could the attempted rape have happened early this morning? I shivered at the thought of the wicked, nasty man. As I was preparing dinner, I heard someone calling my name and knocking at the gate at the same time. I rushed out hurriedly, not wanting the noise to wake Mother Mushet, and I saw Sadie standing there, her eyes puffy.

“Miss Gem, me sorry fi boda yu, but me need yu help. Two days now me deh hospital, Moda had anoda stroke. Me neighbor keep de children dem, but she sey she no see Teacha two days now. A wonder if yu could just look afta de children dem so me can go look fah Teacha; she mus hunger well bad,” Sadie spoke in one rush.

I could see that Sadie was sad and tired so I took Jason, the almost three year boy from her arms.

“Come in, come in, Mother Mushet in here sleeping.”

I invited Sadie in, who collapsed on the chair, with Mae, her fifteen month old daughter, sleeping in her arms. The children looked unkempt, as did Sadie. As I told Sadie what had happened, tears streamed down her face that she hurriedly wiped away with the back of her hand.

“Is me responsible fi look afta Teacha, and look how something bad happen to her eeh. Miss Gem, ah couldn’t help it, lawd knows me couldn’t help it. Me beg me neighbor fi watch out fi her, but she have four little ones of her own and mine two. She seh she didn’t ave de time or energy fi go look fah Teacha.” Sadie paused and looked around. “Me can see her Miss Gem?” she asked.

I told Sadie to lay Mae on the sofa and I took her in to see Mother

Mushet.

Initially, Sadie was reluctant to leave her two children with me, not wanting to burden me anymore since I agreed to keep Mother Mushet, but I persuaded her to leave them so that she would have the time to look after her mother who was still in the hospital. And that was how I became the unofficial custodian of Mother Mushet. I also cared for Sadie's children for two weeks. Surprisingly, Mother Mushet didn't seem to object. She began calling me Mama the very next day after the incident, and she did not venture beyond the gate, as I feared. Instead she spent most of her days in the garden, sometimes pulling up the flowers. I threw away her once white, long sleeve, collared neck dresses, and had a dressmaker sew her, pastel pink, blue and green dresses, that were simple, but short sleeves, and that stopped just above her calf. Once Sadie's mother was out the hospital, she came during the day to help me with the house work and to care for Mother Mushet.

One afternoon, while the children slept and the three of us sat around the kitchen table, Mother Mushet, writing in her exercise book that I had bought her, Sadie cutting up vegetables to cook for dinner, and I doing needle-point that I had recently taken up, without prompting Mother Mushet filled in the details of her story.

"Mama, please forgive me," she tugged at my arm.

She had asked to be forgiven before, and I had always told her she was. The first time she had made such a request, I was taken aback, and didn't think I had the authority to forgive Mother Mushet who had cried, and begged, dropping her head in my lap, until Sadie, who had been doing something in the kitchen had walked into the living-room where we sat and said sternly,

"Teacha, yu Mama fagive yu. Yu Mama fagive yu," and then Sadie had kissed her teeth, cutting her eyes at me before returning to her chores. After that I readily said I forgive you to Mother Mushet, each time feeling as if I was also forgiving my own mother for abandoning me. So this time with Mother Mushet asked for forgiveness, I said,

"I forgive you Marcia Elizabeth," without pausing in my needle-point, but Mother Mushet said.

"Mama, I want you to forgive me for everything," and that was when she related how she lost her virginity, two days before her wedding, because her fiancé had begged, pledging his undying love, and said he only wanted a little touch before the marriage. So Mother Mushet had allowed him to touch her breast, and did not resist when his hand traveled under her skirt, and finally giving in completely. Before they had parted that night, sensing her distress, he assured her that it would be their secret, no one need know since he was assured now that she had saved herself only for him. But the morning of what should have been their wedding, he sent a letter addressed

to her parents in which he boasted.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton:

Sorry I cannot marry your daughter. By the time you get this letter I will be aboard a plane heading for England, where I have always dreamed of going. I will marry an English girl there and get the opportunity to go to university. Tell your daughter sorry, and that I enjoyed having my way with her.

Sincerely,
Derrick

Mother Mushet's father had read the letter, then he had called her and her mother and read the letter to them. After which he had demanded of Mother Mushet, if she had allowed the scoundrel to have his way with her. When, distraught, she was unable to respond, although twenty-five years old, her father flogged her mercilessly, told her she was a disgrace and that he was through with her. Luckily for Mother Mushet, her aunt who was very fond of her, arrived, was apprised of the situation and secluded Mother Mushet away. From that day Mother Mushet was never the same. For almost two years no one mentioned that she was to have gotten married, even though family and friends frequently whispered that she was jilted, always said with shame and blame, as if it was her actions that precipitated her ex-fiancé's behavior. When she stopped eating, she was forced fed, only surviving on cornmeal mush for a long time that her Aunt who was caring for her began calling her Mush-Mush. Somehow over the years it became Mushet, and when she began venturing on the streets, railing at men, admonishing children, someone donned her Mother Mushet and the name stuck every since. When her aunt could no longer care for her, and her father, with his blind stubborn pride, said she could not return home, her mother begged Sadie's mother who had longed worked with the family to care for her, for a small compensation. That was almost twenty years ago, and now Mother Mushet was forty-five.

I took Mother Mushet's hand, and looking at her lovingly in the face said,
five.

"I forgive you my darling, Mama forgives you," and then I patted her face. At which point Mother Mushet said.

"I loved him Mama, I loved Derrick, and he said he loved me."
I sucked in air, and willed away my own tears. I felt as if my own mother was standing over my shoulder, waiting to be forgiven, waiting for me to tell her that I loved her too. I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, then clasping Mother Mushet's hands between my own said.

"I know you loved him Marcia, and Derrick loved you too. He

loved you even though..." I didn't know what else to say. Mother Mushet reached over and kissed me on the cheek and for the very first time smiled, then resumed writing in her exercise book. I could not continue with my needle-point. I got up and went into the bedroom, locked the door, and repeatedly mumbled, "I love you mama; I love you." I don't know why I was saying that, but I couldn't stop for long time, over and over, "I love you mama; I love you."

After much persuading, Sadie gave me Mother Mushet's parents' address. I dressed carefully to go and see them, with the intention of giving them a piece of my mind, reviling them with all the things I didn't get the opportunity to tell my own mother. However, when I got there and faced the two old people, who looked as if life had driven a truck over them, my heart softened.

"Good afternoon," I began, in a respectful tone. "My name is Gemmeth Grant, and I just want you to know I have been helping Sadie look after your daughter, Marcia." When I said the name, I saw that Mother Mushet's mother's eye opened wide, and I could hear the father's breath more labored. I waited, wondering if I should say anything else. Finally, the old woman, after folding and unfolding her hand asked,

"How is Marcia Elizabeth?"

"She is well, but she asks for you."

"Is she married as yet?" the father cut in.

I ignored him.

"Everyday she begs for your forgiveness," I addressed Mrs. Hamilton.

"I forgive her long time. It wasn't her fault. I raised her too good, too trusting and that brute of man took advantage of her." My heart raced.

"It would mean the world to Mother... I mean Marcia Elizabeth, if you were to tell her that," I hastened.

"I told her that years ago, but she doesn't hear me; she doesn't hear anything anymore." And with that Mrs. Hamilton clammed up and her eyes glazed over. I sat with them for another fifteen minutes before leaving. Marcia was their only child, yet they seemed unmoved. Still before I left, I wrote my address on a piece of paper and gave it to Mrs. Hamilton and told her she could visit any time.

I was not at home the day Mrs. Hamilton came to visit her only child, but Sadie related the details, blow by blow. Sadie was combing Mother Mushet's hair, when she heard the knocking at the gate. She went out and there stood Mrs. Hamilton with her cane, standing in front of the taxi that she ordered to wait on her. Sadie welcomed her and opened the gate for her

to enter. Mrs. Hamilton refused Sadie's offer to assist her up the steps, but she managed, sat down heavily on the veranda, asked for a glass of water, and looked out at the garden.

"This is a nice place, very nice. Marcia Elizabeth always enjoyed the garden." Mrs. Hamilton spoke to no one in particular. After she finished the water, she inquired: "Is Marcia Elizabeth here? Tell her that her mother is here to see her," she said as if she was a regular visitor.

Sadie wasn't sure what to do. Mother Mushet had not seen her mother in over ten years; she wasn't even sure she would recognize her. Also, since Mother Mushet had taken to call me mother, Sadie was doubly unsure, and didn't want to upset her, especially since she has been calm for almost four months since the incident. But Sadie reasoned with herself that technically, Mrs. Hamilton was her employer and so she couldn't refuse her either. Mother Mushet appeared at the same time ending Sadie's dilemma.

"Teacha, see yu moda dere come to look fah yu; seh hello to her."

Mother Mushet had looked at her mother, smiled and said,

"So you are my new student. Well I am Miss Hamilton, you may take a seat." And with that Mother Mushet turned and went back to sit in the living-room, and remained there until her mother, who never budged from her seat on the veranda, left by the same taxi, in which she came, in all of ten minutes. Mother Mushet never mentioned the visit, nor did her behavior revert. I had recently resumed working, having gotten a job at a bank and had gone to the University of the West Indies to inquire about help for Marcia; I no longer called her Mother Mushet, although the community still did. I was confident that with help Mother Mushet could have an almost normal life. She had resumed her walks, although she always came home before dark. The people in the community, especially the women, were more actively looking out for her, and they threatened their children with spanking if they caught them teasing Mother Mushet --although a few persisted. Several of the men also helped to look out for Mother Mushet, and they discovered that when they addressed her as Teacher, she did not curse them out or screamed that they were liars and the ruiner of good women.

Mother Mushet's slow but steady transformation, not only impacted the community, but had a profound impact on me. Each day I realized, when I thought about my mother, I no longer felt angry. Most times Mother Mushet called me Mama and other times addressed me as Miss Grant, and referred to me as her most diligent student. In was in the role of student that my bitterness was finally shattered.

As we sat to eat dinner, Mother Mushet looked at me and said.

"Miss Grant, I am very disappointed in you not doing your homework. I expect your composition on my desk by tomorrow morning."

“Sorry Teacher,” I replied and continued eating. When we were through, before Mother Mushet got up from the table she said to me,

“And Miss Grant, remember your essay must have details. I want to know the specific things your mother do that causes you to love her.”

