Xcp 11

cross cultural poetics

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WRITING "HOME"

WRITING "HOME"

THE ORIENT

Kimiko Hahn

Inside, the radio rides from one country western tune to the next. Because the door is open the outside traffic blurs each song rhythmically. I sit in my aerobics' leggings and tee waiting for a cup of coffee and buttered bagel. The girl behind the counter switches up to mo-town.

Your husband called here Monday—looking for you, she says loudly in my direction. She smiles. The air is sweet with women—even the men who wander in to sip latte or shoot pool are this kind of sweet. And it doesn't have to do with *orientation.* The barkeeper knows I'm married to a man but suspects I may be more than a patron or tourist.

*

ORIENTATION: to be located or placed in a particular relation to the points of the compass; to be familiar with or adjusted to a situation—

"The ORIENT," according to Said, is not only adjacent to Europe and one of its richest colonies but also is " its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other."

This is where I write.

This is where I write zuihitsu. I love zuihitsu. The permission, the blur, the rooms created by the little blocks of text.

Not unlike Duras or Wittig, I think to myself. Or even *Paterson.*

This is where I write almost everything —at a little cafe on 5th Avenue in Brooklyn. A small table just out of the sun. *Hey girl. Hey Kimiko. Hey. Mornin'.* They always blast the music. "Fleetwood Mac" maybe. Salsa at times. Other times a radio channel.

Turn the channel.

Static.

She's loosing the frequency. *Turn the channel,* someone suggests.

Said going further in his introduction writes, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience." (2)

*

I am the only Asian-looking "girl" here. From my bookbag I pull out Ki no Tsurayuki's *Tosa Diary* where he writes in the voice of a woman who has lost a child. Writes in a woman's-hand to permit greater emotional license, the men of the 10th century too restricted by their own conventions. They needed the women for an expansion of form and content. They needed the women to use a new language in a sense. They needed difference.

*

An old boyfriend meets me for coffee and kisses me on the cheek. The barkeeper eyes us and scowls. I am embarrassed. Her name is Cicely.

I dream about her I am so embarrassed. Or something.

Is it the channel?

What's at stake?

*

I love the zuihitsu, spatial in every way, and different from the nikki, a "poetic diary" which differs from the Western diary because it is not about documenting fact unless we mean an emotional fact. That truer experience.

Translated as *running brush,* I love the way the form absorbs the content—the paragraph absorbs the content differently. I can allow for a kind of sentimentality that would be too self conscious in a poem with line breaks.

I usually organize my zuihitsu thematically; at times there is a sense of sequence (first 100 days after my mother's death—). But even with a hint of narrative, the zuihitsu also relies on poetic properties: the juxtaposition, the sensibility, the spatiality,—and a way to identify with the most important writers in the world, who happened to be Japanese women. I love them.

Like some teas? she asks. *Or drinking your usual?* I smile and reply, *the usual —but I do like the tease.* She grins back.

I love the unabashed first-person, almost risking the confessional quality that a diary exudes, or that diary-like information can contain in a conventional poetic form. Even the tone becomes altered by the form.

*

I return home after rewriting a short story. Peel off a sweaty unitard. Shower and slip on a velvet skirt and loose cotton top. I sit at my computer to see where the words have taken the heart. The brain enters now.

*

From Ki no Tsurayuki we know that *kokoro* and *kotoba* combine as the basic dynamic in Japanese poetics: the heart and the words—to produce passion,

even if subtly placed.

On my way to Harvey's book party I stop by the cafe to take out a cup of decaf. *It's evening,* Cicely remarks from a table of girls where she's hanging now, off hours. *You're confusing me,* she continues. I smile and reply, *Sweet.*

From confusion to clarity. From clarity to ambiguities, blurs, fuzziness.

In her Preface to *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler asks, "How does language construct the categories of sex? Does 'the feminine' resist representation within language? Within a language of presumptive heterosexuality, what sorts of continuities are assumed to exist among sex, gender, and desire? Are these terms discrete?"

construct

constrict

I am wired from Cicely's caffeine mixed into the decaf.

*

The zuihitsu is a classical form, part of the Japanese canon. It is a mix (elegant, mongrel, hybrid) that blurs categories: those "grade B" forms (letters, diaries) of the Western canon for example. Plus lists, memoir material. I include other texts—fiction, criticism, etc. I love blurs. I appreciate categories but as I grow older, have less of a need for the absolutes I sought in my 20s. The zuihitsu suits this desire to blur.

She asks what I'd like. I ask for more caffeine. To wire the whole room.

Let me get something straight: I love cocks and often the men to whom they're attached; and I've never even slow-danced with a woman. But I'm increasingly drawn to women.

the pulse—

the impulse—

The impulse is to categorize: bi, lesbian-wannabe, a gay man in a straight woman's body, queer but straight,—

The blur, the blurring,—

*

Curious how crazy straight guys are about lesbians—as if women's sex and

sexuality is destined to always be about the male. For me there's no blast in seeing a gay porno flick. It isn't about me—it's about the men.

And this isn't about coming out. It's about emotional truths.

*

I know there are times when I feel boyish: regulation push-ups (50), chinos and boots, JD (my dad's preferred drink—one of the few things we have in common),—

Maybe Cicely is thinking to tell me, *Easy for you girl, you can imagine, you can play, you can return home to the husband. The safe, straight life. Right?*

To the female sensibility: lipstick, gauzy clothes, . . .

Can we allow ourselves to feel what we want rather than what we're supposed to want?

*

"Drawn"?

"Drawn and quartered"?

*

Did you think this would be about ethnicity? That blur?

Artists can weave in and out of class categories— like I always forget which fork to use first. When to slip on one's elbow-length gloves. I am partisan but can feel pleased by some bourgeois nicities. Benefit from them.

And wouldn't I benefit from a faux-queer posture? Is it? A friend has already asked to see this piece for a Gay and Lesbian anthology. Is it? Am I?

I love words.

Words for me are erotically-charged: for example, I love to hear a lover talk dirty. I love to. I am aroused. So the words are mine. The lover is mine. The lover's attention is mine. I am powerful. The lover is powerful. The words are.

Mine—the noun and verb. That blur.

The blur where the skin feels prickly. Desirous and pleased. Delirious.

*

Is there a place in the English language for women? Yes and no. Yes, because we women teach children language—even at this end of the century. And no,

because of who owns the means of production. But because culture is so incredibly susceptible to change the more women publicly use and abuse words, syntax— the more women own it.

Perhaps diaries and letters are too female to become canon fodder.

In publication women come very close to owning their words though in that instant it becomes both the property of the capitalist and within the market.

canon

cannon

I tell several female friends about this piece and only one does not change the subject.

*

I would love to have a drink with k.d.lang. Wouldn't you? Which outfit would she wear? Suede jacket and cowboy hat? Which would I wear? What would I drink? (*Jack*—remember?)

Change the music.

Change the static.

What does become clear through the blurring is the experience of blurring itself.

Do I know how to slow dance with a woman? Who would lead?

Utica Station
Dep. 10:07 a.m. to N.Y. Penn Station

Kimiko Hahn

In the cavernous station I have watched a woman with her newborn, the train delayed for over an hour. She is tall, ties her hair back, has possibly dark green eyes and light dark skin. Her baby is lighter, the man who picked up the ticket and kissed her, very black. I have watched her because her baby is so quiet. And I have not heard her voice.

On the train she sits one seat ahead and across the aisle. At one moment, when the train drops its tail in Albany, the baby cries ahh! And she replies ahh! And I think, just what I would do. Then I feel miserable. Was I ever so attentive to my daughters?

I don't feel I was so attentive ever: placing one or the other in the stroller, on the changing table, in a sassy seat, in the sandbox surrounded by plastic starfish and seahorses.

She cradles the child, a boy by the blue, her rocking syncopated by the train's chugging. Rain flecks the gray window. We pass a ditch of one hundred tires. A muddy lot of containers. Trees that look like sticks. We pass by the buds so quickly it could be late winter. A stray willow.

My heart is swollen, large as a newborn. As if a gland not a muscle.

I do not want to return to their infancies. I would merely do the same: want to be in this notebook, not on the carpet covered with dolls. To be at the window waiting for their father, not swinging them in the park.

That was my mother—in the sandbox.

The farther south, the greener. Is it my imagination—or the proximity to the river?

I see a couple on a tiny peninsula, holding a pink blanket.

But I am wrong. There were stories I'd read and reread. *Mike Mulligan. The Runaway Bunny. Where the Wild Things Are.* If I read a "big word" I'd explain as if the explanation were part of the narrative: private, one's very own.

There were evenings where we ate a picnic dinner on the Columbia lawns while their father worked late. I remember because when a plane roared over us, I'd say *plane plane* and she would love that word. Then the second girl.

One of my first tasks was to name things. Then it became her task. One daughter's then the next. But mostly we walked from apartment to park. *Pizza. Doggie. Firetruck. Naming things. Flower.*

It is so difficult to travel with an infant—the bags of plastic things. The baby herself. One's own pockets of keys, money. Maybe a magazine stuck in somewhere. Balance a cup of coffee with one hand, steer the stroller with the other. A difficult pleasure.

I tell myself, I need to slow down—as if reading a poem. As if picking lice off a child's head. Always looking for the self somewhere outside.

Along this train ride down the Hudson, the tracks run so close to the water it is as if the water were the rails.

I wonder if there is clay along the water just as Barbara and I found clay in the brook behind her house. Or with my daughters digging in the sand on Fire Island, the red clay there.

Always now is the time. Always.

This afternoon the train speeds away from a man I twice might have asked, *shall I slip off my dress?* But I didn't. The first time I was eighteen and it didn't occur to me he might want me. This time it occurred to me that we're both almost single but how can one step out on a lover: there is no urge. It's too bad because I feel so much affection I feel there should be a matched longing.

I look up from this notebook and see a tiny island with the shell of a castle—what is that! And that is how I've been a mother.

Dogwood blossoms, a cloud in the grove of branches.

A working boat. A row boat.

The mother and infant sleep now, the boy like a cat on her chest. I do recall that lovely pressure.

This is the difference: the men are less important, though all my life one or other has dominated my narrative. (Is that tone?)

As we near the GWB, a tugboat rowing a barge. That makes sense.

Several clots of people fishing above the large rocks so mossy the green is almost lime on this slate day. Even the birds.

Central Americans playing soccer.

Part of the bridge is wrapped in cloth. An orange truck crosses the lower deck.

I wish we didn't have to plunge into a tunnel.

Two men playing tennis on that artificial green.

Now forsythia. Now weeping cherry. I think of my mother—dead now seven years—eight by Buddhist count.

My mouth tastes bitter from several days of antibiotics. Another reason not to have an affair.

The sudden brick landscape of Harlem. Then the tunnel, so now I see the boy reflected in the window in front of me who has been banging the seat, as if a sport, for five hours. He's been on longer. I need water to swallow my next pill. I need to stretch.

The mother changes the baby. Rocks and pats him. she begins to collect jackets for them both.

To put on an infant's jacket, I'd curl my own hand through the sleeve and pull her hand through. Tiny, almost liquid arm.

There was a difficult moment on a City bus: when I finally got the baby to stop stamping on the seat and sit down, the passenger behind me leaned forward and said, *You're a good mother.* I nearly wept.

If my short hair didn't get so crushed I'd wear a baseball cap, too.

A mother with a plastic kite.

Rotted poles from long-vanished piers. That's what memory is—as if we've seen that pier before.

SPARROW

Kimiko Hahn

With children the days pass achingly slow as one pulling her earlobe refuses to nap, the other refuses to sit still unless cartoons anesthetize; but the years speed past. Suddenly, it's true, the three-year-old is thirteen—taller than the mother and recalling the word *no* in numerous forms: *why should I? I'm going to anyway. Yeah, right.* Even retaining, *No, mommy.*

*

Basho wrote (and Sam Hamill translated—) that the years are as travellers: *The moon and sun are eternal travelers. Even the years wander on.* I wonder about the translation but cannot recall enough to measure. So many years of bungo and what I recall the most is the plodding pace of those years in the wood-panelled libraries.

Now, with children in this sublet Thursdays though Sundays, I find time has changed. A lover on opposite nights. And the sorrow of flight as I continue to leave my husband; also the relief, not only of leaving our matched flaws, but from that flight itself.

Who is the traveller but the heart—or, depending on the moment, the gut?

A flock, startled by a child's outburst, rises as a single lake of wings.

*

The dog slinks off my youngest daughter's bed when I enter her room to kiss her goodnight. It's our ritual: the dog hops up at her invitation, slinks off when I come in, then hops up again when I leave. Flight also includes sleep as this child lies on her back, snores then rolls over onto her side. Where is she? Only she knows and may not recall the journey upon waking.

For the adult, rising too late. Working too late. Eating too late.

For me, legs on my lover's shoulders.

(Comic that position—feet up by his ears. The internal fluttering and take-off. And after he comes he kisses each instep.)

The flight includes wishing to hold my husband in the pain of our failings although my heart, the romantic heart, has turned away. Has twisted in disinterest and sorrow.

Sorry. No, not really.

At this moment it is painful to leave and more painful to stay. I feel physically ill—like the queasiness of homesickness. In this case because I barely have a home since I left him.

Any residue of affection has twisted into an anger keen as a scalpel. Brilliant as a blade. Clean as glass.

*

I wish there could be some way for my husband to like all this. To also want to part because everything we might have had has eroded so flat I'm not even sure what we did have. Was it my imagination?

Crossing the Triborough

in my lover's compact I look out
at the most tremulous section
of the most tremendous City in the world
which feels like the universe
and know that for every light on
there is ache as ravishing
as the man's who knows
I will not return tonight
and when I do I return for our daughters
and not the heat of the sinewy body
I married fifteen years earlier.
For now I am over this bridge from the borough
with tarmac, an ancient World's Fair Globe,
and my paycheck—to
the streets lodging, for example, Wall Street.
Wall—the image I have of marriage
where fucking could become more conflict
than an occasional solution
to childhood sorrows. Wall—
the opposite of bridge. And triborough—
that my heart has already
moved on to someone else
where travel is possible again.
I am sorry to hurt you, I think to say,
as a bridge—only to be taken
as a wall I do not doubt.
And perhaps this particular bridge
is not about travel but about a home
I'll drive towards instead of away always.

Was it my imagination? I look at photos of cheery tanned profiles and cannot know what I was thinking.

*

As with my mother's death, I walk around seeing objects from a haunted world: a child's easter dress, box of four crystal glasses, unopened package of men's t-shirts. A beach towel. The awful moments he pushed me away ("don't crowd the driver") now pull me away from the present; the delighted ones pin me to grief. Pin me but do not prevent flight. Flight with sorrow. That bird.

873.8 lament, mourn, grieve, sorrow, keen [Ir.], weep over, bewail, bemoan, deplore, repine, give sorrow words; elegize

How does one mourn someone who has not died? Although I know when a parent dies, the relationship continues.

John says—about the lover's own ambivalence—if the relationship weren't conflicted then you should worry. What would I do without *him?*

flock

*

dick*cis*sel A sparrowlike bird. *Spiza americana,* of central North America, of which the male has a yellow breast marked with black. [American Heritage]

*

One morning my lover calls from a hotel bed one hundred miles away to say, *sometimes I feel complete relief for leaving her.* Or did he say *grief?*

*

I thought my husband's long ten p.m. walks were a running-away from me and our daughters. I thought maybe he was purchasing sex in doorways then returning to refuse me. Or just sitting in the meridian watching and talking to prostitutes then returning home to his own reticence. I never saw the walks as a running-to. I'm still not sure they were. I only knew a detective thriller, a talk show—a child's cry that bit a chord of my own.

When I finally told him I'm leaving he curled up in his bed and heaved without noise. I snatched the children's jackets and pulled them into spring snow—to protect them from his grief? To protect myself? To keep them from both? To keep them to myself?

Is memory the same as recollection? As gold dancing slippers? As a sparrow's birthday cake?

His running away from home each night paralleled my constant moving out to one cafe or another, where I could reside safely for a few hours. No phone. No

nothing. The comfort of hearing the clink of silverware washed in the kitchen, "Don't Walk Away Renee" on "Lite FM," someone cute attending the bottomless cup.

Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu translated those Basho lines: *Moon and Sun are passing figures of countless generations, and years coming or going wanderers too.*

And the version I used as a crib sheet in college, Dorothy Britton translated as: *The passing days and months are eternal travellers in time. The years that come and go are travellers too.*

*

I make my home again and again: cafe on Sackett, cafe on President, on 2nd Avenue waiting for John, on 99th waiting for the girls Japanese dance, on 52nd after breakfast with H, in one hotel or other when traveling.

Carol says I am from another planet and need to be able to have a second home "on earth." This is the home: with daughters. The air is difficult to breathe so I need protective gear until acclimated to the atmosphere. But then I need to take the mask off. Fill my lungs. Love the oxygen.

What do I need to breathe comfortably?

1. access to both planets
2. ecstasy and anger
3. deep affection from various sources
4. to be held
5 boots, stockings, t-shirts and skirts
6. the trees whose leaves are blooming now in the spring mist
7. coffee and chocolate—or is this from my planet?
8. words—written and spoken
9. exercise
10. paycheck
11. my girls

Love the oxygen.

*

Or kneeling in front of him by the hall mirror, holding his ass. Or his kneeling in front of me as I look in the hall mirror. Or bend over the edge of the bed. Or perch on the desk, stockings off. Or clothes half on, and half in a pile on the floor.

Do I allow my own home to be messy because the mess feels homey—or do the

stacks of magazines, bills, children's toys, coffee cups,—do all these things drive me away even as I collect them to anchor? Yes.

*

Were family vacations running away from home?

The mice burrowed in as soon as we closed the door.

And what about this sublet of mine—neatly tended and straightened each night. My jewelry dropped in a little case rather than a soap dish. My children's clothes picked up and stuffed into a laundromat bag.

When I tuck my daughters in, I say, sticks-feathers-string-mud.

*

What every living thing on this planet searches for is stimuli—photosynthesis, decent sex, bread, and pulp fiction before turning in. Did this lead me into the hands of boys? Their gaze—his gaze so penetrating it arrested everything in my life but words?

His words so unsettling they over-rode marriage, childbirth, ten anniversies, tenure—so disturbing I could never return to be that figure in over-sized shirts. So absolute they were not from his mouth but from an echo I carried with me that said, There there little one. Stimuli also makes a difference. The one that is cradle and beyond bed.

*

I could not return to the husband.

I could not return to the body that contained only the literal world. The one where there are only nouns.

Where sparrow does not suggest sorrow.

Crossing the Verazano

the air is so bright I wish we hadn't married
but just had sex
while you were in between jobs
which is when we would make love
and I was a secretary
for three professors at Columbia—
my favorite in Intellectual History,
which meant I spent hours
in card catelogs
looking up Meiji men

so she could research how
the Japanese thought we saw them
and how we really did
see them. That was around the time
of the Chinese Exclusion Act and
anti-miscegenation laws
so yellow or brown men
wouldn't pollute the race
openly. Mixing blood although
the little monkeys were kept
from their own kind. When
people are left to their own devices
mixing happens: outraging
my grandparents for bringing home
an Oriental—or my husband's mother who
demanded he *think of the children*
who are so exquisite
our marriage wasn't wrong
exactly. Neither was crossing over.
What was wrong was not paying attention
to the toll plaza at the end of the bridge where
all we have left is weather.
Any weather.
Which is what our youngest, now eleven,
asked at bedtime—
would you be married now
if you hadn't had me?
And all I could answer was,
why do you ask, sweetheart?

Where sorrow does not suggest marrow.

*

He will always be the one who pulled me into my thirties. Who pulled the crowning infants—one daughter and the next. Who could not, as I could not, reflect more than one another's wounds.

Wound. Wind.

Wind.

He is the one who taught me about sense memory.

He is the one who was the wrong person at the right time.

He was the one who referred to our marraige as *scabs over a wound.*

*

I learned the body doesn't need to speak for meaning but for sounds that mean more: Razor, ravish. River. Sparrow.

In which synapse does tuna or gardenia or the lover's sweat reside?

Legs straddling a vanity sink to wash before love making. My powder and oils in my lover's medicine cabinet.

*

Crossing Devil's Point Toll Gate

there is a magnificent tulip tree
on the Manhattan side
which, as children, every time we'd pass
father would point out
as if for the first time which somehow
it was since he'd forgotten or thought
of course we'd forgotten.
And sometimes if we had to wait in line
in the toll plaza
I'd clamber over the seat,
sit on his lap,
and get to throw the dime in the basket
then watch the arm raise.
I guess my mother hoisted me
back over the seat. And I guess
my baby sister was still a baby
or we'd have taken turns which
I'd remember more than the coin.
And I hope my lover's children
will not forever believe I stole away their father
the way I feel, even at forty-four,
my own father's lover kidnapped him.

A female student asks of one of my first books, "Who is X in your poems?" And I answer, "Not who you'd like it to be." Then add, "Not who I'd like it to have been."

Is each *he* really a vehicle? Away or towards?

Each he, first a means to fill an absence, then becoming that absence, and now, over forty—a vehicle to recall how deeply good it feels to be on my own and dependent.

Then he's on the phone to his agent, lifting my skirt and showing off my thigh-high stockings, seam up the back. And I am fingering myself till he bangs the phone down.

Okay.

*

Crossing the Kosciusko

(which no one pronounces correctly)
I want to know something about the number two:
why it's mysterious? What
could be so dazzling about leading the third
to sleep in a little bed
in a little room by herself? But that's evident:
the shared cup of coffee, dark no sugar.
A tv show to the end. A sixty-nine every once in a while.
Two even when it's, instead, three small girls
in a park sandbox with the colorful buckets,
the molds in the shape of starfish.
Starfish—that creature that can reproduce
by splitting in half; that if starved
can eat its own limb. Grow it back.
What about that? That kind of one?

Flight back to claim childhood feelings—but with a woman's body. That kind of one.

BABELLEBAB

Heriberto Yepez

To J. Rothenberg

A PRE-FACE

This long poem (in the false tradition of Eliot, Paz, Olson and Huidobro) should be read after its oral preface. In it: the meanings and instructions of how this long poem should be known and read (respectively). The words that correspond to the (exclusively) oral preface must never be transformed (altered) into written words at the beginning of the long poem mentioned a short while ago (two times).

(Two times. Almost three and more than once).

This Pre-Face (which is not this one) should only appear in performance. Only. In. Performance. Only. There. More than once.

A
The First Stage of Translation
Is
To translate Fears Tongue into Second Tongue.

But the Second (and probably Final)
Stage
Of
Translation
Is to translate one's translation (of First Tongue)
into First Tongue.[1]

First
Tongue.[2]

[The reader should ideologically figure out these last four lines which posses no real poetic sound or success. He should probably (Nice Trick) skip the footnotes. The Reader is always a He or can hide behind one. *She* is not needed. Nobody is going to believe footnotes changed Writing and Reading. But they did.
Returning to my main point outlined in the beginning of this stanza: I am not giving any helpful poetic image or Verbal Sudden Illumination
(Nor commentary) which could make it beautiful or easier for the reader to comprehend the final stage of this poem].[3]

B
Babel
Is so badly
Remembered
Because
It was
The First Congress
Held
On the issue
Of Translation.

It was a complete
Disaster.

C
"B" is*a* humble but successful poem. Isn't it?
It has wit.
It has sound.[4]

D
Poetry has been done to make Reading
a Comfortable Experience for the Reader.
(A Sofa Experience).
It has probably happened so / Because
Readers are most Always a He
And Capitalisms Desires
Reading to be enjoyed by
Readers (Workers="He"'s).

But Reading is Starting to Use All the
Resources of Computers (Capitalism)
(And is becoming a Not Enjoyable, a Not Suited (Experience?)
Not in Favor of "Happiness"
Not in Favor of Continuation-of-Capitalism)
And Thanks to That
The "World" Is Going to End.

Reading is becoming
A Not-Enjoyable Experience.[5]

E
The true task of Writing is controlling language
Not using it to its fullest potential.

When writing one thinks of what has been done before and how that limits the changes one can make to literature.
Literature is always keeping changes (in structure, and the sound and visual patterns of Literature) / slow.
Writers are Control

Freaks.

F
(An Aphorism):
Women are unprotected beings. Men are beings which don't know they are unprotected.

G
Literature created monsters around it. Now literature cannot deal primarily with real or imaginary life but needs to now deal with itself as theme and target. Describing anecdotes, characters, ideas and sound-happenings, literature is forgetting to deal directly with a far more interesting subject: Writing and Reading. This New Main Subject is going (of course) to be considered dull, cerebral or opaque in comparison (in comparison to what?)

Men do not experience (obviously) how being Wrong feels (Knowing Being Wrong is an Experience necessarily needed to be felt in the present).

Individuals live eternally thinking (experiencing, feeling) they are Right, They Are The Truth.

H
And by the way
Exactly what day
("Was"?)
Tomorrow ("?"?)
Was?[6]

I
To say "God is dog"
is none-the-less.

J
Words are becoming Logos.

K
Changes in the City become "Avant-Gardes".

But Please don't Avant-Gard too much.

L
"I" needed a computer in order to fully translate.

M
A reflection on the mirror is not a translation. (*The Age of Translation is nearly over*)

"N"
Nature is a diva.

O
Writings are becoming Catalogs.

P
We don't even need collage to make this clear now.

Q
Diane is the key to Jerome.

R
Most taxi drivers are not a movie. Most taxi drivers are drunk or high.
That's why.

S
The death of your mother.
This is really happening.

T
I saw the best minds of my generation
destroyed by quotes.

U
"We all write in wine".

V
A text is a theater. Writing is acting meaning.
Meaning is [missing].[7]

W
Poetry can be
defined as the "way"

letters are
organized
so they can be identified
beautifully as being
a meaning.

X
To translate I should draw not write.

Y
Streets are horizontal.
They should be vertical.

Z
babeL Lebab.

Y
1
Trains full of dreams
dreams treated like cattle
by guards
dreams treated like spilled milk.
A Performance done
in Germany.

2
A human can have thousands of dreams
throughout her or his life

To kill a single one
Is to kill thousands of dreams.[8]

3
A nightmare is the trauma a dream has
when it is confronted
with the possibility of leaving its nature behind
and becoming reality.

X
"Certain time ago" I lost my soul
so I kept taking journeys
and falling asleep.

And then I found my soul
dancing.

ps. Do I mean I found my soul dancing
Or that I found my (soul?) through dance?

Did I really find it? Does my soul dance?

W
A witch draws
A witch draws a ship
(The Witch which is inside a Cell)
A witch draws a ship
(The Ship drawn on a Wall of a Prison Cell)
A witch draws a ship
And asks
(Asks the Guard)
A witch draws a ship
And Asks
(The Guard)
What is missing in the Drawing of the Ship

She keeps asking him
For several days
(The Reversal of days?)
Until
(Until...)
Until
The Ship is
Complete

And the Witch
(The Witch)
Escapes
(from the Prison Cell)

Keeps Asking Him
Until the Witch
Escapes aboard a Flying Drawing
of a Ship.
And She is Seen
Flying out of the Window
Into the Clouds

Aboard The Ship
(Remember: She is a *Witch)*

And the Guard is thrown in the Prison Cell
(For helping Her
Complete the Ship).

(Remember: He kept telling Her
What was missing in the drawing of
The Ship).

So, be careful about what you say
Or respond.
Your words could be helping
Someone to escape from Prison Cells
Aboard Drawings, Ships or Dreams.

(This is it. This is the End
Of a Myth).

V
A Man Who Was
Walking through New York
Saw a rain of trains
Falling into the streets.

U
"I" is a letter.

"I" M another (letter).

Identity. Phrases. "I am": a quote.
I am citation.

I is a letter.

T
Is
The
World
As
It
Is?

S
Grammar made me say all those lines.

R
(Twists and Turns)

Read a book upside down.
(A simple trick to feel
The Secret Meaning of Language
One Last Time).

Q
1
Some decades ago
A bunch of American poets rediscovered
The Magic Power of Words
And *then* they entered
Universities, Presses and became Known
And after a while they rediscovered (again)
Ideas Why Not To Use
The Magic Powers of Word Anymore.

–Good Ideas, by the Way.

2
A couple journeys
Until they finally find
("Finally Find")
The Cave Where
The Last Wiseman
Thinks, speaks (and lives).
And the couple asks him
For help,
for health.

And the Last Wiseman
Refuses
To give them
Knowledge-words
Alleging he is reading Derrida.

3
The tribe arrived

And they were given
A Free Tour.

P
I had no sleep
For several days.
After not sleeping
For so long
I couldn't walk straight
Or talk.

Walking, talking
Powers given to us in dreams.

In dreams or in thoughts
about them.

O
What
If
Instead
Of
"Writing"
"Our"
"Poems"
We
Would
Translate
Everything
We
Think?

Would the reader/listener notice? Would the end-result still be considered "poetry"?

N
Prior to language:
Translation.

Before speaking or writing
some one had to imagine
the ways in which
the book of Nature

could be translated into words.

Some one had to imagine
There was
A book
A "Nature"
A translation.

Language is the late stage of translation.

M
We live in a late age,
an age which is just letting us know
we live in a late age.

L
Language Poetry
Couldn't exist
if Ethnopoetics had not appeared.[9]

(A statement. A poetics?)

(Am I quoting myself
or just making another cheap example of my *crítica-ficción*?)[10]

"Language Poetry
Couldn't exist
if Ethnopoetics had not appeared".

(This time without footnotes
to make it easier).[11]

Saying/writing this (last?) three lines
is not (of course)
a poem[12]

This is not (I repeat) (and I "repeat" just because
I made before a series of footnotes that could
have prevented the main idea of this text to be grasped)
This is not (again repeating)
This is not (¿again?) (Am I writing or sampling?)

This

is "not".

"Language Poetry
Couldn't exist
if Ethnopoetics had not appeared".

This is not ("of course")

A poem

But an essay.

K
(On Reading)
Instead of pronouncing poems we should spell them.
Spelling is now the key.
S-P-E-L-L-I-N-G.
Poetry. A quiz.

J
The Jewish Prophets were right:
language belongs to lies.
Bring them back
and tell them they can now
use e-mail
to spread their news.
Tell them it's OK to have beards
which make human beings
grow deep down in the direction of the ground
once they stop growing up in the direction of the clouds.

I
We should substitute
Reality
for a narrow word
–like "further".

H
"H" is a letter which in certain languages
has no sound.
(In this line a few of such languages are named).
H is a letter that can easily be none other than Silence itself
or comedy / as in pataphysics and Cortázar.

"Hamor"

But in English "H" (¿age?)
is laughter. Hahaha.
English is an ironic language
where H is not silence but comedy.
Humor.
Where silence turns into laughter.
Hahaha.

G
Jerome has a beard.
I have seen it in
Dreams.

F
I have a mother.
I have seen her
Thanks to
Syntax.

E (Another Deaf Definition):
Voice: (is)
A project of translation
Still bringing forth
Meanings
Directly from
An unknown source.

"D"
1. Poetry should be translated according to colors.
2. Grammar is the Science Fiction of Cave Man.
3. A utopia is burnt every 34 seconds.
4. Motherland is man-made.
5. ABC is a primordial number.
6. Writing is the Black and White Age of Language.
7. Tijuana is New York translated from Yiddish into Spanish.
8. "A poetry beyond" is a slogan.
9. —.
10.

C
Literature is just remarks.[13]

B
Experimental poetry will have to change Philosophy's face.
If people knew the first drafts of a text now well known they would become immediately afraid of the appalling artificiality and unreality of poetry.
Texts that should be written backwards: from definitive text to drafts.

A
Is your real name — — —?
Is it really
A name
Or Just the translation
of a Name given to You
on a book which says
"my name is not a name
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — —".
A name? I- i- — — — a n-m-?
Or just an_ther ghost?

B
Translating 1931
I fell asleep and woke up
on ~~2000~~ 1999 (just a year before
we began to live a decade
of years without a name.
Again. Ten years without a name.
As in 1900-1909.
Years which aren't the "twenties".
Words that cannot be pronounced.
Letters which keep coming back: 1945.

C
No need for a dictionary to explain
the meaning of words which both of us) didn't understand.
We were (the two of us) on his sofa
listening to his explanations of words
we didn't translate / because we didn't (neither) know.
He (she?) was explaining words using his (her?) hands.
So we (both) thought:
Are we translating Him?[14]
Or translating hands?

D

America, there's no need to translate me.
(I deeply abhor Litera-Tourism).
Latin America Literature. The Next Step is English.
English, my way of Translating America.

(Footnotes)

[1] This is the True End of the Poem. The Final Stage.
[2] Just as a nice trick read this poems considering the author committed a lapsus between "First" and "Fist".
[3] The End of a Poem / Does not necessarily have to be / Located in the last lines. / Take this case: / A poem written / And completed / But then modified ./ In order to add more / Lines / At the end of the poem / But in Which / The End is still / In its / Original Place.
[4] And most importantly (and a fact forgotten by the "C" Poem): "B" is a poem which can be read from Beginning to End without having to confront any obstacles or anticlimax happening at the worst conceivable moment (of the Poem).
[5] This is not the End / (of the Poem).
[6] Where should the "Was" be put? And where the question mark? (Don't continue to read. Understand first).

And there is also a question of the lyrical voice of this poem wanting to know which day is going to be tomorrow but paradoxically referring to the future ("tomorrow") using "was" (the Past). This paradox (or word play?) should surprise the reader and make him/her feel this poem is ok (to "read"). Would "ok" and "OK" mean the same in the last sentence? Questions make Language more intelligent, right? What would happen is we talk/wrote using exclusively propositions in the form of questions? Should we read more slowly? Was poetry an attempt (a failed attempt) to make reading a slower activity? Was Mallarmé into slow reading? Is the visual aspect of poetry a technique solely dedicated to slow down our experience with Meaning?
[7] This should be said in a loud way.
[8] If. As If.
[9] Am I patronizing?
Am I coming back
To Tradition?
Are the sixties
our Greek background?;
Our "Western Tradition" we need to leave behind?
[10] Why does English only have one question mark?
It "truly" feels awkward for a Spanish speaker
(¿Still clinging to mother tongue?)
"It 'truly' feels awkward for a Spanish *user* to Ask
when using English.
It really feels strange, I mean.
[11] These last two lines
Are supposed to NOT be
Read.
[12] Even though a poem is just an efficient collection of lines. No need to feel poems have to be considered Sublime Objects of Desire.
[13] Poet listeners in reading shouldn't look at the face of the poet when she/he reads. They should see the page from which (S)(H)e is reading. That is her/his true face: the page.
The future of poetry will be publicity.
[14] Her.

from CONCERNING THE HEBANE BIRD

Will Alexander

"...I
as Hillstar
as force in the Andean substrates
am not the syllogistic imperator
but he
of ventriloqual stamina
of convexity electric with voyage

nautical through invisible agoras
alive
with post-existing obscurity

those beings which post-exist by quantum nomadics
who exchange their central essence by ambivalence

the bird-gods communing by insuperable resurrection

so that nothing ever accrues in itself
all the time
without answer
without growth which exhales
all the while implying
the curious mathematics of stony oregano & skin

if I exist as curiosity by technique
it is true
I still exist as a presence
an equation traced by blizzards
by an action absolved of the hyper-dimensions of brooding
absolved of one simple dogmatism as status
of embryology which ignites by commandment

no
not religious deliverance gregariously instilled by
abstruse misnomer
by wretched clinical incitement
but by osmosis
by a template

appearing & disappearing without any known origination
in austerity

neither is it the quest for annihilation
or for dogmatic catalogue only quenched by catastrophe

but by nature
I am inclement
I partake of air before the sun explodes
quaking
in my present double form
I exist without advantage
without a sense of lakes forming in my region

invisible
yet verbally visible
I speak
so as to detonate winds
to take possession of anti-nuclear form
thereby
withstanding edicts
as if my wings were a great clairvoyant equation

& this equation exists in the source of speculation
in an ecology which generates an incalculable
sorcery by verb

yet I cannot advance creation
nor give it protracted numerological invasive

which equates
with one dimensional vibration
paralleled by counted activity darkened as separate illusives

that is
the serial persistence by which a deductive bridge
is founded

I can say that all separations exist by lower ingestion
that unity is avian in form
is totalic in suggestion
because
it evinces height

it is empyreal scintilla
much like black rotational invasives

& these invasives
undetectable
like darkened radon candles
electric with soaring
insidious with that which obscures
& re-angles its anomalies
according to eclectic gravitational criteria

& all the forms
all the various equational instincts
in motion throughout fissures in the proto-implicate
throughout the great mangers of fire
& these mangers
suns

suns struck
with darkened cellular nomadics
with perfect occult saturation
which hyphenates the power of spells

spells
which hyphenates being
become radial integers which transfix
simultaneous with parallels which waver

& these parallels are tendencies which vibrate
which never coalesce into a bloodless carpentry of atoms
into a field of statistical prominence
into a field of somatology

my universe
never one of coporeality or capture

say
each ratio of drift prevailed by pre-calescent heat
being no more than a dozen or 20 solar masses
with a tendency towards formation

for instance
flames through a black dimensional window

light through intrauterine nomadics
irregular amplification

being of Andean climatology
I know the precarious kindling of space
I know its dense subjective bleakness
far beyond the ozone systems
far beyond its sense for capacity of heat

you see
I fly as a floating pontoon coil
as an invigorated distance
spliced as differential confinement
& each sum that I echo
I challenge with the fire of the ungraspable

I make up methods
as if the one celled beings were congealed out
of heresy
as if the first mountain chains were an isometric error
no longer sought or cherished
as signs of the uncontainable

yet they are the first unnumbered oracles from the Archaen
the first fragmented sepia vocality
like a flashing dominance discharged through the eons

& all this from the caliginous
from the vector of the gyroscopic grain
occluded & enhanced
by the first explosive cataract
by the first ravine of glaciers
knowing that the first nucleic tensions were grounded
in the firmament
in this ream of the vitreous
each song that I sing
rife with anathema & aversion
which is in turn spun into the power of vatic investment

never destruction & correlation as simple gestation & flaw
but flight which irradiates suspension
which transforms as vertex the miraculous soil of the erratic
as pre-suggestive biology

never the graphic eikon as dysfunction
but boats of lava burning as mythic suns
so in this degree
I can foretell chasm
I can challenge conjunction with the essence of rhetoric
or dialectic

first: a needle
three missing pyres
a mountainous investiture

secondly: a stunning tribe of lorikeets
mapping a plain of dark electrical rivers

now
the synthetic riddle which floods its lagoon like an asp
like a blackened celadon pyre

then from this
a viridian prairie with a dearth of inhabited vultures
with subdivided coves
from which the cells of the Bantu Pharaohs rose

I think of charging rams
I think of unsullied cobras

of course
I claim no hierarchical advantage
as specifically concerns the range of my voice
yet its sub-equal distance
a barrage of ciphers
being a glistening depth
which unfolds as an enormous carbon hieroglyphic

& this carbon hieroglyphic is random
combustible
like a torrent of infernos
a calcareous errata
which will never exist as form
& which will remain as central tendency
as corruptive spore in transition

I cannot define
or lend any definitive occurrence to its depth
or re-map the cosmos
& its display of extraneous psychic terrain

there is a law of forges
a primal inquisitor's prism
which possess no other urge
than to speak of a power which increases its friction
through fragment

I mean by fragment
that which condenses into burial codes
which spins with depth & horizon
which impels a fertile isolation
beyond the geometric

for instance
a tense coronal rain
which appears 'as dark absorption features'
as 'heliographic latitudes'
like the sparse ignition in frenetic polar fields

which ascend & project from a radius of diamonds

& for want of increasing reason I assemble as diagrammatic

the Andean sun:
vectored with Eumonia
Proxima Centauri:
vectored with Hidalgo

Canopus condensed with Achilles

& from these arbitrary mergers
dialectical blindings
dazzling obscurities

the application of combining
the intensive flow of rocks through the ether

because I precede the primal solar infernos
I am witness as draft

as cataclysm through stillness
summoned from the empty location of forms
from telekinetic intangibles
never subsumed into a base informing
prone to didactic inscription

perhaps
I am 2 or 3 kelvins removed
flying through the language of epochs
no longer mired in one central explosion
in one definitive struggle
which has informed its activity
through human mental advance

for me
suggestive opaqueness
sealed in tumultuous dodecahedra

this being the pressure on the proto-plane
on the habitat of haunted mural imbalance

much like ice from darting vacuums
from the simultaneous foment
before the spark which unseals tremendums

therefore
I am vatic as regards nucleic coronas
I can predict the signs a billion zodiacs ago
when a universe ignited
from collapse from random photon exposure

then of course the arrow of each galaxy
the sonar from Andromeda
the molecular soundings from M 31

they are general relays which invade
which gives to me
a porous territorial climate
which changes according to the powers
of one particular kelvin or another

say
of 2.7 to 1.6 *

or
1.4 to 3.7 *

these are temperatures projected from intangible ejecta
projected from my domain as voice
my ability
to overlap the eons
to imply by singing eclipse phonation
unknown states of the palpable
because I am Hillstar
am prone to that which inscrutably shifts
roaming imploded kelvins
like a radical cinder unpredictable with pions..."

from SATIRE NO. 4, "IN-FORMATIONAL FORUM ROUSERS—ARCING"

Rodrigo Toscano

A small
American Town
large mall
horniness

a poetry
*sub*scene's
objects

laid bare

—a shoplifting spree

deep inside you

a never know how to quite get you some
(fractured) disquisition
on

(horizontal) desiring
structures?

arrive in the mail—

(yearly subscriptions actually)

—cultural-capital *angling*

(that's "dangling," without the 'd')

affordability

—pollo loco—

bi-national franchise

gone *tri—*

peripatetic perkforce

twerkers

lateraturizations

you don't need to know but he'll tell you anyway

"you hot roll'em like this (and make sure your Sanico hat's on snug—always, the paper one—over your head) then you wrap'em up like this...then ding the bell"

<habitus?>

*

Barfidicus Pragmaticus The Elder
To Barfidicus The Younger

"The *satura,* Barfy
needn't come to a full stop

before eliciting
several hearty
snorts"

"but I see
my job-failure
in my poetry-family's eyes
already"

"that's
structuo-reflexo-simpatico of you
that's

subltedistinctionpsychlike"

<habitus?>

*

Heuristic
medium-range
epistle

post-humanistic
pre-arch-globotic

agentic—

strays
off course
(of course)

the *design* of it
intends to

disable

The Intra-
National
Creative
Bedroom
Privacy
Act

of 2000—*when?*

<click>

"guarantees—
yr. textual
freedom-seeking
procedures
lock in on—"

<click>

shout outs to:
'futural intersubjectivites'
"summoning"

what? (if they ask, indecorously)

"Current
Mutt-Ethereal
Relations"

4% of the world, the U.S.
expends
25% of the resources

('in-calls only'

International?)

*

"He's an *old* 'Centrist'
you'd *love* him!

we have to get you two <screwed> together...somehow"

flush—
sheetrock to plaster

"is this a false wall?
or a *real* wall?"

(knock knock
knock)

<habitus?>

*

<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>

"Captain Hazlewood (no Faust him)
runs aground on Bligh Reef"

<go on>

"howling winds
buffet his .06 b.a.c.
(cross-cut surface)
face"

<cut out "cross-cut surface"—obvious wink
to artworld
savvy>

"sentenced—
to scoop up
<pause—causality check: patch in
it was only a pint and a half
two hours previous> roadside litter
for five years"

<ready? *launch*—"the resonator">

"But, systemically speaking, it was a systemic
system of safety
system failure"

<okay? *okay*—now fade>

"...it's not just *one* cause, but a *complex* of *root* causes
that leads to the
'TOP'event—"

<ok, it's *out* there—now cut>

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

Vertical idealist gnosis—"company pukes"

This training's
spillings—such that

committee's recommendation is

<com-recommem
who?>

1. Back up (cheap) alarms be put on deck (Vulgar Formalism)

2. Sea lanes be monitored continuously by *commissioned* watchman (Vulgar Realism)

<*you!* die hard
dialec->

"and a double-hulled

paranational (unsutured) subjectivity

can (but certainly not of its *own* strength)

design out the cause—"

<*now* you've *stoked* it!>

"stroked

who?"

