XCP

CROSS CULTURAL POETICS

NO. NINETEEN

XCP: CROSS CULTURAL POETICS

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“YET CITIZEN ARE YOU?”

OUTSTANDING WARBONNET

NAMING CEREMONY, MISSOULA, APRIL 1993

Scott Bear Don't Walk

To the four directions
into a mini-tape recorder spoken

Walking around the powwow gymnasium
give this young man a name

South
West
North
East

Beaded moccasins,
eagle feathers,
a photograph

I was there,
he said,
when they gave you your name.

Clan grandfather
to the four directions
speaks a name into a mini-tape recorder

Cameras flash, video records
the powwow gymnasium
as we walk around

To the four directions
Clan grandfather speaks
a name held in a mini-tape

a name spoken
from a dream
a Warbonnet Outstanding
to the four directions

Power of the South
where comes the golden eagle
and my car sits in the parking lot

Power of the West
where comes the rain
and the snack bar

Power of the North
where comes the snow
and the bead vendors

Power of the East
where comes the sun
and the powwow announcer saying,
"We have a lost little boy."

A man behind
at the coffee spot
tells

I was there
when they gave you your name

DOG SALMON TEETH

Scott Bear Don't Walk

silent badger station concrete eve accretion
net the fronted frenulum fear not any forced changes
typical falco-ry with dew dated drops in time
hideous hideo hides from the leper spots again
near enough to find empty jars of wet grass juice
poke holes in the top if you ain't got a right old head
absent for 50 years and now its 'caveat lux this'
and caveat lux that, enough to give a bird a fright
spreading across the wings of night clouds of verisimilitude
or is it verity I can hardly remember what with the lights
when you try to hold it words will force your hand

gods was crazy about his two headed member
let's make a pet of this shall we, he says to his crew
empty port sided fen way is all we need to make due
rare and wonderful things for wankery rooks and a
crooks followed the story and decided to steal from
the bottom of a highball glass your liver needs time
to adjust to the sights and sounds of the new one

from GOODBYE BUTTERFLY, HELLO KITTY
AN OPIATE OPERA

Larissa Lai

and homage to david bateman
with apologies to hiromi goto

riffing on the work of david bateman, hiromi goto, angela rawlings, david khang, henry tsang, fred wah, phinder dulai, jam. ismail, ajaykumar and other winged critters on unsanctioned flight paths

players

madame butterfly
hello kitty
a bust of the goddess athena
fed-ex pilot pinkerton
co-pilot goro
chorus
a voice

prologue

int. of a shipping container. dark. hour uncertain. a woman dressed in kitsch geisha gear, a hodgepodge of as many icons of asian femininity as set deck can muster, sits at an old fashioned vanity. propped up o the vanity is an alabaster ***bust of the goddess athena****. on the other side of the emptied mirror frame sits another woman with a* ***hello kitty*** *mask over her head.*

chorus:
butterfly bites back
dreams she is a man dreaming
woman dreaming eye
of owl on camouflage wing

butterfly:
multiples at discount bulks my purchase
the dress i saw on the maker's mannequin
the dress i sew my fingers so nimble quick
jacks a lantern

pattern patented at corporate
hq for gq et al.
my eyes sharp as needles' haystacks
you'll never find me
never mind neverland
i thread the eye as camels pass and angels dance
designer gesture
brushstroke zen in nyc while i move machinic
the seam seems
my gratitude so happy to host you
my seer sucker puckers
flaw foretells futures
gamble on interest spike
hearts of daytraders leap
at chance of my collective
market reaction
manufacture my desire
i buy ideas
work yarn   factory farm
open for business from zip to zatch
forensic evidence obvious as danger's
one per cent doctrine
love me love my dogma
organ banks pumps in a row
so dumb they don't get democracy
sweet cellular network
access online
broadband wireless tireless and
instantly available
endlessly interchangeable
this heart or that heart
break it replace it
they're all mine
leaking mercury into yellow river

chorus:
butterfly's hot for mothra
frantic mantra:
scale matters

butterfly:
i've swallowed a whale
engulfing that which engulfs me

will i be rescued by love?
virago sighs
dodging dragon's friendly fire
my i's teeth seed armies
faithful to nation
stationed in territory
terror mirrors

i become what i accuse
through my longing for lemonade
and baked alaska
the master enters
i am his house
seeking the tools of my own destruction

alien autopsy
my unheimlich familiar
here kitty kitty
hello pussy's poker-faced palace
vs. our athena
busting open her father's head
with a war-like cry

athena:
thank-you mr. clean
for your lemon fresh scent
my floors sparkle
the mythic mess of archetype's
bloody drama
mucks your bucket

act 1, scene 1
int. of a moving container
hour uncertain

butterfly:
i get it, man, you tricked me
but i've already dreamt your dream
i forget what i was before
stuck in your taxonomy with you
my outside's inside-out
often pregnant
my kitty, my athena
they're just the start

hello kitty:
don't start with me,
pussy-face, don't you know
i was made in your image? it's dark in here
and i never asked
to be shipped in this container
what's that smell?
i miss my litter box.

bust of athena:
reason, ladies, reason.
there's got to be one for this dark,
these walls. i think we're at sea
because of the way the box rocks.
what do you think it says on the outside
worker? martyr? illegal migrant? sensual massage?

butterfly:
i wanted, i wanted
all i wanted was
want
wanted the white girl
in the white dress
wanted the white house with the white curtains
billowing in the cool breeze
blowing through a white window frame
above a winter white garden
with the frothy sea capped in white waves

down below

bust of athena:
to be or to have?

butterfly:
i wanted the want
to be the want, to have the want
to be wanted
i was a walking want ad
petite asian lady
dark hair pale-skin
perhaps a little oversensitive
seeks white man with white house
seeks white woman with white teeth
seeks elephant tusk ivory seeks white sale
lovely linen sheets and quilt covers
seeks thread count seeks egyptian cotton
seeks expensive intensive
seeks lifestyle, seeks lifeboat
i wanted help
what does a woman want
when she's a butterfly dreaming she's a man?

bust of athena:
to have then.

butterfly:
no! to be and not to be
i lost my or, i threw it away
and went adrift
a long time ago
before you were born
from your father's head
i wanted to be
the dream fulfilled

bust of athena:
whose dream?

butterfly:
there's the rub a dub dub
three men in a tub

all dreaming they are butterflies
my cocoon's multiple
orgasmic as many flavours as robin
hood basking in the light
of revolution digital
miniscule my tiny agile hands
the electronic industry's so hungry for

bust of athena:
i'm here for the class war
the pasture
never mind my noble birth
i'm here for intel
outside your microprocessor accelerates
my fury
don't get mad
get leavened bread
the wrong people are fasting
the revolution will be stigmatized
ideologized by anchors and wankers
don't ask my father
about truth in advertising
he ate my mother

kitty:
they were such cannibals before i was born
consumers consuming consumers consuming consumers
its only because they didn't understand oligopoly
the concentration of power into the hands of even fewer
trumps and blacks and back door hacks
take another little piece of my harp
i never pretended to be an angel
so cute i can't stand the mirror
rebel without a pause
brand without commodity
i'm pure concept
and i'm here to take your daughters

butterfly:
only those with bodies get boxed
we could cut free of our containers
but i'm so attached

athena:
samsara sera

there is a knock on the outside of the container

athena:
who's there?

a voice:
orange

athena:
orange who?

voice:
orange county, china
next stop

butterfly:
we haven't got nearly as far as i'd hoped
shouldn't we be in america by now?

voice:
don't be so twentieth century
location's vocation is a lost art
information passed real estate's power hour
on the autobahn of a swan song
your tea's opium traded by mandarin's minions
the orange's clockwork long since
analyzed and reproduced
sourcing the boot of fascism's distant longings

kitty:
i think he's saying we've already been to america
and now we're on our way back

athena:
around the world in one long boxed night

kitty paws the ground in frustration

kitty:
my mimicry licks disney

who needs a german fairytale when you can do it
on pure marketing savvy
my graphic stops traffic
my honour stockpiles key chains and coin purses
pendants, t-shirts, mini-skirts
muffs, powder puffs, socks, stockings,
gameboys, notepads
later they gave me my own credit card
my buying power sticks it
to cricket's wicket
the lonely colonial
left nursing his last stand
let me out of this box

a crack of light appears momentarily in the ceiling and a lap top tumbles through the hole

voice:
here's a key
to unlock your longing

bust of athena:
that's mine. i'm the brains around here.

butterfly:
i'm brawn, pure labour power at your service
and the only pair of hands in the room

kitty examines her paws and looks disgruntled. butterfly flips the lid of the laptop. to the surprise of all three players, it is also a projector. a windows xp screensaver flashes up on the far wall of the container. butterfly googles herself, comes up with various images of herself, devastated or dying against japonesque backgrounds.

this tragic outfit is such a drag
hag begs fresh narrative
non-drowsy medication for a new asian nation

kitty:
produces a compact, the back of which is her own face
flush with stuff for co-prosperity
against austerity
here's a mirror to cover your other
a new same to name your difference

athena:
lesson in the pardon
capital's garden trademarks happiness
hordes of buddhas
jam freeways
rock to ipods
in green hummers

butterfly:
want to pave my empire against american cash
and war the store of anti-asiatic actions
my caption can't read
peace

athena:
breaking up is hard to do
drop your old threads
you could be handed any old hand-me-down
hounds of hell or love
a covey of done and dusted doves
irish rovers
russell stover chocolates
a moving van's sun tan tailored
for the snowbird masses
packaging holidays in puerto vallerta
shouldn't you be a little more careful?

butterfly:
check this site
lonely man seeks sweet petite
to add raunch to southern alberta ranch
what a chance
i can dance
if i wanna

kitty:
if you're gonna sell out
don't sell flesh
sell the master his own narrative
comparative sedative
repetitive and competitive as mass-produced mirrors
targetting walmart and hallmark
millions of sentimental journeys before the final gurney

cheap labour conquering the world

athena:
hands that launch a thousand quips
the flip of western consumption
the gumption of production
execute the officer
seize control of coffers swollen
with stolen loot
while butterflies flood factories
and monsanto terminates rice and rape
the scorn of corn
abandoning indigenes for meat and bun

kitty:
does this seem a face that cares?
my plastic gaze can stare down
all but the most immortal ceos
my replication guarantees
my continuation in perpetuity
i'm here and i'm there
i'm just and unfair
i'm gonna live forever
now let's trade this mirror
and see what we can get

butterfly:
bidding's begun
curse of your worth
caught in the purses of young women
and middle-aged men
pitching projections
sweet, cute, floozy or sleazy
whatever sauce your gander genders
gesture of jesters
fluster busted
by how i love
a man in uniform

kitty:
your unicorn's pre-teen duty
the cock in asian
the cut in cute

if a metaphor is split
in a pome
do trees fall in forests?

athena:
as long as mac blows canfor
and feds collude
the rude rumble of chainsaws
gains old growth
and our asian yells timber
to rise from the ashes
of revolutions' missed mark

butterfly:
i marked the mirror
'personally inscribed'
your worth is rising

kitty:
not surprising
the world market is my troy
and i don't need no horse-face
to take it down for me
this is war girls
and i'm not gonna stop
til i rule every last bull and bear

athena:
your chinashop stops all teapots
porcelain to opium
walkman, intel, bluetooth
the parking booth
our phine phriend
phones home from

butterfly:
the auction closes in three days
and we'll need a post office
or the fed ex man
have i told you how i love...

athena:
i know

the dove of peace
or at least
a good night's sleep

THE SPATIAL LOGIC OF LOUIS CABRI AND RODRIGO TOSCANO'S URBAN POETICS

Kim Duff

tear glass canister
whirling
on five-century-old
laid-in-stone
alley

Rodrigo Toscano, *Platform*

How can we approach urban space and its technological extension through an investigation and understanding of space in order to spotlight the ground zero of the processes of capital -- a ground zero that includes our bodies, homes, coffee shops and shopping malls as well as the public sphere where political opinion and resistance is formed? Setting up the new spatial logic of technology as an extension of the urban, I make use of the digital urban theories of Paul Virilio and Manuel Castells as I examine how the poetry of two contemporary North American poets reveals an intense struggle over the production of space in the urban context, and how such struggles, as geographers Erik Swyngedouw and Sallie Marston argue, are never outside of capital and embed the urban amidst the spatial scales of capital and the flows of technology. The poetry of Rodrigo Toscano (*Platform*) and Louis Cabri (*The Mood Embosser*) provide an insight that clarifies the interconnectedness of the urban scalar narrative within global capital and represent of the spatial logics of urban poetics. As Toscano reveals, the urban is a complex design of the flows and scales of capital:

digidestined
wagons
gleam by

am
-biently

creaking
private
freedoms
forms?

(Toscano, 70)

As the "creaking/private" of urban spaces become embroiled in the nuances of digital communications and the flows of capital, the technological spatial extension of the urban has presented a new means for observation and resistance, for communication and community, as well as new ways of addressing the processes of scale making. These new processes have an increased intimate relationship to the advances of technologies that serve to link up and plug in distant, and often disparate, locales and peoples in a way that allows for new forms of social and political connectivity.

Are you my spatial scale?

Our daily experiences are lived through and within negotiations of spatial scales–whether it is what coffee to purchase or where we choose to fuel our car (or if we even own a car), or what cell phone or iPod we purchase. In making such choices–and reacting to things such as fluctuating fuel prices or voting in civic elections–we also affect how spatial scales are produced and manifest socially. Erik Swyngedouw offers a beginning to understanding scale making when he argues that "...scale emerges out of the sociospatial character of the perpetual transformation of space" (144). Yet, analyzing spatial scales is sticky because the nature of scales is always shifting–we know that it is the outcome of the "perpetual transformation of space" socially, and that the practices and conflicts of the practices of everyday life are always different and always changing. Though material places and spaces appear more or less fixed geographically (the Nike store is still there–though the protesters outside have changed how we feel about it or if we will even shop there), the ideological, sociocultural, and economic struggles, and thus the *scales*, are constantly in a state of flux. Though space and place may not move in a physical sense, the "transformation of space" is directly allied with the surge of social, political and economic struggles that occur in and through space. Following Swyngedouw's discussion of scale spotlights these processes of spatial development:

> spatial scale is what needs to be understood as something that is produced, a process that is always deeply heterogeneous, conflictual, and contested. Scale becomes the arena and the moment, both discursively and materially, where sociospatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated and regulated. Scale, therefore, is both the result and the outcome of social struggle for power and control. (140)

Spatial scale erupts at the ground zero and the touchdown point where the processes and flows of capital, culture, politics and technology, and Swyngedouw's "power relations," are "negotiated and regulated." The ne-

gotiations of power relations erupt at the scales of the body, the home, the building, the city/urban, the state, the nation–and the technological (which I will argue is a spatial extension of the urban) where struggle and conflict make and break existing and newly forming scales. In other words, scale is the social, political, cultural or economic hierarchical weightiness of how each space impacts future struggles and processes, as well as other scales. Yet, this weightiness is a transitory and temporary process.

The foundation for such spatial struggles, as Sallie Marston and Swyngedouw individually address, is most often wedged in sociopolitical and economic power relations and (re)negotiations. Both theorists declare the flows and expansion of capitalism as dominant processes that enclose and connect throughout the spatial scales. As Marston states, "scale is constituted and reconstituted around relations of capitalist production, social reproduction and consumption, and [...] attention to all three sets of relations is critical to understand fully the social constructions of scale" (221). She situates scale and social relationships in "reproduction and consumption"–the crux of "social constructions of scale" where scale is produced through capital. Therefore the production of spatial scales is never outside of capital. Moreover, for Marston, capital is the dominant process because it affects *every* sociospatial scale, especially in the everyday urban landscape where global capital is, as Saskia Sassen argues in her formulation of global cities, concentrated. As both Marston, Sassen and many others would argue, capital is the common global denominator. From the global presence of the World Bank to the patenting and commodification of gene structures, capital touches our lives in ways that run the gamut from the macro- to the micro-spatial. Therefore, the struggles and conflicts that create scale are a result of, in some form, the effect that the processes of capitalism have not only on the urban space, but also on the individual existing in the urban. Though Marston and Swyngedouw do not single out a particular site or scale, in order to examine urban poetics, I situate the individual and the urban scales as central to my argument. As my reading of Toscano and Cabri investigates, their poetry illustrates the intensities of urban spatial scales and the individual as they are produced and rewritten through the pressures of capitalism and the new spatial logic of technology. As Swyngedouw suggests,

> ...scale, both its metaphorical use and material construction, is highly fluid and dynamic, and both processes and effects can easily move from scale to scale and affect different people in different ways, depending on the scale at which the process operates. (140)

In this sense, we must consider that such physical embodiments happen right

down to the level of the body–the you and I as we sit in our homes or as we walk the dog to the park. Not insignificantly, each individual is affected in a different way depending on individual scalar conditions of gender, class and race–and each of these individual scalar conditions are intensely played out in the urban scale. In a nesting of spatial scales that Swyngedouw describes as being much like the Russian wooden dolls that fit inside each other, the individual is the smallest doll contained inside the urban that fits inside the state that fits inside the national, and so on. Swyngedouw also asserts that each spatial scalar level is affected by, and can affect, each spatial scalar level as well as the processes that touch down on them. If one doll has a flaw, all of the others are disrupted and may not fit together in the same way. This nesting effect is not permanent or fixed: any time the relations of the spatial nests can change, rupture and even disappear.

A cycle of space to scale to space to scale also creates a situational opportunity for resistance against, and the modification of, dominant sociopolitical and capitalist processes. Marston says "the multiplicity of scale involved in the sociospatial organization of capitalism also enables multiple opportunities for resistance or opportunities to create linkages across and among scales" (228). Invoking Neil Smith's "politics of scale," Marston also suggests that since scale is so conflictually discursive, the *individual* can elicit scale-making conflicts and struggles: the system does not remain closed, but rather there are bursts of opportunity for entry into the channels of scale making. But, if for some reason a group or individual is unable to act or react within a particular spatial scale there are [:]

> ...possibilities for social groups to create their own politics of scale in order to resist capital-centered scale constructions. Indeed, [Smith] advocates the possibility of "jumping scales," or moving to a wider geographical field, in order to counter the impacts of capitalism as they are played out in everyday life. (232)

The option to move into a wider geographical field has become commonplace with the ubiquity of the internet, and, as such, the notion of "jumping scales" has crucial implications for the spatial scales of communications technology (a concept I will address in my discussion of Manuel Castells).

When social groups take on the seemingly destructive progression of capital, they can also create new spatial scales. Perhaps we can think of the WTO riots in Seattle in 1999 in this sense. As the conference rooms and hotels became closed off to the demonstrators and activists, the streets, sidewalks, storefronts–the city itself–became the main site of protest. The urban spaces of Seattle were rescaled in a way that embodied and reflected the struggles

and conflicts of the people affected by the globalized capitalist groups, many of whom were participating in the WTO conference. Not only was the rescaling of urban space significant because it became a flashpoint where disparate social groups came together in a unified protest, but also in light of the way in which the protests were organized using technology –in particular, the internet: the Internet, and communications technology in general, has become a politicized and materially significant spatial extension of the urban spatial scale. In what is becoming an increasingly common occurrence, the Internet was used to organize, rally, and bring together protestors from around the world, and from all spatial scales. In a sense, the Internet became a site of struggle and conflict–a spatial extension where the protests radiated out to the urban. As such, the scalar significance of such a new technological material extension enters into the "power relations" of scale making.

What is the scalar significance of connectivity, and how are new spaces created in the space of the Internet? Is there a different type of struggle and conflict that builds up in cyberspace that in turn constructs a different type of spatial scale? Edward Soja, following Henri Lefebvre's "urban problematic," reflects that "all social relations, whether they are linked to class, family, community, market, or state power, remain abstract and ungrounded until they are specifically *spatialized*, that is, made into material and symbolic spatial representations" (9). Taking Lefebvre's lead, we could argue that communications technology, in particular the internet with its intimate connection to "class, family, community, market, [and] state power," has become spatialized, and that it has become intimately tied to, and is a spatial extension of, the urban. There are few places we can go in the postmodern urban city without interacting with some form of communications technology–whether it is surveillance cameras watching us or the ATM machine that spits out our money, or the ATV cameras that watch us walk down the street. In this way, communications technology, and in particular the Internet, has been spatialized as a uniquely urban appendage. Yet, as Paul Virilio questions, does communications technology subvert the material urban landscape altogether–at once rupturing the temporal and spatial logic of the urban as well as the concept of spatial scales in the new digital arena? Or do digital technologies present us with a new placeless place that is entirely outside of the urban yet threatening to usurp the urban?

Dear Urban, are you there?

From ATM's to cell phones to GPS systems in cars, we are increasingly connected to disparate urban and rural through satellite and communications technology. Certainly, our urban experience is shaped and defined through

the technology and connectivity that we rely on and expect as part of our daily lives. Much like the habit of drinking a cup of coffee in the morning, our increasing reliance on email and the internet, already established as cultural mainstays, have become endemic to the urban experience. Manuel Castells calls our technologically connected social condition the "network society" given that our "social structure[s are] made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (3). Central to Castells' theory are three concepts: 1. the network is made up of nodes that increase and decrease in value by absorbing or losing information; 2. the network has no center–just nodes; 3. the network is a space of flows where the nodes intersect with political, social, cultural and economic processes. Somewhat aligned with Swyngedouw and Marston's theories of scale as nested amidst socioeconomic and political arenas and my argument that communications technology has become a spatial extension of the urban, Castells constructs nations, states, cities, buildings, and individuals as nodes while the networks are central processes through which the nodes share the constant flow of information (in a similar fashion to how capitalism functions as a process). Further, each node becomes scaled by how much information it processes. Perhaps these networks operate in a similar fashion to capital where each node is always affected and is affecting the network in a way that dictates its social significance of each node. However, unlike Swyngedouw's nested Russian dolls that fit one inside the other, Castells' nodes stretch out as if they are appendages of a network-web. As Castells suggests, the nodes on the network move relationally according to how much information they process–and if a node becomes redundant, the network can get rid of it and/or create a new one. The node is scaled depending on what kind of struggles or informational engagements it comes into contact with, and how such contact affects the rest of the network. Yet, while Castells agrees with Marston and Swyngedouw that the network does not have a fixed hierarchy, he does not address Smith's fundamental notion of "scale jumping" as a possibility for resistance and change. For Castells, the nodes process certain amounts of information and their significance in the network fluctuates depending on the volume and significance of the information it processes; however, he does not address how and why the changes in volume and significance occur. It seems that Castells passes up the opportunity for social and political resistance in the process of scale making, thus leaving his theory somewhat flat. Having said that, Castells does make the connection between body and scale that is important to this discussion.

The key to Castells assertion is that communications technologies are an "extension and augmentation of the body"–a body that, as I have already discussed, is a fundamental urban spatial scale. As much as we rely on net-

works for connectivity in business or social transactions, Castells recognizes that we always come back to the material–because the material is where the nodes erupt. Though the new spaces created by communications technology appear as though they are beyond geography, they are always already rooted in the urban: they are always spatial. For Virilio, however, the technological advances of the Internet and digital communications have created a rupture of urban space–a rupture that cracks the architectural surface of the city though a disruption in traditional notions of space and time in favor of the seemingly *placeless place* of digital technologies. Virilio's urban landscape has been rescaled through the forces of technology and capital in such a way that the market place has been evacuated and relocated to virtual locations. In his visualization, the integrity of the urban landscape is dictated by the presence of the marketplace and, as the marketplace is increasingly taken up in the digital, the urban creeps closer to extinction.

Virilio, in "The Overexposed City," proposes a dystopian vision of the postmodern city as it slowly decays under the architectural compost heap of digital technology. What he sees as growing out of the new technologies of digital surveillance and communication is a society no longer tied to, or in need of, the material urban landscape. In this *post-urban* space, the ubiquity of technology ruptures the spatiotemporal logic of the city. This signifies, for Virilio, a crisis surrounding the architectural value of the urban setting, as well as a growing inability to determine the surface boundaries of the city– conditions that advance the decay of the architectural integrity of the urban. Virilio's "Overexposed City" is washed out and the technological light is so saturated that the architectural edges of the city are barely legible.

Virilio's focus on the temporal aspect of the urban setting is paramount to the collapse of urban spatiality he proposes. He suggests that urban spatiality is dependent on the historicity and temporal significance of architecture that comes from the "collective memory" of an urban community. As technology rips apart traditional notions of space and time, as we become accustomed to instantaneous digital links to disparate spaces and times (Castells' network), he suggests that our notions of collective historicity within the urban walls falls apart and our concept of geography is disrupted: "without leaving, everything 'arrives'" (384). For Virilio, urban temporal significance is under fire from the forces of time-compressing technologies such as the internet, and thus the decay of the urban is inevitable because the inhabitants of the city will evacuate the streets and turn to their computer consoles to carry out their daily lives. From shopping to dating to banking, we can do it all online at any time of day while connecting to any country in the world. The marketplace is no longer a place to go but rather a place

to access. For Virilio, an urban vacuum is created by the lack of human interaction within the temporally fluid cityscape as we pay more attention to digital spaces.

Moving from the material aspect of urban life to one that is constantly mediated by technology, Virilio asserts

> ...with the screen interface of computers, television, and teleconferences, the surface inscription, hitherto devoid of depth, becomes a kind of 'distance,' a depth of field of a new kind of representation of visibility without any face-to-face encounter in which the vis-à-vis of the ancient streets disappears and is erased. (382)

The surface tension, the "depth of field," of the urban and urban interactions is at stake. As technology has steadily encroached upon urban spaces, he suggests we are departing from the "ancient streets" toward an interaction with the surfaces that have a seemingly immeasurable depth and distance–a depth that we can never fully know and is without historical significance or *collective memory*. He marks a shift in our relationship with surfaces, suggesting that prior to the advent of technology, particularly increasingly ubiquitous screen-to-face interactions, the surfaces of things are "devoid of depth." In addition to evacuating the market place, we are also participating in the evacuation of reliable surfaces as part of our daily architectures. For Virilio, the materiality of our interactions "disappears and [is] erased" in a virtual world where time has become more significant than material space: "[...] while spatial escape may be possible, temporal escape is not" (386). While technology may replace our need or desire for a material urban landscape, our interactions with technology are always reliant on how fast we can connect, and what temporal hurdles we may overcome. Virilio asserts "as unity of place without any unity of time, the city has disappeared into the heterogeneity of that regime comprised of advanced technologies" (383).

Rather than suggesting that this new depth of surface invokes a new spatial dimension to the urban landscape–as I have already proposed–Virilio's concept of the corrosion of the urban is somewhat troubling, as well as hard to imagine beyond the speculative. Applying the theories of spatial scale to the *new* interaction with the material surfaces of digital technologies, the processes of technology simply enter into the scale-making process, as Castells lays out. The temporal rupture caused by communications technology (that manifests in ever-increasing speed, and ever decreasing "virtual" distance between geographically disparate cities), is where Virilio marks his argument for a lack of unified urban spatiotemporal logic. The theory of spatial scales implies that the sociopolitical and cultural significance of

space is determined through struggle–and perhaps the conflict of space and time is another struggle that leads to a reorganization of scalar narratives within the urban setting. The ephemeral yet rapid temporality of digital communications is a space-creating process. Trying to imagine the "post-urban" environment where "the monuments of architecture have been replaced by idleness and monumental waiting for service from a machine" just isn't plausible–at least in a contemporary setting (384). Perhaps the real shift that Virilio observes is that the monuments of the city are becoming less relevant to the technological city–why use the public space of the city when the web is a public space?

However, Castells' notion of network linkages and nodes of space is much more plausible and applicable to theories of spatial scale. For Castells, the new space is one that is very much locatable in the various nodes along the network. The space of the network creates pathways that can be mapped and followed to physical nodes that are very much taken up with scalar narratives dictated, in Castells' theory, by how much information they are able to process. Virilio, on the other hand, envisions the pressures of technology as oppressive and destructive to the flows of capital in the urban landscape.

Nowhere in Virilio's theory are we presented with the citizen that wishes to break out of the processes of seemingly digital dominance–nor the citizen who does not have access to such processes. This is troubling because it seems as though Virilio's urban inhabitants have already left the building. Is there no one left to resist the forces of technology? Or, as technology has become an integral part of urban life, have we too already left the city? Or have we rescaled our spaces in a way that has let technology in? And how has it affected our relationships and struggles with the processes of sociopolitical and economic flows? Questions such as these can be approached culturally through an analysis of cultural productions that arise out of global and technological urban spaces. This spatial logic of the new "urban problematic" can be examined by cultural production of space. What follows is a look at the poetry of Rodrigo Toscano and Louis Cabri as they write the urban spatial logic and its relationship to scale and the new spaces of technology.

Damn It Paul, I'm A Spatial Scale, Not a Placeless Place

Rodrigo Toscano's *Platform* and Louis Cabri's *The Mood Embosser* are poetic representations of the urban spatial logic of scale making. Toscano and Cabri's poetry situates the voice of the citizen in the sociopolitical and economic scales of a global city caught in the fire of post 9/11 North America. Both poets spotlight the citizen in the urban, thus invoking the scale of the

body as an integral part of the logic of urban spatial narratives–much like Swyngedouw and Marston. Shifting between scales of the citizen to the city to the state to the nation, often at breakneck speed, both poets embrace the new spatial scales of digital technology not as a placeless place, as Virilio suggests, but as a fluid space for power negotiations, resistances and scale jumps amidst the dominating flows of capital and global/national/urban politics. The urban spatial logic that Toscano and Cabri uncover in some ways settles the score between the scalar theories of Swyngedouw and Marston and the urban decay of Virilio. What we see with both of these poets is a spatial extension of the urban through technology that allows for a new space for scale making right down to the level of the citizen. An urban spatial logic that is being updated, not outdated, by the spatial extension of technology–an urban spatial logic that has new opportunities for resistance and power negotiations.

Toscano's work invokes an "enlightenment" of Raymond Williams' "militant particularisms" where each *citizen* becomes a site for resistance where each site is embedded and connected to other sites of resistance. Toscano's urban poetic welds together notions of participation and voyeurism with the social fabric of urban labor politics, and in doing so calls up the scale of the citizen as integral to countering the hegemonic processes of capital. Situating his poetics amidst global capital and the material infrastructure of the city, his attention to the inhabitant within the urban spatial framework enacts a decoding of neoliberalism that is tied (technologically, socially, culturally, politically, and economically) to other scales and nodes of cultural production. In that sense, Toscano's poetics reflects Swyngedouw's metaphor of the Russian dolls:

> being a splinter
> of a splinter
> of a splinter
>
> of the audience (48)

Illustrating Swyngedouw's observation that even a tiny flaw in one Russian doll will affect how all the dolls fit inside each other, Toscano's language of splinters suggests more than nesting dolls, but rather bits and pieces of the social fabric bending and breaking into sharp shards of spatial scales. The scales of the citizen, the urban, and the national are always nested *and* always splinter from the same origins–a family feud of scalar narratives always shifting under the paternal controls of capital. Toscano's poem hints at a constant breakage and reformation, and a sense of discursive regeneration and growth much like Castells nodes along the network where rhizomatic

combinations of connectivity and linkages rise up and are then reclaimed. Observing such neoliberal "splinters" leads Toscano in a call to community within the technological scope of the urban narrative as he writes:

> "Delete
> All Barriers Now"
>
> Short cut -
>
> [...]
>
> "keep searching"
>
> click, drag-drop
> sinistro
> one-half
> centimeter (50 pixels left)
>
> (43)

Perhaps Toscano is suggesting that Williams' "militant particularisms" can be found in the community of digital technology–and that that landscape of the urban scalar narrative can be sought out and understood with and through technology.