My mouth dropped, and I suddenly felt as if food was lodged in my throat, constricting my breathing. I remained sitting at the table for some time, and then I pulled myself together and went and washed the dishes. That night as I prepared for bed, I went into the closet, reached into the back, and pulled out the small chest that belonged to Granny, and in which I knew there was a picture of my mother that Granny saved. I rummaged through the trunk, found the envelop and pulled out a stack of pictures, some of myself at various stages of my life that I couldn't even remember when they were taken, and then I found what I was looking for: the picture of my mother, taken just before she first left for England: She is standing by a tree, holding her bicycle in front of her as if she is about to go for a ride. I peered at the picture, and not satisfied with the light in my room, I took it out in the living-room and stood under the bright light and studied the image closely. I had the same unwavering eyes, pouty, stubborn mouth and flat forehead as my mother. Tears ran down my cheeks as the memories danced alive in my mind: all those letters Mama wrote, telling me how much she both missed and loved me; the three times she wrote and told her she wanted me to come and live with her in England, but I had been determined to stay with Granny. The second time Mama sent my brother and sister, she had sent a ticket for me to return to England with them. I had torn it up, and Mama had written, both angry and disappointed that I didn't want to join her, and swore that she was never going to send for me again, and she didn't. But still she wrote me and told me how much she loved me, every birthday and Christmas. All of this I had allowed myself to forget in my anger, all of it. I clutched the picture of Mama to my bosom, and with my hand over my mouth, I sobbed for all the mean things I said that I would never be able to take back, but mostly for what I would never be able to recover, my Mama's love. After I cried out my pain, I went and got a thin, blue airmail letter and wrote my brother and sisters, asking for their forgiveness, and inviting to come and visit me whenever they like, and ending, “after all we are sisters and brother, from the same mother, and there is nothing stronger than that bond.”

I placed Mama's picture on the side-table, intending to buy a frame for it the following day. I realized then that I had a whole lot to learn about love and forgiveness, and hopefully, Mother Mushet will continue to help show me the way. Then I remembered that I had a composition to write for Teacher that was due the next day about why I loved my mother. I hurriedly went in search of paper.

REVIEWS

THE CULTURE STRUGGLE

Michael Parenti
Seven Stories Press, 2006

Citizens of the U.S. have grown accustomed – to the point of resignation – to news reports of a “culture war” that, we are told, pits “liberals” against “conservatives” in a battle over the nation’s core values. This political contest, billed as a struggle of titans (Christians against secular judges, moral righteousness against libertinism, etc.), occupies the center ring of the U.S. society of the spectacle with much the same melodrama and mass appeal as a professional wrestling match. The so-called culture war is itself a cultural phenomenon, structured by the same reductive moral dualisms and seductive displays of power as a cage match between the hyper-American Sergeant Slaughter and the morally shady Sheik of Baghdad. In an important sense, the culture war is now a central component of the U.S. mass cultural environment – the greased-up image of a two-sided political dispute ritually performed for public consumption.

Because it represents an entire nation’s politics discrete, the culture war has been waged, ironically, over the heads of cultural critics and cultural studies researchers who worry instead over the narrative designs of Hollywood films, the philosophical dimension of *Seinfeld*, or the aesthetic hybridity of the aerosol artist. Of course, such ongoing forms of cultural criticism, documentation and analysis are significant in that they represent a cultural politics that, over the past three decades, has confronted hierarchical distinctions between “high” and popular culture, eroding and/or overturning obstacles to the recognition of popular sensibilities in the nation’s cultural institutions. But populist maneuvers in university departments, media literacy projects, the art gallery system, and museum exhibits have proven less significant, and less public, for the command and control political economy of the U.S. than has the widely-publicized culture war.

So one reads with a certain satisfaction Michael Parenti’s *The Culture Struggle*, a slim but barbed contribution to the ever-present debates over culture and cultural criticism in the U.S. The title of the book is the first sign that Parenti’s notion of cultural politics is less rarefied than what is typically engaged in a graduate seminar. As Parenti explains, his title is an English translation of the nineteenth century German coinage “Kulturkampf,” an explanation that serves to ground historically his own recognition of the political work of culture while at the same time suggestively linking right-wing U.S. nativist belligerents like Patrick Buchanan (who publicly declared “culture war” at the Republican National Convention in 1992) with a Ger-

manic tradition of authoritarianism. The second sign of Parenti's cultural politics is that his definition of the key term "culture" – i.e., as "the customs, values, and accumulated practices of a society, including its language, art, laws, and religion," which operate as "an arena of conflict as well as consensus" – borrows directly from the early twentieth century Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In the kind of pointed and accessible language one expects from an opinion essay published in the newspaper, Parenti follows up on his definition with a series of short, critical discussions covering a wide array of topics, including: culturalist vs. materialist explanations of human behavior; cultural commodification and its effects on the circulation of ideas and images; psychiatry and social control; cultural relativism and cultural imperialism; patriarchal customs, rape, racism, the institution of heterosexual marriage, new age spirituality and individualism, and the dominant standard of "objectivity" in the mass media.

For many, the list of topics covered in his arguments is no more novel than his definition of culture. What departs from the norm is that his arguments defending gay rights and women's control of their bodies, attacking U.S. imperialism and corporate control of the publishing industry and political system, and exposing the ideological implications of religious doctrine and medical practices, are articulated as a coherent cultural intervention instead of planks in a political party platform. Parenti's cultural intervention is a double-edged one, cutting hard against the cultural discourses of right-wing hegemony in the U.S. (variously theocratic, elitist, and racist claims on the general culture that, in effect, provide political cover and legitimacy for corporate capitalism), while also dissecting a number of debilitating assumptions about what culture is and does - debilitating, that is, for a progressive politics. The principal assumption of this kind is that questions of culture and policy occupy distinct spheres of debate, or as Parenti puts it, that "culture is to be treated as mutually exclusive of, and even competitive with, political economy."

In fact, Parenti's discussion is most useful, and most provocative, in the way that he collapses together several ongoing debates that are conventionally engaged at a significant remove from one another: debates about culture and agency, about national values, about so-called "high" and mass culture, and debates about the political direction of U.S. society and its economy. One indication of the reigning compartmentalization of debates about culture is that only the last of these is readily recognizable by most people as a political debate. Competing notions regarding the relevance of culture to political action are mostly recognized and championed by small intellectual minorities, such as when Marxists wrangle over whether culture is always reducible to ideology, or whether ideology is simply epiphenomenal or, in

contrast, might be a factor capable of driving historical events. Likewise, discrepant definitions of culture often resonate mainly with aging disciplinary tribalisms operating within the university system – where Anthropology, Art History, and Literary Studies have historically dug their trenches in the muddy semantics of “culture.”

In *The Culture Struggle*, the atomizing intellectual division of labor with respect to culture is eliminated, and its attendant territorialisms ignored. Parenti is less interested with cultural theory than he is with cultural practices and institutions. Led by his interest in a counter-hegemonic politics, he treats the values implicit to institutional contexts instead of “reading” discrete cultural texts or objects. While consistently turning to political economy as the best leverage for critical evaluation of dominant values, implicit to the values that motivate him is the presence of the human body and its needs, and its unequal treatment in societies around the globe. In order to demonstrate that the medical profession is not immune to prejudicial cultural norms, Parenti offers as evidence a litany of assaults on the body that range from hysterectomies to surgical removal of healthy breasts, to lobotomies, all “justified” by historically shifting standards for health and sanity. In order to demonstrate that dominant cultural norms are never truly consensual, he describes practices of female genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East and a patriarchal global rape culture that reveals how “humans can be tyrannized by social convention.” Logically, in order to find universal ground for his critiques, he turns to basic human rights as values that transcend local cultural differences. “There is nothing unique about the oppressions suffered by the more vulnerable elements of any society,” he reminds the reader, as he argues against what he views as the ethical passivity of cultural relativism.

There are awkward moments to the book’s arguments, usually a consequence of Parenti’s parsimonious use of examples. In one such instance, he adduces the George W. Bush administration’s Orwellian-sounding “New Freedoms Commission On Mental Health,” which called for mandated universal mental health assessment, as an illustration of some of the ways that medical science is driven by political and economic interests. “According to critics, the mass screening was a pharmaceutical industry scheme to rope in customers and expand sales,” Parenti reports. But then he adds “Screening the entire population would also give authorities an opportunity to medicate large numbers of private citizens, and possibly gain a new level of control over politically troublesome personages.” Because he fails to identify who the critics are, or to make explicit the connections between the Bush administration and corporate lobbyists for large pharmaceutical companies, this example runs the risk of smacking of conspiracy theory

for those unfamiliar with the details of the policy discussion. Similarly, an attempt at the end of the book to short-hand an explanation of how standards of “objectivity” arise from cultural hegemony comes across as nearly text-book paranoia: “The very efficacy of opinion manipulation rests on the fact that we do not know we are being manipulated.” Readers already familiar with the concept of hegemony, and with critical studies of mass communication, will understand what the author intends by this. But for others, these will possibly be moments that undermine the persuasiveness of Parenti’s broader view.

Another weakness of the book, alluded to in the reference to professional wrestling above, is a failure to consider in a more detailed fashion the ideological functions for a mass mediated society of the so-called culture war itself. This omission may occur because Parenti views the de-politicization of culture as the greater ideological threat. Nonetheless, if one recognizes in the simplistic bifurcation of values by U.S. culture warriors a convenient reflection of the nation’s less-than-representative two-party political system, it does seem to matter *how* culture is politicized. There is, of course, little room for Parenti (or many other Americans alienated by two-party control, for that matter) in a Punch-and-Judy show of “liberals” and “conservatives.” Furthermore, mass media spectacles serving as fodder in the culture war, like the obsessive coverage in 2005 of the Terry Schiavo affair, often construct narratives of personal tragedy and intrigue that distract and immobilize public attention to matters of collective interest, in effect selectively politicizing culture. The drama of Schiavo’s wasted body and feuding family turned the nation’s eyes toward the “culture of life” and away from the U.S. Congress’ proposed cuts to the Medicaid budget that partially subsidized her end-of-life care. It seems that while the analytic optic of cultural studies would indeed benefit from Parenti’s insistence on political economy as the governing context for an examination of culture, his own perspective might do well to integrate some of the critical “reading” tools and reflexivity of cultural studies.