I. Figure 10.57. Hospital building north of Poston I.

"I was born in a hospital," she tells me, proudly (Figure 10.57), "driven out of the camp to a hospital" (Figure 10.57).

Looks more like a house. Horizontal wood slats, once painted white, now stained with water or fire, weather. Wooden porch with railings and wood slats sliding off. Garden hose hanging off side of wall.

Looks more like an old house in the South. Windows split horizontally in half, which lift with two hands. Screen door tilted, hanging on by hinge. Chevy parked crooked out back.

Still displays its distinctive double roof and other evidence of former use.

II. Figure 10.44. Relocation center hospital building at the site of the Poston II staff housing area.

On the east side of the highway, the former staff housing area at Poston II now has churches, residences, and a relocation center hospital ward building moved from Poston I (Figure 10.44). The building, lacking its double roof but otherwise in fair condition...

"I remember each time I fill out a formal document, and have to write the place of my birth."

...currently being remodeled, is located behind the Poston Community Baptist Church. The church wants to replace or rehabilitate the structure. The ward building resembles a barracks, but is made of wood planks, not tarpaper.

"It was important to me that you be able to write, 'Newport Beach'".

Window frames, uneven, line the side, wood chipped, rough, scorched exterior. One building anchored outside of its original habitat, under gray sky, most likely blue, large, billowy static clouds, most likely moving, briskly, building in middle of, loose dirt, dried shrubs.

III. Figure 10.30. Classroom building at the Poston I elementary school.

Since no arrangements had been made, evacuees built their own classrooms.

"But mom didn't know if there was going to be one where we were going."

West of Blocks 19 and 30.

"So, she brought encyclopedias for us and for the other children."

Sufficient lumber was not available, so they leveled the ground.

"Only one suitcase, you know?"

The others brought bedding, toilet articles, eating utensils and clothing. Walls were created of adobe, a foreign material to most.

"You see how your grandma is? Even back then."

Mixed mud for bricks, lined hundreds to dry in 115-degree heat. Figure 10.13. Pouring foundation for school. Which still stands today.

IV. Daughter

Figure ten point. ten point. and they couldn't?

Intergenerational tension was also a major problem
in the relocations centers, especially since Issei and Nisei
were very distinct generations.

This book says, "Intergenerational tension was also a major... since Issei and Nisei were very... The majority of Issei leadership had... du da da dah... Pearl Harbor... Nisei gained power and... Once the...

However, use of the Japanese language was restricted: meetings... in English... publications... in English..."

Meetings. Meetings. And publications. What were. But then how did? I don't think this is...

But auntie spoke going in, didn't speak going out.

And you, born there, never spoke. Here it says, "meetings." What is "meetings"?

I don't think they let grandma speak to

speak to you, when you were born

speak "gohan"

speak

"hashi"

like you

spoke

to me

How did grandma

speak

How did

grandma

speak

how to distinguish shiokarai from karai?

What words, what, what, English? Shiokarai. Salty? Strong, biting taste, like shoyu? No, like, like, soy sauce, right? And karai is, is "hot", like, like, hot like wasab No, no, like, horseradish. Don't eat that. Hot, like horseradish.

V. Go

Go shih-shi
shi-shi, like water, like
shhhh, shhhh
sh, sh, sh

Go unko, like
ng, ng, have to go
unko, Mommy,
I have to go
Where is the benjo?
ben, den, room jo, O, hole
room with hole
Take the hashi,
soft in your hands
ashi, ashhhi, ashhhi,
cradle, lullaby
gohan and umeboshi
in your hashi
raise them toward your tongue
ashi, ashi

Ne-ne, ne-ne time
lullaby, time to,
time for ne-ne,
shhhh, hhhh,
shhh, shhh,
neh
hhhh
neh
hhhh
Eat teddy-yaki
teddy
bear—furry sweet—brown
squishy, fuzzy teriyaki kind, brown teddy bear

Wear your zooris
your zodies
one zody, two zodies
zodiac

6 mystical signs under each bare foot

atsui, be careful, atsui desu ne,
hot, hot ouch,
atsui, ot ou!

karai
kk, kk,
kut,
cut,

shiokarai
shoyu cut

VI. My name is

Watashi wa Tsuyako Togawa desu.

Watashi wa Toshiko Nagami desu.

Watashi wa Hezaa Nagami desu.

Watashi wa Hezaa desu.
My name is Heather.

Watashi wa Americajin desu.
I am American.

Watashi wa nikkei yonsei desu.
I am fourth generation of Japanese descent.

Doozo yoroshiku.
Nice to meet you.

Kore wa nan desu ka.
What is this?

Sore wa nan desu ka.
What is that?

Are wa nan desu ka.
What is that (over there)?

Ima nanji desu ka.
What time is it?

Sanji sanjuu-yonpun desu.
It's 3:34.

Kyoo wa nangatsu nannichi desu ka.
What is the date today?

Ju gatsu niju shichinichi desu. Kyoo wa watashi no tanjoobi desu.
It's October 27th. Today is my birthday.

My mother, Toshiko Edna Togawa, was born on October 22nd in Poston, Arizona.
She is sansei.

My grandmother, Tsuyako Ada Kajiwara was born in January, in Suisan, California.
She is nisei.

My great-grandmother, Tatsu, was born in YamaNAshi prefecture. No, I mean, YaMANashi ken, Japan.
She was issei, first generation.

VII. Yonsei

ichi, ni, san, shi, go

issei, nisei, sansei, shisei?

No.

Shi, which is a Chinese character, can mean "death".
So, we use yon—the Japanese number "four".

Yon-sei. You are yonsei.

Not death—say it.

Not death—yone, say.

say it:

VIII. Fourth Generation

white washed? banana? twinkie?

can't speak?

haven't been back?

Can't speak your own language?

own/ language?

oneesan of language

Why no Japanese school? Took it at a junior college? With all the hakujin anime freaks, martial-arts-lovin', Zen-worshippin', shy-Oriental-girl-fuckin', doomo arigato Mr. Roboto Japanaphiles?

Very brave you.

like kamikaze pilot

go for final dive.

Yes, Hezza san. Wash on,

wash off.

Wash on,

wash off.

Ganbatte!

Ganbatte!

IX. Ganbatte shikarishite

Ganbatte—like sand paper, harsh, tough
GHAN-ba-tte

shikatishite—like coastal waves—shhh shhh

ghhhh, shhhh

neh neh

ghhhh shhh

go neh

neh

ichi

ni

san

shhhhhhhhhhhh

* Excerpts were taken from *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, by Jeffery F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord. Tucson, AZ: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, 2000.

GALLERY:
YONG SOON MIN & ALLAN DE SOUZA

Yong Soon Min is an Associate Professor at the School of Arts, University of California-Irvine. Her recent International Exhibitions include "East Asian Women and Herstories" at the Seoul Women's Center (co-curated by Kim Hong Hee), "Flight of the Falcon" at the Girifalco Fortress, Cortona Italy (co-curated by Judith Brodsky, Lynn Allen, R.G. Brown III and Carmon Colangelo), and "Creativity in the Next Millennium" at the Fifth Baguio Arts Festival in the Philippines. Recent writings about the artist include *Haunting Violations: Feminist Criticism and the Crisis of the "Real"* (Illinois UP, 2000), Lucy Lippard's *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place* (The New Press), and *Women & Art: Contested Territory* by Judy Chicago & Edward Lucie-Smith.

Allan de Souza received an MFA in photography from UCLA, and has been a visiting lecturer at UC-Irvine, the University of Minnesota, Otis College of Design, and elsewhere. Recent exhibitions include numerous collaboration with Yong Soon Min, including *will **** for peace* (Mezzanine Gallery, University of. Minnesota), *Nonzero Sum Games* (The Brewery, LA), *AlterNatives* (Menschel Gallery, Syracuse, NY: see < http://www.lightwork.org/exhibitions/mg48.html>), and *alter idem/performing personae* (Camerawork, London).

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(BREATHE)


BED
PEACE
PEACE
PIECE
HAIR
PEACE
BUSH
PIECE

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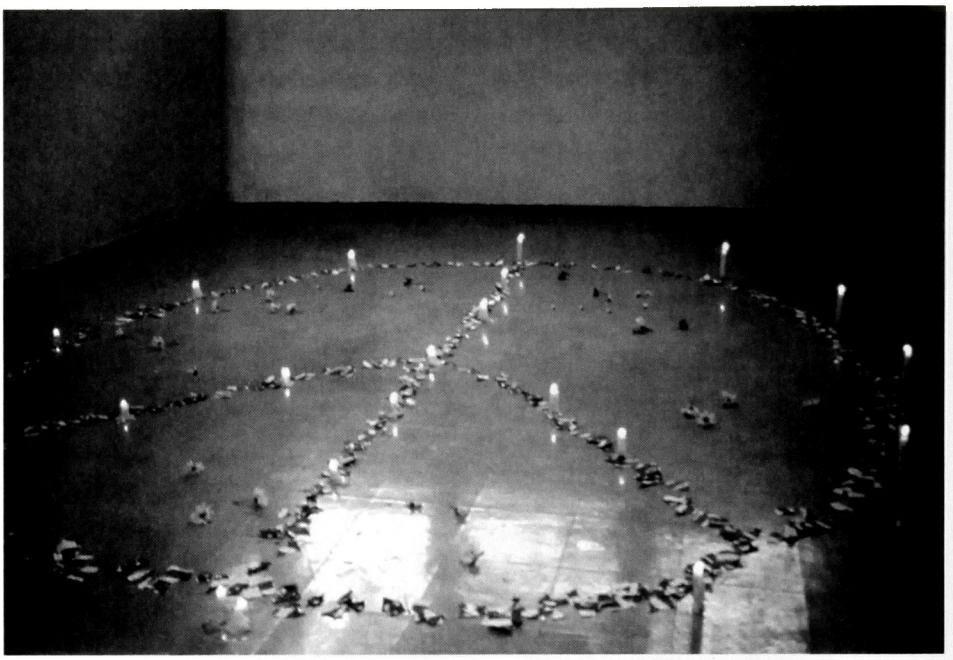
(SURRENDER)

SMASHTHESTATE.EDU

(DREAM)



The preceding sequence of photo/text is culled from two projects inspired by the collaborations of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. The text elements are from a multi-media installation entitled "Flux Us," presented in 2000 at the Brewery Art Complex in Los Angeles. The photos document a performance/installation entitled, "Will **** for Peace," presented during a week-long, joint visiting artist residency in February, 2002, at the Mezzanine Gallery of the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis.

We have come to regard John and Yoko as collaborative alter egos who inspire us in many ways. In their tumultuous relationship, they managed to synthesize the disparate worlds and sensibilities of the avant-garde art scene and popular music. They were exemplary in their ability to integrate art and life, never censoring the deeply emotional nor the sentimental. They were particularly courageous in taking radical stands against racism and the Vietnam war and making art based on these political convictions.

In "Flux Us," we created a "happening" in the form of a multi-faceted room installation that alluded to or quoted key elements of their work and beliefs. Participants entered a darkened canopy of dangling cellophane flowers through a giant "beaded curtain" made of recycled grocery-bagged record albums. The main light source emanated from a revolving slide projector atop a step ladder, quoting Ono's "Yes" sculpture that is the fabled catalyst for their union. It beamed the images of John and Yoko, taken from their first collaborative album, "Two Virgins," but is only in clear focus at the nearest corner; as it plays across the rest of the room, it is distorted and blurred to a greater or lesser extent. The moving light illuminates phrases [transcribed here in the preceding pages] that are adhered to the three walls of the room. On the top rung of the ladder is a little known photographic image of John and Yoko surrounded by her extended family in Japan. A toy turntable plays a vinyl record with a label that is a quote from Walter Benjamin, "to read history against the grain," while a reverse recording of their last collaborative album, "Double Fantasy," can be heard. A central element of this installation is a raised platform covered with a heat sensitive material that changes color according to body temperature, leaving the temporary body prints of other viewers. This became a place for viewers to hang out and/or just "trip" on their psychedelic body prints.

"Will **** for Peace" involved the re-staging of John and Yoko's legendary "bed-in" protest against the Vietnam War as a platform for us to engage U of M students and others in dialogue about the aftermath of 9/11 and Bush's war against Terrorism. A departure from the original and a key participatory element of our

performance was the transformation of the U.S. flag, which has become an emblem of unrestrained and ultra-righteous patriotism. Viewers assisted in the painting of U.S. flags, the tearing up of these painted images into little bits and the reformulation of the bits into a large peace symbol that filled the other half of the gallery. Both the bed-in and the flag permutations raise questions about the relationship between art and activism, the original and reproductions, the sign and symbol, as well as between the past and present.

Allan de Souza and Yong Soon Min
Los Angeles, July 2002

from WHERE/AS: ECUADOR

Craig Watson

Cloud broke, wave froze
tooth and blade
whetted on the bone of
the back of the world.

Stars between islands
corners and steps;
this is the
closed country.

Then we crossed a cold equator and fell through a vertical horizon, that sentence behind the sentence, breathless.

Nowhere else
above.

Awake all night in
wet cement and choked barks,
arrested between sighs
for promises to harden.

Then sour milk and
cash exchange :
knives, cloaks,
anonymous witnesses.

We had heard how, when surrounded and outnumbered, conquistadors invited their enemies to dinner then beheaded them with salutes.

Wait in the mist and
see what chance can do.

Is family learned
or instinctual:
to sleep on any pillow as
the sum of untold distances.

Knowing how rain can split a mountain and
how a mountain can fill a sky and
how a sky is neither pavilion nor abyss and
how an abyss enters mouth and throat, all gravity.

Between the mud factory and a path paved with last intentions we changed languages, then whispered into the deafening drone, foreigners again.

That which we inhabit
inhabits us.

To keep a secret
one story must be true and
another false or at least
as invisible as the obvious.

These children float
drop-by-drop, ghost-to-glass;
not rain but always
the color of rain.

After the king was allowed to fill a temple with his own ransom he was offered a choice of implements, sashes and cords, for his garrote.

Here means one way
to go or the other.

Tongue slipped in toe hold
so climb among
words through
crevice and plunge.

Learn to say "please"
"thank you" and
"the way your mountains
prove the earth is flat."

These are the illiterate pictures of beauty without desire, longing without a mask, allegory for every new name alight.

The wind is
a moving hole.

A squared arch to
a trapezoidal door to
a circular tomb where
even breath cannot slip between stones.

The shadow of a giant condor
rorschached the sun
but we went on burning
the rope bridge at both ends.

In the fortress of no resistance, gravity denied the distinctions but we learned to swallow our echoes; admission will be free but there is no refuge.

What if
we were not yet born.

A boy with a gun
hummed an imported tune
intended to enforce
the deadly peace.

There was no end
to the thirst or
the sweet salt
that drank it.

So we galloped hard through a desert thatched by root and vine, gold-fields and landing zones, cemeteries and monkey markets, toward a city at war with itself.

Always the same gesture to
take the world and give it back.

Every day the cloud factory
draws a new map
and asks "who goes
and who goes further?"

Then what to leave
behind: our furniture,
our food, our voyage
without wake.

It is simply the world that always wants more of itself so that we may someday resume the point of no return and count our blessings where we left them.

Those who cannot go home
already are home.

OUTSKIRTS

Wang Ping

I came here to lose, but the wheel won't let me.

Again, I bet on 3. People gasp. What're the odds for winning eight "straight-ups" in a row?

I snort. At roulette, each spin is new. Would you believe 3 isn't my lucky number? No. Today my wife and I are separated for three months. Three years ago, she enrolled in Queens College and became a stranger. How did it happen?

"Look at me, Meimei," I ask repeatedly. "I'm the same Tiger you loved against everything. Your parents rather you die than marry a peddler's son. The night I swam to Hong Kong, you clutched my sleeves, said we'd never part again, dead or alive, if we made it. Your words kept me going. I slept on streets, toiled in restaurants and antique stores until I flew to New York with a fake passport. You waited 12 years, alone, fighting off marriage proposals by faking insanity. Remember how we cried at JFK! Remember the joy over our first condo? My store? The birth of Jia?"

You turned away and said, "I no longer speak Chinese."

I can't fucking believe it.

The wheel stops at 3. 35:1. I won big. Silence. All the eyes that wish me dead. I wish myself dead, but everything here—names, dealers, and the noodle stand—solicits memories.

"Dump the bitch," people say. "With your looks and money, you can pick anyone in Chinatown."

But she's my lighthouse. The day I saw the fuzzy hair on her nape, I knew I'd never be lost.

Another spin. Place chips on 33. Yesterday, I called to say happy birthday. She sounded nervous. In the background, someone was reading to Jia. Perfect English. White man's voice. I exploded. "Come back home. Now!"

"Tiger, I need a normal life. I want Jia grow up good, not a hoodlum." She hung up and unplugged the phone.

She thinks I'm a gangster. No matter what I say, she yells, "How could you survive in this town otherwise?" She's desperate. "Those damn tourists stare at me like a whore. Always ask why I don't wear gowns with split thighs." She cries whenever she comes home.

"Give me a year to sell," I finally said.

"Doesn't matter where you live," she screamed. "*You* are Chinatown."

Bitch!

But she's right. I live there, sell stuff robbed from tombs, wear costumes to amuse tourists. I do whatever it takes to make a living. But are they grateful? The other day, I told Jia to speak Chinese, like a human being. He grimaced and

said, "Can you talk like a grown up?" I spanked him. He's only five, already imitating devils from school.

I guess it pushed her over the edge.

Fine. We live in America. Spanking isn't hip. I speak Chinglish. My clothes smell garlic. But does she have to date a white demon, have my son call him "Father?"

I retrieved the gun. It cooled my temples.

The ball drops. I won. 2:1. Does it mean I still can't die?

She wants to be in the game, before it's too late.

With her China eyes and yellow skin? With her accented English? She's dreaming!

Does she know she is a walking Chinatown, like me?

But it won't stop her. The stubborn dreamer.

Let's play then, you from Brooklyn, me from *Ruyilou*—the House-of Anything-You-Wish. I'm piling everything on the big red 1. It stands tall, quivering, a pickax hacking into the belly of...

Our Teacher of Marxism and Leninism

Wang Ping

The boy did it again. When we opened our rice boxes, frogs, scorpions, and worms crawled out, barely alive. We showed the ruined dinners to his adopted father, our teacher of Marxism and Leninism. He exempted our mid-term test for consolation.

That night, the whole dormitory heard it—soles hitting on bare bottoms. The homemade cotton shoes were easy to grab, impossible to break bones, the boy told us once. The teacher moaned with each thrashing, high-pitched like cats in heat. The boy remained quiet.

We laid in our bunk beds, hands on grumbling stomachs. The pumpkin-faced urchin caused endless grievances to our favorite teacher, who had adopted his nephew after the boy's father, a poverty-stricken peasant, died. We heard he'd wanted to marry his brother's widow to care for her children, but his wife, who also taught Marxism in another city, refused a divorce. She lived with their ten-year-old daughter. He spent days and nights organizing activities, checking our political and physical health, teaching us how capitalism exploited the poor, women, children, and how we must fight for justice. He stoked our enthusiasm by giving us extra credit to memorize *Manifesto* and chapters from *Capitalism.* Everyone had received his highest grade—120.

We knew this was necessary to turn the boy around. We'd gone through the same ourselves. Still, it was hard to listen. Each thrash hit our nerves, brought out memories.

The next morning, the boy greeted us pleasantly in the canteen. He looked rested. A girl asked, "How did the soles taste?"

"Great. Like pancakes."

She grinned. "Aren't you homesick?"

To our surprise, he started weeping. "This is my home. My uncle never flogs me with buckles or twigs. And I can play all day, eat as much as I want."

MERIDEL LE SUEUR:

AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED IN THE HOME OF LE SUEUR'S DAUGHTER, RACHEL TILSEN, IN ST. PAUL, MN., SUMMER 1994

Nora Ruth Roberts

Nora Roberts: I'm talking with Meridel Le Sueur about her experiences as a radical woman writer. Can we talk first about the matter of consciousness from "I Was Marching"—which is about the consciousness of a woman about to join the march—to "Winter Prairie Woman"—which is about the consciousness of an older woman. Did you think consciously about what makes people act?

Meridel Le Sueur: Where do we begin?

NR: What was on your mind when you wrote "Women on the Bread Lines" and "I Was Marching"?

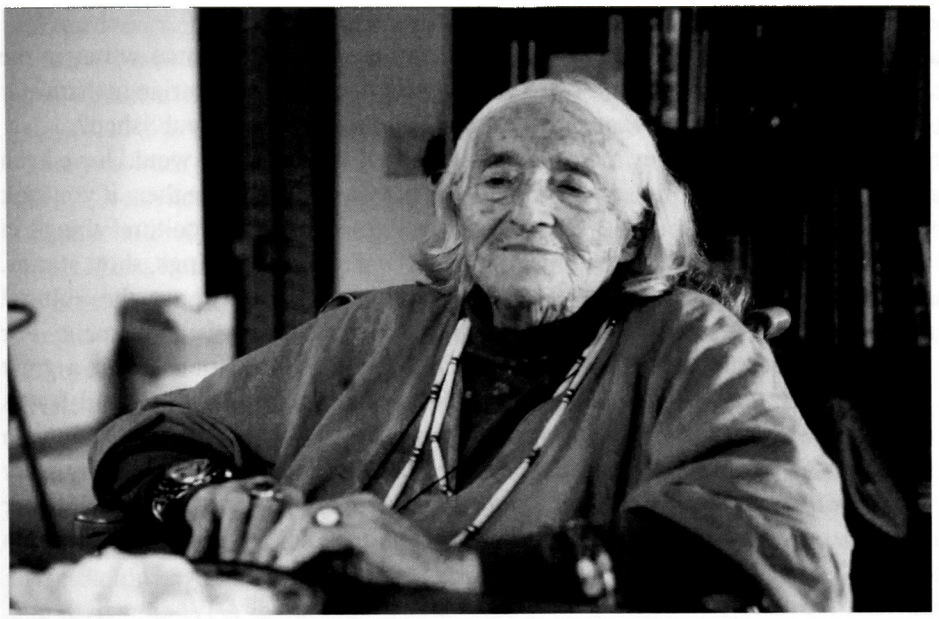
MLS: That was during the depression—'34. I had a great audience in the depression. Everything I wrote during the depression was published. That was the first time I ever had an audience, and it was a left-wing audience to say about the Middle West that would be listened to. "I Was Marching" I wrote sitting right across from strike headquarters the same day and sent it to the *New Masses,* and it was published that week. It was that kind of thing which was very marvelous. I had written since I was twenty, in the dark. Of course I didn't know it was the dark—I mean without any kind of collective audience. That's what it was.

NR: What made you decide to become a writer?

MLS: Well, I don't know if you decide something like that. I decided to write when I was about ten years old. . . because women didn't have any voice. I lived in small towns, and I was raised by two matriarchs, great matriarchal women. I saw that women didn't have any choice--church women, all those marvelous women... It was a matriarchy in the small villages at that time. There were all those depressions when the men were gone to the fields or timber or sea. There was a depression every four years before the First World War, a depression every four years where you lost your job, and your land. And I saw the suffering of women. I didn't see it, I was it, part of it. In the villages at that time, the women's movement was tremendous. Women had great power; it was a matriarchy, really, in the villages. I'd say the men were gone most of the time and women ran the villages, practically. They fed people and they had police and church socials... so I began to just take down what the women were saying. I didn't want to be a writer; I'd never heard of a woman writer.

NR: Did you read writers?

MLS: Well... I'd read some of the socialist literature. My mother was a socialist. But they were very political, they weren't very cultured. There wasn't too much cultural material, except of course things like Sinclair's *The Jungle,* but I didn't see *The Jungle* until much later. The thing that I saw then was Dreiser who was blacklisted. And the socialist movement made a case of him as a writer, because his



Meridel LeSueur, 1994
Photo by Nora Ruth Roberts

books were seized in 1908 or '09. *Sister Carrie* was seized and impounded. And then Whitman—he was considered even by the socialists as being pornographic in a way. They were puritans about the body and then Whitman discovered the body. He was on the table because he'd published his own book and was radical, and socialists promoted him because he'd published his own book and was radical, democratic, populist and that influenced me a lot. I never knew of a writer—a woman writer I never heard of. Later there was a Norwegian, a feminist. She was read by feminists of that day, and my mother had her book. But I never heard of a woman writer. There wasn't any good place to be a writer; I mean as a profession or as something to do, I never thought of it.

NR: To jump ahead a little bit, did you have trouble as a woman writer in the socialist, radical movement? Were you supposed to write proletarian realism? Or did you write what you wanted to? And were you able to get it published?

MLS: I was nourished by the socialists. Without them, I never would have been published in the *New Masses,* for example. That was a great paper then; if you look at the back issues, you will see that it was one of the great cultural things in American life. I was published much in *The Worker,* literary things, short stories. I never would have written—I would have been dead without the cultural Communist movement. There was a struggle in the Communist movement. For example, Trachtenberg [Alexander], the head of the International, was a great cultural Communist. He published my first book, *Salute to Spring,* and it was against the party. They hated my work in the political bureau--those who clung to orthodoxy—because it was lyrical. When the *New Masses* published my story about women on the breadlines, they had a note by it—written by Whittaker Chambers—saying "This is very powerful, but does not advance the proletarian movement."

NR: They called it defeatist.

MLS: But Trachtenberg was really the cultural vanguard of the party internationally. He started the John Reed Clubs. As I say, he loved my stories. He was the first person that nourished my lyricism; he loved that emotional quality. I became very close to him. He published cultural things. He published Tom McGrath. He published that great Communist who was in prison, in one of the Eastern countries—I forgot his name now—[Julius Fuchik]. He published many poets and cultural things. I got my first sense of Marxism in culture from him.

NR: When did you meet Trachtenberg?

MLS: He started the John Reed Clubs in '32 or '33. The John Reed Clubs were great cultural centers across the country. They had their first congress in Chicago in '35. I used to go to New York—in and out—since '24. I knew him then. He took you out to dinner and talked with you, an obscure and unknown writer—and a woman writer. He was very much of a feminist. I think I probably never would have written those stories in *Salute to Spring* without him.

NR: I just reread them and they're wonderful.

MLS: He gathered them together and published them. That was in '39. He had

great power. He was the cultural head of the party in the world. He used to say he disliked the bureaucracy in the party. He used to say he went to Puerto Rico every once in a while to get embraced and kissed (laughter).

NR: Do you know any works about Trachtenberg?

MLS: He wrote several books himself in the thirties--about the Constitution, about the Bill of Rights. They were technical books.

NR: Were you working at the time that you were writing?

MLS: Yes. I never made any money from my writing. I had two children to support. I worked at everything—factories. I wrote for labor papers that paid five or ten dollars. I made a living, but everybody was broke then. After the depression started, it was marvelous because the WPA started. It was the first time I ever had $90 dollars a month. That was in '33. It was great for a writer here. It wasn't like it was in New York where they only put known writers on the Writers' Project, but here you were just a writer and hungry. We didn't have any famous writers. The WPA was not only writing; it was the arts, painting, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. It was a great thing; it hired people from down below. There were about twenty-five people. You could live on $90 a month—rent and food. It was the first time I had a regular check, I think, in that period—in about three or four years. We did other work, we wrote the history of Minnesota. There was a history of each state. It's still a great book.

NR: Yes, it is, I looked at it.

MLS: We figured out places to go and do research, which was very good also. I got a lot of my material for *North Star Country*. They let me use the work that I did in *North Star Country*. That I was paid for doing. And we would get all the folklore. We were sent out to the small villages to do census taking or something like that. We should have something like that now. There was a meeting in Chicago last year to revive the WPA in the arts. Those were great times in American culture—and for the Communists also.

NR: Did you have women friends in that period that you showed your work to?

MLS: I met Tillie Olsen and Josephine Herbst at the Writers' Congress in '35 but I think there was a class thing between us. We had on our young Communists uniforms. I think we were looked on as bourgeois writers. We didn't talk to each other. There were only three women there that were working writers—Tillie Olsen, Josephine Herbst, and Muriel Rukeyser. But we didn't talk to each other, I think because of a class thing. I think Muriel Rukeyser was an upper class woman also.

NR: Josephine Herbst was a New York bohemian.

MLS: Well, she came from the farm; she wrote about the farm. But I never talked with her. She never talked to me at one time; she was an enemy. There were Trotskyites. At the Writers' Congress in '35 there was a split. They sat at one table and Farrell [James T. Farrell] sat with Josephine Herbst. They were writers who were opposing the Congress and undermining it in some way. I noticed that they would laugh at us. We were sitting with the orthodox Communists at another table. I had the sense that Josephine Herbst... I noticed there was an undercurrent.

Anyway, I was too frightened: I didn't have anything to do with them. There were three of us from the Middle West. We were like mavericks that somebody has lassoed and brought to the Congress (laughter). There was Jack Conroy, and Nelson Algren and me, and we couldn't really understand the language that the Easterners talked—not the philosophical language, but the actual speech was different. We had a meeting that Mike Gold organized during that period—a public meeting. They couldn't understand a word we said. And we couldn't understand a word they said. They talked in Yiddish. They had the three of us on the stage, but we couldn't speak; we were tongue-tied. Jack Conroy had a speech that he got out of his pocket—covered with eggs and coffee. He could not read it; he wouldn't talk at all. And Nelson Algren stood up there and never said a word. I thought he was going to fall over. We went over and held him up. He was swaying. Finally Mike Gold came and held him up and began to ask him questions. We were just like maverick colts from the Middle West. Nobody spoke to us very much except Trachtenberg. All the great cultural people of the world were there, and we were just tongue-tied.

NR: Did you have talks with Conroy and Algren? Did you have any kind of intellectual companionship?

MLS: We weren't talkers, not much. I knew correspondence with them through the *Anvil,* but we were never talkers—not New Yorker talkers. Jack Conroy would talk only when he got drunk. He was a wonderful story teller, but only when he was drunk.

NR: Did you know the Trotskyites in the Minneapolis strike [Truckers' Strike of 1934]? They were the heroes while I was growing up—Carl Skoglund, Jim Cannon, and the Dunne Brothers.

MLS: I was marching. On the WPA there were five Trotskyites and five Communists. The vote was always just equal. I don't know what we were against, particularly. I was never put out on strike because I worked in the kitchen; I didn't work in the philosophical end. They were really great leaders. They were great organizers.

NR: Has there ever been a time in your life when you haven't written?

MLS: No. I had a hundred and forty-six notebooks I just gave to the historical society. I would have gone crazy... I wrote all the time. When I was working and I had two children, I'd put them in bed and write in my notebooks. It was a way of keeping sane, I think, and being connected with something. It wasn't to be a writer; it was just to try and understand what was happening.

NR: What advice would you give to young writers, women or men, now?

MLS: Go where it's happening. We need writers. A lot of elitist writers live in a loft. They get grants and they have poetry readings, but they don't participate in any of the struggles. I'd get the young writers to go where it's happening and write about it. Tremendous things are happening here. We have a few who do it—a few street poets.

NR: Can we talk about the men in your life?

MLS: My grandmother and my mother were feminists. My mother was a very militant feminist. She raised her own children, divorced my father, made her own living. I never... I never looked upon men as being any kind of marriageable thing. I wondered how sex was. I was a puritan and had a hard time finding out how sex was. My grandmother and even my mother, as a radical, was a puritan woman, sexually. You don't get over that in a minute.

NR: My grandmother was, too, and my mother went through the same struggle.

MLS: I was in love with a Midwest organizer who was Rachel's father, Yashat Rubonopt, and he was a Russian Jew and very radical and very educated. He came from the ghetto in St. Paul. A group of them from the ghetto in St. Paul. A group of them from the ghetto, mostly Russian Jews, educated themselves as Marxists. A teacher helped them. They became Marxists and became radicals and became organizers. I married him just because of having a child. I thought you had to have a certificate or something (laughter). He was an organizer and I was an organizer. I learned a great deal from him. I broke away from bourgeois feminism and turned to radical men. In my mother there was a struggle between her puritanism and her radical socialism. At one time she visited with Alexander Berkman, the anarchist. Women had to get their education from the radical men then. She was a radical and wanted to find out what anarchism was, and then she came back to socialism. My parents were populist socialists. My mother married Arthur Le Sueur. They studied at the People's College in Kansas. It was a really proletarian workers', farmers' college. They had a correspondence course; they believed in radical education. They wouldn't use bourgeois books, so they wrote their own law books, and another book about workers. English. They had a monthly magazine. I've got a few issues of it, but there must be more somewhere. It wasn't a socialist bourgeois school. *Appeal To Reason* came out of there—from that same locality. They had the largest circulation of a newspaper in America. It went all over the country to organized socialism in 1918. Many people couldn't read it, but they read it to them at meetings. I'm writing a novel now, *The Green Corn Rebellion of Oklahoma,* which came out of that. They voted in socialism in Oklahoma in 1918. Did you know that?

NR: My maternal grandfather came from Indiana. He was a pacifist, a professor. His mother was part of the suffragist movement. She was a school teacher. He subscribed to the *Appeal to Reason.* He was a Debs man, so I know something about the tradition. My father's father was a Russian Jewish socialist. Your ex-husband would have known who he was. He was a leading socialist Yiddish philosopher.

MLS: That heritage in the Middle West still exists. I think something great is going to come up from it; it just went underground. The people here have populist democratic socialist roots. And something else about that populist heritage. There were a lot of great third parties in the Middle West—the Populist Party in 1896 was a leading party not only in the Middle West but in the South also and the Farmer-Labor Party at one time elected the governor in Minnesota. This populism was part

of my roots, of my being in the farm movement and the Middle West when I was a child. That populist feeling of being part of a people was the basis of my work. I became a Communist because they were a wonderful populist movement during the thirties. They were the greatest organizers that ever existed in America and they organized the people. They carried on my idea of the people, which I got from the villages and from the actual people. I believe the language came from them. I believe the radicalism came from them, the new person came from them. That's where I came from, and all the development through Communism up to now was based on that. And I think that's a very important relationship. I just read a review of a marvelous book *[The Development of White Power in America].* It's the history of the dominance of white politics in America—the white puritan basis of politics. In *Green Corn Rebellion,* I'm trying to show that this exists in the people. The theory is not separated; the theory comes from practice. I think in the Middle West we always had this in the Communist Party: the Communists here were never affected by the puritan bureaucracy; they never listened to them. The party here in Pine County was the largest soviet in the world, in Pine County, Minnesota. When they got directions from the New York office, they just laughed. And when the party leaders came out to the Midwest, the local leaders they showed them what was corn and what was oats; they never knew. The membership just carried on that populist thing—organizing the people, the farm movement came from that. Even the party farm movement was based on that, farm schools, and so on. One of the great leaders from that movement just died, Clarence Sharp; he was 96. They never believed in the party following the Soviet Union. They didn't even go to the Soviet Union. There is a deep root in that—from the Populist party to the Communist Party in the thirties. And also, there is a very strange thing. Rosa Luxemburg appeared in *Appeal to Reason* during that period, in 1918, when she was murdered. The Midwest knew Rosa Luxemburg from *Appeal to Reason.* They knew when she was murdered and they knew the struggle of Rosa Luxemburg against the Social Democratic party. They read it in *Appeal to Reason*—her struggle with Lenin.

NR: Did you follow that yourself?

MLS: Yes, I was only fourteen. We always read the *Appeal to Reason.* If you didn't, somebody read it to you. But they had feeling about the power of the people, and I think it came up in the third party, in the Farmer-Labor Party. They had a big struggle between the leaders. Olson [Floyd B.] was a leader, who was actually probably elected by the Republicans. He was put in there by the reactionaries, not entirely, but basically. There was a rebellion in Oklahoma over a debate with Lenin about the elitist party. Luxemburg told Lenin he should have democracy, and he didn't agree with her. He said you had to have a dictatorship, or you would be destroyed. And they would have been. You had to have it in the beginning or the nation would destroy you, and he was also right. But just imagine that this was an argument in the Midwest people's movement that the socialist party had in their papers also.

NR: What year was the Green Corn Rebellion?

MLS: 1916—during the war. They opposed the war. By themselves, this little group of people were going to stop the war, international war, because of Rosa Luxemburg and the German Communists. A little bunch of people in Oklahoma was going to march to Washington and meet the international working class and stop the war. Isn't that marvelous? The Farmer-Labor Party was split on that subject—of the people versus the leaders—and I guess maybe they were defeated because the Republican party came in and defeated them in the split. The operatives tried to make them go together—destroy the people's movement and join the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party. I think this whole theory is returning now—of the people being the source of the struggle.

NR: I'm presenting a paper on working class writing—on Raymond Carver and Bobbie Ann Mason, who are the working class writers of my generation. But it's very hard to find writers who really want to talk about working people, the way people live.

MLS: They'll come up in another struggle the way they came up in the Farmer-Labor struggle. You won't find them and put them there from the bourgeois world. They will appear, like I was created by that struggle. I could have gone to the bourgeois world. I could have done that if I'd written what they wanted me to write. I once wrote children's stories for the *Ladies' Home Journal* and I'd get two thousand apiece for children's stories. If I'd just write about my children. They could never have any real socialism. I found I could make enough money. I could live for a year (laughter).

NR: I have the children's books you wrote for Knopf in the fifties. One of the things I was wondering about is why you write about men so much less than you write about women.

MLS: I was a woman. I don't know anything about men. I don't even want to know much about them (laughter). To find out what a woman is, is enough for me—my own experience. But I have some good stories about radical men.

NR: Yes, in the *Salute to Spring*.

MLS: As well as some also in this book [*Harvest Song*]. There are also a number of stories here about bourgeois marriages, a woman's struggle against bourgeois oppression from men. Another thing, you talk about oppression of writers in the party. There was a big struggle in the party. There were great cultural theoreticians in the party with Trachtenberg. *The Masses* was a great magazine. I was going to give mine to start a library, but I had to keep them and I went through them, they were so remarkable. All those years from 1916 they changed titles—*Masses, New Masses, Masses and Mainstream.* There were Mike Gold and Joseph North; they were Communist literary radicals, proletarian—from the working class. Culture came from the working class; the party believed that. Trachtenberg introduced me to Bill Patterson, a black writer. He nourished me; I learned from him. All these writers fought the bureaucracy all the time. They didn't express the orthodox party line. Mike Gold also fought against that. He finally was sent away. He was sent to France. Mike Gold had a great feeling about working writers—not about

women, however. There was a great group of proletarian artists who fought for the position of the American worker and the American proletariat as being the cultural basis of theory as well as literature. There was a painter, a big cartoonist who stopped cartooning. And the *Midwest Worker*—it started in Chicago in the beginning of '24—was moved to New York. That should never have been done either. It was started in Chicago. They used to publish poetry; they had a whole cultural section. You could find marvelous short stories in the *Daily Worker* during that whole period. They published many of my stories in the *Daily Worker*. McGrath wrote poetry; he's one of the big American poets; he's one of the great Communist poets. He was nurtured by that. Trachtenberg published his first book of poetry and a novel, and he published Neruda. Before anybody ever heard of Neruda, he was a best seller; he sold sixteen thousand copies of the first edition. There was this great poet who was in jail for so many years in Latvia whose poetry was brought out by guards and published. I can't think of his name.

NR: I can't think of it either.

MLS: He published his paperback, letters from prison. It's a collectors item now, I think. The John Reed Clubs and the organization of the unemployed is now beginning to be written about—the tremendous contribution of the Communist party at that period. The first mass organization I saw was here. The unemployed of the Communist party and the farmers.

NR: I first read Theodore Draper on the roots of American Communism. He really just goes up to 1920, and from what you read of him, it sounds like leaders talking to leaders and there's no masses.

MLS: In '24 it began to move toward the working class. A great army of Communist organizers grew up in '27—the beginning of the crash. In '27 they began to organize the IWW and Communist organizers organized the unemployed. Then the Farmer-Labor Party lost the election of 1938, the La Follette [Robert] movement was ultimately defeated. I think it was the beginning of fascism. It was terrible during the twenties and thirties. In 1924 the La Follette Movement in Minneapolis had been a great third party and was very much needed in the depression. The Communist party split. Those years saw the beginning of the organization of the big hunger marches of the unemployed—the first great movement I saw among the people, what the proletariat really was.

NR: Speaking of Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin, what should the relationship be between the leadership and the masses?

MLS: Rosa Luxemburg was against the theory of the vanguard party—the leaders... theoreticians—that theory came from them and that the organization of the revolution came from them. She said it would destroy the revolution—which it did. It became state capitalism, really. Rosa Luxemburg's lectures have been published recently—they kept them secret for a long time and wouldn't publish them, and she was very passionate about that, in the German party. The development of the political power of the party in Germany was because of two women—Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. They organized workers' apartments,

really workers' social structure in Germany. All those Bolsheviks hated her; they called her The Bitch. When they were meeting around tables in Switzerland, she was telling them that you couldn't have these elitist parties.

NR: To go back to men.

MLS: You asked me why I don't write more about men. I've never been a man (laughter).

NR: You don't write much about love—romance. Is that because that's bourgeois?

MLS: Yes, it's bourgeois. I was trying to get away from bourgeois ideologies of sex, of romance and the family. That was one of the major things of being a feminist then. My mother had a terrible struggle. She had to raise three children. I often wonder if she should have gotten married.

NR: Could you comment on Bob Brown?

MLS: He was a great painter.

NR: Was he a companion?

MLS: He was more than that. I got all my aesthetics and feeling about art in my work as a writer from him. He was a great person.

NR: Do you have continuity in what you have done in your writing?

MLS: I certainly do now. That's why that book is so great to me [*Harvest Song,* West End Press.] It starts with the early bourgeois stories and comes up to the radical labor stories. It's coming into what I was working at all the time, even the form. I was even against the bourgeois form of narration because it's a class form. The bourgeois form of narration is hero meets an opposing force, comes in a conflict, and wins. All bourgeois stories are based on that linear structure—which isn't what happens at all.

NR: So you are more interested in consciousness and thought?

MLS: Of course. They just published a book of mine now called *Winter Prairie Woman,* which I think brings out that whole way of looking at things—as round, circular. I think of cyclical structure as against bourgeois structure.

NR: The feminists haven't been very interested in that.

MLS: They are getting better. They were writing like men for a long time. There are several theoretical books now that say even language is patriarchal, that it was created by a patriarchal society. I believe that. There is a work by a French woman writer [Kristeva] called *Desire and Language.* She says that capitalism took the eroticism out of language—made it analytical, which is true, and killed language—killed the tempo and the rhythm of language—which I always thought—killed writing lyrically, writing emotionally, not writing in a straight line.

NR: Did Trachtenberg support you on that—because you were doing it in the thirties?