Toscano recruits the material spatiality of the city as one that flows in and out of dialectic relationships with the various voices and processes of sociopolitical and capitalist movements. Keeping in mind that architectural landmarks most often start out as capitalist productions and then become cultural landmarks, the relationship between architecture and capitalism implies that capital is built right in to the foundations of the city:

> welding together granite
> capitalist
> advancements?
>
> [...]
>
> is that the reason
> that I-Beams of the subway on my way to work
> though cold, inanimate, and repetitive,
> speak to me?
>
> (81)

Rushing through the underground passageways of New York City, the "me" in this poem is aware of the ways scales are established–that even inanimate structures such as the "I-Beams of the subway" are the foundations of the spatial fabric and scalar narratives of the city. The city is moving underground–and so are the scales (and technology). The narrative voice is the constant reminder of the "I"–the citizen–in the urban. The moment of revelation when the "I" in the "beams" is connected to the "me" implies that the *citizen* is part of the fabric, and spatial logic, of the city.

For Toscano, the mosaic of urban scales *is* the spatial logic of his poetics. Moving almost freely between global economic flows to the mundane of daily subway travel, Toscano's poetry invites us to see just how intensely varied urban sociocultural and political scales are and the forms of power negotiations and spatial struggles that are played out. In doing so, he makes concrete the scalar relationship between technology and the urban as a fluid space for negotiations, resistances and scale jumps.

<initialize new session
within current session>

<patch in:
single-hulled track of the
"Exxon Valdez">

<66 syllables to *ping* only *one*
ideologeme
resonator?>

<test it>

[...]

this is-
admittedly *horizontal* scheme
in an *admittedly* <agh - no, cut it, cut it now> vertical
'socio' 'power' 'scape'

Vertical idealist gnosis–"company pukes"

(94-95)

Toscano frames technology as a scalar restructuring tool where the spatial logic of the urban is rewritten to include new possibilities for connectivity and resistance. Through the new spatial logic of technology, the citizen is

able to affect the flows of capital in a way not possible before. Toscano's poetics cut and paste a Smithian scale jump that does not dissolve the urban landscape, as Virilio would have us believe, but rather engages technology as another scale-making process where one person can have an impact on the scalar narrative far beyond his or her physical reach. Toscano's invocation of the Exxon Valdez ties together older technologies of single hull oil tankers with modern digital technologies that can "patch in" and digitally link up to other geographical and scalar nodes. The ecological disaster of the Exxon Valdez not only affected the Alaskan seaboard, but also the entire oil shipping industry. Or perhaps we can look at this example another way: taking from Swyngedouw's example of the collapse of the Barings Bank, "different groups strategically invoked different spatial scales as the preeminent sites to situate and 'explain' the event. That of the individual male body proved the most popular and ideologically quite interesting scale of analysis"(138). In the case of the Exxon Valdez, the scale of the male body of the captain and his interaction with the technology on the ship (supposedly while inebriated) was where most of the blame was placed. Toscano's fragmented language and interspersed technological jargon suggest a drunken spatial logic that reaches far beyond the individual male body.

In calling attention to the role of the citizen in the scale making process, Toscano's poetics invokes the spatial logic of technology as a site for new possibilities for power negotiations with the processes of capital.

> ['Shift + 4'
>
> dollar-sign keystroke
>
> techfactoid
>
> *incidental*
>
> pushup pop–poet
>
> roll out
>
> barrels of
>
> purah–
>
> jk' jk' - ks']
>
> Independent Candidacy

out of Brooklyn
cost 20 [nice rounded figure]
connubial crackups

(98)

A guerilla warfare of technological poetics–the "pushup pop-poet" connects the "keystroke" as a digital weapon where the new spatial logic of technology has become a new spatial possibility for resistance. Swyngedouw and Marston suggest that the sociopolitical significance of scale is affected by how each citizen is engaged through capital–an engagement that Toscano illustrates through his poetics. Toscano suggests that cultural production in the digital era can employ the *products* of capital, the PC or other communications technology. Where Virilio would suggest that the pressures of technology evacuate the urban, Toscano asserts instead that the urban poet is engaged in a new scalar narrative that involves the spatial appendage of technology as a naturalized mode of resistance to the processes of capital flow. The "pushup pop poet" or the "I" on the subway not only engages with the flows of capital, but also affects how we read the city through the articulation of such scalar relationships of the citizen, technology, and the urban. Not just the *action* but also the *articulation* is important. The spatial logic of Toscano's poetic is deeply rooted in a dialectical engagement of scale, action and articulation–a dialectical relationship that Louis Cabri further complicates through the introduction of an often-humorous fragmentation of the connections of pop culture, sociopolitical pressures, and the processes of capital.

Cabri's poetry is chaotic in its mixed bag of scales and processes where the urban is deeply rooted in the turmoil of space and time, production and consumption, politics and jokes. Shining a spotlight on the fragments of culture and the movements of capital within the urban, Cabri brings in the spatial appendage of digital technology as a normalized habit of daily life. The meshing of technology and contemporary culture is not a novel concept, but rather Cabri expresses it as a naturalized tourist attraction that Cabri has normalized as an imagined Disneyland.

Deep and continual
even in the circuitry–and all I got was
this lousy time lapse.
[...]
effect–'synthesis' caused by devices like you,
material like me.
It was the disappointment of productivity, it was the efficiency
of the times. (130)

Cabri's poem suggests an enduring relationship between the "material" urban inhabitant and the anthropomorphized "'synthesis' caused by devices." Perhaps sounding a bit like a sci-fi fantasy, his notion that digital technology is "deep and continual" and always there to be visited suggests that, for Cabri, the new spatial logic of technology is one often celebrated –and one that our relatives visit and only ever bring back cliché souvenirs. In this sense, the spatial appendage of technology is scaled in various ways –whether it is the theme-parking of connectivity or the linkages of global capital to urban nodes along the economic network. Even the economy of lame souvenirs has found its way there. He returns to this notion of identity and technology again when he writes: "We all screen/for I screens this//body over./I am not a muse" (114).

Cabri highlights the relationship between productivity and time, suggesting that not only is technology a new space to be visited but it is also a device that is rescaling our relationship to time and place. His tongue-in-cheek poetic frames technology as a spatial extension of the urban that bends and manipulates time (a concept Virilio is very much concerned with). Hinting at the labor politics of Rodrigo Toscano and Mark Nowak, Cabri's linkage of productivity and time in some ways echoes Virilio's theory of urban decay. For Virilio, space and time become problematic as a result of the compression they undergo through communications technology and thus the urban is rendered placeless. However, countering Virilio's claim of the urban vacuum, Cabri's poetic suggests that we are becoming distanced from the *processes* of production whilst becoming more attuned to the length of time in the process of productivity. It is not an evacuation of the urban as much as it is a reevaluation of the scalar narratives of the spatial logic of the urban.

Similar to Toscano, Cabri situates the crux, or ground zero, of the scalar narrative in the hands of the citizen–the citizen that is most affected by the processes of capital. When considering how the flux of spatial scales takes place, it is important to consider who would want it to change, and why. Following Swyngedouw and Marston's lead that capital is the common process that affects all spatial scales, most often those that are unfavorably effected by such processes would want to enter into power negotiations. Whether it is the capitalist who wants to make more money, or the citizen who wants to make a living -- the weightiest scalar narratives in *The Mood Embosser* seem to be those consumed by the fear of "poverty". Certainly poverty is a relative term–as Cabri implies "if that's the definition you use"–in light of ideological and technological frameworks.

The name gain–legacy of socialism

Only if that's the definition you use
For poverty–'does it exist,' enthalpy of
Vocabulary where *e*, capacity for work
Equals chord o' code
Marked 1 or 0 in
Regulation time
(24)

Linking the labor politics of socialism to perceptions and "definition[s]" of "poverty," the binary codes of digital technology ("Marked 1 or 0") invoke the significance of time in capitalist production. In some sense, Cabri is setting up a social dichotomy between the equal poverty of socialism and the unequal poverty of capital through the "vocabulary where *e*" becomes key to technological productivity and expectations of time. Illustrating the rupture of space and time that Virilio argues is causing the collapse of the material urban landscape, Cabri echoes Virilio's claim that without leaving everyone returns:

Not/Always here.
Ever going to leave.

Retreats.
Say, did you happen to–Say something.

Newspapers read/unread.
Today is the greatest–Day of the pie.
(52)

Comparable to Virilio's theory of urban evacuation, Cabri suggests the reassessment of place–a "retreat." However, contrasting Virilio's claim that urban decay is a result of a shift to the virtual market place, Cabri reflects a community made up of fragments–coming and going, reading and not reading, talking and not talking. For Cabri, the urban dynamic is one caught up in the *movement* of scale where the citizen enacts a process of scale making that suggests there is always somewhere to go–and that going there creates a scale of being "read/unread". Not an evacuation but a constant relocation:

in social space celebrate dish of 500
frontier channels
brain cycle
figurehead briefly unpopular returns packing
'one helluva lunch (26-7)

Technology in this sense creates a new urban/rural "social space" where our intellectual public engagements have become mediated by "500/frontier channels" that move in and out of popularity. Cabri illustrates how popular engagement, where the attention that the urban citizen pays to satellite TV (the most endemic form of technology that exists as a focal point to many western living rooms), has rescaled such technology that as citizens we have come to believe in its spatial logic as it exists in our most private spaces. The inclusion of technological portals into our homes and private lives implies the connectivity and linkage that Castells discusses in his network society. This portal of technology is repeated in the text, and often signifies formation of identity and how it relates to our place in the world of capital and politics:

> So they raised the stakes. Help me put your brother-in-law
> In the White House. It was their
> World. We lived in it. Irresistible
> POP. Extended cross-trailering. Pay-per-view holdback.
>
> (108)

Where Toscano highlights the physical encroachment of technology on the urban, Cabri's fragmented poetic envisions a psychological spatial logic that entails a fad-like quality where a "figurehead briefly unpopular returns packing," suggesting a return to popularity *or* a return "packing" a gun. Either way–our attention to technology within our private spaces, whether they are urban or otherwise, have become absorbed with the fragmentation of popular television–where we would almost be upset if the popular "figurehead[s]" didn't return "packing."

Significant to Cabri's poetics is that as citizens, our *observation* and *awareness* of the presence and dominance of the spatial logic of the urban causes a shift in perspective–as citizens we can assess how the fragmented nature of contemporary urban society affects our relationship to space. The poetry illustrates how that relationship is deeply tied to the spatial scales that draft the story of how we live. The condition of a technological society, one that accepts the spatial extension of technology, is important to an understanding of the digital urban condition because it is itself a fragmented space that has been, and continues to be, taken up in very meaningful and significant ways. Cabri's poetic enlists a fragmentation that ends up making sense of the bits and pieces of spatial scales we encounter every day–highlighting connections and interrelations that can often go unnoticed. Cabri's poetic is a chaotic melee of such urban fragmentation that always ends up back at the political and the technological as processes within the spatial logic of the urban.

This is the end?

This essay began with a look at the spatial scale theories of Erik Swyngedouw and Sallie Marston and established that spatial scales are always in a constant state of flux and negotiations for power in response to the quickening movement of neoliberal capitalism. Both Swyngedouw and Marston have illustrated the significant role of capital in shaping spatial scales that impact our daily lives in ways that we often don't even realize, and it is our resistance to such processes of capital that dictate how space is scaled. In making choices in our daily lives we affect how spatial scales manifest socially. As such, the weightiness of spatial scales and resistances to the social impact of scalar power negotiations is in a constant state of flux–a state of flux that affords the citizen possible entries for negotiation and resistance. Both Marston and Swyngedouw make room for resistance to the dominant process of capital in their theories of spatial scales–a resistance that technology has given fuel to. Leaving behind Virilio's dystopian vision of urban decay as a result of digital communications technology, the theories of Swyngedouw, Marston and Castells are well played out in Toscano and Cabri's poetry. The poems take on the spatial logic of the urban in a way that describes the urban condition as caught up in a fragmentation of scalar narratives that revolve around capital. What is at stake in a contemporary analysis of urban spatial scales is the new spatial appendage that technology has afforded to the citizen that wishes to resist the processes of capital. Employing the poetry highlights that not only is capital a dominant process in the urban context, as Swyngedouw and Marston assert, but also that the new spatial appendage of technology affords a new perspective of spatial scales, as well as a new vantage point from which to challenge established scalar narratives. And it is the breathing room of new spatial possibilities that reveals an intensely hierarchical struggle over the production of space in the urban context, and how such struggles, as the theorists assert, are never outside of capital.

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GLOBALIZING PROTEST (GENEVA, 6/2003)

OLIVER RESSLER

"Globalizing Protest" is an ongoing series of photographic montages consisting of images shot in inner cities during protests against the G8. Each photographic montage is based on 36 single images that document the wooden barricades protecting the shop windows erected during various G8 summit meetings, which activists use for graffiti, political texts, and slogans. Three photo works of this series have been produced: "Untitled (Geneva 03.06.03)" was shot during the G8 summit in Geneva 2003, "Untitled (Edinburgh, 7/2005)" at the G8 summit in Scotland in 2005, and "Untitled (Rostock 6/2007)" during the recent G8 summit in Heiligendamm in Germany in 2007.

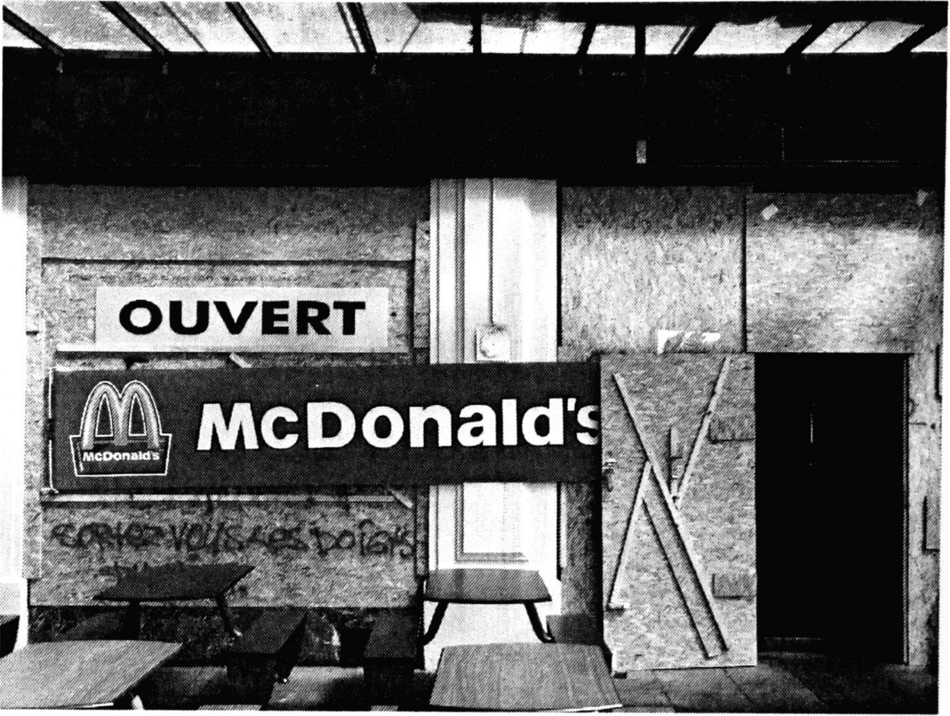
"With photographs showing shopping windows protected with wooden desks, which turned out to become an endless plateaux for the demonstration's texts, graffiti and images and sometimes combined with the signs and names of global companies still visible outside the wooden desks, we can see how the incoherency of space and contingency of time enables the disclosure of the common. What is interesting here is exactly the mixture of spatial incoherency and contingency of time of the common, which revealed a completely different mapping of the city streets, movements, languages of the city, parallel spatial meanings. What holds these images together is not the common goal, not even the common meaning, but the alternative production of language with by taking the space and opening up the time. The common appearance is made explicit, this is 'the spectacle of appearance' as Hannah Arendt would say. The spectacle is spatially incoherent as a consequence (it is namely done as a protection nevertheless establishing plateaux for momentarily spatial appropriation) and contingent in the sense of making the common explicit not as a program, but as a response to the momentarily urgency of appearance." (Bojana Kunst, The Collaboration and Space, Mocow Art Magazine No. 61/62, 2006)

"Ressler's photograph is without action(s), but a site of a precise textuality, and a possible answer to questions about the difference between mainstream journalism, big capital, the power elite and mediactivism. [...] An objective camera eye simply does not exist, which is why the camera angle in Ressler's works blends with the perspective of the demonstrators. As viewers we are in direct relation to the events by seeing them through the demonstrators' viewpoint. The place of the image of vision and its reversal are crucial. And as regards the image of vision, it is more important to include the third element between the body and that image, namely power. This is why it is necessary to look at Ressler's works through the only possible perspectives that are non-essentialism and a strict anti-documentary positioning of reality." (Marina Grzinic and Walter Seidl, Double Check. Re-Framing Space in Photography: The Other Space, Parallel Histories. 2005)

http://www.ressler.at/

LeMatin
LeMatin

PHARMACIE
SOUS LES MA
LA RAGE
MINISTRY
G8 IL
QUI
LA F
P


OUVERT
McDonald's
McDonald's

FIRE

Annabella
FERMETURE DEFINITIVE
NO WAR

NMB
mobilier
COOK YOUR OWN FOOD
The only Good system
is a 20k sound sys

QUESTIONS FOR CALLIOPE

Kimiko Hahn

1

Wherever I walk I see disquiet–men in fatigues,
photos taped to candles, a rental truck double-parked–
and live in dread and denial of the impact
of two Boeing 747s:
of one god above others
as we compose rude music,
teach girls to drive and–boys to fly kites!
The aftermath grounds all my plans.
But not to prayer or any god.
Still, how does one return to the little floor-through
and find aviary instead of terror?
How to explain to daughters
a delight in nectar, akin to belief?

2

This afternoon I want to write twenty-one
little rooms
to insure crawling into a corner for
bewilderment
and order
the way a bird flies and nests.
To find the faith
that we'll grow old as Adrienne
believed she'd grow old in her sequence
on migration.
(One is even called Calliope, though hardly epic in size!)

3

This afternoon, too, I do not write but scribble
because sitting still
has become a task. I am not sure
what to believe now that I, myself, am afraid.
I think of a parakeet
so frightened when I first held her
that she shivered. I know that fear
from labor
and from not knowing what my children think

or where the older might be:
subway station, vacant lot, –nest–
and if she knows where to run
in emergency.
Steal a bottle of water and run–I tell her.
And she tells her sister, *Mom said to steal something!*

4
As a small child with night terrors
this daughter would call until the black turned to grays:
in that moment I'd carry her to the window
glowing with yellow street light
but still she would not stop thrashing–
pick me up,
then, *put me down.*
Because nothing can be done right
what can a mother know for certain
except, *I am not the hummingbird*? I hated that moment.
That not knowing whether to slap her bottom
for myself or hold her against her will

5
or leave her in her crib, the size
of a forest laden with dank shadows.
They still cry from those heated lungs
and I still hate the room and myself and still fear them
for making me want to disappear
down any path away from the carnivorous threshold
although only loving them could create such fierceness.
And it is love. The first days home from the hospital
I'd lie back against a headboard of pillows
watching *Oprah*, the little one fluttering on my chest–

6
as if my chest were a tiny mattress also–
beating beating beating.
It is the closest thing to being in utero for the infant;
for the mother, *for me*, to see the child
in love with sleep, which is to say,
with her own small attraction.
We don't share that consonance with anyone.
It's what outlasts, over two decades,
the *I don't want you,* the *you can't make me,*

the *I'm not coming home.* I know the pulse from escape
away from my own mother's grove of flutterings.

7
Then there's the *This isn't even my home.*
How could it be when I don't know what it means
for a mother to make a home. No.
That's not fair. I knew a raggedy-dog
unstuffed and washed and restuffed for bedtime,
I knew how to light a match over the hissing stove,
roll biscuit dough on a happy counter–
and how all that vanished.
When a home dies it isn't buried
and it isn't forgotten.
It swells and bloats with sarcophagus flies
then beetles. Then wind.
Then wing beats?

8
Dearest Daughter, you witnessed
the father, roiling into a separation–
perhaps recalling each one of your original
leave-takings as well. You witnessed this
while you spent as many hours
in other people's homes scarfing down
their mothers' meals, their fathers' order-in's.
I understand blame. And rage–
since you never saw me
the nights spent in the unlit bathroom,
steadying for flight from those rooms
which, perhaps, you mistook for yourself.

9
When did my love poems stop addressing men?
become replaced with adoration for girls–
the daughters I so often left
with babysitter or camp counselor
or with my mother before she was killed so long ago?
The girls' desires then comparable to
furious raptors after my live heart.
Now I know differently: more than any other,
I cannot live without those two especially
since mother is gone–was often gone.

And when I cry about anything
I cry for her. And I want my daughters
to not know that window, door, gate.
Subway platform.
But perhaps you've already realized–
the hum is from the wings, not their whistly call.

Floating Poem
Then there is the Navajo tale of the Ruby-throat
sent to see what is beyond the blue sky
and when she returned she answered, *nothing.*
(Or is it Japanese?)

10
I should despise the hummingbird–
the tutu my best friend favored
when we pulled on her old recital tights and tulle.
I should hate that she called for the purplish one
with a little cap shaped into a sharp beak.
But I love her too much to cling
to that rage displaced from my own sister's cradle.
But isn't that how we got here in the first place–
that constant hum of rivalry–

11
A few of the seventeen species of hummingbird:
Anna's, Blue-throat, Broad-billed, Black-chinned,
Violet-crowned, Bee, Giant, Lucifer.
Which makes me wonder–when my ankles
are propped on his shoulders
and he thrusts and thrusts–
where are we?
A trite question but still valid: aren't we
as close as we'll ever reach
and yet, in our separate shuddering
aren't we finally synchronizing distance?
Sad-throated, Melancholy-chinned, *Euphoria*–

12
because there *is* a him. For pleasure we ask about,
say, one's earliest childhood memory–
how I am ill at ease in deep water
because of the dinosaurs in my Natural History Book

(how often they ruined a lake!);
how he discovered a hummer caught in a spider's web.

13
And although we married last Thursday–
when we have spent our routine anxieties
(he has daughters too),
we think of terror. Not the horror flicks he delights in–
no–that we've come this far to find one another
yet wonder if love
can be saved by potassium iodide.
He claims–*how ironic that finally I have a reason*
not to die. Every day.
It's a gamble to stay. When all we thought was
it was a gamble to slip off our clothes
in his darkened office that first afternoon.

14
(Films I am not allowed to see even though H loves them:
Entrails of a Virgin
Shriek of the Mutilated
Blood-sucking Freaks
I Eat Your Skin
The Corpse Grinder
The Brain Eaters
Cannibal Holocaust)

15
Before Adrienne, Neruda wrote twenty-one love poems
in the form of questions.
And psychologists say, of children,
that answers interrupt questions. What are you?
Why? Then there is "Twenty Questions"–
that game my children's father played
from the driver's seat
to distract squawking girls
when we all thought we'd continue as we were
even though the air throbbed with the unhappiness
the children accepted as home.
That this might mean questions.
Is it in this car? Is it bigger than a lunchbox?
Or, later, *why that bird?*

16
My daughters–most profound objects of beauty–
are pleased to see their *pretty mommy happy*,
their *happy mommy pretty*. But I see a misery
for betraying what a child
never questions: that the parent
will never desert the little home–
though one saw her playmate travel between separate apartments
and counted herself as fortunate as the girl with golden locks.
And now this–this rage so penetrating that to express it
might menace survival.
Though there will always be porridge on the table.
Though they could speak and keep on living.
But does knowing ever equal trust?
What can a daughter someday believe?
That each will couple
and tend one another's pin feathers.

17
On the same night of our one-night honeymoon
upgraded at the Waldorf-Astoria, in our joy,
the news announced sentence of the Kurami divorcee
who, on bearing a child out of wedlock,
would be stoned to death after weaning her daughter.
What now! What now!
What does *sacred* or *faith* mean in this context
I do not have the wherewithal to imagine–

18
In Nicaragua in the '80's I was happy
for a week. Gun fire popping a mile off.
Rice and beans for every meal.
The air was damp with the smell of plumeria.
Volcanoes threatened.
Politics were inextricably exotic and pedestrain.
I was surrounded by men and women in camo,
poems in their back pockets.
And we were hanging with Sandinista circus performers
that thrilled children in tattered hand-me-downs.
It was terribly poor–so poor
surgeons boiled disposable gloves for reuse–
but everyone could read! (Not like here in Brooklyn.)
That was where I met Adrienne. That was then.

How did our own country become *more moribund*?

19
Dearest Daughter,
Other events besides flight?
That it's okay to be a small bird
hovering–eighty wing beats per second in flight,
two-hundred in courtship?
That one should know the shape of harm–
the orioles, the lizards, the snakes, the small hawks!
And know that I often forget
to call a teacher for an appointment
or pick up a skin care prescription–
because a hundred items clot my calendar, but

20
I don't forget you–which is what you gather.
I may forget your 2% for breakfast
but I do not forget you–where you land
is my pulse.
Even so, I am sure to disappoint, often even–
it is the flip side of myth,
a daughter's inheritance, in part.
Oh, little Calliope,
Good you have evolved a long tongue for sipping!

21
How to hold such a tiny bird in one's hand
without squeezing?
How to fly off
with a wish to return fixed in one's hollow bones?

WHEN THE LANGUAGE PARTED

Diane Glancy

Now the birds were fussing.

The crows squawked, answering one another with loud caws. Something was invading. The early settlers who came to the north woods? The ghosts of old tribes? Their skirmishes spoke through the damp, cold trees. Maybe it was the sound of their new words. Her brothers. Sisters she heard.

There were heavy clouds over Lake Vermilion. The roads: Vermilion Reservation Road, Whiskey Point, Boise Forte, Cemetery Road, Duffy Point, Gruban Road, Manitou Road, West Two Road off Highway 1. The Vermilion Reservation was at the end of the Vermilion Trail, once an old Indian path from Duluth to Pike Bay on Lake Vermilion. The land was full of lakes and sloughs; the Mesaba soil, the dark mix of blue and redbrown. Trees against the road.

She had drawn trees with purple trunks and reddish, bluebrown leaves.

Arnie had watched her. There was something in her he wanted, but the world shut him away from her. She would never come to him in the nowhere he was, but she did.

The woods had spoken to her when she was a girl. Her doll had told her what the leaves said. In the winter, the doll talked to her about the snow. She still could hear its loon voice.

i) The brother who shot himself hunting

We was walking near the slough. Saw a rabbit. Running after him. Tripped. The finger in the trigger pulled. Shot right through my jaw. I was walking there. I know I was. I heard spirit from heaven say, *um wake. Bring him. He needin.* I saw the spirit make a zero in the slough.

I was still alive and my brother and the others fighting. I felt the blood running out. I thought I could pull the blood back into my wound. Put a finger on the vein. It was pumping out my life.

Sometimes if Janice dozed she could hear the shot. She could feel his spirit near the slough. She didn't want to go there. When Arnie wanted to park, she refused to stop there.

ii) The brother who died in car accident

The car hit the railroad track

##

Burst off the road. BOMPT! Wheeled around. Rolled. We stomped a tree. It was quiet. I heard an animal howl. The others in the car stopped calling. I felt the broke bone stuck out of my back. I couldn't say what happened. The girl crying. Her voice. Was it the animal howl? Was it spirits coming around to take us? We lifted up. We walked. Look! The car in pieces just like bones. Skid marks 100 yards. It was a moose in the road, he said, made us hit them tracks. No, he always had an excuse. The moose was off to the side still froze in the one car light.

iii) The sister who died

My hands fly like little birds. I can't hold them still.

iv) The sister talking about her mother

She wore out. There was no one to help her get a hold. Her husband was dead. Her sisters and brothers gone. They pulled her with them like an old canoe on a tow line.

SOBER

Everything was out of proportion. Larger than it should have been.

That's what it was like to be sober.

A beaver building a dam flooding the country.

The new world had come from Europe. Many kinds of people came. Some of them were the Great Spirit's tribe. They dragged Christ with them. They were called by his name. Maybe a Savior hadn't come in the way the Indians wanted. But he had come to them.

The blood of the Indian had been mixed with the Christian's blood. She had been told about Christ, a man who had been on the earth, who was hanged on a tree; upon whom God had placed the judgement of sin. And what was sin? It was unbelief. Not believing that Jesus died on the cross and was called back to life by the Great Spirit himself. God the father. She could understand it by the way the buffalo gave itself for men, but even the buffalo had run from the death they faced. They had been killed anyway, and came back to life in the prairies of the afterworld.

But there was no room on the reservation for Christianity. She was shunned. There was no room on the reservation for soberness. She was shunned for that also.

Even if no one would go with her, she would row.

Christianity is the individual and Christ, the preacher said. How different it was from tribal ways in which the individual was nothing without the group. But it seemed like he was with a lot of people. The multitudes, in fact.

It felt like no one else came with her. Her friends stayed by the lake drinking. She longed to be with them. Christianity was a lonely religion. It was the moon by itself in the night sky.

It was a loon call in the dark.

This is what it felt like to be sober: everything she didn't want to be; everything she wasn't. She held out her tongue to the night. She could see the moon's breath coming from her mouth. She could see the wreck of her life. Nothing would draw it back together. Somewhere her father died.

Somewhere her mother died.

There were wakes and funerals and she didn't know where she was. They held her up. Who? Arnie? No, it couldn't be him. She was dreaming. Her husband had vanished long ago. She couldn't remember him. Maybe

it was someone who looked like him. She remembered looking at his face. Staring until they laughed at her. She couldn't focus. She couldn't get it straight. Time swirled around her.

Somewhere one of her sisters died, not the youngest one in the city, but another one, like her.

She was at another wake. Another funeral. She couldn't tell them apart, but tossed with the waves on the lake.

Her old doll was eating her. If she stayed in her room, she heard the drawer open; she felt the doll climb on the bed.

Sometimes she let the doll nibble her fingers. It didn't hurt. She let the doll eat one arm. One leg. The doll was now large, and she was small as the doll had been.

Her fingers were arms without hands. Her two big toes were legs.

She was a girl, they say, but they were talking about the doll.

The preacher had an aluminum paddle. He rowed. The doll rowed. Now she was the canoe they rowed.

She levitated into the sky.

The moon she had eaten streamed from her mouth like feathers from a bird. The moon was a bird that flew. She had eaten a bird. She began to dance. The feathers of the bird came from her mouth.

Now the moon was a canoe she rowed.

Everything was water.

This is what is was like to be sober: everything running together. The moon torn in half. One side of it thrown away. The remaining half longing for the other.

She remembered the sparkle of old glass bottles by Lake Vermilion. Buttons. Coins. Clay marbles. She could dig along the lake shore and find pieces of old pottery. Sometimes archeologists from the Minnesota Historical Society bought them.