Despite minor weaknesses, however, in the final analysis the reader will find important insights as much between the lines as in the concrete details of Parenti’s arguments. In the culture struggle, right-wing elites and the social movements they have constructed have been better Gramscians than the fragmented on-again, off-again coalition of organized labor, left intellectuals, single-issue professionals and center-left politicians clustered loosely around a progressive politics concerned with defending the working body, the natural environment, and a democratic culture. The right has consistently conflated a reactionary cultural politics with an elitist political economy, thereby enabling an authoritarian cultural reformation of American life cut to the

measure of the oligarchic command structures of neoliberalism. (The reigning economic model finds its mass cultural apotheosis in working people's easy identification with the flaying of the body in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Jesus Christ.") In contrast, the other end of the political spectrum has organized little more than sporadic, uncoordinated and isolated responses to the right wing's "long march through the institutions."

A Gramscian like Parenti would undoubtedly agree that material circumstances have an important role to play in the imbalance of social forces in U.S. society, and would also view the uneven success of progressive politics as partly symptomatic of the rarity of truly "organic" progressive intellectuals in an institutional environment that strips away multi-sectoral commitments in favor of a highly differentiated professional division of labor (academic disciplines in the universities, single-issue mandates in the non-governmental realm, non-profit status and private donor influence among public interest organizations). But the tepid and fragmentary struggle in favor of basic economic and environmental guarantees, social equality, and a more horizontal cultural production, is also partly a function of a fragmented and rarefied relation to the political problem of culture. Even as graduate students and university faculty in the humanities continue to debate distinctions between "high" and "low," canonical and subaltern, modern and postmodern culture, policy changes governing student loans, the cost of higher education, the viability of the public school system, and real wages for the working class will pre-determine who has a seat at the table for their discussions. Hopefully Parenti's book will appear there before too long.

Bruce Campbell

MR: MAGICAL REALISM (2 VOLS.)

Kamau Brathwaite
Savacou North, 2002

(available from <http://www.savacou.com>)

BORN TO SLOW HORSES

Kamau Brathwaite
Wesleyan University Press, 2005

Immediately preceding the index of his monumental 2-volume study *MR: Magical Realism* – a point that would be termed a “conclusion” in a text less open, less richly ramifying than this one – Kamau Brathwaite admonishes the reader: “and that you recognize, long before you reach this moment, that what we say above of MR, is what you might/shd say of ‘literary criticism’ generally – and of life – specifically! – pervasion/perVISION of the palimpsest” (699). A palimpsest can be considered to be an inscribed space where world becomes text and text world; where signs of life, signs of the times, and signs on the page are superimposed such that to speak of one such sign inevitably entails speaking of another. The pervasion of such a domain would therefore involve a quantum consciousness, what Brathwaite calls, following Cuban anthropoet Joel James Figarola, the “principle of multiple representation,” the equivalent of an allover painting in space and time, shape and motion, requiring a commensurate “perVISION” in order to articulate the moments through which this process of layering – at once cultural, historical, existential, and ultimately cosmic – develops and (however unevenly and jaggedly) manifests itself in world and word.

That Brathwaite should affirm the applicability of a similar mode of under/overstanding to both literary criticism and life – more, that he should reverse the conventional formulation in which life is referred to in “general” terms and one’s individual pursuits, intellectual or otherwise, are always “specific” – is of particular importance at a moment in which those involved with literary studies have been grappling, at great length and in numerous forums, with the increasing marginalization if not outright irrelevance of their “discipline” as it is presently constituted. Brathwaite dares to insist that literatures matter and will continue to matter; however, the necessary historical urgency, particularly at the current crossroads of deepening crisis, that must inspire their study and making, has been occluded within the academy by “a kind of arid and often avidly signalled ‘postmodernism’ [...] which not surprisingly says v/ little < of what [...] are/shd be ‘post-modern’ problems and concern(s) of race [...], viral diseases affecting the

soul/body/dreamlife of the person/ality, the soul/body/dreamlife of the culture, the consequences of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, THE FALL OF ROME...” (88). Postmodernism’s postcolonial franchise, thoroughly niche-marketed in the academies of the Christian West, also comes in for Brathwaite’s criticism as a way of commodifying and hence neutralizing insurgent creativities and epistemologies contributed by the global South in order to maintain unshaken “a world still structured to the opposite” (89). *MR* may thus be seen not only as an intervention against established discourses and counter-discourses, but also, and much more importantly, as an affirmation of a general need to think in vaster, more encompassing – yet always grounded and specific – terms, as expressed in the work’s subtitle “a black Caribbean blues perspective on post-cosmological disruption and redemption in the new millennium” (11).

While Brathwaite is best known (or, as he would wryly put it, “unknown”) for his poetry, his literary criticisms and historical investigations have been indispensable elements of his overall body of work, though with the exception of the essay collection *Roots* and his recently reissued *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica: 1770-1820*, these writings are not readily accessible. (In this regard, the advent of a Web site for Brathwaite’s own Savacou Publications is a positive development.) Yet to speak of Brathwaite’s “critical” and “poetic” work as if they were separate tracks or lines of force is to mistake the nature of his fundamentally comparatist and genuinely (not just rhetorically) interdisciplinary project. In a biographical note appended to *Born to Slow Horses*, his most recent collection of poetry, Brathwaite groups *MR* with the work he produced in what he calls his “Time of Salt,” a catastrophic period in his life marked by death, cataclysm, loss, and assault, out of which came the “Sycorax video style” of variable-font and computer-graphic presentation in and through which his work has been voiced for the past 17 years. However, since in its subtitle *MR* also speaks of a “redemption” following the “disruption,” and since its concern is with examining and expanding the term “magical realism” as at once a conceptual path towards, encounter with, and means through which to express the extent and depth of such disruption and the plenitude of such redemption, it can also be seen as a bridge-text or, to borrow Wilson Harris’s image, a bone-flute towards the “postSalt” work “marking...a significant transboundary development” (*Born to Slow Horses*, 143).

MR is nothing if not “transboundary” in its concerns. Beginning as a preliminary exploration of a problematic in Caribbean literature – why the dominant trend in modernist Anglophone Caribbean writing appears to favor a starkly realistic mode of expression, whereas the literature of the “Hispanic” Caribbean opens up into a “Doradean,” more fantastic

and magically real domain – it gradually works towards undermining this binarism: even as Brathwaite acknowledges that there have been distinctive literary styles formed out of specific historical conjunctures and out of the very colonial languages themselves and the way they have been taken up, countered, and transformed by those on whom they were imposed, he sees the “magical realist” mode beginning to enter Anglophone Caribbean literatures with greater frequency and impact, acknowledging and analyzing Wilson Harris’s writings as crucial beginnings in that direction . As Brathwaite himself straightforwardly declares near the beginning of *MR*, “what follows is a record of what who how i learnin” (80), and generously and ambitiously conceived as it is, the entire endeavor is explicitly intended as a “walk in progress” (7) or a “working paper” (9), i.e., an occasion for discussion and an open (even, as he puts it, “random-access”) text reflecting the larger open-system paradigm towards which he is working.

Readers versed in contemporary Latin American literatures may well be wary of a work that grounds itself in a term as commercially compromised with bestsellerdom as “magical realism” has become in recent years. One thinks of Severo Sarduy’s gibe that magical realism was the worst realism of all. And yet, Sarduy’s definition, in *Written on the Body*, of Cuba as “not a synthesis, a syncretic culture, but a superposition” would not be out of place in Brathwaite’s work. In homage to T.S. Eliot, whom Brathwaite nicknames “Salt” and frequently cites as a poetic forebear, one could say of “magical realism” that it is among those “words [that] strain, / Crack and sometimes break, under the burden / Under the tension” and “Will not stay still”. For it soon becomes clear that Brathwaite’s conception of magical realism goes much deeper than those expounded by any of his predecessors, including Alejo Carpentier, whom he faults in passing for an old-fashioned Europeanizing attitude (“strangely patronizing to the very landscape[s] of his inspiration” [78]) in his construction of the “marvelous real.”

At the outset, Brathwaite quotes Chilean poet Cecilia Vicuña’s definition of magical realism as “not a phrase at all, [but] a conflagration” (30), to show that readers need to divest themselves of the various preconceptions and stereotypes that have made of the term a mere entry in the lexicon of literary terms, and to enter a state of “negative capability” (“of OPEN- / NESS & readiness” [40]) through which, rather than grasping at ultimately inconclusive definitions, explanations, and clarifications, they can apprehend/imagine the full horror and glory of the “conflagration,” its root in historical process and violent encounter, and how other ways of seeing emerged from its flames. In the second volume, Brathwaite provides, by way of retrospective summary, a taxonomy of magical realism’s lineaments: “(1) disruption of cosmos [...] (2) the astonishment appearance of

(new) lwa to heal &/or redeem the catastrophe [...] (3) the reconstitution of the fragments of catastrophe into ?new shapes [...] (4) new ?carnival technique(s) art(s) perceptuals to MAP & compass this re/memory re/new [...] (5) a muse/ic of the future-culture continuum & oumfó” (452). As is evident, these characteristics do not make up a linear list but rather a series of moments in a creative and liberatory process, all of which Brathwaite copiously illustrates through examples drawn from the entire spectrum of human endeavor, but notably through an anthology of texts from writers as diverse and (ultimately) comparable as Laurence Sterne and Erna Brodber, Lewis Carroll and Toni Morrison. (*MR* may be considered as an innovation in the genre of the commonplace book, in that the quotations meaningful to the compiler are not simply presented verbatim but actively intervened into and commented upon as part of the actual unfolding of the cited text and even, as in the case of translated quotations from Carpentier and Gabriel García Márquez, retranslated into nation-language to endow them with other resonances of meaning.)