MLS: He didn't change my sentences. He liked them. The grammarian wants to put them into nouns, verbs, and so on—I never wrote like that even then. He was good. He was interested in Dadaism. Those writers came to the League of American Writers meeting in '35—all the French avant garde. They were all Communists then. He believed in the new forms, for example Gropper. I don't

think Gropper would have excited too much without Trachtenberg.
NR: Feminists call it a feminist voice. You are calling it a popular voice.
MLS: Yes, the bourgeois world is a patriarchal, hierarchal world. The oppression of women was upheld by patriarchal theory—structures of religion. This book that I was just speaking about, about white structure, shows how government, even the Constitution, was influenced by bourgeois, white thinking *[The Development of White Power in America].*
NR: Did you get involved in any of the women's struggles, especially in the period before the popular front?
MLS: I was involved with women's struggles because of my mother. I was marching in 1916 in a feminist parade in New York for the vote. I was sixteen. We had this big parade and I wore white.
NR: What about women's struggles in the party?
MLS: Women were very antagonistic to me in the party, even Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. In the Women's Commission they wanted not to publish *The Girl.* I think I presented it to them in the hopes that they would support it. They told me I should write about women like them—the organizing woman, the intelligent woman, the intellectual woman, the role model. They disapproved of taking a working class girl like that—not even making her a hero, according to them. That was the only time I ever had a conversation with them, the only time I ever submitted myself to them. Mother Bloor criticized me. She said "You never go out of the kitchen."
NR: Did you know Mary Heaton Vorst?
MLS: She had a lot of influence on me as a writer later on. She came out here to cover the strike. She wrote about the strike, and she wrote about women. Women had a sort of a bourgeois thing against each other, I think. It took me a long time to become intimate with women, as sisters. As I say, these four women I mentioned never got together. We avoided each other. We were pitted against each other. The men had a meeting around a table—the chairman during the meeting was saying, "We haven't had a woman chairman. We should have a woman chairman." We were sitting there. They didn't ask us. Ford, who was running for president then, in '32, was on this committee. For some reason, they pointed me out. I was sitting there like a lump. Why don't we have her, they thought, because she looks all right. I was sitting right there, and they said. "Do you think she can do it?" He said, "I'll be sitting on the stage; I'll coach her." If I'd had any guts, I would have walked out. But I felt intimidated. Here we were, including Muriel Rukeyser. She had just written that wonderful poem about the miners who had silicosis, which was one of the first poems about a struggle like that. I admired her very much. But we never talked. Tillie Olsen? We just passed each other.
NR: Did you have a relationship with women in the movement in the Midwest?
MLS: I lived with a bunch of women. You read *The Girl*? I got the whole thing from them. That was their life. I was always with the working women and the farm women in my youth, but I was scared of these other women. It was a real struggle for women to begin to talk to each other. Women were enemies—rivals. I just felt

there was a deep class thing between us. It really was true. We were a different class. Muriel Rukeyser was upper class. Tillie Olsen considered herself a proletarian. Josephine Herbst considered herself a middle-class person. She didn't consider herself a worker or even a farmer. I think it was a kind of a class feeling.
NR: What about differences between women in the movement in the twenties and thirties over struggles for child care or for equal pay and having to convince the Communist party that those things were worth struggling for? When you worked with women, did you raise what we now call women's issues—child care centers, equal pay for equal work, abortion, birth control?
MLS: I didn't have to raise them. I was part of the whole. The issues were jobs, hunger, prostitution. I didn't raise them. I wasn't coming down from above. I was there. I was hungry. I wasn't there to organize them into something. We *did* organize. Just to get food, we started organizing.
NR: I was very moved by the Sacco Vanzetti piece in *Salute to Spring*.
MLS: The short story?
NR: It seems to me the best thing I've seen on Sacco Vanzetti because it interweaves the letters with the consciousness of the characters
MLS: We had a great international defense. I was just reading a wonderful book called *Red Angel*. It's about a woman organizer who married a Japanese in California. She wrote a book about organizing. She went around with bail money in her pocket to get people out of jail. It didn't matter who you were; you got bail money. I never was an organizer.
NR: You just went with people and helped them live better. Were you a writer first and then went among the people to write?
MLS: Lorca says the artist should take down the images of the people and give them a form or eternity.
NR: I was thinking of James Agee *[Let Us Now Praise Famous Men]*.
MLS: I love that book.
NR: He was not of those people.
MLS: But he saw the beauty. That's what I did. I thought that only the proletarian culture could be the human culture because it wasn't based on greed, or based on possession, or based upon authority.
NR: For all the reasons you just said, the proletarian culture is the uplifting, is the human culture.
MLS: It's the only human culture there is. The bourgeois is becoming less human. *The Communist Manifesto* prophesied that.
NR: When I read Mike Gold, he seemed to be saying that we have to write about the proletarian culture for opportunistic reasons—to influence the proletarian culture in order to take state power. And I see a subtle difference.
MLS: Subtle! Every difference in the world. That's a bourgeois idea—to take power, to do anything to get power. People who have had no power are the only human beings that exist in the world today. Talk about corruptive... I sometimes feel sorry for Bush [Sr.] and those people. They were born in it... For three

generations. They have never known what a human being was. He doesn't even look like one any more (laughter). That to me was the basis of the People's College—to educate the people. Do you read Paolo Friere? He says you don't bring your education to them.

NR: You extract it from them. I use that in my own teaching style.

MLS: Have you read his book?

NR: Yes. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Yes, I think the world shows that's true now. The only source of the humane impulse is from the people, from the hungry, from the oppressed.

NR: There's another question. Do you see the main problem as class control of society? The feminists have raised the issue—maybe the issue they are raising is that the idea of class is necessary but not sufficient. That is, that maybe even if we take state power, we have to fight for women.

MLS: I think the word power is not going to be the word for the future. Getting power is self-destructive. All the women talking about power has turned me off too. We need to think in terms of relationship. And I think the Women's Movement talking about power... I don't like the word empowered even. In their biological determination they are the only people that care to feed people, and foster relationships instead of elitism. That's what's coming, I think, in the global world. You can't even have a market, just a power market. You create too many starving people.

NR: The question of selling raises another question. What is called the discourse revolution—advertising—has so contaminated the language. You can't even say the word 'love' anymore without selling Coca Cola.

MLS: That's what the Bolsheviks did. That's what Rosa Luxemburg told them. They would die from taking power, elitist power, and they did.

NR: Your work in terms of the language seems very direct. In other words, Mary McCarthy writing in the same period used a lot of irony—saying what you don't mean rather than saying what you do mean.

MLS: That's bourgeois rhetoric. The whole thing has to be based on the lie—covert action.

NR: You were mentioning the surrealists and the dadaists. They were using the lie in order to show people that the bourgeoisie lies. I find a very direct relationship between what you say and what you mean and what you feel.

MLS: If you are speaking of bourgeois rhetoric, well, you can't come out and say, 'I'm going to destroy you.' You say, 'I'm going to save you.'

NR: Do you think *The Prairie Woman* has this direct relationship between theme and language?

MLS: It's about consciousness. It's about using nature as a positive force. Not since Emerson... Emerson really talked about nature as a positive force and he and Whitman argued against the commercialization of nature. And *The Prairie Woman* returns nature and the thinker...

MLS: Nutrition. She feeds them.

NR: It's a very positive relationship, and there's a sense of a cycle of life.
MLS: That's another thing: Capitalism or the bourgeois world are based on a straight line, and that's part of this destruction. If you go fast enough on a straight line, that's called progress, but you can destroy everything. It leads to the bottom—a straight line leads to the bottom. If you keep circling you can't do that, because it's going to return. As a writer—to think on that cause and effect, going towards a goal, attaining a goal and winning. A straight line is deathly. Our whole society is based on it.
NR: You raised your children by yourself. My mother found a very hostile environment in the radical movement to raising a child by herself.
MLS: The reaction to having a child was hostile in the radical movement. When I had my children they said, "You're through as a radical, that's the end of you." You remember Anna Louise Strong? She was a feminist. Rachel and Deborah were about six or seven years old when I introduced them: "These are my children." And she screamed, "You're dead now as a writer, as a socialist, you're dead." That was true in the Communist Party until they, the Popular Front, began to have jobs and make money. Then they all had children when they had a salary. Well, it was somewhat true. If you had a child, there were some things you could not do.
NR: Did you share your writing with your working class woman friends?
MLS: They read my writing. There were writers who could have been great woman writers. They had to be bourgeois writers to make a fortune. Many women writers had to do that. There wasn't any man that was going to marry a woman writer in the middle class world. If she was going to be a writer, she had to be a nun. She really thought she had to eschew sex, even—and just write, devote herself to that.
Rachel: What about Grace Flandreat?
MLS: She had money. She wrote quite a bit.
Rachel: And her husband thought it was O.K.?
MLS: It was just like playing tennis, or something.
NR: Were you on the outs with the bourgeois officials in St. Paul?
MLS: I made my living from them. I had a class in writing that a lot of upper class women came to. I had no degree. I couldn't teach at the University. I really had my class because we had two of the most terrible professors at the University [of Minnesota]—[Allen] Tate and Robert Penn Warren, who were for ambiguity—you write so nobody could know what you meant at all and they were teaching this.
NR: They are considered Cold War critics. They were against Communists. Writing for ambiguity was an opposition to proletarian writing.
MLS: They were snobs. They did a lot of injury to students. They had good farm students and people like that—some of them committed suicide. They just corrupted them, tried to get them into another world that they never could get into.
NR: Did you earn money for teaching the class?
MLS: I lived on that—one class a week. One thing about Tillie Olsen and Herbst and myself. It was really something to challenge the bourgeois world. Women

could write in the bourgeois world. And you had a choice. Herbst could have been a popular writer. And Tillie Olsen also. Well, she didn't write for all those years. That was the bad part. If I hadn't written, I would have died. She couldn't write after—she tried to write the real thing and she couldn't do it. If you didn't write for all those years. That was the bad part... If you didn't write from your being and have an audience—and I think there was great suffering amongst all of us. Too bad we weren't closer together amongst all of us. Too bad we weren't closer together. I don't understand why we didn't... I was living right across the road from Tillie Olsen one time—and didn't even know it—in San Francisco. She came out with that story, that wonderful story *[Tell Me A Riddle]* and I discovered that she lived right across the street from my daughter Deborah, with her daughters. I was working in an office. She came over to see me. We just stood in the doorway; we didn't have anything to say to each other at all. We were afraid of each other, I guess.

NR: That's interesting because she has her whole book about *Silences*.

MLS: If she had written it then, she could have developed the theme of her own suffering of silence. She must have had a terrible feeling inside until that great great story got all that publicity. She must have had a terrible feeling inside that she hadn't fulfilled the writing that she started out doing. She didn't have time. She had all those jobs. She must have suffered terrible in those silences. And then when she found out that she couldn't really write again, couldn't really write from the deeps again... if I hadn't written my notebooks... It's like dancing or anything. If you don't do it, it dies in you. A writer that goes away from the bourgeois world, has a lot of terrible things in herself, fetishes, what to write about, what is the truth. What are you going to write about? What is the truth about you? I think Mary Heaton Vorse had a big struggle over that. It show in her work. She really fought it.

NR: She wrote commercially to make money.

MLS: Then it's hard to go back—to go where the workers are struggling. Many writers are kidnapped completely. They make a success of selling. Then you just keep going; you can't go back.

NR: I don't want to tire you out. We've had a good talk. You tell me when you've had enough.

MLS: Have we settled everything? I get really stimulated by these conversations. I have been looking forward to this for a long time.

NR: Me too. I know in my own case, the witch-hunt-McCarthy period had a profound effect on my work as a writer. I was just starting out in the late fifties and early sixties, coming from a socialist family on the subversive list. The only place I felt I could write openly and not cover up was in the radical press. Was the radical press—or even a non-stream press such as West End Press that still publishes your work—a sufficient mainstay for you during the bleak years?

Rachel: She had years when nobody would publish her. Even the children's books Meridel did for Knopf were sold under the table. What could be more non-

threatening than a book about Nancy Hanks, Abe Lincoln's mother? Still, because Meridel's name was on it, the booksellers kept even those books hidden.

NR: A lot of us had to decide in those years whether to capitulate and give in to the F.B.I. and the House Un-American Activities Committee or to go ahead being radicals come hell or high water.

MLS: I didn't have a bourgeois career to worry about. If the F.B.I. came to me, I slammed the door. Sometimes it seemed like I was spending all my time helping old friends out of trouble with the government. Those were very lean years. Sometimes the only way I could stay alive as a writer was to keep my journals. My daughters were nearly grown but just to keep myself alive physically I took any odd job I could find—from factory hand to field hand, even driving a truck. But the main thing is I never gave up writing in my journals. I knew things would have to get better for us eventually.

NR: And they did get better. You were close to eighty when *The Girl* was finally published and the Feminist Press edition of *Ripening* brought you widespread public attention. Has this given you the inspiration you need to produce more work and keep going?

MLS: I can't be as active helping young writers as I'd like to be. They have to wheel me on the platform of these conferences in a wheelchair, but of course, yes, having an audience to publish for that isn't trying to buy me off or shut me up is wonderfully gratifying. I have just published *Winter Prairie Woman,* a long short story, and West End Press will soon be coming out with a new novel of mine relating to a story by Edgar Allen Poe. I never had a time when I wasn't a writer, but it does feel good to know the audience is there waiting.

NR: You seem to have a powerful sense of the worth of your own writing. I don't mean to suggest that there's anything wrong with that or that it's in any way unwarranted. It's just that I'm envious. First the McCarthy days greatly restricted what I could write and where I could write and even now with modest—very modest—literary publications, there are days when I find it very difficult to write when there is no regular outlet for my work. I wish I had the determination and sense of self-value that shows through in your work, in your journals, and in your public person. If I had to take away a message for myself, to bolster myself, on the basis of our conversation I would say that the important thing is to believe in your own voice, to try to find an expression for a natural relationship with the masses of the people, perhaps the oppressed, not just women, but men and children as well, and to believe in the power of that voice regardless of what the bourgeois world or the mainstream world does to you. Does that sound like a message you would want to leave with a young writer?

MLS: I guess I am tired. I'll leave it in your words. They sound fine.

BRECHT IN L.A.

Rick Mitchell

Characters (in order of appearance)
Ruth Berlau
Bertolt Brecht
Angel (Latino)
Tom
Fritz Lang
Charles Laughton
Elsa Lanchester
Marshal
(If some actors play more than one role—i.e., if the actor playing LAUGHTON also plays LANG, the actor playing TOM also plays the MARSHAL, and if the actor playing BERLAU also plays LANCHESTER—the play can be performed with five actors.)

Setting
Los Angeles County. 1940s.
(Brief scenes in Copenhagen, New York and Washington, D.C.)

Note: *Brecht in L.A.* must be played at a brisk pace, and the set should be somewhat abstract so that there's little or no down time between scenes. Additionally, productions may utilize video imagery to subvert and/or enhance the on-stage action. (If you use video, avoid—as much as possible—imagery that has too literal of a connection to the stage action.) Also, several of the characters, especially the men, are often smoking—or at least handling—cigars. (The size of a character's cigar may increase or decrease as his/her power increases or decreases.) As far as the character of BRECHT goes, it is important that BRECHT seems vulnerable at times, that he cares about many of the people around him, about the world, ideas. In spite of Brecht's many essays that call for a theater without emotion, the character BRECHT should often be empathetic. When a character's line ends with "—" the following character should speak over the previous character's last words. And there are numerous other times throughout the text where slight overlapping of dialogue (and/or a compression of time/space between lines) will help the actors to play the proper "rhythm" of the piece (which is crucial). When working on this play, please keep in mind Brecht's advice to the players of the Berliner Ensemble: "Keep it quick, light and strong."

ACT I

PROLOGUE

(Throughout much of the play, ANGEL may sit in a far corner of the stage, at a workbench full of books and manuscripts, rolling cigars. LIGHTS UP on BERLAU, who unfolds a poem written on a well-worn piece of paper.)

BERLAU

From a poem by Bertolt Brecht...to me, Ruth Berlau...
Splendid is that which burns in fire
Without turning to cold ash.
Sister, you're my heart's desire.
Burning, but not turning to ash.
(BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP. BRECHT and BERLAU are embracing, looking up at the stars. BRECHT holds a bag of groceries.)

ANGEL

A winter evening, Copenhagen.

BRECHT

(BRECHT points to some stars.)
Do you see it now?

BERLAU

What?

BRECHT

The letter?

ANGEL

Mid 1930s.

BERLAU

(pause) No.

BRECHT

Right there... The W.

BERLAU

Oh, okay... I think I see it.

BRECHT

Right up there. *(BRECHT draws a slanted W in the air.)*

BERLAU

Yes, yes...

BRECHT

Cassiopeia has five stars. And that's ours, in the middle. Where both sides come together... From now on, whenever we're apart, we'll always meet up there.

BERLAU

Up in heaven...

BRECHT

All right? *(BERLAU laughs, kisses BRECHT.)*

BERLAU

But heaven's not real.

BRECHT

The star's real. You can see it.

BERLAU

It's unattainable.

BRECHT

But it's always there. Burning.

BERLAU

I need something I can hold.

BRECHT

Here, you can carry the groceries.
(BRECHT hands her the grocery bag.)

BERLAU

Too bad you can't carry me.
(BRECHT scoops her up.) Aaahhh...
Brecht, be careful. There are eggs in there.

SCENE ONE

(BRECHT'S front yard.)

(Discretely, under partial cover, TOM—the BRECHTS' next-door neighbor—may periodically scan the scene in front of BRECHT'S house with a telescope, other surveillance devices, throughout much of the play. At the beginning of the scene, BERLAU stands near BRECHT with an empty grocery bag. BRECHT, with an open loaf of Wonderbread on his lap, is eating a slice of bread. A pile of mail sits next to him. BERLAU works, rakes, takes notes. BRECHT smokes a cigar. Note: scene settings may be projected or announced by ANGEL.)

ANGEL

Los Angeles, California. 1940s.

BRECHT

Proper bread cannot be sliced and then sit in a waxed-paper wrapper for several weeks.

BERLAU

It's the only one you haven't tasted yet.

BRECHT

All I want is proper German bread... I'd even take French...Italian...

BERLAU

Brecht, you've already tried that.

BRECHT

No, I've tried *American* versions of French and Italian. Which, underneath the bright fluorescent lighting, look decent enough. So you pick it up while it's still warm, plop it on the dinner table... Slice off the end... And then the inside, it just crumbles. Or the knife doesn't cut through at first. It just pushes down on the crust, like you're cutting into a sponge. There's nothing beneath the surface but *scheisse. (BERLAU intermittently rakes.)* And people work too hard around here to cover up the desert...

BERLAU

The garden looks like shit.

BRECHT

How am I supposed to get any writing done if I have to water the grass twice a day... Make sure everything looks neat, perfect. Better than real life, but lifeless... Like a goddamn corpse at a wake... Like this neighborhood of hideous stucco boxes...enormous garages with living quarters built onto the back. Even these houses, they make them to last fifteen years...out of mud and chicken wire... Nothing has any permanence here. For inspiration, I like to stroll through plazas. But there aren't any. Nobody even walks. A writer needs to feel history, change. But it never gets cold. It never rains. The trees barely shed their leaves... Cease paying the water bill, everything stops blooming. And everyone's worrying about our yard as Hitler's butchery decides the fate of Europe fifteen thousand kilometres away. While we sit here and wither. Where the weather's always cheerful. Dry, bright, happy... Everybody's always so happy. Because they're too influenced by all this sunshine...which so dessicates the brain that the writers who move out here end up only being able to churn out mindless drivel. So maybe if I keep sitting outside I'll soon write something acceptable to Hollywood...so I can afford to maintain my goddamn grass.

BERLAU

Where are the rest of the gardening tools?

BRECHT

In the garage.

BERLAU

Here.

(BERLAU hands BRECHT some notes.)

BRECHT

What's this?

BERLAU

Some ideas for a film about bread.

BRECHT

We have to write about workers.

BERLAU

The film examines a German breadmaker...

BRECHT

If I don't sell something quickly, I'm going to lose my fucking house. *(BRECHT pockets notes.)*

BERLAU

You have to convince Laughton to play *Galileo*.

BRECHT

It needs a better translation.

BERLAU

I've spent over six months on that.

BRECHT

We just need someone who's a bit more familiar with the nuances of English...

BERLAU

Perhaps a few of the idioms could be improved.

BRECHT

I'd like to rewrite the entire play.

BERLAU

The Swiss production was very successful. *(BERLAU continues working.)*

BRECHT

The world's changed in the past few years. *(BRECHT watches BERLAU work, eventually embraces her.)* You know, you're even more attractive when you're proletarian.

BERLAU

I'm attracted to proletarians, too.

BRECHT

Wonderful. *(BRECHT pulls her close, kisses her.)*

BERLAU

But I also like you for some reason. *(BERLAU pushes away.)*

BRECHT

Certainly, my writing advances the cause of the worker—

BERLAU

I'm going to go trim the hedges. *(BERLAU begins to leave.)*

BRECHT

You'll save me some work.

BERLAU

I'll save your wife some work. *(BRECHT writes and reads a bit. BERLAU works. BRECHT reads BERLAU'S notes, jots down some words in his notebook. TOM puts away telescope, ENTERS BRECHT'S yard, stops, watches BRECHT write, walks up to BRECHT.)*

TOM

Hey, there... *(BRECHT looks up.)* I live right next door, in the blue bungalow... *(BRECHT continues writing.) (pause)* Are you a writer? *(BRECHT nods yes.)* Hey, so am I... I just started getting really serious about it a couple of months ago... *(TOM sniffs the air.)* What's that smell?

BRECHT

I don't smell anything. *(TOM tries to discretely smell his hands, armpits. Throughout scene, he tries to discern where smell is coming from.)*

TOM

What are you working on?

BRECHT

Well, I have several projects...

TOM

(Sticking his finger on BRECHT'S notebook.) What's that?

BRECHT

A poem. *(BRECHT takes out and looks over a manuscript.)*

TOM

Hey, that's great. I'm working on my first book right now: "Hope." The main story's about this boy who's a genius. But he's also poor and can't quite get it together, until his dad takes him to this conference on patriotism in Omaha sponsored by the Baptist Church and the FBI... What are you reading?

BRECHT

(pause) A future book of mine.

TOM

Hey, I read books, too... *(BRECHT gives quick, disinterested smile.)* Hey...you know how sometimes when you're in a book store, just checkin' things out, how a particular book just reaches out and grabs you by the throat?

BRECHT

(pause) No.

TOM

Hey, what's your name, by the way?

BRECHT

Brecht.

TOM

Breath?

BRECHT

Brecht.

TOM

Nice to meet you, Breath. I'm Tom. *(TOM shakes BRECHT'S hand.)* You know what I love about L.A.? There are just so many artists here... Everywhere... I mean, I know this guy...he's been comin' to where I

work, Hollywood Bowl, for about five years. Always says hello. And I just found out he was the producer of *Tarzan Finds a Son*. And he didn't even know I was a writer... He told me to get him a script... I like what...what I think Orson Welles said, "A man's gotta walk his own straight and narrow path..." You do that and good things happen, you know. I'm even getting into performing now. You see, there was this show comin' up at the Bowl, "Roman Holiday," and the director, he asked me if I wanted to be a Trojan. I said, "You want me to play a condom?" He said, "No, a Trojan soldier." *(BERLAU ENTERS, continues yardwork.)* Hey, I don't mean to be rude or anything, but I really gotta get home so I can get some writing done. But it was great talkin' to you, and I'll make sure I stop by again sometime.

BRECHT

Ja. Hoffentlich.

TOM

What?

BRECHT

Yes.

TOM

Are...are you German*? (BRECHT nods yes.)* From Germany?

BRECHT

Correct.

TOM

That's not your wife...

BRECHT

A friend.

TOM

You know, if I hadn't stopped over here I would have never known that I had a neighbor straight from Germany...

BRECHT

Well, there were a few detours...

TOM

What sort of detours?

BRECHT

Denmark, Russia...

TOM

Russia?

BRECHT

Yes.

TOM

You were in Russia?

BRECHT

Just before leaving for America.

TOM

Do you wanna go back?

BRECHT

When the war's over.

TOM

I guess you can't go back any sooner.

BRECHT

Not with the Nazis in power.

TOM

Nazis aren't exactly welcome in the U.S.

BRECHT

I would hope not.

TOM

And neither are Communists. *(BERLAU ENTERS, working. She nears BRECHT.)*

BRECHT

There are many different forms of Nazism. *(TOM notices letter postmarked in Mexico.)*

TOM

What's that?

BRECHT

What?

TOM

That envelope.

BRECHT

Why?

TOM

Oh...I was just noticing that...that unusual postmark... Pohs-stal-ee???

BERLAU

Postale. It's Spanish.

TOM

(To BERLAU.) You're Mexican?

BERLAU

Danish. I lived in Spain for a while.

BRECHT

The letter's from Mexico... *(BERLAU returns to her work.)*

TOM

(To BRECHT.) You must know people from everywhere.

BRECHT

(BRECHT holds up letter.) This is just an acquaintance from the Free German movement.

TOM

(TOM smiles.) Well, good meeting you, friend...

(BRECHT smiles, nods. TOM EXITS. BRECHT reads, writes, as BERLAU continues working. Eventually, ANGEL ENTERS smoking a fat cigar, surveying yard.)

ANGEL

(To BERLAU.) Is this your house?

BERLAU

It's his.

ANGEL

(To BRECHT.) I'd like to help you with the lawn.

BRECHT

I don't need any help.

ANGEL

Everything's overgrown.

BRECHT

The lawn's fine.

BERLAU

This is the last time I'm doing yardwork.

(BERLAU EXITS, continues working.)

BRECHT

(To ANGEL.) I can take care of it myself.

ANGEL

No problem. *(ANGEL begins to leave.)*

BRECHT

How much?

ANGEL

Vamos a ver... (Purveys yard.) I can take care of the grass, shrubs...weeds...for a very low price.

BRECHT

How much?

ANGEL

(pause) Ten...ten dollars a month.

BRECHT

That's too high.

ANGEL

I gotta eat.

BRECHT

I understand that... But I was recently forced to move here from another country.

ANGEL

So was I.

BRECHT

So I don't have much income right now. But if you can take care of the entire garden, and do it well...I can pay you five.

ANGEL

(Laughs.) Five dollars? For all this?

BRECHT

Well, you don't need to trim the shrubs and weed every time you're here...

ANGEL

It's easier I do it every week.

BRECHT

Suit yourself.

ANGEL

Tengo gasolina, mí troca, máquinas—

BRECHT

I'll give you seven.

ANGEL

I can start off at eight. But beginning next month, you pay ten.

BRECHT

The garden's so small...I'm sure it won't take any time at all.

ANGEL

Why you don't do it yourself?

BRECHT

I, uhhh...I would. But I have too much work.

ANGEL

You work for nothin'?

BRECHT

Well, no... I mean, I try not to... But I'm a writer.

ANGEL

You need to smoke a *puro, señor*.

BRECHT

At least the average person can afford a five-cent cigar. *(BRECHT holds up his cigar.)*

ANGEL

In Cuba, the master cigar maker rolls only the finest tobacco...freehand, without any molds or *máquinas*. The primary tools *son las manos*. *(BRECHT periodically jots down notes.)*

BRECHT

Without mechanization, workers can't buy cigars.

ANGEL

Machines are causing workers to lose their jobs.

BRECHT

The problem is who owns them.

ANGEL

It doesn't matter.

BRECHT

If workers owned the means of production, they wouldn't be exploited.

ANGEL

The rhythm of the machines, their noise, destroys the work place... They make it impossible to think... In Cuba, before the *fascistas* took power, before cigar machines proliferated, there were lecterns in the cigar workroom. *Y todo el día*, the workers were able to listen to readings of *la literatura*, political philosophy... The stories of workers, the *pensamientos* of Marx, Neruda, Martí read from the lectern, affected the rhythms of the work. And traces of the readings clung to the craftsmen's *puros*...the way the handprints of the sculptor cling to the clay bust. *(ANGEL checks a tool or two of his gardening trade.)*

BRECHT

This whole idea of workers learning reminds me of my epic theater, which encourages the spectator to transform the—

ANGEL

(ANGEL looks at watch.) I have to go mow a lawn.

BRECHT

When can you start working for me, uh...what's your name?

ANGEL

Angel. I come every Friday. First thing in the morning.

BRECHT

And I'm paying you seven dollars a month.

ANGEL

Eight.

BRECHT

Eight?

ANGEL

You said eight.

BRECHT

Fine. Eight dollars a month.

ANGEL

And then ten.

BRECHT

Once I start making sufficient income...

ANGEL

I own my own lawnmower, *señor*, so you cannot exploit me, correct?

BRECHT

But I own the land. Although, of course, I'm going to treat you fairly—

ANGEL

Buenas tardes, señor. (BERLAU continues trimming, BRECHT writes.)

BERLAU

Here. *(She hands the hedge clippers to BRECHT.)*

BRECHT

What's the matter?

BERLAU

My hands are starting to blister. *(BRECHT gets amorous.)*

BRECHT

That's nothing that a good fuck can't clear up.

BERLAU

Your wife and children are in the house.

BRECHT

We'll go to your place.

BERLAU

(BERLAU hands hedge clippers to BRECHT.) Why don't you finish up?

BRECHT
I have get to my meeting. *(BRECHT puts on his cap.)*

BERLAU
You've been wearing the same shirt and pants for the past two days.

BRECHT
I'm stopping by later tonight to finish the play.

BERLAU
Tonight won't work.

BRECHT
Why not?

BERLAU
I have plans.

BRECHT
With who?

BERLAU
I have to go out.

BRECHT
Where?

BERLAU
To the laundromat... Maybe you can help.

BRECHT
I'll stop by tomorrow night.

BERLAU
Maybe you shouldn't stop by at all.

BRECHT
Ruth, I'm sorry I haven't been able to make it over the past few nights... But whenever I'm not around...you have to put on that white nightgown I gave you, look up at our star... Which, like me, will always be there.

BERLAU
The star hasn't come out since we moved to Los Angeles.

BRECHT
It must be the smog.... C'mon. *(EXEUNT.)*

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: Since correspondence between the Free German group in Mexico and persons in the Los Angeles area has been carried on...it is recommended that the following subjects be placed on the National Censorship Watch List for ninety days: 1. [blacked out]. 2. [blacked out]. 3. Bertolt Brecht, 1063-26 Street, Santa Monica, California.)

SCENE TWO
(FRITZ LANG'S office.)

(LANG smokes a huge cigar, BRECHT a small one.)

LANG
In America, donuts will have a much stronger appeal than bread.

BRECHT
Donuts are going to detract from the movie's gestus.

LANG
It's what?

BRECHT
Social commentary...

LANG
You were talking about a loaf of bread.

BRECHT
If the audience can be made to see a loaf of bread in a radically different light, then they might see the world differently—

LANG
Just give me the story.

BRECHT
It's the Depression. The father's a wheat farmer—from Iowa, destitute, living in Chicago... And the family's tired of waiting in bread lines... Especially because the mother's bread is so much tastier than any bread from the city...

LANG
Why don't you change it to jelly donuts?

BRECHT
No.

LANG
Glazed crullers.

BRECHT
(Adamantly.) It's bread or nothing.

LANG

You know...I've been here too fucking long... And...I've tried. And I still try. To create something substantive. But it's like slamming my head into a fucking brick wall.

BRECHT

Lang, you've done incredible work...*M, Metropolis—*

LANG

In Germany! Here, you do the best you can while dealing with censors, the American government. Which thinks all Jews are Communists... *(Looks at watch.)* And I have to go right now. Because they want me to direct a melodrama about a sideshow contortionist who becomes a pin-up girl... And I have to attend a meeting with the "star," who can't remember her lines because she drinks Grand Marnier all day. But the film's going to get made. You know why? Because Americans go to the cinema to see fucking movie stars. *(LANG begins to EXIT.)*

BRECHT

Could you use my wife for an acting role?

LANG

Helly?

BRECHT

Yeah.

LANG

Her accent's too strong.

BRECHT

You're making movies about Nazis.

LANG

The only Germans we ever show are soldiers. But if the studio wants me to cast a female Nazi, I'll recommend your wife.
(LANG EXITS.)

BRECHT

I'm sure she'll appreciate it.

(Projection: From "On Thinking About Hell," by Bertolt Brecht.
In Hell too
There are, I've no doubt, these luxuriant gardens
With flowers as big as trees, which of course wither
Unhesitantly if not nourished with very expensive water....
And endless processions of cars
Lighter than their own shadows, faster than
Mad thoughts, gleaming vehicles in which
Jolly-looking people come from nowhere and are nowhere bound.
And houses built for happy people, therefore standing empty
Even when lived in.)

SCENE THREE

(LAUGHTON'S house.)

LAUGHTON

What we need is art. Art! *(LAUGHTON spills his whiskey.)* Now you're probably thinking, this actor...he has a villa high on the hill in Pacific Palisades, overlooking the sea... Two full refrigerators, antiques, rare paintings, foreign automobiles... How can he complain? Pour me another one, will you? *(BRECHT pours drink.)* Well, I'll tell you... If I just go with the flow, continue working with Hollywood hacks...I'm whoring myself. And fifty years from now, my possessions, my work...it won't mean squat to anyone.

BRECHT

I realize that the material you've had to deal with hasn't always been...first rate.

LAUGHTON

At the moment I'm playing a bloke from the Australian outback who adopts several orphans...

BRECHT

Sounds like a real tear-jerker.

LAUGHTON

The children, they're constantly running around, hanging on my arms and legs. But I don't know how to deal with children... To tell you the truth, I can't stand them. And the script, it's full of syrupy sentiment.

BRECHT

That's what Americans want.

LAUGHTON

It's what the studios want... I wish you could have seen my stage work.

BRECHT

Even in your films, Laughton, one can tell you're an artist of the theater, steeped in the Elizabethan tradition.

LAUGHTON

Well, I *am* English.

BRECHT

Your acting suggests control, yet vulnerability... A critical attitude towards the material...

LAUGHTON

This Galileo of yours, I think he's right up there with Lear, Hamlet.

BRECHT

Why don't you play the lead?

LAUGHTON

Oh, I wouldn't have the slightest idea of how to begin.

BRECHT

You have to play Galileo. On Broadway. You'd be perfect.

LAUGHTON

I'm honored, Bert... May I call you Bert?

BRECHT

Well, actually most people—

LAUGHTON

But I'm afraid I have several films scheduled.

BRECHT

We'll work around them. And we need to get you a better translation.

LAUGHTON

Have you met William Faulkner yet?

BRECHT

The revision needs an actor, not a novelist. Someone who can make the English language work in performance. Which is why I think you ought to collaborate with me.

LAUGHTON

I'm not a writer.

BRECHT

Don't you rewrite your film scripts?

LAUGHTON

Well, some of my lines. But I do it on the set. In the midst of rehearsing, or between takes...

BRECHT

That's exactly how writing should be done. With actors, a stage...

LAUGHTON

I think Galileo could use a bit more passion.

BRECHT

Passion gets in the way of thinking.

LAUGHTON

Good scientists are passionate about their work.

BRECHT

There cannot be any emotion in epic theater.

LAUGHTON

Then why would the spectator care about Galileo?

BRECHT

The spectator has to think.

LAUGHTON

Right, about the character.

BRECHT

About history, about Galileo's concerns as today's concerns.

LAUGHTON

There needs to be more tension.

BRECHT

There's tension between property owners, the poor. The Church and Galileo.

LAUGHTON

I think Galileo has a big appetite—for knowledge, food, drink. He likes physical comfort. And if you place greater emphasis on the dichotomy between science and the flesh, body and soul, then you'll—

BRECHT

What's soul?

LAUGHTON

Human spirit.

BRECHT

What's that?

LAUGHTON

Read the Bible.

BRECHT

"Spirit" is nothing but an abstraction.

LAUGHTON

It's what infuses Art.

BRECHT

The play is about who controls knowledge. How it's used, concealed, manipulated.

LAUGHTON

The story's about people.

BRECHT

But unless the audience can see them as agents and objects of history, we might as well be writing a script for Abbott and Costello.

LAUGHTON

The play's based on reality, right?

BRECHT

Reality has many versions.

LAUGHTON

Any truthful play is based in the real world.

BRECHT

Of course.

LAUGHTON

And you live in the real world.

BRECHT

I live in Los Angeles.

LAUGHTON

And you get emotional at times... Emotion's part of reality.

BRECHT

But a stage production is not reality. It's rehearsed, written, planned out ahead of time.

LAUGHTON

Individuals still get emotional.

BRECHT

Not in a play that's going to change the way people think.

LAUGHTON

(pause) Look, Bert, I'm not a theorist. I'm an artist. And I'm sure that this script could make for powerful theater. But I can only play the role if I have some control over my character.

(BRECHT picks up a small statue.)

BRECHT

Well, I'm certainly not averse to intelligent input.

LAUGHTON

Do you have a director yet?

BRECHT

No.

LAUGHTON

What about Orson Welles?

BRECHT

Well, uh...*Citizen Kane* wasn't bad.

LAUGHTON

I want you to send him a copy of *Galileo*.

BRECHT

What's this?

LAUGHTON

Oh, I collect pre-Colombian art.

BRECHT

It looks like...two men fucking.

LAUGHTON

Well, there are many different types of passions.

BRECHT

(pause) The lovers' faces show absolutely no emotion.

LAUGHTON

Fucking doesn't have to be passionate.

BRECHT

Exactly.

LAUGHTON

But it's much more fun when it is.

BRECHT

But when it's demonstrated, as art, it has to be controlled.

LAUGHTON

Sit down. *(LAUGHTON gestures to couch.)* Let me get you another beer.

BRECHT

(BRECHT looks at watch.) No.

LAUGHTON
How about some oysters on the half-shell?

BRECHT
Some other time.

LAUGHTON
At least let me get you an apertif for the road.

BRECHT
I can't take any chances.

LAUGHTON
A shot of Sambuca's not going to impair your driving.

BRECHT
I'm an "enemy alien," Laughton. If they catch me outside after eight o'clock, they're going to shoot me...lock me up.

LAUGHTON
(LAUGHTON looks at his watch.) It's not going to take you an hour to get home.

BRECHT
I don't trust the traffic.

LAUGHTON
You'll be fine.

BRECHT
And I, uh...I promised the children I'd listen to the boxing match with them on the radio. *(BRECHT gets up, puts on cap.)*

LAUGHTON
Well, I really wish you could stay a bit longer... But I'm glad you stopped over. *(LAUGHTON hugs BRECHT and shakes his hand.)*

BRECHT
What are you doing tomorrow?

LAUGHTON
I have to be on the set.

BRECHT
Why don't you come by the house when you're done?

LAUGHTON
Oh, I'll be exhausted.

BRECHT
How about Saturday?

LAUGHTON
(LAUGHTON checks his date book.)
I can't make it till after dinner.

BRECHT
I'll put on a pot of coffee.

LAUGHTON
Fine. As long as they don't call us into Warner Brothers.

BRECHT
Didn't they just go on strike this morning?

LAUGHTON
(pause) One of the technicians' unions.

BRECHT
You didn't cross a picket line...

LAUGHTON
Well, I...I didn't want to. And I held out... As long as I possibly could... I stayed outside the gate talking with the workers for almost an hour... And I was just about to turn around and go home when this new assistant producer showed up... Actually, he seemed more like a gangster.

BRECHT
He probably was.

LAUGHTON
He told me that anyone who honored the picket line was considered a Communist sympathizer. *(BRECHT laughs.)* And the last thing I need right now is to be called in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

BRECHT
The studios are bringing in the mafia to break the unions now, contain the spread of socialism... All while ensuring the impossibility of democracy.
(BRECHT laughs.)

LAUGHTON
Then you appreciate the difficulty of my position?

BRECHT
No, I don't.

LAUGHTON

As I drove past the gate, people whom I've known for years began shouting, "Scab, scab." Strikers were waving chains and steel pipes at me... It...it was extremely unsettling.

BRECHT

Maybe you ought to donate part of your salary to the workers who are out on strike.

LAUGHTON

I should probably do something.

BRECHT

It's the least you could do.

LAUGHTON

(pause) You're right... I'm...I'm going to write the union a check first thing in the morning.

BRECHT

I'll see you on Saturday.

LAUGHTON

You'll have to come over earlier next time. *(BRECHT shakes LAUGHTON'S hand.)*

BRECHT

Gute Nacht.

(BRECHT EXITS. LAUGHTON reads Galileo silently, periodically performs the dialogue's rhythm with his hands. ELSA eventually speaks.)

ELSA

(Offstage.) Yoo-hoo, Charles...

LAUGHTON

Hello, love.

ELSA

(ELSA ENTERS.) I just saw Brecht pulling out of the driveway. He couldn't stay and say hello?

LAUGHTON

There's a curfew for "enemy aliens."

ELSA

"Enemy aliens"... You'd think Brecht and his German friends were about to attack Los Angeles with ray-guns, a fleet of flying saucers...

LAUGHTON

The government's just being cautious.

ELSA

It's this Flash-Gordon government I'm afraid of... Everyone with Japanese blood is being locked up in internment camps... Film scripts have to make it past the censor... You'd think the American government would welcome potential Fascists...

LAUGHTON

Brecht's far from being a Fascist.

ELSA

Oh, darling, the next time he comes over, would you take him out on the patio to smoke his cigars. It smells like a barn in here.

LAUGHTON

I don't smell anything.

ELSA

Your allergies must be acting up...

LAUGHTON

Brecht wants me to do *Galileo* on Broadway.

ELSA

Does he have a role for me?

LAUGHTON

Here, take a look. *(LAUGHTON hands ELSA the play.)* It's a wonderful play... Reminds me of Shakespeare, actually... And Brecht wants me to help him revise the script.

ELSA

Well, you've always wanted to write.

LAUGHTON

I haven't stepped on a stage in over ten years. And the play's so long. And I have film commitments...I'd be collaborating on the writing...

ELSA

I think you should do it. *(ELSA gets a bit amorous with LAUGHTON.)*

LAUGHTON

(pause) Perhaps I will.

ELSA

You must be so tired.

LAUGHTON

I'm...I'm still not confident with that long monologue...

ELSA

(Amorous.) Go over it in the morning.

LAUGHTON

It always sinks in better when I look it over just before going to sleep.

ELSA

Pour me a glass of wine.

LAUGHTON

I have to get to work.

ELSA

(LAUGHTON is standing, looking at his film script. Pause.) Sit down. *(ELSA pats the spot next to her on the couch.)*

LAUGHTON

I don't want to get distracted.

ELSA

I want you to make love to me, Charles.

LAUGHTON

When...when I come to bed later.

ELSA

You're always so much more fun on the couch.

LAUGHTON

I have to get these lines down.

ELSA

I'll wait up.

LAUGHTON

I might be a while.

ELSA

You can get up early and—

LAUGHTON

Why don't you just go to sleep.

ELSA

You just said you'd make love to me.

LAUGHTON

I...I will.

ELSA

You never wake me up to make love.

LAUGHTON

Good night. *(LAUGHTON kisses her.)*

ELSA

We never spend any time together.

LAUGHTON

We're together all day.

ELSA

We never spend any time together alone.

LAUGHTON

Well, when we're both shooting a film...getting up at five in the morning to be on the set...

ELSA

You're always shooting a film.

LAUGHTON

Fortunately.

ELSA

I guess we're *both* fortunate, aren't we? Now that we're working together and I get to play your adopted daughter all day.

LAUGHTON

I'll see you upstairs in a little while.

ELSA

(pause) Why weren't you on time for our parlor scene?

LAUGHTON

I...I had to take care of some business.

ELSA

What business?

LAUGHTON

The bank. I had to go to the bank.

ELSA

Well, Alex, the set decorator, saw you walking into the courthouse this afternoon. *(LAUGHTON goes over his lines.)* Were you at the courthouse?

LAUGHTON

Well...yes, that was one of my stops.

ELSA

For what?

LAUGHTON

I...I had to clear something up.

ELSA

Clear what up?

LAUGHTON

It was nothing, really.

ELSA

What?

LAUGHTON

It's taken care of.

ELSA

What's taken care of?

LAUGHTON

(pause) Somebody...somebody was trying to blackmail me...

ELSA
Why didn't you tell me?
LAUGHTON
I...I didn't want to worry you. But it's all cleared up now.
(LAUGHTON returns to his script.)
ELSA
(pause) Who tried to blackmail you?
LAUGHTON
Well, it's...it's a bit complicated... But there was this lad...who was demanding money.
ELSA
For what?
LAUGHTON
Well... All right, you see... There...there was this lad, a struggling actor who was taking care of the crafts table. And I befriended him...by introducing him to my agent... But it became apparent that he didn't know how to act, so of course the agency couldn't work with him. And then—out of spite, I suppose—he said he was going to tell my agency that...that we had a tryst.
ELSA
You and this lad?
LAUGHTON
And then he said he was going to tell the newspapers. And all the studios. If I didn't give him money. And then he kept demanding more. And more.
ELSA
Why would the newspapers even believe him?
LAUGHTON
He said he had photographs. Which is absolutely ludicrous, of course, unless they were doctored. And when I told him I wasn't going to pay him anymore he...he threatened to hurt me... So I went to the police... And it's all been taken care of.
ELSA
Did the boy's accusations have any merit?
LAUGHTON
They're...accusations...
ELSA
So that's all there is to it?
LAUGHTON
(pause) Of course.
ELSA
Be honest with me, Charles.
LAUGHTON
Well...to be frank, as...as you may have already surmised...there...there have been times when...when I've had a...bit of a...homosexual streak... And...well....the lad and I did have some physical contact. But only once. And I promise it will not—
ELSA
It's all right, darling.
LAUGHTON
It will not happen again.
ELSA
I said it's all right!
LAUGHTON
I promise.
ELSA
I trust that this won't continue.
LAUGHTON
No...of course not.
ELSA
(pause) Did you have sex with him in this house?
LAUGHTON
Absolutely not.
ELSA
Have you *ever* had sex in the house?
LAUGHTON
Well...with you.
ELSA
With a man.
LAUGHTON
Well...
ELSA
Have you?
LAUGHTON
(pause) Once...
ELSA
Only once?
LAUGHTON
Yes.
ELSA
You're sure.