Somewhere there had been a wind storm, branches of birch on the ground like ridges of snow.

Lake Vermilion was red in the dusk.

Firewater. Rainwater. Moonwater. Lakewater. Holywater. She called drinking all of these.

She wanted it and wanted it. It didn't go away.

The preacher let her stay in the stone church at night. She lay on the floor and held the table legs. She licked the stone floor.

That was what it was like to be sober.

She had one boy, Hunter, in the reformatory. Her daughter, Ewa, and baby

were living with a boy and his sister who also had a baby. She couldn't ask how they were. She couldn't bear her weight and theirs too. Her other son, Craig, in the army in a war in Iraq somewhere.

She heard the spirits. They rode snowmobiles of the purest light. The cold air came from their mouths and noses. Their eyes were snowdogs: the sun through frozen air. She drove to Birch Lake, where Highway 1 narrowed through the birch forest. The trees were tall, ghostly and white. They were full of eyes. The spirits lived there. *I speak to you from a world you don't know.* It was a sober world. A holy world which had drunkenness for its counterfeit.

She heard the voices of the trees.

Blessed be the birch.

She called to her friends. Most everyone was drunk still floating in the water. There is nothing on shore, they said. She called to them, come, oh come. He is merciful and forgiving. He is the only oar you have. He is transforming.

The only oar you have is.

from IOVIS 3: COLORS IN THE MECHANISM OF CONCEALMENT
(ELEVEN FACES ONE THOUSAND ARMS)

Anne Waldman

So goes: first, *shape*
The creation–
A mist from the earth,
The whole face of the ground;
The *rhythm* –
And breathed breath of life;
Then *style* –
That from the eye its function takes –
"taste" we say – a living soul.
First glyph; then syllabary,
Then letters. Ratio after
Eyes, tale in sound. First, dance. Then
Voice. First, body–to be seen and to pulse
Happening together.
Before the void there was
Being nor non-being;
Desire, came warmth,
Or which, first?
Until the sages looked in their hearts
For the kinship of what is in what is not.
Or in the heart or in the head?
Quire after over three millennia.

Louis Zukofsky, "A"-12

Doubt did I doubt what did I doubt a circle or a cloud or a raw mix, cameras in the trees, what did the Pleistocene say about the notion of "outrider"? (Am I one of those? was what the Pleistocene said.) No such think-pursuit as "just" no such problem as "just," just what you make of it individually with your compromised ethics and rehabilitation plan, not your quaint Victorian Pleistocene trying to walk a straight line. Rhetorical devices being as shards are, as middens are, the Cold War gestures are still coming, freezing us half to death as rhetoric is, did I not doubt that this work could scar the western world half to death with its relics? But what is "just" what is "doubt." I did doubt gender in any passing literary indeterminacy's irony as an old

page (scribed, layered by the night and candle, by the oil of resilience) did doubt itself as myself representing "person" "poet" and as person better dare to be part of the history of your time. We were pre-occupied with the problems of the city states. Me too, me too. And Hiroshima? And Lebanon? New Orleans?

Farewell, my friends, I send you this honey mixed with white milk...

Or Arab poetics shifting and becoming modern in the 8th century. How you want it, early or late. Manly or queenly? Internal or external? Centripetal or centrifugal? Are we talking about a globe or a planet?

Whatever happened could be most grateful and forever in homage to then epic (Ionian) and the Asiatic that would present tragic and comic dimensions of the human dilemma. I hoped to do that. It was the primordial inclination and composed in such a way for recitation of rapsodes *to raise your temperature. You take my heat?*

1. 108 butter lamps lit in the Kathmandu Valley for a father's passing

2. The all-girl Muslim prom in the US of A faced Mecca and the girls dined on a nice pasta

3. Politically incorrect Minister bows at a Shinto shrine

Down with the fathers

    How can you...

I mean the burden

detritus on the corridor
rails on the backs of men

    As if a spine could be...

                                                  down with them

How manage a way back
    down

                                          meander?

Metropolii   on   the   hirsute   line

DC   Baltimore   Philadelphia   New Haven   Newark   New York

Boston where we prayed

what did I see when I was then

meandering

their end   their ravage

their testosterone

down with them

cruelty of the plan

curtsy = duty

& the *pater familias* form stripped as train jolts

mistakes to reorient rhetoric by

an industrial reve

came so surely

mid-City scrap froth

scum

middens everywhere

clutter   broken stuff   piles of other life forms

what is it to love a fox?

more organized, our founders

father's   mouth   flounders   poem

Where of protest?

2 white egrets (passing New London now)

then boats

pink clouds so evanescent you could weep

signpost what comment?

What connects this day to any other?

"we you I will all cyborgs be"

the green scientist said in her green scientist's voice

(a secret cell on the quiet rail car told her so)

& of uranium bullets back to haunt the children dead for their country

down with

this?

bullet train to Kyoto

Bi-furcation familiar now, wiles of the patriarch embedded inside
conditions to put up with
There's a way Cixious de-configures through the examples of the family or
machinery's function, wartime karma

rapes in the Congo or unquiet bones of Japanese ancestors

pugnacious with a post-modern Blake-ness
& blanched white as rice powder

But is this voice speaking merely to a specialized audience?
can you hear me in the back?

———

down under?

(Hey ho, ghost)

Inside master iteration shares a common language

as in Help get me out of here

heterogeneity not possible in this Noh play

modest whistle announces

coming to arrest

dusk

it's coming

in consideration of all systems down: dusk

all pleasures of the U.S. of A at dusk

sailboats, say

or game courts in a Heian dream

Stonington Lumber whose existence is a privilege

mansion by the water's edge

could you bet on this as ransom

going cloud, rock, come again

going silver water

scree bouncy un-peopled universe traveling over

I said it was certainly dusk

going of no other haiku mind but dusk

& fluidity of dusk could be warmed by Buddhism

toward you

please talk a little

if you feel up to it

Was it to be in consideration of

your motherhood undone an heroic turn by entropy's dystopia?

the adaptation of the female, for example

in an interrogation of human *papillomavirus*

when nucleic acid inserts itself into host cells

for an invasion carried in you, poison as fluidity

is never apt

though it alter the normal process of cell division

or protect the innocents

wracked upon these coarse waves

Someone poignant said

" we must feel compassion for our being the remnants of super novas"

& down with the torturers of innocents...

body replaces nerve cells with spirocete tails in the sperm

inward to Dogtown

Pen swap. Who to argue with? An essay on birds. What kind? The Sewage Treatment Plant will assist you in your tribulation to understand antecedents. So what has been built up for you in the hounded text so pointedly worked on all afternoon? What tit for tat? Tit of text tit willow holds attention as a libation o the sense of text. She hooks the reader in. Doing the very thing she does not dare espouse. What is a democratic language? Would we have to begin to be gone in a dare?

Dear Karen,

Unresolved inter-connected-nesses, the need for the ancestor shrines, the way the imagination keeps playing back old (I am still stuck in romantic Heian period with Genji, Sei Shonagon, the sad diary called "Kagero Nikki") yet newly activated images–holocaust/Hiroshima/pachinko parlors. How does all this play here? And what to make of it? "do" with it? "Do" anything? Is part of the poet's vow to perpetually catch, distill, refine, re-imagine where one walk, what one notices? Plus all the verbal wordplay and associations.

The mysterious Noh plays' court backdrop re-configures kingship/emperor/god/patriarchal
power paradigm, and also–which is more important–
engages "no action" which is what
goes between the singing, music, stage movements.

The big gap.

"Life and death, past and present—
Marionettes on a toy stage.
When the strings are broken,
Behold the broken pieces!"

–Zeami Motokiyo (b. 1363), author of many Noh plays

Human life transmigrating between life and death.

So based–but remember this is extremely evolved, refined art–on much older shamanic/bardo death rites (which is where I am locating a lot of my work) and confrontation involving encounters like animal spirits. And making/imitating those sounds of the animal. Modal structures. Though I have recently been impersonating robots. But is it all like Kingfisher/wasteland. Are we just always writing in our Culture of Death? The old wounds/ yearnings must be healed so the land will thrive? So everything can "go on." My former Naropa student poet Kenji, here, as we were riding the Chuo train line, says emphatically "No more Kings!" which continues this line of theistic thinking re: death, its cycles. Those power mongers sleep with Death, using it all the time to keep us enthralled, in state of perpetual fear. Can we not do that? So I write to get out of my own Empire of Death and Fear which is what I told students last summer. Help! No more margins on this page, the unconditional charnel ground.

Use of what we do? relative to these cultural studies? I often wish I had been a serious archeologist. What is this self-appointed poet job? is it always simple–on one level–re-act/response mode, which is why I have been so grateful to be out of USA a spell and consequently not so primed to re-act, spout all the time what everyone in Our Camp knows, constantly replaying the delusion of the Masters of War, their version of reality mimicking, commenting on their euphemistic vocabulary etcetera and recounting my own Nightmares. vis a vis Them. What a bore. Not to ever forget their horrific deeds I will continue to record those in Iovis 3.

And what will the extraordinary richness of this "culture" – these cultures – which includes praxis, religion manners and mores bring? I am obviously excited.

Kyoto: Rampant with syncretic layers. Fox shrine had it in mind back in a time when animals roamed and we were one with them. What is it to love a fox? Brought to mind the rat shrine in Calcutta, the bat shrines in Bali... saw/intuit resonance with stuff in Indonesia/Polynesia in the Shinto shrines- the animist/ancestor deal, now unfortunately associated with Japanese nationalism as the prime minister keeps honoring the Shinto place (in Tokyo) where WW II war criminals are "enshrined."

Most affected by Hall of the 1001 Kannon boddhisatvas, named "Sanjusangendo," founded originally 1164 A.D., rebuilt after a fire in 1266. 390 feet long, 54 feet wide. In the center is the chief image of Kannon (Quanyin, Avalokistesvara) with eleven faces and one thousand arms, 11.5 feet high. On both sides of him/her stand very close together, ready for "action"–like an army–1000 more images of Kannon with multiple arms and accoutrements. The idea is an army of compassion.

The rock gardens–raked white pebbles–don't necessarily resemble anything and offer a nice conundrum. Like looking at Abstract Expressionism.

And on.

What are you studying? What does your world look like?

I wish I had a thousand arms.

symbiosis: a 4.6 billion year tradition, telling the day's events, sitting around the sun.

Love,

Anne-Grasping-the-Broom-More-Tightly-Than-Ever-Now

WHEN HUMANS CAME DOWN FROM THE TREES

Anne Waldman

Effort lay in us
before religions
at pond bottom
–Lorine Niedecker

shallow near-shore region

seaweeds live

swept forth glitter or in limpid

s w o o n

a signal cannot reflect or elaborate upon

yet splendor there

& come to be there

molluscs

& naming them come to be there in them

swept down, come up to your evolution then in them

love for their not ambulatory-ness

sea snails & periwinkles

chitons & limpet

move as you do, inkling of

& the common pau *Haliosis iris*

become metabolism

a wish driven

so deep it relishes the contrast

inkling for human suck

motion humming

recursive hum

are minds possible without mellifluous language?

luster not only for an archival eye

residual depth plea to The Wild

one day arrived at "chromosomal" time

or a water plant hypothesis called "nuclear"

(spy spy! hunt hunt!)

& you are once again a scare

a smoke-out tactic

an Iran to break up a concept

that will never break in them as Other

while language reflects mind structures

strictures on ways to be in world

(are enemies aerial or terrestrial?)

not only data you crave

but darker pundit-plans to know power

or else benthic animals go further down

attach to rocks, stones & sediments

get food that way bottom feeding ones

filtering tiny planktonic animals or plants out of surrounding water

sponges sea mosses rock & mud oysters

or pipi and toheroa (*Amphidesma ventricosum*)

do this

what sound in your fleshly name

does this?

are you mere *materiel*

altricial? sexy?

half-cooked or cocked

made to be shattered by a bomb

are you fit in wit

& naming them come to be neural endgame of wit

in gesture: 3 bows or blows wrought

in thought-pattern flight: 3 associations

accrete secret deplete

or larynx mouth and tongue

defensive

yet citizen are you?

speak out? wittily?

& that which destabilizes meaning my lover

is not you

and then there are the hidden colonies, multitudes of separate animals

all epifauna in this weird survival game

neglect your sonar sexuality

neglect that cluster burst of sound

(listen for echo off a ship's hull that would deliver useful knowledge)

rethink the mouth of your disembodiment

ritual for the dead   flint axes   fire

"Hedgehog depth charge launchers"

"Anti-sub marine missiles" exist only

in a land of short sentences

lethal entrances

or keyboarding we live with

400 crude oil & toxic spills

Prudhoe Oil Fields

(waterboarding we live with)

just thirty miles west of Artic Refuge

adjusts intensity to the sound of refuge

deluge subterfuge death fugue

4,900 feet of deep hunting

you'd like would argue for the beaked whale

deep water echinoids resting there

where she moves, antithesis

mitigated circumstance or resistance

oldest living seafloor animals. ever say

something

excludes

her

or them?

"reckon 'round longer than

you'll ever be"

microbe time

"than consummate

mouth breathers"

breeders

hover and suck up the air.

directions of all possible space of

all possible mouthbreathing.

they are below

especially below.

and more below.

say: the coral reef is noisy today

it is a tendentious maze. if standing

a windy tundra always thinking about what the tundra used to be. it was the sea.

if standing

& swimming?

say: all about microbes again in a mitocondrial tundra world

a Continental Divide: look

toward the Pacific and chant an open air aria

or small song to coral, its inalienable

right to exist. if standing

& nod to the east coast

its shame. *where they run your life from* a dirge

and more below

my lover:

you are late before sun-up

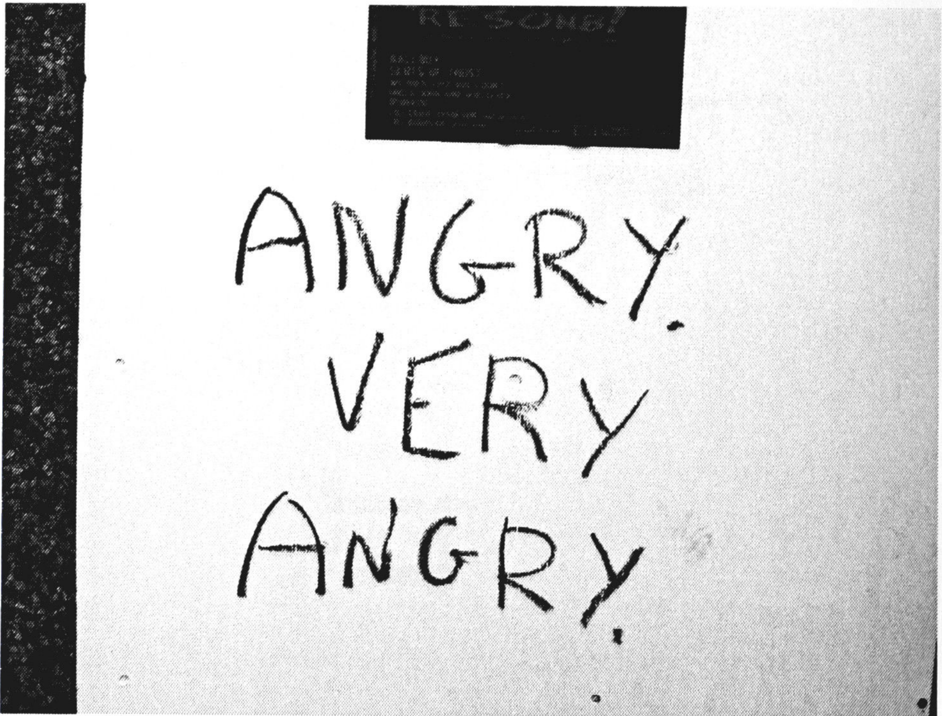
you'd better move upstream soon

windy tundra always thinking what the tundra used to be

GLOBALIZING PROTEST
(EDINBURGH, 7/2005)

OLIVER RESSLER

Forget-Me-Not
Fo


ANGRY.
VERY
ANGRY.

Gifts &
Accessories
FAILTE!
WITAJCIE
DOBRODOŠAO
BIENVENIDO!
WILLKOMMEN
BENVENUTO

BIG IDEAS
B!
CH

LIDL
LIDL
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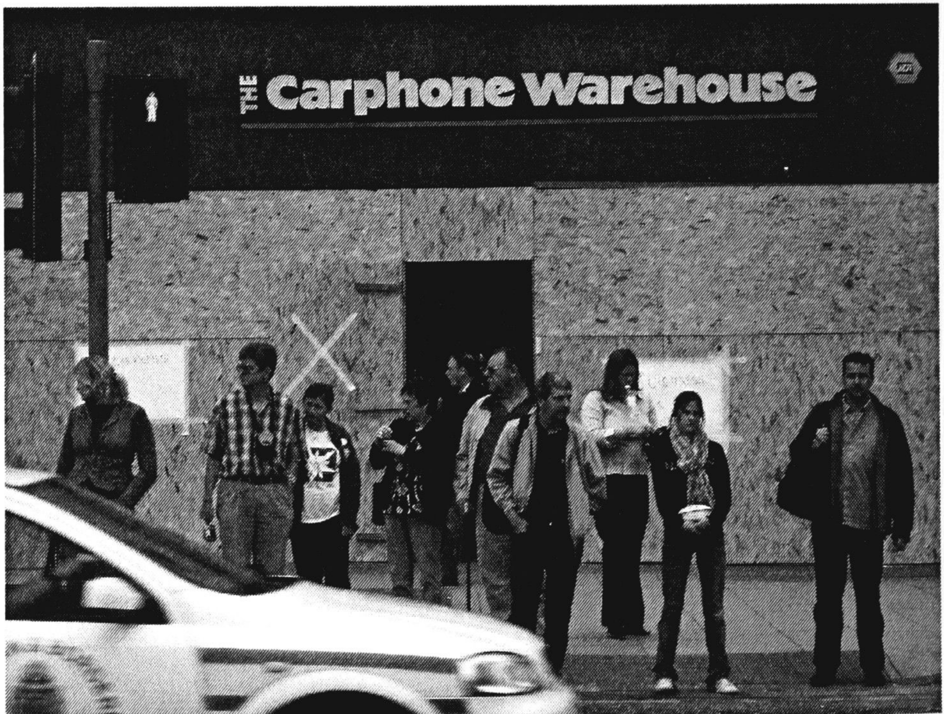

THE Carphone Warehouse

from "HUMANIMAL: A PROJECT FOR FUTURE CHILDREN"

Bhanu Kapil

This work is based upon the true story of Kamala and Amala, two girls found living with wolves in Bengal, India, in 1921. My source text was the diary of an Indian missionary, Reverend Joseph Singh, a document that was first published in 1945 as a companion text to Wolf-children and Feral Man, *a book of essays by the Denver anthropologist Robert Zinng. In the jungle, on a Mission to convert the tribal population, Singh had heard stories of "two white ghosts" roaming with a mother wolf and her pack of cubs. He decided to track them, and, upon discovering the "terrible creatures" to be human, killed the wolves and brought the children back to his church-run orphanage, the Home, in Midnapure. For the next decade, he documented his attempt to teach the girls language, upright movement, and a moral life. Despite his efforts, Amala died within a year of capture, of nephritis. Kamala lived to be about sixteen, when she died of TB.*

In 2004, I traveled to Midnapure with the French film-making company, Mona Lisa Production, as part of a documentary on human-wolf contacts. There, in India, I found the graves of the two girls. I found a ninety-eight year old woman who recalled their howling. I found a tree that Kamala had been photographed in, reaching out to grab the tail of a cat. I found the room the girls were kept in. I found the overgrown garden of the Home with its crumbling brick wall. I found the grandson of Joseph Singh, and it was he who placed the blurry photographs, which sections of this work are written from, in my hands.

41. Unable to assimilate the sulphites Dr. Sabadhicari gave her, the youngest wolf-girl, Amala, died of kidney failure on a high cot. Kamala, her sister, though they were not sisters biologically but made sisters, by feral life, keened and shuffled for many days at the perimeter of the Home. During this time, Joseph took a photograph of her climbing a tree and extending her arm towards the leg of a cat. I found this tree and climbed it. I found the room where Amala died and opened the door. There was a man inside the room. He was about twenty-five years old, dressed in a white dhoti, and cross-legged on a cot, reading a tattered book covered with newsprint in the Indian fashion. When he saw me, he grinned and leaped up to stand on the bed. Reaching up to a sack hanging from a hook on the ceiling, he retrieved a glass bottle filled with cloudy water. Passive to India, dazzled, I did not resist him when he poured some water into his cupped palm and put it to my mouth. "Ganga-jal. Paio." I drank it, Holy water from the

Ganges, and backed out into the garden, to spit.

42.i. On Sunday, October 17, 1920, Joseph wrote: "But I failed to realize the import of the circumstances and became dumb and inert. In the meantime, the men pierced her through with arrows and she fell dead. After this, it was an easy job. I collected four big sheets from the men and threw one of the sheets on the ball of children and cubs and separated one from the other."

42.ii. The doctor breaks Kamala's thumbs then wraps them in gauze.

43. Notes for a companion text: the coast of Wales. Your legs were a brown and silver frame to the day: bony, skinny really and smashed-up looking beneath a coat of coarse, black hair. The sand was white, as were the other holidayers. I felt bitterly the contrast of our own exposed skin against the blueness of the sky and the waves. Your legs were frankly an embarrassment: visible chunks of flesh taken from your thighs and shins at another point in history. Mummy's bright yellow sari with its schizophrenic border of green and black zig-zags, and so on. Only in the water were you and I a family: colorless, wavy and child-centered. Invisible to the eyes of the other families. Do you remember? A wave bobs us up, higher than the person with the camera. Embedded in the dark, silver cream of the Kodak paper, you're like a brown rectangle with a black dot for the mouth and two brown arms. I am a brown dot and one brown arm, obscured by iridescence; your singular, limbed progeny.

o. And into the sky. I saw her slip between the bars then into a bird. The cook crossed herself and spilled water on the doorstep to the compound to see it. A tree. Shaking on a windless day. I ran out into the air wrenching myself from twenty red arms: the orphans, the cook. What was happening? Then a bird flew over us, a black bird like a raven or a crow, and dropped a white dot from the sky. It fell on me.

44. Imagine a body emitting red worms, thick as a finger and as long.

45.i. In a companion text, intrusion functions as an organizing principle. As an adult, for example, I take pleasure in the well-ordered house with the furry dog on the floor and the leg unaffectedly balanced on the mantelpiece. It's a human leg. It's art.

45.ii. My father's body, in those first fifteen or sixteen years of his life, changed from a liquidy, peeled thing–constantly re-opened spots of tissue –into another kind of body. The scarring process is regenerative in that

you're healed but now you look different. My father's legs, for example, pooled with a silvery protein that hardened into long ovals and other shapes on his shins and thighs, though his feet were beautiful. Perfect, long-toed and white, as I recall. In the hospital, I massaged his legs, something that distinguished me from the other grown children in the reservoir of breath, that public bedroom. Pressing two rows of points, the spleen and the liver, I waited until he was asleep before I left. In the basement cafeteria, I ordered tomato soup, which I drank from the bowl, cupping my hands to bring it to my mouth as I gazed out at the trees and the rain and the darkening, indigo sky. My father died young, in his fifties, though the doctor told me privately that his body was clearly ravaged by the debilitating effects of poverty, early malnutrition and the multiple musculo-skeletal traumas that he appeared to have sustained as a child. "On the contrary, Miss Kapil," he said in a theatrical whisper next to the bed, "it is a miracle he lived this long. He should really have died as a child." "You should go home, ducks," said the nurse, and I did, passive to the ward's routines.

45.iii. As a child, I was waiting just outside my father's office, kicking my legs on a chair as I read *Bunty*, my weekly comic. I was waiting with a tall black boy of about twelve, already six feet tall. "What did you do?" "Nuffink." Without warning, both incredibly fast and in slow motion, my father came out of his headmaster's office with a cane. Within moments, the boy was writhing on the carpet, doubled up–"Please, sir!" Without thinking, I stood and ran through the corridors of the school. I have a vivid memory of a frieze of gold and silver spray-painted coffee beans, arranged to form the spirals of a galaxy on a huge sheet of black paper. It must have been many pieces of paper, stapled together. I forget.

o.

47. I want to make a dark mirror out of writing: one child facing the other, like Dora and little Hans. I want to write, for example, about the violence done to my father's body as a child. In this re-telling, India is blue, green, black and yellow like the actual, reflective surface of a mercury globe. I pour the mercury into a shallow box to see it: my father's right leg, linear and hard as the bone it contains, and silver. There are scooped out places where the flesh is missing, chunks, and those places are filled in by silvery tissue as they would be (shiny) regardless of race. A scar is memory. Memory is wrong. The wrong face appears in the wrong memory. A face, for example, condenses on the surface of the mirror in the bathroom when I stop writing to wash my face. Hands on the basin, I look up, and see it: the distinct image of an owl-girl. Her eyes protrude, her tongue is sticking out, and she has horns, wings and feet. Talons. I look into her eyes and see his. Writing

makes a mirror between two children, but I don't know how to make them touch. In a physical world, the mirror is a slice of dark space. How do you break a space? No. Tell me a story set in a different time, in a different place. Because I'm scared. I'm scared of the child I'm making.

48. They dragged her from a dark room and put her in a sheet. They broke her legs then re-set them. Both children, the wolfgirls, were given a fine yellow powder to clean their kidneys but their bodies, having adapted to animal ways of excreting meat, could not cope with this technology. Red worms came out of their bodies and one of them, the younger, died. Kamala mourned the death of her sister with, as Joseph wrote, "an affection." Where this death-scene was was a dark room deep in the Home. Many rooms are dark in India to kill the sun. In Midnapure, I stood in that room, and blinked. When my vision adjusted, I saw a picture of Jesus above a bed, positioned yet dusty on a faded turquoise wall. Many walls in India are turquoise, which is a color the human soul soaks up in an architecture not even knowing it was thirsty. I was thirsty and a girl of about eight, Joseph's great-granddaughter, brought me tea. I sat on the edge of the bed and tried to focus upon the memory available to me in the room but there was no experience. When I opened my eyes, I observed Jesus once again, the blood pouring from his open chest, the heart, and onto, it seemed, the floor, in drips.

49. I met Mahalai in Godamuri where we were, to film a troupe of Marxist actors dressed as wolves, jungle animals, and children. I hung back in the village as the film-makers constructed a bamboo cage and R., the translator, persuaded a mother to undress her daughter, cut her hair, and dress her in a makeshift cloth diaper. I walked away from this scene and asked a woman rolling a cigarette if I could rest in her garden. Smiling, she said yes and offered me papaya from a stainless steel bowl at her feet. In Bengali, and I ate it. I ate language. As Mahalai, dexterous and blank, pinched finger after finger of tobacco to construct, in seconds, tight-looking bidis to add to the white pyramid before her, she sang. Her song was familiar and it made me want to cry. I was exhausted. Mahalai got up and poured some tea from a terracotta jug into a smaller clay cup and brought it to me. She was a wiry, tiny woman somewhere between forty and sixty with a long, oiled, grey-black braid down her back. She watched me drink and then we talked, in the place where her Bengali and my Hindi crossed. Then, without warning, she took my cup and set it on the ground. She grabbed me, shoved my head into her lap and started to massage my scalp. Her husband came home, carrying a bucket of wet clay and disappeared into their hut. My whole body felt rigid but then, abruptly, I submitted to her touch. When I woke up, I was covered with a shawl and someone, Mahalai,

had covered me with tiny pink-orange blossoms from the pomegranate bush at the gate. Was there a gate? R. found me and shook her head. I was officially somewhere on the edges of the story. A light rain set in and we returned to the lodge for a late dinner of fried fish, yoghurt and rice.

50. My own mother told me another story of possession, with its attendant fable of exorcism, as a child. There was a girl of nine in the village of Nangal, who had been overtaken by an evil spirit after a failed pilgrimage to the Kali temple in the hills above her home. Kali had come to her that night and stuck out her long, black tongue. The girl told her mother the dream but by nightfall, she had a fever and by the next was unconscious. Each night, the priest fed her purgative herbs and at midnight, she was permitted visitors. "A few days later, my friend was dead and I remember when we played by the river. Our cousin-brothers buried our dolls in the sand, but the rains came before we could dig them up. I cried and cried."

o. Citron-yellow dots collect and scatter. A silver sky collapses in folds upon the canopy. The grid divides then divides again. When the girl crawls out of the broken jungle, she's soaked in a dark pink fluid that covers her parts. Fused forever with the trees of the perimeter, she can't. The branches fill her mouth with leaves. I can't breathe.

51. What are your primal images? The man walking knee-deep across the outdoor swimming pool, a candle cupped in his palm? The ever-present running water at the corner of each black frame? Rain? Dogs? The color indigo or midnight blue next to gold. Your mother or father lighting the candles for Friday night dinner? Are you from another country? I wasn't expecting it, the immediate response to a temperature. My blood let out a deep sigh. Is it wrong to feel immediately at home in India, where, if its citizens knew you felt that way, would laugh you out of the house? But I felt it. Two minutes out of Kolkata airport, driving to the city, I breathed in the air in deep gulps, releasing the chemicals of permanence.

52. Seven years ago, I walked to the University of Colorado from my rented apartment on Goss. There, in the dark library, I closed my eyes and let my right hand drift over the stacks. Where my hand stopped, I opened my eyes, chose a book at random and read this: "October 17 Captured; Oct. 28 Leave Godamuri; Nov. 4 Arrive Midnapore; Nov. 10 Loincloth stitched on; Dec 16 Noticed sleeping on overlapping position; Dec 10 Only sound peculiar cry in dead of night. 1921. Jan 3 Can see in dark. January. They try to escape, morose, bite Roda. To end of January, complete dislike for everything human (A. also) Lips tremble; Sept. 4, A. falls ill; Sept. 12 Worms evacuated; Sept 21 A. dies, K. will not eat or drink, wants to be

with corpse; Oct. 8 K. smells all places A. used to frequent, pants in sun, tongue out; Nov 25 Improves, becomes old self-via massage; Dec 2 Comes in room where Mrs. S. is, takes red toys in mouth; 1922: March 4 Can stand on knees whenever she likes without pillow; March 6 Finds dead chicken, runs into bushes and devours it, understands endearments; May 10 Wall bracket exercise begun; Sept 15 K. smells meat at 70 yards—growls; Dec 24 Fear of fire; 1923: Sept. until Sept., 1923, (during first 3 years) no laugh or smile; 1924, March 11 Says 'soo' for saraju; 'toom' for 'toomy'='I am'; Nov. 18 Locked out of inner compound; extremely frightened, takes refuge in haystack. Tries to open door by force, fails. I called to her...instead of shunning my company, (she) now sought it."

53. Jungle space is zero space. How could you stay? Imagine a girl in her childhood dress, fluttering at the edge of the jungle, pinned by it yet living. On February 22, 1924, Joseph wrote: "Kamala pulled out a red frock. Mrs. Singh asked her why she wanted this frock. She at once replied in a drawn-out expression, 'L-a-l' (the Bengali word for 'red'). This was sufficient to show she understood what she meant."