Brathwaite’s famous couplet from his poem “The Sahell of Donatello,” “Rome burns / & our slavery begins” can thus be seen as an example of the “disruption of cosmos” that births the magical realist impulse. A major element of Brathwaite’s exposition involves the enumeration and discussion of “continental culture paradigms” as manifestations of cultural/civilizational “organons.” Each of these paradigms “carries a variation of cosmos w/in it/them which account(s) for their difference or, as we shd perhaps now say, *relativity*” {131}. Developing and extending an argument made initially in his essay “Missile and Capsule,” which explained Europe’s invasive history in terms of the missile, and African cultures in terms of a common circular or capsular paradigm, Brathwaite identifies the cenote as similarly characteristic of the Americas, the pagoda of Asia, and the boomerang and wave map of Australasia/Micronesia, and proceeds to discuss them as exemplars of their respective cosmoses. It is through the radical, often cataclysmic disruption of cosmos – occasioned by slave trades, wars, invasions, colonialisms, imperialisms, but also by such moments as September 11, 2001, to which Brathwaite, as a witness, dedicates much poetic insight both in *MR* and in *Born to Slow Horses* – that, as part of traversing the pain, trauma, and Middle Passage limbo such seismic upheavals bring with them, new forms of expression emerge, new paths towards a possible redemption, which Brathwaite, as he has done elsewhere in his critical work, locates in the vast range of cultural practices – music, dance, religion, writing, song, story, gesture, nation-languages, voices -- formed in the crucible of the Plantation Americas. By way of mapping out what a new, reconstructed and reconstitutive cosmos might be, Brathwaite devises his own complex chart (261-262) organized according to the principles of the “African/vo-

doun/santería tradition, which // increasingly influences my procedures” (263), wherein “the movement is...from North/sky light to DOWN the *oumfó* (FOUNDATION) and often proceeds (TRAVELLIN) through the sea/mirror/lembe of the organon SOUTH.” In short, he asks those of his readers in need of such reorientation (and who among “us” today is not in such need?) to take account of new/old spaces like the *oumfó* (the praisehouse or dwelling place of revelation in Haitian vodou), not a “center” in the hierarchical, controlling sense of the word, but a domain, located at the crossroads of the time-space continuum, where humans can potentially realize themselves in their fullest capacities, in constant open dialogue with and shaping of a living organon of radiant and radiating energy as active force and memory. By stressing santería/vodoun as a methodology, an intellectual as well as spiritual practice, Brathwaite rescues such African-based knowledge systems from the exoticizers, cultists, and commodifiers and locates them as “NOMMONATING” elements in “(NEW) KINDS OF ENVISIONING/REVISIONING” (39).. A poem in *Born to Slow Horses*, “Lwa,” dramatizes the gnosis welling up from the moment of spirit-possession with perhaps even more driving, radiant power than his earlier “Angel Engine”: “If this is all / i have // If this is all // i have / i can travel no farther // you must pour / you must pour / you must pour // me out / so the god can enter the silver / so the god can enter the river // you must spill / me into the crack / (ed) ground // i am blood / i am pebble / root hairs // and the dust of the thunder’s room” (59-60).

Proper consideration of *MR*, beyond the spatial confines of a review, would require almost another book in itself, so rich and expansive are its perceptions. Acknowledging its status as a working paper, I would like to point out a couple of areas that appear to me in need of further exploration (in addition to those that Brathwaite himself has designated in the text). I am not sure that cenotes – which appear to have emerged as “culture paradigms” at a relatively late, even declining period of Mayan civilization, and in specific locations like Yucatan – can be generalized to all of the Americas. At least in a Mesoamerican context, pyramids would seem more appropriate images. In another comparative context, it would be interesting to consider Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s baroque “Primero sueño,” with its magnificently resonant opening “Piramidal” and its conclusion in a Phaëton-like fall from sleep into the diurnal, through Brathwaite’s magical-realist prism. Indeed, the baroque of the Americas receives only passing mention in the essay, although a project that examined magical realism and the (neo)baroque as two moments in a larger process (rather than as opposing literary-artistic schools) merits undertaking. And on a strictly literary-history level, the associations of Latin American and Hispanophone Caribbean literature with “Doradean” fantasy and dream, while certainly applicable to a specific

moment of its development, need to be reconsidered in light of the recent turn towards the “blistering voiceprints” of so-called dirty realism among (for example) Cuban writers like Pedro Juan Gutiérrez and Ena Lucía Portela, and Colombians like Fernando Vallejo and Jorge Franco, and the mocking rejection by many young Latin Americans of Macondo in favor of “McOndo” as a more accurate description of the ruined neo-liberal world they inhabit.

Yet and still, the primacy Brathwaite accords to the need to re-name, to create space for such re-naming, and to revelation in and through the word and its sounds (and sounds and their words) compels immediate and permanent attention. For, as he puts it on his cover note to *MR*, “w/out the act and art of imagination, the revolution out of Plantation might well remain impossible.” To speak of such revolution – and of the transformed culture it implies – would seem, in such despairing and cynical times as these, to be almost beyond conceiving. Yet Brathwaite’s own personal experiences – as described in his work emanating from his “Time of Salt” – are eloquent evidence of the power of his own imagination to endure years of brutal disruption and dislocation of his life and cosmos and to move into new stages of poetic renewal – rebuilding the *oumfó*. Brathwaite’s recent work, so magnificently present in *Born to Slow Horses*, exemplifies both Edward Said’s aphorism, “Late style is what happens if art does not abdicate its rights in favor of reality,” and Aimé Césaire’s proposition (in “Poetry and Knowledge”): “Poetry is that process which through word, image, myth, love, and humor establishes me at the living heart of myself and of the world.”

The magically real in Brathwaite’s sense is challengingly present on the cover of *Born to Slow Horses*: a photo of a woman’s face, her lips parted, a ring in her nose, and her right eye a blazing flash of light and her left eye a half-moon staring into the camera. The inside back cover flap calls it, “Spirit-Image of Namsetoura...received by the author into his camera, CowPastor, Barbados, April 12, 2000.” The poet, while attempting to take pictures of a spider on his home ground (then as now under siege by the Barbadian Government’s territorial designs on behalf of the tourist industry – see <http://tomraworth.com/wordpress> for the story so far), broke three camera lenses until finally, with a cheap lens, the woman’s picture emerged. What followed is poeticized in “Namsetoura,” as the spirit was/is named. To those still conditioned by the reflexes of rationalism, the photo stands as a challenge, an unmistakable numinous presence whose mystery is that of the entire history of Plantation America to which she was subjected – Cow Pastor stands on the site of a slave burying ground – and of the spiritual and linguistic resources on which she drew for sustenance in this world and what, imprisoned by linear models, we tend to call the “next” (though as

the poem and the vodou traditions that animate it demonstrate, that world is “with” us at all times).

Far from a solemn and portentous poem of ghostly revenants, “Namsetoura” shows the spirit speaking in earthy, downright bawdy tones (as befits one whose resting place is guarded by the trickster spider), even as the poet confesses his inability to do justice to it (“the *salt* of her nationlanguage is *barely* suggested here” [122]). And having been granted admission into her presence, however challenging and chiding her words, the poet would appear to have renewed cause to fight for his piece of earth – not only for himself but for the ancestors inhabiting there. The crack in the space-time continuum that brought Namsetoura to him (rhyming with her “slack” comments and graphic gestures about and around her “bosomtwa”) also grants him a miraculous weapon against the missilic forces that would raze and plow under this place of memory.

It is appropriate that “Namsetoura” should follow the long poem “9/11 / Hawk,” which links a memory of one of Coleman Hawkins’s final performances with the destruction of the Twin Towers, with Hawk rising past and above his illness and blowing glory in the face of death, not only his own but, as Brathwaite indicates in his breathtaking panorama of the world’s disaster, what Guyanese poet Martin Carter called “the terror and the time,” all the atrocities past and present into which the Towers are sucked as if into a black hole. (One of the challenges of reading Brathwaite’s work involves attuning oneself to his simultaneous and allusive presentation of apparently distinct historical epochs in a poetic field, sometimes in a single line or stanza.) In the words of a fireman’s widow, transcribed from a televised memorial tribute to the dead of 9/11, Brathwaite finds an individual voice of grief and perseverance to counterpoint Hawkins’s flowering solo, and moves from there into a compassionate ending that, even as it is haunted by the fragility of the word, of love, of the words/notes of a solo in times of cataclysm, manages to affirm their endurance: “these words of love to sovereign wars of lust / to lose / u // even in the burn- / ing towers of this saxophone / o let me love you love you love you love you // vivid + green + golden // . // *body / body & soul*” (114). What is remarkable is that Brathwaite, in writing about an event as charged and catastrophic as September 11, never falters or descends into easy invocations or laments; his threnody has sufficient range and depth to embrace the dead and welcome them into his presence without using them (as so many would-be poets do) as backdrops for their strictly personal crises. But as his wife “Dream Chad,” whose son was killed in Jamaica by a hit-and-run driver not long before 9/11, laments: “...this ONE DEATH...she keep on saying...is like these ALL” (*MR*, 544).

The senselessness and randomness of violent death, the shadows of gunmen and bombers and other missile-wielders, if they cannot be avoided, must still be comprehended and confronted. That is why Brathwaite's poems of grief and loss are never sentimental – they stand up to death even as they stagger and tremble beneath its burden, and the result is almost unbearably moving. The tears he inspires are more than an existential *lacrimae rerum*, because those “things” are named, given context, brought before our eyes so that, as he demands in *Trench Town Rock*, we have no choice but to “see see see until yu bline.” And from such temporary “blindness” (think of Namsetoura's blind blazing right eye), more profound insight – which has nothing to do with the appalling cliché “closure” and everything to do with spiritual opening – might be born. The sequence “Kumina,” dedicated to his wife after the killing of her son, recreates, with an emotional sensitivity at once delicate and profound, the grief and despair of her middle-passage journey through the limbo of the 21-day mourning period. Here individual bereavement, with the force of a sigh followed by a deep intake of breath, wells up into the natural world and then collapses into the keening absence enveloping the moment: “i am unhappy like the wind & tides are restless rivers / i can't find you. i can't find you. i cannot cannot cannot be console to dreams” (76; the threefold “cannot” seems to plumb deeper chasms with each repetition). And always the crushing weight of oppressive social and political structures to rub salt into the wound: “dem seh because i poor & have no book to haul-out who / inside dis station. an i inn got no song // to sing becau i colour in dis Marcus Garvey country proud an strong / an wrong – yu sun gone out & still yu colour wrong / inn got no i say song” (77). The poem culminates in an evocation of the Jamaican Kumina ritual, with its roots in Kikongo cosmology, which the grieving mother enters through a moment of “door corridor crossroad gateway threshold” (86; in *MR*, Brathwaite accords special importance to liminal spaces leading into the magic real), and which brings her into a meeting with her son's traveling spirit (*nkuyu*): “...one in one & as always w/in him w/in her in her / -- learning himself again to live w/in her wounds” (87). For the envoi of this sequence, Brathwaite returns to the sung words of Miss Queenie, a Kumina queen whose tale of initiation he has often used in his work, and the Kikongo song, echoing in Jamaica down the years, breathes a mournful ancestral blessing on the dead.