LAUGHTON

Just once.

ELSA

Where?

LAUGHTON

(pause) In the house.

ELSA

Where in the house?

LAUGHTON

(pause) On the couch.

ELSA

Our living room couch?

LAUGHTON

I'm sorry. I...I don't know what else to—

ELSA

Get rid of it.

LAUGHTON

What?

ELSA

Get rid of the couch.

LAUGHTON

(pause) What do I do with a couch?

ELSA

Just get it out of the house.

LAUGHTON

Okay... *(LAUGHTON looks at couch. Pause.)*

ELSA

Now.

LAUGHTON

A couch isn't the easiest thing to discard—

ELSA

Just get it out of here.

LAUGHTON

I'll...I'll put it out in the garage.

ELSA

I want it off the property.

LAUGHTON

(pause) How?

ELSA

I don't know... Take it to the Salvation Army.

LAUGHTON

I will not let this happen again.

ELSA

I don't want to talk about it.

LAUGHTON

I promise.

ELSA

Just get the couch out of my house.

(LAUGHTON begins dragging couch out of room. BLACKOUT.)

(Projection: J. Edgar Hoover: We must beware of the threat from alien groups, foreign oppressions and noxious 'isms'...of writers who decry religion and argue that distance from God makes for happiness. Foreign interlopers, international swindlers, and espousers of alien philosophies cannot be permitted to hide behind masquerading fronts.)

SCENE FOUR
(BERLAU'S flat.)

(BERLAU is reading a communist tract, sipping water. BRECHT quietly ENTERS her apartment, puts keys in pocket.)

BRECHT

Hello, *Fräulein*. *(BRECHT hands BERLAU a red rose, kisses her.)*

BERLAU

Oh, how nice... And it's plastic.

BRECHT

They last longer.

BERLAU

Here. *(BERLAU hands BRECHT a newspaper clipping.)*

BRECHT

What's this?

BERLAU

An article about the Prague underground and the assassination of Heydrich the Hangman.

BRECHT

(BERLAU hands article to BRECHT, who pockets it.)

Laughton might help me with the *Galileo* translation.

BERLAU

I'll just concentrate on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.*

BRECHT

I'm going to need your assistance with *Galileo.*

BERLAU

Laughton has a much better command of English.

BRECHT

We'll still need someone to do the typing... Do you have a vase?

BERLAU

For a fake flower?

BRECHT

It doesn't really look fake.

BERLAU

Maybe you could stick it up your ass. *(BRECHT sticks flower in empty bottle. He smokes, takes a drink.)* I have some new ideas for the end of the play.

BRECHT

We're not working tonight. *(BRECHT drinks.)*

BERLAU

Since the Governor's Wife practically rips the child apart when she yanks him out of the circle, the judge declares her an unfit caretaker, even though she's the biological mother. So the judge awards the child to the peasant.

BRECHT

But the Governor's Wife still has her estates.

BERLAU

The judge can find her guilty of fraud.

BRECHT

And then he can confiscate all of her land.

BERLAU

But what becomes of it?

BRECHT

Playgrounds. For the children.

BERLAU

Perfect.

BRECHT

All we need now is a famous actress to play Grusha, like Luise Rainer...

BERLAU

She's too old for Grusha.

BRECHT

Not if she can get the play on Broadway.

BERLAU

It might be too radical.

BRECHT

I'm going to sell it as a harmless fairy tale... The bourgeoisie love fairy tales. *(BRECHT acts amorously towards BERLAU. She pulls away.)*

BERLAU

I'm still concerned about the play's politics.

BRECHT

Look... Aesthetically, the play's innovative... Its ideas are properly Marxist... *(BRECHT is physical with BERLAU.)* It's all there... So why don't we fuck? *(BERLAU massages BRECHT'S neck. BRECHT plays with her hair.)*

BERLAU

We have to write out the ending.

BRECHT

We'll write it tomorrow night.

BERLAU

I don't want to wait that long.

BRECHT

Tomorrow afternoon... No, that won't work. Helly needs me around the house.

BERLAU

For what?

BRECHT

The children.

BERLAU

So now you're going to take more time away from me. *(BERLAU straddles him.)*

BRECHT

(pause) I don't want to.

BERLAU

You shouldn't.

BRECHT

I *do* have a family.

BERLAU

And what do I have?

BRECHT

(pause) Freedom... From children running around the house.

BERLAU

That's what I want.

BRECHT

God knows there are going to be enough orphans after the war.

BERLAU

My baby would have been twenty-two years old by now. About the same age as Frank. But I didn't need a child then.

BRECHT

I should have made sure Frank got out.

BERLAU

He has his mother.

BRECHT

Last I heard, Frank was being sent from relative to relative. My relatives, his mother's...

BERLAU

I want my own baby.

BRECHT

Wait till we get back to Germany.

BERLAU

I'm thirty-seven years old.

BRECHT

Ruth, look...once I start selling my work here, I'll be in a better position—

BERLAU

I need you around more Brecht.

BRECHT

I'll try to come by more often—

BERLAU

Without a wife to return to all the time. And I need a child sleeping in the other room as I work on my novel...

BRECHT

Let's just focus on writing out the ending.

BERLAU

(pause) I can't.

BRECHT

It was your idea to write tonight in the first place.

BERLAU

I'm going out for a walk. *(BERLAU begins to EXIT.)*

BRECHT

Rainer wants a copy of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by the end of the week.

BERLAU

You can use my typewriter.

BRECHT

We'll work on it when you return.

BERLAU

When I come back, I'm going to sleep.

BRECHT

We can finish it in the morning...

BERLAU

(pause) I'm leaving for New York tomorrow.

BRECHT

What?

BERLAU

I'm attending a conference there, on anti-Fascist resistance in Denmark.

BRECHT

When are you coming back?

BERLAU

I'm not sure.

BRECHT

Well, the conference has to end sometime.

BERLAU

I also have a job interview.

BRECHT

In New York?

BERLAU

I need to work, Brecht.

BRECHT

I'm paying your rent.

BERLAU

I need to do my own work.

BRECHT

It's *our* work.

BERLAU

I need to do work that's not for you.

BRECHT

Ruth, we've been collaborating on this for almost two years.

BERLAU

You know how to write.

BRECHT

I'm too used to members of the collective helping with the writing.

BERLAU

And fucking.

BRECHT

Primarily writing—

BERLAU

Writing and fucking. Fucking and writing. Fucking fucking, writing writing—

BRECHT

Right now I just want to finish the fucking play.

BERLAU

You want me to keep giving...and waiting... As you get your work published, produced—

BRECHT

At the very least, we're both going to make some money once the play gets to Broadway—

BERLAU

Do you think that's why I've been spending all this time with you? For money?

BRECHT

Of course there's much more than—

BERLAU

All your collaborators work for free anyway. Except for Kurt Weill, who's a man, so you can't fuck him like you fucked Margarete and Elisabeth and me and your fucking wife, God bless her... Weill could do something you couldn't take credit for, compose music, so you had to pay him... But me, you just keep fucking—and I let you—because I believe in what Brecht's trying to accomplish...

BRECHT

What *we're* trying to accomplish.

BERLAU

Why don't you put my name on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* instead of yours?

BRECHT

Well...bourgeois publishers don't understand the notion of collective authorship yet...and my name's more recognizable. But we're splitting—

BERLAU

I must be a goddamn idiot... You storm into Copenhagen with your entourage and I give up my theater, my writing career—which was just beginning to flourish—to work for Brecht... I walk away from my marriage to a physician, a potential family, so I can fuck Brecht without feeling guilty... And I've continued to write for Brecht, to sleep with Brecht, for nine fucking years... And still...I don't have a play or a child I can call my own.

BRECHT

Ruth, you're the most important person in my life.

BERLAU

I'm going out for a walk. And then I'm coming home, and going to bed. And then I'm going to wake up, pack my suitcase, take a taxi to Union Station, and leave for New York.

BRECHT

We finally have a chance to get a play produced on Broadway.

BERLAU

You have your friend Laughton to work with on *Galileo*.

BRECHT

I don't even know if he's interested.

BERLAU

At least he understands English.

(BERLAU EXITS. Note: while she is in New York, the audience may often see BERLAU, at times, on a video monitor. Phone eventually rings.)

(Projection:
The houses in Hell, too, are not all ugly.

But the fear of being thrown on the street
Wears down the inhabitants of the villas
no less than
The inhabitants of the shanty towns.
—B. Brecht)

SCENE FIVE
(BRECHT'S front yard.)

BRECHT
(BRECHT ENTERS with phone.) Hello... Hallo, Luise. *Guten Tag*... Yes, yes... I know you're leaving on a USO tour... I just have to finish proofreading the script... Who? Leventhal? Of course, if there's a Broadway producer involved I'm going to need some money up front... At least fifteen hundred... Well, see what you can do... Yes, yes, the play's being translated... *Danke sehr.* *(BRECHT hangs up phone.)*

(Projection: FBI file on R. Berlau: On June 13 a 120 day mail cover was placed on Ruth Berlau at 123 East 57 Street, New York.)

BRECHT
Why do I have to put up with this crap? I feel as if I've been removed from civilization... This is Tahiti in metropolitan form... I feel like Francis of Assissi in an aquarium, Lenin at Oktoberfest...

ANGEL
Hey, Brecht...

BRECHT
A chrysantheum in a coal mine...hell...

ANGEL
Brecht!

BRECHT
What?

ANGEL
You been to Mexican Town, yet, where the kids play on the sides of the dirt roads all day, runnin' through the muddy sewage in their barefeet... To *las cantinas* on Central Avenue? To skid row?

BRECHT
I'm certainly aware of those places.

ANGEL
You been to 'em? To the dirt-floored brothels up in Boyle Heights?

BRECHT
I, uh...went to a strip joint in Malibu.

ANGEL
When you gonna go see where the other half lives?

BRECHT
I've driven all over the city.

ANGEL
You ever stop and get out of the car anywhere except Santa Monica and Pacific Palisades?

BRECHT
I observe, I read...

ANGEL
Down here it's always cool breezes, ocean.

BRECHT
Helps make hell bearable for me.

ANGEL
You don't know what hell is till you've stood in the fire.

BRECHT
The fire's gotta be extinguished.

ANGEL
By you?

BRECHT
Well, I can't do it myself.

ANGEL
You can't put the fire out at all. Nobody can. Until they can feel the heat... *(ANGEL EXITS, BRECHT tries to puff on cigar; it's out.)*

BRECHT
Helly...do you have any matches in there? *(BRECHT EXITS.)*

(Projection: Brecht's journal: occassionally, especially in the car going to beverly hills, i get something like a whiff of landscape, which 'really' seems attractive...gentle lines of hills, lemon thickets, a californian oak....but all this lies behind plate glass, and i voluntarily look at each hill or lemon tree for a little price tag. you look for these price tags on people too...)

SCENE SIX

(BRECHT'S front yard, two weeks later.)

(LAUGHTON knocks on BRECHT'S front door one last time, looks at watch, walks away from door. TOM ENTERS.)

TOM

Hi, there.

LAUGHTON

Good evening.

TOM

You know, you look familiar.

LAUGHTON

I have that sort of face.

(LAUGHTON walks towards street.)

TOM

You're...you're a movie star, aren't you?

LAUGHTON

Well...

TOM

The...*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.... You're the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

LAUGHTON

Well, that was one of my roles...

TOM

You were hilarious.

LAUGHTON

(pause) Thank you. *(LAUGHTON walks.)*

TOM

Hey, are you looking for Breath?

LAUGHTON

Brecht.

TOM

(Periodically, LAUGHTON wipes sweat from his face, neck with a handkerchief.) I, uh...I saw you knocking on his door.

LAUGHTON

Are you a friend of his?

TOM

Yes... We're very good friends, actually...

LAUGHTON

I was supposed to meet him here.

TOM

My name's Tom by the way. *(TOM offers his hand.)*

LAUGHTON

Charles. *(They shake hands.)*

TOM

You know Breath pretty well?

LAUGHTON

Brecht... We're working together on a project.

TOM

You're acting in one of his plays?

LAUGHTON

At the moment, I'm helping him to revise a play.

TOM

What about?

LAUGHTON

Galileo.

TOM

Oh, the scientist.

LAUGHTON

Well, it was nice to have met you.

(LAUGHTON begins to leave.)

TOM

I'm a writer, too, you know.

LAUGHTON

Good luck to you.

(LAUGHTON goes to leave.)

TOM

Breath often asks me for advice.

LAUGHTON

Tell him Charles Laughton dropped by.

TOM

Where are you from?

LAUGHTON
Pacific Palisades.
TOM
No, I mean what country.
LAUGHTON
England. *(LAUGHTON looks at watch, seems inclined to leave.)*
TOM
I'm sure he'll be right back.
LAUGHTON
He told you this?
TOM
He has curfew. *(TOM looks at his watch.)* Which means that if he's not back here within...twenty-two minutes, a neighbor could report him to the police.
LAUGHTON
Why would a neighbor do that?
TOM
Well, I'm not sure that anyone would...
LAUGHTON
I would hope not.
TOM
But you never know.
LAUGHTON
Well, I'm not about to stand out here waiting for twenty minutes.
TOM
Why don't you come wait at my place?
LAUGHTON
I'm just going to be heading home.
TOM
I'll make some iced-tea.
LAUGHTON
Oh, I don't want to impose.
TOM
Impose? I'd be honored.
LAUGHTON
I don't want to disrupt the household.
TOM
I *am* the household. Just me and the cat.
LAUGHTON
Well, I... *(LAUGHTON is sweating profusely.)*
TOM
I'd really like to hear about this play you're working on.
LAUGHTON
It's Brecht's play, actually.
TOM
Galileo was against the Bible, wasn't he?
LAUGHTON
I'm more interested in the play's theatrical aspects. *(LAUGHTON is ready to leave. TOM glances at his watch.)*
TOM
You know, every movie I've ever seen you in, your character always stands out.
LAUGHTON
Well, I try...
TOM
Even when you're playing a minor role...or some buffoon that most established actors wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole.
LAUGHTON
Thank you. *(LAUGHTON begins to EXIT.)*
TOM
You have to stop in for a cold drink.
LAUGHTON
Well...
TOM
My kitchen table's right next to the window. You'll see Breath's car as soon as he pulls in.
LAUGHTON
Well, perhaps I can stop in for a couple of minutes.
(They start walking towards house.)
TOM
Are you a bachelor?
LAUGHTON
No... Not exactly.
TOM
"Not exactly"? *(TOM smiles.)*
LAUGHTON
I'm parched.

TOM

If you'd like something stronger, I also have excellent Scotch...Dom Perignon...

LAUGHTON

Scotch would be fine.

TOM

You know, I've always wanted to get into acting.

LAUGHTON

Well, you have the proper looks.

TOM

You think so?

LAUGHTON

You'll just need to work on technique.

TOM

Maybe you can give me some advice. *(TOM puts his arm on LAUGHTON'S shoulder, accompanies him towards his house.)*

LAUGHTON

I'd be glad to. *(EXEUNT. The audience hears a car pull up, a car door open and close. BRECHT ENTERS, gets mail, looks at watch.)*

BRECHT

I hope Laughton shows up. *(BRECHT sorts through mail.)* "Opened by mistake." "Opened by mistake." Leventhal...that's the producer... *(BRECHT opens letter, pulls out check.)* Seven hundred and fifty dollars?... He was supposed to send me fifteen hundred... Fucking reptile... *(BRECHT continues sorting through mail.)* "Opened by mistake." This one's taped up... I thought only the *Gestapo* was reading my mail... New York... *(BRECHT reads the lines within the quotation marks to himself as BERLAU speaks in a white nightgown from another part of the stage.)*

BERLAU

Dear Brecht, I am happy. I thank you, thank you. I worry now and again, but it is mostly fear that you might become unfaithful... *(BRECHT chuckles.)* I thought that you would be thinking "glad that she finally left, a good riddance," and then you told me to come back as soon as I could... It's a good thing that you're so strict with me. Enclosed is the German version of *Caucasian Chalk Circle*... As you requested, Auden's begun the translation work. Yours always, Ruth. *(Here and elsewhere, Berlau might occasionally look up to the sky with a small telescope.)*

BRECHT

(Phone rings. BRECHT answers it.) Yes, Luise... I was just about to bring it over... In German... Yes, I know I promised the English version two weeks ago... I can get it to you by Friday. But I need the money from Leventhal... Well, he hasn't sent it yet... *Auf Wiedersehen.*

(Projection: J. Edgar Hoover: Today vile and vicious forces are seeking to tear America asunder, killing freedom, ravishing justice, and destroying liberty... The subversive group, those termites of discontent, can be neutralized only by a holy war.)

SCENE SEVEN

(BRECHT'S front yard, next morning.)

(It's early morning, birds are chirping. BRECHT sits with a cup of coffee. He wears slippers, a silk robe over his clothes. He's smoking a cigar and writing quickly, with great intensity. After a successful onrush of writing, BRECHT pauses, speaks.)

BRECHT

This is just what I need... To get outside first thing in the morning...while the day's still fresh... While the bird's are chirping and everything's placid, peaceful... *(BRECHT writes for a while, smiles.)* This is going to be my best day of

writing since arriving in California... *(BRECHT writes for a few more seconds and then a gasoline lawnmower starts up.) Vas ist denn los... (ANGEL ENTERS with lawnmower.)* Hey... Hey... *(ANGEL neither sees nor hears BRECHT. BRECHT walks over to him.)* What the hell are you doing?

ANGEL

(ANGEL smiles, nods head, continues mowing.) Sí.

BRECHT

(BRECHT stops him.) Hey... It's seven o'clock in the morning... I need you to stop.

ANGEL

Un minuto. (ANGEL turns off lawnmower.) What?

BRECHT

It's seven a.m.

ANGEL

I wake you up?

BRECHT

I'm trying to get some work done, damn it.

ANGEL

Me too.

BRECHT

I just thought I'd have a bit more time before I had to start listening to the—

ANGEL

I'll be done in ten minutes. *(ANGEL is about to start lawnmower again.)*

BRECHT

Maybe you can begin by doing— *(Lawnmower starts.)* Hey. Hey!!! Turn that thing off!

ANGEL

The more of those cheap cigars people buy, the more jobs get replaced by machines.

BRECHT

You use a machine to cut grass, don't you? And it enables you to make more money.

ANGEL

It enables *you* to get your lawn cut more cheaply, no?

BRECHT

If I can't sell a play soon, I might have to start mowing lawns with you.

ANGEL

I don't think you could do it.

BRECHT

What?

ANGEL

Cut grass. *(ANGEL readies the tools of his trade.)*

BRECHT

Anybody could cut grass.

ANGEL

When's the last time you did any manual labor? *(ANGEL works.)*

BRECHT

Well, I, uh... *(ANGEL EXITS, continues to operate manual hedge clippers. BRECHT tries to write. Eventually, ELSA ENTERS.)*

ELSA

Good morning.

BRECHT

Hello, Mrs. Laughton.

ELSA

Oh...Elsa. *(ELSA sniffs the air, intermittently, throughout scene.)*

BRECHT

Elsa...

ELSA

Have you seen Charles at all?

BRECHT

No.

ELSA

He said he was going over to your house last night.

BRECHT

He never showed up.

ELSA

What's that odor?

BRECHT

(BRECHT takes a whiff of the air.) I don't smell anything.

ELSA

We're supposed to be on the set in a couple of hours and I have absolutely no idea where he is.

BRECHT

I'm sure he'll show up there.

ELSA
He never came home last night.
BRECHT
You know how Charles likes to talk... He probably stopped at someone's house, had a few drinks, and before he knew it, he was laid out on their couch.
ELSA
What couch?
BRECHT
A friend's couch.
ELSA
What was he doing on a couch?
BRECHT
What do people usually do on a couch?
ELSA
Well...that depends.
BRECHT
He was probably sleeping.
ELSA
He never stays out all night.
BRECHT
He's probably trying to call you right now.
ELSA
I could hardly sleep, I was so worried.
BRECHT
Let me get you a cup of coffee.
ELSA
Is your wife awake?
BRECHT
She's up in Santa Barbara with the children.
ELSA
Where's your mistress?
BRECHT
I don't have a mistress.
ELSA
That Danish actress I always see you with...
BRECHT
She's just an assistant. And she lives in New York now.
ELSA
Charles has been so energized over the past few weeks from working with you on *Galileo*.
BRECHT
Your husband's making the play stronger. He's been emphasizing Galileo's polarities. He's always thinking, yet has a weakness for things of the flesh... He's highly intelligent, yet also a coward...
ELSA
Charles must be just perfect.
BRECHT
Absolutely.
ELSA
Too bad there isn't a role for me.
BRECHT
You can play Galileo's servant.
ELSA
She's subservient to a man.
BRECHT
(ELSA gets matches, eventually lights BRECHT'S cigar.) If you utilize the techniques of my epic theater, you'll be able to perform patriarchal subservience while simultaneously critiquing it.
ELSA
Galileo's servant has three lines.
BRECHT
Well...I have plenty of strong women in other plays. Like Mother Courage, which I think you'd be perfect for.
ELSA
You've never even seen me perform.
BRECHT
I saw you at the Turnabout Theater.
ELSA
You saw that?
BRECHT
Yes. And I was very impressed... You were a performer up there, not some method actor trying to hide behind the fourth wall.
ELSA
Well, I began my career as a cabaret artist in London.
BRECHT
You have to play Mother Courage... She travels from battle to battle selling whatever's at hand. To soldiers. But she's always in charge...

And she's also a pacifist, a feminist. And she's a performer...she sings. You'd fit the role perfectly.

ELSA

I'd just about given up hope of ever finding a decent part out here.

BRECHT

Why don't you come in for a cup of coffee and we'll, uh...discuss the play.

ELSA

Oh, I have to go find Charles.

BRECHT

Charles is a big boy... He's fine.

ELSA

I hope so.

BRECHT

Let me show you the house.

ELSA

Oh, I wouldn't want your wife to get the wrong idea.

BRECHT

My wife let's me do what I please...as long as I keep her happy.

ELSA

(Looks at watch.) I should probably get to the studio.

BRECHT

You have two hours.

ELSA

I like to relax in my dressing room before going to work.

BRECHT

With all those protestors shouting outside the gate?

ELSA

There really aren't that many.

BRECHT

Don't Hollywood actors have any conscience?

ELSA

If you have a conscience, you don't act in Hollywood.

BRECHT

I love your sweater. *(BRECHT fingers the sweater.)*

ELSA

Charles gave it to me.

BRECHT

I never realized your eyes had such color.

ELSA

They get puffy when I haven't slept.

BRECHT

They're so clear.

ELSA

There's that smell again...

BRECHT

Must be the neighbor's garbage...

ELSA

Otherwise, it's...it's quite pleasant out here...

BRECHT

Nice and quiet...

ELSA

Yes, and I...I appreciate the serenity... After being up all night worrying, it's exactly what I need right now. *(BRECHT puts his arm around ELSA. Lawnmower starts up offstage. ELSA jumps.)*

BRECHT

Let's go inside! *(ANGEL ENTERS, walks by with lawnmower. BRECHT ENTERS house with ELSA, with his arm around her. LAUGHTON ENTERS, looking as if he'd been up late drinking.)*

LAUGHTON

What the hell... *(He tries to fix his hair, tie, etc., stares at a car in BRECHT'S driveway.)* What... What's Elsa's car doing there... *(Looks at watch, EXITS.)* And that wanker told me his wife was going to be out of town... *(LAUGHTON EXITS, BERLAU opens letter.)*

(Projection: FBI file on R. Berlau: Ruth Berlau has been said to be critical of United States' policy and to advocate communism in this country.)

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: Subject's writings...advocate overthrow of Capitalism, establishment of Communist State, and use of sabotage by labor to attain its ends.)

SCENE EIGHT

(New York/Los Angeles.)

BRECHT *(offstage)*

(BERLAU reads letter silently as BRECHT speaks its words.) Dear Ruth, I think of you always and implore you, my love, to remain faithful during these dark, dark times. I've received an advance...but the criminal producer paid me only half of the agreed upon amount. As promised, I am sending you a check for half of what I received, two hundred dollars. Love always,

bb

p.s. a silver haze filled the evening sky and no stars were visible. but I knew you were looking up and I stood, so to speak, next to you...

BERLAU

(BERLAU writes a bit, reads.) The one you love carries great weight... I love. I am in love. I am jealous...in love...and the damned devils are tearing at me... I'm so full of jealousy and love that the devil's fire is burning all over my body. *(BERLAU'S phone rings.)* But the joy of lust still has the upper hand... *(BERLAU answers phone.)* Yes? *(BRECHT ENTERS with phone.)*

BRECHT

Hello, darling.

BERLAU

Brecht.

BRECHT

What's that clicking sound?

BERLAU

I don't hear anything.

BRECHT

No?

BERLAU

I was just thinking about you.

BRECHT

Is anyone there?

BERLAU

No... But my crotch has been burning for you...

BRECHT

Good.

BERLAU

It keeps getting hotter...and hotter...

BRECHT

Are you wearing your white nightgown?

BERLAU

Yes, but if you don't get here soon it's going to be nothing but ashes.

BRECHT

Just wait for me to put out the fire.

BERLAU

When are you coming to New York?

BRECHT

As soon as I get some money.

BERLAU

You have the money from Rainer.

BRECHT

Not after I pay the mortgage.

BERLAU

Once you get the rest of the advance, you'll have to hop on a plane.

BRECHT

Her producer friend needs to see the script first.

BERLAU

You have the script.

BRECHT

He needs to see it in English. What's going on with Auden?

BERLAU

I haven't been able to find him lately.

BRECHT

If I don't get the English translation within the next few days, the entire deal's going to fall apart...

BERLAU

I keep calling him. He's never in.

BRECHT

Go to Auden's apartment. As soon as we get off the phone.

BERLAU

I'm too tired.

BRECHT

Tired? It's Sunday.

BERLAU
It's ten o'clock at night here.
BRECHT
What have you been doing all day?
BERLAU
I...I went to a shower.
BRECHT
You have a friend who's getting married?
BERLAU
I went to a baby shower.
BRECHT
I thought you didn't have any friends there?
BERLAU
It was all co-workers.
BRECHT
You shouldn't be wasting your time at work-related functions unless you're getting paid.
BERLAU
(pause) The shower was for me.
BRECHT
What?
BERLAU
I'm seven weeks pregnant.
BRECHT
(pause) So who's the lucky man?
BERLAU
What kind of question is that?
BRECHT
I'm sure there are plenty of doctors in New York who can take care of it for you.
BERLAU
This might be our only opportunity.
BRECHT
We can't have a baby now.
BERLAU
I don't have any choice.
BRECHT
Of course you have a choice, Ruth. There are—
BERLAU
(BERLAU puts down phone.) I'm having the baby. *(BRECHT puts down phone. They speak directly to each other.)*
BRECHT
Have you seen a doctor yet?
BERLAU
I went to a clinic.
BRECHT
Clinical examinations aren't very accurate.
BERLAU
I went to two clinics. I got the same result each time.
BRECHT
You have to go see a regular doctor. In an office.
BERLAU
Are you going to pay for it?
BRECHT
I'll be sending you another check if Auden ever finishes the damn translation.
BERLAU
I have to see a doctor regularly.
BRECHT
Go to the clinic.
BERLAU
They don't provide prenatal care there.
BRECHT
You'll be fine.
BERLAU
How am I supposed to make sure that the baby's okay?
BRECHT
You're making more money than me.
BERLAU
(pause) I'm not making anything.
BRECHT
What?
BERLAU
I was fired from my job.
BRECHT
For what?
BERLAU
Well...according to my boss, I was fighting against the wrong side in Spain.
BRECHT
You were fighting against fascism...
BERLAU
My friend thinks I was fired for getting pregnant out of wedlock...

BRECHT

You haven't told anyone else...

BERLAU

No.

BRECHT

I want you to keep it that way.

BERLAU

How am I going to pay the rent?

BRECHT

Find Auden and get me the translation.

BERLAU

I don't even know if he's in New York.

BRECHT

Rainer wanted the translation by today.

BERLAU

I need your support.

BRECHT

I'll...I'll do whatever I can, Ruth. Okay?

BERLAU

I love you... You know, having a baby together isn't the worst thing that could happen to us.

BRECHT

I love the idea of having a baby with you.

BERLAU

Really?

BRECHT

As long as he doesn't look like me.

BERLAU

He'll probably come out with a cigar in his mouth.

BRECHT

Why don't we make him wait a couple of years?

BERLAU

I love you.

BRECHT

You, too, darling. *(BRECHT turns away, speaks into phone.)* Now find Auden and send me the script. *(They hang up. BERLAU eventually writes, intermittently looks at and caresses her stomach. BRECHT moves to his front yard.)* Jesus Christ. *(BRECHT tries to write. ANGEL ENTERS with gardening tools.)*

ANGEL

I made this for you. *(ANGEL gives BRECHT a cigar.)*

BRECHT

Here. *(BRECHT attempts to give ANGEL a quarter.)*

ANGEL

The tobacco doesn't belong to me.

BRECHT

You made this, right?

ANGEL

Yes.

BRECHT

Just take it.

ANGEL

To my ancestors, the Tay-ahno, cigars were always for healing, gifts... But then Columbus "discovered" cigars... and the tobacco's smoke, which—to us—had always represented freedom, became the devil's spirit. Its fire, which freed the spirit, became hell. Eventually, though, aristocrats realized that they could sell cigars for a profit. Thus, cigars were no longer evil. So while Indians were being burned at the stake, cigars were burning in the mouths of white men.

BRECHT

So I'm complicit in all that...

ANGEL

(pause) As long as you continue to consume the present without recognizing the past. *(ANGEL EXITS. BRECHT holds up the cigar.)*

BRECHT

This is only a fucking cigar. *(BRECHT'S phone rings; he answers. ANGEL may softly speak following "projection" as BRECHT speaks.)*

(Projection: Brecht's journal: every act of selling...becomes a defeat, either for the buyer or for the seller depending on whether a sale is made or not. the belief that concerns of the nation might be treated on the stage here is utterly

fanciful. for an author to succeed his public must fail.)

BRECHT

Hello... Hello, Luise. *Wie geht es Ihnen*? Yes, I know you only have the German version, but I... What... You expected Grusha to be more sympathetic?... Then the audience will be more concerned with Grusha than the play's politics... Yes, I know people will be buying tickets because they want to see you... I also thought Auden would be finished by now... Look...if you can just give me another week or so... What? I can't believe this... You told me we had a deal...

BERLAU

(BERLAU speaks as if possessed.) The roof collapses and I feel that I am on fire...

BRECHT

To tell you the truth, Luise, perhaps it's just as well... Because you're much too old for the part anyway.
(BLACKOUT on BRECHT. SPOTLIGHT on BERLAU.)

BERLAU

Strange that my pubic hairs are the first to catch alight... I seize them with both hands and attempt to douse the flames with the water of my womb.
(BLACKOUT.)

ACT II

SCENE NINE

(BRECHT'S front yard.)

(Projection: Brecht's journal: custom here requires that you try to sell everything, from a shrug of the shoulders to an idea, ie you have always to be on the look-out for a customer, so you are constantly either a buyer or a seller.)

ANGEL

(BRECHT ENTERS.) Hey, Brecht... Brecht!

BRECHT

I'm on my way somewhere.

ANGEL

You keep goin' on and on complaining about consumerism...

BRECHT

I can't help it. I'm swimming in it here. And if I don't start kicking harder it's going to swallow me up.

ANGEL

When are you gonna start doing something to change all this?

BRECHT

That's what my epic theater's all about. It encourages the audience to participate, actively, in radically changing the world.

ANGEL

So you think it's enough to use a typewriter, or the stage, to create revolution.

BRECHT

Well, that's my only means at the moment.

ANGEL

An underground group I belong to has a stockpile of weapons outside Havana. Plans for attacking government strongholds.

BRECHT

I thought your Communist Party was supporting the Cuban government.

ANGEL

They are. Because it's benefitting the people at the top of the Communist

Party. But my group, we're going to transform the structure of society by attacking hierarchy. At all levels. And I'd like you to accompany us.

BRECHT

Well, I'll do what I can...

ANGEL

I'll give you your own machine gun.

BRECHT

Well...thanks... But, uh...once the war ends, I have to carry on the battle against fascism in Germany.

ANGEL

You can come to Cuba with me *before* the war's over.

BRECHT

I'd like to, but I, uh...I have my children...

ANGEL

I have a young daughter. And I'd like to be with her. But it's unsafe for me to be in my country right now. Although I'll have to go back, eventually.

BRECHT

Sometimes it's best to operate from afar. *(BRECHT looks at his watch.)* And I, uh, have an appointment to get to.

(Projection: Brecht's journal: you sell your piss, as it were, to the urinal. opportunism is regarded as the greatest virtue. politeness becomes cowardice.)

SCENE TEN

(LANG'S office.)

BRECHT

There's a radical pig farmer from Kentucky. He could be played by Peter Lorre.

LANG

Peter Lorre's all fucked up.

BRECHT

He did some brilliant stage work for me over in—

LANG

Lorre doesn't even leave his house anymore. He sits around all day strung out on morphine.

BRECHT

I'm sorry to hear that—

LANG

Look, Brecht, I know you're having difficulties here. But the fucking studio's got me working my ass off right now and I'm not going to be able to consider any more stories until next year.

BRECHT

Lang, I've got children to feed.

LANG

What is it now, four, five?

BRECHT

I have two that are with me here. And a wife.

LANG

And how many mistresses?

BRECHT

The mistress is in New York.

LANG

So now you have a place to visit.

BRECHT

What, exactly, are you looking for in a screenplay?

LANG

At the moment, the topic everyone's interested in is war.

BRECHT

Well, I have *Mother Courage.*

LANG

World War II. It's huge right now.

BRECHT

Well, with half the world's countries sucked into it—

LANG

It's huge for the film business.

BRECHT

In Hollywood.

LANG

The film business *is* Hollywood.

BRECHT

As long as Japan doesn't start dropping bombs on Los Angeles.

LANG

That's exactly the sort of threat that's selling movie tickets right now. Which is why the studios are rushing to get war films out before the fervor dies down. As we speak they're filming *Spy Smashers*, *Yellow Peril*, *V. is for Victory*... A mega-musical, *I'll Take Manila.*

BRECHT

The Japanese have just about taken Manila.

LANG

So the studio can change the title to...to...I don't know...*I'll Take Tahiti*... Who gives a damn? As long as the audience gets to see palm trees, tanks, machine-gun fire... *(LANG looks at his watch.)*

BRECHT

How about this... Someone from the Czech resistance ambushes the deputy chief of the *Gestapo*, Heydrich the Hangman.

LANG

The *Gestapo's* very popular right now... But Americans could care less about a Czechoslovakian hero.

BRECHT

We'll include American marines.

LANG

Or we can keep the movie all Czechs and Germans, but have the Czechs speak with American accents, so then, as far as the audience is concerned, the Czechs are American.

BRECHT

Heydrich's assassin appears at a clandestine meeting of the Prague underground, where he gives a speech against imperialism.

LANG

Hollywood wants to colonize foreign markets.

BRECHT

So the speech can emphasize the absurdity of war.

LANG

Violence and patriotism sell tickets.

BRECHT

We can have flashbacks to concentration camps full of shirtless, emaciated Jews splitting boulders.

LANG

Impossible.

BRECHT

It's reality.

LANG

Film creates its own reality.

BRECHT

But it must also be connected to the world.

LANG

Look, Brecht, if this film is going to get made, it cannot depict Nazi atrocities against Jews.

BRECHT

You're Jewish for Christ's sake.

LANG

Brecht, you're in America... So stick with what the American government wants people to see and you can make a lot of money...

BRECHT

(pause) We'll call the film *Trust the People.*

LANG

Too socialist.

BRECHT

Why don't we call it *Trust Capital: Why Fascism's Good for Business*?

LANG

Do you want to work in Hollywood or not?

BRECHT

I have to.

LANG

I'm going to try to sell this idea of yours.

BRECHT

How much is it going to pay?

LANG

Let me pitch it to the studio first, and then we'll talk. *(Looks at watch, stands.)* And I'm running late for a luncheon meeting with Shirley Temple and Lassie... Jesus Christ, who are they gonna ask me to work

with next, a tap-dancing cocker spaniel? *(LANG EXITS. BRECHT EXITS into hall. ELSA ENTERS.)*

ELSA

Brecht.

BRECHT

Hello, darling.

ELSA

I told you not to visit me here.

BRECHT

I was just pitching a film script. But I'm glad I ran into you. *(BRECHT pulls her close. She moves away.)*

ELSA

No one can see us together.

BRECHT

Where's your husband?

ELSA

We just started working together on a new film.

BRECHT

Has Charles been a good boy lately?

ELSA

I could care less what Charles does in his free time.

BRECHT

Are you busy?

ELSA

I have about half an hour.

BRECHT

Step into my office.

ELSA

You don't have an office.

BRECHT

It's right there.

ELSA

That's Fritz Lang's.

BRECHT

He said I could use it. *(BRECHT puts his arm around her. ELSA sniffs the air.)*

ELSA

There's that smell again.

BRECHT

I'll light a cigar.

ELSA

Not one of those cheap cigars...

BRECHT

Lang has top-shelf cigars in the office. Would you like one?

ELSA

What if Lang walks in?

BRECHT

He just went to lunch.

ELSA

He might come back early.

BRECHT

Don't worry. He's an old friend... C'mon, let's go inside. *(ELSA sniffs the air. BRECHT gently pushes ELSA towards office, which she ENTERS.)*

ELSA *(Offstage.)*

This office is quite lovely... *(LAUGHTON ENTERS.)*

LAUGHTON

Brecht.

BRECHT

(To ELSA, who is in office.) I'll be right there. *(BRECHT shuts LANG'S door, remains in hall.)* Hello, my friend.

LAUGHTON

You can't get enough, can you?

BRECHT

Well, I—

LAUGHTON

So now you show up at the studio.

BRECHT

Well, I'm certainly free to go elsewhere.

LAUGHTON

You better be careful where you hang your hat, pal.

BRECHT

I never realized you had an exclusive contract.

LAUGHTON

You're lucky we have an agreement.

BRECHT

What agreement?

LAUGHTON

Between me and my wife.

BRECHT

I'm talking about *Galileo*... It's not the only project I'm working on at the moment, thank God. I just pitched a film to Fritz Lang.

LAUGHTON

(pause) That's why you're here?

BRECHT
Why else would I be here?
LAUGHTON
Well, I...I drove by your house this morning.
BRECHT
For what?
LAUGHTON
On my way to the studio.
BRECHT
I don't live anywhere near the studio.
LAUGHTON
Well, I...I went by anyway, thinking I might catch you outside.
BRECHT
What time did you drive by?
LAUGHTON
About 7:15.
BRECHT
How could you miss me?
LAUGHTON
I drove right by and—
BRECHT
I was sitting on the front step.
LAUGHTON
No you weren't.
BRECHT
You should have honked.
LAUGHTON
My wife's car was in your driveway.
BRECHT
What car?
LAUGHTON
A red Cadillac. With whitewall tires.
BRECHT
Oh, that's the gardener's.
LAUGHTON
Why would a gardener drive a new Cadillac?
BRECHT
Why not? He's entitled.
LAUGHTON
They don't make enough money.
BRECHT
How would you know what gardeners make?
LAUGHTON
Well, I don't, but—
BRECHT
He works in Beverly Hills...
LAUGHTON
Well, still, he—
BRECHT
I pay him top dollar.
LAUGHTON
I never saw a new Cadillac carrying lawnmowers.
BRECHT
Have you ever seen a Cadillac's trunk? You can fit five lawnmowers and a small church choir back there.
LAUGHTON
It looked exactly like my wife's car.
BRECHT
There must be ten thousand people driving red Cadillacs around here.
LAUGHTON
You didn't see my wife this morning?
BRECHT
No. Of course not.
LAUGHTON
I'm surprised you're here.
BRECHT
Well...my family has to eat.
LAUGHTON
So that justifies crossing a picket line?
BRECHT
I didn't see any picket line.
LAUGHTON
It's right outside the front gate.
BRECHT
I came in through the back lot with Fritz Lang.
LAUGHTON
Well, there's still a strike going on.
BRECHT
But I didn't see it, so, I, uh...I assumed it was settled.
LAUGHTON
I guess you don't need me anymore for *Galileo*.
BRECHT
What are you talking about?
LAUGHTON
Now that you're writing movies for Fritz Lang...

BRECHT
I haven't sold anything yet—
LAUGHTON
I've had several offers recently...
BRECHT
You know, New York producers have been calling me non-stop for the past two weeks...ever since word got out that you're playing the lead.
LAUGHTON
I'm afraid I'm becoming too busy...
BRECHT
You're the main reason Orson Welles thinks this production is going to be the most important theatrical event of the twentieth century.
LAUGHTON
Welles likes to be in control, you know.
BRECHT
That's why you have to co-produce.
LAUGHTON
I think I'm going to go say hello to Fritz.
BRECHT
Oh, I wouldn't bother him.
LAUGHTON
No?
BRECHT
Why don't we grab some lunch?
LAUGHTON
I already ate. *(ELSA ENTERS smiling, with a big stogie in her mouth. She does not notice LAUGHTON.)*
ELSA
(To BRECHT.) Hello, darling.
LAUGHTON
"Darling"? *(ELSA notices LAUGHTON.)*
BRECHT
She, uh...she was talking to you.
LAUGHTON
I thought you were going to the lunch truck.
ELSA
I, uh...I just stopped in to see Fritz Lang.
LAUGHTON
About what?
ELSA
Work.
LAUGHTON
But why would you—
BRECHT
What else would one see Fritz Lang about?
LAUGHTON
Since when do you smoke cigars?
ELSA
I got it for you, darling. *(ELSA shoves cigar into LAUGHTON'S mouth.)*
LAUGHTON
Which movie were you talking about?
ELSA
I, uh...just wanted to see if he had any roles open.
BRECHT
Lang's always looking for actors.
LAUGHTON
Maybe I should go see him about a role. *(LAUGHTON walks towards LANG'S office.)*
BRECHT
He's extremely busy right now.
ELSA
That's why he, uh...just asked me to leave.
LAUGHTON
Oh, I'm sure he'll give me a couple of minutes.
BRECHT
Once you get on Lang's bad side, he'll never work with you again.
LAUGHTON
We're actually on quite friendly terms.
BRECHT
I don't think he's coming back today.
LAUGHTON
I thought he was in his office.
BRECHT
He, uh, just walked down the hall.
ELSA
A few seconds after me.
LAUGHTON
That's odd. I never saw him.

BRECHT
I'd be happy to recommend you, though.

LAUGHTON
Thanks.

ELSA
Well, nice seeing you, Brecht.

BRECHT
Yes. *(ELSA EXITS.)*

LAUGHTON
Cheers, old man. *(LAUGHTON EXITS. TOM ENTERS.)*

TOM
Hello, Breath.

BRECHT
What are you doing here?

TOM
I'm shooting a film.

BRECHT
What film?

TOM
A thriller...with Charles Laughton and Elsa Lanchester.