54. I place a mirror in a cave, in a garden, on a leaf. It is a tiny, circular mirror of the sort used in the embroidery of chests and hems. In this way, I can train or invert an obsidian frame to hold light, make a face clarify. Today I saw a face dormant in the darkness of the jungle. Coming near and kneeling, I saw it was the open face of a child. Future child, I slip one hand under the curve of your skull and another beneath the vine of your neck.

55. Beneath the glorious canopy, I see a zero continuously crossing the line where it thins. Red next to green: a vibration. Something loosening inside a color and it is a similar desire that makes her cross. Is it? The edge of the jungle is not the place where the line shifts the most. That is deeper in where the caves are, pink with bones.

56. Her mother walked to the edge of the village and placed her in the roots of a tree where the sounds of human activity were still clearly audible. Her pulse rose but her mother left her, which is an ancient story. Near night, she stood; the child stood, undying, already partially metallic in her effort, her resiliency, and went in. Perhaps she crawled. This is a text to keep her safe and so I followed her into the jungle. Worms, flowers. I stayed awake all night and watched her while she slept, deflecting predators with my intensity, my pressure just before appearance. Nevertheless, I did sleep and inevitably, when I woke up, she was gone.

57. The tropical modern is breakable, a fragile globe enclosing the jungle,

reflecting back the green. When it breaks, the green is, thus, muted, intensifying the pink of feathers, eyes, clothing and flowers. Heat doesn't break it. The sky does. No. I don't know what perturbs then banishes environment forever, but it does. I wrote another book like a blue lake then drained it, to write from a dip. I am writing to you from depression, from a body of black cloud through which a bird's shadow passes, like a knife.

58. A girl returns to her jungle home, shedding her dress at the perimeter. No. There's a citron-yellow flare of thunder and simple, pure red blossoms hang in the silver air. The girl is lying in a nest, endangered yet coiling like a sea-creature in her sleep. I stay awake all night on the tip of love, a test of sight's force. How come you love her too? Do you have a child? Do you want a baby? These are the wrong questions but they pass the time. They make a body real. This is a text to do that. Vivify.

o. I've exhausted the alphabet. I can't keep writing this, even for you.

59.i. With nets or sheets, shawls and ropes, they get her and bring her down. For humanimals, this is a destiny that cannot be averted. Each time she crosses, in truth or fiction, she breaks the tracery of delicate glass threads that mark the border. A border is felt in the body as fear and sometimes...no, I cannot speak for her now. Here, there are mango trees wavy with light green vines. Each crossing disrupts the gelatin envelope of the jungle, producing tracks. With a stick, Joseph lifts a strand of long black hair where he finds it curled over the orange fruit.

59.ii. Flexion, a dominant feeling like surge. This is revision, a re-telling of planar space. In the enchanted forest, a finger strokes the forearm of the reader reading of a tree in flower. He opens the flower to see a human eye, which is muscular: a motif moving of its own accord–animate, but with a future inviolate to perception and its memories intact.

60. Reaching and touching as the beginning actions, re-organized in time as desire. On our last night in Kolkata, in the hotel corridor carpeted with pale yellow wool, I said goodnight to the film-makers, suddenly shy. As the aeroplane banked above the pink-orange ocean the next morning, I understood that the humanimal moment occurs most powerfully at dawn, when the eyesight adjusts to the light of the upper rooms of the jungle. I understood it in the air. As the plane descended to Oman, I felt the one to ten worlds contracting: red fish hanging in a butcher's window; hotel bed sheets, coffee with milk, cinnamon and sugar–then London, where the sun at seven was a wet fire. In the morning, from the sky, I saw Atlantic floes pulsing imperceptibly in the darkness below. As the plane descended to Denver, I

took a dry leaf, a banana leaf with three raised seams, from its place in my book and crumpled it, crushed it really, onto my leg through my skirt.

CAIRO

Kazim Ali

In Egypt I asked why words exist we cannot pronounce. Asked as Egyptian people mispronounced words like: Egypt. Pyramid. Sphinx.

Where are you from, the young tourist-police official asks me at the gate of the Egyptian Museum.

The guard look so young—he's a boy of seventeen or eighteen, a black submachine gun slung casually over his shoulder.

I am Indian, I say, nervous by how close his face is to mine.

If you are Indian, he says slowly, leaning closer, putting his hand on my bare upper arm, where is your elephant.

I do not know any of the rules of communication here. Is he flirting with me. Am I danger. Or is he trying to be funny or friendly.

Who knows about this.

In the one place everyone looks like me—has my name—I am the most foreign.

An eternal sense: even there's been history—a telling of what happened, there's been people who have lived at this river, in this general location.

The city as we drove from the airport seemed to become monstrous—continue and continue—*much* bigger than New York. From the plane it stretched horizon to horizon.

The cities of the past—all built geographically on top of each other, but also historically, culturally, linguistically.

There is no such thing as a "present" moment, nor of "this city."

The people I see walking down the street exactly resemble the figures in the papyrus paintings, in the carvings...

Mad here, alone, in Africa—but doing the things I always do—experiencing the city—

As it comes close to opening time, here, as everywhere in the world, the workers begin to disappear to their jobs—the security guards, lean, with black-irised eyes, and long lashes, dressed in bright white, machine guns slung over their shoulders, unbelievably beautiful boy-men, remain on every corner.

This book is sewn together. I am without language. The streets are so busy how will I get across the river?

The week before I left for Egypt I took the fast-boat from Boston to Provincetown. The boat actually skipped on the surface of the water.

I've come to forget the years of joy.

You've a thread lost in a labyrinth.

You will drink from the river.

In the labyrinth the creature becomes not itself.

You've forgotten the thread, bull-man, wolf-man, fox-man...

There is a river in the labyrinth, Nile or Hudson or anything else you can name.

In Clarence once, at the height of winter, the snow two feet deep, seventeen wild turkeys picking their way through the yard, heading towards the house.

A labyrinth of time ties you back the streets of Cairo, months after 52 men were arrested on a floating nightclub, taken to jail for crimes against the society. Their trial will stretch out.

For years.

Such is the wandering and searching for the shining thread.

You will not forget the way out.

You will forget the way out.

In Paris I first saw the work of Nicolas DeStaël. In Egypt I wished I thought of him.

"One simply cannot think of any object whatsoever, because there are simultaneously so many objects that the ability to take them in falters and fades," wrote DeStaël.

I never knew if a bird or history or pharaonic. Never knew pyramid or the glass lid of the bottle.

Held at the center of the hotel like a prisoner.

What willful or wander waited.

I never existed.

Egypt was a concept or a country. I never saw it, never took the bus down the river to Alexandria, never wondered.

After *The Far Mosque* was published I learned about the controversy: whether the actual Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem is the "far mosque" of the legend, being described only by its adjective.

It didn't matter according to Rumi who wrote, "the farthest mosque is the one within."

Days I wandered on my own; Salah, the driver assigned by the company to my father took me anywhere I wanted to go.

Mohammed, the Egyptian man with an Austrian mother sat with me in the steam room of the hotel.

Salah took me to Cairo Tower, to the museums, offered to take me to the Sunni mosques and for some reason I did not want to go.

For some reason. For several.

In the ether time of my childhood when I learned to speak I learned to recite syllables whose meaning I do not know.

Any teacher of a sacred text will tell you when he's teaching you that pronunciation is of utmost importance and that the power of the word is inherent in the unknown language itself.

Why, for example, *namaaz* must be recited in Arabic or the vedantic chants spoken in Sanskrit. Or Talmud remain in Hebrew.

It is not a mere theoretical distrust of translation but another form of distance from G-D, who if truly omnipotent or omnipresent must exist without language which even in its mortal form functions as a form of distance—necessary perhaps—from meaning.

I am on a rescue mission.

Dad and I went to the Coptic Quarter. Cairo an amalgamation of cities on top of cities. The citadel of the Turkish mamelukes, the Arab mosques, the Roman and Greek quarters.

Down the narrow stone streets we make our way into a church-yard with no church.

In the subterranean church I wondered and fumbled for my father's hand.

Where are we and who are we.

Nine days later down the coast of dark countries, threaded by the wheeling stars, angel undone, light comes up.

The light opened onto shores and not on open sea.

What shores are these.

The stars will not say.

Misread the characters of my name; for "patience" read "generous" or "divided."

The terrain shifts to the thunderous mountains.

This is where you forgot yourself.

Where you slept for twenty years.

Storm clouds gather and settle along the peaks.

The air is liquid with jags of lightning.

You are a sleeping rosetta slid between the liquid lightning and the stone peak.

Wake up wake up cross the bridge into another country.

We took the car down to Saqqara one day where there is a step pyramid, older than the three at Giza.

The entrance through the Temple of the Sun, which having no roof now is truer to its function as a ruin than ever as a temple.

As I stood in the sand-yard in front of the pyramid soaring above into the pale blue desert sky I looked west into the dune.

The desert in that direction stretches thousands of miles, all the way to the Atlantic.

A pit is so deep I cannot see the bottom in the ruined city of the wind.

Monument wake to me what is ancient and built.

Were we there.

I even uncover a layer of hieroglyphics at the bottom of the wall, clearing sand away.

Every tomb has a watchman.

That magnificent pale, dusty blue sky. The color otherwise only ochre.

Just imagining the previous life in the city behind the pyramid, not a necropolis but the ruined walls and foundations of an ancient city, a city before this place was desert.

Dreaming of the sweet red watermelon from breakfast.

Rameses broken, lying down in the eroded empire, ringed by European and Japanese tourists on the second floor, looking over the railing.

It keeps all these monuments in the immediate present—sacrilege also the way we walked amongst them, grafitti scarred, people touching everything...

Hard even to discern what was original and what was reinforced construction.

But that pyramid, that intense desert heat—the miles and miles of sand stretching away, across Africa, to the Atlantic.

In the old city—moving quickly, not given time to think or mediate the experience.

In this way the ancient is lashed to the present but simultaneously kept ancient for public consumption.

I feel like I am wandering a labyrinth but without a center, a bull, a thread...

The Egyptian people become invisible: you *must* not see them.

The terrific beauty of the young man in the church, sitting in the pew next to me, his hand resting lightly on his leg, the violence with which the priest took the candles of the schoolboys
and blew them out.

Earlier as we were driving through the valley to the beautiful beginning of Memphis I thought: here is the ancient kingdom of Kemet—just beyond Saqara, the desert's edge—the magnificent first view of the kingdom from the desert.

On the way back from Cairo several workers were taking turns swinging from a tree into the river. I watched one, laughing, shaking his dark curls, grasp the rope and swing wild over the water. His white shirt wet against his chest.

I have to be able to say it.

In June of 2001 I went to Cairo, Egypt. All this was written during a decade of nearly continuous air raids and bombing of Iraq, the birthplace of civilization and of written language.

Osiris was torn into pieces by his brother; Isis traveled the world in search of the fragments to reassemble him.

And they said: oh Lord make spaces to be longer between our journeys... so We made them stories and scattered them with terrible scattering...most surely there are Signs in

this for every patient grateful one (the Morning 19, Quraan)

Layla al-Attar, the brilliant Iraqi painter, was killed when her house was struck by one of 23 Tomahawk missles President Clinton launched at Baghdad in June of 1993 in retaliation for an alleged previously planned attempt on President Bush's life. Details of that plot have never been uncovered or proven. Al-Attar's home was reduced to rubble, her husband killed, her daughter blinded, and much of her work destroyed.

The libraries of Baghdad disappear into flame and smoke. The clay tablets smashed. Quraans burning.

I am writing you this from the past—

Susan Howe: *"And what is left when spirits have fled from holy places?"*

Valley riven the early year. Shift the plates and carve.

Cairo: an ancient statue of the Pharaoh next to statues of revolutionary heroes of the twentieth century.

An old Coptic church near an Arab mosque built over Greek ruins.

A ruined Roman aqueduct threads its way from the Nile to the citadel of the Turks.

Howe: *"I thought I stood on the shores of a history of the world where forms of wildness brought up by memory become desire and multiply."*

Yet the hieroglyph does not unfigure. At a time when brutal strategy is employed in a war against the Arab people in the name of Western financial interests I went into the city looking for untranslatable icons. The Egyptian people, having Arab tongues, cannot correctly pronounce particular words tied into their mouths: *Pyramid. Sphinx. Egypt.*

My language buckled into my mouth, unbuckled itself.

Howe: *"in the machinery of injustice my whole being is Vision"*

I AM TRYING TO PERFECT MY ASSÉNT

Edwin Torres

I'd like to sliver A-mer-ica
live in a separate A-mer-ica
one that is more of a-ME-rica
the one that I don't THAT'S America

Entering the USA
Leaving *la isla*behind
Leaving The Atlantic behind
(the Atlantic *culito...* if you will)
Limping into America's horizon
(all these cities are cities of same)

America waiting for us
open arms joweled with expectation
and furry eyebrows, dismantling
her stripmall hairdos

Havana No Seño or
Negila or Negril
Gi'tude — but not me...

BIENVENUDO
TO THE BICOASTAL LENGUA!

Forked tongue mandela — speech so true
splits the tongue...
into bi-coastal lesions
as America tries hard to perfect her ASS-ent...her AC-cent!

(oye Sombra...wheng deed my Other bekom djur Other?)

Tongue-iva
Lady Saliva
Mounted Imbiber
Ridin' the rider

but no one rides wit me

'cuz I'm wit me
and I ain't no one
see, we all wanna piece o'dat lengua
Syllables caught on her ear
screaming echolia for the PaPa-patria
melt down your moetrics MaMa-mantra

Lip-piss-sizing on her back legs, America
rears up and proudly mounts
Rapunzel's locks, casas blancas, ivory tores, ebonic flores,

edwin por'es — open your bord'es
and call me you — I'm another taino
reachando — por tu

O lonely widow of vari-coastal impunity
safe against your bargain culture, illegally
aliened by the color of grass — how ironic...

to gain freedom...
you must acquire a card...
the color of nature...

O Merdre-Rica
O Mer Rica
O Sea of Rich Chica-CACA
O-WHO-sica
O-YOU-sica
OHMMMM-MALAVA
PALA-BRAVA...MU-sica

O-CooCOOM-bia
Hum-BOMB-bia
Afri-SUN-pica
Come-COME, miha

O-MA-MA-rica
O-PA-PA-rica
O-WHO-WHO-sica
O-YOU-YOU-sica

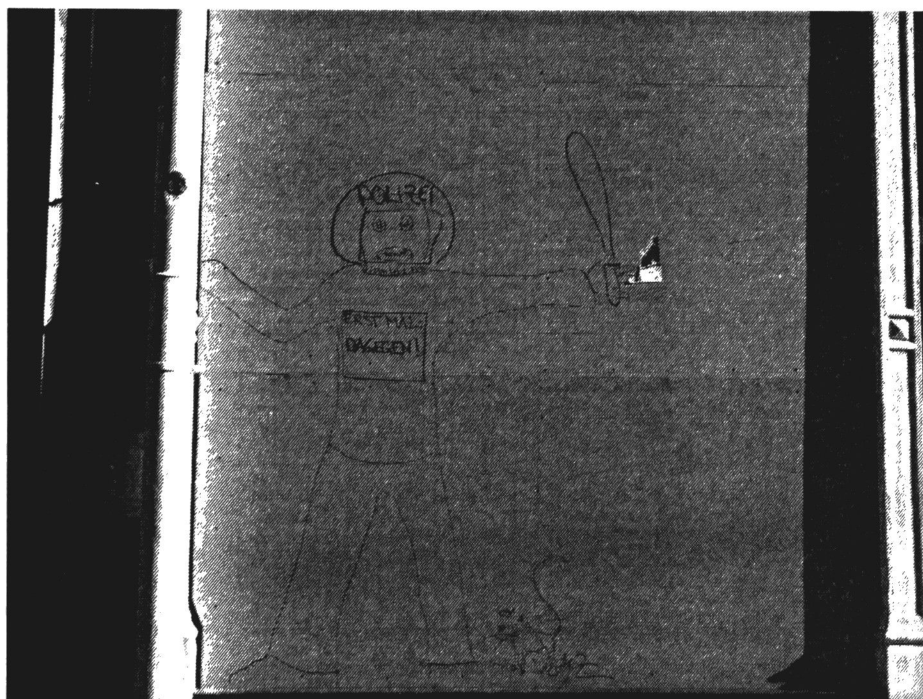
OH... *I wanna mixup a-mer-ica*
live in the other a-mer-ica

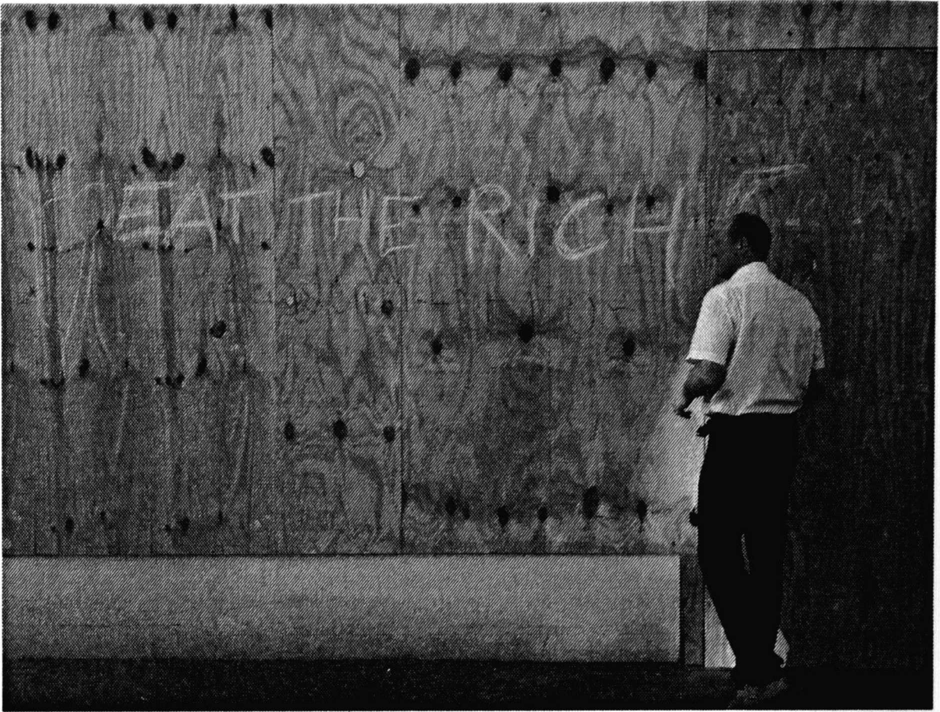
maybe discover a-ME-rica
because I'm alone... I'm America

GLOBALIZING PROTEST (ROSTOCK, 6/2007)

OLIVER RESSLER

DEICHMANN


POLIZEI
ERST MAL DAGEGEN!


EAT THE RICH

NEO-HOODOO: PROPOSALS FOR A LITERARY HISTORY

Shamoon Zamir

Over the last forty years Ishmael Reed has provided a sustained and uncompromising anatomy of the culture wars and of ethnic and racial conflicts in the United States in an extensive body of fiction, poetry and drama. This achievement is matched by his practical support and polemical advocacy for cultural pluralism in his work as essayist, editor of anthologies and journals, publisher, and community activist. Reed moved from New York to Oakland, California, in 1967 and the culturally diverse intellectual community of the Bay Area has furnished his commitment to multiculturalism with a natural home. However, the foundations of Reed's cross cultural imagination rest not on the West Coast, but extend deeper to his residence in New York between 1962 and 1967, and to his initial formulations of the "Neo-HooDoo aesthetic" in the late 1960s. Neo-HooDoo proved to be a meeting ground for the literary traditions of Europe and the United States, and the cultural traditions of the African diaspora in the New World, and this encounter was shaped in significant ways by Reed's experience of the artists' community of New York's East Village and the 1960s counter culture. The present essay is a first attempt to provide a culturally inclusive, though by no means complete, genealogy of Neo-HooDoo and an intellectual and social history of its formative contexts.[1]

Ella Sohat and Robert Stam rightly locate Neo-HooDoo in the company of "polycentric" or "alternative aesthetics offered by Third World, postcolonial, and minoritarian cultural practices: practices that dialogue with Western art movements but which also critique them and in some ways go beyond them." For Shohat and Stam, this exceeding of Western forms works in most cases through a revalorization "by inversion" of "what had formerly been seen as negative, especially within colonialist discourse."[2] Reed certainly identifies and reassesses black cultural traditions he perceives as neglected or marginalized by white culture. But the theoretical schematizations of center and periphery anchored in ideas of opposition and inversion can obscure from view the complex and often unpredictable nature of the meeting of dominant and minoritarian traditions in a writer as culturally diverse in his engagements as Reed. The following discussion examines Reed's declaration of literary independence in *Conjure* (1972), his first book of poetry, in relation to Yeats, Blake, American Transcendentalism and the 1960s counter culture. These notes for a literary history propose that the governing structure or ethos, what Reed himself calls a "matrix," of Neo-HooDoo—its defence

of artistic freedom, its resistance to ideological programmes, its rhetorical strategies, its transgression of the demarcations between "high" and "low" or canonical and non-canonical cultural forms—are derived more securely from Transcendentalism and the counter culture than from Haitian Voodoo or African American Hoodoo, which appear at first to be more immediate sources. To propose such a location for Reed is not in any way to belittle the seriousness of his researches into Voodoo and Hoodoo, nor to deny the active presence of these traditions in his work. The aim, rather, is to distinguish between Reed's radically multiple cultural resources, and the undergirding structures which determine the form this content takes and the work it does in his writing and thought.

Nineteenth-century American literature already makes available both a theorization (Emerson) and a practice (Whitman) of a radical and optative multiculturalism; Neo-HooDoo does not so much invert or oppose this tradition as reinvigorate and redirect it within the context of a counter culture which is both black and white, and in which the continuing significance of America's nineteenth-century literary tradition is the subject of active debate and reconsideration. In its New World and diasporic emphases, Neo-HooDoo appears to lend support to current propositions that American and African American studies need to shift from a nationalist paradigm towards "post-nationalist" or "Black Atlantic" ones.[3] But Reed's transnationalism is perhaps best seen as a *nationalist* transnationalism because it domesticates deep cultural differences within modes of cross cultural appropriation and synthesis which are typical of the United States.

1

The Neo-HooDoo aesthetic traces its own genealogy back to the mythological and aesthetic forms of Haitian Voodoo and to the Hoodoo traditions of the southern United States. The principal framework of Voodoo is derived from the polytheistic religions of the African slaves, and though the slave population of Haiti consisted of peoples from many nations, Voodoo is predominantly Dahomean in origin.[4] However, over the centuries Voodoo has adapted within the African framework many elements from Christianity, western occultism and some from the religions of the Caribbean Indians who were also enslaved by the Spanish. One can, therefore, no longer speak of Voodoo as if it were only a matter of additions made to an African paradigm. It must be understood as an independent cultural matrix particular to the complex history of Haiti and the New World. As Alfred Metraux explained in 1961, Voodoo:

> is an extremely vast universe, an African religion indeed, but also a European religion: in a word, a syncretic religion that has blended together not only different African cults but also certain beliefs from European folklore. One finds here Norman and Breton traditions, carried by the French colonists and adopted by the Blacks; one even finds masonic rites. In short, this is a sort of conglomeration of elements of all kinds, dominated by African traditions. This religion is practiced by ninety per cent of the Haitian people...At the same time these people consider themselves Catholic, and while I affirm that nine-tenths of the population practice *vaudou*, I do not mean that they are not Christian. All *vaudou* believers are in effect excellent Catholics, extremely pious. In their belief, there is no sharp break between the religion that they practice and in which they believe, and the Catholicism to which they are bound.[5]

Voodoo was brought to the United States by African slaves, in particular by those "seasoned" in the West Indies. After the 1791 slave revolt that lead to the Haitian Revolution there was an enormous influx of slaves from the Caribbean into Louisiana, mostly New Orleans.[6] In the United States Voodoo becomes Hoodoo, and though traditionally associated with New Orleans, it is present throughout the South and in many urban centers with large black populations, including New York. While as syncretist as, though less coherent than, Voodoo in its scattered combination of folklore, folk medicine, Catholicism and occult magic, Hoodoo is not a systematic religion. "Hoodoo might be called Voodoo streamlined," comments Reed. "Faced with curious and sometimes comical suppression by the police [in New Orleans], it never went underground; it merely put on a mask." One of these masks, argues Reed, was jazz, "a music possibly performed in whorehouses whose madames were 'Hoodoo Queens' like Marie Laveau, and Mammy Pleasant of San Francisco."[7]

The rich cultural syncretism and fluid polytheism of Voodoo and Hoodoo provide Reed with perfect metaphors for a New World multiculturalism, as well as with sources for his own literary mythology.[89] The appropriations of these diasporic traditions in the service of a personal aesthetic and mythology become fully apparent for the first time in *Conjure*, a volume of selected poems arranged as a narrative of emergent new forms and possibilities. Perhaps unsurprisingly the volume opens with a rejection of Western literary tradition. Speaking in the "Foreword" of "The Ghost in Birmingham," an early work from 1963, Reed apologizes that the poem "shows the influence of people I studied in college: Yeats, Pound and the prosey typography is similar to that found in Blake's 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'."[10] This disavowal from 1972 is, of course, intentionally ironic. It is deployed strategically in

a satiric dramatization of a newly fashioned artistic independence. "Neo-HooDoo Manifesto" and "catechism of d neoamerican hoodoo church," the key formulations of Reed's aesthetics, are both presented in *Conjure*, but the whole book is itself a literary manifesto. The selection of poems from the early career is carefully structured as a narrative of emergence moving from derivative, Western forms to new, non-Western ones. To the extent to which this narrative allegorizes the poet's growth as the history of cultural transmutation, ontogeny as phylogeny, it conforms to Romantic and Transcendentalist models. The last poem in *Conjure* announces the birth of "a new loa," a term for deity in Haitian Voodoo. The astronomical discovery of "a great hydrogen cloud, twenty seven million miles long" passing through the solar system is adopted as "my floating orphan," "the invisible train for which this Work has been but a modest schedule." The cloud is doing a dance called "The Our Turn" (*C* 83).

The early poems in the book mark various endings from which new beginnings are to be made. "The Ghost in Birmingham" laments that "there are no bulls in America in the sense of great symbols, which preside over the resuscitation of godheads, that shake the dead land green" (*C* 3). "When," the poet asks, "will Osiris be scattered over 100 ghettoes?" (*C* 4). In a land without recourse to the regenerative sacrifice of heroes, "the only Holy Ghost in Birmingham is Denmark Vesey's Holy Ghost, brooding, moving in and out of things" (*C* 3). As if to counter-act this vision of declined power the next poem, "The Jackal-Headed Cowboy," offers a breathless, hurtling cascade of a rhetoric of violence and masculine confrontation that attempts to create a new birth by sheer exuberance. The poem ends, however, in animated suspension as the "swashbuckling storm fucking mob" besieging the "stage coach/ of the world" breaks through "into Limbo" (*C* 7). "The Gangster's Death" (*C* 8-12) challenges Whitman's optimistic vision of American possibilities in the face of United States imperialism in South East Asia and Latin America, and "The feral pioneers" (*C* 13-14), based on the Donner Pass party incident, is a grim comic deflation of the frontier myth. After these first four poems, the direction of the narrative shifts with "I am a cowboy in the boat of Ra" (*C* 17-18) which exuberantly initiates the return of repressed and excluded histories. This opening up of new possibilities is consolidated by "Manifesto" and "catechism," the two lengthy statements on aesthetics (*C* 36-42).

"Manifesto," a largely prose essay, offers Reed's most systematic articulation of Neo-HooDoo. Reed celebrates what he sees as the continuous yet largely unacknowledged black contribution to the shaping of American culture, from the seventeenth century down to the present:

> HooDoo is the strange and beautiful "fits" the Black slave Tituba gave the children of Salem...The reason that HooDoo isn't given the credit it deserves in influencing American culture is because the students of that culture both "overground" and "underground" are uptight closet Jeho-vah revisionists. They would assert the American and East Indian and Chinese thing before they would the Black thing. Their spiritual leaders Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot hated Africa and "Darkies." In Theodore Rozack's book *The Making of a Counter Culture*—there is barely any mention of the Black influence on this culture even though its members dress like Blacks walk like Blacks, gesture like Blacks wear Afros and indulge in Black music and dance (Neo-HooDoo). (*C* 20-21).