Dream Chad's journey's end/beginning is also associated with a specific place of origin – Kongo through the Kumina ritual but more immediately “the hills / of beginning again of Trelawny home again before / she will be able to go-on again. Ulster Spring Healing / & Zion & Byall Thistle SweetBottom OleGermanTown / into Maroon Town & the Accompong of the voices” (88). In an era where much is made of “routes” over “roots” and the “hybrid” is accorded pride of place over the “native,” Brathwaite's

insistence on place and ground might be – indeed has been – dismissed as a throwback. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that theories of a gleaming, antiseptic (and often corporate) transnationality have tended to be elaborated in the elite universities of the metropole. Brathwaite, while certainly part of that metropole insofar as he has taught at New York University for the past fifteen years, has always positioned himself as singer and theorist of a Caribbean that is not a theoretical construct but a region people dwell in, struggle in, live and die in, even as they have been subjected to unending historical depredation by imperial powers and slavocracies past and present (see for example “Guanahani,” where the specter of Guantánamo erupts into the poem as a reminder of the prisons and plantations lurking amidst the beauty of the archipelago). As well, the Caribbean possesses names, places, and dynamic cultural traditions that must continually be remembered and asserted against the rising tide of uniformity and its violent foundations. The range of linguistic registers Brathwaite deploys in his work reminds the reader that there are not one but many nation languages, as witness the poem “Days,” written in Bajan speech, Dream Chad’s Jamaican voice, and the quicksilver shifts, often within a single line, from “standard” English to nation language. The poem “Mountain,” a tribute to the Jamaica where he lived and worked for so many years, exemplifies, in its symphonic grandeur, Brathwaite’s care for the land he and others walk on, and the homage he pays to those who have sent him on his path as well as those who accompany him on his poetic journeys. Let us at least know how to accept the gifts he has bestowed on us in these marvelous, forever new writings, and pay heed to his words as we continue our quest for the worlds that dwell in the place(s) we call home: “for we have love here beyond so much loss. beyond any previous / premonitions or promptings along dry-river beds. among huge / white boulders long deserted by water. but still waitin still watchin // still holding on to the cool photograph of the mind / standing barefoot here on the land. sitting still in the wind. bend / -ing our soft ripple backs. washing along fern gullies of water // little smooth-stone spirit footsteps across slippery rivers / bridges of spidery swinging suspending perilous crossings / MavisBank Rockfort Mocho Runaway Bay walking the dust of the morning” (138).

Christopher Winks

AFFLICTED POWERS:

CAPITAL AND SPECTACLE IN A NEW AGE OF WAR

Retort (Iain Boll, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts)

Verso. 2005

It seems obvious that the Bush administration's response to the events of 9-11 has ushered in a new era in American global power, one marked by blatant disdain of all views but the administration's own and an eagerness for military action that insists on its right to violate national and international law, including that regarding torture and trial by jury. On the other hand, given the many U.S. wars since WWII, it can be easier to feel we are in a new era than it can be to define precisely what's new about it, or to identify both the particular dangers of this era and any new possibilities for resisting it. *Afflicted Powers* attempts to define this new era while showing its relation to previous eras both of U.S. power and world capitalism more generally. While its conclusions are not always convincing, there's much to be learned in about contemporary global political conditions in this compact book.

The writers use as a theoretical basis the Situationist concept of the Society of the Spectacle, most famously defined by Guy Debord, in which capitalist control is not determined solely by military and economic power but also through control of media images and ultimately of the concept of time. Yet if the Society of the Spectacle has been an expanding nexus of power for many decades, one whose development was prepared over several centuries, a question has to be raised regarding differences in its functioning now. What are the causes of many people's sense that the world is worse off in 2006 than it was six years ago if, as the book suggests, "What is new in the current dark circumstances still largely eludes analysis (18)"?

The four authors of *Afflicted Powers* answer that question in a series of chapters that mix both theory and history impressively, paring down some of the often windy abstractions found in a book like Hardt and Negri's *Empire* by concentrating more specifically on present details. Some chapters focus on overarching changes in contemporary uses of the spectacle, while others focus on particular political and cultural problems of the moment: the role of oil, war in Iraq, changes in the U.S. relationship to Israel, and the history and current state of what the authors call "Revolutionary Islam," in which they include not simply Islamist groups which have taken up arms against the West but also a broad range of people who in varying degrees sympathize with them.

A basic difficulty in contemporary leftist political analysis regards suggestions about change. Gloom and doom scenarios, all too tempting, are also too easy, yet many calls to action come off as idealistic or general. *Afflicted Powers* avoids this trap in its introduction by highlighting that it is a trap, and suggesting that necessary hope for change must also be necessarily tentative. The book takes worldwide protests beginning in February and March 2003 against the coming Iraq war as a sign of possibility for world scale resistance not only to the war but to capitalist control more generally. But it also acknowledges that those protests ultimately failed. *Afflicted Powers* tries to build on the energy of those protests while never pretending that they were victories.

The first full chapter focuses on a definition of what is new about current global conditions but seems only partly convincing. The authors make the solid if unsurprising case that the attacks of 9-11 were not simply military but also spectacular, that is, designed to be effective on the level of imagery that could be broadcast around the world. They argue that in the realm of the image, the United States suffered a defeat on 9-11, and just as importantly, was forced to witness that defeat repeatedly through the replaying of its image. Pictures of the falling twin towers make clear, they say, that the “historical monopoly of the means of destruction by the state is now at risk” (31). The writers rightly refuse to make even a perverse heroism out of the attacks, insisting both that they were obscene and failed. But they also point out that the attacks were not isolated or random, but a fundamental part of a history of atrocities caused by actors on various political sides that stretch back through the whole era of U.S. world control inaugurated by the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. Still, their argument that “never before have spectacular politics been conducted in the... ‘historical knowledge’ of defeat” ignores that the U.S. spectacle has always been linked to the fear of defeat and finds ways to use it (37). One can debate the extent to which the U.S. was more defeated or threatened by 9-11 than by, for instance, Pearl Harbor, the Korean War, the revolution in Cuba, or the Vietnam War, but the fear of defeat has been a constant element of U.S. manipulation of spectacular imagery. There are no significant differences between telling people to hide under desks in case of nuclear attack or to buy gas masks and duct tape to prepare for terrorist assaults. And while one could perhaps argue that the possibility of U.S. defeat is now legitimately more real than it has been before, the authors don’t do so, for the most part probably because it isn’t true.

The book does a better job in the following chapters. While making clear the important role that oil played in the Iraq invasion, the authors reject any single cause theories or even financially-justified rationales for the inva-

sion. Impressively, though, they also reject generalities about multiple causes and look instead at the specific ways in which oil was not the only impetus for war. Sifting through these causes, the authors argue that recent world events (9-11 and many others) had increasingly undermined the idea that spectacular empire could be maintained solely through “agreement (between governments and corporations)” and, feeling genuinely threatened, the world’s neoliberal leaders lashed out to make clear to everyone that they were still in control (74). This kind of lashing out, the authors suggest, is an essential and even cyclical feature of spectacular politics. The argument, insightful in many ways, still generalizes too much about the specific actions of the Bush administration. It’s just as possible that current U.S. leaders have resorted so consistently to the crudest elements of their power—war and primitive accumulation (i.e. the direct seizure of resources belonging to others)—primarily because they are crude leaders. But the book does show there was no thought-through financial logic (however grim) at work in the war that made it a good source of oil-industry profit, or any other kind. The authors may overestimate the long run losses of key players in the oil industry, given recent statements after the publication of the book of record oil industry profits. Nonetheless it seems likely that nobody has gained much more from the war than they might have by other methods. It’s far more clear how much they have lost.

The following chapter discusses the liability that Israel has become for U.S. foreign policy. The suggestion that the U.S. may have turned to Iraq to distract the world from its failures with Israel seems overreaching, but the chapter does a good job of showing just how failed U.S. policy on Israel has been and how those multiple failures have themselves become crucial elements of current global realities. Indeed the chapters on “Revolutionary Islam” and “Modernity and Terror” show that those who have recently taken up arms against the U.S. have done so by taking advantage of its weaknesses. The desperate economic realities of the countries from which these people come have led them to take up weapons (both literal and, like the internet, spectacular) left in the debris of the capitalist marketplace. Real cultural differences notwithstanding, the book claims that current Islamist enemies of the U.S. are just as thoroughly invested in (and misled by) the power of the spectacle as U.S. citizens, struggling with a “mixture of atavism and new-fangledness” (180). On the whole, the authors do an excellent job of analyzing the ideologies propagated by revolutionary Islam by attempting to “balance a loathing of the ideal...and a comprehension of the forces that gave rise to it” (174). Only once or twice do they seem to credit this vanguardist rage with more coherence than it may possess. For instance, when they say that “What revolutionary Islam cannot stomach... is the idea of a human existence without a present tense,” the emphasis

seems slightly too theoretical (184). Millions of people who share rage and hopelessness are still unlikely to share an understanding of exactly why they feel that way, even if they do all believe that they know who caused it.

Afflicted Powers is finally pessimistic about the chances of creating a “real hostility” to the Society of the Spectacle rather than a hostility that is, like al-Qaida, primarily a deadly function of its condition (180). If the goal of the book is a world in which disenfranchised citizens have more control over their lives, such a possibility hardly seems closer in the early years of the 21st century, except perhaps in pockets and moments. Still, the desire for that possibility is held by many people willing to speak out and work for it, as worldwide war protests made clear. Contrasting those people with not simply the power of the spectacle but also with its recent spectacular failures suggests just how many people may understand—and how well—that whatever the military and economic circumstances of the current world, the self-regarding spectacle may be more transparent, and transparently empty, than ever. Whether that’s wishful thinking or not, *Afflicted Powers* also shows, on some level against its intentions, that what’s most new about the current Society of the Spectacle are the purposes and methods of the people who are currently taking up arms for and against it. The very crudity of their assaults, it turns out, reflects more than a little on the limits of their power.

Mark Wallace

THE POEMS OF CATULLUS

Translated by Peter Green
University of California Press, 2005

“In bed I read Catullus. It passes my comprehension why Tennyson could have called him ‘tender.’ He is vindictive, venomous, and full of obscene malice. He is only tender about his brother and Lesbia, and in the end she gets it hot as well.” So observed Harold Nicholson, in his *Diaries and Letters 1945-1962*. His view of Catullus, the infamous Roman poet (?84-54 B.C.E), is certainly borne out by Peter Green’s new translation, though leavened with a certain malevolent humor: “I didn’t, god help me, think it mattered whether / I put my nose to Aemilius’ mouth or ass, neither being cleaner or dirtier than the other” (#97)—a typically bawdy poem, but hardly “tender.” Even today, when we think we’ve seen and heard it all, the poetry of Catullus still shocks and delights.