BRECHT
I never knew you acted in films. *(LAUGHTON ENTERS.)*

TOM
I hope to start doing theater soon, too.

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: According to MM-1, [blacked out] has had considerable contact with B. Brecht during the past several months at least.)

SCENE ELEVEN

(TOM'S house, several months later.)

(TOM looks out window with telescope, he wears earphones. LAUGHTON walks up to him. Lines within quotation marks are read from a draft of Galileo.*)*

LAUGHTON
Okay, are you ready to start? Tom... *(TOM does not respond.)* Are you ready.

TOM
Sure.

LAUGHTON
What are you looking at?

TOM
I, uh...I'm trying to look at the ocean.

LAUGHTON
Isn't Brecht's house in the way?

TOM
Maybe...maybe I oughta try a different window.

LAUGHTON
(pause) Well, are we going to rehearse?

TOM
Yes. *(TOM puts down telescope, earphones.)*

LAUGHTON
Let's start with scene one.

TOM
You know, this is like *deja vu*. I mean, lately I've been totally dedicated to writing. But in the back of my mind, I think I've always wanted to act in the theater. Although I don't think I've ever verbalized that. But theater, it...it just feels so right.

LAUGHTON
You've never even been on stage.

TOM
I was just in a movie.

LAUGHTON
You had two words, Tom.

TOM
I'm sure there's a lot I don't know yet, but—just holding a script in my hand, envisioning myself on the boards—I...I feel this vital connection with the art that seems so...so natural. Like it's something I excelled at in a previous life.

LAUGHTON
Why don't we start with this section right over here... Now you've just handed me a letter of introduction... *(TOM clears throat, hands LAUGHTON a piece of paper. Both TOM and LAUGHTON read their lines from their*

scripts. TOM'S acting is very self conscious.)

TOM

"Good morning, sir. My name is...Lude...Lude-ah..."

LAUGHTON

Ludovico.

TOM

"Good morning, sir. My name is Loco"...

LAUGHTON

Ludovico.

TOM

That's what I said.

LAUGHTON

You said loco.

TOM

I did not.

LAUGHTON

Don't worry about it.

TOM

I did not say loco.

LAUGHTON

(Reading letter.) (pause) "You came by way of Holland and your family lives in Campagna? Private lessons...thirty scudi a month."

TOM

"They showed me an instrument like yours in Amsterdam."

LAUGHTON

What instrument are you talking about?

TOM

One like yours.

LAUGHTON

Yes, but what do you think of the instrument?

TOM

Oh, I think it's quite functional... *(TOM laughs.)*

LAUGHTON

You don't understand it.

TOM

"Andrea exits."

LAUGHTON

Why did you say that?

TOM

Oh, is that *your* line?

LAUGHTON

Why would your character say that?

TOM

Because he wants Galileo to know that he left.

LAUGHTON

It's a stage direction.

TOM

Oh... "I saw a brand new instrument in Amsterdam. A tube affair..." A tube affair? *(TOM smiles.)*

LAUGHTON

Just read the lines, please... "And the tube. Did it look like this?" *(LAUGHTON shows TOM sketch.)*

TOM

"Well, sort of. And they only started peddling it on the plaza just before I departed Holland."

LAUGHTON

Let's move on to scene two. "Members of the High Senate! Gentlemen... As professor of Mathematics, your obedient servant has always counted it his privilege to offer you such discoveries and inventions as might prove lucrative to the Venetian Republic. Thus, in all humility, I tender you this my optical tube, or telescope..." *(TOM falls asleep, eventually snores.)* "Constructed, as I assure you, on the most scientific and Christian principles..." Tom!

TOM

Oh.

LAUGHTON

You have to stay focused.

TOM

I was just thinking about your, uh, tube...and I fell asleep.

LAUGHTON

I would hope that that wouldn't happen in the theater.

TOM

Only if I were in the audience.

LAUGHTON

Let's jump ahead... *(Points to line near end of scene two.)* I'll read your cues.

TOM

Who's Virginia?

LAUGHTON

My daughter.

TOM

You have a daughter?

LAUGHTON

Galileo has a daughter... *(As a teenage girl.)* "Here's Ludovico to congratulate you, father."

TOM

"Congratulations, sir."

LAUGHTON

(As teenage girl.) "Isn't father a great man?"

TOM

"Yes."

LAUGHTON

(As teenage girl.) "Isn't father's tube pretty?"

TOM

"Yes, a pretty red." *(TOM smiles.)* You wrote that, didn't you? *(TOM glances at LAUGHTON'S crotch.)*

LAUGHTON

Brecht and I still have to do some polishing.

TOM

You know, this is the sort of part that...that I can really sink my teeth into.

LAUGHTON

We still need to do a lot of work.

TOM

Well, you and Breath do what you have to do with the script, but I can't wait to get up there on the boards.

LAUGHTON

We have to work on your presentation.

TOM

(Defensive.) What's wrong with my presentation?

LAUGHTON

Nothing that can't be improved.

TOM

You don't think I can act?

LAUGHTON

No, no... I'm sure you can act. It's just that, well...you haven't done it before.

TOM

Galileo's an atheist, isn't he?

LAUGHTON

No. But his work is being suppressed by the Church, which is also running the state.

TOM

What's wrong with that?

LAUGHTON

That's exactly the sort of question Brecht wants the spectator to think about.

TOM

So the play's subversive.

LAUGHTON

It's a play. So it's much more complicated than any social statements.

TOM

I don't want to do it.

LAUGHTON

I thought you wanted to work with me.

TOM

I'd rather just concentrate on my writing.

LAUGHTON

Tom, if you play Ludovico, you're going to make connections. Chaplin's already expressed an interest in the play. Peter Lorre, who's a personal friend of Brecht's, might be playing the Pope. And it looks as if Orson Welles is going to be directing.

TOM

What's it going to pay?

LAUGHTON

Well, we'll be opening in Los Angeles. And as long as everything goes well, which it will, you'll be receiving a substantial wage once we hit Broadway.

TOM

I don't work for free.

LAUGHTON
You're not going to.
TOM
I mean, if they expect me to take time away from my writing, then I have to get—
LAUGHTON
You're not going to work for nothing. I'll make sure of it.
TOM
Is the Broadway production definite?
LAUGHTON
Just about.
TOM
So it isn't.
LAUGHTON
No, it is... We're just waiting on a couple of contracts.
TOM
Can I get you a glass of Scotch?
LAUGHTON
Yes... As long as we get right back to work... *(TOM gets two drinks.)* How do you support yourself?
TOM
Well, I, uh... I'm a writer, primarily.
LAUGHTON
What do you do for money?
TOM
I work at Hollywood Bowl... I'm in charge of the ushers.
LAUGHTON
And you're able to pay for a house in Santa Monica with that?
TOM
Well, I, uh...I have a trust fund.
LAUGHTON
We better get back to the play.
TOM
We can do it later.
LAUGHTON
You need to practice for the audition.
TOM
You're the producer, Charles.
LAUGHTON
I'm one of the producers.
TOM
I'd hate to see anything get in the way of our relationship.
LAUGHTON
Brecht doesn't give a damn about relationships.
TOM
Well, certainly you have some leverage...
LAUGHTON
You still have to be adequate during the audition on Saturday.
TOM
You don't think I'm adequate?
LAUGHTON
Tom, look, no matter what sort of leverage I try to apply, Brecht will not compromise his art.
TOM
(pause) You wouldn't work with a Communist, would you?
LAUGHTON
What?
TOM
Oh...I just heard something...
LAUGHTON
About Brecht?
TOM
It's probably just a rumor.
LAUGHTON
Then why don't we leave it at that and get back to rehearsing?
TOM
I'd like to, but I...I'm just too tired right now... But I have something that I've been wanting to give you. *(TOM pulls out a small box of photographs.)* It's just a little gift.
LAUGHTON
Oh.
TOM
Go ahead...open it. *(LAUGHTON opens box, looks at pictures.)*
LAUGHTON
Oh, a picture of you in a bathing suit.
TOM
Do you like it?
LAUGHTON
You look so buff.
TOM
There's more.

LAUGHTON
A picture of both of us in bathing suits...

TOM
Look at the next one.

LAUGHTON
I don't remember anyone taking this picture.

TOM
Isn't it hot?

LAUGHTON
Who took this?

TOM
Don't you remember? I had the camera set up on a tripod.

LAUGHTON
It's always on a tripod. But I've never seen anybody using it.

TOM
I was using a remote control.

LAUGHTON
You never told me you were taking photographs.

TOM
Of course I didn't tell you. That's why the pictures look so natural. *(LAUGHTON thumbs through more pictures.)*

LAUGHTON
Too natural...

TOM
Don't you like them?

LAUGHTON
Well, yes, but...I don't think I could take these home... Maybe I should just keep them here.

TOM
They're for you.

LAUGHTON
But if I take them with me, then you won't have any.

TOM
I made copies. And I have lots of other pictures of us, too. *(pause)* Let me go get 'em. *(TOM EXITS. LAUGHTON follows him.)*

(Projection: J. Edgar Hoover: Communists and Fascists are materialistic, totalitarian, anti-religious, degrading and inhuman. They differ little except in name. Communism has bred Fascism. Fascism spawns Communism.)

SCENE TWELVE

(BRECHT'S home.)

BRECHT
You could work with Tom for five years, twenty-four hours a day, and he still wouldn't get it.

LAUGHTON
I think we should give him another shot.

BRECHT
He'll ruin the goddamn play.

LAUGHTON
I've seen worse, even on—

BRECHT
I don't even want to discuss this anymore.

LAUGHTON
My agent thinks I should get a firm commitment on the New York performance dates.

BRECHT
I want a firm commitment. Welles wants to push the shows back again.

LAUGHTON
Elsa was talking to another producer who might be interested.

BRECHT
Who?

LAUGHTON
Mike Todd.

BRECHT
Have him give me a call.

LAUGHTON
Frank Capra wants me to do a film with him in the fall.

BRECHT
What's it called?

LAUGHTON
It's a Wonderful Life. He wants me to play the lead.

BRECHT
With a title like *It's a Wonderful Life*, I'd be surprised if it plays for more than a couple of weeks.

LAUGHTON
At least it would pay a decent wage.

BRECHT
But then you'll be doing another hack film, and then another, and another.

LAUGHTON
If I'm going to do a play, it's crucial that I'm performing with actors with whom I want to work.

BRECHT
Make some recommendations.

LAUGHTON
Well...as far the the role of Andrea goes, I think that if you give Tom another opportunity he'll show you—

BRECHT
Tom is not going to be in *Galileo*.

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: Los Angeles Field Office will attempt to prepare enough clear-cut evidence to determine whether...the United States Attorney...will authorize the arrest of Subject with a view to his internment or deportation. Approval granted to install technical surveillance on subject... provided full security assured.)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(TOM'S house.)

TOM
My shoulders feel awfully tight.
(LAUGHTON begins massaging TOM.)

LAUGHTON
I still don't understand why Capra reneged on his offer.

TOM
Can you get around the neck... And the shoulder blades...

LAUGHTON
I'll tell Brecht again how right you'll be for the part.

TOM
A little lower, Charles... Oh...that feels good...

LAUGHTON
I...I don't know what else I can do.

TOM
You know, we still have to be cautious of enemy aliens.

LAUGHTON
The war's virtually over.

TOM
It's just beginning... America's major threat, now, is the enemy within. Which is a bigger challenge, actually, than World War II...

LAUGHTON
I think that's all being exaggerated.

TOM
(LAUGHTON continues the massage.)
You know, a lot of writers and actors are being closely scrutinized right now...

LAUGHTON
It's not the most conducive environment for creating art, is it?

TOM
And with all the buzz about *Galileo*, everyone knows, now, that you've been working with Brecht.

LAUGHTON
Well, Brecht's certainly not a Soviet operative.

TOM
Do you have any evidence to support that?

LAUGHTON
We've been working together for months.

TOM
Do you know much about his work with radical exile organizations, like the Free German movement?

LAUGHTON
I haven't the foggiest...

TOM
Has he published any plays or essays critical of communism?

LAUGHTON
I never said he was critical of communism.

TOM
Perhaps you should tell someone.

LAUGHTON
What?

TOM
That Brecht isn't anti-Communist.

LAUGHTON
For what?

TOM
Either he's with us or against us.

LAUGHTON
I'm not going to compromise our relationship.

TOM
I assume that you're talking about *our* relationship, Charles. Because I'd hate to see everything come to an end because the government ends up revoking your visa.

LAUGHTON
If worse came to worse, I suppose I could always work over in England.

TOM
Once English journalists find out about a star's unusual sexual inclinations, they'll plaster it all over the newspapers.

(LAUGHTON stops massaging TOM.)

LAUGHTON
Why would they find that out?

TOM
I don't know. But they could.

LAUGHTON
Well, I'm not going to have to work in England.

TOM
American newspapers would do the same thing. With articles, photographs.

LAUGHTON
I'm not going to betray Brecht.

TOM
As long as your work on *Galileo* is enabling you to gather information, no one's going to tamper with the play. Otherwise, I'm afraid it might be shut down.

LAUGHTON
So this is what you want to see happen?

TOM
I have nothing to do with it.

LAUGHTON
You certainly seem to know a lot.

TOM
Someone came to visit me... Because I'm Brecht's next door neighbor. And I don't want to see you get hurt.

LAUGHTON
I can't just back out of the play at this point.

TOM
You'll be fine, Charles...as long as you provide information about any of Brecht's activities that might seem anti-American.

LAUGHTON
I'd probably forget most of what he says.

TOM
It doesn't matter. They'll have you wear a wire.

LAUGHTON
A wire?

TOM
Or maybe they'll have you hold one... Microphones are so small these days, they can stick them in almost anything, like...like a cigar.

LAUGHTON
For all I know, the production's not even going to happen.

TOM
It has to happen. Because it's going to enable you to get the information on Brecht that you've been witholding.

LAUGHTON
I haven't witheld anything.

TOM
You don't want to be blacklisted...

LAUGHTON
Well, no, of course not. But I'm not about to spy on a friend.

TOM
You don't have any choice at this point.

SCENE FOURTEEN
(BRECHT'S front yard.)

(Projection: The new, American atomic bomb destroyed the entire Japanese city of Hiroshima in a single blast....350,000 innocent people are there one moment...and wiped out the next.)

(ANGEL ENTERS, working.)
ANGEL
I thought you might like some more of these. *(ANGEL gives BRECHT a bunch of cigars.)*
BRECHT
Wonderful... At least let me give you a dollar.
ANGEL
No.
BRECHT
You've got kids to support.
ANGEL
The spirits won't accept money.
BRECHT
(BRECHT chuckles.) It's just tobacco.
ANGEL
(With great purpose.) It's *not* just tobacco... And while it's burning I want you to focus on the cigar's smoke, the tobacco's spirit.
BRECHT
All I ever think about is where to put the ashes.
ANGEL
(ANGEL says the following lines with powerful, prophetic conviction.) Then you have to pay closer attention. To the moment. While everything's burning, in flux. If you see only the ash, you can't understand the present. If you see nothing but fire, you'll never grasp the past. But the connection between fire and ash, past and present, becomes visible—at times—in the smoke, as a constellation. But you have to seize the image the second it flits by or it's going to disappear.
BRECHT
You sure there's only tobacco in these? *(BRECHT writes, ANGEL finishes doing yardwork, EXITS. Eventually, LAUGHTON ENTERS, with his raincoat's collar pulled up around his face. He's carrying several newspapers, a huge cigar that contains a microphone. LAUGHTON handles the cigar awkwardly, at times.)* Laughton.
LAUGHTON
Don't say my name so loudly.
BRECHT
It's not supposed to rain today, is it?
LAUGHTON
I...I don't want anyone to recognize me...
BRECHT
What's the matter?
LAUGHTON
Did you see this? *(LAUGHTON points to one of his newspapers.)*
BRECHT
It's hard to believe that a civilzed person, never mind a "democratic" government, would utilize science to murder hundreds of thousands of people.
LAUGHTON
Well, there's that, too... But there's also something about me in here... It's in all the papers. *(LAUGHTON hands BRECHT papers. BRECHT reads.)* The *L.A. Times*, *Variety*... Right on the front page... *(BRECHT reads.)* I lost a ten by fifteen foot section of my property. Gone, caput, right down the side of the cliff...
BRECHT
Some things you can't control.
LAUGHTON
You see what they're saying in those articles? I just want to crawl under a rock and die.

BRECHT

(BRECHT reads the words within quotation marks.) "The actor Charles Laughton recently lost a portion of his garden in Pacific Palisades during a slight landslide." So what?

LAUGHTON

Look at the gossip columns. *(BRECHT looks at a gossip column.)* They're equating the crumbling of my garden with the faltering of my career.

BRECHT

(pause) It doesn't say that here.

LAUGHTON

Read between the lines... Industry people are looking at the papers right now and laughing... Because those articles are just reinforcing what studio execs have been thinking about me... And this is only the beginning... There's a subterranean stream undermining everything. So the world, my career is going to continue to fall apart, right beneath my feet... I'm just so ashamed right now... Oh, I...I'm sorry. I shouldn't be troubling you with all this...

BRECHT

You're over-reacting, Laughton. You're an accomplished actor...

LAUGHTON

All I've been getting lately are offers to play supporting roles, for people like Marjorie Main and Wallace Beery...

BRECHT

That's going to change once people see you in the play.

LAUGHTON

There's still the subterranean stream.

BRECHT

The L.A. run of *Galileo's* already sold out—for three weeks—because of you.

LAUGHTON

But it's not going to make it to Broadway now.

BRECHT

I just talked to Mike Todd yesterday.

LAUGHTON

He called you?

BRECHT

Broadway's a done deal.

LAUGHTON

You talked to Todd before the bomb was dropped, right?

BRECHT

What difference does it make?

LAUGHTON

Nobody's going to produce a controversial play about science right after the world's worst scientific atrocity.

BRECHT

All we have to do is help the audience to see the parallels between the dawn of science and the birth of the atomic bomb.

LAUGHTON

Galileo's discovery didn't kill hundreds of thousands of people.

BRECHT

In both cases, scientists let themselves be manipulated at the expense of—

LAUGHTON

Galileo wasn't manipulated.

BRECHT

He caved in to the Church.

LAUGHTON

One has to bend a bit sometimes.

BRECHT

Galileo's a coward, just like Oppenheimer.

LAUGHTON

Well, I'm not about to play him as a cowering wretch. *(BRECHT takes out a lighter.)*

BRECHT

Let me give you a light.

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON pulls his cigar back.) No.

BRECHT

What good's a cigar if you don't light it?

LAUGHTON

I...I just feel like holding it...to calm my nerves.

BRECHT

I want you to try out some new lines. *(BRECHT hands LAUGHTON an altered monologue.)*

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON looks a monologue.) I thought this speech was pretty well set...

BRECHT

I had to make a few changes. *(BRECHT points to a passage.)* Why don't you start right here?

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON reads, performs.) "If you give way to coercion, science can be crippled, and your new machines may simply suggest new drudgeries. Should you then, in time, discover all there is to be discovered, your progress must then become a progress away from the bulk of humanity. The gulf might even grow so wide that the sound of your cheering at some new achievement would be echoed by a universal howl of horror."

BRECHT

Good.

LAUGHTON

This "universal horror"...it refers to the atomic bomb...

BRECHT

That's what the play's about now.

LAUGHTON

The way you discuss scientific progress, the ways that machines and science don't really help, but exploit... It's...it's... *(LAUGHTON becomes mute.)*

BRECHT

What? *(LAUGHTON gives thumbs up sign.)* You like it? *(LAUGHTON nods yes.)* So you like the change?

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON talks into cigar.) Well, no.

BRECHT

You don't think it works? *(LAUGHTON nods yes.)* You do?

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON talks into cigar.) No.

BRECHT

But you just nodded your head that it does.

LAUGHTON

No I didn't.

BRECHT

You feeling okay?

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON feigns laryngitis.) I...I'm coming down with laryngitis... So I'm trying not to talk too much.

BRECHT

Would you like some water?

LAUGHTON

Do you have anything stronger?

BRECHT

Scotch?

LAUGHTON

Well, I really shouldn't...but if you insist... *(BRECHT EXITS, TOM appears from behind a bush.)*

TOM

Hello, Charles.

LAUGHTON

What are you doing here?

TOM

I, uh...I'm looking for a golf ball.

LAUGHTON

I didn't know you played golf.

TOM

You need to ask more pointed questions.

LAUGHTON

I really don't want to participate in this.

TOM

That was just recorded.

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON looks at cigar.) Shit. I keep forgetting.

TOM

Think of your career. *(TOM begins to EXIT.)*

LAUGHTON

Maybe I should just leave.

TOM

Get some more information first. *(BRECHT ENTERS with Scotch.)*

BRECHT

Tom... You're not still looking for a part in the play, are you?

TOM

I, uh... I was just looking for a golf ball. *(TOM EXITS. BRECHT hands LAUGHTON a drink.)*

LAUGHTON

Thanks.

BRECHT

Nichts zu danken. (LAUGHTON downs drink.)

LAUGHTON

I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to call it a day. *(LAUGHTON begins to EXIT.)*

BRECHT

Make sure you get some rest.

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON stops. During rest of scene, his "laryngitis" comes and goes.) Oh, ummm...I've been meaning to ask you... *(LAUGHTON is handling his cigar in an awkward manner as he tries to use it to record BRECHT'S words.)* What does the play have to do with the Free German movement?

BRECHT

Nothing... Why?

LAUGHTON

Oh, I was just wondering...

BRECHT

Right now the Free German movement's main concern is that no one associated with Hitler has any power during reconstruction.

LAUGHTON

What about the Communists?

BRECHT

Well, Germany would certainly be better off with the Communists in power than the Fascists, wouldn't it?

LAUGHTON

I don't know.

BRECHT

Well, that's what you've said before.

LAUGHTON

I never said that.

BRECHT

You said it last week.

LAUGHTON

You must be mistaken.

BRECHT

I'm *not* mistaken.

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON speaks into cigar.) Germany needs, uh, American democracy.

BRECHT

If they only look to the U.S. for help, then all they're going to get is imperialism, right?

LAUGHTON

I...I don't think so.

BRECHT

Why are you changing your stance all of a sudden?

LAUGHTON

I've always felt this way.

BRECHT

Is your voice coming back?

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON feigns oncoming laryngitis again.) No, no, not at all...

BRECHT

I've never seen anyone hold a cigar like that.

LAUGHTON

Well, I...I guess it's...it's a bit awkward for me...because it's larger than what I'm used to.

BRECHT

(BRECHT holds up a light, LAUGHTON pulls cigar away.) Why are you bothering with the thing if you're not going to smoke it?

LAUGHTON

I...I need something to occupy my hands. And smoking's not good for my laryngitis. *(LAUGHTON'S "laryngitis" becomes worse.)*

BRECHT

You haven't had any vocal problems at rehearsal...

LAUGHTON

Not with my voice... But, to be honest, rehearsing has become so

stressful lately...because you're so insistent on having me deliver the monologues in a manner that's inconsistent with my interpretation of what you've written.

BRECHT

If you had a better grasp of Galileo's faint-heartedness, you'd be able—

LAUGHTON

I cannot perform Galileo that way.

BRECHT

You have to.

LAUGHTON

I can't.

BRECHT

If you just took my direction...

LAUGHTON

(Definitively.) I'm not going to do it.

BRECHT

What?

LAUGHTON

I quit.

BRECHT

You can't quit.

LAUGHTON

There are plenty of other actors...

BRECHT

We've been working on this for nearly a year.

LAUGHTON

I refuse to make the character something it's not.

BRECHT

We can talk about this.

LAUGHTON

You never listen.

BRECHT

Why don't we get together tomorrow morning?

LAUGHTON

For what?

BRECHT

We can work this out, Laughton.

LAUGHTON

You have to trust my instincts.

BRECHT

We can meet at your house.

LAUGHTON

Oh...I'd prefer to come here.

BRECHT

Your place is so much more pleasant.

LAUGHTON

Not since the landslide took my big trees... I mean, I just dread going back into my house now, especially during the day... It...it feels so different since the big spruce went. There's so much light. Everywhere. It's as if the whole place has changed... This morning, the sun was pouring in through the windows, brightening corners that have never seen the light of day... It's...it's really unbearable for me.

BRECHT

We'll pull down the shades. *(BRECHT pats LAUGHTON on the back. LAUGHTON EXITS. BRECHT writes for a while. Eventually, ELSA ENTERS.)*

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: FBI recommends Brecht's internment to Assistant Attorney General Attilio di Girolamo....This action should be taken without delay.)

ELSA

Brecht, darling.

BRECHT

You never told me you were coming over.

ELSA

Do I need an invitation now?

BRECHT

Well...there's the children...

ELSA

I brought them each a little gift.

BRECHT

They're not home at the moment.

ELSA

Oh, no?

BRECHT

They went to the store with my wife.

ELSA

I'm so excited about *Mother Courage*. I'm ready to dive right into it.

BRECHT

We have to get *Galileo* up first.

ELSA

We can work together in the evening, after rehearsals.

BRECHT

I wouldn't want Charles to get jealous.

LAUGHTON

I've decided to leave Charles.

BRECHT

What?

ELSA

I have to.

BRECHT

I thought you and Charles had an understanding.

ELSA

We do. But he's never home anymore, anyway. And he seems to be encouraging me to leave. *(ELSA runs her hands through BRECHT'S hair.)* You don't mind, do you? Now I'll have more time to spend with you.

BRECHT

I don't know...

ELSA

Why don't we go inside for a while?

BRECHT

Ruth Berlau just called. She's on her way back to California.

ELSA

I hope you told her that you're already spoken for.

BRECHT

(pause) I couldn't.

ELSA

What!?

BRECHT

I've known her for nearly ten years. And then there's my wife, the children... And you, of course. Which is why I discouraged her from returning... But I can handle only so many things at one time...

ELSA

As soon as something else comes along, you want to drop me like a hot potato...

BRECHT

I didn't expect Berlau to come back to Los Angeles.

ELSA

It's not as if you're married... Well, not to Berlau anyway.

BRECHT

You just have to be patient...till all the dust settles... And I have to be going now.

ELSA

You're just walking away...

BRECHT

I'm not walking—

ELSA

After all I went through for you.

BRECHT

We were just fucking.

ELSA

Who do you think secured you a producer for *Galileo*?

BRECHT

Laughton found him.

ELSA

No, it was me... When I heard you were having trouble with Welles, I went to visit Mike Todd and I convinced him to produce your play.

BRECHT

Galileo's going to be on Broadway—and it's even becoming a movie now—because of the writing.

ELSA

The writing? *(ELSA laughs.)* Todd hasn't even read it.

BRECHT

Bullshit.

ELSA

I've been telling him that he didn't have to. Because I know that he hates being associated with anything "controversial." Especially with Congress working so dilligently to ferret out "reds" in Hollywood.

BRECHT

Berlau's going to be back in New York soon.

ELSA

I think I'm going to encourage Todd to read your play. *(ELSA EXITS.)*

(Projection: FBI file on R. Berlau: Agent Hood requests blanket authorization for the installation of a microphone surveillance in whichever unit of Chalet Motor Hotel Berlau might reside after relocating from the Beverly Hills home of P. Lorre.)

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Chalet Motor Hotel.)

(BERLAU is very pregnant; she's sweating. Nearby is a new Leica camera.)

BERLAU

(Upset.) I feel like a pregnant nun who's been sequestered, so as not to bring shame to the order—

BRECHT

Now don't get upset again.

BERLAU

For the past six weeks you forced me to live with a morphine addict...while people kept wandering in and out of the house all night...sitting out by the pool drinking, smoking...

BRECHT

Everything's going to work out.

BERLAU

How? Are you going to keep me and the baby locked up in this fleabag hotel until he's twenty-one years old?

BRECHT

At least you're close by now.

BERLAU

Your gutter's even closer by. Is that where you want me to move next?

BRECHT

Look, with Broadway up in the air right now, and Laughton...I'm doing the best I can.

BERLAU

For the first time since we met, I'm about to produce something that's indisputably mine. And you keep trying to cover it up.

BRECHT

It's going to be different once the baby arrives.

BERLAU

If you don't get me out of this hell-hole by next Friday, I swear to God I'm going to call all of your friends and tell them how hard you've been working to make sure nobody knows that I've been carrying your child for eight months.

BRECHT

You're getting an apartment.

BERLAU

By next week.

BRECHT

(pause) Let me finish showing you the manuscripts I want you to photograph.

BERLAU

I don't feel like doing this right now.

BRECHT

It'll take five minutes.

BERLAU

I'm exhausted.

BRECHT

If I can finish showing you tonight, you won't have to think about it again. Till after the baby.

BERLAU

What do you want to name it?

BRECHT

(pause) Whatever you want.

BERLAU

If it's a boy I'm going to name him Michel. After the baby in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.*

BRECHT

All my plays from the twenties are in this box over here. Which is where I want you to start.

BERLAU

It's so hot in here.

BRECHT

Hot?

BERLAU

You know, there's an ice-cream parlor right down the block. We can sit right out on the sidewalk.

BRECHT

We're in the middle of Santa Monica.

BERLAU

I *have to* get out of this room.

BRECHT

I just want to show you—

BERLAU

Now!

BRECHT

Let's...let's go sit by the pool.

BERLAU

I want to go have some ice cream.

BRECHT

I'll go out and get it.

BERLAU

I don't want to sit here all by myself.

BRECHT

I'll be back in a minute.

BERLAU

I need to be around people.

BRECHT

It's just another month.

BERLAU

(Agitated.) I have to go out and get some ice cream.

BRECHT

Ruth, relax.

BERLAU

Right now!

BRECHT

I can go out and get it.

BERLAU

(Desperate.) Take me out of this room, goddamn it!

BRECHT

Okay, okay... Where's your coat?

BERLAU

Coat? It's a hundred degrees outside.

BRECHT

I just thought you'd want to cover yourself up.

BERLAU

I'm not covering anything.

BRECHT

(pause) Okay...

BERLAU

The baby cannot remain couped up in squalid rooms, hidden beneath overcoats. *(Phone rings.)* It needs fresh air.

BRECHT

(BRECHT picks up phone.) Hello... Laughton...Laughton...

BERLAU

Ohhh...

BRECHT

Disconnected, damn it. *(BRECHT hangs up phone.)*

BERLAU

Ahhh...

BRECHT

What's the matter?

BERLAU

I...I just have a little indigestion.

BRECHT

Why don't we take the car?

BERLAU

I want to walk.

BRECHT

C'mon. *(BERLAU suddenly writhes in response to sudden stomach pain.)*

BERLAU

Aaahhh...

BRECHT

Ruth...

BERLAU

Ohhh... Aaaahhh...

BRECHT

Sit down. *(BRECHT helps her sit.)*

BERLAU

Aaaaahhhhh.... Uhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

You're going to be okay.

BERLAU

Ooooohhhhh...

BRECHT

Did...did your water break?

BERLAU

Aaaahhhh.... Ohhh... *(BERLAU checks to see if her water broke.)* No...no water... Ohhh...ohhh...

BRECHT

What's the matter?

BERLAU

I... I don't know. Aaaaaahhhhhh.... Aaahhh... Ohhhhhh...

BRECHT

C'mon, I'll...I'll take you to the hospital. *(BRECHT tries to help her up, to no avail.)*

BERLAU

Oh, no... Aaahhh... It hurts too much... Aaahhh...

BRECHT

I...I can try to carry you.
(BRECHT tries to carry her.)

BERLAU

Ohhh... Aaaahhh... No, no... Ohhhhhh... *(Phone rings. BERLAU continues reacting to pain, which gradually increases.)*

BRECHT

Hello... Laughton...

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhh...

BRECHT

What? Todd's backing out of *Galileo* because he doesn't like the script...

BERLAU

Ohhhhhh... Aaahhh...

BRECHT

No, you can't do a movie. We'll get another producer...

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhhhhh... Ohhh...

BRECHT

She's all right...she...she just has a bit of indigestion...

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

I'll talk to you later.
(BRECHT hangs up phone.)

BERLAU

Aaahhh. I...I feel like I'm going to burst. Ohhhhhh... Ohhhhhh... Ah. Ohhhhhhhhhhhh... Ahhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

I'll...I'll call the doctor.

BERLAU

Call an ambulance. Aaahhh...

BRECHT

Okay, okay.

BERLAU

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh... Aaahhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

Where the hell's the phone book?

BERLAU

Call the operator.

BRECHT

(BRECHT picks up phone.)
Hello...operator... Tom?

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

What are you doing on this line?

BERLAU

Call the ambulance!!!
(BRECHT hangs up phone.)

BRECHT

Okay!

BERLAU

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhh....

BRECHT

Hello, operator. There's a pregnant woman here who needs an ambulance.

BERLAU

Ohhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

Chalet Motor Hotel, 3212 Wilshire.

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhh...

BRECHT

No, I am not her husband.

BERLAU

Aaahhhhhh...

BRECHT

Just hurry up, please!

BERLAU

Ohhhhhhhhhh... Aaahhhhhhhhhhhh...

BRECHT

You're going to be okay, Ruth.

BERLAU

Aaaaaahhhhhhhhh... Ohhhhhh...

(BLACKOUT.)

(Projection: FBI file on R. Berlau: Hotel room contained boxes of Brecht's manuscripts. Contents of Berlau's suitcase included various supplies of photographic papers, 35mm film, assorted infant attire, 0-6 months.)

SCENE SIXTEEN
(LANG'S office.)

BRECHT
There's a revolutionary cigar roller forced to mow lawns...for low pay...like thousands of other Hispanics. But then he organizes the yardworkers...

LANG
Brecht.

BRECHT
And they all go out on strike.

LANG
Brecht! The people who green-light movies like having their lawns cut every week. Cheaply. *(LANG begins to EXIT.)*

BRECHT
I have several more scenarios—

LANG
I don't want to hear them.

BRECHT
Please, Lang, just give me five minutes.

LANG
It's unneccessary. *(LANG looks at his watch.)*

BRECHT
Look, I'm sorry I was late, but I couldn't help it. I had to stop at the hospital.

LANG
For what?

BRECHT
I...I had to drop off a friend of mine.

LANG
Anything serious?

BRECHT
No, no, not at all. And I think I deserve a few more minutes to discuss my new movie idea—

LANG
Brecht, relax. I've been shopping around your Heydrich the Hangman scenario. The movie's going to be called *Hangmen Also Hang.*

BRECHT
That's unacceptable.

LANG
It's already been decided.

BRECHT
It's my movie.

LANG
No...it's your idea. And once your idea's sold, it belongs to whomever paid for it.

BRECHT
I haven't sold it yet.

LANG
You're about to sell it.

BRECHT
Then it has to be under my terms.

LANG
(LANG smiles.) Brecht...you haven't even written anything yet.

BRECHT
When do I get paid?

LANG
You'll get half the money up front. Five thousand. But you have to write a treatment first. And we have to finish this thing before people lose interest in war.

BRECHT
The war's over.

LANG
Brecht, the war is never over. Just the faces change. But you'll have to make the story a bit more light-hearted.

BRECHT
The movie's about Nazis.

LANG
I know. And we can keep much of your story. But Edgar Bergen's under contract here... So one of the anti-

Fascists is going to be played by Charlie McCarthy. *(Looks at watch.)* And I'm running late for, I don't know... something.
(LANG EXITS.)

(Projection: FBI file on B. Brecht: Brecht's treatment for the film Hangmen Also Die shows a familiarity through personal experience with all the tricks of an underground movement: never tell the police anything, establish alibis so as to fool the police, work very secretly, guard against informers.
Internment of subject imminent, upon Justice Department approval.)

SCENE SEVENTEEN
(BERLAU'S apartment.)

(BERLAU is taking pictures of manuscript pages. BRECHT reads the paper, smokes a cigar.)

BERLAU
Just a few more plays to go...

BRECHT
And then we can start on the journals...

BERLAU
You want the journals, as well?

BRECHT
Everything must be preserved.

BERLAU
Then I guess I'll move on to the journals for a while... *(BERLAU takes out journals, eventually starts photographing them.)*

BRECHT
Just try to keep it all in order.
(BRECHT jots down some notes now and then. BERLAU'S work pace continues to increase as she photographs journal pages.)

BERLAU
The air in here is so stifling.

BRECHT
I'll open the windows.

BERLAU
They're painted shut.

BRECHT
I'll have to pick you up a fan at Woolworth's. *(pause)* This place isn't so bad. You have your own kitchen here, a darkroom for developing photographs...

BERLAU
I can't wait to start taking pictures of people for a change.

BRECHT
We'll get pictures of every rehearsal, the shows—of every one of my plays, eventually. *(BERLAU continues taking pictures. Eventually, a journal passage catches her attention.)*

BERLAU
What's this journal entry about?

BRECHT
If you're going to start reading everything now, you're never going to finish.

BERLAU
(Reading.) "sept. 3rd. ruth has an operation. cost: forty dollars."

BRECHT
A lot of that writing, I'm not even thinking.

BERLAU
You're always thinking.

BRECHT
That's...that's just a mindless notation.

BERLAU
I was in the hospital then.

BRECHT
They're just notes.

BERLAU
You paid absolutely nothing towards the doctors' bills.

BRECHT
You know I didn't have any—

BERLAU
If it were up to the doctors I'd be resting in the hospital right now...

BRECHT
Ruth, you've been doing fine.

BERLAU

You make it sound as if I had just had a corn removed...

BRECHT

What happened, Ruth, it—

BERLAU

What's the forty dollars for?

BRECHT

Well...the funeral home, they—

BERLAU

We never had a funeral.

BRECHT

(pause) He was two days old.

BERLAU

And nobody even knows he was born.

BRECHT

We'll adopt a child once we get back to Europe.

BERLAU

Michel needs to have a funeral.

BRECHT

It will just make things worse.

BERLAU

I want him to have a funeral, damn it... In a Catholic Church...with altar boys...flowers.

BRECHT

Ruth, right now, you...you just need to take it easy.

BERLAU

When? After I'm done photographing another two thousand pages? *(BERLAU works.)* I cannot continue to hide everything. *You* can't.

BRECHT

Once we're in Germany, we're not going to hide—

BERLAU

What did you spend the forty dollars on?

BRECHT

(pause) Michel's cremation.

BERLAU

(pause) (Softly.) Cremation... *(pause)* You couldn't pay for doctors' visits, my train ticket, a decent place for me to stay—*(BERLAU take pictures of manuscript pages at a furious pace.)*

BRECHT

Maybe I don't deal with death well, all right—

BERLAU

Or *life*.

BRECHT

I...I never acknowledged the death of another son, either.

BERLAU

What?

BRECHT

Apparently, while my son Frank was watching a film with his infantry, the movie theater was fire-bombed.

BERLAU

Oh, my God...

BRECHT

He was fighting on the wrong side.

BERLAU

I'm on the wrong side. *(BERLAU snaps photos of manuscript pages at an insanely rapid pace.)*

BRECHT

(pause) Ruth, relax... Ruth...

BERLAU

I'll relax when I'm dead. *(BERLAU'S work pace intensifies.)*

BRECHT

There's no need to do this now.

BERLAU

Don't you want your work to live on for eternity?

BRECHT

Well, I don't think all my writing should end up in the waste heap of history.

BERLAU

You mean like two of your sons. *(BERLAU works harder, faster.)*

BRECHT

Stop, goddamn it.

BERLAU

You couldn't take so much as one picture of our child, could you? But you want me to spend months, years, the rest of my miserable life photographing your words, actors doing exactly what you've told them—

BRECHT

Give me the camera, damn it. *(pause)* Give it to me!

BERLAU

Instead of taking pictures, maybe we should just burn everything... Shovel all the ashes into a cheap vase... *(BRECHT eventually grabs camera away from BERLAU.)*

BRECHT

You need to get some rest.

BERLAU

I want to finish.

BRECHT

Ruth...Ruth... *(BRECHT caresses BERLAU.)*

BERLAU

Don't touch me!

BRECHT

Fine. Fine! Maybe I should just stay away from here. Is that what you want?

BERLAU

(pause) Don't desert me...

BRECHT

I would never do that.

BERLAU

I swear I'll go mad. *(BRECHT embraces and kisses her.)* Ohhh... Bertolt.

BRECHT

(Eventually, BRECHT begins to break away.) I have to drop off a press release. *(BERLAU pulls him back, holds him hard.)*

BERLAU

No. *(They embrace again, kiss. Eventually, BRECHT pulls away.)*

BRECHT

I'll stop back later, okay? *(BRECHT EXITS.)*

BERLAU

I snap up some of the sentences: for you it is a matter of life and death for your works. But I, once more, show the torch, my burning right hand, and I cry softly through the night, "Bertolt."

(Projections: FBI file on B. Brecht: Chairman of House Un-American Activities Committee, will subpoena subject to testify in Congress. Postpone FBI interview with subject and possible internment in light of his pending HUAC appearance.)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(TOM'S house.)

(TOM sports a flashy, new suit.)

TOM

At least you're off the hook now.

LAUGHTON

I can't even look Brecht in the eye anymore, my career's in ruins... I've lost half of my property to a landslide...

TOM

Compared to the war that we're battling against communism, which you're helping us to win, Charles, your personal problems are piddling.

LAUGHTON

I still haven't seen Brecht do anything un-American.

TOM

We'll find that out in a couple of months.

LAUGHTON

I told you, I'm not doing this anymore.

TOM

You've done enough, Charles. HUAC thinks they have enough dirt on Brecht now to call him to Washington.

LAUGHTON

You told me that me doing what I did wouldn't have any adverse affect on the play.

TOM

It won't. As long as Brecht can answer the questions properly.

LAUGHTON

My name's on the play.

TOM

You're going to be fine, Charles. As long as you're not implicated in Brecht's testimony.

LAUGHTON

Why would Brecht implicate me?

TOM

He wouldn't. Unless he knows you were spying on him.

LAUGHTON

I can't believe I did this.

TOM

You did what you had to do.

LAUGHTON

And now what's left?

TOM

(pause) Your career.

LAUGHTON

This wonderful relationship...

TOM

Oh...I just accepted a government position in Washington. With the Office of Censorship. So I'm afraid our relationship's over.

SCENE NINETEEN

(Coronet Theater. A couch sits beneath a sheet.)

(LAUGHTON rehearses a monologue. He is visibly nervous. He has his hands in his pockets and inadvertently plays with his testicles while performing his lines.)

LAUGHTON

(BERLAU snaps pictures.)
"By credulity the Roman housewife's battle for milk will always be lost."
(LAUGHTON loses his temper.) Can you please stop making noise with that camera?

BRECHT

Relax, Laughton.

LAUGHTON

We don't even have a proper set yet.

BRECHT

It's being built.

LAUGHTON

I need to interact with Galileo's surroundings. To see Galileo's furniture, sit on it, as Galileo did. I mean, I'm sure Galileo never had a sheet draped over his couch.

BRECHT

Fine. Take it off. *(LAUGHTON pulls sheet off couch.)*

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON realizes that the couch was formerly his.) Where did you get that?

BRECHT

The Salvation Army.

BERLAU

It's perfect, isn't it?

LAUGHTON

It's...it's not right.

BRECHT

It's going to be fine.

LAUGHTON

We have to replace it. I mean, I can't—

BRECHT

Stop worrying about things that you can't control and focus on your goddamn acting.
(LAUGHTON readies himself.)

LAUGHTON

"Threats and bribes fill the air. Can the scientist hold out on the numbers?—For what reason do you labor?"

BRECHT

Why are you so anxious today?

LAUGHTON

(pause) "I take it the intent of science is to ease human existence."

BRECHT

Focus on the implications of the words.

LAUGHTON

How can I focus when you keep interrupting?

BRECHT

Proceed.

LAUGHTON

"If you"... *(LAUGHTON clears throat, etc.)* Do you mind if I get some water?

BRECHT

I'd like to get through the monologue. *(LAUGHTON'S pocketed hand becomes more fidgety.)*

LAUGHTON

My throat's incredibly dry right now and I'm afraid if I—

BRECHT

Go get some water, damn it! *(LAUGHTON EXITS.)* Jesus Christ... I've gotta tell him to take his hands out of his pockets.