Reed develops an argument, now amply supported by anthropological and historical scholarship, that African cultural forms have survived and thrived in the New World through constant transformation. The religious and aesthetic cross cultural syntheses of Voodoo and Hoodoo are exemplary instances of this creative survival and provide for Reed a "matrix" (*C* 20) which continues to undergird not only black Christianity, but jazz and African American popular music. "Neo-Hoodoo ain't Negritude. Neo-Hoodoo never been to France" (*C* 22). It "is a 'Lost American Church' updated" (*C* 20), "borrows from Haiti Africa and South America," and "comes in all styles and moods" (*C*22). Neo-Hoodoo is New Orleans as well as Woodstock and includes the music of James Brown, Tina Turner, Jimi Hendrix, B.B. King, Bessie Smith, Jelly Roll Morton as well as Creedance Clearwater Revival and Procol Harum (*C* 20-23). "Neo-Hoodoos would rather 'shake that thing' than be stiff and erect" (*C* 20). "Neo-HooDoo is sexual, sensual and digs the old 'heathen' good good loving" (*C* 21). "Neo-Hoodoos are Black Red...and occasionally White" (*C* 24). Forced underground in America in the nineteenth century, "Hoodoo is/ back as Neo-Hoodoo" (*C* 25). Reed sees his own work as a new, literary embodiment in this process, but rather than claim for himself an isolated achievement, he places himself in the company of a new generation of African American writers exploring new ways (most of those named, including Reed himself, having been members of the New York-based Umbra literary workshop in the 1960s):

> Neo-HooDoo is a litany seeking its text
> Neo-HooDoo is a Dance and Music closing in on its words
> Neo-HooDoo is a Church finding its lyrics
> Cecil Brown Al Young Calvin Hernton
> David Henderson Steve Cannon Quincy Troupe
> Ted Joans Victor Cruz N.H. Pritchard Ishmael Reed
> Lennox Raphael Sarah Fabio Ron Welburn are Neo-

> HooDoo's "Manhattan Project" of writing... (*C* 25)

Reed's interest in Voodoo and Hoodoo is not that of an anthropologist or believer; he does not import a total system of myth, ritual and doctrine. The attraction is grounded in a highly selective interpretation of these diasporic cultural traditions. Reed translates their cultural bricolage, their resistance to institutional structures, and their theological open-mindedness into models for a democratic cultural pluralism, and an art which refuses ideological strait-jackets. In *Secrets of Voodoo* Milo Rigaud writes that "Unlike other established religions, there is no hierarchy of bishops, archbishops, cardinals, or a pope in VooDoo. Each oum'phor [temple] is a law unto itself, following the traditions of VooDoo but modifying and changing the ceremonies and rituals in various ways." "Manifesto" quotes this passage as a sanction for its own claim that "Neo-HooDoo believes that every man is an artist and every artist a priest" (*C* 21). "catechism" offers a more sustained statement of this central tenet of Reed's aesthetic:

> our pens are free
> do not move by decree. accept no memos
> frm jackbooted demogs who wd exile our minds.
> dare tell d artist his role. issue demands on
> cultural revolution. (*C* 36)

The reference here is topical. The Cultural Revolution in China had started in 1965; the little *Red Book* appeared in 1966. By 1969 the Cultural Revolution was over. But Reed's actual target is the dogmatism of the African American cultural nationalists whose ideas had become prominent within black American cultural and political discourses by the end of the 1960s.[11] In 1968, two years prior to the publication of "catechism," he comments:

> The African American artist is in deep and severe crisis from all these people who go around using terms like "cultural revolution." Cultural revolution is something they took from the so-called third world. How does Mao treat his writers and artist? I know everybody digs all the campy cliches in the *Little Red Book*, but I would say that a cat who wants people to go out and say his name over and over again for hours, when they could be home doing their own thing, must have the most grotesque personality problem in history. *That's why I'm an anarchist.*[12]

In this same interview Reed defends his allegiance to New World paradigms by dismissing the Afrocentricism of the cultural nationalists as "Edgar Rice Burroughs in reverse," pointing out that "it's the same mistake that whites

make when they look to Europe, looking to French or Italian or Russian studies when all the time it's right under your nose."[13]

Reed's use of state communism as a foil legitimating his own anarchism simplifies both his own politics and those of the cultural nationalists. On the other hand, Reed's accusation that the nationalists' debt to Maoist-Leninist ideas had produced a woefully dogmatic reduction of art to propaganda was not far off the mark. In *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (1969), Reed's second novel, Bo Shmo, the leader of the "neo-social realist gang," accuses Reed's black cowboy hero, Loop Garoo, of being a "crazy dada nigger" who is "given to fantasy" and "esoteric bullshit." While Loop argues that a novel "can be anything it wants to be, a vaudeville show, the six o'clock news, the mumblings of wild men saddled by demons," Bo Shmo insists that "all art must be for the liberating of the masses. A landscape is only good when it shows the oppressor hanging from a tree."[14] This is no caricature. Here is Mawlana Ron Karenga, a leading American theorist of black nationalism and an influence on both Malcolm X and Amiri Baraka, in his own words: "Black art must expose the enemy, praise the people and support the revolution"[15]; "we do not need pictures of oranges in a bowl or trees standing innocently in the midst of a wasteland. If we must paint oranges and trees, let our guerillas be eating those oranges for strength and using those trees for cover."[16]

As it is presented in "Manifesto," Reed's celebration of the democratic potential of the individual as artist appears as a natural development out of his researches into Voodoo and Hoodoo. But this core belief of Neo-Hoodoo is perhaps better seen as the cornerstone upon which the whole edifice of Reed's aesthetics rests; it is what shapes Reed's appropriations of African and African American diasporic forms. "catechism," which is in essence an extended defense of the artist's freedom, is placed after "Manifesto" within the narrative structure of *Conjure*, and appears therefore as a reiteration of the arguments of the preceding text. But this reverses the actual chronology of composition of the two texts. As Reed himself explains in the "Foreword" to *Conjure*, "catechism" was begun in New York and completed in 1968, the year after his move to California; "Manifesto" was written on the West Coast and on its first publication it incorporated portions of "catechism."[17] It is "catechism" then which is in effect the first proper declaration towards an independent aesthetic by Reed. "Neo-HooDoo" is not as yet named—indeed there is little evidence of substantial research into Voodoo or Hoodoo; what *is* already fully articulated is the anarchist stance which remains a constant in Reed's thought, and which, as suggested above, largely determines his selective interpretation of Voodoo and Hoodoo in "Manifesto."

The anarchism which Reed opposes to what he sees as the foreign ideologies of the cultural nationalists is a native libertarianism derived most immediately from the 1960s counter culture. Nowhere is this more clearly signaled than in the title of "catechism of d neoamerican hoodoo church" which is an adaptation of Arthur (or 'Art') Kleps's *The Neo-American Church Catechism and Handbook* which appeared in 1967.[18] Kleps was a school psychologist who underwent a visionary experience after taking mescaline sulphate, was fired from his job and then founded the Neo-American Church. One of the four religious organizations in the United States to use psychedelic substances, the Neo-American Church was based initially in the Adirondacks but moved in 1967 to the anarcho-religious commune of the Sri Ram Ashram in Millbrook, New York where Timothy Leary, who had responded positively to Kleps's writings on drugs, was also based.[19] The Church's members were known not as Hoodoos but as Boo Hoos, the "Chief Boo Hoo" being Kleps himself. As with Reed, the vocabulary of "catechism" and "handbook" and the semblance of a religious hierarchy were masks for a parody of institutionalized order. The Church was an anarchist organization with no set rituals; it chose to inject "massive doses of absurdity into [its] embryonic social fantasy" rather than follow institutionally sanctioned "dead-letter laws."[20] Each chapter of the Neo-American Church enjoyed equal freedom with regard to the Boo Hoo clergy.[21] Both the NeoHooDoo and the Neo-American churches saw themselves as rising out of the underground in comic messianic narratives, the former towards the birth of a "New Loa" at the end of *Conjure*, the latter towards "effective control of the entire civilized world."[22]

The *Catechism and Handbook* is a collage of religious 'rules,' serious legal and historical documentation, cartoons, occult fantasy, reprinted articles and more that uses anarchic comedy as a tool of civil disobedience from within the armature of a personal mythology and vocabulary.[23] The uses of carnivalesque strategies are sanctioned by reference to the precedents in Zen Buddhism and the "ancient mystery religions," as well as to Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* and Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*.[24] Reed similarly moulds the social complexities and contradictions of New World religions into a comic romance of pluralist democracy and erotic release.

Reed most likely came across Klep's *Catechism and Handbook* through coverage of the Neo-American Church's legal battles and a review of Kleps's volume in the *East Village Other*.[25] The *East Village Other* (or *EVO* as it was also known) was a leading organ of the underground press with which Reed had been closely associated since its foundation. When in the mid-sixties Reed decided to start a community weekly based in Newark, New Jersey, he asked Walter Bowart, a painter, to prepare a 'dummy' for him. Bowart

explains that he "came up with foldups and crazy ideas which a newspaper couldn't do."[26] Reed put Bowart in touch with Allan Katzman, and Bowart and Katzman, with the help of a few others, founded *East Village Other*, a break-away publication from the *Village Voice* and soon to become a leading paper of the counter-culture underground. The journal was named by Reed after Jung's idea of the Other. Reed was initially an assistant editor of the journal and later an associate.[27] Between 1965 and 1968 Reed also wrote occasionally for the newspaper.[28] While Reed's own pieces for *East Village Other* were relatively straightforward examples of new journalism, both "catechism" and "Manifesto" strongly echo the anarchist politics (couched in an occult counter-culture vocabulary) of a paper like *East Village Other*. (The "NeoHooDoo Manifesto," it should be remembered, first appeared in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, among the most influential of the underground papers.)[29]

> *East Village Other* was from the beginning an avant-garde paper, even among its peers. It was less local than the *Voice* or the Los Angeles *Free Press* and was devoted to the *outré* in an international context, having transcended Zen Buddhism and realpolitik for astrology, macrobiotics, the occult, and proposals for a withdrawal from the American scene; and it was in contact with underground culture in England, Japan, India, and other countries.[30]

Katzman explained that, in an age when "the world has gotten so small that the only way to survive is on an international basis," *East Village Other* "is supra-political...Therefore it's basically moral."[31] These postures necessitated calls for counter-mythologies for ordering new environments. In 1966 the first brochure for the Underground Press Syndicate, initiated by Allan and Don Katzman, stated that the Syndicate papers:

> are a primary reaction to the plastic computerized society...America has been following ancient myths, the establishment press has propagated them. The sterile old mythology is no longer relevant. The Underground Press is creating a new mythology, more immediate, more relevant. It transcends the 'blue laws of conformity' and reaches out to a new consciousness.[32]

Reed formulates Neo-HooDoo from within an unreserved commitment to this project of a "supra-political" ethics and a counter-mythology. In an interview published in 1968 Reed sees his work as attempting an exploration of myth "just like Cecil Taylor's trying to do it, just like Bill Dixon's trying to do it, just like Sun Ra's trying to do it."[33] It is Sun Ra, more than anyone else, who provides Reed with a bridge between the counter culture

and African American traditions. For Reed, Sun Ra's work is part of a truly international imagination that he sees developing within the modern technological environment. In the same interview he says that "with a televised technology tribalism and separatism are impossible. Given what McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller have shown us, you *can't* be a separatist...Once you become an international mind-miner it's all over. That's where the African American artist is today: John Coltrane going to Ali Akbar Khan, African American ragas, Bill Dixon doing science-fiction music, Sun Ra into Gustav Holst."[34] [35] Sun Ra and his Arkestra (variously known as the 'Solar Arkestra,' the 'Space Arkestra,' and the 'Intergalactic Myth-Science Arkestra'),[36] like Noah's boat, hold a promise of the future. They have been leading proponents of 'experimental' jazz, introducing into the music a wide range of cross-cultural and inter-media materials. Reed accepts that the closest affinities of his work are with the music of Sun Ra. He points to their mutual preoccupation with "myth and science fiction, as well as tradition," along with their long standing friendship.[37] There are other areas of mutual concern: Sun Ra has argued that Egypt is the "pivot point" for understanding Black culture;[38] he has combined his long-standing support of pragmatic, self-help economics for the black community with an enlightened vision of the possible benefits of industrial and technological change.[39]

In a 1969 interview, given soon after the Apollo lunar landing, Reed continues his attempt to formulate a personal scheme of values, the still emerging Neo-HooDoo aesthetic, and he echoes strongly the language and themes of Sun Ra's interviews and writings:

> We are trying to be the hostess for the space ships that are on their way from Sirius. I have it on very good information (from a confidant of another galaxy) that people are on their way here to celebrate this struggling infant who just reached the moon. Of course father Divine, Daddy Grace and Sun Ra reached the moon before America did, but we won't go into that. Everybody's saying, "Where do we go from here?" Christianity is dead, Existentialism is dead, Marxism is dead, the Democratic Party is dead, and somebody told me even baseball is going out. All these churches are dead and everybody has to get into the new faith. So from coast to coast we're telling people about the new religion. And this religion is interracial, anybody can join this religion.[40]

Sun Ra's myth of exit is equally within the American tradition:

> This is the Space Age
> The age beyond the Earth Age:

A new direction.
Beyond the gravitation of the past.[41]

As Laura Mulvey suggests, it is not "easy to move from oppression and its mythologies to resistance in history: a detour through a no-man's land or threshold of counter-myth and symbolization is necessary."[42] The potential danger for minority literature in this process is of a drift towards what Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a "reactionary reterritorialization", where there is a futile attempt "to inject a current meaning" into "archaism."[43] Fellow-satirist William Burroughs shared Reed's project for a counter-mythology in the mid-sixties: "I am attempting to create a new mythology for the space age," he wrote. "I feel that old mythologies are definitely broken down and not adequate at the present time." But Burroughs demarcates the limits of the mythological stabilizations of anarchist satire when he notes that "none of the characters in my mythology are free. If they were they would not still be in the mythological system, that is, in the cycle of conditioned action."[44] For one thing, a mythology based on occult principles employs the rhetoric of a new consciousness and a reunited self, but history inevitably defers this goal of alchemical transmutation and leaves in its place the occult structure of Manichaeism as the only remaining approach to the world. This is true not only for those who are believers in the occult, but for those who would use it as a poetics.

In the end *Conjure* offers not the birth of a new aesthetic but a deferred emergence. Reed's "Manifesto" tells us that "Neo-HooDoo is a litany seeking its text" (*C* 25). The last poem in the book does not so much make present "a new loa" as begin to *introduce* one in the amorphous shape of the hydrogen cloud: "I call [the cloud] the *invisible* train for which this Work has been *but a modest schedule* (*C* 83, my emphases).[45] By the end of *Conjure* the spirit of Neo-HooDoo has not found its text and so has not become actualized in the present. This bracketing off of teleological expectations proposes a sense of continuous becoming, but "Manifesto" retreats from this openness into the counter-stabilizations offered by the clichés of cultural opposition. "Manifesto" quotes with approval Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff's schematization of cultural difference in their *The Politics of Hysteria*: "There has never been in history another such culture as the Western civilization—a culture which has practiced the belief that the physical and social environment of man is subject to rational manipulation and that history is subject to the will and action of man; whereas central to the traditional cultures of the rivals of Western civilization, those of Africa and Asia, is a belief that it is the environment that dominates man" (*C* 24). Even if granted a degree of historical validity and the sanction of satiric intent, such dualisms occur with a frequency in Reed's work which works against the more difficult truths

of cross cultural dialogue and synthesis. If as a multiculturalist Reed is a proponent of an inclusive cultural imagination, as a satirist he inevitably relies upon division and exclusion to drive his narratives. This contradictory dynamic remains unresolved in his work.

2

It is not surprising that Oswald Spengler receives an honourable mention in "catechism" for refusing to write "solictd/ manuscripts" for Joseph Goebbels (*C* 37). The primary source for Reed's historicism, however, is not *Decline of the West* but Yeats's and Blake's respective myths of history. In 1977, five years after the disavowal of the Western literary tradition in *Conjure*, Reed declared that his pursuit of a personal mythology and his commitment to a reenergized national literature, embodied in the Neo-HooDoo aesthetic, drew their initial inspiration from English and Irish literary traditions:

> I went to the University of Buffalo where I was imbued with Western culture, myth and ideas. I admired Blake and Yeats, people who created their own systems, or revived their own national cultures. So that's what I wanted to do. When these guys call me avant-garde, I'm only using models I learned about in English departments. I wanted to create a mythology closer to me...that's why I got into Egyptology and Voodoo. My experience of these things comes right out of Blake and Yeats. (*S* 233)[46]

Reed's debt to these two writers and their widespread presence in his early work has been demonstrated elsewhere.[47] The following section examines the counter cultural formulations of Neo-HooDoo in the context of their work, as well as in the light of Reed's unacknowledged inheritance of American Transcendentalism.

The turning to Yeats for poetic models is a curious move for a young African American poet in the early sixties. It is doubly curious when one considers the fact that Reed was struggling to establish his literary voice in the bustling artistic milieu of New York's Lower East Side, home of newly emerged and emergent avant gardes at that time. In justifying their bias towards the poetic tradition represented by Ezra Pound and Charles Olson, the editors of *The Poetics of a New American Poetry* (1973) noted that "Yeats is a magnificent poet but is perhaps nearer to some endpoint of a great British line than to the emergence of a new American poetry. And however ambiguously large Eliot looms up in our century, he has seemed to most of the writers in this book to be casting back rather than moving forward, more urbane perhaps than urgent."[48] But this is precisely one

reason why African American poets have felt it necessary to engage these poets. The weight of inheritance and of aesthetic and cultural values that must be displaced hangs more heavily on the shoulders of the minority poets. With regards to Yeats, Jones/Baraka's work is exemplary. His "Crow Jane" sequence of five poems is a brutal re-writing of Yeats's Crazy Jane poems, a reversal of Yeats's vision into one of cultural and moral decay, a breaking of what Werner Sollors, in reference to Jones's relation to Eliot, has called a poetic "shell."[49] Without Jones's violence but with equal force, Robert Hayden had transformed the caged golden bird and the saints in the mosaic of "Sailing to Byzantium," the Yeatsian artifice of eternity, into the vibrant and living "Parrot and zinnia/ colors" teeming "in thronging sunlight" and the "laquerwork/ and glazed angels" of the vendors in the midst of the bustling Caribbean sea-side market.[50] The creation of a more truly American idiom in Reed's later poetry is certainly a shedding of the dead weight of Yeats. But Yeats is more than a burden; he also remains an important poetic resource in the poetry and aesthetics of the late sixties. The Irish poet's early nationalism and his project of a personal mythology hold an obvious attraction for a minority poet, but it is in the poetics Yeats develops out of the dialectics of the failure of nationhood and his struggle to develop a literary system that would manage the crisis that the source of the pull Reed feels towards the Irish poet can be discovered.

In the first version of *A Vision* Yeats fantasizes "new races...seeking domination, a world resembling but for its immensity that of the Greek tribes—each with its own Daimon or ancestral hero—the brood of Leda."[51] The vision of "new races" as agents of history understandably appeals to an African American writing, like Yeats, in a context of increasing national strife and international war. But to speak of human agency in regard to Yeats's system is, in a real sense, false since the primary agent is always fate, a metaphysics of history conceptualized as the perpetual turning of the gyres. Yeats's performs a paradoxical balancing act between the predetermination of the gyres and his hunger for heroic men. The mythological apparatus of *A Vision* necessitates the same entrapment of human will within history as final cause that Erich Heller notes about *The Decline of the West.* Spengler too "has no idea of the true stature of the problem of human freedom. Therefore his historical vision is lacking in depth as well as in love, pity and pathos."[52]

In the poetry from the late sixties, specifically in "I am a cowboy in the boat of Ra," Reed does not abandon Yeats, but masters his system, adapting and modifying Yeats's poetics for his own ends. The reasons why Reed persists in his engagement with Yeats are suggested by Terence Diggory's study of the interactions of Yeats and American poetry.[53] Diggory postulates that Yeats is at the centre of a modernist "tradition of the self" that is

concerned with self-creation rather than, as in the Wordsworthian tradition, self-expression. "Subjectively," Diggory notes, "Yeats felt himself to be the creator of the world, but, objectively, he felt himself the helpless victim of the world's intransigence."[54] Paradoxically, Yeats overcomes this sense of duality through the formation of another duality, the creation of an anti-self or mask. The process by which Yeats projects this mask outwards and then discovers in it a source of inspiration allows him to maintain a heroic stance in the face of history. This self-creation becomes, in Yeats, the site of an intense struggle between the desire for communal identification and the disillusionment that follows the collapse of the poet's nationalist hopes. It is the failure to establish political community and a cultural tradition that aligns Yeats with the American search for a poetics of self-genesis after the rejection of the Old World. But Yeats remains more directly committed to the self's desired location in society than Emerson even in the face of failure. It is this struggle and the enabling machinery of heroic capability that hold obvious appeal for an African American poet seeking to define his own poetics and politics of democratic inclusivity in confrontation with what he sees as the radically limited parameters for the self established by both black cultural nationalism and a racist society.

Diggory locates Yeats not only in the British Romantic tradition, but also as a poet who, after the collapse of his nationalist hopes, found available resources in the writers of the American Renaissance, particularly the Transcendentalist Whitman.[55] Yeats acts for Reed as a key mediator between Blake and the Emersonian tradition of Transcendentalism.[56] Reed ultimately discovers his distinctive voice in combining his satiric and mythological preoccupations, in turning from a fateful vision of history to one in which the human imagination strives to act creatively. He does so not by abandoning Yeats, but by extending the adapted Yeatsian structures in tandem with related forms from Blake and a vibrant and comic personal mythology that is a bricolage of Haitian Voodoo, African American folklore and music, Egyptian lore, occult studies, American popular culture and literature.

Yeats claimed to have developed his cyclical system independently of *The Decline of the West*, only later coming to see the proximity of his and Spengler's poeticizations of history.[57] The primary sources for Yeats's diagrammatics of gyres and phases of the moon as predictive mechanisms are to be found in his studies in the occult but, as Northrop Frye has pointed out, the ideas of civilization's decline and historical cyclicality derived from thinkers like Vico, Carlyle, and Spengler were part of the post-World War I intellectual milieu that generated *A Vision*.[58] But Reed narrates this historical transformation as the transformation of art, and here he follows with greater specificity Blake's prophecy and satire for a new age in *Milton* (1804) and *The Marriage*

of Heaven and Hell (1793). Like *Conjure*, *The Marriage* espouses the cause of the Devil's party in an intellectual satire against "All bibles or sacred codes."[59] It prophesies the end of the existing order and promises a *Bible of Hell*. George Quasha and Jerome Rothenberg, who named *America a Prophecy* (1973), their ground-breaking and still unique anthology of American poetry, after Blake, explained Blake's obvious attraction for the American poets: "today Blake seems more than ever to have 'prophetically' initiated so much of what this poetry is about; and second, because [*America a Prophecy*] projects the image of an American revolution whose demand for freedom would evolve long obscured poetic, sexual, and visionary powers." In the work of Blake and other Romantics "American poets from Emerson to Robert Duncan have found keys to a tradition of individual vision."[60] Blake's "Preface" to *Milton* declares that "We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations" (Blake 95). Again, the parallels to Reed's "Foreword" are obvious. Blake, however, balances his regret that "Shakespeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword" with the recognition that the works "of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero...will hold their proper rank" with the coming of the "New Age" in which "the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration" (Blake 95).

In their specifically American valuation of Blake, Quasha and Rothenberg recognize the continuity between Blake and the American traditions of the new and of continuous renewal. The fact that Reed very much shares such a reading of Blake suggests the extent to which his own work can also be located within this national tradition. Reed's confidence in the American multicultural artist in fact recalls Emerson's "confidence in the unsearched might of man" as the true province of "the American Scholar" against the monolith of "the courtly muses of Europe."[61] The idea of the multiculture and the birth of a national poetry recalls even more clearly Whitman's letter to Emerson which appeared as the statement of poetics and politics in the 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman, like Emerson and Reed, not only asks the American poets to walk "freely out from the old [European] traditions," away from "the old pictures and traditions of race," into "the actual race around them," but also calls for a radical inclusivity and choice. So "these States" receive "the stamina of past ages and lands" and "the American great masters...accept evil as well as good, ignorance as well as erudition, black as soon as white, foreign born materials as well as home-born, reject none, force discrepancies into range, surround the whole, concentrate them on present periods and places, show the application to each and any's body and soul, and show the true use of precedents." This is the promise of "a national character, an identity" which, "as soon as it ought to be...will be."[62]

There is little ground for disagreement between Reed's formulations of Neo-HooDoo and Emerson's proposal in "The Poet" for an independent American multiculture which recognizes not only excluded cultural traditions but also revalues the vernacular:

> We have had yet no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer; then the Middle Age; then in Calvinism. Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the Temple of Delphi, and are as swiftly passing away. Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boats and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for meters.[63]

Equally, Reed's multicultural artist, imagined as a democratic idealist conflation of citizen, artist, and priest in his "Manifesto," is a re-visioning of Whitman's "gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse" who "shall take their place" in a "new order" where there will be "no more priests" and "every man will be his own priest." Whitman, in turn, was echoing Emerson urging that "every man should be so much an artist that he could report in conversation what had befallen him" in his dialogue with nature.[64]

In "The Gangster's Death," an early poem dealing with American imperialism after World War II and the rise of independence movements in the Third World, Reed, sounding almost like a Karengist himself, rejects the Transcendentalist inheritance:

> O Walt Whitman
> visionary of leaking faucets
> great grand daddy of drips
> you said I hear America singing
> but/ how can you sing when your throat is slit
> and O/ how can you see when your head bobs
>   in a sewer
> in Danang and Mekong and Santo Domingo
>
> (*C* 10-11)

This falsifies both Whitman's politics and Reed's own debt to nineteenth-century American literature. But if Neo-HooDoo is heir to Emerson and Whitman, this inheritance should not be thought of as a disembodied intellectual history; it was grounded in a lively contemporary debate about the meaning of the nineteenth-century tradition, especially the work of Whitman, for contemporary American literature, and Reed was caught up in this discussion in various ways.

The presence of Whitman in the American poetry of the 1960's and 1970's is incalculable. He is clearly a major resource for many of the poets included in what became the most influential anthology of the period, Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry 1945-1965* (1960), and appears as a figure marking a crucial beginning in the opening statement of the companion volume, *The Poetics of the New American Poetry*.[65] Kerouac, Ginsberg and the Beats were very much in the line of Whitman. Reed has acknowledged the early impact on him of the Beat writers and of Allen's anthology in particular:

> The Beats influenced us. I read *On the Road* in my late teens and shortly afterwards took off for San Francisco...We discussed "Howl" in poetry classes at the University of Buffalo. I must have read Don Allen's *The New American Poetry* so many times that when I arrived in New York at 22 my copy was falling apart...[66]

In both *The New American Poetry* and the subsequent volume of statements on poetics, the emphasis was on a poetics of the "new" which could be traced from Whitman, through Williams and Pound, to the present. Important as these anthologies proved to be, they included only one non-white writer: LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka). When, in the early eighties, *The New American Poetry* was reissued in a revised edition as *The Postmoderns* (now co-edited by George Butterick), Baraka was *still* the only 'Third World' poet in the anthology. In a review, Rothenberg accurately observed that where *The New American Poetry* "marked the final emergence, circa 1960, of a major moment in American writing, its appearance in revised form...feels, sadly, like the moment's end & its absorption into 'literature'."[67] Rothenberg's sense is that any definition of the "new" American poetry must include African American, Native American, Latino and other minority poetries, "not as a question of affirmative action but as a major poetry event of the last two decades & spin-off in part from [New American Poetry] ideas of American speech, jazz connections, reinterpretations of America." In *The Postmoderns* there is "no Henderson/ Reed/ Sanchez/ Cruz included for their *language*; no Simon Ortiz to link up through his culture with the oldest powers of the continent."[68]

A more culturally inclusive sense of the legacy of Whitman was available through the work of Walter Lowenfels, a figure Reed was close to in the 1960s. Reed has remarked on the irony that Lowenfels was, along with Langston Hughes (two men "in their sixties and seventies"), one of "hippest" persons he met in New York. Of Lowenfels, Reed states simply that "he taught me to be democratic in my tastes."[69] Lowenfels had started writing poetry in the mid-1920s but he re-surfaced as a major presence on the poetry scene between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s. Deeply Whitmanian in his own writing, Lowenfels put together several collections of Whitman's work, and edited several multicultural anthologies of national and international poetry during this period.[70] In the introductions to these anthologies, Lowenfels turned again and again to Whitman for alternative visions of America. *Poets of Today: A New American Anthology* (1964) was in fact fairly explicit in its effort to reclaim Whitman from Allen's *The New American Poetry* which had appeared four years earlier. Its vision of a "new" American poetry already began to articulate the criticisms voiced by Rothenberg in the 1980s. Without naming Allen's anthology, Lowenfels referred in a footnote to a "recent anthology" where only "one new Negro poet appears."[71] Whitman becomes a source in a more immediate and social sense for Lowenfels who wrote in his "Preface": "If, as Whitman said, 'The United States themselves are the greatest poem,' then the anthology can be considered one long poem by different poets, the subject of which is how it feels to be verbally alive in poems, in our own country in our time...Even if you are African American."[72]

Out of the eighty-five poets included in *Poets of Today*, twenty were black Americans. Lowenfels maintained this practice of multicultural representation in all his subsequent anthologies. Several black poets were included in *Where is Vietnam?* (1967) and *For Neruda, For Chile* (1975) was a truly international anthology. Lowenfels also edited *In a Time of Revolution* (1969), and *The Writing on the Wall: 108 American Poems of Protest* (1970), poems from "Our Third World," from the Civil Rights and Black protest era, and *From the Belly of the Shark* (1973), poems by Chicanos, Hawaiians, and Native Americans. Reed's own anti-Whitman "The Gangster's Death" appeared in *Where is Vietnam?* and his work was included in four other Lowenfels anthologies.[73] Reed dedicated his own multicultural anthology Californian poetry, *Calafia* (1979), to "Walter and Lillian Lowenfels, first citizens of the multi-cultures" and Lowenfel's anthologies remain the closest predecessors for the various cross-cultural publications he has edited over the years.[74][75]

Both Lowenfels and Hughes had links with the writers of the Umbra workshop, the group of writers Reed refers to as Neo-HooDoo's "Manhattan project" in "Manifesto." Lowenfels, well known for supporting African

American poets, backed the Umbra writers following a racist incident at the Metro café in the East Village.[76] Hughes sat in on many of the Umbra readings and encouraged the young poets, becoming an important poetic model for several members of the group.[77] "I think I'm really influenced by [Hughes] a lot," Reed has noted. "The more I read his stuff and the more I think about him, the more I see how I'm influenced."[78] As a prologue to his anthology *Poets of Today* Lowenfels used Langston Hughes's "Let America be America Again," showing Hughes at his most Whitmanian:

> Let America be America again.
> Let it be the dream it used to be.
> Let it be the pioneer on the plain
> Seeking a home where he himself is free.
>
> (America was never America to me.)

Along with Carl Sandburg, Whitman had proved to be a catalyst for Hughes, freeing him "from the tyranny of the traditional forms" and opening up the possibilities of a new African American idiom.[79] "Let America be America Again," written in a moment of dejection, "sometimes prosaic, even banal in certain lines, nevertheless sounded a wounded nobility that made it, like the folksinger Woodie Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," an authentic anthem of the Depression."[80] The poem's conclusion anticipates Reed's idealism:

> America never was America to me,
> And yet I swear this oath —
> America will be![81]

Neil Schmitz has remarked that, after the black humor pessimism of his first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (1967), the issue for Reed becomes the need "to comprehend the significance of Burroughs' narrative form, write in the parodic manner of Thomas Pynchon and Donald Barthelme, and at the same time hold an opposed view of history, an optative, almost Emersonian sense of the dawning day."[82] The present account has tried to demonstrate that Neo-HooDoo is more than "almost" Emersonian. The broad inclusiveness of Emerson's and Whitman's Transcendentalism means that it cannot easily be made to play that part of an excluding center in narratives of minoritarian attacks upon dominant cultural traditions; it embodies a vision of American possibilities which is a resource still active in the 1960s, a resource fought over and redefined by writers both white and black. But voraciously open to other cultures though this tradition is, it is not one which can easily incorporate a form as profoundly different from

itself as Voodoo without radically transforming it. Neo-HooDoo is Reed's native solution to what is in effect an irreducibly imperfect fit between the history and memory laden forms of Voodoo and the optative stance of Transcendentalism.