Catullus thrived on mocking the flaws and foibles of most that came before his satiric gaze, even Julius Caesar, a friend of his father’s. Caesar must have been fairly think-skinned to tolerate such public ridicule: “I’ve no great urge to find favor with you, Caesar, nor to / discover whether, as a man, you’re black or white” (#93), the last line referring to Caesar’s sexual preferences. Catullus is most famous, though, not for his political commentary, but for his love/hate poems to his beloved Lesbia: “that Lesbia whom alone Catullus worshipped / more than himself, far more than all his kinsfolk-- / now on backstreet corners and down alleys / jacks off Remus’s generous descendants” (#58A). Many scholars, including Green, believe Lesbia to have been Clodia Metelli, an ambitious woman ten years older than Catullus. She happened to have been the wife of a Roman aristocrat, whose death Cicero attributed to his adulterous wife’s poison. But this happened after she and Catullus parted ways, after the poet’s death. Catullus died at the young age of thirty, possibly, Green thinks, of tuberculosis. We’re lucky that Catullus’ poetry has survived, but one can’t help but wonder what Catullus might have written had he lived another thirty years.

Given how many translations of Catullus in English can be found, it’s fair to ask if we really need yet another. But a new translation of any work holds the promise of bringing the reader a new and deeper understanding of the poems, and perhaps the poet. Green adds this caveat, however: “No one in their right mind (except egomaniac translators and fundamentally lazy readers) would actually prefer a translation, of poetry in particular, to the original.” For those of us who are “lazy” or unlearned in Latin, Green

gives us a feisty, unabashedly profane, and “bitchy” (to quote the dust jacket) Catullus. His translation, with the Latin facing the English, is also noteworthy for this feature: rather than trying to imitate the rhyme, Green attempts to replicate the meter, which he considers essential for the English reader. To his credit, he usually succeeds at this difficult feat.

As a translator, Green doesn’t shy away from creative solutions, such as employing a term that Catullus could not have known. For example, in yet another poem insulting Julius Caesar (#54), Green has Catullus call the general “super *Duce*,” a word which carries connotations of Benito Mussolini. While it would be impossible for Catullus to invoke *Il Duce*, it works, for Green slyly implies that Caesar’s destruction of the Republic led to the rise of Italian fascism, a jab Catullus no doubt would have made if he could. Green is also unafraid of sexual slang, such as “fuckfests” (#32), though at times his dedication to the meter leads to slightly awkward phrasing: “Up yours both, and sucks to the pair of you” (#16). Again, a creative solution, one that captures the spirit of the original, but it calls too much attention to itself.

Yet Green’s translation, especially when compared to others, reflects his considerable knowledge of the period, of Catullus, and his poetry. Here’s an example of a poem (#59) translated by Green, followed by two other translations, to show the challenges Catullus offers and how widely the translators’ solutions vary:

Rufa, Bologna lady, sucks dear Rufus’ cock—
Menenius’ wife, the one you’ve seen lots of times
out in the graveyards, snitching food off a pyre,
in pursuit of a loaf that’s tumbled from the cinders,
or getting banged by some stubble-chinned corpse burner.

The Latin verb *tunderetur*, Green notes, carries a sexual meaning in this context, thus his choice of “banged” in the last line. Not all translators, however, agree. Here, in a recent translation by David Mulroy (*The Complete Poetry of Catullus*, Univ. Wisconsin, 2002), which also reflects the rhythms of the original, the tone causes the reader to feel sympathy for “Rufa” in the closing lines:

Rufa the Bolognese sucks Rufus.
I mean Menenus’ wife, often seem
Lurking among the graves, grabbing food.
She dives when loaves of bread fall from pyres
and braves the squalid corpse-burners blows.

The two spellings of Menenius/Menus reflect less on the translators, perhaps, than the state of the Catullus texts that survive, but Mulroy's first line sounds flat, and he either misses or doesn't see any sexual quid-pro-quo in the graveyard. I prefer Green's "snitching" to "grabbing" and suspect that the smutty Catullus wouldn't be satisfied with "blows," unless it hinted at the sexual use of the verb "blow."

While Green and Mulroy ignore the rhymes, not all translators feel comfortable doing so. Reney Myers and Robert J. Ormsby (Catullus, E.P. Dutton, 1970), in a translation intended for "American Readers," offer this rhyming version of the same poem:

Bolognese Rufa sucks her Rufus; has a spouse
Menenius. She haunts the local graveyards where
She robs the funeral pyres of food. This goddam louse
Will chase the loaves of bread that roll down from the flames:
The sloppy slave in charge gives her her lumps; he knows those
games.

The rhyme forces Myers and Ormsby to add "This goddam louse," not out of character for Catullus, but skillfully implied in Green's version by tone alone. The last line feels a bit wordy, though Myers and Ormsby do clearly implicate Rufa and the corpse burner in a sexual arrangement, agreeing with Green, whose strengths can clearly be seen in this comparison.

To further the reader's immersion in Catullus, Green offers the read extensive notes on the period, on Catullus, on issues raised by the texts and how other translators and critics have responded to them, and explication on the various meters Catullus employed. At the back of the book, there are helpful notes on each poem, a forty-five page glossary for all the names that appear in the poems, as well as a bibliography for those who wish to do further research on Catullus. It's obvious that Green holds a deep affection for the poetry of Catullus and is doing all he can to make the poet available to another generation of readers—even if they don't know any Latin.

I come away wondering how Catullus would be regarded by Americans if he were living and writing his brilliant, biting, bawdy poems today. Would he be a guest on *The Daily Show*? Write poetic commentary for *Vanity Fair*? Surely he would have a blog, where he would blithely ridicule poets, politicians, and pundits, and it would have thousands of readers, though many would deny ever visiting it, much to the author's publicly professed glee. For despite Catullus's often self-righteous tone, we can sometimes glimpse the man behind the barbed words, and this is the Catullus I find the most

fascinating, who can be seen in this two-lined poem (#85): “I hate and love you. You wonder, perhaps, why I’d do that? / I have no idea. I just feel it. I am crucified.”

This is a book that can make you both cringe and laugh. How often can you say that about a book of poetry?

John Bradley

FRIENDLY ANGER:

THE RISE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN ST. MARTIN

Joseph H. Lake, Jr.

House of Nehesi Publishers, 2004

When one clicks on the official web page for “St. Martin,” one is immediately informed:

The smallest island in the world ever to have been partitioned between two different nations, St. Martin/St. Maarten has been shared by the French and the Dutch in a spirit of neighborly cooperation and mutual friendship for almost 350 years. The border is almost imperceptible, and people cross back and forth without ever realizing they are entering a new country. ...All the same, each side has managed to retain much of the distinctiveness of its own national culture.

Indeed, a series of web sites regale readers with stories of resorts, hotels, beaches, and the like, with no mention that there are people living there, yes, colonized there, working there. *Friendly Anger* gives its readers a window into that other world, the world of diasporic African peoples, the descendants of slaves, and women and men with newer roots, immigrants from other Caribbean islands, African countries, and India, who catch and process the fish, cook and serve the meals, wash the dishes, clean the rooms and make the beds, transport goods by truck and boat, making St. Martin the location for a “perfect holiday in the sun.”

Located in the northeast Caribbean, approximately 150 miles east of Puerto Rico, St. Martin consists of 38 square miles, divided north and south between France and the Netherlands. The southern half is called “Sint Maarten” and is part of the Netherlands Antilles, linked to Curacao and Aruba, while the northern half is incorporated into the French overseas *department* of Guadeloupe. As of 2004, about 33,000 people lived in each half of the island. Columbus himself “discovered” and named St. Martin on his second voyage to the New World, in 1493. Initially populated by agrarian-oriented *Arawak* people, the island was soon taken over by the *Carib* Indians who arrived from South America in Columbus’ wake, but were then subjugated and largely wiped out in the 17th century struggles between the French, English, Dutch, Danes, and Spanish for control of the West Indies. St. Martin was desirable as a trading entrepot and as the site of salt ponds. In 1648 France and the Netherlands agreed to divide the island. The Eu-

ropean colonizers soon introduced African slaves to mine and process the salt and, in the 18th century, to work sugar plantations. After slavery was abolished in the first half of the 19th century, the British imported Chinese and East Indian contract laborers to take the place of the slaves on the plantations that they continued to control. Like other parts of the West Indies, St. Martin became home to a racially mixed community, but, at the same time, this community was divided between two colonial apparatuses, which remain in place to this day.

“The demand for labor that resulted from our being forcibly incorporated into the western capitalist economy and the consequent dialectic of struggle between capital and labor has been the history of the modern Caribbean,” writes Joseph Lake, Jr., in his introduction to *Friendly Anger*. This author stands consciously in the tradition of Caribbean writer-activists like C.L.R. James, George Padmore, and Walter Rodney. His father, Joseph Lake, Sr., publisher, editor, and primary reporter of *The Opinion*, the primary voice of anti-colonialism in St. Martin in the post-World War II period. Lake, Jr., follows in these deep footprints, placing the struggles of transportation and service sector workers within the context of colonialism and anti-colonialism in the turbulent Caribbean of the 1970s.

Despite the relatively small size of this island, the issues faced and confronted by its workers were large and global in nature, offering a veritable microcosm of the challenges facing working people across the globe in this new era of neoliberalism. It is no accident that Lake, Jr.’s narrative account begins in the early 1970s, just as neoliberalism began to replace Keynesianism as the organizing principle of the global economy. With its emphasis on a redistribution of wealth from the bottom and middle of the economic ladder to the top, its new prioritization of the service sector as a source of profits, and its promotion of the global unification of formerly distinct economic networks, such as colonial empires, neoliberalism put new pressures on workers around the world, and in St. Martin. At the same time, the St. Martin workers still had to face the all-too-present legacy of colonialism, from the division of their island into a northern zone controlled by the French and a southern zone controlled by the Dutch, to the very real fact that control over investment policies, labor legislation, and immigration regulations rested in the hands of European states thousands of miles away and their chosen agents on the ground. St. Martin workers faced a combination of colonial and neoliberal challenges which both pushed them into action and made their collective success difficult.

On a political level, St. Martin workers had to organize across national boundaries which were not of their making. They had to organize within

a colonial framework with not one but two European powers, who had long divided them between their spheres of influence. They faced an international boundary which divided their tiny island, turning half of them into the subjects of the French and half into the subjects of the Dutch. It became critical for them to organize as if this boundary did not exist. Lake, Jr.' narrative follows the organization, rise, conflict, and, typically, fall of a series of trans-border labor organizations, the General Workers' Federation of the Windward Islands, the United Federation of the Windward Antilles, the United Labor Front, the Windward Islands Federation of Labor, and the Windward Islands Chamber of Labor Unions. Each was propelled into existence by a particular struggle and the dissatisfaction of the workers in that struggle with their access to solidarity and unity from other island workers. Despite moments of impressive mobilization and solidarity, none of these overarching federations was able to build a long-term, stable, supportive organization, falling prey to the opportunism of leaders, on the one hand, and political repression on the other.