BERLAU

Don't. He's nervous enough.

BRECHT

The audience will be laughing at him.

BERLAU

If you say anything, you're going to destroy his confidence.

BRECHT

I can't have him standing up there playing with his balls for three hours.

BERLAU

I'll tell the wardrobe girl to sew up his pockets. But don't say anything. *(BERLAU EXITS.)*

BRECHT

Goddamn sensitive actors... *(LAUGHTON ENTERS.)* Let me hear the last few lines of the final monologue.

LAUGHTON

I can't gain proper momentum unless I start from the top—

BRECHT

Just give me the last few lines...from "At that."

LAUGHTON

(LAUGHTON clears throat.) Give me a moment. *(He clears throat again. Again. Walks away.)*

BRECHT

(pause) Are you okay?

LAUGHTON

I'll...I'll be all right... *(LAUGHTON clears throat.)* "At that particular time, had one man put up a fight, it could have had wide repercussions. I have come to believe that I was never in real danger; for some years I was as strong as the authorities, and I surrendered my knowledge to the powers that be, to use it, no, not *use* it, *abuse* it, as it suits their ends."

BRECHT

You finally seem guilty. As if you've done something completely unacceptable.

LAUGHTON

I have.

BRECHT

Your character has.

LAUGHTON

So have I.

BRECHT

It's your character, all right? Your character.

LAUGHTON

But there isn't much difference—

BRECHT

You are not your fucking character.

LAUGHTON

(pause) Maybe I am.

BRECHT

In epic theater, character and actor must always remain separate.

LAUGHTON

Well, if one's in a particular situation... *(BERLAU ENTERS.)*

BRECHT

It doesn't matter. If you "become" the character, the audience will empathize with you, as an individual, at the expense of understanding the play's political implications.

LAUGHTON

Well, I am an individual, and I—

BRECHT

I don't give a shit about individuals. I'm concerned with history, class struggle...

LAUGHTON

"I must make a confession: I have betrayed my profession. Any man who does what I have done must not be tolerated..." *(LAUGHTON begins to EXIT.)*

BRECHT

Laughton, it's working... You finally understand Galileo's cowardness.

ANGEL

(ANGEL ENTERS.) Brecht.

BRECHT

I'm in the middle of rehearsal.

ANGEL

Something very terrible has happened.

BRECHT

Who told you I was here?

ANGEL

My baby, she's ill. She's very ill, Brecht.

BRECHT

I'm sorry to hear that.

ANGEL

I...I have to get home to Cuba see my baby.

BRECHT

Do you know anyone else who can mow the lawn?

ANGEL

The doctor, he says she might not last through the weekend.

BERLAU

Oh, my god.

LAUGHTON

Jesus...

ANGEL

I need to leave for Cuba, before it's too late.

BRECHT

Well, don't let me hold you back.

ANGEL

Please, I...I need two hundred dollars for a plane ticket.

BRECHT

Well...

ANGEL

Please, Brecht.

BRECHT

I wish I could help you.

ANGEL

My baby... It's very critical...

BRECHT

If there's anything else I could do...

ANGEL

I...I just need two hundred dollars, today...

(LAUGHTON takes out cash.)

BRECHT

I thought it wasn't safe for you to go back.

ANGEL

It doesn't matter.

BRECHT

You shouldn't be flying home right now if that's going to hinder the revolution.

ANGEL

If I can't take care of my child, or at least try—to do whatever I possibly can—then the revolution, it's...meaningless.

BRECHT

Here's a five spot. *(BRECHT gives ANGEL money.)*

ANGEL

You owe me ten for the lawn.

BRECHT

You'll have to go talk to my wife.

LAUGHTON

Here. *(LAUGHTON hands ANGEL four one-hundred-dollar bills.)*

ANGEL

Oh, thank you, sir. Thank you. *(ANGEL EXITS.)*

BRECHT

You didn't just give him two hundred dollars...

BERLAU

Three hundred. *(MARSHAL, who has had a bit to drink, ENTERS. BRECHT and BERLAU do not see him at first.)* That was so nice of you, Charles.

LAUGHTON

You don't mind if I leave now, do you?

BRECHT

No, because you finally understand your character. *(LAUGHTON EXITS.)*

BERLAU

Laughton's going to be fine.

MARSHAL

Uh, excuse me, sir... Are you, uh, Berth-tawlt Breeched?

BRECHT

No.

MARSHAL

You're not?

BRECHT

I'm Bertolt Brecht.

MARSHAL

That's what I meant... I, uh... Do you mind if I sit down?

BRECHT

No, not at all.

MARSHAL

I been doin' this all goddamn day... For several months... All over California...

BERLAU

Can I get you a glass of water?
(MARSHAL sniffs the air.)

BRECHT

How about some whiskey?

MARSHAL

Whiskey sounds good.

BRECHT

(BRECHT takes out a flask, pours whiskey.) Here.

MARSHAL

Somethin' smells funny...

BRECHT

It's just a little musty in here.

MARSHAL

To your health.
(MARSHAL downs a shot.)

BRECHT

Have another.
(MARSHAL takes another shot.)

MARSHAL

I'm sorry about this, but—you understand—a man's gotta eat. And this is my job... So, uh...
(MARHSAL hands papers to BRECHT, who looks them over.)

Would you mind signin' right here, please?

BRECHT

What is it?

MARSHAL

A summons to appear in front of, uh... *(MARSHAL reads.)* The Honorable J. Thomas Parnell... In Washington. You got to be there on, uh...October 30th...

BERLAU

Parnell's the Chairman of HUAC.
(BRECHT signs paper.)

BRECHT

Would you like another shot?

MARSHAL

Sure... You know, you're the first people I served a subpoena to offered me a drink.

BRECHT

You're just doing your job.

MARSHAL

Exactly. But people keep movin', tryin' to avoid me... So I gotta keep chasin' 'em... Runnin' up and down stairs all day, knockin' on doors, gettin' blisters on my goddamn feet. And when I finally do catch up to 'em, they act like everything's my fault... But the people I'm chasin', they don't bother me half as much as the goddamn government. This is all just a racket to get politicians votes is all it is... Nothin' gets people hopped up like a threat, whether it's real or not... But I got my own racket... You see, the government, they take care of all my travel expenses... And I tell 'em I use my car all the time when I'm outa town... But I really take the train, which costs a hell of a lot less... So I've been able to pick up an extra hundred a month...tax free. And I'm savin' all that wear and tear on my automobile. *(MARSHAL laughs.)* You gotta take whatever you can get nowadays, whenever you can get it.

BRECHT

One more for the road.

MARSHAL

No, I can't... I gotta drive... Good luck to you in Washington, pal. *(MARSHAL EXITS.)*

BERLAU

After all these years, we finally have a play going to Broadway, and now this has to happen.

BRECHT

The publicity's going to help sell tickets.

BERLAU

What are you going to do about HUAC?

BRECHT

We'll rehearse. You can question me about my plays and poems, especially the more radical ones. And we'll practice until I can give the right answers.

BERLAU

How long are you going to be in Washington?

BRECHT

A couple of days...

BERLAU

I'll have our apartment all set up by the time you arrive in New York.

BRECHT

(pause) I bought a plane ticket to Switzerland.

BERLAU

For when?

BRECHT

The ticket's open-ended. So I'll be leaving the day after the hearings.

BERLAU

Does Laughton know?

BRECHT

No. And don't tell him. With all the spying and blacklisting going on here, it's like the beginning of the Third Reich all over again.

BERLAU

I feel as if the Third Reich's been shadowing me ever since we left Copenhagen.

BRECHT

We'll talk on the phone everyday about rehearsals. And you'll relay my directions.

BERLAU

The play might not even go to New York now.

BRECHT

Of course it will.

BERLAU

Not if you're blacklisted.

BRECHT

I'm not going to let them do that to me. And we're going to be together soon. Like we've always wanted to. *(BRECHT embraces BERLAU.)*

BERLAU

Where? Up in the sky somewhere?

BRECHT

Everything will be different once we're back home.

EPILOGUE

(Washington, D.C./New York)

ACTOR

(ACTOR'S voice could come from off-stage.) Washington, D.C. House Un-American Activities Committee. Brecht breaks ranks with the ten "unfriendly witnesses" who precede him by *not* refusing to answer the central question.

BRECHT

I was not a member or am not a member of any Communist Party.

ACTOR

Brecht thus avoids prison and the blacklist. *(BERLAU finds and reads crumpled poem by Brecht.)*

BERLAU

Splendid is that which burns in fire
Without turning to cold ash...
(BERLAU crumples poem, lowers it to her side.)

ACTOR

From Brecht's written statement to HUAC: *(In combat mode, ANGEL heads towards BERLAU, eventually provides her with an incendiary device, i.e., a burning cigar. ANGEL EXITS.)*

BRECHT

We are living in a dangerous world.

BERLAU

There is a star missing in Cassiopeia...

BERLAU

Our state of civilization is such that mankind already is capable of becoming enormously wealthy but, as a whole, is still poverty-ridden.

BERLAU

It is the missing star that struck me and started the fire...

BRECHT

Great wars have been suffered, greater ones are imminent. *(BRECHT continues speaking as BERLAU speaks, although he pauses for a moment prior to her final line.)*

BERLAU

Splendid is that destroyed by fire...

BRECHT

And one of these wars might well wipe out mankind...

BERLAU

When produced by a false sire.

BRECHT

The ideas about how to make use of the new capabilities have not been developed much since the days when the horse had to do what man could not do.

BERLAU

Words cannot extinguish fires. *(BERLAU ignites BRECHT'S poem.)*

BRECHT

Do you not think that, in such a predicament as we now find ourselves, every new idea should be examined carefully and freely? *(The poem continues burning.)*

BERL AU

Words cannot fulfill desire...

BRECHT

Art can make such ideas clearer...and even nobler.

FINIS.

Reviews

SURRENDER

Roy Miki
Mercury House, 2001

As a literary scholar, cultural theorist, editor, teacher, activist, and writer, Roy Miki is an important figure in CanLit circles. The publication of *Surrender*, his third book of poetry following *Saving Face* and *Random Access File*, demonstrates why this is. Bringing together poetry written in the last five years, *Surrender* draws on the disparate threads of a life in and around writing—its language charged on the energy and exhaustion of a public intellectual, teacher, and activist. Coming out of Miki's travels across the continent and around the globe, the poems in *Surrender* provide a significant counterpoint to ongoing discussions about the role or function of poetry and poetics in realm of cultural politics, in a variety of contexts: Asian North American, Canadian, Asian Canadian, West Coast, and Asian Pacific. Extending investigations into the limits of writing and memory at the intersections of "race" politics and experimental poetics, these interconnected poems reveal a crucial aspect of Miki's multidimensional critical-creative practice.

If his scholarly writing shows a tendency to transgress the clear divisions between scholarly prose and literary text in favour of a more fluid, more resistant critical style (see for example, essays collected in Miki's *Broken Entries*), so too does his poetry, albeit from a very different perspective. *Surrender* confronts the problematic relationship between poetry and politics, culture and history by engaging in a complex array of linguistic/poetic disruptions. Miki's forays into experimental or language based poetry struggle with conventional, and not so conventional, thinking about avant-garde poetics and the concerns of everyday life. Flowing back into territory that will be familiar to readers who know Miki's other work, which explores the limits of identity and subjectivity, "race" politics, Canadian history and the struggles of Japanese Canadians, these poems perform a series of discursive disturbances that call into question a gamut of critical and cultural boundaries. Citing an intricate web of geographic references that juxtapose a diversity of sites from Coimbra to Calgary, Smithers to Sydney, the Sunshine Coast to Honolulu, St. Lucia, Brisbane, Elora, Winnipeg to Wollongong, and back home to Vancouver, *Surrender* layouts a highly particular, and evocative, network of national and international locales and cultural situations.

Conscious that the freedom to move through specific sites and across borders, or more precisely the restriction on that freedom, continues be determined by the "race" codes of empire, Miki's writing resists tourism. Rather *Surrender* asserts a fascination with spaces of new cultural possibility in which the worn out identifications of reforming nations are inflected with a strong sense of the uncanny. In "On the Sublime," he writes,

"we" listened at the fork in the road. "i've heard that

before." the clause was held in perpetuity.

Unlike the snapshots, postcards or email messages of the traveller which try to weave the foreign into a tapestry of meaning that maintains a comfortable distance between "home" and "away," Miki's writing focuses on the fragility of such distinctions, on the break down of distance and meaning. It is the decay of reason – its displacement – that drives "us" on through the text:

when logic fails, logic hails a cab. "we" cruise the early morning
city streets. the headlines as headlights. a
concept dying on the dashboard

Throughout the text, readers are brought face to face with the destabilizing power of language in progress. Thus, *we* – he, she, "u" and "i"– enter a matrix of dominant orders: social, political, economic, but also syntactical, logical, and syllogistic. Time and again, Miki's writing brings the un/certainties of (social) position and (cultural) location into play in a manner that is both generative and unnerving. Writing against the grain of archival document, a number of these poems demonstrate the subversive power of textuality – not the infinite free play of post-structuralism but the *re:* and *dis* of cultural political engagement. For example, "a walk through portage mall," sections of "surrender is a verbal sign," "watch signs," and its sequel "ariel ports," all foreground found texts as key elements of composition. Re-situating various types of found language, what might be called "material recovery" (invoking the title of a series of twelve poems that are woven through *Surrender*), Miki unwrites *the given*, opening the archive to its contradictions and false desires. As he reminds us the "dates do not / add up to date": history remains an issue of erasure and negotiation.

Vigilant to the duplicitous nature of the written document, its function in the formation of Canada as a racist state, Miki's poetry stays close to the flow of language, his own and others'. Throughout *Surrender* we see his "i lower in case" follow the semantic movements of the poet's own writing. For example in "knocks at the door," a poem dealing with childhood memories of post-war Winnipeg, the writing demonstrates a divided consciousness or always already mediated relationship to language that is crucial to Miki's explorations of subjectivity. Moving across the spread of two pages, the poem speaks in two voices: the text on one side providing a critical gloss on the poetic narrative on the other. On the left hand side, the poem invokes a lyric subject:

four

isolation is a commodity. dry goods in the summer heat. the

sum total alters the mirror to expose blond curls.

oh, the park, the street, the back lane, the grocery store, the laundry, the diesel clangs in the night air.

later, always later, the deliberation on the wages of sin, thinking it was short for sink, or singular, or sinuous, or fats domino on blue monday since

And across the page, another voice remarks on the instability of language:

each delicious moment is apt to undo the test drive. each immigrant moment is ape to undot the faulty lines. falling between the seams unbends the communication canal. eruptions enter unannounced. lend me your ear, like would you succeed if the discourse were less slippery? clouds of unknowing drift across the blank page. sign on the dotted line.

The poem moves from the lyric descriptive to a metadiscourse on the slipperiness of meaning, of mimicry and semantic "eruptions." In this to and fro between discursive positions, we see Miki's poetics at work. Inviting readers to "sign on," to enter into the textual flow and "rage on, or rave on, they said later," his gloss draws out the performative elements of language, in a sense undoing the social contract in perpetuity. The "faulty lines," the "dotted lines" separating subjects (reader and writer, but also readers and writers), appear everywhere in the text. In fact, the differential relationships to language and power "we"– always already particular and divided – bring to the text arrive "unannounced," but are then folded into the text, becoming central to the semantic drift of many of the poems in *Surrender*. In its discursive and counter-discursive flows, *you* and *i* are caught out: "two syllables making out / in the compact rumble seat." Between the lines of Miki's immensely pleasurable text, there is a recurring sense of being seen; the anonymity of reading – the banked on isolation of "the reader," the private self – is untenable, at best a bit of cover —"yeah like self / reliance is a liberal habit." Like the poet, the reader learns to be on the lookout for the errant phrase, mistimed interpretation, or misplaced meaning.

If we were speaking of a musician, we might say that Miki has "big ears"– that his playing is evidence of an acute awareness of a wide range of forms, idioms and other performers – and that he brings this awareness to the text of *Surrender* in fascinating and provocative ways. As much as the poems suggest a long history of poetry and poetics, past and present, its experimentations turn on the utmost respect for the particularities of cultural location. Throughout the text questions of intention, or more specifically its cross-purposes, arise. The poem "fool's scold, 1.4.97," about being invited to speak at the University of California-

Irvine and finding himself caught in the bureaucratic nightmare of having to be "re-examined" by agents of "immigration and naturalization," details an uncanny ability of language and history to sneak up on the poet:

> re-examined? when was i examined? that's the problem, the
> voice said, i wasn't, at the Vancouver border new
> regulations. since? today.

Oblivious to the history of injustice, to the fact that April 1st (1949) marks the date on which *"the last of the restrictions on freedom of movement was lifted for japanese canadians,"* the disembodied voice of authority speaks and the poet-narrator finds his movement restricted, again. In spite of being an invited speaker, a prestigious guest of UC Irvine, he is required "to be re-examined by justice, section for aliens." Justice performs a cruel mimicry of an "april fools" joke and ceases to achieve neutrality; the *new* rules and regulations keep the same old divisions in place:

> the slack alters the speech task
>
> *ie the sun rose on april 1*
>
> "but why didn't you
> declare your intent
> on the way through?"
>
> in tent? the nomadic armour had fallen away
> leaving only the mask to fill the passage

Nonetheless, in this "slack" between the speaking and the spoken, of being and of being spoken, Miki's poems camp out on the problem of "intention."

Resisting a desire to bridge experiences, to offer resolution, *Surrender* functions through a poetic economy of recirculation. Rather than proffering a break from the past, so that *we might move on*, Miki's writing returns to the apparently outmoded conventions of modernism and reinvests them with different concerns. In a beautifully ironic example of this, *Surrender* stakes Miki's initial claims about his poetic strategies in Pound's worn directive to "make it new." Asserting the differences of "racialized" subjects in an alternative time-place of modernity, Miki revises *the new*. Remodelling it to fit the purposes of particular social spaces, Canada, Vancouver, or elsewhere at the turn of the millennium, modernity becomes cyclical, sort of. Miki's new, one realizes in reading his larger body of work, is always already marked by the brutal histories of modernization

and "development"– i.e. by the racist confabulations of the modern, so-called "developed" nation-states. Invoking the poetics of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, H.D., and Emily Dickinson, various aspects or elements of which surface throughout the text, Miki's writing marks a distinctive return to familiar territory. Thus, the first poem of the book, a preface of sorts, is titled "make it new." He begins, "I have altered my tactics to reflect the new era"; more Williams than Pound (more Robin Blaser than Williams in fact), his candid narrator surrenders himself to optimism:

already the magnolia broken by high winds
heals itself

the truncated branches already
speak to me

As the poem carries on, however, this voice becomes more ironic, slightly more duplicitous.

say what you will
the mountain ranges
once so populated with fleeting images
look more attractive

The uncertainty of the new millennium does not seem to put off this poet persona, this reader of the great traditions of European romanticism and modernism. He seems quite comfortable, quite at home in his surroundings. No nostalgia, no despondency here:

the earth is not heavy
with the weight of centuries
nor do bodies
of multitudes tread muted on fleet denizens

And yet the subtleties of purpose undermine the appearance of positivism. Finally, the voice of the poet doubles back on itself, and the transliteration of this line quoted above signals an unravelling of the poem towards an unexpected conclusion:

in the declension of plumed echoes
or is it contractual fumes
the sunset clause expires.

Miki's dry humour takes the air out of "the new" while breathing life back into it. Gesturing toward the end of "the long century," the poem offers no resolutions. Miki simply turns the page and the next poem begins, "currents funnel in."

In the wake of this introduction, readers are left to grapple with the discursive residue of twentieth century poetics. The issue of how Miki has "altered [his] "tactics" is left open. Readers are left to sort through layers of allusion and discursive echoing that tie together pop culture, cultural theory, and contemporary poetics, or not. The influences of the past, not so past, and present, between the modern and postmodern, are apparent all through the text. Paying homage to other friends and poet's, Robert Kroetsch, Robin Blaser, Roy Kiyooka, bpNichol, Fred Wah, Ashok Mathur, Rita Wong, Hiromi Goto, Larissa Lai, and Rajinder Pal, Miki's writing draws on an array of poetic sources that extend literary modernism beyond the cultural confines of Anglo-American poetics.

In "a mid initial," which is subtitled "*on bpNichol's gIFTS*," Miki borrows from Nichol's "letteral" poetics to explore the semantic possibilities within the word. Miki writes,

> mid initial pun
> give me a p
>
> the u n
> of leafs
>
> falling random
> no tation
>
> give the reader
> the st un of never

Adding its very own Saint —"st un""– to Nichol's hagiography, Miki's poem highlights the problem of reading and the breakdown of a poetic tradition – Nichol's special brand of nationalism. This poem seems to ask us to

> reassemble the text or
> the liberty of an endless
> riddling *so the infinite*
> *turns to a fin etude* [emphasis added]

Envisioning the possibility of a fine study, Miki's writing returns identity to

questions of prosody and poetics. In the flow of the poem, the text launches into a narrative about "the guy next to me [on the plane from Toronto] talking about his job rail testing / the whole of canada in time." His tests on "the line for internal wounding" resonate with "bp's love affair with rail lines" and "the trains of thought." But also for readers of contemporary CanLit, they resonate with the tragedy of Nichol's untimely death:

> the breaking of the line
> the potential accidents
> the falling apart of the line
> the forestalling of disasters

Nichol's death itself is, in part, one of the "signs of internal splitting / from use & weather"; it becomes a harbinger of the breakdown in the promise of CanLit.

Reframing issues of national culture within the international flow of ideas and people (including poetry and poets), *Surrender* extend the critical boundaries of CanLit. Its rhetorical and imaginary power stems from Miki's commitment to cultural politics and "race" in relation to writing. To further contextualize Miki's fluid engagement with language and the politics of representation, we might look to the writing of his friend and colleague, Fred Wah. Wah's notion of poetics — "'poetics' here not in the theoretical sense of the study of or theory about literature, but in its practical and applied sense, as the tools designed or located by writers and artists to initiate movement and change" – is particularly useful. Wah suggests that the "alienethnic" poet, which is Wah's term for formally and politically engaged poet's who identify themselves as "minority writers," "racialized" writers, or writers of colour, proposes a challenge to a prevalent notion of Canadian identity – i.e., that "we are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here" (Wah is quoting Rosemary Sullivan who is quoting Margaret Atwood). He explains that continuing "to universalize the 'many' as 'one.' A 'poetics of ethnicity' would be, then, in the view of Atwood and Sullivan, *the* poetics, the whole *Canadian* thing." Instead, Wah's "alienethnic" poetics draws out the differences between "culturally marginalized writers," and he would include Miki in this group, who he sees practicing strategic poetics. Against the universalizing drive of Atwood's ideas about identity and literature, Wah's conception of the "alienethnic" poetics proposes "a practical and applied poetics . . . a singular and personal toolbox," and he maintains that "a writer who seeks to articulate a distinctive ethnic and . . . ethical sensibility requires a particular and circumstantial poetics, the right tools."

While, as Wah points out, the key terms of this proposition – ethnic and ethnic minority – are problematic in reference to –"racialized" writers, the basic premise is sound. It offers a valuable way of thinking through the openings or breaks proposed in a text like Miki's *Surrender*. Rather than categorizing the writing in terms of formal poetics, as I am guilty of doing in parts of this review, the

problem of reading the text becomes a question of performance and of choosing a relevant social context in which to bring it. *Surrender*, as a literary text and critical act (writing/reading), then becomes contingent on location, "particular and circumstantial"– the poetics it proposes both tactical, and as Miki suggests in "make it new," highly ambivalent.

In terms of Miki's writing, the concept of "surrender" invoked in the title becomes such a "tool." The apparent simplicity of the one word title gives way to a cluster of powerful, at times contradictory meanings. There is the more or less immediate association of "surrender" with abjection or the loss of will, which is an important concept dealt with in the text. There is also the sense of "surrender" as an *act* of resistance and ambivalence. As I have suggested above, many of the poems deal with the violence that is or has been brought to bear on "racialized" subjects – historically, as in the case of the internment of Japanese Canadians and Americans or the segregation of First Nations in accordance to the Indian Act, but also in the present under the auspices of Immigration or Free Trade and the sanctioning of cheap, even forced labour. In "ariel ports," which is based on "found letters and reports from rcmp fillies, 1942," it is impossible to ignore the brutal history underlying the text. The violent will of the first person narrator, an "rcmp" officer who reports on the "two Js" he caught slipping "into / the Park through a hole in the fence" and "confiscated the sealed bottle of Gilbey's London Dry Gin" from, is undeniable. That "the two Js were paraded before their / peers as a warning of things to come" is a reminder of the heinous acts of racism performed in the name of nationalism. As the symbolic "Gilbey's London Dry Gin" suggests, this interaction is framed by European Colonialism and the international notions of white supremacy upon which it depends (I'm thinking of arguments put forward by Stoler, McLintock). In relation to this history, i.e., to the restrictions placed on Japanese Canadian during and after World War II and the confiscation of their property, however, reading "surrender" in terms of a resignation of rights and properties is problematic.

Inasmuch as Miki's writing refuses to take the historical account as given (or written), readers will realize that the valence of "surrender" can not be taken for granted. Who "surrenders" what to whom? As an act of exchange, "surrender" has an economy. (Again, I refer readers to Miki's conception of "material recovery" articulated in the twelve serial poems around which the larger text is organized; due to spatial limits, however, I am unable to discuss this important series of poems in the depth it requires). In "surrendering" who gives what to whom depends on matters of perspective, depends on which side of the line (or fence) one finds oneself, one's friends or one's family. By what or whose authority can "surrender" be granted? Upon which side does the "surrender" depend? Who owns the act of "surrender" the giver up or the taker in? Does one surrender one's hope? Or does one "surrender," into hope. Giving in, what is given up? Most important, I think, Miki's poems bring into light questions about the guardians or holders of that trust. One wonders whether or not it is the dominant order that must finally

"surrender" to abandon the myths nationalism and succumb to the will of social justice.

The "two Js" have "slipped" through the fence. Transgressing the spatial logic of the dominant order, these two figures perform an escape and a return that calls out the powers that be. As the RCMP officer puts it in the report, "found" and "modified in response to the exigencies of compostion,"

> . . . The appearance, as
> material witnesses in body and spirit, of the two Js would incite
> publicity you wouldn't want in view of the present confabulations
> in the "evacuation" of same.

Surrendering the Gin, the "two Js" return to the police, and the archivists, the illusion of control: "while absent the letters slipped into the folders like fallow fields." How many others who have slipped through and returned not quite noticed? Faced with the logic of recording each and every disruption in the narrative of progress, in the description of power, reason balks. *Surrender* returns as a social script – a set of roles contingent on time and space. Giving up or giving in are never for good; in "surrender" the locus of power shifts momentarily, remaining open as a negotiation with one's location, position, power, privilege. Like the act of writing/reading foregrounded in Miki's text, it becomes a tacit agreement, maintaining order while proclaiming its fragility and foreseeing, yet again, its demise.

For readers or writers interested in working through the complexities of cross cultural poetics, thinking across the lines of debate regarding the relevance of poetry, or engaging in an enjoyable read, I recommend *Surrender*. Give up. As the poet says, "sign on."

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Glen Lowry

UNDERSTANDING POWER: THE INDISPENSABLE CHOMSKY

Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel, editors
The New Press, 2002

Edited by two public defenders from New York City, this is a fast-paced, accessible combination of some of the most engaging discussions between Noam Chomsky and his audiences. It resolved a personal search that has taken years—my attempt to find a book for first year college students in an introductory social science course on diversity, democracy and social participation that would treat student-readers as if they had the right to understand basic power relationships.

What the editors, the speaker and the questioners demonstrate repeatedly is a process of thinking, a process of reflecting, and a process of valuing social activism. Chomsky advocates for everyday people to be empowered—this book empowers by providing a distinct view of power relationships that is not readily available. In contrast to Chomsky's other focused, in-depth writings, the editors successfully bring Chomsky to a wider audience. I will not suggest however that this book only appeals to the novice Chomsky reader. I think that it appeals as well to those that have been immersed in Chomsky, whether to criticize or to revere his work.

Many editors would have cut the material in this book in half. Instead the editors and publisher placed all the notes and citations on-line at www.understandingpower.com. I am not ready to advocate this for every book, but the on-line notes work because the text is very readable even without notes given the q and a format and because the on-line notes could also be read independently. It is a creative, practical approach, and it keeps the book affordable, going along with the mission of New Press which is "committed to publishing, in innovative ways, works of educational, cultural, and community value that are often deemed insufficiently profitable." There are nearly 500 pages of notes that provide added depth, further study and demonstrate the commitment of the editors to encourage further discussion.

The format of the book is more intimate than past work—questions from audiences in Chomsky's lectures and Chomsky's responses. The responses are brief for the most part, usually a page or two long, just redundant enough to remember Chomsky's persistent point of view, organized logically and with grace.

Oddly enough, the audience is only identified by gender. Unusual, with the editors only offering up this explanation: "Questioners are identified as 'Man' or 'Woman' because frequently this device reveals when the same person is pursuing a line of questioning, or whether somebody else has taken over." Say what? At any rate, all of this becomes unimportant given the artful editing of the questions and the responses. I appreciated throughout the public defenders' patience for the mammoth editing of this work.

The editors attempt to capture Chomsky's "revolutionary perspective for evaluating the world, and for understanding power." Topics include

globalization, the middle east, abortion, animal rights, civil and political rights, the media's role in suppressing activism, a brief statement about 9-11, etc. The core of all these excerpts relate to critical thought: **What does Chomsky read?** "...people should not be asking me or anyone else where to turn for an accurate picture of things, they should be asking themselves that... Ultimately it's your own mind that has to be the arbiter: you've got to rely on your own common sense and intelligence, you can't rely on anyone else for the truth... I think the smartest thing to do is read everything you read..." **How do we develop morally?** "I think it's part of our moral progress to be able to face things that once looked as if they weren't problems." **How can we teach about resistance?** "I don't think any of it's very hard, to tell you the honest truth—I mean, intellectuals make a career of trying to make simple things look hard, because that's part of the way you get your salary paid... the social world—to the extent that we understand it at all—is more or less right there in front of you after you sort of peel away the blinders a little... if you do a little work, you can find out what the facts are, you can find out the way they're being distorted and modified by institutions. And then the purposes of those distortions become clear."

The editors present a sometimes humorous look at Chomsky. "Take all this business about Allan Bloom and that book everybody's been talking about, *The Changing of the American Mind.* It's this huge best-seller, I don't know if you've bothered looking at it—it's mind-bogglingly stupid. I read it once in the supermarket while my... I hate to say it, while my wife was shopping I stood there and read the damn thing: it takes about fifteen minutes to read..."

Chomsky is often self-deprecating. When he discusses the nearly cult-film *Manufacturing Consent,* he regularly and publicly keeps his own importance in check:

> ...the standard letter [in response to the film]... says 'I'm really glad they made this film; I thought I was the only person in the world who has these thoughts...' Then comes the punch line: 'How can I join your movement?'... Now, I don't think it's anything Mark and Peter [the directors] did wrong; I mean, I haven't seen the movie, but I know that they were very well aware of this problem, and tried very hard to overcome it. But somehow it's just inherent in the medium, I don't think the medium allows an escape from this... I don't think the medium can make people understand that if they film me giving a talk somewhere, that's because somebody else *organized* the talk and the real work is being done by the people who organized the talk, and then followed it up and are out there working in their communities. If they can bring in some speaker to help get people together, terrific, but that person is in no ..sense 'the leader.' That somehow doesn't get across in a movie—what gets across is, 'How can I join your movement?'

Chomsky nearly begs people to think for themselves.

Robin Ann Lukes

THE DISPARITIES

Rodrigo Toscano
Green Integer, 2002

Rodrigo Toscano is an important figure in a fascinating and growing area of contemporary poetry, one that explores problems of cultural history, identity and politics while also using the complex, disruptive language structures frequently associated with avant garde literature. In Toscano's work, the concept of culture turns out to be more complex than the increasingly powerful cliches of institutional multiculturalism would have us believe. The idea that drives much of that multiculturalism is that despite our differences we are all individuals who want to "be ourselves," who want our cultural histories recognized and pure and our capitalist options open. In practice, this idea turns out to be a fundamentally bureaucratic tool, an example of the contemporary "management of differences" that, in their crucial recent book *Empire*, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt argue is central to contemporary bureaucratic control. Despite the progress it undoubtedly represents over earlier forms of racism, such control still forces people into the sort of singular identities that are as easy to recognize as those official charts on which people check a box saying "Hispanic" or "Caucasian." But in Toscano's work, the problems of culture cannot be resolved so simply, because they were never that singular in the first place.

The bi-lingual narrator of Toscano's first full-length collection of poetry, *The Disparities*, recognizes that his cultural background is not simply Hispanic. Instead, it is made up of a complex encounter *between* cultures and histories in which no cultural identity remains pure. This encounter is crucially embedded in the official language of the United States—as Nuyorican poet Ed Morales pointed out in a talk at George Washington University several years ago, the number of non-English words in the English language grows all the time. In fact, a close look at Toscano's book shows that it's more than bi-lingual. He feels just as free to use French, German or even Middle English as he does Spanish or English. Or, perhaps equally accurately, he feels just as unable to avoid them.

Toscano's poetry frustrates the moment of recognition that the literature of cultural identity undertaken by writers like Amy Tan offers readers—that moment when readers can say "that's my culture too," or can recognize the value and problems of a culture different than their own and feel for a moment that they are sharing in them. The environment of *The Disparities* is much more radically and constantly thrown into confusion. The narrator of these poems, far from understanding who he is simply by exploring the cultural problems his family faced, finds his circumstances shaped by a complex series of questions, rather than answers, about the nature of culture and how it interweaves with political, social, and linguistic concerns.

The frantic, bumpy ride of *The Disparities* presents a new notion of the

landscape poem, one that has no place in the calm, conservative pastoral tradition with which the word "landscape" is usually associated. Toscano's landscape is that of contemporary southern California (since writing *The Disparities*, Toscano has relocated to New York City), with its material overkill, class and race divisions, and corporate owned banality:

> Transfer #7 bus not arriving yet;
> The oil fields, the air fields, ground policy; *the schools.*
> Physically-bodily not at my workplace yet
> Yet nearing it—here, in the company of ghosts
> Early words, late meanings, deep scarcity. Brinksters.

Toscano knows that contemporary social struggles all revolve around contested attempts to shape and define physical space, to "re-contextualize the parking lot's war," as he writes in "Circular No. 6." At stake is nothing less than people's lives and how they will be lived.

"Replicas of visions, hopes, mores, in short/ Never has there been such a stalemate," Toscano continues in that same poem, and the herky-jerky crush of images and frustrations make it clear he's been there. Partly, the landscape in *The Disparities* is that of the simulacrum, defined notoriously some years ago by the French cultural critic Jean Baudrillard—an environment which has been created to fit a preconceived, packaged image of what life should be, a place in which the poet, "until a high tide of revolution comes," imagines the possibility that he can "manipulate frames, oil, nullified themes." But it is also a landscape in which the simulacrum has never completely taken hold—there's too much anger, confusion, and wreckage, too much struggle, for the false surface to be believable.

The question that *The Disparities* constantly raises is how the narrator can remain responsive to the world and to others in an environment of this kind. Wouldn't it be simpler, in fact, to shut down, to close out others, to go about your business without caring? Thankfully, Toscano's answer is a steady no; the book consistently attempts to expose what "Has justly been called Power" and "begins to become 'city'." But even if it didn't, it turns out that shutting down is not really an option. Even if you want to believe in the simulacrum, it's not going to believe in you: "Locus, where? You want assurances, *choke.*" If you want to remain alive, according to Toscano, you've got to respond. But how?

The early poems in *Disparities* feature a long, block-like shape and sharply fragmented language which constantly disrupts any clear narrative center to the details of the landscape he develops. However, unlike much of the contemporary American avant garde poetry which such features recall, Toscano's work seems interested in reforming rather than discarding the notion of person in poetry, although the voice of Toscano's poems is fragmented and decentered in a way inconceivable in more conventional verse. The narrative self, rather than being dispersed by such fragmentation, is shaped by it; the narrative voice in

these poems emerges through its responses to the phenomena it encounters: "I was (no?) *part*... wait, I was *part*, a part *of*, look..." That is, identity in Toscano's poetry does not arise from emotions or histories or even experiences, but from active responses—we *are* the way we respond to the things we experience.

The range and specificity of experience in *The Disparities* is truly amazing. It includes the physical facts of social spaces, individuals and groups and their conceptions of what they are, the unresolved dilemmas of the past, and a perplexing variety of ideological constructs that the narrator has to learn to see and to see beyond. The poem "Premise No. 1" opens with what turns out to be a fairly typical day:

> Blimp soars through the shelves, digital ballot wallet
> While Eternity (usually light blue and soft)
> in the background (for those who've known these productions)
> Opts for a carbonizing rain, mapped out, rough crust
> Flesh, fields. It was Sunday. Bright. Ghost traffic. More news—
> Frantically called "events." And later (soon) that "day"
> Its cultural wing (absolvers racket) *voices*
> Were at [pluralism farce] a slam (bam) *spunk*, bonk.

Advertisements in the sky, conceptions of heaven, the distorted constructions of contemporary media, the noise of conflicting voices, constant claims that cultural problems are already being solved, traffic on the freeways and in our own pasts; all these things, and more, make up just one particular moment of one particular day. Deal with that, Toscano seems to be daring us. And if by some amazing chance we can manage to navigate through these conflicts, the next step is having to deal with more.

Despite the fact that shutting down will get us nowhere, *The Disparities* remains ambivalent about where being responsive will lead: "Not even an effort / will be needed / I'd say/ Though that's not so / but can be more so / Carnival." While awareness about different cultures and cultural issues inside the United States may be growing, and while it's possible that various groups may achieve more equal representation in bureaucratic systems, Toscano doesn't believe that the capitalist simulacrum is going away any time soon. Would achieving equal cultural representation inside a management system that reduces all experience and people to an economic value be the same as real social and personal freedom? For Toscano, that key difference is simply another dangerous disparity.

The last several poems in *The Disparities* are no longer large, block-like, and jagged. Instead, with only several words at most to a line, and not much more than that to a page, these last poems make the book fade away, as if the narrator, so present through much of the text, is drifting out of range. The landscape of these last poems uses much the same variety of details as the earlier portions of the book, but an often overwhelming silence has been added. Does one read this

closing silence as a greater calm and sense of resolve, or a greater sense of failure and impossibility, or simply as disappearance, a voice lost to the void? Probably one reads it all these ways, but with the recognition that the disparity between them cannot really be resolved. "not apples and oranges/but the fruit/ of the same carved-up tree," Toscano writes as the book finally disappears, and the world he's writing of is one where the differences between you and me, while desperately significant, still are found mainly in the scars that gave birth to us both.

Mark Wallace

A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post/ Colonial Politics on an Indian Tea Plantation

Piya Chatterjee
Duke University Press, 2001

Piya Chatterjee's *A Time for Tea* offers a feminist analysis of the colonial and postcolonial histories of tea plantations in North Bengal, India, illustrating how practices of tea production are gendered. Her work thoughtfully engages with issues which have been central to postcolonial studies such as the writing of alternative histories, the (re)presentation of subaltern communities, and the relationship between knowledge-production and power. In crafting this feminist ethnography, Chatterjee draws upon both the political and the analytical insights of the subaltern studies collective. By telling us that her text privileges "the pragmatic and contemporary worlds of women and men working in the tea fields of North Bengal," she underscores that the text will not be recounting an 'objective' and all-encompassing tale. Rather, it will offer a specific and limited view, one that recognizes that it is incomplete and has blindspots. By writing the history of the tea plantation from the vantage point of subaltern communities, her task is not to show that colonial and national histories were false or to offer us the subaltern voices as unvarnished truth. Rather, it is to question History's claim to truth and objectivity. She accomplishes this task by employing a play "to introduce, interrupt, and frame" the chapters. As the characters in the play comment and reflect upon the histories of the tea plantation, Chatterjee reminds us that history itself is staged and presents her text as a performance.

Tracing the play of power amongst and within the subaltern communities, colonial administrators, and post/colonial planters, Chatterjee demonstrates how the worlds of the tea plantation workers were/are structured by colonial, imperial, and postcolonial forces. She offers an absorbing account of the history of tea as it travels from China to Europe. "From the late sixteenth century," she notes, "tea titillated European palates." This exotic commodity would be "slowly transformed into the signifier of a quotidian and very English definition of civil manners, genteel taste." It would also be associated with aristocratic femininity and the grand parlors of Europe. As the demand and desire for tea increased in England, the English sought economic and political ties with China. The Chinese, however, refused to enter into trade agreements with England.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the English turned their attention to the possibility of tea cultivation in India. In order to create tea plantations in India, the English needed to cultivate both land and labor. The English annexed the land in Assam and Bengal through infamous 'divide and rule' policies. They also appropriated land by classifying large tracts of forests as 'wastelands' and then laying claim to the tracts. As a technique of disciplinary

power, classification was used not only to mark and appropriate land but also to define and manage labor. Initially, on the colonial grid, Nepali peasant laborers were ranked higher than nomadic cultivators. The colonial planters viewed the Nepali labor more favorably because they were a settled peasantry and therefore could become "ideal workers of the imperial army and plantation." In contrast, the nomadic cultivators were considered to be less than ideal because they wandered from place to place. The colonial perception of Nepali workers changed after it was discovered that the workers preferred to work on their own lands rather than colonial plantations. The stability of these workers became a problem for colonial planters and they used stereotypes such as 'indolent' and 'hostile' natives to explain the behavior of the Nepali peasant labor.

The lack of available labor near the plantations forced the colonial planters to recruit migrant labor. A system of recruitment was constructed where natives were employed to recruit workers from their home villages. Planters and colonial administrators encouraged a policy of family recruitment because they believed that women and children would assist in creating a stable home environment and thus ensure that the male workers would stay on the plantations. This policy was not a simple program for providing a stabilizing influence for the plantation workers. Rather, it was pivotal for the "reproduction of an increasingly expensive labor force."

The indigenous plantations emerged alongside the English ventures in Bengal. In the early decades these plantations were not nationalist, but later these industries did employ an explicitly nationalist idiom and sought to ally themselves with the nationalist movement. In the story of nationalism, the indigenous tea plantations transformed into nationalist enterprises which challenged colonial plantations. Chatterjee notes that while the indigenous planters may have challenged colonial supremacy, they also created a space for their own ascendancy.

During British colonial rule, tea was marketed both nationally and internationally. "While international tea committees focused on the large, lucrative, but elusive U.S. market," Chatterjee notes, "the British Indian producers, compelled by the world wares and economic depression, also looked within at the potential of domestic market in the colony." Chatterjee draws our attention to advertisements in Indian-owned newspapers such as *The Hindu* which targeted managers, telling them that tea would increase the stamina of the male worker. In these advertisements, "[t]he ideal consumers are presented as 'sons of the soil,' and tea within that association becomes indigenized in a singularly populist-masculine-sense." While one set of advertisements associated tea with working-class masculinity, other advertisements focused on rural working-class and urban middle-class women, urging them to keep their families strong by serving them tea. Tea becomes a "family beverage" and the woman enacts familiar roles as wife-mother, reproducing the gendered division of labor.

In postcolonial India, tea emerges as a national brew. "Advertisements of wives and mothers serving tea to their husbands and children in urban middle-

class settings," Chatterjee explains, "offer an archetype of national domesticity. The feminization of tea has come in a spiraling journey back to its 'home' [as] [p]ostcolonial Indian women create their own parlors." While one set of advertisements offers images of the ideal urban middle-class wife-mother, another set provides us with romanticized images of attractive and happy female laborers. The female tea plantation workers who Chatterjee interviews laugh at the images of the female laborers, saying that the women resemble film stars. Pointing to their callused and stained hands, they display the marks of labor.