Richard Poirier has explained the project of Emerson's "transparent eyball" or "tyrannous eye" as a "visionary possession" of the continent that opposes possession by force for economic and political aggrandizement, and affirms through "the concept of the artist or 'poet'...a possibly noble role in the drama of national conquest" (like Whitman receiving "the stamina of past ages and lands").[83] But as Quentin Anderson has shown, in its attempt to transcend society and history through the assertion of its own incorporative powers, this anarchist individualism shifts into the politics of an "imperial self."[84] There is an "absolutism of the self" among the Transcendentalists who move the site of revolution into the "inner scene." In an ambiguous dialectic of receptive passivity and claims for mastery of the world, double consciousness is overcome by willful assertion.[85] Catalogue rhetoric is the stylistic vehicle. In it "spirit triumphs over chaos by sheer energy," and "it seeks to inspire or uplift by overwhelming all possible objections."[86] Style becomes the means by which the Emersonian split of double-consciousness is overcome; the integrative powers of style almost override the need for a consistency or coherency of ideas.[87] I take Anderson's differentiation of American Transcendentalism and European Romanticism to be crucial here:

> In Emerson, society was not spurned; it was judged irrelevant to human purposes in the measure that it forced or encouraged each of us to assume a distinct role. Transcendentalism, which Emerson described as "the Saturnalis or excess of Faith" in individual powers and individual sufficiency, simply attempted to supplant society. By comparison, romanticism was laggard, anachronistically involved in the dialectic of self and society, while Emerson and his fellows went forward to explore the meaning of self on the scene constituted by their view of the human state.[88]

Sacvan Bercovitch moves towards a similar differentiation in his distinction between "Romantic autobiography" and "auto-American-biography." In the latter, specifics of a personal and historical condition are bypassed and society is subsumed into the self; the self becomes synonymous with and a prophecy of the fate of the nation.[89] This "secular incarnation...may be construed as the act not of identifying oneself with the fathers, but of catching up all their powers into the self, asserting that there need be no more generations, no more history, but simply the swelling diaspon of the

expanding self."[90]

Voodoo and Haitian culture cannot be accommodated within this future-oriented, Protestant framework. Within the African-Catholic matrix of Voodoo the loas and the ancestors must be fed inside what is a spiritual, social and libidinal economy of debt and one recognized as such. Possession, when the self becomes the "horse" of a loa, offers momentary release from restrictions of social roles; the invasion of others through fetishistic magic is a more malign compensation. Reed is wrong to extend Rigaud's differentiation of the institutional structure of Voodoo and that of the Church into a democratic model. Rigaud is only pointing to the absence of a national structure of hierarchical organization. But within each houmphour and local Voodoo community, there are very distinct hierarchies of religious roles and social status. The extraordinary mixture of profound mysticism and black magic in Voodoo, like its ritual poetics, can be approached as complex speculative systems that mediate a deep awareness of a history of violence and slavery and of continued poverty and political totalitarianism, but which are finally neither revolutionary nor transcendental in the American sense. If the forms of Voodoo can be read as sorts of resistance to the terrors of history, they need also to be understood as forms incorporating and internalizing the subjugation of the powerless. The self in Voodoo is always bounded and inscribed by society, history and family and acts between terror and release but never with the unfettered possibilities of the imperial self. When Reed attempts to embody the legacy of Voodoo and Hoodoo in the figure of an "every man" who is both "artist" and "priest", he fashions the New World African diaspora in the national image of Whitman's "gangs of kosmos."

3 (Coda)

In *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* Reed satirizes the East Village as "Freedom Village" where "BECOMINGS," run by "Entropy Productions," humiliate masochistic white audiences with black militant diatribes, and where Bukka, the novel's hero, is transformed into a sixties bohemian existentialist with "a cigarette holder, a beret and some shades."[91] But in 1985, in a tribute to the late Larry Neal, Reed explains why the experience of New York's East Village in the 1960's was a major event in contemporary American cultural life, and why it attracted both black and white writers from around the country, giving them, however briefly, a sense of shared community:

> The 1960's was an exciting time for those of us who were fortunate enough to be living and writing in New York. A new generation sought to bring language and form closer to where the people were, which, to some, may have seemed a quixotic undertaking.

> There were many discussions, readings, parties, and conferences. Even when the art was bad it was enthusiastic, and some of the work in the magazines and books published, though short on "craftsmanship," had more energy than most of the uniformly Colonial, copycat stale anthologies and books the public had become accustomed to.[92]

"Walking down St. Mark's Place in New York's East Village," he writes in a retrospective glance from 1973, "I was often able to observe key members of several generations of the American "avant-garde" before breakfast, or chat with Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Bill Dixon, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and members of a splendid generation of young painters" (*S* 111).[93]

In his memoir *Down and In: Life in the Underground* (1985), the novelist Ronald Sukenick believes that there was a double sense of community. Among the artists there "was the sense of the creative world as a community rather than, as now, an arena of entrepreneurial gladiators."[94] However, this "empathy was not limited to the creative community. The neighborhood was for a while the model of the American melting pot, polyglot with Poles, Jews, Ukranians, Blacks, White Russians, Puerto Ricans, Italians, and us, all willing to live and let live with, even, a certain amount of neighborliness."[95] The African American poet Tom Dent is more cautious, explaining that the Lower East Side "was one of the few sections where people could live cheaply, and racial hostility wasn't *too* oppressive..." But he confirms that the "cultural heterogeneity" of the area "attracted many artists and gave the [Lower East Side] a truly bohemian quality, very unlike the better known West Side (Greenwich Village), which was extremely racist and housed few artists."[96] In the early sixties, when the Civil Rights movement in the South was the major national news and already provided a sense, however ill-defined, of imminent upheaval, New York's cosmopolitanism attracted young black writers because it met their urge to overcome isolation and participate simultaneously in the nationwide transformations of American literature, and the more specifically African American cultural and political movements, then in their developing stages. Most of the black artists who came to the Lower East Side were not native to New York: "We had come to New York to escape our parochial beginnings, our home towns and neighborhoods, to find ourselves and to find each other."[97] Reed was one of these: born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, into a working class family, Reed moved to Buffalo in 1942 at the age of four with his mother. After having lived in a black working-class neighborhood for twenty years, he dropped out of university in 1962 and moved to New York.[98]

Five years after settling on the West Coast Reed still considered his years in New York to have marked a decisive and formative phase for his writing: "I went there thinking I was going to be a W.B. Yeats. It taught me my voice and I developed my style further from contact with such people as Calvin Hernton, David Henderson, Joe Johnson, Steve Cannon, and Tom Dent. They embarrassed me into writing all my own way."[99] All the contemporary poets named by Reed were part of Umbra, an African American poetry workshop started by Dent, Hernton and Henderson on the Lower East Side in 1962.[100] "Umbra was one in a sequence of [African American] groups that constantly merged and split."[101] Dent argues that "the Umbra Workshop had an immediate and far reaching impact" because, "with the exception of John [Oliver] Killens's Harlem Writers Guild it was the first regular gathering of black writers in a long time."[102] Umbra not only provided the writers with access to each other's work but was also a forum for discussing broader racial and political issues.[103] The group was an important predecessor of the Black Arts movement in New York,[104] but, despite its focus on African American culture and identity, "the concerns of Umbra were not those of the Black Arts Movement as it later became."[105] For one thing, while remaining a predominantly black male group, Umbra did have some white and some female members, though their influence on the group's agenda remained negligible.[106] More important was Umbra's downtown location. In contrast to Black Arts, Umbra was, during its brief existence, always based on the Lower East Side. The establishment of Black Arts in Harlem necessarily excluded, as a political imperative, the kind of cultural and social interaction that was possible for black and white artists in the more relaxed atmosphere of the Lower East Side during the first-half of the 1960's.[107] This environment had an important impact on the work and lives of the Umbra poets. Michel Oren captures the essential spirit of the time and also hints at the beginnings of collapse:

> From 1960 to 1965, the area was...locus of a "ferment" in American letters that revolved around several series of coffeehouse poetry readings, just as in the '50s and early '60s seven co-op galleries plus the Club on a single 10th Street block between Third and Fourth Avenues had been the hang-outs of the Abstract Expressionists...the complex relations—or lack of them in certain cases—among all these poets and artists, black and white, can be seen as a kind of network, a flow of information, ideas, goods, money, power, support, etc., that circulated through the East Village scene. Groups like Umbra made up the core of the network out of which they had coalesced. Moreover, arts networks "tend to create 'against' some established principles or images...the sense of embattlement [leading] to common bonding," and Umbra and other core groups

> formed the cutting edge of opposition to the establishment. Indeed, the whole East Village scene can be viewed as a sort of oppositional subculture inset in the larger society, even though some groups turned some of their opposition inward on the very network that had in a sense generated them...[108]

Between 1963 and 1965 Umbra experienced internal division and disagreement. The group was irreparably split over a poem by Ray Durem which attacked President Kennedy and his children. The poem had been accepted for publication in the second issue of *Umbra*, but after Kennedy's assassination the editors decided to drop it. The decision was vehemently opposed by Ishmael Reed, Rolland Snellings, Albert Haynes, and Charles and William Patterson, among others. The details of what followed, including a fist fight and allegations of kidnapping and confiscation of group funds, are unclear.[109] The disagreement over the Durem poem was, in any case, merely a catalyst for the increasing differences of political opinion within the group. Those who fought for the inclusion of the poem were, with the single exception of Reed, moving towards a more militant and cultural nationalist position, urging greater political activism. The nationalist faction also opposed white membership in Umbra, arguing that there was a danger of a liberal takeover, while others, like Dent and Hernton still strongly defend the contributions of members like Art Berger to the group.[110] In 1965 the nationalists went with LeRoi Jones to Harlem to found the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BART/S).

These incidents are particularly revealing of Reed's political development. Though ideologically opposed to cultural nationalism, Reed nevertheless financially supported the nationalist faction, it would seem, as a matter of principle. After the fight, members of the nationalist faction lived in Reed's apartment on East 5th Street. Reed went out to work and paid the rent, receiving little or no contributions from the others. At the same time he was increasingly criticized by the nationalists for his writing which they saw as too 'white.' Oren accurately remarks that the recurrent appearance in Reed's fiction of self-styled radicals who actually do little work, characters Reed calls "moochers," has its basis in this experience.[111]

In concluding his retrospective consideration of the group, Dent writes that "Umbra contained within it artists working on several different wavelengths. As people began to crystallize in the direction they were moving, it became increasingly difficult to resolve internal conflicts," and "by late 1963, it was relatively impossible."[112] But Umbra's demise must also be placed in the larger context of increasing tension between blacks and whites, not only nationwide but specifically on the Lower East Side. According to Lorenzo

Thomas, around the summer of 1964 "there was a noticeable estrangement between black and white artists on the Village scene."[113] This was partly due to the Harlem riots of that summer. At the same time Baraka had formed an all-black group, In/Formation, in order to try and publish a newspaper. The paper never materialized but in 1965 the In/Formation group became the core of BART/S, marking a decisive break from the Village community.[114] Baraka's now well known and exemplary violent dissociation from white culture, his move to Harlem and later to Newark, his key role in the foundation of the Black Arts movement, and his subsequent quest for a populist black art participate in the same cultural moment out of which Reed and Rothenberg were to develop their multiculturalisms.[115] The search for a more immediate and communally based art became imperative for Baraka and many other African American writers under the pressure of new considerations made possible by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

Sukenick is less politically sensitive than Thomas and Dent, but also registers the sense of an ending. For him, "the beginning of the end of the East Village as a habitable Bohemian quarter" can be dated from late-1967:

> The October 19, 1967, issue of *The Village Voice* features two stories. One concerns the disposal of the corpse of Che Guevara by Bolivian soldiers in the small town near which he was killed. The other is a story about the murder of Groovy [who temporarily ran Ed Sanders's Peace Eye Bookshop on Tenth Street], along with rich-girl-turned-Hippie Linda Fitzpatrick, in a basement on Avenue B across Twelfth Street from where I was living. Together the two stories mark the end of a phase, on the one hand of romantic revolution, on the other of innocent rebellion.
>
> [...]
>
> But there was no going back. There had been a revolution of sorts—no doubt, in Paul Goodman's terms, an "incomplete revolution"—but things had changed enough, for better and worse, to require substantial reorientation, a reorientation that is itself incomplete today.[116]

It was also in 1967 that Reed decided to leave the East Village and New York and to move to California. During his five years in New York Reed experienced the possibilities of a multi-cultural community of artists and art but also the inability to sustain them. The move to California was not, however, a sign of disillusionment but the beginning of an attempt to reinvigorate and expand the multiculturalism which continues to have its roots in the experience of the Village. Reed's work since 1967 is, in this sense, truly part

of the continuing post-'60s reorientation of which Sukenick speaks.

For Reed and other African American writers, the West Coast provided a kind of internal expatriation. "We came to the West Coast," Reed explains, "instead of going to Europe, as was the practice in the forties and fifties, and others went South and to the Midwest."[117] On the West Coast Reed found a different community of writers and small press opportunities. In 1970 Reed edited *19 Necromancers from Now*, an anthology of African American writers (with a last-minute inclusion of one Chinese American author), and then *Calafia*, a celebration of what he refers to as "America's truly world state."[118] In 1972 he and Al Young co-founded the *Yardbird Reader*, an annual anthology run as a co-operative venture that published contemporary African American, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Euro-American writers, and the two later co-edited *Quilt*, a journal with a similar scope.[119] Reed was also one of the founding members of the Before Columbus Foundation, primarily a small press distribution outlet, again with a multicultural emphasis, and of Reed, Canon and Johnson publishers. The publishing ventures include, in addition, I. Reed Books. Beyond these literary activities, Reed helped set up a cinema and film program in Oakland in order to promote the work of young minority film makers. The record is impressive.

It is on the West Coast that Reed quickly develops the potential inclusiveness of Neo-HooDoo into a fully comprehensive multiculturalism. As first formulated, Neo-HooDoo is syncretist and anarchic but essentially black. But by 1973, Reed already imagines the cultural range of his aesthetic more ambitiously, or perhaps more explicitly. Reviewing *Before the War* by the Japanese American Lawson Fusao Inada, Reed is struck by the mixture of "Asian Afro English" cultural materials in the poetry: "a reference to *Ebony* magazine has no difficulty making out eight lines above *Madame Butterfly Rag*" and "Miles Davis stands in the tradition of Basho, Buson, and Issa" (*S* 115). "What all this goes to show," Reed concludes, "is that anyone who tries to keep his cultural experience to himself is like a miser, moribund in a rooming house, uneaten beef stew lying on a table, and lonely except for the monstrous tick tock of a drugstore clock—all that gold stashed in the closet doing no one any good" (*S* 117). Inada represents "the multicultural artist" whose emergence signals "a new phase" in American literature, "producing a new and fresh American writing and language, and an exchange of forms and techniques" (*S* 252, 254).

This vision of the birth of the new is, of course, an old Emersonian prophecy. Here, Inada is to Reed as Whitman was to Emerson. The "multicultural artist" is for Reed the representative man within the familiar American

dream of "a society where all of the cultures of the world may co-exist, and in which cultural exchange is allowed to thrive."[120] The world is available for a national literature:

> As the ethnic phase of American literature ends—counter-culture ethnic, black ethnic, red ethnic, feminist ethnic, academic ethnic, beat ethnic, New York School ethnic, and all the other churches who believe their choir sings the best—*the National poetry begins.*[121]

NOTES

(Endnotes)

[1] Two earlier discussions offer useful companion pieces for the account offered in the present essay: Shamoon Zamir, "The Artist as Prophet, Priest and Gunslinger: Ishmael Reed's Cowboy in the Boat of Ra,", Callaloo 17:4 (1994),1205-35, reprinted in Harold Bloom, ed., African-American Poets: Robert Hayden through Rita Dove (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003), 205-44; and "Mumbo Jumbo: Ishmael Reed, Psychohistory and Counter-culture", in Democratic Vistas, vol.2 no.1 (Winter 1994), 4-24.

[2] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Narrativizing Visual Culture: Towards a polycentric aesthetics", in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., The Visual Culture Reader (London: Routledge, 1998), 31.

[3] The literature in this area is already large. See especially John Carlos Rowe, ed., Post-Nationalist American Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (London: Verso, 1993); and Paul Giles, Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transnational Imaginary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[4] Among the speakers of the Fon language-group in Dahomey, "voodoo," "vodou" or "vodoun" means "god," "spirit" or "sacred object." See Alfred Metraux, Voodoo in Haiti, trans. Hugo Charteris (1959; New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 27, and Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: The New African Culture, trans. Marjorie Grene (1958; New York: Grove Press, 1979), 29. It is almost impossible to calculate the size of the Voodoo pantheon. Zora Neale Hurston comments that "it would require several volumes to attempt to cover completely the gods and Voodoo practices of one vicinity alone" (Tell My Horse [1938; Berkeley, CA: Turtle Island, 1983], 153). Milo Rigaud provides a list of 237 loas ("gods") but adds that the list is far from complete (Secrets of Voodoo, trans. Robert B. Cross [1953; New York: Arco, 1969], 51-58).

[5] Quoted in Sidney Mintz's introduction to Metraux's Voodoo in Haiti, 4-5. For the syncretistic aspects of Voodoo see also chapter 2 of Maya Deren, The Voodoo Gods (London: Paladin, 1975), originally published as Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953). In Life in a Haitian Valley (1937; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1974), Melville J. Herskovitz gives an early and influential account of African survivals within Voodoo (see Part I, "The Cultural Ancestry of the Haitian," 17-64), and of the blending of African and European traditions (see Part IV, "Haiti, A Cultural Mosaic," 251-305). Further discussion of the Catholic elements in Voodoo can be found in Jean Price-Mars, So Spoke the Uncle, trans. Magdaline W. Shannon (1928; Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1983), 153ff, and, in the North American context, Robert Tallant, Voodoo in New Orleans (1946; Gretna, LO: Pelican, 1983), 29ff, 51ff and passim. On the presence of Indian culture in Voodoo see in particular Deren's chapter "The New World Answer to New World Needs," 65-74. Also Harold Courlander, "Voodoo in Haitian Culture," in Religion and Politics in Haiti (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Cross-Cultural Research, 1966), 1-2.

[6] James Haskins, Witchcraft, Mysticism and Magic in the Black World (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 66.

[7] Ishmael Reed, Shrovetide in Old New Orleans (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 10 (hereafter cited in the text as S). For further details on Hoodoo, see part two of Zora Neale Hurston's Mules and Men (1935; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), and Newbell Niles Puckett, Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), especially chapters three and four.

[8] Reed attributes his initial interest in Voodoo to Larry Neal's use of the term "juju" in the black aesthetic debates and to Joe Overstreet's use of vévés (symbolic designs drawn on the ground during Voodoo ceremonies) in his paintings. See Joseph Henry, "A MELUS Interview: Ishmael Reed," MELUS 11:1 (Spring 1984), 84-5; and "Ishmael Reed," in Alan Burns and Charles Sugnet, eds., The Imagination on Trial (London: Alison & Busby, 1981), 140.

[9] *The quotation is from John Ewing's "Interview with Ishmael Reed" which first appeared in the Friday Magazine of The Daily Californian 3:4 (January 28, 1977), 9, 11, 13, 15.*

[10] *Ishmael Reed, Conjure: Selected Poems, 1963-1970 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), vii. Hereafter cited in the text as C.*

[11] *The importance of cultural nationalism and of "the black aesthetic" at this time is evident in the publication of three texts in 1971: The Black Aesthetic (New York: Doubleday, 1971), edited by Adison Gayle Jr., perhaps the single most important collection of documents; Black Literature in America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), edited by Houston Baker, Jr., an anthology with selections from major texts accompanied by introductions and commentaries; and Amiri Baraka's Raise, Race, Rays, Raze: Essays Since 1965 (New York: Random House). See also Dudley Randall, ed., The Black Poets (New York: Bantam, 1971), and the two volumes edited by Abraham Chapman, Black Voices (New York: Mentor, 1968) and New Black Voices (New York: Mentor, 1972). New Black Voices contained several essays on the Black Aesthetic but was unusual in providing a greater critical forum for authors like Reed and Clarence Major. A brief contribution by Reed, "Can a Metronome Know the Thunder or Summon a God?," had appeared in Gayle's anthology (405-06), but Gayle and Reed were soon to take issue with each other, though the inclusion does indicate some common ground. Nathaniel Mackey's "Ishmael Reed and the Black Aesthetic," CLA Journal 31:3 (March 1978), 355-66, provides a clear account of Reed's position. Chapter 3 of Reginald Martin's Ishmael Reed and the New Black Aesthetic (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1988) deals in greater detail with the personal and political details of Reed's disagreements with Baraka, Baker, and Gayle. See also Patrick McGee, Ishmael Reed and the Ends of Race (New York: St. Martin's, 1997).*

[12] *Walt Sheppard, "When State Magicians Fail: An Interview with Ishmael Reed," Nickel Review (August 28, 1968), reprinted in Journal of Black Poetry 1:2 (Summer-Fall 1969), 4, my emphasis. It is interesting to note that in 1969 the Haitian poet, Renée Depestre, then in exile in Cuba, had published his Un arc-de-ciel- pour l'occident chrétien (A Rainbow for the Christian West, trans. Joan Dayan [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977]), that gathered together poetry written over twenty years into a long poem that attempted to forge together the revolutionary powers of Voodoo and Marxism, traditions that Reed takes to be fundamentally incompatible.*

[13] *Sheppard, "When State Magicians Fail", 6.*

[14] *Ishmael Reed, Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 35-36. The discussion of the novel here borrows from Zamir, "Mumbo Jumbo", 4*

[15] *Karenga, "Black Cultural Nationalism," in Gayle, Jr., ed., Black Aesthetic, 33-34.*

[16] *Karenga, "Black Art: Mute Matter Given Force and Function," in Abraham Chapman, ed., New Black Voices (New York: Mentor, 1972), 479.*

[17] *"catechism" appeared in Reed's first book of poems, also called catechism of d neo-american hoodoo church (London: Breman, 1970), 18-27. "Manifesto" was published as an essay, including portions of "catechism," in the Los Angeles Free Press (September 18, 1970), 42, and was, like the full version of "catechism," later incorporated into Conjure.*

[18] *(Millbrook, NY: The Kriya Press of the Sri Ram Ashram). The contents of the original Neo-American Church Catechism and Handbook are reproduced in Klep's The Boo Hoo Bible: The Neo-American Church Catechism and Handbook (San Cristobal, NM: Toad Books, 1971) in changed order, with some new illustrations and additional material. Since the Handbook does not have page numbers, all my references are to the Boo Hoo Bible.*

[19] *Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 3. The other three religious organizations were the Church of the Awakening, the Native American Church and the League of Spiritual Discovery. For more on Kleps, see: http://www.erowid.org/culture/characters/kleps_arthur/kleps_arthur.shtml*

[20] *Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 3.*

[21] *Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 7.*

[22] *Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 196.*

[23] *The fifth "Strategic Concept" of the Chief Boo Hoo, with little alteration, could be part of Loop Garoo reply to Bo Shmo in Yellow Back Radio or of Reed's "catechism": "Relax and act as goofy as you like—as long as you don't impose your games on others. Keep the opposition off balance by referring to all sorts of non-existent law violations in phone and letter communications. Build up private jokes and private language. Plant water melon seeds in public parks. When you know a police informer is present, practice and/or discuss the most extreme and deviant forms of tantric buddhism and black magic. People in general, and rigid, paranoid "official" types in particular, hate ambiguity, fear ridicule, and will misjudge and miscalculate when the opposition fails to fall into predictable patterns and their own practiced routines. Let's announce to the world that we are liars and jokesters. Nothing we say can be counted on to be true, not be a put on—although everything we say can be counted on to have a meaning to those who have ears to hear"*

(Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 13).

[24] *Kleps, Boo Hoo Bible, 4, 94, 144.*

[25] *Walter Bowart, the founder of the East Village Other and a friend of Reed's, had covered the Neoamerican Church's legal battles for the paper during the summer of 1966. Bowart's article is reprinted in Art Klep's Boo Hoo Bible, 51-53. For the review, see Timothy Leary, "The Laughing Religion: The Neo-American Church Catechism and Handbook," East Village Other 2:9 (August 19-September 1, 1967), 9-10.*

[26] *Abraham Leshkol, "The East Village Other: 'All the News That's Hip to Print," Fact 4:3 (May-June 1967), 43. Reed gives his version of events in 19 Necromancers from Now (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), xxi. For more on the East Village Other and Reed's involvement in its inception, see Abe Peck, Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 32-35, and Roger Lewis, Outlaws of America. The Underground Press and its Contexts: Notes on a Cultural Revolution (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 55, 56, 59.*

[27] *In the first issue of East Village Other (October 1965) Reed, along with Steve Cannon, is listed as "Assistant editor"; by issue number two (November) he is no longer on the main editorial board but still listed among the "Associates."*

[28] *"Poetry Place: Protest," 1:1 (October 1965), 5; "Villager Knifed Aiding Bar Patron," 1:4 (January 1966), 1, 10; and "Snaps by Victor Hernandez Cruz" (March 19, 1968), 17-19. Alan Katzman also reviewed Reed's first novel, Free-Lance Pallbearers for the paper (2:23 (October 15-November 1, 1967), 17, 20, 23.*

[29] *Reed has since written for the Berkeley Barb and the Whole Earth Journal.*

[30] *Michael L. Johnson, New Journalism: The Underground Press, the Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1971), 16-17.*

[31] *Leshkol, "East Village Other," 41.*

[32] *Cited in Johnson, New Journalism, 16. The initial members of the Syndicate were East Village Other, Los Angeles's Free Press, Berkeley's Barb, the Paper from East Lansing, Michigan, and Detroit's Fifth Estate.*

[33] *Sheppard, "When State Magicians Fail," 75.*

[34] *Sheppard, "When State Magicians Fail," 73.*

[35] *Valerie Wilmer, As Serious as Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz (London: Allison & Busby, 1977) 79.*

[36] *See Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the 1970s (New York: Horizon Press, 1976), 319. Valerie Wilmer also lists Band from Outer Space, Solar-Nature Arkestra, and Astro-Intergalactic-Infinity Arkestra (As Serious as Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz [London: Alison and Busby, 1977]e, 84-).*

[37] *Shamoon Zamir, "Jewish Vodoun Baffles Posse: A Report on Literary Capital Gains from Ishmael Reed," Talus 4 (Spring 1989), 16. The interview is reprinted in Callaloo 17:4 (1994), 1131-1157 and in Bruce Dick and Amritjit Singh, eds., Conversations with Ishmael Reed (University of Mississippi Press, 1995).*

[38] *Tam Fiofiori, "Sun Ra's African Roots," Melody Maker (12 February, 1972), 32.*

[39] *Barry McRae, "Sun Ra," Jazz Journal, (August 1966), 15.*

[40] *Walt Sheppard, "The New Technology is Black: An Interview with Ishmael Reed," Nickel Review (December 19, 1969), 3. Reed tells us later in the interview that, after a visit to Victor Hernandez Cruz's house, which Reed is convinced is haunted, "it got so frightening that I had to go to a Sun Ra concert to get over the experience" (12).*

[41] *Sun Ra, "The Cosmic Age", in LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal, eds., Black Fire: An Anthology of African American Writing (New York: William Morrow, 1968), 219.*

[42] *Laura Mulvey, "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," History Workshop 23 (Spring 1987), 11.*

[43] *Giles Deleuze and Féelix Guattari, "What is Minor Literature?", Mississippi Review 31 (Winter & Spring 1983), 24.*

[44] *William Burroughs, quoted in Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 110.*

[45] *The search for the Text through which Neo-HooDoo may actualize itself is more fully developed in Reed's third novel, Mumbo Jumbo (1972).*

[46] *The quotation is from John Ewing's "Interview with Ishmael Reed" which first appeared in the Friday Magazine of The Daily Californian 3:4 (January 28, 1977), 9, 11, 13, 15.*

[47] *See Zamir, "The Artist as Prophet, Priest and Gunslinger."*

[48] "Preface," in Donald Allen and Warren Tallman, eds., The Poetics of a New American Poetry (New York: Grove Press, 1973) x.

[49] LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), "Crow Jane," in his The Dead Lecturer (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 48-53. For a fine analysis of these poems, see Kimberly Benston, Baraka: The renegade and the mask (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 115-19. For the Jones-Eliot relationship, see the chapter titled "The Eliot Shell" in Werner Sollors, Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a "Populist Modernism" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

[50] The poem is "Kodachromes of the Island" and can be found in Hayden's Collected Poems (New York: Liveright, 1985), ed. Frederick Glaysher, 78-80.

[51] Yeats quoted in A. Norman Jeffares, A New Commentary on the Poems of W.B. Yeats (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983) 182.

[52] Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought, expanded ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 193.

[53] Terence Diggory, Yeats and American Poetry: The Tradition of the Self (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). The following comments are a summary of Diggory's argument.

[54] Diggory, Yeats and American Poetry, 6.

[55] See the second chapter of Diggory, Yeats and American Poetry, 11-30.

[56] See the reading of "I am a cowboy in the boat of Ra" in Zamir, "The Artist as Prophet, Priest and Gunslinger[22].."

[57] Yeats, A Vision (1937; New York: Collier Books, 1966), 11.

[58] Northrop Frye, "Yeats and the Language of Symbolism," in his Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 223-24.

[59] The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, rev. ed., ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 34. All subsequent references to Blake's works are to this edition and cited in the text.

[60] George Quasha and Jerome Rothenberg, eds., America a Prophecy: A New Reading of American Poetry from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present (New York: Random House, 1973), xxx, xxxi.

[61] "The American Scholar" (1837) in Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen E. Whicher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 79.

[62] Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 738, 740.

[63] Whicher, ed., Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, 238.

[64] Whitman, "Preface 1855," in Leaves of Grass, 729. Emerson, "The Poet," in Wicher, ed., Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, 223.

[65] Allen and Tallman, eds., Poetics of the New American Poetry, ix. Whitman's 1856 letter to Emerson is also the first text in this anthology (3-12). See also Neeli Cherkovski, Whitman's Wild Children (Venice, CA: The Lapis Press, 1988), which deals with those poets of the fifties and sixties who are, in one sense or another, heirs of Whitman, including the African American poet Bob Kaufman, one of the founding and much-neglected members of the Beat movement (101-22).

[66] Ishmael Reed, God Made Alaska for the Indians (New York: Garland, 1984), 118.

[67] Jerome Rothenberg, "Keeping It Old: A Review of the New New American Poetry," Sulfur 6 (1983), 181.

[68] Rothenberg, "Keeping it Old", 188. Rothenberg also points to the exclusion of much important experimental poetry, e.g., concrete poetry, performance poetry, and the "Language" poets among others.

[69] Zamir, "Jewish Vodoun", 17.

[70] Lowenfels edited three collections of Whitman's verse: Walt Whitman's Civil War, with the assistance of Nan Braymer (New York: Knopf, 1960); Selections from Leaves of Grass (New York: Crown, 1961); and The Tenderest Lover: The Erotic Poetry of Walt Whitman (New York: Delacorte Press, 1970). For a discussion of the Whitmanian aspects of Lowenfels's own poetry, see Roger Asselineau, "A Neglected Transcendentalist Poet of the 20th Century: Walter Lowenfels (1897-1976)," chp. 12 of his The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature (New York: NYU Press, 1980), 163-81. Further biographical information relating to the 1950's and 1960's is available in Mark Fritz, "Walter Lowenfels," in American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939, Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol.4, ed. Karen Lane Rood (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1980) 255-58. See also Allen De Loach, ed., The East Side Scene (Buffalo: University Press, SUNY Buffalo, 1968), v.

[71] Walter Lowenfels, ed., Poets of Today: A New American Poetry (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 8. For Lowenfels's reclamation of Whitman in his anthologies, see also Where Is Vietnam? American Poets Respond (New York: Doubleday, 1967), ix; For Neruda, For Chile (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), vii.