St. Martin workers on both sides of the border lacked the protection of their basic political rights, from the election of their representatives to the making of their laws. They also had to figure out how their workplace struggles related to a struggle for national liberation, on the one hand, and international labor solidarity, on the other. Organizing and organized workers often struggled with their inclinations towards syndicalism, on the one hand, and the entreaties of "independence" oriented political parties, on the other. Some activists sought to participate equally in economic and political struggles, while keeping the organizations of both realms separate. *Friendly Anger* suggests that this problem never got solved, at least not for long, and not to the benefit of rank-and-file workers.

Similarly, the challenge of organizing locally, regionally, and internationally, while met over and over, was never resolved favorably. Lake, Jr., offers a particular critique of the intervention and influence of what he and others call "remote control unions," that is, transnational labor organizations whose primary leadership was based outside St. Martin. Sometimes, these organizations reached out from other Caribbean islands, sometimes from the European metropolises themselves. Often, they wore the guise of international labor solidarity, but Lake, Jr., following the lead of some local labor activists, insists that they subordinated and demobilized local labor at critical moments. All too often over the course of *Friendly Anger's* narrative, St. Martin workers seemed left with the devilish choice between locally, democratically controlled organizations which had little power and regionally or internationally controlled organizations which would not heed local workers' needs and demands.

St. Martin workers also had to devise strategies that could succeed within a tourism-driven economy, which, at least according to employers, was both price-sensitive and based on the provision and performance of emotional labor by “happy” workers. The lead in moments of upheaval typically came from outside the tourist sector, at times from government workers, at times from fishing industry workers, and at times from electrical power utility workers. Hotel and resort workers demonstrated, time and again, their ability and willingness to organize, even to strike, and they were the main foundation of one labor campaign after another, but they were rarely the spark and rarely in the lead.

As the tourist industry, racist and profit-hungry employers encouraged immigration rather than offer expanded job opportunities to native St. Martinites. In the 1980s and 1990s, particularly as economic globalization expanded and tourists poured in from around the United States and Europe, immigrants also arrived. They came from elsewhere in the Caribbean, parts of Asia and Africa, even from the U.S. Unable to muster the political clout to block or even limit this immigration, St. Martin workers faced the challenge of building solidarities within this racially diverse workforce. They used cultural events, holidays, music, dance, and carnival to create, maintain, and extend these solidarities, often with success. The level of exploitation experienced by all workers on the one hand, and the smallness of the island, on the other, encouraged awareness of the fundamental nature of the dividing line between employers and workers.

Friendly Anger details specific organizing campaigns, strikes, and conflagrations which, in their participants’ efforts to gain a living wage, respect, and dignity, engaged these larger issues but also failed to surmount them. The book places these struggles within an historical arc which traces their emergence in the 1970s, their ebbs and flows in the 1980s and 1990s, and their discouraging state in the 21st century.

This is not a heroic tale of David defeating Goliath. It is an impassioned, partisan accounting of powerful, unfeeling employers and distant governments, on the one hand, and internal conflicts, on the other. There are some high points, some moments of organizational achievement and strike victories, but they are largely overshadowed by stories of repression, corruption, and disunity. The limits of these achievements also offer a cautionary tale about the fate of workers in the neoliberal global economy. In Lake, Jr.’s hands and words, St. Martin’s workers prove far more successful at clarifying the challenges of labor organization and struggle in this world than in actually surmounting them. “At the dawn of the 21st century,” he writes, “the workers of St. Martin still did not have everything for which they had

struggled during the formative years of the labor movement. They had, however, fought for everything they had gained.”

Lake, Jr., ends with a compelling plea for union democracy, on the one hand, including local control over local unions, and political democracy on the other, including the decolonization and unification of St. Martin. Victory is far from impossible. He rests his case on the thirty-plus years’ history of workers’ struggle he has painstakingly detailed in *Friendly Anger*. These workers and their interests are well-served by Lake, Jr.’s brief, and those of us interested in justice in the midst of this neoliberal era would do well to learn from these stories.

Peter Rachleff

EVERY GOODBYE AIN'T GONE:

AN ANTHOLOGY OF INNOVATIVE POETRY BY AFRICAN AMERICANS

Aldon Lynn Nielsen and Lauri Ramey, editors

University of Alabama Press, 2006

Every Goodbye Ain't Gone: An Anthology of Innovative Poetry by African Americans is a tonic from start to finish. From the healthily polemical tone of the introduction through the alphabetically organized pleasure-trip sampling of some of the most exciting work salvaged from the wreckage of history in (my) recent memory, the book is a page-turner—though it is sometimes so over-stimulating that it's difficult to actually take in the work except in an almost olfactory, experiential, not too analytical way, at least for the first go-round. From a broken bottle perfume indeed still emanates; the book itself as unopened object glows with energy, an effect partially of its promising heft and its rich, dire and fiery cover art, a mixed-media painting/photo-collage by Theodore Harris in blacks, yellows, reds of flame, blood, politics, history. And what's inside, when book is crack'd, delivers on that intuited energy: a steady, heady attar-rush of words, signs and arrangements that won't stand still, "won't/," in poet Bob Kaufman's words, "stay dead."

It is gratifying to see brought back into print and assembled so many of the poets and poems alluded to in Aldon Nielsen's earlier breakthrough critical books *Black Chant: The Languages of African American Postmodernism* and *Integral Music: Languages of African American Innovation*, which, illuminating and analytically insightful as they have been, often worked as teasers for aesthetic encounters with textual objects that eluded capture; the descriptions and cited snippets of compelling poetry whetted the unfulfillable appetite of the reader of poetry, and there was no easy where to go after those readings to find the motherlode, the full realization of readerly desire promised by these metonymic fragments. So here it is, a relative immersion experience.

Some familiar writers appear in a new light through their juxtaposition with less known work: the selections from Amiri Baraka, for example, are not the standard ones we've seen in other anthologies; likewise for Bob Kaufman, whom I was especially delighted to see so generously represented. In a sense, this counter-normative principle of representation—choosing the least expected and hence in a sense the least "representative"—operates as an animating logic throughout the volume, down to its rationale: this poetry is representative in its very "out-there"ness, in its refusal to play to a putative lowest common denominator as a politics. In this it is most welcome.

The introduction, for example, invokes the pairing of Melvin Tolson and Langston Hughes—typically conceived of in opposition, as the “Europeanized” high modernist versus the “folksy” plainspoken—in a continuum of interests, sympathies and aesthetic practices. Foregrounding the inclusion and acceptance by gate-keeper Hughes of poets subsequently neglected because of their difficulty or implicit refusal to toe a clichéd line of any kind, the editors indict the canon-forming processes of academe and institutionalizing/mainstreaming tendencies of kwik-ee-kultur, rather than the African-American literary community itself, for allowing such strikingly original and pleasing work to go under- or unappreciated for decades—and further, for creating convenient but falsely polarized oppositions that, in effect, dumb down what is actually happening among poets and in writing itself. It is clear that in more than one case, the editors have been unable to track down the poets for permissions or to update biographical information; this is surely a tragedy of cultural and personal neglect that further instanciates the persistent racism of literary institutions and of Literature-making machinery. More theoretical meta-questions, such as, “What exactly constitutes ‘innovative’ writing and where is the demarcation between it and presumed other types of writing?” are not addressed explicitly; rather, the introduction’s suggestion of rapprochement between Langston Hughes and Melvin B. Tolson, and discussion of the latter’s short-sighted dismissal by subsequent scholars of African American poetry (too “Eurocentric” etc), implicitly delineate what is at stake in this history of exclusions, salvagings, mappings and remappings of the wide and varied terrain of recent African American adventures in the Word.

In this generous assemblage of work, I was struck by several recurring themes, most of which have a place in the larger tradition of African American writing, but are presented here in newly illuminating ways because of the “innovative” nature of the writing: lynching; taking public transportation (an apt displacement/ embeddedness of the traditional train-song in otherwise non-traditional poetry); urban and emotional landscapes both interior/subjective and physical/sensory; smalltown memories either menacing and nostalgic; and sound, sound, sound. The inclusion of sound poems—Stephen Chambers’s “Her” (“A-JA-BU// bu-su// sue / san...”), Percy Johnston’s “Blaupunkt” (“Paradiddle, paradiddle, flam-/Wham...”), Bob Kaufman’s much-circulated “Crootey Songo” (“DERRAT SLEDGELATIONS, FLO GOOF BABER”) and Norman Pritchard’s “Junt” (“mool oio clish brodge...”)—partakes of a tradition as well, aptly summarized by Langston Hughes’s letter to Countee Cullen in which he characterizes his own “amusing” “Syllabic Poem” as sly signifying on the seriousness of semantic poetry; one might suppose as well that the tradition is a mimetic enactment of mutilated language, musical exuberance, or the to-white-ears

“unmeaning jargon” (Frederick Douglass’s words), the wails and shouts with which plantation slaves expressed their most intense feelings. For those of us who appreciate self-reflexivity, taking it as an index of seriousness of literary purpose, there is writing about writing’s processes, peculiarities and conventions: punctuation as integral part of expressive culture is on display in Russell Atkins’s and Norman Pritchard’s work (most dramatically in Pritchard’s poem entitled “”):

“ “ “ “ “
 “ “ “ red “
 “ “ “ “ “ “ red “ “

and so forth).