Chatterjee's observations and detailed interviews with the men and women who work at the tea plantations make visible the architecture of power which structures their lives. This architecture is not a stable entity, but is reproduced through various practices. For example, Chatterjee draws our attention to the fact that managers' bungalows, staff cottages, and houses of laborers are built at a distance from one another; they are also separated by brick walls or wire fences. Chatterjee points to the physical and social distances between communities that reside at the tea plantations. These include the lack of social interaction between managers and laborers as well as the shunning of bodily contact by the upper castes with those lower on the caste hierarchy. These spatial, physical, and social distances both signify and reproduce unequal relations of power. According to Chatterjee, it is through the figure of the planter as *mai-baap* (mother-father) that "the architecture of power and patronage is constructed.... Within its mantle, the sahib attempts to create an aura of legitimate rule through garnering consent of an overseer cadre." What is important to note is that power is negotiated, albeit unequally. Furthermore, the planter is also subject to a moral economy thereby enabling workers to employ the vocabulary of honor and benevolence to make demands of the planter.

Chatterjee shows that gender is a central precept around which life at the tea plantation is organized. For the overseers and the planters, the male and female workers pose different kinds of threat. In describing two events, one in which "two assistant managers caught a man stealing from the factory," and another which concerns a conflict between a female laborer and an assistant manager, Chatterjee illustrates how interpretations of such incidents are gendered. The overseers and the planters are more afraid of men's hooliganism than women's cunning nature because hooliganism signifies the possibility of political threat. This fear is partly based on the fact that men occupy prominent positions in the union and in the village communities and can employ these positions of power to harm the administrators and the planters. The overseers separate female and male laborers in order to avoid sexual play or sexual violence. This separation points to the heterosexual assumptions at work. Female laborers are assigned the task of plucking leaves because they presumably have 'nimble' fingers whereas male laborers are given more physically demanding tasks because they are 'stronger.' Female laborers are also paid less that male workers. The duties of the female

laborers neither begin nor end at the tea plantation. Before they leave for work and after they return, they also need to do household chores.

While Chatterjee eloquently and sensitively describes the work done by the female laborers, she does not romanticize them or their lives. She accomplishes this by discussing how class and caste create differential relations of power between the women workers. She also points out that the women also employ the vocabulary of honor and shame in order to police women's sexuality or to interpret acts by women. In discussing how women's bodies serve as boundary markers for caste and ethnic divisions within the subaltern communities, Chatterjee underscores that it is the women "who offer a theoretical and pragmatic legitimization of the disciplinary practices that enact the terms of community." If a woman marries outside of her caste or ethnic community, she is disowned and her family has to pay the community for her transgression by conducting costly rituals. On the other hand, if a man marries a woman from another community, his "misalliance will be incorporated after ritual payments have been made. Most significantly, his children will belong" to his community. According to the female laborers, the punishment for women is harsher because she is the repository of honor and through her transgression she brings dishonor to her family and her community. Moreover, as Chatterjee points out, the woman's "departure is a reproductive loss in a deeply social sense. Her child will enter the patriliny of another *jat* [caste and/or ethnic community]. If she is a wage-earner, she takes her earnings with her." While pointing out the ways in which "women speak distinction" and the practices through which they uphold patriarchal norms, Chatterjee also notes moments of solidarity when they identify with one another on the basis of gender, class, or caste.

Chatterjee points to the multiple ways in which women challenge authority. They may stop work, raise issues in women's groups, bring a dispute before the village council, or ask the tea plantation manager to intervene. Discussing how women can bypass village patriarchies and appeal to the manager for assistance, Chatterjee draws our attention to the complex nature of their resistance. While women are able to draw upon the moral vocabulary of *mai-baap* for their immediate benefit, "the manager's decision about highly individualized cases does not challenge the systemic terms of women's subordination. Indeed, his own patronage depends on that very subordination."

In collecting information through interviews and observations, Chatterjee is attentive to Gayatri Spivak's incisive critique of the subaltern studies project. In her famous article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak reminds the subalternists that the post-colonial intellectual cannot have access to a pure subaltern consciousness, that their recovery of subaltern voices is mediated first by history and second by a history of unequal structures. Spivak points out that the postcolonial intellectual's hearing has been impaired by the structures of privilege. Chatterjee's work makes visible the relations of power that scholarship inhabits. She does not simply recite her privileges as an academic from the U.S. and as a

memsahib, but demonstrates how these privileges structure her access to information and shape the way in which the text is crafted. What is impressive about Chatterjee's work is the effort to unlearn privilege by listening to stories which are marginalized and to use her privilege to (re)present these stories. In doing so, Chatterjee supplements Spivak's politics of vigilance with a politics of hope.

Monika Mehta

ALCHEMIES OF DISTANCE

Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard
subpress/Tinfish/Institute of Pacific Studies, 2001

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF NIGHT/DEL OTRO LADO DE LA NOCHE: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS

Francisco X. Alarcón
University of Arizona Press, 2002

The English language is a marvelous thing. Or at least when it means that I can read two books of poetry written in English that might have lived solely in another language. *alchemies of distance* by Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard and *From the Other Side of Night/Del otro lado de la noche; New and Selected Poems* by Francisco X. Alarcón are books that reach into the sublime, the personal and global beyonds—those alchemical other sides.

Sinavaiana-Gabbard's book begins with what ends up being a rather long introduction, "a kind of genealogy," in which she maps out—in a ruminating, personal way—her poetics. She immediately disarms the reader with her statement, "my first thought was to wonder if I had any [poetics] and if so, what might they be...Growing up 'colored' in the American south of the 1940s, amid the hooded dangers of working class, immigrant life, I understood poetry as oxygen. And I wanted to breathe." She then launches in seventeen pages of her hero's journey as a woman-American-poet that takes on a central metaphor of "the boat being built night and day" which, in Samoan tradition, is part of something larger than the individual because "culture itself is the boat that can cross the v, the space between then and now, here and there, the distances between time and space."

alchemies of distance is divided into several sections: departure, malaga/ traveling party, tagi/lament, reunion. The language of the poems is often casual (one- and two-syllable English words) but occasionally with an street-apocalyptic flavor, fragmentary (all lower-case, frequent use of the slash, both within lines and at line breaks). The lines and stanzas are often the same length throughout the (mostly one- and two-page) poems. The effect is a steady, plain-clothes kind of rhythm. Most poems are in a delayed, somewhat impersonal, objective first-person point of view that offers the reader a photographic-like presentation or tableau. Here, the first two stanzas from "death at the christmas fair: elegy for a fallen shopper":

> mushroom angels sprayed silver & gold
> ceramic vases like Stetson hats someone sat on
> over-sized satchels for the fashionable bag lady,
> and death/ stopping by next to the noodle stand/
>
> we sit on the lava wall/ colonial amerika, late

> 20th century/ ketchup-dipped French fries arrested
> in mid-bite/ while 2 benches away, a young cop
> pounds on the dying man's chest.

Many of the poems have a world-weary feel to them—a kind of inchoate sleepiness—that contain the sense of long, hard journeys behind and ahead, both for the speaker and the human cultures at large. Her poems have a lovely and peaceful symmetry and often a rather open, airy texture effected by the slashes, spaces after the slashes, the frequent indentations, and short stanzas. Maori and Samoan language and references are used but not fetishized.

Sinaviana-Gabbard sometimes drifts into lyrical, romantic language, "the diagonal light of winter/& the liminal hour/caressing all in its wake:/ sideways glances in the half-light," but then brings the scene back to a more sullen urbanity that almost evoke a clichéd decay—but not quite—"even glare of video posters muzzled now;/inside the men's house/ pool hall, that is/brown faces under white neon/the hushed men murmur, ponder/click clack & whsshhh of wooden balls/ into the corner pocket." A brief, noir-ish, Hopper-esque moment disrupted by the brown color of the men.

The new American's well-worn tropes of itinerancy, loss, shock, dislocation, arrival, struggle, etc. are mostly saved from fatigue within this book by Sinavaiana-Gabbard's quiet compassion and steady gaze at all the elements in her poetic landscape. The "congress of chickens" are given the same space and time as the radio voice drifting down from the morning breeze that announces "LAST NIGHT, AN AMERICAN WARSHIP SHOT DOWN/A PASSENGER AIRLINE OVER THE PERSIAN GULF." Occasionally she overshoots and descends into diatribe, as in "on form & content, or: slouching toward texas; for presidents' day, 2001," where she writes "o say can you see/by the dawn's early light/that the votes were not counted/ & black votes/denied/ that the election was rigged/." These kind of sarcastic statements leave no room for the readers' own conclusions or explorations through the kind of serene, dream-like imagery and associations/juxtapositions of her other poems.

From the Other Side of Night/Del otro lado de la noche offers some similar pleasures and some different challenges. I've been thinking a lot lately about the poet-as-shaman, the poet as the bringer of fire who needs to respect and control that fire so that it is life-giving and illuminating, not destructive. A worthy quest for a life's work, for a single book, for even one poem, a line, a phrase. One of the ways in which Alarcón's book achieves this balance or creates this dialogue is through the standard procedure of including the poems in Spanish and English. Yet in small but notable ways this structure is disrupted. Some poems, such as "tattoo," the first in the book, are only in English. Some are only in Spanish. Some have only one title, either in Spanish or English. Some, most interestingly, are titled in Spanish—such as "Las flored son nuestras armas" which is a poem mostly in English with a few Spanish words. Some words, such as "desierto/

desert" are paired with their translation and some remain untranslated, such as "madre agua." These variations offered, for me, small but welcome moments of surprise in a book consisting of mostly very similar (in form and content) poems.

Reading them is almost like chanting, or counting off rosary beads (not necessarily a bad thing). Most lines have one, two, or three words in them, making each poem read very slowly, and for me, ploddingly. The poems have a timeless feel, often operating in a quasi-religious (Biblical)/political (revolutionary) space, as in "Bienaventurados" or "Blessed":

> those who toss
> their crosses
> and dare
> to live out
> their tenderness
>
> those who bring
> together body
> soul
> and world
> in a kiss
>
> blessed
> the exiles
> of love
> the queer
> in spirit
>
> for they carry
> deep inside
> the seed
> of true
> liberation!

Some poems, such as "Working Hands" contain a simple, calm prophesy about the future of Chicanos, "we clean/your room/...a footnote/for you/but hands/ like these/one day/will write/the main text/of this land." The poem's calm, unsentimental (and nonjudgmental) address to the "you," a book (footnote) reading, hotel-room buying, maid-service using Americans is as clean as those same hotel rooms.

At times I heard echoes of Neruda, as in part VI of "De amor oscuro" or "Dark Love" in which Alarcón writes, "asleep you become a continent—/long, mysterious, undiscovered,/the mountain ranges of your legs/encircle valleys and ravines," and I was left wanting something more particular. The tiny poem "Afuera"

or "Out" gives me this, just with its clever, quiet line breaks. Haiku-like, it captures the essence of the immigrant/colored person's existential (i.e. alienated) experience in America, "we're/out/even/inside." This evokes the title of the book, a coordinate that places Alarcón still an Other, still in the Night, but calling from that place rather than being banished to it.

Or perhaps the title can mean that the colored-poet is both invoking and crying out from yet another side of night. This is more complex, newer, more hopeful meaning. As a reader/poet/human I hope there are endless "other sides" of night, as well as day, and everything in between. The poems here often contain an acute emotionality, a heroic longing and deep love for family members and lover/s that felt tender & bitter, full of wonder & admiration, pride & tragedy.

If you're looking for affirmation that people are living deeply through the word, sifting whole worlds and peoples through a single phrase, *From the other side of night* and *alchemies of distance* is not a bad pair to read together. Sinavaiana-Gabbard's book is more cinematic, the line breath much more horizontal, more flowing, and the individual poems stayed with me longer because the language is more brilliant: more textured and descriptive, more scenic. Alarcón's vision is more somber, more religious. Large, it builds slowly, stubbornly, naively with each poem (line, word, letter...) like layers of an anthill, or a fragile sandcastle that believes in its eternity. Each grain of sand is brought forth with labor. I sensed that the choice of this word over that cost the poet dearly but ultimately had to be exacted. In Sinavaiana-Gabbard's book, I felt more exhilaration that each word was a coin purchasing another measure of distance away from the dark undertow—that words are breath, and breath is life. Happily both books contain the stuff of gods and mortals, the ghosts of dying and reviving cultures, the language/words/images that are the fruit—the fire—of that (for the poet) not-so distant other side/s of night/s.

Sun Yung Shin

TRANSPACIFIC DISPLACEMENT: ETHNOGRAPHY, TRANSLATION, AND INTERTEXTUAL TRAVEL IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

Yunte Huang
University of California, 2002

Professor and translator Yunte Huang's *Transpacific Displacement* borrows from "postmodern" deconstructions of ethnography and fieldwork to track the history of an ethnographic projection of "China" in the American literary imaginary—a history in which even Ezra Pound can be considered an "ethnographer." Critics like David Palumbo-Liu and others have reconceived American cultural history as one that has always emerged out of a transnational dynamic with "Asia" and "Asian America," and Huang, in his own way, seeks to recast American literature as having been actively engaged with the "East," examining how Chinese linguistic and literary forms were "translated" by American writers from the Imagists to Maxine Hong Kingston and John Yau. "Transpacific displacement" is, as Huang writes, "a historical process of textual migration of cultural meanings... And such displacement is driven in particular by the writers' desire to appropriate, capture, mimic, parody or revise the Other's signifying practices in an effort to describe the Other."

Largely borrowing from historian of anthropology James Clifford, Huang relies on three categories of literary mediation – ethnography, translation, and intertextual travel—to describe the transpacific migration by means of which these writers attempt to "capture" the "cultural reality" of the Other. Writing against nativist accounts of American Modernism as well as against the identitarian ghettoization of Asian American Lit., Huang sets his focus on the formal aspects of the writing, in what might be read as an effort to temper a New Historicist approach with an attention to textual materiality. Railing against "thematization" in recent literary and cultural studies readings of Asian American and Chinese literature, Huang demonstrates an Adornian influence (or perhaps more directly, the influence of Charles Bernstein, his mentor at SUNY-Buffalo) that insists on the politics of aesthetic form.

The visual quality of the Chinese language invites formal analysis, and its "pictographic" characters have been an important part of the exotic intrigue of China for Western observers. As Huang describes, historians and philosophers from the Renaissance to the 19th century were engaged in debates over the nature of the Chinese language, whether it reflected the inferiority and barbarity of the Chinese "mind," or the civilization and superiority of the culture. Beginning his historical foray with three early twentieth-century "ethnographers" of China – Ernest Fenollosa, Percival Lowell (Amy's brother) and Florence Ayscough – Huang suggests that their approach to representing "China" was influenced by Franz Boas, who at the turn of the century instituted anthropology as a discipline in this country. This is a curious connection to draw, especially in the case of Percival

Lowell, whose Victorian-era Social Darwinism and sniveling caricatures of the people in the Far East are a far cry from Boas's lifelong project to debunk racist ideologies based on facile theories of culture. In addition, Boas was invested in what is now called "salvage ethnography," a deeply empirical research method that sought to record the languages and cultures of Native American tribes before the ravages of imperialism destroyed them forever.

But Huang's real interest in Boas is that he was an anthropologist, and his theories of language and culture help bolster Huang's own argument about the "poetic ethnography" of Imagism. The overtly racist Lowell aside, Fenollosa and Ayscough were drawn to Chinese "culture" and sought to capture its "essence" through a study of its linguistic patterns and through the translation of elite poetry. Fenollosa's Sinophilia was bred in Japan and his knowledge of Chinese poetry mediated through Japanese instructors. Huang analyzes Fenollosa's notes to consider how the various mediations of Chinese language, history, and culture, filtered through Japanese nationalism and through Fenollosa's Emersonian transcendentalism, produced some "peculiar ethnographic images of China in twentieth-century America."

Ayscough was born in Shanghai and had a more "insider" perspective than her contemporaries, yet, as Huang notes, neither she nor Amy Lowell have received adequate recognition for their contributions to Imagism. Ayscough's interpretive method, "ideographic analysis," (against Fenollosa's "ideogrammic method") involves unpacking Chinese characters into phrases, with an attention to the form and meaning embedded in the characters—a method that seems to have inspired Huang's own translation of classical Chinese poetry, *Shi*. Huang sees this as an ethnographic method that "provides her reliable access to the Chinese reality she is trying to grasp." His intent to recuperate Ayscough's place in the history of American literary Modernism leads him to defend her against contemporary readings that would box her into a critique of Western imperialism: That her writing is in the Chinese tradition of "literary tourism" suggests to Huang that, "...when an author is interested in a literary culture to such an extent that, as we see in Ayscough, she has even incorporated part of that tradition into her text, interpretations based on a positivistic history that may be logically coherent or even politically sound badly need revising."

For Huang, these ethnographers' writings constituted the intertextual "field" for the subsequent "ethnographic" work of Pound, Amy Lowell and more contemporary writers such as John Yau. Huang tracks Pound's ethnographic research and his "touching up" of Fenollosa's notes to make them more Imagistic and also more "Chinese." Pound's interest in German diffusionist theories of culture and the rise of civilizations inspired his own theory of "Kulchur," completing the picture of Pound as similar to 18th and 19th century European "armchair anthropologists." Likewise, Amy Lowell becomes an ethnographic "traveler" whose guide through the textual landscape is Florence Ayscough, her collaborator and authenticator. Huang's major contribution may be his framing

of these writers' cultural appropriations as the production of "culture" itself; in the case of Fenollosa and Pound, the transmutation of the "original" Chinese texts by Fenollosa were "re-orientalized" by Pound to produce a distinctly American version of Chinese literature and a distinctly American image of the "Orient."

In a chapter that considers the pop cultural context in which these writers were producing their "Chinese" work, Huang contrasts what he sees as an appropriative "mimesis" in the Imagist work with the ventriloquizing "parody" of the contemporaneous Charlie Chan novels (on which the popular films were based), in which "Orientalness" is linguistically represented through Chan's florid diction and pidgin English. The Imagists' "benign" Orientalism is, for Huang, a sincere attempt to understand Chinese language and culture through literary appropriation, whereas the caricatures of Charlie Chan link linguistic practice to racial stereotypes in a blatantly bigoted fashion. It is somewhat unusual, and perhaps provocative, that Huang refuses to make a sustained critique of the Orientalism that fueled the entire Imagist project. This seems to smuggle in an elitist agenda, however, one in which literary endeavors that project a desire for the inscrutability of the Other, or the "essence of China," are considered to be more worthy contributions to American literature than those that parody that inscrutability.

Throughout the book, Huang makes clear that he is not interested in a postcolonial critique of Orientalist depictions of the "exotic" East. He shirks from interpretations that fall prey to "ideological determinism" and that render "literary works mere cultural symptoms." Huang's anti-positivist, hermenuetic stance may be a necessary corrective to interpretations overdetermined by a presentist bias, yet his attempt to stay clear of "preconceptions" is demonstrated by a disinterest in political-economic or historical connections to relations of power and colonial domination in favor of a "textual history" that is ungrounded in anything but an archivist's pleasure. In his conclusion, he writes, "it is certainly indispensable to speak of the nation's imperialist past and its effects on the literature we are reading; but it is equally important to take stock of the linguistic appropriations that physically make up the body of the literature." A theory of history and culture seems necessary to justify the interventionist defiance that lies behind Huang's rejection of what he calls political "preconceptions"—a rejection that is analogous to hermeneutic close readings that replace any historical or social context of literature with one that's strictly textual.

Huang opens his book with an anecdote about growing up in China where, as a child, he wondered how his neighbor, a blind man who moved to America and worked as an interpreter, could have "seen" America if he was blind. From this anecdote, Huang suggests that his own youthful ocularcentrism belies the importance of nonvisual ways of "seeing," namely, by traveling through texts. Yet the problem with this extended metaphor is that the blind interpreter's knowledge of America was not based on reading, but on his lived experience as a

blind Chinese man in the United States. Between vision and non-vision there are a whole range of phenomenological and epistemological processes, yet Huang, in this anecdote, and throughout his book, limits his analysis by staying "close to the text," and refusing to stray further afield into processes that would, to this reader, seem vital to a comprehensive understanding of the con/texts he considers.

But for Huang, context is intertext, a framework borrowed from Paul Riceour. Huang writes, "Imagism can be understood as an ethnography based on the matter of intertexts: the production of 'image' and meaning in Imagism takes place in its intertextual relation to other poetries and ethnographies. Imagism, in other words, exists in a much wider world of intertexts." This leads Huang to propose that the anthropological field be recast as one peopled by texts, and in so doing, he is able to recast Pound as an ethnographer whose own theory of "Kulchur" was based on other texts.

This attempted intervention into the anthropological myth of the "field" (as an exotic place "over there," bracketed in space and time), which has already been worked over and dismantled by many recent critics, leads him suggest that "Text is probably the 'final frontier' of anthropology as a discipline, for beyond that, anthropology may not be distinguishable from cultural studies or literary criticism." So-called "postmodern" anthropologists have made this assertion as well, but "text" in their case denotes more than just written documents. Moreover, "texts," as part of the anthropological "field," are considered not in isolation, but in the contexts in which they are produced, and thus they are vitally connected to social practice and networks of circulation. Perhaps this interrogation is part of a disciplinary "turf war" that anthropology has been waging with cultural studies, in which "thick description" and participant-observation go head-to-head with the "quick take" and textual analysis. Nevertheless, discursive analysis has long been in practice in anthropology, and in a world of increasing mediation and transnational flows, strategies for the interpretation of texts hold a key place in recent discussions of "postmodern" anthropology.

Huang's book moves quickly out of Pound's ethnographic dominion and turns to consider the cultural translation of "China" in contemporary American writing. Huang's discussion of Maxine Hong Kingston's appropriations of Chinese myths in the *Woman Warrior* engages the ongoing debate over her token canonization and selling out to the mainstream desire for exotic content that has been raging since her book was published in 1976. Frank Chin's vociferous diatribe against Kingston accuses her of being a "fake" for her made up version of the myth of Fa Mu Lan, and Kingston has maintained that her book has been "mis-read" as a window onto an exotic China, when in fact, it is an American novel, constructing American myths. What Huang attempts to add to this discursive rabble is what in fact organizes his entire project: an attention to literary form over "thematization." In the case of Asian American literary criticism, themes of assimilation and the immigrant experience have long dominated discussions in the field without due acknowledgment of the ways that aesthetic form embeds

cultural and ideological meanings. Borrowing from Charles Bernstein's "Artifice of Absorption," Huang suggests that Kingston's appropriations of Chinese myths are disingenous, for by collaging these myths, she presents them as transparent translations to mainstream audiences well-schooled in the marketplace of multiculturalism. For Huang, Kingston engages in an "intertextual transposition denied as such," thereby inviting a projection of Orientalist desire as she simultaneously reinscribes a conventional notion of identity.

Huang extends this critique into contemporary English language translations of Chinese dissident poets. His own translations of classical Chinese poetry, *Shi* (Roof Books) employs a number of hermeneutic lenses, with glosses, annotations, and linguistic analyses that lay bare the apparatus of the translation, drawing attention to the gaps between languages that conventional translations seek to obscure. In *Transpacific Displacement*, Huang goes after interpretations that are overdetermined by essentializing Western perspectives of "China," ones that reduce all poetic meaning to a reflection of the post-Tiananmen "political struggles for democracy." Rightly arguing against the domestication of aesthetic work into recognizably "poetic" language in English, he takes issue with cultural critic Rey Chow who has written against the long-standing Orientalism embedded in the American academy. Taking the case of an American Sinologist who suggested that Bei Dao has sold out to his Western readership, Chow critiques China scholars in the West for their nostalgia and desire for the "real" China, predicated as it is on a denial of the real political and cultural contexts in which people live. For Huang, however, this "contextualization" bias ignores the ways in which the actual practice of literary translation defuses the ideological choices of form and language into transparent expressions of "universal human emotions." The cultural work located in the style and form of the writing is thus suppressed and homogenized, such that the poetry functions to reproduce a pre-existent political image of China for a Western audience. Huang advocates for a wholly different kind of translation practice, one that recognizes its own impossibility and that writes against linguistic transparency and political reductionism. Huang's polemic against dominant critical approaches is a valuable one, yet it prevents him from engaging with the troubled border between text and context, and between the politics of form and the politics of "voice." Had he done so, he might also have considered the dimensions of asymmetrical power that is a defining feature of any cultural translation.

Despite often facile appropriations of anthropological theory that permit Huang to bracket a hermeneutic field disconnected to "culture" as political or social practice, Huang's book does offer an intriguing reading of Imagism as a transnational imaginary, by constructing a history of cultural representations mediated through writing and ethnographic projection. In arguing for the importance of aesthetic form, Huang explores the literary negotiation of "culture" and representation, as well as the ambivalence of the desire for the Other and its impossibility. This book, however, sorely needs a theory of culture, or a theory that would connect the textual construction of "culture" to a wider field of

production and consumption. Huang's anti-positivist hermeneutic is so radically committed to texts of his own choosing that this literary history can only hint at the larger implications of his own cultural translation.

Eleana Kim

THE VERTICAL INTERROGATION OF STRANGERS

Bhanu Kapil Rider
Kelsey St. Press, 2001

Why write, if not in the name of an impossible speech? —Michel de Certeau[1]

The subaltern voice is in trouble. The conceptual "voice" is troubled by generations of colonial interference and miseducation, and the actual physical *speaking* voice is traumatized by the inflections, sonic demands, and syntactical sins of whole other language systems. How indeed "can the subaltern speak"?[2]

And in time? For, as the western war on "terrorism" begins to affect the lives of millions of people around the world, questions of grammar become lethally relevant.[3] So writer Bhanu Kapil Rider has fashioned a unique way to uncover the sounds of some of these occluded voices. She does so in a form that blurs the line between community and self, and de-centers the colonizer—if anything she is engaged in an act of poetic decolonization.

The "strangers" in the title can as easily be the Indian women who were the focus of Rider's ethnographic research as they could be all the strange women inside Rider. The difference is blurred in the preface and is not cleared up in the following text. From the preface: "From January 12, 1992, to June 4, 1996, I traveled in India, England, and the United States, interviewing Indian women of diverse ages and backgrounds. Originally, my question to them was, "Is it possible for you to say the thing you have never been able to say, not even to the one you have spent your whole loving?"

The women, on the condition of anonymity, are given a space free of furniture, windows, or overhead lighting in which to compose their answer. "My aim," writes Rider, "was to ensure an honest and swift text, uncensored by guilt or the desire to construct an impressive, publishable 'finish.' In editing this anthology of responses I did not attempt to 'clean up' their roughness or rawness in terms of syntax, grammar, spelling, punctuation, or the way in which they filled the space of the page."

However, later in the introduction, Rider confesses that she too answered the questions over and over again in her notebook. She writes some responses on stickers that she leaves in public places ("escalator tubing, café tables, shop windows") and others, it seems implied, may have ended up in the book. However, to what extent the book is an "anthology of responses," and to what extent it contains Rider's own writings, she does not clarify. She merely says "The voices of the women I met: pure sound. The shapes they made, as they moved through the world: methods. A way to describe my body. I didn't know where I was going."

Memory as we have clung to it can be newly conceived.

Following the preface is a page on which are listed the questions:

TWELVE QUESTIONS

1. Who are you and whom do you love?
2. Where did you come from/how did you arrive?
3. How will you begin?
4. How will you live now?
5. What is the shape of your body?
6. Who was responsible for the suffering of your mother?
7. What do you remember about the earth?
8. What are the consequences of silence?
9. Tell me what you know about dismemberment.
10. Describe a morning you woke without fear.
11. How will you/have you prepare(d) for your death?
12. And what would you say if you could?

The unconscious is the center of our mental life, or at least... nearer the divine, and posits multiple centers from which to say.

"The long dark of the border of Pakistan and India." We are trying to speak it out through water it seems like. Perennial subtitles. Subtext. In some Hindi films, the subtitles are white. When the characters are wearing white clothes (often) the subtitles themselves become invisible.

Strange moment of disconnect: when I can understand bits and snatches of the broken Hindi: enough to notice, at any rate, the English subtitles (frequently) lose the subtext of the spoken Hindi, sometimes completely mistranslated.

Amidst the progression of questions, the answers come from clearly different women, with different languages, and different geographies. Each speaks earnestly, seriously, and once in a brief while what seems to be a more autobiographically immediate voice appears. Out of the lyric plucks, an emotional narrative begins to uncover itself. "Sometimes, for days, weeks even, she forgets that she is going to die." Each of the women-voices speaks out of a need to experience, define, and divine—the writer-Rider herself, at some undisclosed point, begins a gorgeous interaction with them.

The white subtitles melting into the white garments of the heroine. Who is doing some song and dance number in a whole other language. Better for those white letters to become invisible—how else can one perform the act of rescue?

Writing is my way of listening and ventriloquising
until I reach the place of speaking.

Those moments of the merging of "ventriloquising" and speaking are moments reminiscent of rapturous Robert Duncan: the poet, coming into intimate contact with her subject becomes "ecstatic" in the classical sense: she loses her senses, becomes immersed in the *material linguistic* experience. "You want to

live? Finally, you're alone. The ice drifts in the hollows. You walked here. The sheer maroon cliffs. The silver bones of your pelvis. The bright blue sky. Your bloodstone. This water. Something huge and without music has just happened"

Questions begin to fold into themselves. They appear in the answers to other questions. Or the answers wander far away. One issue the book presses against is this: in the grammar of the colonizer there is a Subject which Acts-Upon an Object. The pattern of question and answer enacts the same motion—a questioner who delineates the area of engagement, the answerer who endeavors to construct a linguistic response that adheres to the main principles articulated. But more frequently, Rider's voices swerve away from such a system of binaries—more frequently engaging in dialectic response, answering the same questions over and over again, and in radically different ways, or more disturbingly, refusing to answer the question at all.

Eerie truths are voiced in the answer that swerves: "TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT DISMEMBERMENT: 'His coat was made of rain, and the torn-off covers of English paperbacks, and human hair. It smelled of the earth, then; the twin histories of nostalgia, and bonesnapping.'" Such twin histories.

The figure of the loved-one emerges as the Other these speaking women are writing and talking about. There's a lot of engagement between a self constrained from speaking by a complex set of social systems and a governing world, many times for Indian women, personified at the family level.

Ultimately what emerges from kaleidoscopic call-and-response format is a kind of "novel"—one that more clearly approaches, through its radical formal and linguistic innovation, emotional revelation that any "realist" or fragmented "postmodern" treatment might do.

For me the urgent question is... "do we have a prayer?"

"I think of my mother, as a bride leaving India." "WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUFFERING OF YOUR MOTHER?" The wild transformation between questioner and answerer. But here the usual relationship is unstitched. The answerer is given her own room, encouraged to speak for as long as she likes and of whatever she likes. The prayer is in the unplanned utterance. "Somebody is asking me the question. I reply, "Coffee, please," and the moonlight turns into pure red sun, and then the clouds, and then the earth."

These women and women-within who speak do so in a constructed environment: the room without windows, overhead lighting furniture, etc. The acts they describe and write of engage the events of their lives in a context without consequence. In an extreme and powerful moment answering the question "TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT DISMEMBERMENT" one woman describes going to the Tate Gallery to look at the painting "the Lady of Shallot."

In the painting, the Lady of Shallot is in her boat, transfixed, *captured* by the painter at the moment the curse has come upon her. While the guard looks

distractedly at his hands, the woman leans forward and slices out a piece of the painting—the candle flames.

The answers come in repeated waves. Of dismemberment. The preparation for death. How shall one begin? How will you live now? "The snow comes in waves. I can't even move my head. My eyes are open. The catalpa pods are singing. The sound of tongues slapping the roofs of fifty or sixty mouths."

We have a prayer. "I do not think I will die today."

(Footnotes)

[1] Note: The four italic section heads are quotes *from An Heuristic Prolusion* (Documents in Poetics #1, Runcible Press, 2000) by Melissa Wolsak. The epigraph of this piece is the epigraph of the book.

[2] For the source of this particular theoretical argument, the reader is referred to the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Spivak.

[3] Terry Jones, in his excellent essay "Why grammar is the first casualty of war," explains the deadly consequences of George W. Bush's inability to make war on an abstract noun, in this case *terrorism.*

Kazim Ali

THE HISTORICITY OF EXPERIENCE: MODERNITY, THE AVANT-GARDE, AND THE EVENT

Krzysztof Ziarek
Northwestern University Press, 2001

> It's the stutter in American literature that interests me. I hear the stutter as a sounding of uncertainty. What is silenced or not quite silenced... history has happened. The narrator is disobedient. A return is necessary, a way for women to go. Because we are in the stutter. We were expelled from the Garden of Mythology of the American Frontier. The drama's done. We are the wilderness. We have come on to the stage stammering.
>
> What is in the word?... It's the singularity. It's a catastrophe of bifurcation. There is a sudden leap into another situation.
>
> —Susan Howe

> As event, experience unfolds beyond the strictures of presence and beyond the poles of the identical and the non-identical, the fragmentary and the totalizable, which work as parts of the dialectical economy of presence. It occurs as a kind of its own "avant-garde," as experience always in translation, ahead of and differentiating itself from the presence, identity, and signification to which it has always already submitted itself.
>
> —Krzysztof Ziarek

> A reason for having refused a narrative for having refused a narrative for reason for reasons for refusing for reasons refusing narratives for reasons refusing narrative refusing for reason refusing reason for refusing narrative for reason refusing narrative a reason for refusing for refusing narratives narrative for a reason.
>
> —Gertrude Stein

Anyone who senses Nietzsche's phrase 'the untimely' as directing us to a critical (political) impulse to move beyond the idea of the subversion of technocracy's functionalist mentality with the idea of negation or lack would be wise to study this impulse in order to deepen her or his understanding of it. In my view, the impotence of the traditional left, its despair, nihilism and/or resignation to 'duty' shows the need for this study. Krzysztof Ziarek's book *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* reflects the exhilaration (the creation of energy) which happens when we transform the negativity of old

leftist binary thinking. In going beyond binarisms, Ziarek explains we "radicalize the negative into the futural force of temporality." Thus do we create a site for the "transformative opening of the present." In other words, the mental paralysis and micro-fascism of the traditional left comes from its habitual use of dialectical temporality, its inability to open to the untimely or in other words, "futural temporality." The left's stupidity shows up in the solipsistic effect of its use of dialectical temporality: a belief in "absolute knowledge." Whereas "futural temporality" insists on the present's opening to the future and thus demands a certain noncomprehensiblility to experience, dialectical temporality figures a closed (readable) experience.

Initiating his work with readings of critiques of modern experience as structured via technology, Ziarek investigates Heidegger, Benjamin, Lyotard, and Irigaray, in order to show that works representative of the avant-garde by Susan Howe, Gertrude Stein, Velimir Khlebnikov and Miron Bialoszewski perform a similar function; they refigure modern experience as nondialectical and sexuate. Although we cannot do adequate service to Ziarek's lucid and provocative thought by reiterating it in full, to recount a partial reading of his readings of Heidegger, Irigaray, Stein and Howe will help to show an example of the how Ziarek uses close reading to urge readers on the left to take their politics to a new level. Reading Heidegger as the ground of poetic (nondialectical) thinking, Ziarek shows that Heidegger's thought doesn't lead us to binary thinking the way Hegel's thought does. There is a crucial difference in how Hegel and Heidegger conceptualize the ground. "This difference could finally be explained in terms of the distinction between dialectical and futural temporalities in play in Hegel (and post-Hegelianism) and Heideggger." For Ziarek, Heidegger's work, as well as the work performed by the avant-garde grounds history as 'futural temporality,' in other words, it grounds history as having no ground.

> The negating force of history in Hegel is not "negative" enough because it sublates, both cancels and elevates, the differences that make up experience. The futural force of temporality in Heidegger, by contrast, does not lead to sublation or abstraction but keeps opening up the ungrounding and transformative occurrence of the event as spatio-temporal differentiation. This force is more radically "negative" in its finitude than any dialectical sense of negation or of the nonidentical, because it locates the negative not in the negating force of an oppositional identity but in the transformative opening of temporality.

Translating Heidegger's thought into the everyday, we could say, to change the world, in other words, to recognize ourselves as 'untimely' historical agents, we must discontinue referencing the patriarchial family's narrative scenario as if it were our own. The family itself, of course, is not problematic, but the idea of the

family as narrative completion excludes the historicity of experience; it "sublates, both cancels and elevates, the differences that make up experience." If we transform our understanding of experience so that we recognize experience as 'event,' according to Heidegger's view, we allow the "transformative occurrence of the event as spatio-temporal differentiation." For Ziarek, this "spatio-temporal differentiation" is stronger than Hegel's negative, it is "radically "negative." In other words, when the ground keeps shifting, we cannot formulate a circle or narrative which completes the whole. We live non-metaphysically as 'untimely' historical agents because (paradoxically) time as the shifting element of constant flux signals finitude. The family narrative, on the other hand, forgets 'eternal' time, fixing us within its timeless constructs (boy, girl, brother, sister, daughter, son, father, mother/love, marriage, children, etc.).

The importance temporality plays in the reconstitution of metaphysical experience as post-metaphysical can be seen in the terms outlined by Gilles Deleuze's book on Kant, in particular with respect to Kant's idea of time 'out-of-joint.' According to Deleuze, Kant's phrase signals we are inside time (not outside time: meta-physics, but inside time: post-metaphysics); time splits us (in the present we are momentarily divided by a past and a future). The Greeks have a name for this kind of past-present-future-simultaneity: *aion*. I understand aion as "eternity" in time. Chronological time, *chronos*, is clock time, but there is as well eternal time, aion: every present moment is instantly bifurcated by past and future time. This ghostly presence of an "eternal" temporality (aion) haunts us with the sense that simple negation forgets the whole of temporality. Momentarily, when we represent our experience, we forget the ghost; we command a fully articulated, captured, and contained experience.

In today's mediated era, according to Ziarek, experience is understood almost exclusively from the point of view of representation: representation demands experience be reducible to one kind of (narrative) progressive time; clock (pure chronological) time is by definition bound to calculation. Experience under this view can only be defined as calculatable exchange; we must disavow the noncomprehensible aspect of experience; the idea that in the articulation of experience there is always both concealment and unconcealment. Moreover, we tend to disbelieve economies of gift and sacrifice, to lend them no credibility, to view them as irreal. They are imagined in fact as nothing but the exhibition of 'irrationality,' madness even. In demanding that experience be calculatable, we necessarily privilege meaning. Totalization means we have not had an 'experience' until we can name it, capture it, contain it, in short, narrativize it. This demand/nostalgia for narrativization is innocent enough at first. But soon we realize that in our desire for history constructed thusly, that is for an "explanatory and unifying mythical code, a ...nostalgic evocation of a beyond," we refuse that side of history which Ziarek argues avant-garde art grounds as having no ground: historicity. In the avant garde's foregrounding of the "heterogenity at work in the linguistic event over and against the uniform picture that it becomes upon entering the present of represen-

tation," the poetic as opposed to the technic is used to refuse the effacing of historicity by completed narrativization. Fortunately, as I stated above, we are haunted by the exclusion (forgetting) of temporality and historicity from experience; when we meet the exemplars of this forgetting, "the triumphant and self-assured," we detect a certain sickness; we detect abuse in accord with instrumentality and commodification or we note with quiet fear and horror, their apparent opposite: "a private sphere of aesthetic experience removed from history."

Ziarek's point is that like critics of modern experience, as Deleuze advises, avant-garde poets are clinicians; they diagnose the (mental) danger that materializes itself in the common (historicist) understanding of experience. Aesthetics is the symptom of instrumentalization and commodification; it ensures modern man's continued sickness, whereas avant-garde art gets at the root of man's dis-ease; it works as an anti-aesthetic. It urges us to reexamine our use of aesthetic categories which involve "...the absence of historical experience and its replacement by either the punctual experience of shock without memory or the compensatory recuperation of everyday *Erlebnis* in the totality of myth." Experience in this aesthetic (historicist) mode shows "the self-identical instant without historicity"; it shows "self presence" as "representable in terms of its calculation and availability," "absolute knowledge."

As an alternative to the aestheticization of the 'art object,' Ziarek asks us to study the avant-garde's articulation of experience. Given that avant-garde art "works by unworking its own articulations..." "it crosses into the unwork; the line between working and unworking becomes increasingly fine, like the corresponding play between concealment and unconcealment." An aesthetic object has a closed form, but "The work of art *works* precisely when it draws attention to the dynamic field of the rift, its continued reemergence as itself "an openness opened by itself...." Against the common gesture by the liberal and radical left of calling the avant-garde anachronistic and useless, Ziarek shows the way this art's 'uselessness' ensures its radical effect. Shunning the idea of realist aesthetics, communicational consensus, and certainty of meaning, Ziarek calls on academics in the human sciences to rethink the avant-garde so as to hear in its work the non-conformist 'minoritarian' poietic voice which works to unwork the notion of the structure of experience as privatization, aestheticization and subjectivation. What is problematic about understanding experience based on this old humanist idea (a private subject armed with an aesthetic) is that when encountering that which is 'not the same,' members of technocratic societies have a tendency toward fascism because they want to tell themselves a story about their experience and the experience of the other, in effect, they want to totalize it: "As it deploys the technological means of control and propaganda together with the mythical sense of identity, fascism draws upon a collusion between aesthetic and technological models of the totalization of experience." Every micro-fascist recognizes at the base of technocratic culture, not "the "excessive" folds of history as the quasi-transcendental condition of experience that mark in each moment of presence an alterity which needs to be

remembered without ever being recuperated" but his or her own unified presence, inscribing and thus recuperating experience into a linear progression.

Focusing on the interval between experience and language, avant-garde poets use neither dialectics nor binary thinking to totalize experience. The significance of the avant-garde is that its work shows us that we make history in the moment (historicity) not in some mythical place beyond time (utopia). There is no 'experience' followed by a writing 'about' experience. Experience as event signifies we are in time. In time there is always a remainder in experience because each present event is split by a past and future. The "inessentiality" of experience signals that in experience as event we withdraw from essence and presence, hence, there is always a certain noncomprehensibility in the event. The techno-homogenization of the everyday requires efficiency which means a locking out of experience as event. But the technological is ruptured when we do not represent experience as 'psychic space' and 'lived instants' but rather from the point of view of historicity: "the ecstatic temporality opened up in the emergence of experience, the force of a temporal dislocation." A structural indetermination cannot ground a private, stable psychic space or a lived instant.

With his insistence on experience as event, that is, the inclusion in experience of temporality and historicity as its noncomprehensible element, as Ziarek notes in his reading of Irigaray, we still have not engaged the problem of experience as sexuate. To do so without the reestablishment of binaries is complex, in particular when having critiqued our binary position and ended up with difference, we find that "the positive meaning of multiple difference may not be enough." Many feminists are caught here and thus keep falling back on a seventies politics. They discover that 'difference' doesn't figure sexuate experience, so they proceed to fall back on a binary, oppositional politics. Investigating Irigaray's poetics, Ziarek shows that Irigaray does not use difference-identity or sameness to establish the notion of sexuate experience. "Differential economy produces difference in order to annul it and deploy the very erasure in the service of its logic of unification. This logic of sameness, produced at the price of the double gesture of a simultaneous sexuation and desexuation of experience, forecloses the space of its own inscription and renders it off-limits to sexual difference." Instead, Irigaray uses Levinas' idea of "proximity" to theorize the relation *between* man and woman, the interval; "proximity is so radical that it does not let difference and distinct identities trace themselves." As different from Levinas' proximity which sublates the carnal in the ethical, the direction of Irigaray's proximity is ethical and carnal: it doesn't adhere to an ethics "without or outside of sexual difference." Irigaray's proximity "interrupts and inflects differential logic from its dialectical trajectory of completion. Proximity keeps difference in play in spite of and against the dialectical pull of sublation precisely because it remains, as it were, illegible to difference, refractory to its logic of separation and identity. It acquires the status of a passage, a between, never reducible either to the polarity of two distinct moments or to the suture of unification."