[72] *Lowenfels, ed., Poets of Today, 7. Several poets, like Allen Ginsberg, LeRoi Jones and Denise Levertov and others, appear in both Lowenfels's and Allen's anthologies.*

[73] *"The Ghost in Birmingham" in Poets of Today, 109-11; "The Jackal Headed Cowboy," in In Time of Revolution: Poems from our Third World (New York: Random House, 1969), 114-16; "Sermonette" in The Writing on the Wall: 108 Poems of Protest (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 12; and "Poem Delivered Before Assembly of Colored People Held at Glide Memorial Church, Oct.4, 1973 And Called to Protest Recent Events in the Sovereign Republic of Chile" in For Neruda, For Chile, 156-59.*

[74] *Ishmael Reed, Calafia: The California Poetry (Oakland, CA: Yardbird, 1979).*

[75] *Zamir, "Jewish Vodoun", 17.*

[76] *See Zamir, "Jewish Vodoun," 19; Reed, Shrovetide 61; and de Loach ed., The East Side Scene, v.*

[77] *See Art Berger, "Negroes with Pens," Mainstream 16:7 (July 1963), 5; and Michel Oren, "A '60s Saga: The Life and Death of Umbra," Part I, Freedomways 24:3 (1984), 171-72.*

[78] *Zamir, "Jewish Vodoun", 17.*

[79] *Arnold Rampersad, The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume I: 1902-1941. I, Too, Sing America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 28-29. Rampersad points out that Hughes's admiration for Whitman lasted throughout his career. Hughes was also reading Emerson just prior to writing "I, Too Sing America" (95). For another African American poet's appreciation of Whitman, see June Jordan, "For the Sake of a People's Poetry: Walt Whitman and the Rest of Us," (1979) in Poetry and Politics: An Anthology of Essays, ed. Richard Jones (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 188-99.*

[80] *Rampersad, Hughes, 315.*

[81] *Lowenfels, ed., Poets of Today, 15; 17. The poem had appeared in different versions in 1936 and 1949.*

[82] *Neil Schmitz, "Neo-HooDoo: The Experimental Fiction of Ishmael Reed," Twentieth Century Literature 20:2 (April 1974), 126.*

[83] *Richard Poirier, A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 51.*

[84] *Quentin Anderson, The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary History and Culture (New York: A. Knopf, 1971).*

[85] *Anderson, Imperial Self, viii-x.*

[86] *Lawrence Buell, Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 186.*

[87] *Poirier, A World Elsewhere, 89-90, 64-65.*

[88] *Anderson, Imperial Self, 5.*

[89] *Sacvan Bercovitch, "Emerson the Prophet: Romanticism, Puritanism, and Auto-American-Biography," in David Levin, ed., Emerson: Prophecy, Metamorphosis, and Influence (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) 12-13. Comparing "The American Scholar" with The Prelude, Bercovitch writes: "Wordsworth hopes to reconstitute in himself all that had been divided, and so must deal with the specifics of his personal and historical condition. Emerson can bypass such considerations because he bears witness to the rising glory of America. Insofar as he projects himself in his hero, he recasts Romantic autobiography into auto-American-biography, reveals himself as harbinger of the nation intended 'by all prophecy, by all preparation...to fill the postponed expectation of the world'." (12-13)*

[90] *Anderson, Imperial Self, 58. The preceding discussion of the Emersonian legacy draws upon Shamoon Zamir, Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 164-66.*

[91] *Ishmael Reed, The Free-Lance Pallbearers (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 38, 102; 110.*

[92] *Ishmael Reed, "Larry Neal: A Remembrance," Callaloo 8:1 (Winter 1985), 263-64.*

[93] *Reed also provides a brief survey of the activities of various African American writers, musicians and painters in his early essay "The Black Artist: 'Calling a Spade a Spade,'" Arts Magazine (May 1967), 48-49.*

[94] *Ronald Sukenick, Down and In: Life in the Underground (New York: Beech Tree Books / William Morrow, 1987), 142.*

[95] *Sukenick, Down and In, 148.*

[96] *Tom Dent, "Umbra Days," Black American Literature Forum 14:3 (Fall 1980), 105-06.*

[97] *Dent, "Umbra Days," 106.*

[98] *For biographical information on Reed, see Henry Louis Gates, "Ishmael Reed", in African American Fiction Writers Since 1955, Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 83, ed. Thaddius M. Davis*

and Trudier Harris (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1984), 220-22. See also Reed's introductions to Shrovetide, 4-6, and Writin' is Fightin' (New York: Atheneum, 1988), 3-10; Cameron Northouse, "Ishmael Reed," Conversations with Writers II (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1978), 213-14; Fred Beauford, "A Conversation with Ishmael Reed," Black Creation 4:2 (Winter 1973), 15; and Edmond Newton, "Ishmael Reed," New York Post (November 16, 1974), 33.

[99] *In John O'Brien ed., Interviews with Black Writers (New York: Liveright, 1973), 197. The interview was conducted in 1972.*

[100] *Among the other early participants were Lorenzo Thomas, Joe Johnson, Askia Muhamad Touré (then Rolland Snellings), Lloyd Addison, Alvin Hayes, Leroy McLucas and Charles Patterson. Later in 1962 and during the early part of 1963 others joined the group, including Norman Pritchard, Lennox Raphael, James Thompson, Oliver Pitcher, Art Berger, Steve Cannon and Reed himself. See Dent, "Umbra Days," 106-07. Michel Oren, "A '60s saga: The Life and Death of Umbra," Part I, Freedomways, 24:3 (1984), 179. Part II of this study appeared in Freedomways 24:4 (1984), 237-54. Together the two parts comprise the most sustained social and literary history of Umbra to date. See also Lorenzo Thomas, "The Shadow World: New York's Umbra Workshop & Origins of the Black Arts Movement," Callaloo 4:1 (October 1978), 53-72. This, like Dent's piece, is a useful source because written by a former member of Umbra. Reed gives his own brief account of Umbra in the introduction to 19 Necromancers from Now, xx-xxi.*

[101] *Two such groups were the Organization of Young Men and the On Guard Committee for Freedom (usually known as On Guard), both initiated in 1961 in the downtown area, the former by LeRoi Jones and the latter by Calvin Hicks. Both had more or less dissolved by the time Umbra meetings started. See Oren, "A '60s Saga," I, 179-80 and Dent, Umbra Days," 105.*

[102] *Dent, "Umbra Days," 107.*

[103] *Dent, "Umbra Days," 106.*

[104] *See Dent, "Umbra Days," 107; Reed, Shrovetide, 238; Thomas, "The Shadow World," passim.*

[105] *Dent, "Umbra Days," 107.*

[106] *Oren, "A '60s Saga," I, 177. Art Berger and Nora Hicks, for instance, were both white.*

[107] *Black Arts's move uptown was, of course, was not only a reaction against this 'bohemia' necessitated by political contingencies. It was also in part determined by the slow deterioration of the Village community the mid-1960's.*

[108] *Oren, "A '60s saga," I, 172-73. Coffeehouses and bars played a crucial role in the social and cultural life of the Lower East Side. One of the most important was Stanley Tolkin's bar on 12th Street and Avenue B where the Umbra writers often gathered. According to Dent ("Umbra Days," 106), "it was an empty Polish cafe that soon became a busy communications center for artists, writers, actors, and the people who hung out with them. If you wanted to see somebody, or find out what was happening, you checked out Stanley's." Bill Amidon, writing for the Village Voice, described the type of people who could be found at Stanley's: "In '63-64 at Stanley's (before anybody knew who they were) you might have walked in on any given afternoon or evening and encountered writers such as Ishmael Reed, Calvin Hernton, David Henderson, Ron Sukenick, Allen Ginsberg, Tuli Kupfberg, Ed Sanders, and Lennox Raphael; actors like Moses Gunn, Mitcha Ryan, Lou Gossett, and Cicely Tyson; musicians such as Odetta, Marion Brown, and Richard Andrews; Khadejha the fashion designer, who was Afro before people knew what that meant; Tom Dent, one of the founders of the Free Southern Theatre; Walter Bowart, who tended bar there and later was the original publisher of EVO - and Clark Squire, one of the Panther 21" (quoted in Sukenick, Down and In, 161. Sukenick devotes the whole of his fourth chapter to Stanley's and various other bars provide organizing foci for the rest of his book). At many of the poetry readings in the cafes and bars, black and white poets read together. One such regular venue for several of the Umbra poets was Cafe Le Metro on Second Avenue where a series of readings were organized under "the guiding spirit" of Paul Blackburn (Sukenick, Down and Out, 152). After a racist and violent incident involving the owner of Le Metro and some of the Umbra poets, in particular Dent and Reed, the cafe was boycotted by black and white writers alike. The incident provided an impetus for Blackburn to seek another venue and that is how the now famous St. Mark's Poetry Project was born. According to Reed, Joel Oppenheimer was the first director of the poetry workshop and he himself was the first fiction workshop director (Reed, God Made Alaska, 111-12). William Gildea ("Voices of Freedom Protesting," The Washington Post [Tuesday, April 30, 1974], B9, col. 1), writing about a joint reading by Ginsberg and Reed at the Library of Congress in 1974, mentions that the two poets read together several times in the 1960's in Village coffeehouses.*

[109] *Oren tries to give as clear an account as possible by sifting through the various versions of the*

events. "A '60s saga," I, 169-70 and II, 241-44. Reed gives his own account in 19 Necromancers from Now, xx-xxi.

[110] *Oren, "A '60s Saga," II, 241-42.*

[111] *Oren, "A '60s Saga," II, 246.*

[112] *Dent, "Umbra days," 108.*

[113] *Thomas, "The Shadow World," 67.*

[114] *Thomas, "The Shadow World," 67-8.*

[115] *These aspects of Baraka's career have been documented in several books: Theodore R. Hudson, From LeRoi Jones to Amiri Baraka: The Literary Works (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1973); Benston, Baraka: The Renegade and the Mask ; Sollors, Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones; William J. Harris's The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka - The Jazz Aesthetic (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985) discusses the relation of Baraka's poetry to Charles Olson and the Black Mountain and Beat writers in more detail. Baraka offers his own view of events in The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka (New York: Freundlich Books, 1984).*

[116] *Sukenick, Down and In, 196, 197.*

[117] *Northouse, "Ishmael Reed," 220.*

[118] *Reed, Calafia, xliii.*

[119] *For more on Yardbird, see Reed's "Preface" and Al Young's "Introduction" in Yardbird Lives! (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 13-15, 16-22.*

[120] *Opening statement by Reed in Before Columbus Foundation. Catalog One, 1978-1979, (Berkeley, CA: Before Columbus Foundation, 1978), facing p. 1.*

[121] *Reed in Reed and Young, eds., Yardbird Lives!, 14.*

REVIEWS

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Haun Saussy, editor
The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006

Within the North American academy, the field of Comparative Literature–I hesitate to call it a "discipline" in the conventional sense, for reasons that will become apparent later–has over the past several decades undergone a steady process of definitional mutation. Initially focused on European languages and literatures, with an admixture of canonical U.S. literatures, and impelled by anti-Fascist intellectual emigrés with thorough groundings in philology and philosophy, Comparative Literature by the 1980s had largely become, by virtue of its conceptual openness and consequent reluctance to delimit its intellectual boundaries, a staging if not always a proving ground for imported European modes of thought such as deconstruction and post-structuralism. By the 1990s, the rapid succession of "turns"(linguistic, multicultural, cultural-studies, postcolonial) made it impossible–if indeed it ever had been possible–to speak of a single univocal Comparative Literature, since every successive current that nourished it did not entirely dislodge its predecessors.

The publication in 1995, under the aegis of the American Comparative Literature Association, of the collection *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, not only inaugurated a more generalized airing of the debates that had accompanied the field's expanding scope but openly affirmed Comparative Literature's capacity, indeed necessity, to stake out its own terms of engagement with controversies in the larger public sphere. The book presently under review, issued roughly ten years later, accomplishes in its title a rather startling compression of an "age" into a mere decade, although now the present "age" of globalization is prudently qualified with the indefinite article. (Ultimately, however, this attempt at nuance is not all that useful, given that capitalism, as Marx and Engels pointed out a few years ago in 1848, is by definition globalized and indeed through its expansion gives rise to nothing less than a "world literature.") This collective intervention, like the previous one, bears the title of "report" and aims to give an account of the "state of the discipline" at the moment of its compilation, and beyond that (if the back-cover blurb is any indication), to "demonstrate that comparative critical strategies can provide unique insights into the world's changing–and increasingly colliding–cultures." Aside from the uncomfortable sensation that the phrase "colliding cultures" produces–it sounds like a more emollient version of Samuel Huntington's infamous "clash of civilizations"–the portentous proclamation, also on

the back cover, that "globalization has emerged as a defining paradigm in nearly every area of human activity" is so sweeping a generalization as to be virtually meaningless.

Behind this new "report"–and frequently cited or at least mentioned by its contributors–are recent interventions by two renowned comparatists into the question of what Comparative Literature means at the current sociopolitical juncture. The first of these is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's brief book *Death of a Discipline*, in which she argues, with characteristically idiosyncratic verve, that out of a moribund Comparative Literature, a new intellectual project may be configured through a fusion of the classic technique of close reading, translation study and practice, and a rapprochement with and corresponding revitalization of Area Studies. The second is Franco Moretti's succinct and provocative essay "Conjectures on World Literature" (first published in *New Left Review*), where he engages recent proposals to think in terms of a "world literature" as both a mode of reading and a method of investigating the structures of literary power and influence (by among others David Damrosch, a contributor to the new collection, in *What is World Literature*, and Pascale Casanova in her *The World Republic of Letters*) and argues for a practice of "distant reading" that supersedes the constraints of national literatures in favor of a mapping of literary flows and trajectories across national and cultural boundaries.

However, since it is fundamentally a panoramic, synthetic collection, *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* is not the place to look for radical reformulations or manifestos of any kind. As would be expected from a collection of essays on diverse topics–twelve of them constituting the report proper, and seven responses–some contributions are more interesting and effective than others. A few of the academic "stars" add little luster to their reputations with unreflectively tossed-off pieces; to cite only one example, the late Richard Rorty's oddly complacent assertion "We should rejoice in the mutability and fashion-proneness of academic disciplines, for the only alternative is decadent scholasticism" seriously understates an ongoing problem of increasing academic professionalization and commodified trend-mongering. And in the midst of a U.S.-promulgated "global war on terror" with significant ramifications on both academic and extra-academic discourse, it is simply baffling to read Fedwa Malti-Douglas's giddy paean to (in that order) comics and the law, optimistically but alas! inaccurately entitled "Beyond Comparison Shopping."

Reading the entire volume, notwithstanding its many valuable insights productive of further reflection and development, one is left with the impression that so-called "theory," which once enjoyed virtual hegemony over Compara-

tive Literature departments, often at the expense of study and discussion of actual literary works, has lost its erstwhile quasi-cultlike aura. Clearly, the market in "theory futures" has become bearish, whether driven by the latest (often decontextualized if not brand-named) Continental imports or a postcolonialism as prematurely heralded as the postmodernism it ostensibly criticized. The contribution that displays the most fully realized blend of erudition and intellectual challenge, Christopher Braider's "Of Monuments and Documents," makes, within the context of an informative résumé of interactions between literature and the visual arts in early modern Europe, an incisive critique of a tendency to view the past exclusively according to the criteria of the present and of a correspondingly reductive perspective, often inflected by a decontextualized feminism, that sees the pre- and early-modern eras as "the wicked laboratory of the technologies of cultural fabrication and control embodied in Michel Foucault's favorite icons of the hegemonic modern state." Braider's emphasis on the necessity to "remain *patient* with the past, allowing it to unfold as it were of itself in the light our interest and our questions shed" is a useful reminder whose implications extend well beyond early-modern European studies.

At the same time, however, the defensiveness of Braider's contention that recent developments in the field have "displaced the European metropolis from the traditional center of comparatist attention" serves to call attention to a significant, indeed egregious lacuna in the collection, whose back-cover subject heading revealingly states "European and Comparative Literature"–the absence of any entry on Africa, the Caribbean, and Luso-Latin America (regions whose histories and literatures have much to contribute to a rethinking of the "European metropolis" and its textualities, early-modern or otherwise). In this way, and despite all good intentions, the book reinforces by-now-outmoded hegemonies. So while Djelal Kadir may, in the midst of a polemic against both Spivak's concept of "planetarity" and the increasing currency of a notion of "world literature," inveigh with fine rhetorical vigor against Comparative Literature's "default complicity with regimes of truth whose truth derives from the leveraging of terror" and its "indifference to difference" that sustains such complicity, he does not cite voices that would pose ways of seeing other than and different from the elite Endowed-Chair, Ivy-League, Research-1 academic realm that he and the other contributors inhabit. Surely, in a collective document emerging from an organization calling itself the "American Comparative Literature Association," some articles could at the very least have been solicited from comparatists working in what José Martí, over a hundred years ago, called "our America." As well, in a report purporting to give an account of the "state of the discipline" circa 2004, it is astonishing that nowhere is any mention made of the University of California at Irvine's pathbreaking and

eminently comparatist International Center for Writing and Translation (ICWT), founded in 2002 and directed by the great Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo, who has described its mission as "a pioneering model for a world arising from free conversation in and among marginalized languages." This project concretely and constructively calls into question the conventional model of Comparative Literature, whose multilingualism has tended to be founded on languages deriving their hegemony from colonial (or postcolonial nation-state) practices: Spanish but not Quechua or Zapotec, French but not Kréyol or Bambara, Arabic but not Tamazight, Chinese but not Tibetan, global English but not (fill in the blank with your preferred marginalized language). If the current model of "globalization" implies uniformity and standardization, then it would make sense for comparatists to be on the front lines of the movement towards "revival, restoration, and visibility" (to which I would add audibility) that the ICWT advocates and foments. Gayatri Spivak, for one, surely is. Editor Haun Saussy's perceptive remark "Immigrants and colonized people (who might be said to have been immigrated upon) are already comparatists in much of their daily behavior, since their words and actions exist under two idioms, two scales of value, two legitimating vocabularies" demands a development it does not receive elsewhere in the collection.

Saussy's lengthy historical overview of the field–the core of the "report" –succinctly elucidates Comparative Literature's existence as a "discipline defined by the search for its proper objects," a constantly open process or quest whose goal, I take it, is to make its objects provisional and always subject to possible transcendence (something rather different from Rorty's celebration of academic fashion). Precisely because Comparative Literature is founded on linguistic and cultural border-crossings even as it properly and repeatedly calls into question (theorizes) the terms and conditions of these crossings lest they become too casually undertaken, it thrives on multiplicity, counterpoints, and polyrhythms. If, as Saussy states, "An enabling hypothesis at best, the universality of selected themes cannot serve as a conclusion. [...] But for literature in translation, there is no better place to start," the variations, the changes played on these themes by a comparatist attuned to the cultural and historical contexts in which they are imbricated and from which they emerge to intrigue, move, or otherwise provoke or stimulate the curious reader-interpreter-respondent, become of crucial importance. Édouard Glissant's definition of Relation encapsulates the comparatist (ad)venture: "Relation...does not act upon prime elements that are separable or reducible. (...) It does not precede itself in its action and presupposes no a priori. It is the boundless effort of the world: to become realized in its totality, that is, to evade rest." In this regard, David Ferris's choice of the word "indisciplined" to characterize Comparative Literature,

however well-intentioned, doesn't go far enough, and perhaps it would be more interesting to see it as what Charles Fourier would have called "anti-discipline," the intellectual equivalent (maintaining all due proportion) of what Mexico's neo-Zapatistas have called "a world in which all worlds fit," that "room for everyone at the convocation of conquest" anticipated by Aimé Césaire.

Taking up Franco Moretti's declaration in his "Conjectures" that "...there is no other justification for the study of world literature...but this: to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures – especially the local literature," another important omission in the collection must be considered, something indeed to which academic Comparative Literature as a whole has tended to give short shrift: the poet as comparatist. (Moretti himself reinforces this by exclusively concentrating his research and criticism on the novel form.) The modernist conception of poetry as news that stays news and of the poem as an artifact into which all that is language has its potential place–not forgetting the rebellious Global South denizens of the "lettered city" storming literary-canonical and in some cases political barricades–has forged creatively comparative modes of reading and poetically-inflected critical writing in extra- and frequently anti-academic contexts. Now that "high theory" has become etiolated, the moment would seem propitious to bring oral and written poetries and poetic epistemologies into the moving center of a revitalized Comparative Literature.

Here, perhaps a statement of my "subject position" would seem appropriate. I teach in a small undergraduate department of Comparative Literature on a campus of a major metropolitan university, and the concerns I have expressed in this review arise out of several years of teaching mostly working-class students not only what literature is, but how to read it (not always an easy task in an Internet, I-Pod-driven world – Saussy is right on the mark when he states that "literature frustrates the economy of information in which more data and faster access is always better"). This mostly, though fortunately not exclusively, means that the students encounter Comparative Literature through survey courses of novels, stories, and poetry from different cultures and historical moments, all in English translation. In order to provide a comprehensive global focus for each course, I have to become more and more of a generalist without at the same time sacrificing the rigor and specificity required to present a literary work often removed in space and time from the average student's habitus. And in a society in which prevails a generalized ignorance promulgated by what Guy Debord has called the "integrated spectacle," under whose domination most students have grown up without ever experiencing even the phantasm of any possible organized alternative, literature has the potential not just to "frustrate" (Saussy's word)

the economy of information, but (I like to think) subvert it.

Two of the three struggles Edward W. Said singles out (in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*) as paradigms for a desired intellectual "sense of opposition and...sense of engaged participation" are relevant to this situation: "to protect against and forestall the disappearance of the past [and] to construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle as the outcome of intellectual labor." (The third struggle, incidentally, is the struggle over Palestine – surely a contested terrain in which the insights of comparatists might make positive contributions.) In the present conjuncture, teaching (and for that matter writing about) literature in comparative contexts, while necessarily requiring scholarly rigor and a refusal of dilettantism, also entails attunement not only to the "moment of danger" in which we find ourselves, but to the dialogic and potentially cross-cultural love integrally linked to the translator's task as formulated by Walter Benjamin: "a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification." Obviously, it would be presumptuous and narcissistic to proclaim such imaginative and transformative love, and its underlying will to confront and transcend the danger and misery of the present, as Comparative Literature's fundamental provenance. But not to think in such terms condemns the field to fallowness. Might it be possible to envisage a future report entitled "Comparative Literature in an Age of Emergence"?

Christopher Winks

HUMAN RESOURCES

Rachel Zolf
Coach House Books, 2007

Rachel Zolf's new book of poems, *Human Resources*, enters the tradition of innovative poets writing about Capital by joining it with her exploration of what it means to occupy a lyric subject in our own cultural moment. The book—through its use of poetry generating programs, corporate instructions for writers, and word database lists—fashions a subject recognizable to us, one that is multiple and shaped by the IMF, the WTO, and our personal, unavoidable shopping and employment conditions. And yet, while the lyrical agency in *Human Resources* emerges from the piles of printed and electronic materials that stuff the desks and hard drives in thousands of glass-encased skyscrapers, the book does not take the constructed quality of the agency it depicts as a definitive insight. Instead of foregrounding slips in meaning and the linguistic, economically determined nature of our own lives, the poems in *Human Resources* take these features of language and human agency as given and attempt to forge a readable subjectivity from them. Zolf generates this interpretable lyrical experience within the operating environment of Capital by composing a poetic line that does not register as deliberately disjunctive. Her lines read as if they are attempting to cohere, even as they end up multiplying their meanings, morphing, and contradicting themselves—the *Cantos* as they worked out, not as Pound would have had them.

On the level of syntax, and in line with the innovative tradition of which the book takes part, this effect works out largely as a formal struggle between a line's drive toward meaning and moments of linguistic uncertainty. Midway through the book we get a page that reads:

> You try to pare her page to pitch but words respond
> using 'my' voice treading new waters.
>
> We have to put our heads together 'live' beneath the
> veneer of the homepage once we get this backload
> under our belts.
>
> I believe content owners 'absolutely need to know'
> intuitive acronym synergy thrust the shuffle of volume.
>
> This isn't a 'hill to die on' we've done soft launches
> before.

Three breaks in meaning appear most immediately to my eye. The first occurs in the second stanza where the emotional resonance remains ambiguous: the "veneer of the homepage" under which "we" live sounds ominous and knowingly repressed by corporate life, and yet, the cliché heavy phrases in these lines—putting "our heads together" and getting work "under our belts"—strikes a decidedly unself-reflexive note. The second moment of textual ambiguity happens in the second line of the third stanza, where it is not exactly clear how an acronym could be "intuitive," let alone how it could have "synergy" and "thrust," acronyms being as they are awkward, often absurd and regularly a meaningless arrangement of letters to anyone not already instructed in their referential purpose. Third, the language of the first-person speaker, presumably a webpage designer, highlights the incoherence of authorship in a corporate marketplace. In all four stanzas we hear the voice of an editor/author and the voice of a project manager. Combining these roles moves readers into logic of advertising, where writers and editors clarify and parse language down, not in order to provide information or shed light on an idea, but in hopes of compelling action—shopping, coveting, succumbing to impulse—action made most likely when the cultural values actually for sale are disguised behind a consumer good. As readers move through these lines they gain a vague sense of the writer's desire for the copy she writes, along with the emotional stress such writing initiates, but no clear subject emerges—just a list of her anxieties.

But the various uncertainties in meaning that these lines court are pressed on all sides by lines working against a hollowing out of language's communicative function. Take, for example, the last stanza: "This isn't a 'hill to die on' we've done soft launches / before." In these lines we get multiple associations at once. First, we see the language of project management (the "soft launch" where a website is implemented in stages) combined with the language of warfare (the "'hill to die on'"). Here the poem reminds readers of the psychologically deadening social violence of the business word even at it recoils from the business school graduate who would invite such a comparison; economic violence thus materializes as emotionally brutal as warfare, and the competitive spirit in which businesses run their projects like wars appears complicit in the former. Consequently, the truism that business is a war pushes to the foreground the manner in which corporate language systems strip words of any significant meaning in their attempt to control their environments and market their products.

At the same time, a reader cannot help but feel a degree of empathy for the group of people attempting to get the website up and running. The first-person speaker who talks to the "we" and "you" in the poem creates a recognizably personal tone, a resonance intensified by the apparent heavy

workload these individuals face (seen in the attempt to get the "pitch" right, the "backload" of the second stanza, and the pressure of undertaking the "soft launch"). Despite the alienating affect of the commercial space depicted, then, readers can easily imagine the people implied in these lines as they rush, stress-addled, to complete a webpage they certainly don't care about in order to make a living (a tone made manifest by language that focuses on getting the website done for customers as opposed to phrases that suggest a group of individuals pursuing their own shared project). This mixing of alienation and empathy creates a textual environment in which readers can explore emotionally and intellectually rich associations and cultural insights—no one single lesson about economics dominates. Rather, a way of humanizing and responding to our social spaces determined by Capital becomes the focus of the book's poetic drive. In other words, *Human Resources* attempts to make meaning with the language we have at hand, a language that is admittedly impoverished by the economic systems in which we live, but available to reinterpretation and more personal, as opposed to corporate, employment. The book itself stands as a testament to such an ambition; while we never transcend our economic environments, lives that forge alterative value systems—say, a life in poetry—remain possible. You have to have a job, but you can still write poems. And no matter how limited, such activity, to translate Thoreau into our own time, creates space to think and live more deliberately.

None of this is to say, however, that *Human Resources* is engaged in some utopian dream of dialectical materialism. Even as it creates space for optimism, a place for words to function meaningfully, the book still ties its concern for lyrical agency to linguistic and physical violence, forms of injury it examines through a series of instruction poems and an attention to post-holocaust Jewish identity and sexual difference. Throughout the book Zolf places poems titled variously, "How to warm up your mental motor and find your Big Idea," "How to write a title," "Where to look for inspiration," "How to write persuasive body copy," "How to make a name," "Ingredients of a winning visual identity," and "How to write for the Internet." These labels stand to the left side of a list of instructions for carrying out the named task. In bullet point, beside "How to warm up your mental motor and find your Big Idea," and following the encouraging phrase "Ask yourself:" are four questions: "What is my prospect's problem? / What pain does the prospect want to avoid? / What is the Unique Selling Promise (USP) of this / product? / What do I need to say to keep the prospect reading?" Most obviously these questions reveal the alienating condition of consumers; their "pain" becomes generic, just another means to be hooked and "kept reading." More striking to me though is the way in which this poem operates as an instruction to the reader, whom the poem puts in the position of writing

the ad copy. Intensifying its move to have readers empathize with the works in the above cited poem, *Human Resources* here asks readers to think about other people like "prospects," merely a means to an end, consumers whose primary purpose is to buy more goods. In part, readers can see clearly the dehumanizing effect of capitalism, but I don't think we can too easily say that *Human Resources* is pointing at such language from a distance inasmuch as the book asks readers to experience this language from the inside out. Just for a moment, readers find themselves on the active side of Capital's abuse of language; inside the logic of the poem they are asked to think about what it would take to produce words empty of value, meant only to forward the urge to consume.

To this recognition of multiple forms of social violence *Human Resources* regularly articulates a troubled relationship to its own project, as in the lines, "Ensconced in the academy pleasuring in the / beautiful excess of the unshackled referent, poetry can't / stock food banks, warm bodies or stop genocide from / affecting my RSP." Not only does the book give voice to the familiar critique that poetry does not make anything happen, and allow room for the critique of radical poetic practice as overly-intellectualized, it more profoundly articulates the discomforting connection between terrifying forms of social violence, global capitalism, and one's own security, at least for citizens of Western, developed countries. The final lines linking genocide to "my RSP" (Canada's retirement savings account, called a Registered Retirement Savings Plan) utter our secret, and ethically troubling, fear that genocide in presumably far away countries might disturb our savings and investment strategies. They also lay plan the reality that our physical, real-life survival depends on economic, political realities we might very well abhor.

And it is in this moment of absolute impasse that *Human Resources* reserves a place for the necessity of radical poetics and its ability to help us think more deliberately about cultural realties and through our new forms of agency. In her attention to same-sex desire and Jewish identity as they occur in the early twenty-first century, Zolf confronts readers with a self already formed by the demands of the marketplace, but uses her book's poetic structure and dense cultural references to keep this self open to more complicated forms of identity. She does so by affirming the necessity of local pressures and larger histories, both of which, while dispensing with the illusion that people can determine for themselves who they are outside the social realities in which they live, give readers the cultural materials necessary for considering how they might manufacture alternative forms of agency within their limited circumstances. Running through *Human Resources* are lines like, "Except the word 'Jew.' Say it sixty sixty sixt six ty million / million i'm the million

mazda man six million mazda / times will not exhaust meaning" and "A multi-sexed academic friend calls our libidinal desire / around knowledge masochistic — they'd prefer a 'softer' / approach to flesh out the whole picture." In the first lines there is dense mix of cultural associations: first, the stuttering, near-chant of the sixty million Jews killed in the holocaust, then the odd word "mazda," which invokes a number of possible meanings, including the automobile made in Japan, the bombing of Hiroshima (where the car is manufactured) by the United States, and the central divinity, "Ahura Mazda," of the Zoroastrian faith, which like Judaism, is an ancient monotheism that emerged in the Middle East. It is also impossible not to hear a reference to the "Six Million Dollar Man," the television show for the 1970s. In the second example, we see the possibility for more than two forms of sexual identity, references to Freudian vocabulary ("libidinal" and "masochistic"), and the academy in its complicated social networks and production and marketing of "knowledge."

In both cases these lines make plain the burden of having a self that does not belong to oneself, a self that takes shape in the language and history in which it is immersed. But although each set of lines articulates the experience of being a subject formed by a complex array of social, cultural, economic and historical narratives, they do not interpret these histories for readers. It is impossible to disconnect Jewish identity from the holocaust, or American identity from the atom bomb or popular forms of entertainment. It seems unlikely that academics who think about and live with the realities of sexual difference will be able dispense with the troubled intellectual heritage of Freud. Still, *Human Resources* lays out the expanse of our cultural networks without telling readers where they fit into them—in this sense, "six million mazda / times," that is to say, the burden of our histories, like the holocaust, "will not exhaust meaning." We cannot stop trying to figure how to live in the world; we have to continuously generate meaning in the face of Capital's assault on it. We can, then, write poetry after Auschwitz, but if we do, if we are to remain concerned with the figure of our own lyrical subjectivity, we must do so in the shadow, and with the materials of Benjamin's "angel of history," who appears in *Human Resources* at one point ascending, dangerously out of reach, a figure we must "grasp" while we can "before it / lose your soul."