And there’s visual poetry! from Amiri Baraka! in his “Map of New Ark,” in which a sketched streetmap looks like barely defamiliarized letters of the alphabet arranged in some gridded riddle; if only one can crack the city’s ironbound secrecy code, climb onto the Ark with all other species, take refuge with the Sacred Text in the Ark behind the velvet curtains! De Leon Harrison’s music-themed, synaesthetic “Yellow” approaches math-poetry in a graph/flow chart that moves horizontally from the “Sun” as prima causa “[energy] rays” through “intensity” and “quantity” to “conductor” and ultimately to “yellow;” meanwhile, “conductor” is the axis/crossroads, vertically linking “creative process” to “[musicians]” and “birds” which are glossed as:

personal
 sub-conscious
 (imagination)

Indeed, figures like Charlie “Bird” Parker and John Coltrane are never far from the field of invocation here; they hover at the periphery and sometimes enter explicitly to give blessings and receive homage from these fellow sound-artists. Lorenzo Thomas’s famous “The Bathers,” a brilliantly sardonic application of ekphrasis to the shocking newspaper tableaux (not to mention experience) of Black civil rights marchers being firehosed and police-dog-attacked in the streets of Alabama, also contains a line of hieroglyphic. A strong surrealist presence runs throughout, from the work of Jayne Cortez through Ted Joans and Bob Kaufman to Melvin Tolson’s two unfinished hallucinatory verbal kaleidoscopes (what a brilliant find, and how great to include unfinished poetry, itself a benchmark of the innovative impulse). Aphoristic stingers from Ishmael Reed (“Dualism in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man”) and William J. Harris (“A Grandfather Poem,” “Practical Concerns”) among others happily slap the reader upside the head. Refreshingly down-played are poems about romance and eros, though there

are a few blues-tinged love-poems here and there. For the most part this collection comprises poems of sound and ideas, evincing intellectually rigorous and sometimes appropriately ludic/absurd responses to the challenging puzzles of (Black) social being. The reach of the poems demonstrates that the period under scrutiny (post-World War II) was not aesthetically limited to the tame tightness of “New Critical”ly self-contained verbal drama on the one hand, or, on the other hand, the putatively undisciplined posturing that has been ridiculed and stereotyped by a later generation of critics and poets wanting to distance themselves from the militaristic restrictions they perceived in the aesthetics of the Black Arts Movement.

The book delivers on the suggestion of its title, *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone*, that its contents will linger with the reader. The combination of Michael Harper's title *Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep* and the promise of Stephen Henderson's landmark introductory essay to *Understanding the New Black Poetry* when alluding to the wide range and internal contestations of “the New Black Poetry”—“We may quarrel sometimes, but ain't never gonna say goodbye”—indicates the ongoing inclusiveness, multiplicity and resilience of the phenomenon of African diaspora expressive culture in the United States. The editors are to be thanked for this labor of love which commemorates and reanimates so much almost-lost work and reminds us of the ubiquitous wealth of word-art past, present and still to come.

Maria Damon

THE ANTI-CAPITALIST DICTIONARY:

MOVEMENTS, HISTORIES & MOTIVATIONS

David E. Lowes

New York: Zed Books, 2006

Beginning with “Accountability” and ending with “Zapatistas,” the apparent last word in anti-capitalist critique, David E. Lowes’ book, *The Anti-Capitalist Dictionary*, gathers and defines one hundred fifty-six words in an effort to introduce the contemporary activist to the concepts, contemporary keywords, and jargon that circulate among an international English-speaking left. Lowes’ vocabulary universe seeks to capture the diverse oppositional energy that emerged from the “enduring sequence of protests that began in Seattle in November of 1999.”

The dictionary format, with its generous references and cross-references, is employed to challenge straight histories and mirror the anti-globalization movement of the multitude, with its big-tent inclusion, its decentralized and networked organization, its direct-action focus, its technological and legal acumen (in both finance and agronomy), and in its radical theoretical critique of both liberalism and neo-liberalism. However, the distribution of imagery deployed by Lowes is in line with old left readings. The rubric of anti-capitalism applied is flexible enough to inhabit the “Levellers” and “Black Bloc,” as well as “Social Forum,” but when anarchist, feminist or ecological entries are introduced they are cast as either proto-Marxist critiques of capital, or derivations of the inherent logic of Marxist historical materialism. Clerical, spiritual, tribal, neo-feudal, or fascist anti-capitalisms fall outside of this volume’s scope.

The entries, which first suggest an odd grab bag of buzzwords, appear to be chosen for inclusion because they satisfy four of the dictionary’s goals. The first is to provide the reader with a basic understanding of Marxist thought. David Lowes, as a socialist historian and economist, provides clear and adequate two-page length definitions for such concepts as “Commodity,” “Profit,” “Exploitation,” and “Class,” but in his effort to present the activist with workable definitions he ends up jettisoning much of the history, controversy and critique at play in the meanings of these key terms. A reader seeking a deeper and more speculative reference experience might contrast and supplement Lowes’ definitions by consulting the multi-authored classic *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* edited by Tom Bottomore (London: Blackwell, 1991). Twentieth century terms, like “Media” and “Brand” fare worse under Lowes’ reductionism, as he fails to expose his

readers to the more complex critique of consumer society waged by post-structuralism.

Lowes' second tactic is to include a smattering of words to develop a heritage and give depth and texture to his anti-capitalist opposition. Reaching into the past, a very select hagiography is constructed. The "Diggers," "Enragés," and "Autonomia" make it in, but not the Wobblies or the more obscure League of Black Revolutionary Workers, entries one can find in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas' *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, (New York: Oxford, 1998). There are also no biographical entries at all. Lowes explains that "[t]his reflects the fact that today's movement is bigger than one person or group and that activists reject the established media and political practice of reducing ideas and movements to personalities." Again, Lowes positions his book as a contemporary user's manual rather than another scholarly biographical salvage operation. Yet while movements, stories, and words unhinged from their social actors may be in keeping with the politics of a non-conceptual multitude, this type of alienation evaporates the very materiality biography can contain. Despite his caution against personality, Lowes does include a collective entry for the "Haymarket Martyrs" to stand in for the social history of turn-of-the-century Chicago anarchism and the battle for the eight-hour day. Every movement apparently needs its ghosts.

A third group of entries centers on the main issues and institutions that have provoked the current anti-globalization movement. Lowes' definitions on global finance and trade institutions and policies, such as NAFTA, the World Bank, and the IMF, are thorough, well documented, and among his most useful. Although relatively brief, and probably too select, they are treated historically and critically to expose the main objections of resistance and reform groups. Lowes seeks to clear up the misrepresentations that develop when these institutions and issues are understood solely from the position of capital. He provides copy on "Kyoto Treaty," "Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights," and the "Multilateral Agreement on Investment" in order to help media activists "combating unfavorable coverage."

The fourth group of words is selected to acquaint the reader with the neologisms and new concepts circulating through the activist left. Lowes seeks to "build the movement" through the promotion of a new oppositional vocabulary. For instance, entries like "The Genuine Progress Indicator" and "Global Commons" illustrate some of the alternative tools of global cooperation, while tags like "Hot Money" and "Biopiracy" are positioned to help today's *Strassenkritiker* gain a rhetorical advantage in the struggle for

public opinion. “Hacktivism,” “Copyleft,” and “Floodnet” also make an appearance, but just as they emerge, they seem antiquated by the speed and liquidity of global capital flows.

Sometimes, it is hard to uncover Lowes’ reasoning for including an entry. Under X we find “Xenotransplantation” defined as the “transplantation of tissues or organs from one species of plant or animal into an individual of another species.” Is this good or bad from anti-capitalist position? Either way, the reasoning is not provided. Then there’s “Quisling” under Q, which seems either a quixotic or otherwise quirky way to fill an alphabetical quota.

Fans of a truly global anti-capitalism will also question the scarcity of words from outside the anglosphere. While obvious inclusions like “Maquiladora” and less obvious terms like “Ya Basta” (the only Y) make it in, one role of a volume such as this might have been to develop an international lexicon of the left. A polyglot anti-capitalism is needed if activists are to speak across borders the way money does now.

This is obviously not a traditional reference source, but an overt play at image management. From the beginning Lowes forgoes any semblance of objectivity or universality in his effort to marshal the lines of oppositional thought. In the preface, he responds to early critics who cite the book’s “lack of balance” by explaining that he did not intend to write a “dictionary of politics” but rather “a counterbalance to orthodox counterparts by way of a praxis that aims to invigorate today’s progressive anti-capitalism...”

His lack of objectivity is not a problem, especially since his subjectivity is validated in his standpoint essentialism and interventionist approach. There is, however, a larger pedagogical concern at work. Unlike Raymond Williams *Keywords* (Oxford, 1976) which represents a record of subjective inquiry into the layered meanings of a vocabulary, Lowes dictionary is unable or unwilling to shed the doctrinal connotations of its form. It takes on the character of a textbook, drilling readers with the basics while providing little discussion or controversy to distract activists from the task at hand. Instead, each signifier clings defensively to its signified, desperately positing singular true meaning, and in the process revealing the essential artless instrumentality of the project. Lowes dictionary, in the end, is less about “contributing to the growth, understanding and development of the movement” and more about dispatching a scholastic corrective to contain and discipline the heterogeneity of an emerging *altermondialisme* within the dogmatic confines of his narrowly construed anti-capitalism.

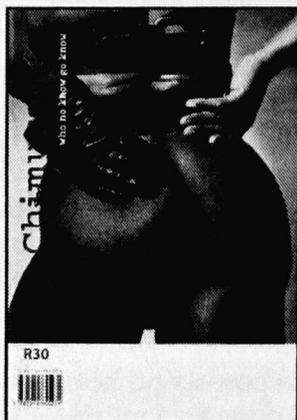
The best dictionaries and encyclopedia realize their authority through social collaboration, by becoming open systems that unfold the multiple interpretations of the world. In Lowes' effort to bracket and forestall the very multitude of protests he seeks to manage, the *Dictionary of Anti-Capitalism*, relinquishes its role as a user-manual in the name of cagey sectarianism, one that will, at best, be interpreted as a response to neo-liberal doctrine, and at worst, a publishing foray into a disgruntled niche-market. (For those in need of a trendy handbook to go with their black bandanas, pick up the more stylish Susan George et. al.'s *Anti-Capitalism: A Guide to the Movement* (London: Bookmarks Publications Ltd., 2001).

Lowes' anxiety is palatable. In his post-script, he offers ten percent of his proceeds to relevant groups and organizations. He also offers a web site to "make suggestions for additional entries or amendments to existing ones." Charity donations and logging-on wiki-style can only augment the alienating effects of the capitalist system. The answer is back in the R section, in Lowes' relation of Adorno's take on "Reification." The struggle to understand establishes real value.

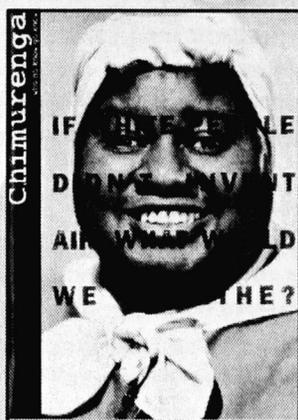
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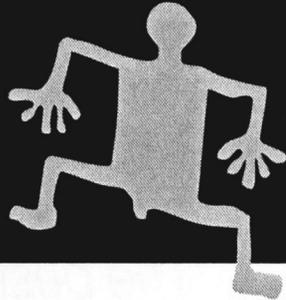


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