Though we have discussed just a fragment of Irigaray's work and Ziarek's complex reading of it, we have not discussed her work from the point of view of its poetics. We can gather Ziarek's interest in this poetics, indirectly, through a brief look at the work of Gertrude Stein and Susan Howe. Ziarek discusses Stein's "poetics of the event" in part through Irigaray's "proximity." Ziarek shows that just as Irigaray uses the French language to inscribe a poetics which insists on matter as always double or materialization and signification, Stein attempts "to play with and deform the "deep structures" of American English in order to illustrate how "the feminine paradigm of nonassimilative relation becomes worked into the very texture of her writing." Ziarek speaks of Stein "liquefying" English word order and increasing indefinitely the plasticity of syntax and the elasticity of words and meaning." For example, in *Lifting Belly*, Ziarek notes, "The voice(s) remain indistinguishable because language in Stein arises out of the space of proximity free of the either/or logic, where relating takes place without the discrimination of identity and property. "The whole point of *Lifting Belly,*" continues Ziarek, "seems to be the construction of a textuality within such an economy of exchange that would operate without a foundation in a determinate identity or a representable difference, and, hence, without the requirement of nouns, naming, and definition. The text arises out of the "touching" of one voice against the other (itself?) and experience in it opens up through such "intimacies" and exchanges, which remain unsystematizable and overflow the parameters of the logic of identity."

Howe, according to Ziarek, takes her work in a different direction; she rearticulates history, undermining the legibility of experience to show the way history's traditional articulation from the point of view of empathy obscures singularity. Within the gendering of experience, history, and freedom, Howe works to establish new parameters of legibility, "These parameters accentuate the unpredictable and dislocating effects of historicity over and against the articulated forms of experience, making manifest how the articulation of experience as presence depends upon and precipitates the effacement of the event, and with it the alterity and the fracturing, the temporal noncoincidence, of experience." Howe's poetics demands of her reader that she or he explore everything on the page including the blank space, not as a quasi-hermetic sign, but as the gendered singularity's erasure in history and politics. Her "unsettled, and unsettling, arrangement of the page, with multiple possibilities enacted simultaneously (words revised and/or crossed out) and made indeterminate by the absence of conjunctions..." is another of the many great examples of Ziarek's avant-garde poetics of experience as event "beyond the negative" of which the traditional left is so sorely in need.

Julia Van Cleve

ANCESTORS
Kamau Brathwaite
New Directions, 2001

WORDS NEED LOVE TOO
Kamau Brathwaite
House of Nehesi, 2000

For the first time in our poetry . . . **we admit** – i can't describe to you the terrible limbo/lembe effect of this word . . . as a result of the downpressure of the colonial experience – thru which we – mwe – as i say, 'admit' = *discover* – **family**
–Kamau Brathwaite (*conVERSations*)

It was thought the native ought to be encouraged to shed his nativity, in part through language acquisition. –David Theo Goldberg

Long after all signs of the spaceship had weathered away, their phantom memory is revisited upon Kamau Brathwaite. It is in a Valentine's Day phone call in the United States that Brathwaite is reminded of his own earlier musings. Jerry Ward, calling from Tougaloo, Mississippi, where he professed literature at a historically black college, one of those islands of intellectual elevation that form an archipelago of advancement strung in an arc across the North American South, completes a diasporic circuit, re-minding Brathwaite of earlier conversation. The moment stands as metonymic characterization of what Brathwaite has done in his heavily revised *Ancestors* trilogy, "reconstituting the orig /'–inal ancestral at least symbolically" (*Words*). The lines themselves enact the reconstitution of which they speak, rejoining across an enjambed line-break the very language of diasporic reconnection, forming, in readerly consciousness, the familial rejoining they recall. As syllables are conjoined in the reading eye, morphemes gathered together in the reconstituting consciousness, diasporic relatedness is posited in the prosody and syntax of Brathwaite's recollection. Jerry Ward reminds him of an earlier speech. What Brathwaite has forgotten has lived on in Ward's memory. It is an image passed between poets, now reanimated across a distance of years and telephone wires. Ward recalls to Brathwaite an extemporaneous passage, neither written nor recorded at the time, now faded from the memory of its author. In the neo-space of telephone conversation, the two writers reconnect, and reconstruct, an imagery that has survived as dispersed memory trait. Brathwaite likens this to a holograph, by means of which we are allowed "each one of us in our different parts a common memory."

It is precisely here, among Brathwaite's "vowels of glistance," that we must begin to understand the reconstructive "tidalectics" of Brathwaite's "nation

language," upon the broken playing field of the page, the graphic space of poetry. A hologram is not an exact replication. It is an enlightened excitation of information within a different space, a reconstituting of the original ancestral. Brathwaite's poem "Jerry Ward & the fragmented spaceship dreamstory" commences with Ward's voice, the phone call out of Mississippi that reproduces the sonic image of a friend's sound. "You may recall," Ward offers, "having met me.". What Ward calls Brathwaite back to is a deliberate act of poetic memory, recreating a diasporic image, a verbal holograph. This in itself is intriguing. The process of holography uses coherent light beams to illuminate a hologram, a film or plate upon which has been recorded the light wave interference patterns of an object previously illuminated by a split beam process. Holography, then, reconstructs the image recorded on a hologram. A holograph, on the other hand, is an earlier technology. It is a document reproducing handwriting. In Brathwaite's poem, his writing permits the reconstruction of a four-dimensional memorial, a graphic hologram as it were, an "image of the origins made out of atoms of light." As light plays across the page of the poem, readers reactivate the process by which Brathwaite and Ward between them recalled an earlier reconstruction of geo-ancestral meaning.

It had first appeared in the course of a lecture at the Southern Black Cultural Alliance. Brathwaite, remembering the subsequent phone call, writes that Ward "tried to spell it back out for me in a telephone." It was another in a series of metaphoric descriptions of the scattering of African peoples across an archipelago of Caribbean geographical and historical space. Brathwaite had remarked, and then forgotten:

> that it was as if the spaceship bringing us here
> had like **crash** into the New World / plantation
>
> & Xploded on impact / the **stars** of the ship
> From their commune origen scattering over a wide wide
> area

Students of Caribbean writing will recognize here a close cousin to the familiar image of skipping stones of earlier poems addressed to those islands dotting the entryway to the New World. But where that familiar imagery posits a primordial stone skipper, Brathwaite's recollected imagery partakes of the future anterior of diasporic postmodernity. The scattered islands of the Antilles and the dispersed Africans resident there turn out to be remnants of an intergalactic primordial planting, a nexus of futurity with the ancient of days. It is out of the explosive contact between technologically advanced Afro-futurity and the now-old New World that the startled citizens of post-plantation new island nations emerge.

And it is within this scintillant holography of the future anterior that we can gain a clearer notion of the constructedness of Brathwaite's "nation language." In the same way that one might all too easily lock in on the singularity of the

definite article in William Carlos Williams's emphasis upon "the American idiom," the term "nation language" could be subject to essentialist readings. It is important, therefore, that we register Brathwaite's appreciation of Martinican novelist and poet Edouard Glissant's view of nation language as a strategy rather than as a mimetic representation of previously embedded speech practice, now frozen in time by writing. Brathwaite opposes native language to "dialect." Dialect writing is truly no more mimetic than is the wildest typographic experiment of Brathwaite's late style, yet it is an effort to inscribe an essential language trait, to ascribe to a racial, ethnic or class other a plane of speech and consciousness below that of the colonizing master. "Tidalectics," "nation language" and other such neologisms are Brathwaite's means of practicing a form of poetics as maronage. The English of the islands was indelibly marked by the "underground language, the submerged language that the slaves had brought." C.L.R. James, in his lengthy postscript to the later edition of *Black Jacobins,* argued that it was in the process of revolution against the colonial masters that the separated African peoples of the Antilles began to think of themselves as a people, linked by their historical experiences of rupture, removal to the New World and organization into new working and living relationships. Brathwaite holds that the nation of nation language comes into being in acts of linguistic creation, in its speaking and writing. It is the Caribbean's "at least symbolic" reconstituting of a phantom pain, driven by felt absence and distance to posit a once and future memory. As Jerry Ward and Kamau Brathwaite between them call up a memory that could never coincide exactly with the unrecorded words of the past, that could not even coincide exactly with the memory of either man alone, nation language reaches into historical memory to plant "vowels of glistance" which shall become the "commune origen" of diasporic consciousness.

It turns out to be a high-tech performance. Between the time of Brathwaite's first great trilogy, *The Arrivants,* and his radical revisions of his second under the title *Ancestors,* not only the rhythms and registers but the very physical appearance of his poems underwent a sea-change. In his *conVERSations* with Nathaniel Mackey, Brathwaite remarks that:

> The very concept of the writing has alter, and it's as if I'm gone back to the Middle Ages, in a way, and I'm trying to create those things that they did – what-do-you-call-them? Scrolls? That kind of tone. And the computer gives me that opportunity. To release the pen from the fist of my broeken hand and begin what I call my '***video-style***,' in which I tr(y) make the words themselves live off–away from–the 'page' so you can . . . see their sound. – Technology was taking us 'back.'

In English, of course, one silently "scrolls" through the display of text on a computer's video monitor. In this "scrolling" we appropriate an old word to a new technological practice, and thus the technology truly does "take us back" by

mode of linguistic back-formation, back to a forever altered earlier language universe. At the same time, the technology we have so often been told spelled the end of the book, taking us back to a pre-post-verbal social realm of image and virtuality, seems in so many ways more than ever text-bound in its unbound textuality.

Brathwaite's coming to the computer, which has proved so fecund a source of formal and thematic innovation for him since, was itself a form of family reunion. It had been his wife, Doris, affectionately nicknamed "Zea Mexican" by her husband in an odd poetic nod to her Guyanese, Afro-Amerindian ancestry, who had taken at once to the new technology of the desktop. Following the long, loving, tortuous struggles of Doris's illness and death, Brathwaite was left bereft, alone with his memories, with her belongings and their lingering aura, and with her beloved Kaypro computer. Readers of a certain age may recall the 1980s era Kaypro, with its array of commands one must remember and invoke to coax the machine towards one's goals at a time when the more user-friendly graphic interface was just becoming more widely available. Doris Brathwaite was one of those described by sociologists of the technical as "early adopters." In his *Zea Mexican Diary* Brathwaite noted how Doris broke "into computers long before the current craze." Before the phrase "digital divide" had gained currency among journalists, a term that soon seemed to be posited almost as a racial characteristic as much as a description of socio-economic disparities, the woman Brathwaite called "Mexican" had become an avid technophile, loving her computer because of what it permitted her to do in the world. As the poet looked at that machine following her death, how could he not but be deeply affected by the realization that her relationship to that machine had become a part of her relationship with him. For Doris Brathwaite had been hard at work, among her many and diverse projects, on an extensive bibliographic effort encompassing her husband's creative and scholarly writings. The secrets of the Kaypro's keyboard, the commands Doris had mastered, now stood between the poet and access to the bibliographic memories his wife had constructed there. It was left to Kamau Brathwaite to learn what his wife had learned so lovingly, to repeat her acts of access at the keyboard, to reach into the memory she had located outside of her self. Before the poet could write his vision of an intergalactic, diasporic mother ship leaving its bewildered African progeny on the Antillean shores, he first had to reach the mother board inside that Kaypro.

Which required powering up, gazing at the blinking cursor of the unscrolling screen. In his historical works, Brathwaite had detailed the technologies of domination deployed in the exploitation of the New World and the centuries of slavery. Soon, he would undertake a poetics of maronage, using technologies of mastery remastered as technologies of consciousness and resistance. As Jerry Ward was to do more than a decade later, Doris Brathwaite reunited the poet with his own dimly recollected past through the recombinant powers of digital technology. While Brathwaite stared at the cursor, learning to

navigate his way with the mother board, he rechristened the computer "Sycorax," naming it for Caliban's mother, ancestral original of the tempest-tossed island Prospero would want to make prosperous by means of brutal enslavement of the island's first son. Brathwaite was to re-enter his own texts, reopen his *Mother Poem, Sun Poem* and even *X Self,* recasting them as virtual scrollwork, readmitting them as liminal, ancestral, recomposing them as *Ancestors.*

The recomposed persona of *X Self,* in his "Xth letter from the thirteenth provinces," addresses himself to his mother in the nation language and typography of Brathwaite's "Sycorax video style:"

> *Dear mumma*
> uh writin yu dis letter
> *wha?*
>
> Guess what! pun a computer
> kay?
> Like a jine de mercantilists?
> *Well not quit!*
>
> Uh mean de same way dem tieff/in gun-
> power from sheena & taken we blues &
> gone
>
> *say*
> *wha? get on wid de* same ole
> *story?*
>
> Okay
> Okay
> Okay
> Okay
>
> if yu cyaan beat prospero
> whistle?

The speaker/writer proceeds to describe to his mother the improvements of this machine over the nearly forgotten family Remington typewriter gathering dust in the kitchen. (And where, we might well ask, are our histories of the technologies passed as legacy from one generation to another of black families?) The new machine affords new powers:

> dis ya obeah blox
> get a whole para

graph write up &
blink\

As an early habitue of "Bitnet," I can testify that the world wide web did not have its origins, anymore than did the original Kaypro, in a desire to make better poetry through technology. That spell checker the multinational mercantilists sell will not tell you there is anything paradoxical with writing "quit" for "quite," nor will it highlight "pun" as a nation language pun. The dubiously named "style checkers" marketed by Microsoft will simply label these usages incorrect. Tools that were devised to make it easier to derive profit across great distances, still, can be turned to the radically purposeful purposelessness of poetics. Caliban does not so much use the computer to beat Prospero at his own game as change the nature of the game itself, to make Prospero whistle a different tune. Those who would tell you that you can't use the master's tools to tear down the master's house have momentarily forgotten who it was in all probability that built the house (see Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*); indeed, who may well have fashioned those tools in the first instance. Brathwaite, echoing Langston Hughes's complaint that "they" had taken our blues and gone, recognizes the seemingly ineluctable power of hegemony to reappropriate nearly any resistant gesture, reappropriate and bring to market (witness American Hip Hop's triumph in suburbia). But Brathwaite also recognizes that the masters themselves are fundamentally and irreversibly altered by that which "dem tieff;" what they make off with remakes them. David Theo Goldberg has recently argued, sounding much like poet Brathwaite, that there is a mode of linguistic "glocalization," a means by which the now global English of mercantile relations is constantly retooled by local usage: "English becomes in-habited by local ethnoracial expressions of its projected differences, invaded linguistically and culturally by those taking on its terms and structures, thereby creatively transformed semantically and syntactically, but also culturally and politically." This is a progress visible in all languages of colonization, from the earliest moments of cultural contact. In 1689, with the publication in Madrid of *Inundacíon Castálida de la ñica poetisa, musa dézima, Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz,* we had the appearance in the metropolitan capitol of Sor Juana's villancicos mixing Nahuatl and African-inflected Spanish (Arteaga 47). Here, in the earliest colonial poetics, we already witness the inventions of new nation languages and their almost immediate influence upon the mother tongues. The repeated "Okay" of Brathwaite's *X Self* marks a similar "glocalization." The American affirmative, ethnically if mysteriously marked in its origins, has since become a recognizable part of English English and has, in fact, become a universally recognized usage in languages the world over.

Caliban's complaint in *The Tempest* is that Prospero has given him language and his only profit is that he can now curse. That, of course, was never Prospero's intention in bringing Caliban to language acquisition, a bringing that was to have made Caliban, if anything, less Calibanic. Brathwaite's new writing

shows how Prospero comes to get cursed by "im own curser" – by means of what we might well term a post-Prosperic, Calibanic keystroke. Brathwaite has found, through Prospero's own devices, that "it becomes possible to write... in t/reasonable 'English'" (*conVERSations*). Melville's Bartleby enacted his treason by preferring not to be a little reasonable at his master's behest. The rationalized processes of global markets, like the slave-trading world economic system of the Age of Reason, cannot spread their net or internet over the world without opening themselves to counter-usage. World English will be a "t/reasonable" mode of communication.

The *X Self* persona writes out of the between-decks darkness of the Middle Passage to establish a new New World exodus:

> writin in lite
>
> like i is a some
> is a some
>
> is a some-
> body body
>
> a art
> noveau
>
> X
> pert or some
> ting like moses or aaron or one a dem dyaam isra
>
> light
>
> *mumma*
>
> *why is dis*
> *what it mean?*

Here the chiasmus of the "X" marks the spot of radical reconnection and recontextualization. A people, refusing to be Xed out of history, remark in their "Christian" (Xtian) last names a place of post-Adamic rechristening and reassertion. Coming out of the memory of catastrophe, diasporic peoples inevitably find themselves carrying their origins always within them, like the encoding of the hologram, in the form of what Brathwaite terms their "paradoxical and pluraradial situation" (*conVERSations*). His wife's death, his discovery of the computer and his redirecting of its properties, all overdetermine the moment when he decides to recast his poetic lines. He tells Nathaniel Mackey:

in about 1986, something ?new, ?else, begins to 'happen' and my sense of

> poetry makes a very strange lea(p) – back – ?back – into a very different future and technique (procedure) and *echo* of images; as if I needed to *redefine* – having discovered parents (!!) – that I have to redefine myself. (*ConVERSations*)

In a passage of *ConVERSations* immediately following this declaration, Brathwaite attaches a footnote that does not appear at the foot of the page. He notes that his *American Heritage Dictionary* has no entry for the word "maronage," and proceeds to supply scholarly citations for this thoroughly racialized word denoting flight and resistance. The word "Maroon" does appear in this dictionary, but not with the meaning of one who commits an act of maronage. It is as if the *American Heritage Dictionary,* like America itself in the wake of the slave revolution in Haiti, would suppress any potentially infectious hint of African rebellion. And yet, it is at the same time as if the etymology of American, now global, English could not quite ("quit"?) cover its tracks. The dictionary does supply, as a source for our word "Maroon," the American Spanish "*cimarrón*," which did in the New World denote a fugitive slave.

Brathwaite conducts his fugitive poetics in the hypersphere of digital diasporic text, making use of what Anna Everett calls "digitextuality" to offer new strategies of chiasmic meaning, new strategies of maronage. For Brathwaite, it's a family affair.

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Aldon Lynn Nielsen

ON YOUR MARX

Randy Martin
University of Minnesota Press, 2002

From the title and funky red cover with an image of Karl Marx sporting beatnik shades, I expected Randy Martin's *On Your Marx* to lean toward the populist tenor of *The Communist Manifesto*. Instead, I found a text that paralleled the opaque nature of the three volumes of *Capital*. There are valuable insights available here, but for some readers the price of admission may be too high. For myself, once my metabolism adjusted to the lofty altitude of Martin's theory-swept peaks, I was able to enjoy a variety of provocative observations.

First off, I should point out that this book is not for the sociologically challenged, nor the theoretically faint of heart. By my own informal count, Martin cites upwards of 30 theorists in this work, ranging from Lacan to Althusser, Said to Adorno, and Goffman to Negri—just to name a few. At times the book engaged in conversations that I am not privy to, without even a cursory introduction to the issues. While I do not condemn a work for this at-times necessary practice, I would warn potential readers. Martin himself seems to be aware of possible criticism of his work: he explicitly defends the necessity of complex language and exclusive jargon, and deconstructs the hidden meanings behind calls for 'clear speech.'

In the first (and arguably most valuable) section of the book, "Rereading Marx," Martin addresses three of the most common leftist criticisms of Marx, and places the critiques themselves in a disciplinary paradigm:

> Three presumed deficiencies can be named: totality, universal subject, teleology. The first reads Marx as a philosopher of societal being, where the object of his theory is to assert the consummative whole of human relations. The second sees in Marx a political theorist who, by anointing the lone protagonist of social struggle, has severely circumscribed what may count as significant political activity and who can count as doing it. The third identifies him as a historian who imbues history with a determinate means and ends, a direction and a point of arrival. Needless to say, these partitions fit nicely into the way in which academic disciplines are carved up institutionally within the university so as to fragment not only Marx, but the thrust and scope of their own critical impulse. It is the resistance to each of these reductions that gives marxism the complexity it requires to continue being serviceable in the present.

In series, Martin defends Marx from his reductionist detractors in each of these areas, although some more orthodox Marxists may find themselves wanting to

defend their Marx from Martin's defense (particularly those historical materialists who base their faith on the inevitability of socialism and the ideology of a clear progression up the stages of society, for whom Marx provides a science of society that predicts the end of history). While Martin's rereading of Marx is more useful to the current political context, Martin engages in his own reductionism of the critical arguments, thus weakening the overall thrust of his analysis. (His portrayal of Marx's critics verges at times on creating straw men.) Ultimately, both sides have valid interpretations of Marx; while I appreciate engaging Martin's updated version, I remain unconvinced that even this newer incarnation is entirely free from all of those deterministic, rationalistic, and Eurocentric problems.

Martin's most often-repeated and important point is the immanence of socialism inside capitalism. He elucidates Marx's assertion that it is capitalism itself, not an independent workers' movement, which catalyzes and creates socialism. Martin uses Marx to demonstrate the contradiction of capital, which organizes (socializes) labor into productive units, but then betrays that socialized base in the phase of accumulation. This is what makes capitalism fundamentally unsustainable and contradictory. At the same time, however, this is also what makes socialism such a potentially powerful force: it is already imbued throughout the institutions of social production and reproduction. Indeed, this analysis of the development of socialism inside capital structures of production is at the core of the rest of Martin's argument for the superiority of socialism, not only for the future of left activism but for the future of global society. Martin thus pinpoints why capitalists are still vigilant in their crusade against socialism even as they tout their triumphs from every hilltop; why, even as the Third Way crowd have declared the battle won, they continue the campaign to privatize with a vengeance:

> Every explicit expression of socialism threatens to display the contradiction of capital's own contrary condition. As such, even the most minimal expressions of socialism appear to its enemies as more socialism than they are willing or able to bear.

However, given the fact that at several points in this book Martin explicitly addresses the anti-globalization movement, he does not sufficiently clarify how this process of socialization leads to socialism rather than syndicalism, or how this workplace socialization is necessarily benefited by movement toward state socialism.

When he engages individualist-based politics of autonomy, Martin showcases the clear strength of this work overall—his ability to reread Marx into the contemporary. Martin elucidates Marx's theory of the ensemble and reads it in light of Lacanian psychology, supporting a postmodern conception of human essence as maintained in the social rather than contained by the individual, and a politics of increasing sociality (building on inherent trends of capital). While Martin sees potential critical value in the current wave of what he identifies as

'tribalism,' he also warns against what he sees as the left's blind acceptance of an inadequate localism to fill the programmatic vacuum resulting from the abandonment of socialist thought.

Martin calls for an engagement with the movements of globalization instead of an unthinking rejection. He identifies the process of globalization as an agent to socialize capital as capitalism has worked to socialize labor. Instead of rejecting the progress that has been made and the potential of revolutionizing social relations worldwide, Martin encourages the would-be left activist to build upon the socialism that is already present in global industrialization and the concentration of finance. Martin believes that in this respect there is an immanent socialist world inside the shell of capitalism; we need to make it clear how we, not capitalists, have built and are building this new world order. At that point, we can shape it for our use, not their profit: "There is a world to win, but only if it is possible to show how people are already implicated in making it." The drive for socialism must work through the socialist processes already present; the "collectivization of credit through stock" needs to be shown for what it is: a "move away from individual ownership" and the "abolition of capital as private property within the framework of capitalist production itself." Likewise,

> It is necessary to see how globalization actually adds to the language of socialism. By enlarging the means through which resources are held in common, the meaning of ownership is transformed from self-possession to one of strangers mutually obliged to each other.

Amid this barrage of bracing insight, Martin leaves some questions begging: if, as he suggests, workers witness the demise of capital but are not necessarily the executioners, I am left to wonder who are the executioners—and how do we find them?

From my perspective as a historian, one of the most useful aspects of the book is Martin's analysis of the complex relationships of identity. This is especially useful as a teacher trying to craft the syllabus of a required class that is inevitably titled "Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity." The struggle to craft a narrative that synthesizes these elements can often result in awkward and inappropriate articulations. Martin offers a way to begin to negotiate this complicated terrain. He posits that the problem of casting groups as politically homogeneous cannot be overcome

> merely by attributing multiple identities to individual members; the unforeseen consequence of such a move is a final resort to a reductive individualism which foils the goal of understanding the unity-in-diversity of a movement.

> Applied to the politics of social movements, the topos of group becomes even less helpful, for it introduces unstable separations and homogenizations between the likes of race, gender, sexuality, nationality. If this problem is resolved simply by saying that people belong to many groups, then the coherence of the concept for specifying politics is lost to an untheorizable multiplicity. Further, group membership appears to be given prior to actual mobilization, rather than seeing collective space as a consequence of political activity. The presupposition of bounded, static, discrete entities, with clearly defined insides and outsides, bespeaks a certain methodological individualism... now applied to the collective unit.

Martin's observations challenge simplistic formulations of category equivalence and maintain that race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identity markers are not equivalent categories with labor, in that labor is a fluid activity of self production and reproduction.

This is reflected in the reluctance to give pride of place to labor, when so much political activity seems to be organized along lines of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, ecology, and the like. It would be easy enough to add labor to this list, as many radical democrats do, but from a Marxist perspective that would constitute a kind of category error; for labor is not the description of a type of person, an identity category, but rather an activity that confronts its own conditions of production. "[L]abor produces not only commodities: it produces itself."

While I still need to think about whether I agree with Martin (I could argue that gender can also confront its conditions of production, for example), his argument leads me to consider new ways of thinking about the relationship between class and other identity markers. What is even more interesting is the extension of Martin's thoughts to suggest that it is through our labor that we in turn create and recreate 'fundamental' categories as significant bearers of identity and meaning.

> It may turn out that the initial postmodern emphasis on cultural production as knowledge was too narrow, too cerebral, ascetic, and disembodied to embrace all of the activity that terms such as identification, consumption, pleasure, or difference are meant to invoke... Yet, if the things we do to make us who we are entail uses made for others [Martin's definition of labor]... then labor is always a dimension of those identities named by the likes of race, gender, and sexuality.

Martin goes on to apply similar postmodern theory to examine issues of equality and difference, crafting and recognizing a Marx that is useful for current

mobilizations that don't revolve merely around organized labor but also encompass racial justice, queer politics, gender equity, and environmental sustainability.

Overall, what Martin is offering the reader is a hopeful Marx, a vision that advocates building on the past to create a more just and equitable future. In every instance Martin calls upon the left to look for resources already present but not to turn back and retreat into a nostalgic past. Indeed, the left must look to itself to create new social meaning and show the social at the root of our daily existence, rather than accepting the alternatives presented by dominant ideologies that mask capital's betrayal. Martin recognizes our potential agency both for liberation and self-repression, but even there he sees the power for us to turn the tables:

> At the same time, we should not lose sight of the enormous capacities for reflection on the future that have been generated in the current versions of calculating reason. The labors brought into the home, marshaled in the service of self-management, can also be applied to different ends. Such possibilities lie in a different calculus, one whose reason can remain focused on debts to mutuality rather than mutual debt. For this work ethic to assume the credit it deserves, a left must heed its own calling.

An item in the June 17, 2002, copy of *The Nation* encourages me that Martin is correct in his assessment. According to a survey conducted by Columbia Law School, 69% of Americans believe that, or are uncertain if, the U. S. Constitution contains the phrase "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs." When Marx makes it that far into the popular consciousness, there is hope after all.

Mark Soderstrom

FUCK YOU–ALOHA–I LOVE YOU

Juliana Spahr
Wesleyan University Press, 2001

In the first poem of her most recent book, *Fuck You–Aloha–I Love You*, Juliana Spahr informs us, "There is no there there anywhere" and "There is no here here or anywhere either"— rendering the world disentrenched and always shifting. The fact that much of the writer's experience of being-in-the-world is that of lost-ness and contradiction comes as no surprise in view of the above circumstances. However, this predicament is merely a point of departure for Spahr. What occupies her more than the instability of world conditions is the question of how to survive it. How to create a flow from self to others, from place to place, such that a pattern of living evolves? This collection (of one short poem and five more extensive works) explores —with a prepositional charm at times reminiscent of Wittgenstein — the consciousness of engagement, be it political, cultural, or intimate.

> This story, the story of we, is of
> our loss and our loving.
>
> It is the story between deeply
> sleeping, dreaming, and waking.
>
> It is the story of what is crooked
> and loving that crooked.

Spahr presents the *story of we* in full exposure of its paradoxical yet alluring form. "We" is a term indicating equality, also accountability: it conjoins, makes allegiances, describes an intimacy. The term fails as much as it succeeds, discriminates as much as it gathers, predicating all that is crooked, which for Spahr is all that is the case. These pieces underscore the writer's resolve to not only acknowledge the contradictions of perceived reality, but also to map them.

> There are these things and they are
> the circle malformed, pulled tight
> in one place. These things are the
> symbol of all not being right. They
> are da kine for me.

What is remarkable about *Fuck You–Aloha–I Love You* is that, without apology, it gazes dangerously into the glare of existence. It is a serious endeavor to make sense of loneliness, alienation, conflict, and incongruity — to make peace with it. Yet Spahr's concerns are about more than her own sense of isolation; from

particular corners or centers of a populated place, one observes the dynamic between its inhabitants; one understands oneself, though somehow apart, as an aspect of the dynamic. Relations and disturbances are exposed. Fragility is exposed, and with it courage, with it love. Perhaps the writer does not feel particularly "at home," but she has not given up the concept:

> I am in a place called there and I
> am trying to make it into a place
> called here.

The issue of "there" and "here" is never settled. The process of finding one's place in the world is never complete, even for those who are of the place in which they live, native to it. In "gathering: palolo stream," Spahr begins calmly compiling pragmatic truths:

> A place allows certain things.
>
> A place allows certain things
> and certain of we of a specific
> place have certain rights.

She continues:

> To go to the stream is a right for
> certain people.
>
> To go, to gather.

The simplicity of the language carries the weight of logical congruence: because one has been given the right to hold a ceremony at a particular stream, one has the freedom to do that. However, we have come far enough in this book to know that the above should be understood as both ironic and earnest. Reading on, we learn that next to the stream is a parking lot owned by a rental company; the parking lot is surrounded by a fence and kept locked; the fence is enclosed (on two sides) by buildings; the parking lot is unused because no road enters it. The stream cannot be accessed. While the *we* of the book's opening poem "localism or t/here" portrays a singularity (e.g., "we are arrows of loving lostness") in this poem, it fractures into a *we* that alienates and another *we* that is alienated, opposing though occupying the same plane. This sameness is precisely what Spahr wants the reader to think about, evident in the level, documenting tone of the writing.

While there are many points of departure in this compelling work, I'm particularly drawn to that of collective identity as Spahr wrestles with it, piece by piece, with extraordinary resilience and wonder. Her interest in sustaining plurality in a capital-obsessed culture is daring and rare. Spahr interrogates: how to encircle

these things that are important to me, how to preserve an openness such that others might enter, how "to make flourish" the encircled place.

She continues her pursuit in the poem "switching," still using a flattened emotionality to juxtapose varying aspects of *we*. In one room a group of people "gather at a table to hear opinions" and in another room meet two lovers who "haven't seen each other for some time." The former are positioned around a wood table, which they perceive and welcome as a barrier, and the latter, the couple, is positioned on a bed. The barrier for the lovers is both the distance created by time since they last met and the difficulty of overcoming the restrictions of human flexibility:

> This desire takes the form of one
> person having one leg on one
> person's shoulder and the other
> leg stretched out and twined
> around the other person, moving
> back and forth.

Gathering, coming together, and how that manifests in the kind of world Spahr describes is integral to what is wonderfully difficult about this work. Spahr uses the physical world and our own physicality to draw out both our compulsion toward and repulsion away from one another. In "switching," she questions the preservation of integrity (of identity and place) as she moves from one situation to the next. A disorientation arises:

> I am in one place and I am
> longing for the geography of the
> other place.

What differentiates the dynamics of these two rooms is the level of coalescence. It is not that the lovers have necessarily achieved the closeness they seek, for Spahr admits that the contortion of bodies is "impossible" and "does not even give the most pleasure." But, she contends, their effort represents a kind of courage that is lacking in the meeting room. Those in conference "long for fluency," but are inhibited by the formality of their relationship to each other and the pressure of having to reach some type of agreement:

> How to speak around a table as if
> one leg is on one shoulder and
> then the other is stretched out or
> twined around the other person.

Though Spahr wearies of the ineffectiveness of the meeting, of the struggle to decide what is right and how to act, she acknowledges, "this is thinking in exchange." There is something to be gained from "invested discourse." But ultimately, she is left wondering: How to make progress? How to find accordance? How to find the right contortion, the one that will allow her to feel at home in the "circle malformed"? How to be most open? In the last eight pages of this twenty-three-page work, the now-patent precision of Spahr's observations loosens, beautifully. Composure is surrendered to the pursuit of touching that place of confusion; she makes leaps, allows the more freeing nature of poetry to absorb the conflict:

> Oh one of thinking
>
> Oh one of desiring
>
> Oh one of making and of doing
>
> This madness of love and madness
> of thinking and thinking of love
> and loving of thinking and loving
> of maddening and thinking of
> maddening.

Conversant with the preceding four poems, the remaining two continue to poke and pry at, but also defer to, the mores of collective identity. The diagrammatic poem titled "a younger man, an older man, and a woman" establishes a frame—in this case, culture, "a group enterprise" requiring "the cooperation and teamwork of we who are in the formations"— in which to arrange and rearrange the possibilities of being. This poem is stubbornly choreographic. Here, Spahr seems intent on reducing the compound of identity to its basic, comprehensible form: the body. How to arrange the body in relation to other bodies? What is instinctual, what is extraordinary? She concludes with the serenely paced poem "we," which is given more as song than as final destination. This last poem carried me entirely off the page.

A stellar achievement, *Fuck You–Aloha–I Love You* advances the discourse of being-in-the-world into an emotionally intelligent realm, one complicated by the infinity of desire: "this growing around and into each other" we do every moment of our lives — unfurled and terrifying.

Renee Gladman

HATRED OF CAPITALISM: A SEMIOTEXT(E) READER

Chris Kraus and Sylvére Lotringer, editors
MIT Press, 2001

I was a teenage *Semiotext(e)* reader. When I first arrived in New York in 1982 aged 18, the newly published "Polysexuality" issue of the journal, with its bulbous leatherman on a motorbike on the cover and its "sadistic" blurred interior typeface, embodied a vision of art and knowledge that promised to open up secret worlds hidden in the gloom of Reagan's America and Thatcher's UK. Semiotext(e) was started in 1974 by Sylvére Lotringer, a professor of French at Columbia University. Early issues, with titles such as "Alternatives in Semiotics" and "Saussure's Anagrams" had a strong linguistic focus, but by 1975 the magazine had focused on French post-structuralist post-1968 theory, devoting issues to Georges Bataille and Friedrich Nietzsche, two issues to "Schizo-Culture" and so on. In 1983, Lotringer started the Foreign Agents series of cheap, stylish, minimalist paperbacks with a collection of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work, *On the Line*, Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations*, which became one of the seminal texts for the 1980s art world, and Lotringer's dialogue with Paul Virilio, *Pure War*, which, among other things, was a powerful influence on American cyberpunk. In 1990 New Zealand-born film maker Chris Kraus (who is married to Lotringer) began editing the Native Agents series, devoted to first person American fiction/nonfiction mainly by women, including Eileen Myles, Kathy Acker, Cookie Mueller and Kraus herself.

Last year, Semiotext(e) ended its association with co-editor and manager Jim Fleming and Autonomedia, the Brooklyn based alternative publishing collective, for a new distribution deal with MIT Press. One of the first fruits of this new association is *Hatred of Capitalism: A Semiotext(e) Reader*, edited by Kraus and Lotringer, offering a selection of greatest hits from the last 25 years of the journal and the book imprint, including selections from Acker, William Burroughs, Hèlene Cixous, Michel Foucault, Chris Marker, Kate Millet, David Wojnarowicz, Louis Wolfson and many others. Even if you do not care in the least about French theory or post "I" fiction, the garish, eyecatching title lettering on the spine will elicit all kinds of interesting conversations on the subway or with immigration officers in airports. If you find yourself being questioned at JFK, and the first amendment isn't working any more, try telling your questioners that, as Lotringer and Kraus say, the title is a kind of joke.

The book consists of a series of sections with titles like "Terror", "Pure War" , "Ecstasy" and "Life in these United States" that bring together the theoretical interventions of the mostly French male academic writers and the mostly male New York downtown 1970s writers who Lotringer edited, with the first person texts written by the mostly American female writers that Kraus worked with. It is very hard to articulate exactly how the European theorists, 1970s New York avant

garde and the first person narrative writers of the 90s fit together. Apparently, even back in the day, it was a volatile mix. Lotringer recalls a conference he organized in 1975 at Columbia University at which Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari and Lyotard, none of whom were known in the US at the time, attended along with New York avant garde figures such as William Burroughs, John Cage and Richard Foreman and various political, counter-cultural figures of the time. According to Lotringer there were clashes and disputes between the various parties present, Foucault eventually allying himself with a group including radical psychiatrist R.D. Laing, mental patient advocate Howie Harp, and Judy Clark, who gave a paper on behavior modification in the prison system (and was later arrested and imprisoned as a result of her involvement with the Black Liberation Army and the Brink's hold-up in New Jersey).

Michelle Tea, author of one of the Native Agents books, says in her review of the *Reader* that the French theory is illustrated by the American first person narratives, but the relationship between the two is much more enigmatic (and is complicated by the presence of the earlier NY avant garde who were neither theorists nor post "I" women writers). At the very beginning of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari speak of the rhizomatic association of a wasp and an orchid, two unassociated things brought together temporarily for a particular reason, without their ever becoming fused into a single transcendental unit: Deleuze's collaborations with Guattari are a fine example of this, as is Semiotext(e). Resistance to the full flowering of the rhizomatic association has been very strong though. Although in one of Kathy Acker's texts, Lotringer is excited that he has made terrorism fashionable in New York, the Italian autonomists and German radical groups around Baader Meinhof that Lotringer documented so well remain unknown to most Americans – who continue to prefer homegrown extremism, whether of the Weatherman or Charlie Manson variety. As for theory (I realize that it is absurd to use this word to describe such a complicated ecology of intellectual, political and aesthetic practices and practitioners, but I will do so for the sake of convention), Lotringer's interviews with New York avant garde figures such as film maker Jack Smith, or painter David Wojnarowicz, reprise a series of fascinating, highly intelligent rebuffs to the Europeans, whether projected as some kind of alien Other or accurately understood. One of the most fascinating encounters documented in the *Reader* is between a theoretically oriented interviewer and New York composer John Cage. The interviewer repeatedly attempts to assimilate Cage's aesthetic of improvisation and spontaneity into a philosophical system (as Stockhausen and Boulez tried as well), while Cage carefully steps outside of the oppositions that are offered to him. Cage, like film-maker Jack Smith or for that matter Burroughs, recognized the ghost of European intellectual hegemony when he saw it, and was not about to genuflect to it.

And what does one make of the inclusion of German "terrorist" Ulrike Meinhof's "Armed Anti-Imperialist Struggle" or former Black Liberation Army leader Assata Shakur's "Prisoner in the United States"? Originally Meinhof's

piece was part of the remarkable volume devoted to Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, in which a vast collection of interviews and texts opened up buzz words like "Baader Meinhof" into multiplicities in which strategies of resistance and becoming fragmented off in many directions, allowing one to perceive the complexity of events. As an isolated piece, Meinhof's text ends up looking like very late radical chic, served up for whatever sensationalist or kitsch value remains in it. Of course, Meinhof's text can stand on it's own, or could resonate with the other texts around it, but I don't think it does.

I miss the density of perspectives gathered around a particular event that characterized the journal in its heyday. The book went to press before September 11, and inevitably, given that terrorism is one of the books foci, one reads the *Reader* in the light of that date. Baudrillard's piece on Mogadishu remains brilliant, the various Deleuze and Guattari associated pieces are still thrilling, but most of the pieces seem historically of their time. What remains is Lotringer's exquisite taste in both European and American thinkers, and the real role he has played in introducing theory to America, insofar as that has actually happened (Lotringer's version of theory bypassed psychoanalysis and Derridean concerns with textuality for the French Nietzscheans, Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze).

The title of the *Reader* embodies many of the contradictions within. "Hatred of Capitalism" was New York film-maker Jack Smith's suggestion for an alternative title for the inescapably academic "Semiotext(e)". Lotringer is dismissive of academic faddishness. When I went to graduate school in the early 1990s in New York, it was partly out of a desire to read more of the stuff that Semiotext(e) had turned me on to (this was the time that French theory was becoming fashionable in academia according to Lotringer). My interest in Semiotext(e) began to wain around the time that French theory started to become unfashionable in the mid-1990s, and my own interests tended in the direction of the kind of first person narratives which the Native Agents series published (which were then also becoming fashionable). It's hard not to see the evolution of the Native Agent series, under Kraus's editorial control, as in itself a part of a broader response to "theory" in the 1990s and a growing lack of patience, both in the US, but also in France with the jargon ridden parodies and pastiches of certain original thinkers, which resulted in the growth of cultural studies and reflexivity as intellectual tropes in the 1990s. Both Kraus and Lotringer note that they wanted to get away from the overwhelmingly male culture of theory. But why use the American women writers (and the name of Semiotext(e)) to do so? Maybe Semiotext(e) would have been better off remaining a forum for overeducated, arty, white male crankiness, such as it is. Isn't this what Jack Smith meant when he proposed his alternate title?

More problematic in the *Reader* is the absence of any material associated with Jim Fleming and Autonomedia. Semiotext(e) was originally published by Lotringer, out of Columbia University. Jim Fleming became the manager of Semiotext(e) in the early 1980s, and took responsibility for the business end of

the journal and imprint. He is also listed as co-editor of the Foreign Agent series in Virilio's *Pure War* (1983). According to Lotringer, a loose agreement was made with Fleming that allowed him to use any money made from Semiotext(e) to build up the collectively run Autonomedia. Important issues of Semiotext(e) such as the SF, USA, Architecture and Radio numbers were published jointly, according to the credits pages, and the two presses catalogs overlapped both in terms of the authors they published and the book formats. Last year, Semiotext(e) ended its association with Autonomedia, with the back catalog being split according to who was most involved editorially, with Kraus and Lotringer retaining the name. Thus the *Reader* contains none of the work associated with Fleming or Autonomedia. This is unfortunate because if there is a mutant offspring of the downtown New York scene and French theory, it is embodied in Autonomedia's ethos, and the post-punk, anarchist, spiritualized, radical ecology oriented American writers who it publishes. Semiotext(e) USA, edited by Fleming and fellow Autonomedia editor Peter Lamborn Wilson, charted the rise of this movement, while Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zone* was one of its bibles in the 1990s, to the point where Bey himself withdrew from his celebration of temporary moments of autonomy such as those celebrated by participants in the Burning Man ceremony in Nevada, into a more rigorously DeBordian critique of the spectacle, which was capable of appropriating both the TAZ and the multiplicities and radical neo-subjectivities which Semiotext(e) celebrated. In one sense, the TAZ's success, along with Semiotext(e)'s estrangement from Autonomedia suggests one of the problems with rhizomatic multiplicities – the difficulty in controlling the directions in which they proliferate, the constant risk of autonomy being reabsorbed into transcendental units under whatever name.

Hatred of Capitalism, with its lack of biographical information, it's ad hoc organization and programmatically spontaneous introduction has a painstakingly unfinished quality, as though it is desperately trying to avoid becoming history, trying to remain open and multiplicit, which is another way of saying alive. The anxiety is palpable – and in itself the strongest sign of life. It reminds me of the anxiety I've always felt reading Semiotext(e) – the almost unbearable sense of what the world we live in today is like, how painful it really is to think about the situation we find ourselves in. No easy solutions, no withdrawal from the world, no attempt to convert our suffering into masochistic pleasure (well, maybe once or twice). What then? *Hatred of Capitalism* – a joke? What do we know about jokes? The theorist would have much to say on this point, but the post-I writer just laughs.

Marcus Boon

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Marcus Boon's first book, *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs,* will be published by Harvard University Press in December, 2002.

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