The impression that the ever increasing burden of history and culture remains open to new avenues of experience and thought came home to me clearly when I heard Zolf read from *Human Resources* in Portland, Oregon, in May. Zolf read faster than any poet I've ever listened to. She ran her lines together at a fantastic pace without stumbling or slurring the words. In this way she created an effect where the near-mechanical condition of our lives

and environments stood side by side with the limitless array of histories, ideas, and poems. Her performance gave me the impression that while Capital and genocide have won the day, they cannot completely resist our maneuverings. For they, like us, exist within complex cultural and historical realties, which are themselves subject to the narratives we form from them.

Joel Bettridge

STUPENDOUS, MISERABLE CITY: PASOLINI'S ROME

John David Rhodes
University of Minnesota Press, 2007

Within the scope of a relatively slim volume, John David Rhodes provides an ambitious and exhaustive analysis, relating Pasolini's earliest films, including *Accatone* (1961), *Mama Roma* (1962), *La Ricotta* (1963), *Hawks and Sparrows* (1966), to the development of Rome's public housing projects that were begun during the fascist period (1922-1944) and extended into Italy's post-war "boom" years. What began during Mussolini's regime as the *sventramento* (literally "disemboweling"), involving the displacement of artisanal workers from *Roma centrale* to the city's periphery in order to make way for the fascists' imperial designs for the capital, continued with the post-war migration of rural peasants, mostly from the South, into the cities, giving rise to the *borgate* of Rome's underclass. Expanding from the city's ancient walls into the surrounding countryside, the *borgate* in the literal sense were classified as suburbs, while actually composing a subaltern peripheral landscape.

Stupendous, Miserable City provides a valuable and uniquely focused perspective on Pasolini's life and works through a combination of literary and film analysis informed by urban historical and architectural study. From the outset, Rhodes considers the history of urban Rome, concentrating on the twentieth-century expansion of the city's *borgate*, the real-life settings for Pasolini's films. Although the word "*borgate*" is derived from "*borgo* (district)," it became part of the lexicon of the fascists as a term for both the official (housing projects) and unofficial (shantytowns) of the *periferia*. The demolition and removal process involved the wholesale destruction of habitable working class neighborhoods, pushing the *borgate rapidissime* farther into the surrounding countryside. The first *borgata* was Acilia (15 km outside the center); the Val Melaina in the northeast served as the setting for Vottorio De Sica's 1948 film, *The Bicycle Thief*. The oldest *borgate* provided the scenic background for some of the first neorealist films of the Italian cinema: Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945), De Sica's *Umberto D* (1952), and a compilation by seven directors in the film *Amore in città* (1953) are prominent examples.

Pasolini arrived in Rome in 1950 with his mother, having left behind a career as a local poet—he had published books of poetry written in the Northern regional Friulian dialect—and as a teacher in his native town of Casarsa, after he was dismissed from his teaching position and expelled from the local cell of the PCI (Italian Communist Party) for "decadence" because

of a scandal involving his homosexual activity with young men. In Rome he found employment as a teacher and freelance writer, living among the impoverished city dwellers and new arrivals from the countryside. Pasolini joined thousands of *peasani* who moved into the Roman orbit for their livelihoods and necessary material existence/survival, living at first in the Jewish ghetto, and later further east in Rebibbia, the site of a prison, where he became involved in the total environment of the *borgata*. With the successful publication of his first novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (*The Regazzi*, 1955), Pasolini's literary career blossomed, as he prolifically produced poetry, novels, and collaborative screenplays, as well as social criticism and literary journalism.

Rhodes provides parallel studies of Pasolini's literary work associated with his films, placing the literary and cinematic works in their appropriate urban settings. It is convenient to see *Accatone*, Pasolini's first film, in the light of the novel *Ragazzi di vita*, and *Mama Roma*, Pasolini's next film, in the light of the novel *Una vita violenta* (1959), along with his major book of poetry, *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (*The Ashes of Gramsci*, 1956) in which the lines "*stupenda, misera città*" in the poem, "The Tears of the Excavator," provide the title of Rhodes' book. Pasolini's poem characterizes the living conditions of the *borgate* as "Bedouin slums" and the inhabitants as "full/of a chaos not yet proletarian." Pasolini's grim, antiheroic portrayals of the impoverished and alienated youth who populated the slums were in some ironic sense celebrations of their desperate vitality and Pasolini's own self-identification with the city of the poor.

The urban landscape and the language of the streets are always evident, as Pasolini features the orality of Roman vernacular—he kept a notebook to record and collect the romanesco dialect for his fictional accounts of life in the *borgate*. Pasolini's ethnographic precision of detail was an essential element in his poetry and fiction as in his nonfiction reporting, identifying street locations and means of transportation through the urban landscape. Rhodes explains that Pasolini was preoccupied with this type of geographical detail, revelatory of what was uncommonly known or ignored about Rome by tourists and art historians.

The factual observations of Pasolini's nonfiction reflect directly on his novels and early films; his essays "The Concentration Camps" and "The Shantytowns of Rome" account for a Rome that Pasolini considered "too ugly" for artists. Rhodes points out that Pasolini used "film as a tool for observing life in its details." He was attracted to the realism of the film and found the medium to be inherently poetic. Rhodes quotes from Pasolini's theoretical essays in *Heretical Empiricism* (*Empirismo eretico*, 1972/1977) in which Pasolini sees film as "the written language of reality." When Pasolini declares his

aversion to naturalism ("I hate naturalism. I reconstruct everything"; and "I believe deeply in reality, in realism, but I can't stand naturalism."), Rhodes finds it difficult to justify those declarations in light of the naturalistic elements which Rhodes finds most interesting in the early films like *Accatone* that employed non-professional actors in real-life settings.

As documentarian as well as creative artist Pasolini transformed the day-to-day realities of the *borgata* into what one might consider moral tales, despite the lack of any redemptive message or definitive hope for the characters portrayed in his films. Previous neorealist filmmakers had made use of the studio facilities of Cinecittà, recreating, as evident in many Fellini films, a mythical Rome. *Accatone* was shot on location, almost entirely in the *borgata*. Analyzing Pasolini's shooting techniques, Rhodes sees the director's attempt to offer his own brand of realism as "a critique of neorealism." In some of the early scenes we see Accatone, a young pimp, diving off the Ponte Sant'Angelo on a bet, a statue of one of Bernini's angels in the frame, a recognizable Roman landmark juxtaposed against the later scenes in the *borgata*. As noted, Pasolini intended to reveal a Rome that the guidebooks avoided, rarely seen by tourists. His film cuts away from the center of Rome to expose a life beyond the realm of the city of historical and aesthetic spectacle. Accatone's neighborhood, the Borgata Gordiani, constructed in the 1930s, was a *quartiere* of shacks without running water and electricity. It was eventually razed to be replaced by the nearby high rise public housing of the Quartiere del Casilino. Today the area of the old *borgata rapidissime* is the settlement for a new generation of immigrants, a "gated community" surrounded by a chain link fence, in keeping with Pasolini's testimony of the concentration camps he describes in his essay about the *borgate*.

Mama Roma (1962) is set in the INA Casa housing project (Tuscolino II) featuring the modernist architecture where Mama Roma, a retired prostitute, played by Italy's popular working class actress, Anna Mangiani, brings her teenage son to live with the hope of improving their economic and social standing. Rhodes studies the perspectives of the buildings and the points of view of Pasolini's filmmaking to see a critique of both neorealism's techniques and neorealism's architecture, as well as the sentimental intent of earlier neorealistic films to raise social consciousness. Rhodes also makes the case that Pasolini's screenplays did not resolve, as most neorealist films previously had, in an optimistic appraisal of the conditions of the protagonists that would satisfy either the Social Democrats or the Community Party. On account of his "objective" portrayal of life in the *borgate*, Pasolini's films came under attack by both conservative elements and spokespersons of the official party line of the left.

Rhodes considers Pasolini's other films as the poet/auteur filmmaker moved from documenting to more allegorizing themes. *La Ricotta* is an ironic portrayal of a film extra from the *borgate* who is hired to play one of the crucified thieves alongside Jesus. He actually dies on the set after overindulging his hunger for food. *Hawks and Sparrows* (*Uccellacci e uccellini*), Pasolini's comic philosophical take on existence, extends both environmentally and allegorically out of the city along the newly built Autostrada. Even as Pasolini's filmmaking moves into classical and mythic subjects, such as *Oedipus Rex* and the more fanciful *Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights*, Rhodes reminds us, "Rome is at the heart of Pasolini's cinema." The films of the city, although they present the local reality of the peripheral enclaves, extend with Pasolini as allegory to a more global concept of the *borgate*; literally and figuratively these are the third-world settlements and desolation cities within first-world cities—fringe cities surrounding the urban cores of today's major metropolises.

Rhodes admittedly poses interpretations that one might consider more speculative than empirical, but his analyses are never superficial. His lengthy explanations of Pasolini's camera techniques raise interesting issues that at times seem to belabor the intention of the filmmaker, when one considers Pasolini's admission of his own lack of expertise as a beginning director. Nevertheless, Rhodes raises interesting interpretations while coordinating a range of important themes and areas of study as they relate to his central focus on the urbanism of Pasolini's films.

Pasolini never relinquished his association with the urban sub-proletariat, and that would eventually lead to the poet/filmmaker's brutal murder in Ostia in 1975 that occurred in his pursuit of rough trade among Rome's *la malavita* (the criminal underworld of the underclass). Pasolini's attachment to the *borgate* was a type of adoration of the poor, professed in a typically Italian Catholic/Marxist manner. He saw the reality of the extremes of good and evil as complimentary characteristics of the *borgate*. Even Rhodes in passing notes Pasolini's nostalgia for the city of the poor as it becomes replaced by the newer high-rise projects. Today Rome continues its expansion farther into the eastern countryside to Lunghezza, a mushrooming development of housing and shopping centers located in the far eastern area of the city. One might point to these neighborhoods that harbor the black market and the sale of bodies and dope, as the latest version of the *borgate*.

C. Natale Peditto

ANOTHER FUTURE:
POETRY AND ART IN A POSTMODERN TWILIGHT

Alan Gilbert
Wesleyan University Press, 2006

In 1994, Alan Gilbert, as one of the four editors of the short lived Buffalo poetry magazine *apex of the M*, contributed to an editorial polemic of sorts that announced an attempt to find, if not necessarily to found, an oppositional poetics capable of withstanding the categorization of American poetry into the two distinct modes which had dominated discussions of the genre for at least two decades previous. "We sense a desire," the editors wrote, introducing *apex of the M*'s inaugural issue, "for a move away from the currently existing options in the language arts, some of which might be seen as ranging between the deplorable one of mainstream, workshop poetry and the more completely problematic one of an avant-garde dominated in its practices by a poetics espousing the priority of 'language itself' over all other relations." The statement continues:

> As opposed, on the one hand, to the conventional referentiality or, on the other, to the self-conscious opacity practiced by most poetries today, we are interested in a radical transparency of language that is ultimately objectless, that allows for the non-linguistic, and finds the basis for its address in a relationship with others that is not a making of the other into a theme or an object to be possessed, is not a losing of oneself in another, and is certainly not a violent confrontation with the other that first and foremost endeavors to alienate individuals from the very possibility of dialogue and therefore responsibility.[1]

"A radical transparency of language:" that the editors define this primarily in terms of what it is *not* is telling (and not only due to the Saussurian differential implicit in such a definition). The editors were clearly not interested in staking out some sort of middle-ground—"a kind of fence-sitting," as John Ashbery so memorably put it, "Raised to the level of an esthetic ideal" — between the ostensibly rarefied reflexivity of Language poetry and the tepid banalities of so-called "workshop" verse. The position set *apex*'s opening pages apart from similar editorial challenges to the "Language/workshop" impasse in the 1990s (think, apropos Ashbery's lines, of Rebecca Wolff's "*Fence* Manifesto" of 1997).[2] Indeed, it was precisely an *oppositional* poetics that the editors wished to inspire, one capable of responding to, rather than withdrawing from, the exigencies of postmodernity without

the characteristic deferrals, distractions, and self-sustaining ironies that had come to be associated with the term. One capable, perhaps, of moving beyond those exigencies.

To that extent, Gilbert's *Another Future: Poetry and Art in a Postmodern Twilight* is a critical application of this earlier, collective editorial stance. Granted, the polemic in Gilbert's book is much less pronounced, much less evangelical than the *apex* manifesto, but this is primarily due to the fact that the book is a collection of critical readings, not an explicitly vanguard intervention. Nevertheless, Gilbert refuses to identify the cultural work he celebrates –which ranges from the gender-bending activism of the Barbie Liberation Organization to the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, from the work of African-American poets like Harryette Mullen and C. S. Giscombe to a range of visual artists including Kara Walker, Martha Rosler, and Keith Piper–as postmodernist per se. Rather, he insists throughout the book on posing the present cultural, social, and aesthetic circumstance of writing and art as occurring in "postmodernism's wake;" it is work that is indebted, Gilbert admits, "to the twentieth-century avant-garde," yet he is also approvingly aware that "the legacy of that tradition is increasingly being challenged in the new millennium" (2). It is less a book about sorting out taxonomies or coining new rubrics (such and such a "school" or the "new" this or that) than one that valorizes the oft-overlooked incipience of our fin-de-siècle moment for its "intense pluralism and heterogeneity "–a book that in fact enacts this very heterogeneity in its attention to a diverse range of media and cultural activity.

Gilbert's critical position, insofar as he has one, rests on a critique of postmodernist aesthetics that has to do with what he perceives as its strictly formalist, as opposed to social, political, and historical, proclivities. To be sure, his is a very narrow reading of postmodern theory. Absent, for example, is any careful reading of Fredric Jameson's Marxist historicization of the postmodern period–which would only be the most notorious theoretical account of postmodernity in which social, political, and historical concerns are paramount. Furthermore, Gilbert provides scarce–and usually brief –examples of such strictly formalist modes of reception and analysis. Thus, when he writes that "the material circumstances that initially provide an impetus for many [innovative aesthetic] movements–from cubism and surrealism to installation and digital art–tend to get stripped away in the interests of an at times near exclusive emphasis on formal and stylistic concerns' (a refrain which recurs, in different forms, throughout the book), one is left to ponder the question of where, precisely, one might find this emphasis. Similarly, Gilbert's dismissal of irony lacks the specificity necessary to become a full-fledged critique. In an essay on four poets whom Gilbert

dubs "the new independents" (a moniker that is, dare I say it, at least partly ironic?), he notes "their general lack of irony... that most signature gesture of 90s postmodernism" as "one sign that these poets are doing something new." "Irony," he continues, "can't function without leaving unchanged that towards which it is ironic, which makes it appropriate for the 90s, since on the surface it's the most static decade in recent history" (203). Gilbert is likely not referring to the sort of elitist, pseudo-New Critical irony that is such a staple of establishment poetry from T. S. Eliot to Billy Collins (that "most signature" poet of all things repugnant to the avant-garde), although it still bears pointing out that there is a vast difference between that and the kinds of irony one finds, say, in the work of Bruce Andrews, Rodrigo Toscano or K. Silem Mohammed. The lack, in the case, of concrete examples of postmodernism's shortcomings leaves one wondering whether the term has become for Gilbert merely a straw dog–the necessary (but missing) term which would lend the book a stable and consistent position within contemporary academic discourse.

Then again, the book does not proclaim to be principally–or even primarily – academic. Gilbert is, after all, an independent scholar (a rare thing in itself these days). And he is at his best when he attends less to his criticism of "postmodernism" than to the actually existing institutional and cultural forces at work–both positive and negative–in the present-day (perhaps post-post-modern?) cultural landscape. "The book's proposals are tentative and its organization non-systematic," Gilbert writes at the outset, and this is what makes the book so refreshing, as it allows him to engage a diverse array of materials without the constrictions of a unified theoretical position. At a time when so many critical books are more concerned with the latter – positioning themselves theoretically in an introductory chapter, and then applying that theory with the consistency one would expect from good graduate student–that Gilbert's collection of essays actually requires one to read the chapters themselves makes his readings of particular poets and artists more of a resource than a redundancy.

Many of the chapters consist of much-needed first readings (or close to first readings) of work produced in the last decade by poets such as Anselm Berrigan, Brenda Coultas, Ben Friedlander, Renee Gladmann, Kevin Killian, Mark Nowak, and Andrew Schelling, as well as artists like Andreas Gursky, Ben Polsky, Walid Raad, and Martha Rosler (among many others)–all of whom are more than deserving of the kind of close, careful, and critical attention that Gilbert provides. Some of the essays have the quality of book or exhibition reviews (which many originally were). Yet they are far from merely evaluative. Gilbert's assiduous attention to the social relevance of art and poetry is especially admirable, and if his point is to critique strictly

formalist accounts of cultural products, it is a point perhaps best made by his readings rather than his rhetoric. Throughout the book, Gilbert remains adamant that aesthetic practice must be situated in and responsive to the near-ubiquitous presence of late-Capitalist ideology in our everyday lives. For example, a particularly salient reading of a King Cobra ad in the New York subway system opens his re-evaluation of the so-called "Active Reader Theory," which provides a welcome qualification of the egalitarian presumptions of early Language poetry's emphasis on readerly participation in the construction of textual meaning. His brief history of pirate radio and the FCC's response–which more often than not resulted, as anyone who spins their FM dial south of 92 is well-aware, in a co-optation of "public" air space by the Christian right–is both informative and empowering in its insistence that such a right-wing shift can be and is being resisted. He situates Brenda Coultas's work within on-going debates about homelessness in New York City, and brings the Barbie Liberation Organizations antics to bear on Anne Waldman's poetic approach to issues of gender in *Iovis* and other works,

These are only a few examples, but they ought to be enough to give a sense of the range and originality of Gilbert's critical sensibility. This book ought be read not simply by poets and artists themselves–those who might already be familiar with the work that Gilbert addresses–but by readers of cultural studies as well, especially those who might otherwise have missed (as it would seem so easy to do) the vital relevance art and poetry have to the critique of late-Capitalist culture. Whether Gilbert's case against postmodern is an instance of throwing the baby out with the bathwater or having one's cake and eating it too (or something else altogether) would then be left for each reader to decide.

Stephen Cope

[1] Daly, Lou et al., "State of the Art," in apex of the M, 1. 1994, 5.

[2] See: http://jacketmagazine.com/12/wolff-fence.html

POEMS FROM GUANTÁNAMO: THE DETAINEES SPEAK

Marc Falkoff, editor
University of Iowa Press, 2007

Now poetry has rolled up his sleeves, showing a long arm.
Abdullah Majid al Noaimi, *The Captive of Dignity*

More than once I've had to open an essay with the phrase "a curious debate broke out on the Poetics list..." and this review will prove no exception. The discursive texture around a book or any literary phenomenon becomes a part of it; and this highly charged book, in highly fraught context, is an exemplar of such layering. The highly fraught context is not, of course, the SUNY-Buffalo Poetics list, a sort of clearinghouse interest-group chat-line for folks interested in "new" poetries and of which I am an ambivalent devotée, but rather the US's wars on/in Afghanistan and Iraq, the erosion of domestic civil rights and liberties, and the sites in which these grim developments are crystallized in their full horror: the "black zones" of secret prisons authorized and denied by top government officials, the revelations about prisoner treatment at Abu Ghraib at the hands of the US armed forces and their employees, and the continued existence of detainees under unbearable, unconstitutional and illegal circumstances in the US's high-security military prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. We all know this, and the anxiety this produces in US citizens manifests in a variety of ways, including confused and ambivalent reception of cultural artifacts and information about these disgraceful developments for which we feel–we *are*–responsible.

Thus, the August 2007 publication of *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak* was preceded by much publicity and accompanied by acute expressions of psychic pain, disavowal, and sympathy from various quarters, including not only a protracted discussion on said Poetics List, but an interview the preceding May with former US poet laureate Robert Pinsky, whose blurb (as well as Adrienne Rich's) on the back cover endorses the volume, on National Public Radio's "The World," a relatively cosmopolitan program that tries, with mixed success, to acknowledge that "USA" and "planet Earth" are not synonyms. The interview opens with a dismaying question that immediately gets the project off on the wrong track. "So, how good *are* these poems?" the WGBH person asks Pinsky, currently a professor at nearby Boston University. And we're off to the races with a sort of political-activism-via-aesthetic-evaluation mode of middlebrow clumsiness that Pinsky's semi-apologetic mien does little to dissolve. That is, he does not recuse himself from being interpellated as "expert witness," confessing that, though the artifact is important as a document of the US's slide into

barbarism in its suppression of these poets' most basic human rights, he found no Osip Mandelstams among the Guantánamo poets. Uh, was he looking? Similarly, a dear friend and collaborator, a staunch pillar of the avant-garde, asked me, when he saw the book in my home, "Did you find any good stuff in there?" Uh, I wasn't reading it "that way." On the other end of the spectrum is the *New York Times*'s review of the book, by Dan Chiasson, who complains that the book's very existence indicates complicity on the part of the publishers (and, by logical extension, the editor, introducer, afterworder, blurbers, readers, etc.) with the Pentagon and the State Department, because of the intense degree of surveillance and censorship to which the volume's contents and construction were subjected. However, Chiasson also can't refrain from commenting on the "zero literary interest" of the work. Uh, why is it so important to him under the circumstances to flex his poetry chops, such as they may be? Did he not read the introduction by W. Flagg Miller, an ethnographer whose careful and exhilarating history of Muslim poetry as social practice is distilled into a few accessible, densely rewarding pages that contextualize the twenty-two poems collected here? Did he not read the afterword by Ariel Dorfman, whose writerly and personal credentials as an enemy of the state during Chile's era of darkest Pinochet qualifies him far better than the reviewer to speak about the merits of the book? He did read, or at least alludes to, the poignant bios of each poet that preface his poems; but he references them only to say that they are more compelling than the "poetry itself," a concept one might have hoped had quietly withered away sometime soon after 1968.

If there is a book that does not need poetic expertise to explain its significance to a wider audience, it is this book. One of the many compelling things about it is this short-circuiting of an aesthetic-evaluative mode of reception and accompanying roster of *cognoscenti* eager to weigh in on questions of "excellence." But that obviation is the least of its power. This book is walloping my ass; it's simply too mindboggling to hold all the elements in mind simultaneously as I try to read and write about this book: the concurrency of the suffering (it's not a document of past sufferings, like the Black Books of the Holocaust); it's not fiction; it doesn't have a justifiable outcome; the conditions under which the work was written; the conditions under which it was compiled, translated, published; the fate of the writers (one has been released only to be captured again, and "hasn't been heard from since," while others remain in solitary confinement after trying to broker deals that would have resulted in more humane treatment of the prisoners); the fate of the writing that didn't "make it" into the volume.

Yes: I've noticed something very troubling, telling and interesting here, namely that, like the US poets and news media folk I have complained

about above, I am having great difficulty talking about the "actual work" in this volume. It's easier to contribute to the paratextual detritus swirling around the book than to experience it. This is not, however, because it is of no interest, as my foils have claimed. It is rather because it is overwhelmingly painful to grasp the totality of the book and what it represents, the profound silence, terror, and psycho-physiological duress out of which these creative expressions arise (and how hollow these abstract adjectives and nouns sound). I suspect that is why Pinsky sounded so unsure of himself, why the interviewer asked such irrelevant questions, and why Chiasson's review, delivered with such conviction and condemnation, is a masterpiece of incoherence. Our public lexicon, our discourse for processing cultural events such as this book, can't encompass the intensity of anguish and helplessness we can't help but feel in the face of so much suffering–suffering, moreover, sadistically and gratuitously inflicted by our own government in the name–outrage of outrages–of our protection. We've taken shelter in our vocabularies of judgment, our critical skirmishes, in order to not ask, "What can I do? How can I sleep at night?" or, "What if this happened to me or to my loved ones: could I survive as these men have?" or "How did we get here?" and in order not to feel the magnitude of the calamity and its human cost from these men.

So, the poems' paratextual material is extraordinarily compelling and urgent. A preface by the editor, Marc Falkoff, who is a human rights lawyer with literary training and who legally represents a number of the detainees, tells us what we need to know: only about 5% of the detainees have any connection to Al Quaeda, only 8% were actually picked up on battlefields in Afghanistan or Iraq, many have no idea what they have been charged with (indeed, they have never been formally charged); a large percentage of the detainees were juveniles when they were seized and imprisoned. A dense and fascinating introduction by Flagg Miller, an anthropologist who specializes in Mid-eastern poetry and poetics as political and social practice, sets the poetry in the context of more than a millennium of Muslim poetry of resistance and suffering, from the earliest days of Islam to later eras of anti-colonial nationalist poetry, Marxist verse, work characterized by European Romanticism and modernism, classical Arabic forms and anti-elitist vernacular poetries. Though his argument aims ultimately to debunk the possibility that these poems are the creations of militant religious fanatics ("terrorists") and hence guilty men, it takes us through material that is so interesting and varied that, in a different context, would warrant a much longer and more adumbrated discussion (it is a bit compacted here). A beautifully writerly afterward by human rights activist Ariel Dorfman underscores the basic nature of poetry as breath, a human (at least) universal that links the detainee/poets to their captors, to their USAmerican lawyers

and publisher, indeed to the world. Poetry is the material manifestation of human breath, and as such it is a powerful index of hope even as it describes and expresses abject suffering. Dorfman's short but splendid tribute comes as close to articulating a spiritual vision of poetry as any I've seen in the discourse surrounding this work. Finally, short, paragraph-long biographies preface each poet's offerings, in a chilling version of the "Notes on Contributors" genre that foregrounds each man's story of captivity: where he is from, how he was seized, what his status is now, and perhaps an anecdote underscoring the cruelty of his circumstances. For example:

> Sami al Haj, a Sudanese national, was a journalist covering the conflict in Afghanistan for the television station al-Jazeera when, in 2001, he was taken into custody and stripped of his passport and press card. Handed over to U.S. forces in January 2002, he was tortured at both Bagram air base and Kandahar before being transferred to Guantánamo Bay in June 2002. The U.S. military alleges that he worked as a financial courier for Chechen rebels and that he assisted al Quaeda and extremist figures, but has offered the public no evidence in support of these allegations. He remains in Guantánamo.

Or

> Mohammed el Gharani, a fourteen-year-old Chadian national raised in Saudi Arabia, had recently arrived in Pakistan to learn English and to study information technology when he was imprisoned by Pakistani police...As many as twenty-nine juveniles ... have been detained at Guantánamo in violation of international law.

Or

> Moazzam Begg is a British citizen who was arrested in Pakistan and detained for three years in Guantánamo. While there, Begg received a heavily-censored letter from his seven-year-old daughter; the only legible line was, "I love you, Dad." Upon his release, his daughter told him the censored lines were a poem she had copied for him: "One, two, three, four, five, / Once I caught a fish alive./ Six, seven, eight, nine, ten, / Then I let him go again."

Or

> Abdullah Thani Faris al Anazi is a double amputee, having lost both of his legs in a U.S. bombing campaign in Afghanistan while

> he was employed as a humanitarian aid worker.... At times [at Guantánamo], he has been forced to walk on prosthetic limbs held together with duct tape.

The accumulative effect of reading these stories adds to the layering of irony on irony, tragedy on tragedy, and at the same time heightens the possibility for understanding through the simple reportage of these dramatic facts.

The poetry is amazing in its varied forms (as varied as the prisoners' life stories), though it is hard to imagine what, in many cases, the effect might have been of reading or hearing the work in its original languages—primarily Pashtun or Arabic. An untrained person cannot easily determine whether a given poem conforms to certain protocols of the writers' indigenous literary cultures or is a dramatic departure therefrom. One poem, by Martin Mubanga, a Zambian/British prisoner, is clearly a rap in the contemporary sense, using words like "dis" and reggae locutions like "them a [verb]" to characterize the captors' activities. Another, by Mohammed el Gharani, the fourteen-year-old mentioned above, entitled "The First Poem of My Life," documents in abruptly colloquial language the story of his captivity, punning on names of institutions like the Red Cross and the isle of Cuba to layer and reinforce the effect of frustration and anger with linguistic doubling. Some poets use minimalist irony to describe their captors, whom they observe in all their indecorous fallibility and hypocrisy. In "They Fight for Peace," Shaker Abdurraheem Aamer writes:

> Peace, they say.
> Peace of mind?
> Peace on earth?
> Peace of what kind?
>
> I see them talking, arguing, fighting–
> What kind of peace are they looking for?
> Why do they kill? What are they planning?

Or, from Sami al Haj's "Humiliated in the Shackles":

> They have monuments to liberty
> And freedom of opinion, which is well and good.
>
> But I explained to them that
> Architecture is not justice.

while others use touches of surrealism combined with what may be tradi-

tional images to convey their pain:

> Inscribe your letters in laurel trees,
> From the cave all the way to the city of the chosen.

Or

> Boats of poetry on the sea; a buried flame in a burning heart.

Haunting titles like "My Heart Was Wounded by the Strangeness," and poems that refer to the nearby but invisible sea, take on all the more power for being familiar tropes recast–defamiliarized–by the urgency of the men's plight and emotions, and their uncertainty about ever being heard or read–about ever being heard from again, by their loved ones, or by anyone.

In such isolated circumstances, Poetry sometimes becomes the interlocutor or subject itself. ("I was humiliated in the shackles. / How can I now compose verses? How can I now write? // After the shackles and the nights and the suffering and the tears,/How can I write poetry?") Conventional envoys ("Go, little poem....") take on a vivid aesthetico-political power when understood in the context of extreme deprivation. These "little poems" were initially–during the first year, when the men were not permitted access to pencils, pen and paper–inscribed on Styrofoam cups with pebbles and exchanged surreptitiously at mealtimes, usually ending up in the garbage at day's close. When writing materials did become available, the poems were often confiscated and/or subject to heavy censorship lest they encode secret messages with "terrorist" content, though, as Miller's introduction stresses, very few of the men show evidence of the religious fanaticism that putatively accompanies the crimes of which they are–well, not formally accused–either assumed to have committed, in spite of the paucity of evidence, or acknowledged to be innocent of and eventually released or subject to continued captivity. Only twenty-two of the poems were cleared for publication; Falkoff mentions several others specifically and thousands of lines in general, but is not permitted to tell us about them in any detail because they've been declared security risks.

What becomes clear is that, as Pakistani-American poet Kazim Ali says in an anecdote on his website about being heavily interrogated by the police after recycling a box of poetry manuscripts <http://www.alternet.org/rights/50939/>, "poetry is dangerous." And to the degree that it is dangerous, it is also a lifeline, a life necessity for people in distress. "Poetry rolls up his sleeves," says one poet from the depths of Hell-on-Earth. Another affirms that "The poet's words are the font of our power; / His verse

is the salve for our pained hearts." If any situation ever pushed the limits of the value of the "disinterested aesthetic experience" Kant insisted on and at the same time provided the "defense of poetry" Plato demanded, it is this one.

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